

# Majestic Mallorca

Words **Jamie Christian Desplaces**

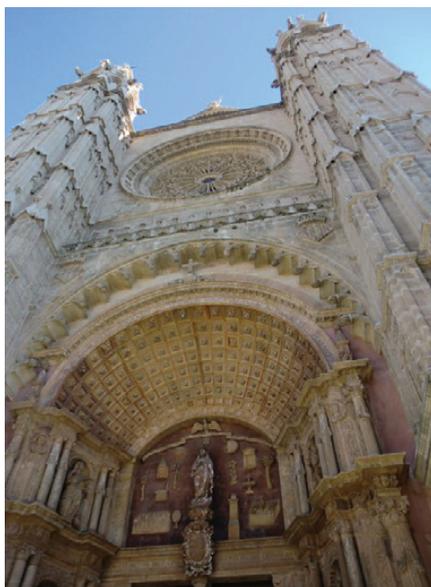
**Mallorca, some of the best of Spain crammed into one manageable mass where just a brief jaunt inland sees the salty spray of the Mediterranean replaced by the citrus scent of lemon, lime and mandarin groves.**

The capital, Palma, was founded by the Roman Empire and remains one of Europe's most wondrous seaside towns, the vessels of that ancient Italian Army now replaced by the gleaming white yachts of the globe's super-rich. But there's much more to this island than that flaunted – and at times, vulgar – extravagance. The largest island of the Balearics boasts a rich and diverse history that remains gloriously evident still. There are plenty of more modern-day attractions on offer for the whole family too, with an abundance of water and marine parks, crazy golf and water-sports and the city's aquarium is one not to be missed.

The Cathedral of Santa Maria, or La Seu, is breathtaking. This magnificent, elevated sandstone structure is the city's very heart, constructed upon the site of an ancient mosque (dating back to when the island was under Islamic rule from 902-1229), its Gothic design still more menacingly beautiful come nightfall.

To the front of the cathedral lies the port and to the back the Old Quarter's narrow, cobbled and shady streets meander, intertwine, untouched and unspoiled for centuries. Achingly charming cafes serve the finest coffees, local cheeses, breads, olives and cured ham. Elegant bars, bistros and boutiques are to be found behind pastel facades that are, at times, as Arab-influenced as they are European.

Outside Palma, the island is littered with hidden treasures, hillside retreats and quaint coastal towns such as Deià and the adjacent Valldemossa - where the monastery is a must-see. Wander sun-kissed hillsides as birds chime from the treetops of fruit orchards and the peal



of ancient Roman Catholic church-bells further fill the air. Find your own hidden enclave and soak up the rays upon one of many pristine beaches as you admire the rich blue glow of the Mediterranean Sea and catch a sunset sipping on a sangria, or two.

A favourite of Spanish kings and queens past and present, Mallorca may well be fit for royalty, but it's open and welcoming to all. So seriously, what are you waiting for?

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