

THE AUSTRALIAN 🇺🇸

TRAVEL + LUXURY

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ALPINE HIDEAWAY
Revel in the untamed
beauty of the Austrian alps

MAD ABOUT MALLORCA
A guide to the beguiling
Spanish island

NEOCLASSICAL ITALIAN
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distinctly à la moda

SWEET SERENITY

*Nature-focused retreats, ocean-inspired
wellness and indulgent getaways*

EXPLORE



Balearic beat

With exquisite beaches, soulful villages and a humming capital, Mallorca is one of the Mediterranean's most alluring destinations. Away from the well-trodden haunts, the Balearic isle retains the power to entrance.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANA LUI



TO BE SHORE
Caló des Moro is a slip of a beach in the island's south. Opposite: Hotel Corazón's mezcal-based Easy Rider laced with jalapeño and hibiscus salt.

EXPLORE

HIGHEST PINNACLE
La Seu is the Gothic cathedral and architectural landmark in Palma's old town. Clockwise from right: The lobby of Sant Francesc Hotel Singular; a marina in Palma; riotous pattern play in the bar at Grand Hotel Son Net.



Mallorca inspires obsessive devotion. Among the glories of this sun-soaked Spanish island are its honeyed villages, sylvan retreats and crystalline coves recalling a work by Joan Miró, the prolific Catalan artist who lived here for decades. Yet for years I had neglected the largest isle in the balmy Balearics. Instead, I hopped from party-hard Ibiza to low-key Menorca and even to free-spirited Formentera, which has been expropriated by louche Italian tourists with espresso-hued tans. Last northern summer, I finally made it to Mallorca, which blends all the appealing attributes of its siblings in one seductive package.

Travel often means striking a balance between ascetic and hedonistic impulses, between green juice and orange wine. In a week-long visit to Mallorca, I found perfect harmony. My idea of tranquillity is tramping through thyme-flecked forest, plunging into verdigris water, and feasting on briny seafood paired with local wines at lunch. Staying at thoughtful lodgings where you can linger and exploring cultural attractions, such as historical ruins, are other considerations. Mallorca, a place of surpassing beauty, excels at all the above. And though I was travelling solo, I could switch from isolation to connection at will – such as when I needed to pronounce stops like Puigpunyent in Mallorquí, the local Catalan dialect.

Over 100 kilometres long and 70 kilometres wide, Mallorca is ideally navigated by rental car. From Palma, gateway to the island, I whizzed north into the Tramuntana mountains, arriving at fairytale hamlets like Valldemossa where lovers Frédéric Chopin and high-society divorcée George Sand incited scandal in

the 19th century. Nearby was Deià, the bohemian enclave beloved of artists and writers of the stature of Robert Graves and Anaïs Nin. Next, along a sequence of zigzagging roads, I ventured to Sóller, a picturesque town with fruitful valleys, Modernist architecture and European expats. Along the way, a clutch of hairpin turns revealed startling views of limestone cliffs, pine trees and jewel-bright seas.

In Santanyi, in the south, I found flea markets, artisanal wares and mood-boosting beaches. And, after visiting Miró's former atelier, his paint brushes still upright in their cans, I circled back to Palma. With its maze of medieval streets, humming cafés and arresting landmarks – including a looming Gothic cathedral and a 14th-century fortified palace – the city is best explored on foot. Art diversions were equally exhilarating. At Es Baluard Museum and the Juan March Foundation, I surveyed the output of Spanish masters, including a cannily composed still-life by Juan Gris that reminded me of my favourite vermuteria in town.

A treasured destination for holidayers from the continent, Mallorca is swamped in the peak months, so tailor your visit to the less-frenetic shoulder seasons when temperatures – radiating from aggrieved locals peeved by overtourism as well as the scorching sun – are more moderate. Like latter-day pirates, Irish and English sightseers have long conquered the neon-lit resort town of Magaluf, and made it their own. I skipped it entirely, not being a fan of water parks, lager louts or message tees. The wonder of Mallorca lies in the island's blessedly rural and restful side.



SUNNY OUTLOOK
Sundeck at Nobis Hotel Palma. Clockwise from below left: Fluid wares at Cortana, the brand by Rosa Esteva; Son Net's ochre walls and immaculate gardens; Lobster Club restaurant's fish-shaped pool.



EXPLORE



NET ASSETS
Son Net's pool is flanked by shaded cabanas. Above right: its Chimney Room is a joyous blend of furnishings, antiques and artworks. Right: One of Son Net's polychromatic suites.



NOBIS HOTEL PALMA

Arabic splendour meets Nordic ingenuity at this 37-room haven unveiled in 2023. Spanish architects Jordi Herrero and Eduardo Garcia Acuña collaborated with intrepid Swedes Gert Wingårdh and Helena Toresson of Wingårdhs to transform a 12th-century medieval Islamic palace, later adapted into a private residence with traces of both Gothic and Baroque styles, into a swinging hotel. An air of calm greets guests at an inner courtyard, with potted palms, sweeping archways and a ceiling decorated with original calligraphy. The coolly elegant rooms, in various shapes and sizes, are animated with a mixture of Scandinavian and Italian furnishings and Byredo toiletries. The hotel's Noi restaurant is a cosmopolitan affair with striped banquettes, geometric lights and inventive locavore dishes such as ruby-tinted prawns splashed with olive oil, chilli and garlic. Patatas fritas and sautéed greens were dusted with smoky pimento salt – which I wanted to add to everything. Above Noi is the mirror-studded Mirall Bar, handsomely outfitted with velvet sofas, as well as an adjoining sun terrace with olive-green loungers. The hotel's location, near tree-shaded retail avenue Passeig des Born, means everything is on your doorstep. Plugged-in staff are incredibly helpful when it comes to dispensing advice. nobishotel.es

SANT FRANCESC HOTEL SINGULAR, PALMA

Also situated in Palma's old town, this hotel exudes an urbane charm and stately grandeur that hints at its earlier life as a 19th-century manor house. The lobby immediately sets the patrician tone: coffered ceiling, chequerboard floors, sophisticated artworks and deep, dapper furnishings to fold yourself into. Under the aegis of owner Andrés Soldevila Ferrer, who hand-picked architect Tolo Cursach and interior designer Maria José Cabré, the property has a residential flair. The hotel opened in 2015, but it remains incredibly fresh. I cherished its large, metal-framed doors, cobbled patio and historical details, such as the original tie rings for horses fixed to several walls. A small basement gym takes shape in what was the old cistern. Quadrat, a focused Mediterranean restaurant, occupies the one-time stables and extends into the courtyard garden. All the 42 rooms are sleek sanctuaries, but the namesake suite is a sensation, with a ceiling fresco and plaza views, while the La Torre studio has a split-level layout, outdoor deck and jacuzzi. You could easily



PALMA READING
The pool terrace at Sant Francesc looks out onto the rooftops of Palma. Clockwise from left: the hotel's lobby connects to a traditional patio; Nobis hotel occupies a 12th-century building with great bones; its Mirall Bar is an inviting lounge.

LEADING LODGINGS

GRAND HOTEL SON NET, PUIGPUNYENT

Occupying an estate dating back to 1672, this lavish eyrie is an ode to Mallorcan maximalism. A medley of palatial frills and polished furbelows, the mannered interiors evoke one of Goya's portraits of the Spanish Court with their gleaming surfaces and pattern plays. But the effect is never stuffy or stilted. The design wizardry is the handiwork of Madrid-based antiquarian, art historian and interiors maestro Lorenzo Castillo. Relaunched in 2023, Son Net spans 31 suites with a miscellany of precious heirlooms, gilt-framed oils, vintage rugs and chromatic textiles; my room was swaddled in a whimsical blue and yellow pineapple fabric designed by Castillo. Original features include antique fireplaces, mosaic floors, and gloriously restored four-poster beds. The 17th-century courtyard, soothingly soundtracked by a spring-fed well, was the perfect spot for a G&T made from local citrusy Gin Eva. Multiple dining venues included an enticing gazebo serving gazpacho with cucumber sorbet and grilled Iberian pork. For pampering, there's a princely spa with ochre walls, indulgent treatments and a saltwater pool. Set below the main salmon-pink building, the 30-metre pool is a heady vision, too, and equipped with private cabanas. Son Net's impeccable grounds include olive groves and grapevines that produce an aromatic malvasia, a white drop with a whisper of honeysuckle. Though only 20-minutes from Palma, in sleepy Puigpunyent, the hotel felt utterly sheltered and secluded. sonnet.es





RUSTIC CHIC

The pool at Can Ferrereta is surrounded by cypress and olive trees. Clockwise from above: One of its soothing rooms; bird's-eye view of Deia from La Residencia, A Belmond Hotel.



while away a few hours on the rooftop terrace, sipping, supping and sunning by the glistening pool. That deck is eventually shadowed by the adjacent 13th-century church and the city's historic quarter. Service was cheery, informed and insightful. hotelsantfrancesc.com

CAN FERRERETA, SANTANYÍ

In the south-east of Mallorca, the rustic village of Santanyí tempts visitors with its twice-weekly markets, blonde-stone buildings and the lustrous water of its nearby beaches. The most notable hotel is this 32-key inn, sister property to Sant Francesc, flowering in an erstwhile 17th-century townhouse with an agrarian past. Meticulously refurbished and extended, decked out with tony furniture and compelling art, the hotel is a resolutely chic retreat. The pool is the biggest scene-stealer. It's flanked by painterly gardens, an alfresco eatery and dome-roofed stone huts that function as changing rooms. When an afternoon sun shower arrived, not a single guest – myself included – relocated indoors. Instead, we were all as composed as the enormous bronze head by sculptor Jaume Plensa slumbering in the nearby grass. Later, I migrated to dinner at Ocre restaurant. A dish of spicy, spreadable black pork sobrasada, accompanied by honeycomb, pickled fennel and grilled bread, was such a revelation I wondered if I could order it for breakfast. The following day, I flitted around town, admiring handcrafted ceramics, colourful baskets and floaty clothing, before a bracing bike ride past dreamy coves and beaches; the hotel loans two-wheelers to guests. Back in my room, the serene amalgam of soft linens, woven furnishings and flaxen shades amounted to a peaceful crash pad. hotelferrereta.com

LA RESIDENCIA, A BELMOND HOTEL, DEIÀ

Is there another hotel as sensuous as this one? Set in the poetic village of Deià, on the island's north-west coast, and enveloped by olive trees, stone fincas and craggy mountains, it is preternaturally beautiful. On closer examination, the sprawling 71-room property unfolded as a series of biscuity buildings, four restaurants, three pools, art installations and Babylonian gardens. The Belmond



group acquired it from Richard Branson in 2002, and has been gilding it ever since: the main pool was updated recently with smart loungers, and the leafy grounds augmented with almond and oak trees. The rooms span four buildings from different eras, including the 16th century, and no two are alike. Most contain bucolic touches like wooden beams, green shutters and mosaic tiles, as well as supremely comfortable beds; some of the hillside suites have their own terraces and plunge pools. Mountain-facing Restaurante Miró is the place for anchovies, croquetas and endless glasses of airy moscatel. A tomato salad with a splatter of sherry vinegar evoked the restaurant's collection of 33 Miró originals. Meanwhile, candlelit El Olivo comes alive in the evening with note-perfect fare by chef Pablo Aranda. At Tramuntana Grill, another scenic eatery, I relished translucent prawn carpaccio enlivened with pickled lemon peel. In Deià, try a sugar-dusted ensaimada for breakfast, visit the one-time residence of Robert Graves, now a museum, and splurge on local jewellery, ceramics and artworks. The hotel has a shuttle to Cala Deià and can also organise rental cars. belmond.com

HOTEL CORAZÓN, SÓLLER

Set midway between the beguiling towns of Deià and Sóller, this 15-room bolthole is a social-media darling for its sultry design and uninhibited sensibility. "You can't break the rules," declares its mission statement, "because there are none." Owners Kate Bellm and Edgar Lopez, a photographer and an artist respectively, gave a 16th-century finca a suitably creative makeover, adding quirky artworks, a cactus garden and a vegetable farm. Corazón, which debuted in 2023, attracts as many locals as visitors. The pool is especially tantalising: behold tangerine recliners, tasselled hammocks and grass-covered umbrellas with fringes that resemble French-girl bangs. The inviting chambers accent rounded shapes, mellow shades and soft fabrics. hotelcorazon.com

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TYSON SADIO (LA RESIDENCIA) & RICHARD JAMES TAYLOR (DEIÀ)



EXPLORE



IN THE PINK

A pastel, linen-clad haven at Hotel Corazón. Clockwise from below right: a bathroom in one of its rooms; aerial view of the pool; El Olivo, the signature restaurant at La Residencia.

