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## SANT FRANCESC HOTEL SINGULAR

Until not so long ago, visitors to Mallorca had to choose between staying in the middle of the historic city center, or basing themselves in a five-star hotel on the periphery to enjoy the facilities of a deluxe resort. But as aristocratic Spanish families moved out of the center – relocating to their grand country estates and downsizing their city pads – savvy hoteliers moved in, refurbishing, restoring and instilling new life into grand properties, giving many more accommodation options to visitors who enjoy the historic bones and year-round buzz of Palma. Set in a 16<sup>th</sup>-century palace, Palacio Ca Sa Galesa which opened in 1993 was one of the first, with just a dozen rooms. Since then it has been joined by a couple of dozen more privately owned and individually designed bijoux hotels. One of the newest is Sant Francesc Hotel Singular, a rather smart 42-bedroom hotel, positioned on a small square dominated by the Basílica de Sant Francesc in the centre of Palma, with an abundance of shops, cafés and restaurants nearby, and the city's magnificent sea-facing Cathedral just five minutes walk away.

Formerly the home of a showy Mallorquin noble family until the established Barcelona Soldevila hotelier family bought it, many original features of the 1880 building were skillfully preserved in the conversion process, including the gorgeous main staircase. The Baroque façade was lovingly restored, the cobbled inner courtyard returned to its former glory, and the lobby – once an entrance for horse-drawn carriages – is now a soaring space with pale Santanyí stone pillars and beautifully preserved geometric moldings. The resulting hotel is packed with historic features coupled with modern day amenities, with pale natural hues gently contrasting with the charcoal and chocolate tones, giving the interior a contemporary, urban feel. The hotel's 42 rooms and suites – all crisp lines and cool shades of gray – range from 25 to 60m<sup>2</sup>, are all different, and most have oversized walk-in showers or deep freestanding tubs.

Up on the roof, a small pool is surrounded by artfully landscaped terraces, and sun worshippers are treated to dramatic vistas of the spectacular Cathedral to one side and the Serra de Tramuntana mountain range to the other, which forms the northern backbone of the Spanish island. Whilst the plentiful attractions and eateries of Palma are literally on your doorstep when staying at Sant Francesc Hotel Singular, not to be missed is dinner at Quadrat, the hotel's excellent onsite restaurant set in the former stables, which serves modern Mediterranean cuisine, with dishes such as turbot with fennel cream featuring on the interesting menu. ➔ NICHOLAS CHRISOSTOMOU

[www.hotelsantfrancesc.com](http://www.hotelsantfrancesc.com)