

Ticket to Paradise (2022)



Lilly & her parents talk with her lover Gede on Bali. (c) Universal Pictures

Director Ol Parker provides a nice escape from reality in this old fashioned romantic comedy. The main reason for seeing it is to watch two pros, Julia Roberts and George Clooney, go through their paces in a story about as believable as anything from the Brothers Grimm.

Like some of the screwball comedies of the 30s and 40s, David (Clooney) and Georgia (Roberts) are bickering exes who have split up after a five-year marriage. We're supposed to believe that by coincidence they are seated next to each other at their daughter's law school graduation and later on the airline trip to Bali their assigned seats are next to each other. Of course, if they hadn't been, we would have missed the delightful zingers they fire back and forth.

They're headed to the paradise of the title because their daughter Lily (Kaitlyn Dever) and best friend Wren (Billie Lourd) have been vacationing in the island nation and while swimming far out to sea had been left behind by their boat. (Yeah, sure.) Then came along the incredibly handsome Gede (Maxime Bouttier) in his motorboat to pluck them from the water, and—yes, love at first sight. He is a Balinese seaweed farmer and we are supposed to believe that True Love will overcome their cultural and educational differences. The

parents are upset by their daughter's sudden abandonment of a law career—who *wouldn't be?*— to become a—what?

So, between insults, the parents agree to sabotage the wedding and return Lily both to her senses and the States. Their scheme is to seem to go along with Lily's wishes while concocting a plan to prevent the wedding. Lily is aware of "Trojan Horsing," so she is on her guard. And Gede may be a seaweed farmer, but is no dummy. When the parents manage to slow things down by stealing their ceremonial rings, he realizes they are the cause of their disappearance.

There are a lot of shennanigans, but it is a far-gone conclusion how this kind of a movie will end. It is a fun ride to get there, with few if any real surprises, except one. It is the fun of watching two fine actors move from hostility to second-thoughts to reviving their original feelings for each other that created the warm feeling at the end of the film. The filmmakers also deserve credit for seeming to present the Balinese wedding in an authentic way, with no one stage whispering an explanation. It appears that Lily has no Christian beliefs, apparently deciding to "go native" for her husband and new family—the latter have accepted her with no qualms. (At least none are shown.)

However, what we don't see, and this is a legitimate parental concern, is what in Gede makes Lily decide on such a drastic change in her life. Do they share a love for literature, music, or art—what beside physical attraction do they share? Is it enough to keep them together so that they will live "happily ever after"?

One more observation: like those old romantic comedies, the characters are from the 1%. David is a very successful architect, Georgia owner of a hugely prosperous art gallery, and Lily has a law degree. A month's vacation in an exotic land is no financial problem for them, and apparently seaweed farming will provide enough income to satisfy the American

born Lily. So, we might ask, why do we care about these wealthy people. I suppose the answer has already been given—the fun of watching two A-list stars cavort (there's a silly drunken dance scene) on the big screen, so, "Pass the popcorn."

No questions for this film.