

THE BETTER BALEARIC

While Ibiza dumbs down with commercial chains and stag holidays gone wild, neighbouring Mallorca is hiding an exploding capital of cool they'd rather you didn't know about...



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You know the younger sister who sort of went under the radar in her teens, then suddenly reached adulthood and the world's jaw hit the floor? Well, the same thing just happened to Mallorca. While Ibiza was busy being taken over by brands and corporations like the Hard Rock, Cipriani and Cirque du Soleil, in a homogenisation too common in 2016, the 'cool' migrated to its sister island Mallorca.

The blossoming Balearic destination has a capital that's both effortlessly chic in that way the Mediterranean does best, but creative and youthful too. It's attracting new and independent designers, chefs and entrepreneurs and half the island's population lives there, as well as wealthy internationals with second homes, so there's always a buzz.

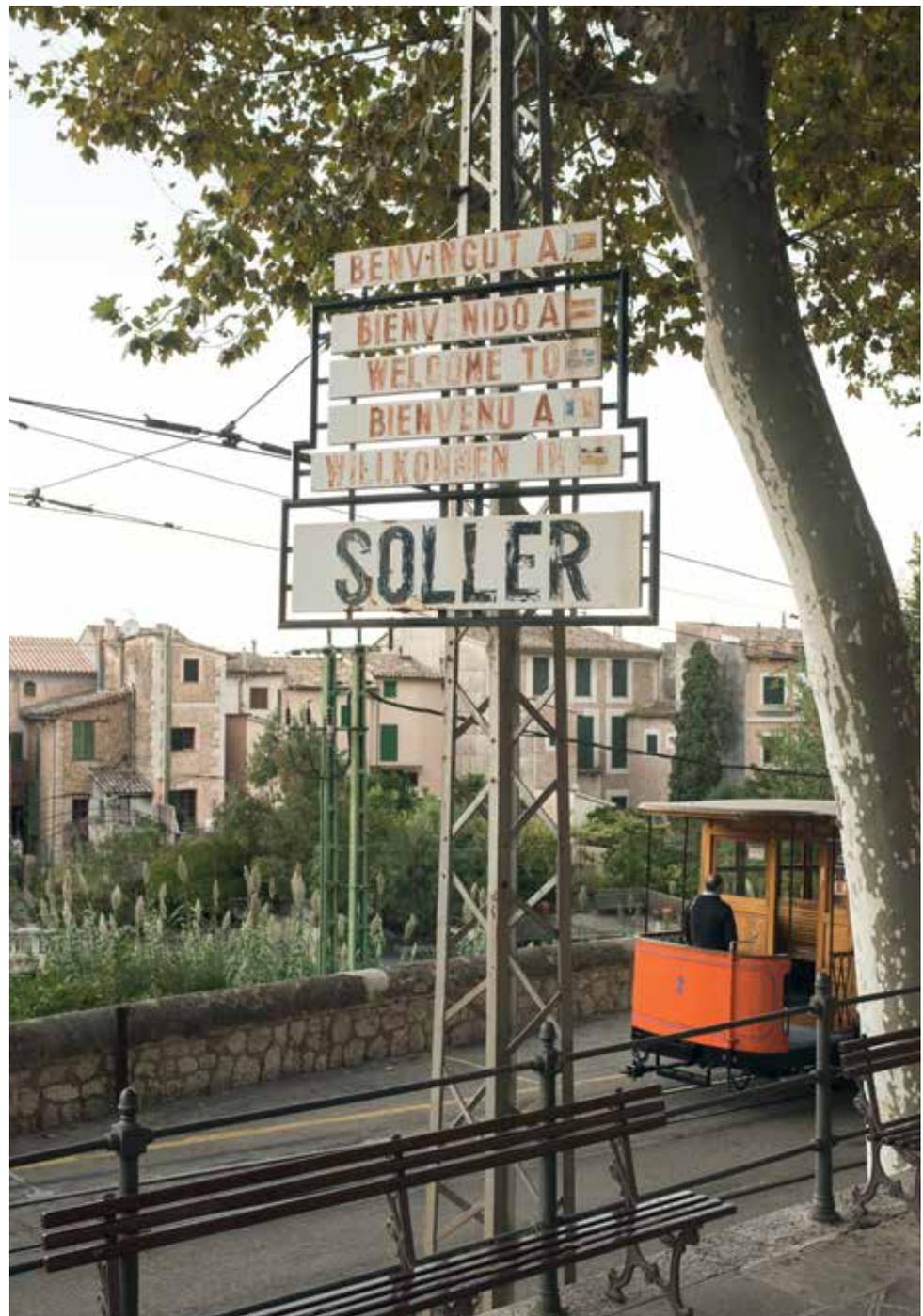


Mallorca is also on the party map for nautical tourism. There are two world-class marinas – Port Adriano and Puerto Portals – with moorings for state-of-the-art luxury yachts, with fine restaurants and high-end boutiques to serve those on board. August 1-6 sees the Copa Del Rey Regatta (regatacopadelrey.com), a glitzy week-long race set against the glamorous backdrop of the Bay of Palma. Former Spanish King Juan Carlos has won the trophy twice, so expect the royal family to be in attendance.

From the 1930s to 50s, the famous Hotel Formentor had a formidable visitor's book with guests like Grace Kelly and Charlie Chaplin. Today, you'll be rubbing tan lines with the likes of Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones who own an estate on the northwest coast between the exclusive villages of Valldemossa and Deià. Germans love the island and that includes model Claudia Schiffer, who owns a 400,000 square-metre mansion in Camp de Mar. The fact that singer-songwriter James Blunt has migrated here from Ibiza is either an attraction or a reason for concern.

Palma itself is a city of several quarters. The walled old town has the go-to stores like cosmetics brand Sephora, and Spanish shoe store Ulanka with its caramel desert boots and summer clog sandals. It also hides vintage shops like Rita's House (ritashouse.es) where treasure hunters can pick up a Diane Von Furstenberg wrap dress for under €25. The central Passeig del Born is where you can get your designer hits at newly opened Mulberry. Louis Vuitton and Rialto Living are there too but for credibility beyond labels, head to the square mile of Santa Catalina.

This area, with its recent Scandi influx, delivers a Balearic block party you'll never



Clockwise from top: A parked scooter; the Sóller prawn and mash main from Bros restaurant; Palma's Sóller railway

Opposite: The rooftop pool at the Nakar Hotel

The Sóller railway leaves from Plaza de España and journeys through the Tramuntana mountains.
Below: Bob Van Den Hoek and dog Curro from the men-only Syndicate Barbers in Santa Catalina



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want to leave, and the beating pulse is the market where weekends are best spent sipping on a €5 glass of sparkling *rosado* and repeat-ordering spicy tuna and alfalfa maki rolls at Arume; the fresh tuna is sourced from one of the neighbouring fish stalls. Santa Catalina is where you'll find all the funkier furnishings for your first or second home, at places like Bconnected (bconnectedmallorca.com), a luxe fashion and interior concept store for anyone who loves the playful, fluoro-edged Balearic style. The owners, André and Christine, know the history of each piece and much of what you buy is sustainable, or fair-trade, without compromising on any cool factor. Think iPod docks that would match your Roberts radio and high-backed woven chairs in rave-popping colours.

Previously an interior decorator, founder Ariela Schönberg at Vintage Collective nearby (ariela-schoenberg.com) is a magpie for collecting retro treasures, from oak boat rudders to an original 1940s telephone exchange unit she's transforming into a writing bureau. Insider tip: There's a 1950s 'sunburst' mirror she loves so much it lacks a price tag, but make her the right offer and she might be persuaded.

Another resident, José Luis Camacho, one half of Bros Restaurant explains: "Palma is a great city because it's so international. Visitors come from all over the world and bring their influences; some buy second homes. We're like a mini Soho, with the market, the boutiques and the cafés, and that market provides our kitchen with some amazing seasonal, fresh produce."

Santa Catalina, and Palma in general, has just as varied a well-being scene as Ibiza, including yoga at Earth Yoga (earthyoga.es) and Zunray (zunray.com) in their



chic studios. You can switch from activewear to chic swimwear with some Moroccan unwinding at the newly opened Hammam Palma. Swathed in its blood-red walls, enjoy the warmth of a traditional bath and cleanse in the marble steam room. For just €27 you can use all the facilities, with an aromatherapy refresh thrown in (hammampalma.com). Raw, vegan, and organic, Ziva (zivatogo.com) is stocked with deliciously smug treats. More of a lifestyle than a café, this gorgeous spot also offers cooking classes and talks on nutrition and philosophy. That's because the Swedish CEO, Petra Wigermo, is also a chef and holistic counsellor. If you want a major health overhaul then Ziva can hold your hand through one of its own raw detox plans too.

According to Soul Holidays, the island has a significant spiritual energy, as yet untapped for commercial exploitation like neighbouring Ibiza. "The magical combination of majestic mountains, the sea, pine trees, almond trees, rosemary fields, lakes and desert landscapes makes Mallorca so varied and special. Mallorca's appearance is based on an age-old history in which the island was conquered and inhabited by different cultures. Everywhere you can find the mysterious and impressive remains of ancient ancestors (the Talayotic culture) which connects the island's aura to our origins."

For Instagrammable dishes to really impress your foodie friends, the pick of the Michelin-starred restaurants (and there will be 10 on the island in 2017 to choose from) is Marc Fosh (marcfosh.com). Fosh is Palma's gastronomy superstar who earned his fame in London, France and San Sebastián, with a signature style that's theatrical and elegant. Along with his flagship restaurant, Marc Fosh, Fosh Kitchen and

Palma has more luxury boutique hotels in its old centre than any other European city – and there'll be 23 by 2018

Fosh Lab opened last summer. Lab is the hotspot for sampling work-in-progress that includes using local ingredients in the most surprising ways, like the squid with cauliflower, Massaman curry, squid ink and apple. Mallorca has 22 five-star hotels, and 25 classified as 'rural deluxe'. Palma also has more luxury boutique hotels in its old centre than any other European city. There are 18 at present, to which a further five will be added this year. The capital is a year-round playground for the chic elite and that means hotels don't rely on seasons, like neighbouring Ibiza, to lure in tourists at higher tariffs.

Hotel Cort (hotelcort.com) is exactly where you need it to be; slap-bang in the selfie-ready Old Town with its pretty, narrow alleyways, bounty of shops and lazy piazzas. Take your cava on the bistro-style overspill from the restaurant opposite the 17th century town hall and contemplate the knots and silvery leaves of the 800-year-old olive tree opposite.



The breakfast spread at the new Park Hyatt hotel near Artà in the northeast of the island

Each of the 16 suites has their own unique twist with cool white and aquamarine, Moorish tiles and traditional Mallorcan fabrics with a fresh geometric design. Go for the Place Suite to indulge your inner-pioneer with its framed maps, model boat and mounted jaws from some underwater predator. Alternatively, newcomer, Sant Francesc Hotel Singular (hotelsantfrancesc.com) opened last summer in a renovated 10th century mansion right in the centre. Stylishly understated in neutrals and monochrome throughout, the place to be seen is the rooftop terrace where the view stretches from the mountains down to a string of hip beach clubs.

Finally, there's only one way to make an entrance á and eventual exit á from this capital of cool and that's on some sweet wheels from the new Urban Drivestyle (urbandrivestyle.com) hire store. You can rent a pistachio-coloured vintage-style bike for just €25 a day or a coffee racer e-bike for just €30.

Enjoy the ride, and leave the other Balearics in the dust.



Clockwise from top: the bar at Patron Lunares restaurant, once a fishermen's social club; Ziva health foods café; inside the Bconnected interior concept store

