

Despite concerns that an activity-packed trip to Sardinia wouldn't fit the bill, it turns out...

Nothing beats a holiday with the grandchildren



By **Bel Mooney**

A THREE-GENERATION holiday? Hanging out with grandkids? What could be better?

But my daughter didn't sell it to me very well. 'Please come with us this year,' she begged, 'but I have to warn you, Mum, it's not your kind of holiday at all.' Why? 'Well,' she replied, 'It's non-stop activity!'

For the third year running, Kitty and her husband were taking their two children (13 and ten) to a Neilson's Family Activity Holiday. All four of them thrive on the range of choices: from paddleboard and sailing to mountain biking, yoga, tennis and much more. There's something for most ages – except for a grandmother with zero interest in all that stuff. Of course, my lovely

daughter waxed lyrical about cocktails in the pool bar and delicious food – but apart from that... fitness classes? In the heat of Sardinia? Not on your life!

My kind of holiday always involves culture. The only walking I enjoy is around an art gallery, museum or beautiful ancient town – with maybe a little foray into a pretty antiques shop in an elegant street. River cruises are perfect, because your luxurious floating hotel stops somewhere new and interesting every day.

On the other hand, how could I weigh all that against what was being offered – special family time with people I love?

No contest. In fact, in the end my husband and I decided we'd have it all – because when

you're older you deserve it. So we enjoyed a Spring Viking cruise on the Danube, and then prepared to get active with the kids. Of course, those last three words – 'with the kids' – reach the heart of the decision. Maybe I'd hate all the get-up-and-go, but granddaughter Chloe will soon be 14 and grandson Max 11 – and how much longer will they want to spend quality time with us? Children grow up so quickly and prefer to be with friends. This holiday was about being with *them*.

We flew from Bristol to Olbia (north-east Sardinia) and were whisked by coach to the Baia Dei Mori Beachclub. By now the grandchildren's excitement was off the scale: they'd made friends the year before and knew the same family would be holidaying at the same time. 'You might not see much of me, Granny,' warned Chloe kindly.

Our accommodation was simple and comfortable: three rooms (little villas, really) all next to each other and each with a little terrace and wicker chairs. Later, at the Pool Bar 'welcome evening', I spotted quite a few more three-generation holidaymakers. Were we that transparent – grandparents gazing fondly at grandchildren and eager to embrace the totally relaxed vibe, simply because being with family is the best thing ever and life is short? Yes, we were – and so it was celebratory cocktails all round!

At that welcome party the jolly, charismatic and unbelievably energetic guy in charge of us all – and known universally as 'Frostie' – detailed all the activities on offer. It was rather like being at an up-market holiday camp, which was just fine. You're on a Neilson holiday to go with the flow – and I was delighted to flow speedily over to the two pretty spa ladies waiting for bookings. I booked luxurious facials for my daughter and myself and decided things were definitely looking up.

The days settled into a pattern. One thing that made this holiday extra special for families is the ratio of delightful young staff to

guests – there was always somebody to look after you. The children were divided into the kids' clubs according to age.

There were nannies for the babies – and one of my pleasures was watching other people's children trotting along the paths to some activity or other, with a watchful member of staff at each end of the crocodile. No wonder parents love the resort; it's so safe.

Each morning we'd all meet for breakfast and the others would plan their day. You download the resort app and the hourly choices are all laid out – for example, tennis, then cycling for super-fit son-in-law Edward, then fitness class and cycling for Kitty, sailing with other teens for Chloe and swimming with his kids' club for Max.

My husband Robin loved snorkelling, swimming and going on punishingly long cycle rides with Kitty and Edward. One afternoon I tried 'Stretch and Relax' with my daughter, but it was too much stretch and not enough relax, so that was it. At least I had a go.

My own version of an activity holiday went like this. After breakfast I was happy to wave them all off on their various activities and go back to my wicker chair and Kindle e-reader. My 'activity' for the week was finishing four novels. Since I can't swim, the beautiful pool was out, but I loved watching the grandchildren having a great time there with friends.

Mid-morning I'd stroll to the pool bar for coffee and to people watch, then return to my chair. Lazy? Too right. I loved us all meeting up for lunch, and then the afternoon siestas, followed by more reading... then getting ready for cocktails and dinner. What was not to like? One evening we danced. Another night we all had fun watching hilarious 'pool-Olympics' – when the members of staff formed teams to compete in the pool. I hadn't laughed so much in ages.

The resort's meals policy means that we ate out in nearby restaurants on three evenings, which benefits the local economy. Full

marks for that. Fresh seafood, good pizzas, robust Sardinian wine – both in and outside the resort the Mediterranean menus were exactly as I like to eat.

We were sad to say goodbye, leaving the family there for a second week. But those hugs from the grandchildren will keep me warm all winter – we’re secretly hoping they ask us to join them again.

TRAVEL
FACTS

Seven nights at Baia Dei Mori Beachclub from £680pp for a family of four, departing London Stansted on October 2. Includes transfers, most meals, over-55 activities, tuition and kids’ clubs.

‘This was all about
being with family’



TOGETHER TIME: Bel Mooney, top centre, with, from left, Edward, Kitty, Chloe, Max and Robin. Above: Boxing, watersports and cycling activities