

## Luxury Mallorca

### Holiday like a millionaire on the Spanish isle



**By Lee Cheshire**

This was supposed to be relaxing, I remind myself, my grip tightening on the side of the car seat. “It’s an amazing view isn’t it?” says my

guide, nodding towards the Mediterranean glistening in the distance. Frankly, I'm more concerned by the view of the 1,000 foot drop just a few inches away from the edge of the crumbling mountain road. "Er, yes. Lovely," I stammer back, wishing we were safely back in the yacht, sailing on the placid waters of the Bay of Pollença.



Right now, though, we are high in the Serra de Tramuntana, the sparse limestone mountain range along the north edge of Mallorca, on our way to one of the island's most unusual vineyards. Although it's hard to say that this is the real Mallorca – most of the local economy has been based on tourism since the 1960s, turning the inhabitants from some of the poorest people in Spain to the richest – it is certainly a long way from the beach and booze cliché. This is the other Mallorca – the one that attracts writers, musicians, film stars and supermodels, and you don't even have to look hard to find it.

We arrive safely at our destination – a secret plateau 1,200 feet above sea level that has, improbably, been turned into a winery, called Mortitx. It was planted in 2001 by a group of friends in nearby Pollença, butchers, bakers and petrol station owners who had more experience of drinking wine than making it. Not surprisingly, head winemaker Aurelie Mercier tells us: "The other estates in Mallorca didn't believe in the possibilities of this place." Yet it has been successful: the high altitude and sea breezes counter the island's searing temperatures, and now the wine is gaining plaudits in trade shows and Decanter magazine.



There are many winemakers in Mallorca, many of high quality. However, the region is not well known internationally, mainly because

there is usually little left over for export. Most of the wine produced on the island is enjoyed locally so you'll have to come here to see what all the fuss is about. You can easily put together an impromptu vineyard tour – your next stop should be Macia Batle on the western end of the Tramuntanas, close to Palma. They use predominantly indigenous grapes and commission local artists to design their labels. Get there via the scenic coastal road the MA-10; if you're in a rush, then the MA-13 is the nearest Mallorca has to a motorway, although long-running improvement works make journey times unpredictable.



Any stylish tour should include a visit to Simply Fosh, a new Palma restaurant that has kept Mallorca's foodies talking since it opened earlier this year. Proprietor Mark Fosh – a Briton who trained in London, before soaking up Spanish style in San Sebastian – walked away from the Michelin star he had earned at Read's Hotel, a luxurious property in the wine area of Binissalem. He says the food at this new venture is intended to be as straightforward as the name suggests, using fresh, healthy Mediterranean ingredients, including produce from the nearby olive oil market. However, the confident five-course tasting menu (reasonably priced at €52) could well see him regaining his star status.

Fosh also has a sideline in provisioning yachts, and there are plenty of yachts to provision. Mallorca's three wide bays are dotted with marinas and bristling with masts. Although the sailing highlight of the year is the Superyacht Cup in summer, when some of the world's biggest and most expensive boats come to Palma to race and show off, it maintains its

status as a yacht haven all year round.



Even if you're not a billionaire, it is simple to charter a yacht for a week – or even just an afternoon. We went out with David Chambers and his wife Kay, who run Saracen Sailing in the north-east of the island. The bays of Alcudia and Pollença are perfect for less-than-able seamen and women – they are wide, sheltered by the headlands and there is no tide to contend with. There are plenty of harbours and anchorages for a longer trip, though you're never far from the nearest marina. The yachts will sleep up to eight people, although fewer are needed to crew.

Using the motor, David edged the yacht out of the crowded marina at Puerto de Bonaire, hoisting the sail when we were in open waters. Keen to learn, I relished the opportunity to take the wheel – there are few dangers to worry about other than showboating motorboat owners – holding the course while David looked after the more complicated bits. After just an hour, the spaghetti-pile of different ropes started to look more logical. Saracen run beginner's courses ranging from a one-day introduction to a five-day Royal Yachting Association Competent Crew award. Another five-day Day Skipper course and you know enough to be the captain.

If you'd rather just lounge on deck and enjoy the sun (although the sea breezes mean that this isn't always as warm as you might hope), Saracen can provide skippers who will do all the hard sailing for you.

Sailing is the least strenuous of the island's elite sports. The Tramuntanas attract hikers and rock climbers, while the long coastal roads and picturesque hill towns are thronged with cyclists. Read's Hotel has a cycling centre, which offers bike hire and access to their spa to melt away leg aches. Its position between the mountains and Mallorca's central plain means you have a choice of training routes.

The centrepiece for hikers is the monastery at Lluc, not far from Mortitx. It has been a place of pilgrimage since the 13th century but people today mainly come here for the walking. A pilgrim's footpath leads up the rocky hillside to a wrought-iron cross and spectacular views of Puig Roig, the tallest peak in the Balearics. That'll take just 10 minutes, but

it'll warm you up for one of the many day-long hikes of varying difficulty. If you're planning to do a lot of walking, you can stay at the monastery.

By the last day of our trip, we were exhausted and it was time for the beach. Slipping down to one of the golden-sanded inlets, we sunbathed and sipped a beer at a shoreside bar. For all the island's upscale pursuits, it is still Mallorca after all. ☺☺☺

### **Mortitx**

On the road between Lluc and Pollença, +34 971 182 339,  
[www.vinyesmortitx.com](http://www.vinyesmortitx.com)

### **Macia Batle**

Cami de Coanegra, Santa Maria del Cami, +34 971 140 014,  
[www.maciabatle.com](http://www.maciabatle.com)

### **Simply Fosh**

Hotel Convent de la Missio, 7A Carrer de la Missio, Palma, +34 971 227 347, [www.conventdelamissio.com](http://www.conventdelamissio.com)

### **Saracen Sailing**

0845 330 1357, [www.saracensailing.com](http://www.saracensailing.com)

For tailor-made tours of Mallorca: [www.balearicdiscovery.com](http://www.balearicdiscovery.com)

## **Where to stay**

### **Hotel Cala Sant Vicenç**



We stayed in the Cala Sant Vicenç on the north shore of the island, close to the Bay of Pollença. It's a pleasant modern property, with swimming pool and gym. There are two restaurants on site – Carvall Bernat serves sophisticated Mediterranean specialities, while the Trattoria does Italian favourites. Local artists exhibit in the public areas.

The Cala San Vincenç is offering Voyager readers a special price until the end of the season: €483.50pp for three nights' bed and breakfast, plus a chauffeur-driven car to and from the airport and an upgrade to a junior suite when available. Ask for the 'Elegance Break'.

2 Carrer Maressers, Cala Sant Vicenç, +34 971 530 250,  
[www.hotelcala.com](http://www.hotelcala.com)



**Read's Hotel**

A family-run perennial favourite, this has a Michelin-starred restaurant, bike centre and spa. Prices start from €260 for a double room per night.

Santa Maria, +34 971 14 02 61, [www.readshotel.com](http://www.readshotel.com)

## Lluc

Accommodation at the Lluc monastery is sparse but comfortable, including self-catering apartments.

+34 971 871 525, [www.lluc.net](http://www.lluc.net)

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