



www.visitpalma.com

A scintillating city besides the sea

The Mediterranean island of Mallorca, or Majorca, is the largest of the four Spanish Balearic Islands, which also take in Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera.

The island has long been a lure for the budget conscious visitor content with the island's *sun, sea and sangria* offering .

And while Mallorca remains a popular sunshine destination it is Palma, the island's capital, that has seen a well-deserved surge in popularity over recent years.

Palma is a vibrant city of cultural abundance and contrast offering all that one would expect from a short break – with the added benefits derived from its Mediterranean climate with pleasant weather year round.

All parts of this stunning island are also within a two hour drive of the capital.

www.newsmallorca.com

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller





A Mediterranean capital on the up and up

By Ashley Gibbins

The seatbelt signs were turned on, we began our descent and my thoughts turned to our short break to Palma with some trepidation.

Our last visit, in 2008, was an enjoyable one although we recalled a city that had, as they say, seen better days.

Lacking in vitality

Undoubtedly full of character, but lacking the cosmopolitan vitality that makes cities the lure they are.

An old town that was authentically historic had too many of its buildings in need of refurbishment, and a noticeable number of its shops were in need of occupants.

The bars and restaurants at that time were *much of a muchness*, and there was an overall air of a place feeling somewhat sorry for itself.

The one redeeming factor, even at this time, was Mallorca's wonderful Mediterranean, year-round, climate.

But one could easily understand why many of the visitors flocking to Mallorca's coastal resorts saw little need to spend time much time in the island's capital.

Well, and to paraphrase, what a difference a decade (and a bit) makes.

A remarkable renaissance

In the eleven intervening years since our first trip to Palma, the city has seen a remarkable renaissance.

Its historical buildings have been renovated and returned into use - many as hotels.

Where one five star hotel was operating in 2000 there are now 20.

And the range of wining and dining options has also increased considerably along with the quality of the city's retail offering.

Palma has an impressive range of designer brands and high end stores that would befit any European capital.

And then there are many dozens of small, independent shops lining the winding streets and alleyways of Palma's Old Town.

This area, combining heritage and vibrancy so effortlessly, makes a visit to the city so rewarding.

Strolling around, just taking it all in, I was genuinely warmed with the rejuvenation of this beautiful city.

So please to be back. It will not be another decade before we return.

www.visitpalma.com/en
www.seemallorca.com





Mallorca Cathedral : an historical work in progress

A visit to La Seu, Mallorca Cathedral, are made the more poignant given the subsequent blaze that took the roof of Notre-Dame de Paris.

In particular it put in context the priceless fragility of what might seem an indestructible monument that strides the centuries.

But it also makes one realise that historic buildings are not locked in time.

They are forever being reassessed, renovated, repaired and reconstituted as needs must - and prevailing thinking demands.

And so it is with the truly magnificent cathedral at Palma.

Construction of this 'Levantine Gothic-style' cathedral began in the 13th Century, during the reign of James II, the first King of the Crown of Mallorca.

The earliest historical documents relating to the building of the Cathedral dates from 1230 when Bishop Pere de Morella consecrated the altar stone of the main altar.

Now that really is something to get ones head around when visiting nearly 800 years later.

But while work began in 1300, it continued throughout the centuries with many extensions and alterations planned, funded and carried out.

Work in earnest on the Gothic cathedral took place in the 14th and 15th Centuries, when the bell tower was completed.

And then in the 16th Century, the main portal and the two stunning rose windows were installed.

The interior of the Cathedral was completed during the 17th and 18th centuries with altarpieces, paintings and sculptures.

Major restoration and repair was then needed after an earthquake of 1851 and in 1902 the architect Antoni Gaudí was commissioned to undertake a decade long renovation and reappraisal of the cathedral.

More recently artist Miquel Barceló was invited to make contemporary artistic contribution to the Chapel of the Sacrament and his stunning creation was unveiled in 2007.

That the Mallorca Cathedral at Palma is an historical work in progress is the essence of the place.

It is constantly and continually reflecting the demands of the building itself and the prevailing social, political and cultural environment within which it stands proud.

On the day of our visit Toni, our guide, was determined we catch the morning sun crossing the large, circular rose stained glass window.

The multi-coloured rays of light dappling the cathedral created a magical experience and encouraged a few moments for reflection on our relative mortality compared to the building within which we were standing.

www.catedraldemallorca.org/en





Just the place to start your visit to Palma

First time visitors to Palma are well advised to head for the Paseo del Born, which is the city's most elegant avenue.

From here one can walk across into the old town or along to the cathedral, marina and beach.

Running off of the Paseo del Born is the Carrer del Saint Feliu and it is here that one finds one store and an art gallery that were at the vanguard of Palma's resurgence a decade or so ago.

Rialto Living



Rialto Living, which was founded by Klass Krall and Barbara Bergman, and opened in 2007, is located in the former Rialto cinema in Palma Old Town.

It is a self-proclaimed 'premium lifestyle store for the discerning, design-orientated shopper' and also a veritable visitor attraction in its own right.

Klass and Barbara moved to Palma in 2006 and wanted to lead, what they saw as the city's potential renaissance.

With plans to establish a store that offered a relaxed, select, stylish mix of products, they found an old theatre that had been turned into a cinema that was called Rialto before closing.

Unlike Ann, the thought of spending time in the shops has never been an appeal.

Rialto Living is an exception.

Its café with free wi-fi and the Financial Times, great coffee and pastries is a fine place to go for breakfast before touring the city.

www.rialtoliving.com/en

Gerhardt Braun Gallery



Gerhardt Braun opened the gallery that bears his name, in 2012, a seventeenth century palatial house in the Mannerist style.

The building, which is known as Ses Carasses for the masks that adorn its façade, provides up to six exhibition spaces, where different displays embracing art works, installations and performance art.



Casual visitors are welcome to take a look around the building and the galleries.

www.gb-gallery.eu/gallery



Take to the market and Tuesday tapas route

The Mercat de l'Olivar



One recommendation that must be offered to visitors in Palma is a trip to the Mercat de l'Olivar.

This covered market is the largest market on Mallorca and houses over a hundred stands selling fresh fish and meat, fruit and vegetables, bread and bakeries and a range of other goods.

It is the place for Mallorcans to get their produce and, while it is a no-frills market, that is precisely its attraction.

The market hall also has a number of wine and tapas bars serving freshly prepared dishes – including those with meat or fish you have just purchased.



The Mercat de l'Olivar is located off Sant Miquel Street, which itself is one of Palma's most bustling thoroughfares.

www.mercatolivar.com/?lang=en

Ruta Martiana



Ruta Martiana is the Tuesday tapas route in Palma when a dozen or more bars in the old town offer a small plate (tapas or brochettes) with a glass of wine or beer) for 2€.

The Ruta Martiana, which was introduced to encourage people out on the quieter Tuesday evenings, has really taken off.

It has become a tradition attracting throngs of residents and visitors, from 19:30 to midnight.

This is a great way to embrace the vibrant culture of the city while enjoying good food, wine and beer.





The place where friends and memories are made

By Ann Meador

Memories of our last visit to the Bonsol, some 11 years ago, came flooding back as we travelled up the hill from the small town of Illetas towards the hotel.

Memories come flooding back

The Bonsol sits on a cliff top among pine trees overlooking Palma Bay and the landscaping was just as lush as before.

And, most of all, I remembered the then welcome by owners Martin and Lorraine Xamena, who met us then like old friends over drinks on the patio.

Plush and comfortable

Entering the reception is like walking into a grand castle of old, but a plush and comfortable one.

There were the dark, wooden beams, the cool lime brick work, rich carpets and oriental rugs and wooden floors.

Objets d'art from across the world decorated the reception rooms and, most fascinating of all, a knight in full suit of armour complete with sword, guards the stairs.



Our room

After a swift check-in, we headed to our room, which was bright, airy and decorated in creams and greys with touches of blue.

There were also the small, but all important touches that make a room more comfortable.

Fluffy bathrobes and slippers; eco friendly, locally made toiletries in the bathroom and an abundance of tea and coffee.

There was also fresh fruit (although juicy, sun soaked oranges are always available throughout the hotel).

A large patio, equipped with table, chairs, sun loungers enjoyed stunning views over the bay.



And a welcome drink

On arrival, and like all guests we were also offered a welcome drink.

You can choose whatever you like, no small print or restrictions here.

I went for a crisp, refreshing Mojito, expertly made by the bartender Christian while Ashley (surprise, surprise) had a cold beer.

We sat on the sun drenched patio, sipped our cocktails and tucked into the selection of crisps, nuts and other nibbles that came with them.

The Bonsol breakfast

The Bonsol breakfast is a veritable feast!

If there was nothing else worth getting up for in Majorca, but this morning buffet, it would still be worth the trip.

There was a full selection of cold meats, cheeses, olives, nuts, seeds, fresh breads and traditional pastries, ripe fresh fruit including melon, pineapple and strawberries and cereals.

And hot dishes such as bacon, sausages, beans, mushrooms and tomatoes with eggs, cooked any way you like them, from the egg station where the chef cooked our omelettes perfectly with ingredients of our choice.

There is also honeycomb in its frame. You just scoop out what you want, and make your own fresh orange juice using a juicer machine

What did not go unnoticed was a block of fresh butter that got spread thickly on the fresh bread before adding the honey.

At breakfast, and lunch, empty plates are cleared away quickly and food is always re-stocked on the buffet, which is something I really appreciate.

Although a full breakfast is served until 10am, a continental breakfast table is available until 11am for those who want a later start.

The Bonsol breakfasts fuelled us through to dinner (see below)

Great attention to Detail

What also makes the Bonsol so special is the importance they give to the small details.

Martin and Lorraine really do believe that each and every guest is a friend in their home.

They are both multi-lingual, as are many of the staff, and they happily chat to guests in their own language.

The couple also dine in the restaurants, with a warm greeting for all the guests.

The couple go to great lengths to maintain the very high standards and friendly ethos first set by Antonio and Roger Xamena, Martin's parents, when they opened the Bonsol in 1953.

One of Antonio and Roger's first guests was a certain Erol Flynn, who would moor his boat in the bay before spending time at the hotel.

As one example of this, today, it was Ashley's birthday on our first day at the Bonsol.

We made no mention of it, but when arriving at our table that evening, there was a specially printed menu with his name on it and fragrant flowers on the table.

We also received a complimentary bottle of fizz and a delicious piece of cake with chocolate-dipped strawberries and a lit candle on top.

It was very thoughtful of our hosts and such a surprise.



Magazines, books and newspapers are dotted around the hotel and in the many cozy corners.

There is also a bag in each room filled with towels ready for you to take down to the beach.

And of course, fresh, juicy oranges can be found in bowls all over the hotel.

Around the hotel

The Bonsol is the sort of hotel that guests will want to make the most of and there is so much to enjoy by way of rest and relaxation.

The hotel has its own, small, private beach surrounded by loungers and a pool surrounded by tropical landscaping.

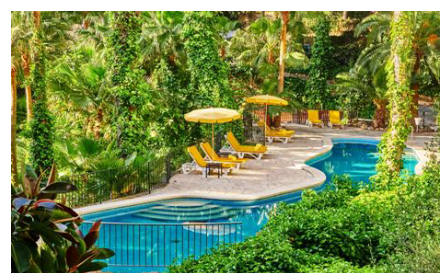
There is a mini-golf course in the garden and the chance to play tennis, billiards, table-tennis and squash or take yoga sessions.

The tranquil and therapeutic Spa, offers a range of massages, facials and wellness treatments and is worth an afternoon visit if you want a bit of pampering.

Reducing its carbon footprint

The Martin and Lorraine are aware that visitors to Mallorca will invariably have to fly to the island and were determined to do something to offset the hotel's carbon footprint.

And so they purchased land in Costa Rica where they have planted and carefully manage a veritable forest of 220,000 trees, which helps to compensate for the CO2 emissions produced by visitors travelling to the hotel.



For each guest staying at the hotel, Martin and Lorraine will allocate three Euros per day for the upkeep of the project.

A considerable investment given the number of guests who call the Bonsol home for a while.

Guests are also encouraged to do those small things to help the environment such as turning off lights when leaving the room and closing windows when the air conditioning is on.

Returning again and again

Given the great care and attention given by Martin and Lorraine, and all their team, to ensuring every guest has the most enjoyable stay possible, it is not surprising the Bonsol enjoys a very large number of repeat visits.

My own parents visited a few times back in the eighties and so it really does feel like coming home, but even better!

We are already thinking of our next visit, knowing it will be just as enjoyable.



All the ingredients for a fine dining experience

By Ann Mealor

We dined at the Bonsol each evening during our stay in Palma.

We had planned to try some of the interesting restaurants on offer in Palma, but the food, service and ambience at the Bonsol, was so good we just kept going back.

We were on half board, and I would not necessarily recommend this, but at the Bonsol it is definitely worth doing.

Lunch in the conservatory

If you miss breakfast or if you prefer to eat later in the day you can enjoy lunch in the light filled, Winter Garden restaurant where, again, you are spoilt for choice.

Hot dishes, including a colourful paella topped with prawns, and cold dishes include crisp salads, silky smoked salmon, fresh tuna, meats, cheeses, crusty breads, fresh fruit and desserts including a smooth crème caramel, a moist carrot cake and a moorish chocolate cake.

Dressing for dinner

The evening meals are an occasion and worth dressing-up for.

Las Antorchas, the main restaurant 'is sumptuous with very comfortable crimson velvet chairs, starched, white table linen and candles and flowers tables gleaming with silver cutlery and sparkling wine glasses.

The menu changes each evening so regular diners never get bored.

We enjoyed fillet of hake – Majorcan style and other fish such as red mullet and sea bass, juicy steaks, succulent shrimps, ripe avocado, creamy soups, green salads and a great choice of traditional desserts, ice cream and local cheese.

The 'Always favourites' of Beef rib-eye, fillet of beef, chicken/pork escalope and catch of the day appear on the menu each night and there is always a local speciality such as chicken legs with garlic and a soup.



There are plenty of vegetarian options and any dietary requirements are well covered.

Wines are good and very reasonably priced with a special selection to choose from each evening as well as an extensive wine list if required.

Chef, Jesus Egea is to be congratulated for providing such high quality, interesting meals to so many people on a nightly basis.

The service here is efficient, friendly and helpful - nothing is too much trouble.

Running like clockwork

Head Waiter, Vicente Hernandez makes sure the restaurant runs like clockwork and all the guests are happy with their meals. He speaks eleven languages, so diners are rarely misunderstood.

Evening entertainment

Live entertainment often takes place in the restaurant and we were lucky enough to hear a skilled pianist and enjoy some spectacular Spanish dancing.

There were about 12 costume changes during the 45 minute flamenco performance and so much colour, vibrancy and energy from the dancers – it was a real treat.

Nightly entertainment also takes place in the large, comfortable bar.

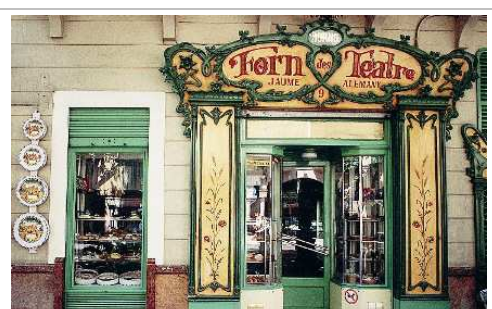
Its soft sofas are the ideal place to relax and have a night-cap to close the day.



More information

www.hotelbonsol.es

A snapshot of Basel



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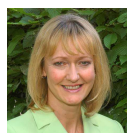
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