



Pristine Caribbean isles get more accessible, p.36

From mezcal to pulque, where to drink in Mexico City, p.40



Travel

FEAST FOR THE EYES

The gorgeous island of **Sardinia** has Italy's best (and healthiest) food

A 12-PAGE
GUIDE TO THE
BEST SPRING
DESTINATIONS



Shutterstock; Getty Images (inset)



Thanks to a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle, Sardinians report increased longevity and happiness. Fregola (above) is a signature dish.

By JACKIE COOPERMAN

GIOVANNI Scanu starts his days among chickens, goats, banana sage and zucchini, tending the vibrant 11,000-square-foot vegetable garden at Cala di Volpe. It's a storied luxury resort on Sardinia, an island surrounded by pristine waters 120 miles west of mainland Italy.

Often, 73-year-old Scanu plucks a handful of strawberries or a bouquet of basil and plops them into curious guest's hands, a puckish smile under his trim gray mustache.

"Prego," he says with a flourish — "you're welcome," or "here you go," in Italian — before returning

to his beloved produce (images of which he posts, with disarming earnestness, on his Instagram account, @Giovanni.Scanu14).

Scanu and his colleagues in the Cala di Volpe kitchen are enthusiastic champions of one of Sardinia's claims to fame: its remarkably localvore diet and its citizens' longevity, cited in Dan Buettner's books about "Blue Zones," parts of the world where people live longer and report being happier.

"It's beyond just the ingredients, which have rich properties. It's also the lifestyle," explains Maurizio Locatelli, 58, the hotel's executive chef. He left his home in Brescia, in Italy's far north, to relocate to Sardinia in 1981 — and never looked

back. "The calm that's here is one of the things I love the most."

Locatelli rattles off a long and impressive list of Sardinian ingredients and their nutritious properties. Among them: sheep's milk cheese like pecorino; wild artichokes and asparagus, which help to detoxify the blood; olive oil, which is rich in antioxidant-like compounds called polyphenols; and a flat hard-grain bread called *pane carasau*, which has no added oil or yeast, contains very little gluten and is easily digestible. Local fish and seafood like mussels, tuna, mackerel and (the now endangered) giant clams are rich in other antioxidants as well as omega acids, which benefit the heart and mental health,

among other effects.

Sardinians also love fregola, sometimes called Israeli couscous, which they make by creating a dough of semolina grains and water, then breaking down the gluten as they knead the grains against the surface of ceramic bowls, yielding delicious little spheres. And then there's wine. Sardinia's robust red Cannonau, the local name for Grenache grapes, is particularly high in polyphenols and anthocyanins and grows throughout the 9,300-square-mile island.

Together, these ingredients create balanced diets and, some geriatric researchers say, promote longevity. They also, Locatelli notes, share humble origins.

SEE
PAGE
35



The Luxury Collection Sardinia (2)

A 73-year-old Sardinian farmer, Giovanni Scanu ensures only the freshest ingredients end up on Cala di Volpe guests' plates.

From **SARDINIA** on Page 33

"The vegetables, a bite of pecorino cheese and a glass of red wine — it's the classic base for a Sardinian farmer," he says. "But even the most sophisticated Sardinians have this in their diet."

Locatelli should know. Cala di Volpe, one of four hotels that billionaire Aga Khan IV and a handful of his fancy European buddies began building in 1962, has been catering to the Italian jet-set, and the well-heeled tourists who emulate them, since it opened. With airy rooms, an immense saltwater pool, a private sand beach whose waters are at least a half dozen shades of azure, chefs who passionately



The Cala di Volpe resort is a gem on Sardinia's northeast coast, the Costa Smeralda.

discuss the distinct varieties of Sardinian dumplings and a surfeit of Acqua di Parma toiletries, Cala di Volpe manages to be both sleek and appealingly old-school (from \$871; CalaDiVolpe.com). A five-minute walk along a sandy, tree-lined path leads to the private beach, but to truly arrive there in style, hop on the hotel's gleaming 33-foot fiberglass boat.

Starwood bought Cala di Volpe in 2003, which along with Aga Khan-built sister properties Hotel Pitrizza, Cervo Hotel and Hotel Romazzino, all opened between 1962 and 1965. They're now part of Marriott.

Those resorts on the Costa Smeralda, a glittery 12-mile stretch on the island's northeast coast with some of

Europe's most expensive real estate, certainly merit their sterling reputations.

But travelers looking to appreciate Sardinia on a less padded budget should know that most beaches are free, public and spectacularly clean. The area also has compelling affordable hotels.

In the rarefied yachting town of Porto Cervo, where even in summer the trees are decked out in crystal ornaments and the shops are super chic (Prada, Miu Miu, home design darling Rossana Orlandi), you can find accessibly priced accommodation at Il Cervo Dormiglione. It's a charming four-bedroom bed and breakfast with a lovely garden, just behind the august Costa Smeralda Yacht Club (from \$173; IlCervoDormiglione.com).

If you're renting a car and want to sleep in the nearby Gallura countryside, check out Tenuta Pilastru, an upscale *agriturismo* (a combined hotel and working farm) with an ambitious wellness center (heated natural granite massage rooms, Technogym machines) and 370 acres of juniper, olive and oak trees (from \$88, breakfast and dinner included; TenutaPilastru.it).

No matter where visitors stay, though, salubrious Sardinian rituals apply to all.

"It's not just about food, but about taking time to enjoy and really taste things — and not eating so quickly," Locatelli says. "The Sardinian diet is not just a glass of Cannonau or a salad of raw artichoke served with bottarga [fish roe]. The meal must not be rushed, it has to be tasted, appreciated for its simplicity and shared in that spirit with others."

The author was a guest of Cala di Volpe.



The world's only underwater yoga class is at the Maldives' chic Hurawalhi resort.

Long seen as just an elite beach retreat, the Maldives are worth the schlep

By **JIMMY IM**

HEAVEN is indeed a place on Earth — and it's in the Maldives. Dotted with dreamy lagoons and ridiculously priced lavish resorts, these Indian Ocean islands spoil visitors with private butlers, overwater villas and beaches so white you have to squint. But paradise, a collection of about 1,190 tiny atolls 600 miles southwest of Sri Lanka, comes with a hefty price tag. Most of the hotels are on remote isles reachable by puddle-jumper flights or private boat transfers from the capital, Male. With air transfers and rare packages that include meals, a five-night trip for two can easily cost up to \$10,000. So it makes sense that this fantasyland caters to wealthy honeymooners, jet-setters and bucket list seekers who undertake the 24-hour journey from New York City. Which begs the question: Is it even worth the expense — or the time?

Yes, if only for the endless parade of jaw-dropping attractions beyond natural beauty and high-end hotels. There are one-of-a-kind activities, from underwater yoga to glass-bottom Jacuzzis, exclusive to the archipelago. These only-in-the-Maldives experiences justify the long trek — and they're worth every penny.

Strike a pose on the ocean floor

In 2016, Hurawalhi resort opened 5.8, the world's largest underwater restaurant, sunk 20 feet in a lagoon.



Last year, Jumeirah Vittaveli debuted an artificial skating rink.

Tables are cleared out in the mornings to transform the space into a studio where yogis hold warrior pose as tropical fish, manta rays and reef sharks swim past the windows. It's the only all-glass, underwater yoga studio in the world (open to all, it's \$65 per class; Hurawalhi.com).

Ice skate in the tropics

A 89-suite hotel on Bolifushi Island, Jumeirah Vittaveli is already small. The vibe is even more intimate in its seven freestanding villas (from \$2,155), which "float" in the sea offshore and are only reachable by *dhoni* (a local boat). With glass-bottom floors, a private infinity pool and decadent room service, there's no reason to leave — except to ice skate. Debuted last year, the resort's artificial rink is the first of its kind in the Maldives; all guests glide against a tropical backdrop. Perfect for a surreal post on Instagram (from \$1,125; Jumeirah.com).

Dolphins outside your door

New resorts have the advantage of one-upping slightly older ones, and Milaidhoo (opened last year) didn't spare any luxuries. Beach villas, each with two outdoor showers and a private infinity pool, are oval-shaped to maximize views. The best part? They're built around a coral reef in a protected marine reserve, so you can take a spur-of-the-moment snorkel with sea turtles, dolphins and nurse sharks just steps from your villa (from \$1,600; Milaidhoo.com).



Spy on fish in the glass-bottom Jacuzzi on Soneva Fushi's yacht.

Sea life while you soak

While new resort Soneva Jani has been getting all the attention (water slides in each of its villas), its slightly older sister property, Soneva Fushi, is also having a moment. It recently unveiled a luxury yacht with a retractable deck for scuba diving and a glass-bottom Jacuzzi in the main suite. Guests can cruise during sunset or spend three days visiting uninhabited atolls (the sunset cruise starts from \$1,750 per couple). Back at the hotel, the observatory's new Meade telescope allows live 3D stargazing for the first time in history. As of January, it's the only resort in the world to offer this experience (from \$1,754/night; Soneva.com).

Swim among the celebs

Most travelers to the Maldives enjoy their privacy — with one exception. Guests at One & Only Reethi Rah love to be seen. A magnet for celebrities from David Beckham to Milla Jovovich, this property features a guest-only beachfront ocean club with an ice cream bar, pool tables, jet skis, climbing walls, swinging chairs and a live DJ. Here, it's all about the scene — and showing off expensive swimsuits and rock-hard abs (from \$1,800/night; OneAndOnlyResorts.com).

Book a trip now, because May to November (aka low season) offers the best rates and fewer crowds with near-perfect weather in the mid-80s. Cathay Pacific offers flights from New York with a stopover in Hong Kong starting at \$1,130 roundtrip.

The author was a guest of the hotels.