

A Destination to suit all tastes

BALEARIC ISLANDS



It is wrongly perceived by many people that the Balearic Islands only represent one kind of tourism, this is the holy trinity of sun, beaches and parties. Majorca, Menorca and Ibiza are well-known islands all over the world which represent low budget tourism, partygoers, fashionable culture as in Ibiza, but also and especially also unique as luxurious paradises. It is surprising how the most tourism has not covered the rich and ancient Balearic identity. On the contrary, its Gothic churches, prehistoric ruins, vernacular customs or hidden coves remain valuable attractions of these privileged turquoise islands. By José Carlos Pico

Bathed by the waters of the old Mare Nostrum and blessed by a splendid sun, the Balearics are an archipelago of five islands and several islets. Split in two groups, Majorca, Menorca and Cabrera are related to the North with Ibiza and Formentera to the South-East. Each island has its own indigenous personality, its individual characteristic landscapes, and its unique folklore, but each one attracts their visitors so intensely that they always feel the temptation to come back over and over again.

Majorca

Majorca, the largest island of the Balearics, has consolidated itself as one of the top destinations in Europe.

the entry of its awesome Cathedral. Presiding over the city and the port, the Cathedral is one of the largest Gothic structures in Europe. The period of Moorish left the tenth-century Arab Baths and the Almudaina Palace. The best example of the civil architecture in the city is the Lonja, where the active, prosperous medieval merchants turn their public exchange. Another must see attraction of Palma is the Belver castle, amazing panoramic views of the city can be found from this hilltop Castle, with its unique circular structure being both unusual, and exceptional in particular for Spain.

The 'other Majorca' is located in the mountains and the isolated valleys.

The Tramuntana mountain range crosses the entire North-West coast. There is a charming train which makes an exhilarating zigzagging ride from Palma to Sóller through these steep mountains. The trip is an interesting attraction itself, as well as the visit of the lovely town of Sóller, where an important community of artists, musicians and writers live, and Valldemosa, popularized by the famous composer Frederic Chopin in the XIX century. On the other side of the island, the Drac Caves are another popular tourist attraction. The caves run 1,700 m long and are wonderfully illuminated by weird figures of stalactites and stalagmites. The beauty of the place is ennobled with the music shows performed from vessels which sail on a big underground lake.

Menorca

Menorca is the least developed of the Balearics. Instead of the handful of attractions, the locals are very particular in keeping its treasure island like 'a virgin paradise'. Despite its tourist development, Menorca has maintained its harmony and tranquility by preserving its natural, historic and folkloric heritage. Hence, it was nominated 'Biosphere Heritage' by UNESCO in 1983. Menorca is peaceful, insular and a different world within the Balearics, its calm coasts are as unique in the Mediterranean Sea as its prehistoric monuments. The landscape is



The port in Mahón, the capital of Menorca

its coast hypnotizes the tourists with its unspoiled landscape beauty. With a fine combination of stunning cliffs, wet area like lagoons, large sandy dunes and small coves, along with its famous beaches such as Alcudia, El Arenal or Cala Pi.

Half of the population of Majorca lives in its capital, Palma de Mallorca. It is brimming with vibrance and cheer. Its cosmopolitan atmosphere and lively streets makes this a city well worth a visit, as does the historic centre and the elegant areas of La Rambla and El Born. A visit to Palma must include



Majorca's old city, 'beauty at a distance'



Dracmaires

Cala Boni beach where a slightly gipsy culture is the island of Ibiza

cluttered by hundreds of crude stone monuments attributed to the so-called Talaiotic Culture, which dates from the second millennium BC. Even more puzzling are the accompanying Taulas, four-metre-high stones with another prehistoric riddle to form a T.

It seems that Menorca has inherited a British nature. The Anglo-Saxon presence, who ruled the island during the XVII century, is still strong in the capital Mahón, a small, welcoming city overlooking its port. On the other side of the island is the other important city, Ciutadella, its aristocratic character is betrayed by the mansions and colourful facades reminiscent of Venice. Its inhabitants passionately celebrate the 'Saint Joan day', a historical feast which originates back to the medieval times by playing equestrian games and horse parades.

Ibiza

Ibiza, originally hippy mecca in the 60s, soon became the island of night parties. Home to the most famous nightclubs in Spain, Ibiza is one of the most fun-loving places in

the world. Even though the nightlife attracts tourists in hypnotic fascination, its charming white sand beaches and crystal-clear sea are also famous. Lovely beaches include Ses Salines and d'Es Cavall. The most spectacular way of arriving to the city of Ibiza (or Eivissa in Catalan) is by sea. In the distance, Ibiza shows its Renaissance walls to discourage the assailants, but once inside the port the city is friendly and smiling. Towers, windows and terrace roofs match as a whole. Ibiza offers an unbeatable cocktail of worldly multicultural hedonism and ultra-modernity. Its beauty, tolerance and unpretentious offering make Ibiza the place where many people dream of escaping.

From Ibiza city there is a ferry which makes the route with Formentera, a small island of only 20 km from East to West. It is a fantastic place to be discovered by bicycle or on foot through fabulous paths which cross and lands of pine groves, dry saline, stone walls and waste lands. The area of Es Pujols gathers most of the tourist resorts in the island.



Traditional Balearic dress



PRACTICAL GUIDE

Language

Balearic people are bilingual in Spanish and Catalan, the official languages of the islands. According to speaking thousands of French tourists, English and German are spoken everywhere with French and Italian used slightly less.

Getting around

Flight is the expensive from one island to another one. You could also take a ferry. For instance, Transmediterranean Shipping Company makes two trips per week between Palma and Ibiza. The best way to get around one island is by car or bicycle. In the island of Majorca there are two railway lines from Palma: one links the capital with Sóller, in the North-East coast, and the other with Sa Pobla, in the center of the island.

Climate

The islands benefit from its privileged situation in the Mediterranean Sea. So, its climate conditions are excellent, with warm summers but bearable and mild winters. There are few times of real cold a year. The average annual temperatures are between 18 and 20°C. It could reach more than 29-31°C in summertime. The sea is calm and warm to bathe in all year round.

Food and drink

The so-called cerves (wine) are the most

picturesque places to taste a local specialty. The Balearic gastronomy is rich and Mediterranean, using a huge variety of agricultural produce. It is not surprising that one can find a high proportion of seafood and fish. However, the most famous island recipe is the ensaïmada, a giant spiral of sugar dusted pastry which is to Majorca what the croissant is to France.

Another well-known specialty is the extra-virgin olive spreadable version of hot churros sausage. In Ibiza the fideu (chicken cake with herbs) is outstanding. Menorca is famous for its mayanassa and chuches and in Formentera its fish salads are delicious. Although it is a small archipelago, and the list of dishes to taste is outstanding, Majorca is the only place in the Balearics which produce its own wine in the areas of Binissalem and Llevant.

Shopping

The island design is trendy all over the world. Ibiza exports its modern trends of music, painting or clothes, but it also has maintained its traditional handicraft. In Menorca the open air markets sell everything, even at night: from its distinctive sandals to agriculture produce or costume jewelry. In Majorca there are two interesting areas for shopping: Manacor, where they produce cultured pearls; and Lloret, where they manufacture shoes and leather products.