

THE  TIMES

## 20 coolest Balearic hideaways



Alcaufar Vell, Menorca Jordi de Febrer

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## Want to relax in style on Spain's party islands? Four Times writers give their lowdown on where to stay

### Mallorca

#### Cala Blava

**1 Cap Rocat** Converted from a 19th-century military fort, this cliff-top hotel is built into rugged rocks and surrounded by greenery. The grounds are so big, with 2km of coastline, that staff ferry guests around in golf buggies — very handy for trips to the secluded (man-made) beach. The high walls make it very private — in fact you barely see anyone during your stay (which may be why Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas are fans). In two hours lounging by the sea, we didn't see a soul.

Our suite, in an old cannon storeroom, was a perfect mix of old and new, with plush fabrics, reclaimed wood and glass furniture, and cool white Spanish walls and curved ceilings. There was also a giant four-poster, an enormous bathroom with a deep bath, giant shower, a sun terrace, outdoor lounging area and gazebo.

We asked to borrow bikes, which came with locks, baskets, water and even straw hats. It was a pleasant 45km round trip to Palma on seaside paths, passing tapas bars and beaches, with the magnificent Gothic Palma cathedral rising up ahead.

The best thing about the hotel? Breakfast. It was delivered to our gazebo, where we opened the hamper and discovered delicious local breads, cheeses and meat plates, fruit platters, pastries, yoghurt, nuts and seeds — and surprises, including *magdalenas* (small, sweet Spanish cupcakes) and *ensaïmadas* (melt-in-the-mouth sugar-coated pastries). Dinner was good too, with moist and tender lamb, baked fish, rich pumpkin soup and ravioli.

*Details* Cap Rocat (0845 0340700, [mrandmrssmith.com](http://mrandmrssmith.com)), Carretera Cap Enderrocat, Cala Blava. Hotel Cap Rocat has B&B suites from € 600.

## Palma

**2 Puro** This stylish hotel is sexy and sleek, set in a revamped 14th-century palace with rooms with four posters. There's a beach club, spa, pool and hot tub. It's all very Miami Beach, with a super-cool cocktail bar and restaurant, with top DJs providing music and Mallorca's hip crowd in attendance.

*Details* Puro Hotel ([purohotel.com](http://purohotel.com)). B&B doubles cost from € 235.

**3 Hotel Tres** Bang in Palma's centre, with great views across the old town from its brilliant rooftop pool, Hotel Tres feels tucked away, with an in-the-know feel. Parts date from the 16th century, though the hotel has a chic, modern style — with slightly risqué art and sculptures in rooms.

*Details* Hotel Tres ([hoteltres.com](http://hoteltres.com)), double rooms start at € 205.

## Pollença

**4 Son Brull** There's a terrific spa with indoor pools, hot tubs and treatments at this super-slick designer palace in Pollença. Bedrooms have exposed beams, beds have fine cotton sheets and there's a futuristic look. There are recommended hiking routes, bikes, tennis courts and wine degustations in the evenings.

*Details* Son Brull ([sonbrull.com](http://sonbrull.com)), rooms from € 488.

## Soller

**5 L'Avenida** This modernist mansion in Soller, on Mallorca's northwest coast, has been turned into a top-class boutique hotel with striking Cole & Son wallpaper in bedrooms, some of which have four-posters. Bathroom designs by Philippe Starck add to the designer look. There's a stylish cocktail bar and a poolside barbecue serving lemon chicken skewers and chilli squid.

*Details* L'Avenida ([i-escape.com](http://i-escape.com)) has B&B doubles from € 245.

Where to eat You can't beat Bodega La Rambla in the centre of Palma at 15 Rambla dels Ducs (0034-971721190) for cheap authentic tapas. Animal skins, gourds, jamón and

spices hang low over the small bar, which heaves with locals. You can have lunch and a beer for €15pp. Soak up cocktails with croquettes, calamares and patatas bravas at The Tapas Club (0034-971248604) while enjoying the view of Portixol, a 15-minute walk from Palma town centre; tapas from € 3.

## Ruth Lewy

*How to get there* Ruth Lewy was a guest of British Airways (08444 930787, [ba.com](http://ba.com)), which flies from London City to Palma from £162 return.

## Menorca

### Es Castell

**6 Sant Joan de Binissaida** The occasional whinny of a frisky Menorcan stallion may disturb your sleep at Sant Joan de Binissaida — but nothing else will. The whitewashed farmhouse is surrounded by olive groves descending towards the gentian-blue sea. Twenty years ago, this was one of many abandoned buildings that dot the Menorcan countryside. After a decade-long restoration, Binissaida is now a hit with those after a peace that is far from the beer-swilling crowds. Binissaida's 12 rooms combine rustic charm with modern touches, with antique wooden beds, bare stone walls and plasma TVs. Bikes are available for hire (the hotel can arrange picnics), but we went horse-riding — on Menorcan stallions, galloping across beaches one morning. Book through Menorca a Cavall ([menorcaacavall.com](http://menorcaacavall.com)).

Food here is king. Binissaida's chef transforms the produce from the hotel garden — as well as the abundance of local seafood and meats — into a menu that would give any Soho upstart a run for its money. Iberian pork cheeks graced with a deep rosemary sauce, and fillet of cod topped with tangy local chorizo and honey, were complemented by wine from the Binifadet vineyard down the road.

*Details* Sant Joan de Binissaida (0034-971355598, [santjoan.binissaida.com](http://santjoan.binissaida.com)), Es Castell. B&B doubles from € 107.

### Ciutadella

**7 Hotel Tres Sants** This is a sexy, boutique hotel in the Moorish town of Ciutadella, once the island's capital. Housed in a medieval building, its eight bedrooms are arranged around an elegant dome-topped atrium, and are decorated with white muslin-swathed four-poster beds. They all have terracotta flagstone floors.

*Details* Hotel Tres Sants (0034-626053536, [grupelcarme.com/en/tres-sants-en](http://grupelcarme.com/en/tres-sants-en)), B&B doubles cost from € 150.

### Sant Lúís

**8 Alcaufar Vell** For an upmarket hideaway in the countryside try this fine old mansion that has been turned into a boutique hotel. There are 21 large, minimalist rooms with exposed beams and tiled floors, with designer lamps and pieces of antique furniture dotted about. There is a wonderful sense of seclusion, and its restaurant has an outside courtyard where food is served in the shade of olive trees.

*Details* Alcaufer Vell (0034-971151874, [www.alcaufarvell.com](http://www.alcaufarvell.com)), B&B doubles cost from €125.

## Ferrerries

**9 Hotel Ses Sucreres** In the unspoilt village of Ferrerries, right in the centre of Menorca, this charming little hotel with six rooms is a great hideaway — and good for walkers. There are lots of tracks from the village leading through the rugged countryside and the owners can recommend routes. Rooms have modern art, whitewashed walls and a refreshing feeling of simplicity.

*Details* Hotel Ses Sucreres ([sessucreres.com](http://sessucreres.com)), B&B doubles from €95.

## Mahón

**10 Hotel Carlos III** This hotel offers great value and is a short walk to the harbour in Mahón, overlooking the ferries and fishing boats from a commanding position on the rocky coast. Hotel Carlos III has four stars and a 1960s look, with a curving white frontage and lime-green, aquamarine and pink balconies. There's a decent-sized pool on the terrace. Rooms have a minimalist look.

*Details* Hotel Carlos III ([artiemhotels.com](http://artiemhotels.com)), B&B doubles cost from € 79.

*Where to eat* The island's own version of Heston Blumenthal resides at Sa Pedrera d'es Pujol (0034-971150717, [sapedreradespujol.com](http://sapedreradespujol.com)), in a rambling Menorcan hamlet. A traditional escalivada (grilled peppers, aubergines, onions and tomatoes) came concealed in a jar full of wood smoke. There was also scallops with apple sauce and iodine, and home-made chocolate ice cream submerged beneath a blood orange foam. Or at the fishing village of Fornells, try the island's speciality lobster stew (caldereta de langosta) at Es Port (0034-971376403).

## Daisy Greenwell

*How to get there* Daisy Greenwell flew to Menorca on easyJet ([easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)), which has return flights from Gatwick from £68.

## Ibiza

### San Juan

**11 Atzaró** For chic, hip agroturisme, look no further than Atzaró, a favourite with Gisele Bündchen, Kylie Minogue, fashionistas and DJs. Having started life as a family farm, the sprawling orange-grove estate has 24 rooms, suites and villas, all with traditional Ibicenco designs and a laid-back atmosphere. It's a great place to hide from the island's noisy clubs, but equally accessible should you wish to head into the throng. Canopied day beds are dotted throughout the grounds, each with a little pile of oranges to snack on. Around the main pool, cocktails flow from around lunchtime onwards — it's a great place to relax (though there is a 43m-long catwalk pool for laps by the spa).

There are also yoga and Pilates classes and even bongo drum sessions. The Balinese spa is set around a lily pond and sun deck and there's a Swedish sauna and Turkish bath.

Breakfasts are superb — pan con tomate, cheeses, home-made bread, Iberian hams, goat yoghurt, fresh fruit, pastries and freshly squeezed juices. Evening meals are served in the music and sushi lounge, an ambient dark red and mahogany bar with Balinese beds — lit with candles and lanterns — and the setting for live music in high season. But it is the silence and calm of Atzaró that makes it so special.

*Details* Atzaró (0034-971338838, [atzaro.com](http://atzaro.com)), Carta San Joan KM 15, B&B doubles from € 160.

## Na Xamena

**12 Hacienda** With its cliffside location overlooking the northeast coast, the Hacienda offers high style in a high place. The hotel has traditional Ibizan whitewashed buildings with Arabic decoration — and double rooms with hot tubs on private decks with sea views. The locally well-considered restaurant is on a series of terracotta terraces amid palms and olive trees.

*Details* Hacienda (0034-971334500, [hotelhacienda-ibiza.com](http://hotelhacienda-ibiza.com)), doubles from € 399 a night.

## San Juan

**13 Giri Residence** This is a colourful and fun boutique hotel in a 150-year-old finca on the edge of the village of San Juan in the north of Ibiza. There are hidden courtyards with pools, lounge areas with low-level sofas and games of chess on old tables made of driftwood. The terraces have scoop-shaped day beds, and bedrooms have unusual pebble-stone floors partially covered by rugs; there's lots of modern art.

*Details* Giri Residence (0034-971333345, [thegiri.com](http://thegiri.com)), B&B doubles from € 324.

## San Rafael

**14 Can Lluc** Set in thick pinewood in the San Rafael valley, Can Lluc is an agroturisme hotel with stylish cube-shaped buildings and well-tended gardens. Bedrooms have exposed beams and walls, terracotta-tiled floors and large beds with fine quality cotton sheets. Rooms in the main hotel are smaller than those in the six brand new semi-detached villas, which have slick interiors and private terraces.

*Details* Can Lluc (0034-971198673, [canlluc.com](http://canlluc.com)), has B&B doubles from € 250 a night, villas from € 550.

## San Carlos

**15 Can Curreu** One of the most romantic places to stay in Ibiza, the Can Curreu is outside San Carlos in the northeast of the island. Its designer rooms are tucked away in a series of honeycomb-like buildings. There are courtyards with pools here, and hidden stone terraces with views of Ibiza's hinterland there. Rooms are smart with tiled floors and designer sofas, flatscreen televisions and pieces of modern art.

*Details* Can Curreu (0034-971335280, [cancurreu.com](http://cancurreu.com)), B&B doubles from € 220.

*Where to eat* The journey to Restaurant Es Boldado (0034-626494537 [restauranteboldado.com](http://restauranteboldado.com)) is worth every inch of steep, dusty potholed track. Es Boldado sits atop a cliff; reserve a table for some of the island's best seafood, including lobster (€ 70). You could also try La Paloma, San Lorenzo (0034-971325543, [palomaibiza.com](http://palomaibiza.com)), up the coast from the Atzaró hotel. A must-visit restaurant, it is unpretentious and rustic. The food is simple but delicious. Filled focaccia or salads costs about € 8.

## Harriet Addison

*How to get there* Harriet Addison was a guest of BA (08444 930787, [ba.com](http://ba.com)) which has returns from London City Airport from £162. Moto Luis (0034-971340765, [motoluis.co.uk](http://motoluis.co.uk)) rents cars from € 19 a day.

## Formentera

### Playa Migjorn

**16 Gecko Beach Club** The atmosphere at the Gecko Beach Club is chilled out and neo-hippy ... and I liked it. It's in the south of the tranquil island of Formentera, the smallest inhabited Balearic island, in a lovely spot on Migjorn beach. Formentera feels like the perfect alternative to Ibiza, and — if you believe the rumours — A-listers such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Sienna Miller have stayed at the Gecko. We checked into a decent-sized room with minimalist but stylish decor and splashes of modern art. Our balcony overlooked a quiet garden, in which a pool was surrounded by day beds and hammocks. There was also a cool bar with efficient waiters: super swift service creates the beach-club feel.

From the hotel you can stroll to the sandy beach or across dunes full of vegetation and pines — with a wonderful smell of herbs mixed with salty air.

At times you feel alone on the island, but you can find secluded bars nestled in the dunes. We ate a fine Mediterranean-Asian meal cooked by the head chef, Jacinto del Vallea, who trained at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Majorca. The lobster tempura with salad and caramelised watermelon was a refreshing surprise. The hotel started life in the Sixties as a chiringuito (a hut bar). Five years ago Dino Gillibrand and his partner bought the property and turned it into what it is now: a fab beach retreat.

*Details* Gecko Beach Club (0034-971328024, [geckobeachclub.com](http://geckobeachclub.com)), Playa Migjorn, B&B doubles from € 165.

### Santa Maria

**17 Es Mares Hotel & Spa** This minimalist hideaway opened last summer — and it's already proving popular. Stepping into the reception is like entering an icebox, with its white walls, big white hanging lights and white curtains covering the ceiling-to-floor windows. The comfortable bedrooms keep up the white look, which extends to the lovely terrace where seafood is served. There is some colour in the plush, tucked-away spa.

*Details* Es Mares Hotel & Spa ([hotelesmares.com](http://hotelesmares.com)), B&B doubles cost from € 330 in the summer.

## Es Pujols

**18 Roca Bella Hotel** The Roca Bella is on a quiet beach, just 300m from Es Pujols, with its sleepy tavernas and relaxed feel. The hotel's decor is plain (do not expect a designer palace) but the atmosphere is chilled out, and that's the key to this quiet hotel. There's a big pool on a terrace overlooking sand dunes. Windsurfing, sailing and water-skiing are on offer.

*Details* Roca Bella Hotel ([zulmarhotels.com](http://zulmarhotels.com)), B&B doubles cost from € 182.

## Playa Migjorn

**19 Hotel Rui La Mola** It may be a giant hotel, but it has just been refurbished and offers great value for Formentera. There is a huge pool on a terrace facing out to sea, and steps leading down to a lovely wide sandy beach. Watersports can be arranged. There's a great "chill out bar" and a spa. Rooms are comfortable and smart, many with terrific hillside views across the water.

*Details* Hotel Rui La Mola ([riu.com](http://riu.com)), half-board doubles cost from € 97.50.

**20 Insotel Formentera** Another big one, right on Migjorn beach and set amid palm trees above the dunes. Recently refurbished rooms have a whitewashed New England look, some with porthole windows. There's a sushi bar and a cocktail bar but the hotel is also child-friendly with plenty to keep youngsters amused. Day beds on the beach are positioned beneath umbrella palms, creating a nice place for an afternoon doze.

*Details* Insotel Formentera ([insotelhotelgroup.com](http://insotelhotelgroup.com)), B&B doubles cost from € 173.

*Where to eat* The Blue Bar ([bluebarformentera.com](http://bluebarformentera.com)) is 2km east of the Gecko Beach Club and is hippy chic with Balearic beats, serving cheap cocktails and snacks. The most well-established restaurants are located on Illetes beach in the north of the island, attracting George Clooney, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt.

## Marta Pérez

*How to get there* Fly to Ibiza and take a ferry. Marta Perez flew to Ibiza with BA (0844 4 930787, [ba.com](http://ba.com)) from London City; returns from £162. Ferries to Formentera are with Mediterranea Pitiusa ([medpitiusa.net](http://medpitiusa.net)), returns € 43.

More information from the Balearics tourist board at [www.illesbalears.es/ing](http://www.illesbalears.es/ing) and Spanish Tourist Board at [spain.info](http://spain.info)

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