



instant escapes

# Rustic Mallorca

Leave the hordes behind and discover the island the locals love

Its cool capital, Palma, draws the crowds, but the countryside, with its almond groves, verdant hills and pretty pueblos, is where you'll find the island's purest pleasures. They call it Part Forana — 'the outside bit' — but that doesn't mean it's out of the loop: hip hotels and fine little restaurants are bringing style to the bucolic backwaters. **By Paul Richardson**



## CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | RUSTIC MALLORCA

### SEE & DO

For a buzzing tourist island, Mallorca's interior has some great trekking country. Nowhere's wilder and woollier than the Barranc de Biniaraix, a deep gorge with a rushing mountain river in its depths. Leave the car in Biniaraix village and follow the stone path up the valley past terraces as steep as Machu Picchu's. Once at the top, retrace your steps for a proper three-hour ramble (you'll need decent walking shoes).

Joan Puigserver and Sebastian Massanet, farmers in the lush valley of Sóller, are pioneers of 'citrus tourism' at Ecovinyassa (ecovinyassa.com). Wander along paths in their fruit-laden groves, learning about local varieties as you inhale the heavenly fragrance. A two-hour visit (£10; booking required) includes a snack of *pamboli* (oil-drizzled bread) and freshly squeezed juice from the farm's own oranges.

In 1970, the great Danish architect Jørn Utzon fell in love with the rocky coastline near Porto Petro — and here he built Can Lis as a retreat (from the stresses and strains of building the Sydney Opera House). This simple Mediterranean masterpiece, preserved as the visionary left it, can now be visited (by appointment only; contact info@canlis.dk for details of times and prices). Professional architects, lucky folk, can also rent the whole house from £2,145 a week (canlis.dk).

**POET'S CORNER**  
The writer is buried in Deià churchyard. Look out for the disarmingly simple tombstone hand-carved with the word 'Poeta' (poet)

Far from the grind: windmill in Sineu, Mallorca's historic former capital; below, Cabrera Island; the gardens of Alfabia

The ancient *possessió* (estate) of Alfabia, on the southern flank of the Tramuntana foothills near Bunyola, is best known for its swooningly romantic gardens. Pergolas, staircases and fountains dribbling into glassy pools are all enveloped in an atmosphere of genteel decadence. Time your visit right — early morning is best, before the coach parties pitch up — and Alfabia is a tranquil Eden (jardinesdealfabia.com; £7).

Can Alluny (lacasaderobertraves.org; £6), outside Deià village, was Robert Graves's home from 1946 until his death. The house and garden have been considerably restored as a museum, displaying original editions of *The White Goddess* alongside spine-tingling curios, such as the great man's reading glasses and his collection of straw hats. (Check out the Colman's mustard and English teabags in the kitchen.)

For a snapshot of the bygone Balearics, take a day-trip to Cabrera Island, a protected speck lying off Mallorca's south coast. It's a less-is-more destination, with nothing much to do beyond delicious dips in deserted coves and gentle walks in a pristine landscape smelling of sun-warmed herbs. A regular boat service leaves from Colònia de Sant Jordi (marcabrera.com; £44 return).

While the bucket-and-spaders battle it out on the beaches, peace-seekers head inland — to the island's pretty agricultural towns. None of which is more real or rustic than Sineu, Mallorca's historic former capital, its torpor broken only by a weekly *mercat* (Wednesdays), selling everything from radishes to rabbits, pottery to piglets.

Think Tom Hiddleston in *The Night Manager* as you swing along the switchback roads of the Tramuntana mountains in a 1981 Alfa Romeo Spider or 1976 Triumph TR6 (rented from Mallorca Driving; mallorcadriving.com; about £265 a day). Take the Ma-10 from Andratx to Pollença — more than 100km of craggy uplands, pastoral villages, oak forests and eye-popping sea views. It's one of the world's most glorious — and underrated — drives. >



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EAT

● Beside the seaside

EL BUNGALOW (Mains about £17)

**Because:** With its retro maritime look and peerless paellas, this beachside *chiringuito* (snack bar) is a jealously guarded secret among Mallorca expats. **Travel's tip:** Keep tabs on your sandcastle-building children from a terrace table within a few metres of the beach. Carrer d'Escullers 2, Ciutat Jardí; 00 34 971 262738.

● Village gastronomy

ES RACOD'ES TEIX (Mains about £32)

**Because:** On a warm spring day there's no more delicious place for a laid-back lunch than the flower-filled terrace at Josef Sauerschell's Michelin-starred place in Deià. **Travel's tip:** Don't fear foams and foodie fads: Sauerschell's cuisine is 'modernised Mediterranean classic'. Carrer de Sa Vinya Vieja, Deià; 00 34 971 639501, esracodesteix.es.

● Home-grown talent

SANTI TAURA (Six-course menu £42)

**Because:** Self-taught chef Santi's Mallorcan-inspired dishes, such as Sóller prawns with *sobrassada* sausage, jostle brilliantly with original inventions, including piquillo peppers with pea sauce and chestnut cream.

**Travel's tip:** Book up to three months ahead online. Carrer Joan Carles I 48, Lloseta; 00 34 656 738214, restaurantsantitaura.com.

● Modern Mallorca

RESTAURANT JOAN MARC

(Six-course menu £46)

**Because:** In tourist-free Inca, Mallorcan chef Joan Marc Garcías cooks with elegant simplicity using local, organic produce — veal, artichokes, almonds.

**Travel's tip:** The three-course *menú del día* (lunch Tue–Fri) is a steal at £15. Plaça des Blanquer 10, Inca; 00 34 971 500804, joanmarrestaurant.com.

● Locavore hideaway

CANA TONETA (Seven-course menu £55)

**Because:** Maria Solivellas and her sister Teresa are heroes of the Slow Food movement, sourcing everything on their Mallorcan menu from the island. **Travel's tip:** Don't miss the gorgeous homewares at the shop next door. Carrer de s'Horitzó 21, Caimari; 00 34 971 515226, canatoneta.com.

WHAT TO TAKE HOME

Sal d'es Trenc has diversified into a range of fine salts deliciously flavoured with herbs, spices, fruits and flowers. The best are lemon and lavender, or orange and chilli.

DRINKING TIPS

If you're into wine, talk to sommelier Teresa Solivellas about her selection of handmade, natural and low-sulphite wines (no hangover, they say).

SHOP

● Chic souvenirs

VICENS

**Because:** This shop is a fascinating showcase of Mallorcan *llengües* — the traditional patterned fabric. Don't miss the looms out back. **Travel's tip:** A length of *llengües* makes a cool wall hanging and souvenir (from about £45 a metre). Rotonda de Can Berenguer s/n, Pollença; teixitsvicens.com.

● Salty charm

SAL D'ESTRENC

**Because:** *Flor de sal* — the upper crust of salt — is still produced by artisan methods here. Stock up on handmade foods at the on-site shop. **Travel's tip:** The salt pans are open to the public — stroll in the weird white wonderland. Carretera Campos Colònia de Sant Jordi km 8.7; flordesaldestrenc.com.

● Village potter

CERAMICS BY JOANNA

**Because:** Joanna Kuhne hand-paints her covetable bowls and tiles with motifs inspired by the local landscape and lifestyle. **Travel's tip:** No room in your case? She delivers worldwide. Es Porxo 1, Deià; ceramicsbyjoanna.com.



ASK THE LOCAL

Toni Martí Oliver, a retired plumber, has lived in Sóller all his life

“The Serra de Tramuntana region has it all: sea, mountains, villages. Every day you'll find a new secret corner, such as Cala Tuent, **my favourite little cove — it's beautiful and almost virgin**, with the forest behind. The Torrent de Balitx is a **mountain gorge that makes for an amazing trek**. There's a spectacular waterfall, but you need an expert guide (mondaventura.com). Something more *tranquilo*? Sóller's Can Prunera museum is excellent — **many visitors don't know about its Joan Miró paintings** (canprunera.com; £4). We Solleric love our little train, which takes you to Palma on **old wooden carriages though a tunnel under the mountain**.



STAY

● Down-home delight

SON SANT JORDI (Doubles from £70, B&B)

**Because:** It's a historic, family-run Pollença townhouse, with a magical walled garden planted with citrus trees. Interiors are homely, with beams, white walls and upholstery in traditional *llengües* fabric. **Travel's tip:** Leave enough time to idle over breakfast in the garden (try the marmalade from those oranges), served until 9.45am. Carrer de Sant Jordi 29, Pollença; hotelsantsantjordi.com.

● Chic and country

ES CORTE VELL (Doubles from £103, B&B)

**Because:** It's one of a new wave of rural *hotelitos* to major on a breezy modern design and, so far, the only quality accommodation in the little-visited village of Bunyola. **Travel's tip:** Light sleepers may be bothered by air-con noise — earplugs at the ready. Carrer de Santa Catalina Tomàs 67, Bunyola; escortevell.com.

● Spa-on-sea

FONTSANTA (Doubles from £147, B&B)

**Because:** In a gorgeous creamy-stone manor house with cottages, this spa-focused hotel is in a brilliant location for cycles to Es Trenc beach (the best on Mallorca) and salt flats. **Travel's tip:** Fontanta is adults-only (that means over-18s, not over-12s) and couples and grown-up groups make up the sophisticated clientele; expect early nights. Carretera Campos, Colònia de Sant Jordi Km 8, 2; fontantahotel.com.

● Village vanguard

ECOCIRER (Doubles from £150, B&B)

**Because:** This new six-room guesthouse, run by Sóller-born Barbara Martí and her Dutch husband, Martijn, is based on the trendy tenets of recycling, upcycling and pleasurable vegan living. A former ice-cream shop in a high-ceilinged stone house, it brims with the owners' colourfully eclectic taste. **Travel's tip:** Leave your car on the outskirts and forget about it — parking in Sóller is a nightmare. Carrer de Reial 15, Sóller; ecocirer.com.

DIFFERENT DAY-TRIP

Even if you don't stay at Fontanta, consider a spa day here — it's the only thermal water spa in the Balearics, and its various heat rooms are in beautiful, ancient stone spaces (£128pp, including treatment)

**Fabric of life:** clockwise from top left, homewares and textiles at Vicens; Es Corte Vell's pretty pool; breakfast with a view at the Gran Hotel Son Net; bright and homely Son Sant Jordi hotel; modern Mallorcan cuisine at Restaurant Joan Marc



● High estate

GRAN HOTEL SON NET (Doubles from £170, B&B)

**Because:** Ruralism in excelsis is the theme at this palatial country house dating from 1672, stuffed with blue-chip art, Spanish antiques and expensive fabric. Service is silky-smooth and the suites are some of the island's poshest. **Travel's tip:** Do sample (and buy) the house wine and olive oil, produced on the estate. Castillo Son Net s/n, Puigpunyent; sonnet.es.

● Room for romance

PLETA DE MAR (Doubles from £309, B&B)

**Because:** Just opened, this spectacular clifftop spot was once the local family's (and owners') summer house and gardens; it's now a scattering of sleek hotel bungalows tumbling down to the sea. The pool — with Med views — is exquisite. **Travel's tip:** Ignore the sat nav when it directs you to Can Simoneta hotel (same family); you're two minutes south. Via de les Cales s/n, Canyamel, Capdepera; pletademar.com.

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

**BA, Vueling, EasyJet, Jet2, Ryanair, Tui, Norwegian, Thomas Cook and Flybe** all fly direct to Palma from UK airports. For an example of cost, fares from Luton or Belfast with **EasyJet** start at £23, one-way. **BA** flies from London City from £36 one-way.

GO PACKAGED

**Jet2holidays** (jet2holidays.com) has a week's self-catering in Pollença from £399pp, including flights from Glasgow. **Ramblers Holidays** (ramblersholidays.co.uk) offers a 'Walking from Puerto de Sóller' tour from £1,125pp, including seven nights' half-board at a four-star hotel and Gatwick flights.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact **Oficina de Turismo de Mallorca** (infomallorca.net). An extensive bus network covers the Part Forana: see the public transport website **tib.org** (there are special '800' services to weekly markets). ■