



Menorca,
experience the Mediterranean





Binibèquer

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Parc Natural de s'Albufera des Grau



Menorcan countryside

Menorca, nature at its purest

Some places seem fated to be singular. And their strong personality offers those who visit them an equally unique sensation. Essential, profound places. Menorca is one of them.

Located at the gateway to the Gulf of Leon, for centuries Menorca was considered a highly strategic enclave. The power that occupied it held the key to controlling the Western Mediterranean.

This explains its turbulent history. The invasions, the attacks, the long periods of British rule during the 18th century and the short period of dependence on the French Crown.

nature



These historical vicissitudes, in addition to a very peculiar climate and the extremely rich cultural legacy it has accumulated over the centuries, give Menorca characteristics that are quite distinct from the rest of the Balearic Islands. In addition to which there is nature, in its purest state. Menorca has conserved its natural environment in a truly enviable fashion.

Which is why it was declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1993.

The most important aspect, the factor that governs the relationship between man and nature, lies in the proportion. When you walk in the Menorcan countryside, divided up by stone walls, with slight elevations in the form of intense green hills, the houses and villages take part in that harmony. The “lloc” or rural house, painted white or that carmine colour introduced by the British, does not look out of place. It forms an elegant contrast to the landscape, enhancing it.

That unity of scale factor is present in other ways. The towns, Maó to the east and Ciutadella to the west, are human, well-proportioned. They enter into dialogue with the seascape, showing their history, opening up their delightful little corners, and not for a single moment does one element impose on another.

Menorca instils one with a sense of centrality, as though you were in a place from where you could put the universe in order. Everything is so well-proportioned, so well-balanced, so full of content.

There is something mysterious and totalizing about it. An island that is quite different to everything else.



Cala Tortuga

sun and beach



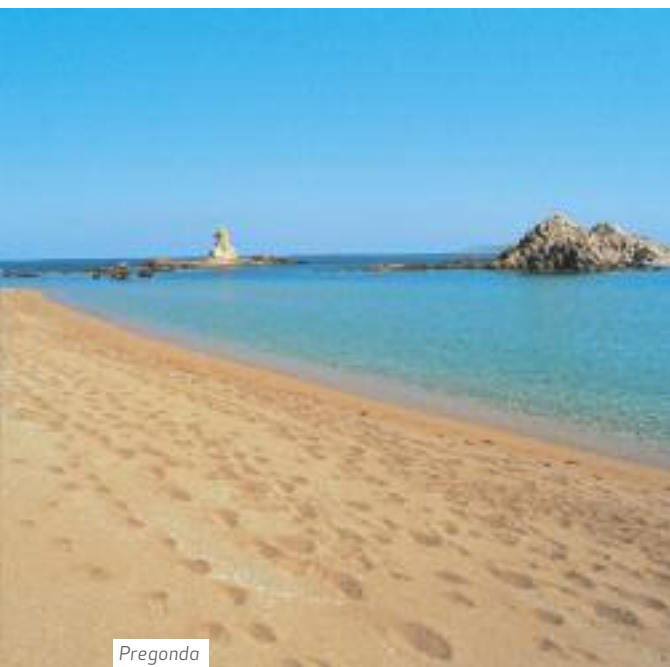
Cala Mitjana

The perfect beach

The name Menorca immediately calls an image to mind. An enclosed cove, with woods, cliffs and transparent, brightly-coloured waters. A place far from mundane noise, devoted to the blues and golds of the beach. Sun, peace, wellbeing. The perfect beach.

The beaches of Menorca are famous the world over. The island offers a variety of options. First we have the more family-orientated ones, very easy to access.

This is the case of Son Bou (Alaior) for example, and Sant Tomàs (Es Migjorn Gran), Arenal den Castell (Es Mercadal), Es Grau (Maó) or Punta Prima (Sant Lluís). There is no overcrowding in Menorca.



Pregonda

The beaches always retain their heavenly air, their components of happiness, and there is no element capable of disturbing them.

The north of the island offers a very peculiar type of island. Cala Mesquida, located close to Maó, is a beach of dark pebbles, as corresponds to this part of the coast. It is a retiring place, presided over by a defence tower with striking profiles made of dark stone.



Equestrian tourism

Further west, we come to solitary coves like Cala Torreta or, near the Favàritx lighthouse, Cala Tortuga. The waters here are mineral blue, contrasting with the sand.

El Arenal den Castell is another of the north-facing beaches, in this case surrounded by a small housing estate and near the Son Parc golf course.

Moving on from Cala Tirant, the beaches are spectacular. Modelled by the Tramontane wind, with different-coloured sands and small wetlands. Authentic paradises for bathing, such as Cala Tirant, Cavalleria, Cala Pregonda and the spectacular beaches of Cala Pilar and Algaiarens. The sand of Cala Pilar is shot through with reddish streaks, making it



Camí de Cavalls

almost carmine. It provides a striking contrast with the green tones of the water, and with the forest that surrounds it. Bathing here is an experience in itself. And Cala Morell, too, looks like a film set, with stones sculpted by the wind and the waves called “frares” (friars), a small housing estate and a mysterious necropolis of prehistoric caves behind it. In general, this north coast offers open, wild, forceful scenery. With pronounced contrasts and great plasticity.

diversity



Beach of Son Saura



Dinghy Sailing

The south or Migjorn represents quite the contrary. Here is where we find those typically Menorcan coves. Modelled over millennia by the torrents, shaped like an amphitheatre. They represent that model of fine, white sand, luminous water, woods. Inlets guarded by two rocky promontories. They all have a coquettish, protective, amiable, sensual character. The most famous ones begin in the Ciutadella area: the beach of Son Saura, Son Saura, Cala en Turqueta, Cala Macarella, Cala Macarelleta, Cala Galdana, Cala Mitjana, Cala Trebalúger...

No sensation can equal bathing in these extraordinarily clean waters, feeling as though the pine groves and the small cliffs are watching over you. Intuitng, in the estuary, that southern sea that trembles indolently. A much clearer, much more placid sea than that of the north.

Two models for bathing, two states of mind. For a host of extraordinary beaches.



Favàritx lighthouse

reserve



A thousand ways to discover it

Menorca's orography has a surprising particularity. The island is composed of two types of geological formation. One could trace out an imaginary dividing line from Cala Morell to the Port of Maó. To the north, we would have ancient terrain. Dark, slate-like rock, worn by the wind and the storms. In many areas it forms gentle hills, precisely as a result of its senile character. At times one moves forward on gaunt, almost lunar promontories that penetrate into the sea like that of Favàritx. The green of the vegetation forms a beautiful contrast with the blackish, dark-coloured earth.

The south or Migjorn, on the other hand, is composed of limey soils of a much more recent constitution. A landscape of rocks, wild olive trees, drier plains. It is a flat platform that inclines down towards the south coast. This means the torrents, which start in the north, cross the island and run down to meet the sea in this southern area. All along their course they carve through the limestone platform and give rise to one of the peculiarities of the Menorcan countryside: the gullies. They are narrow hidden gorges, sliced into the rock, where a world apart takes refuge. Animal and plant species find



Illa de l'Aire

protection against the wind and abundant water here. Some gorges are covered in vegetation, with pools of freshwater in the rocks, little farming plots, prehistoric caves. An authentic microcosm.

The most interesting natural zone of the island is without doubt the Parc Natural Albufera des Grau. This natural park is a wetland located on the coast near Maó, a system of lagoons where migratory birds stop over on their routes. The lagoon has a long, narrow shape, and is surrounded by hills and connected to the sea by a small channel called Sa Gola.

Another extremely interesting natural enclave is the Cavalleria area. It lies in the middle of

the north coast, and includes the tiny natural port of Sanitja and the Cavalleria peninsula. The lighthouse of the same name stands on this promontory, punished by the storms. This part of Menorca is explained in the Ecomuseu del Cap de Cavalleria, an ecological museum situated in the former estate of Santa Teresa.

equilibrium



Punta Nati

During the 18th century, a peripheral path was built in order to be able to watch over the whole of the coast of Menorca.

Today this route, known as Camí de Cavalls, is one of the big attractions for hikers, because Menorca is definitely an island for walking; and also for exploring by bike, on horseback... The distances are never too long, the paths are prepared, and along that old military trail, which is now being restored in full, one will soon be able to walk all the way round Menorca.

There is an extensive range of excursions available. Menorca's highest elevation is Monte Toro, which has an altitude of 358 metres. From here one can contemplate a

large part of the island as though it were a model, and see the silhouette of Mallorca on the south-western horizon. Another elevation worth visiting is Santa Águeda, where one can still see the remains of a medieval fortress. After a short walk one can admire the vestiges of the towers and walls, as well as enjoying an impressive view.

Other areas of interest are the old salt marshes of Fornells, the gaunt cliffs of Punta Nati in Ciutadella, and torrents like that of Algendar.



Torralba d'en Salord



Naveta des Tudons

The magic of horses and the riddle of the stones

As well as that privileged nature, Menorca has a cultural heritage unthinkable for an island of its size.

With regard to prehistory, it is the most interesting of the Balearic Islands. The famous Naveta des Tudons, considered the oldest building in Europe, is just one example. It was a collective monumental sepulchre, constructed in accordance with symbolic rules which unfortunately have not survived to the present. But when the sun sets, and the stone is tinted with reddish hues, it seems to reveal part of its secret. Menorca is an island of stones that talk, that speak to us.

culture



Museum of Menorca



Ciutadella



"Jaleo" típico de las fiestas

The majesty of the prehistoric monuments is overwhelming for modern man. The 'taulas', vertical slabs of stone that hold up another, horizontal one, are so steeped in magical significance that they impress even those who know absolutely nothing about history.

Anyone can capture the hidden message of sites such as Trepucó (Maó), Torralba d'en Salord (Alaior), Torretrencada (Ciutadella), Torre d'en Galmés (Alaior). These remote ceremonial centres, where rituals and sacrifices were performed, corresponded to large towns, encircled by cyclopean walls. Son Catlar (Ciutadella) is the best example.

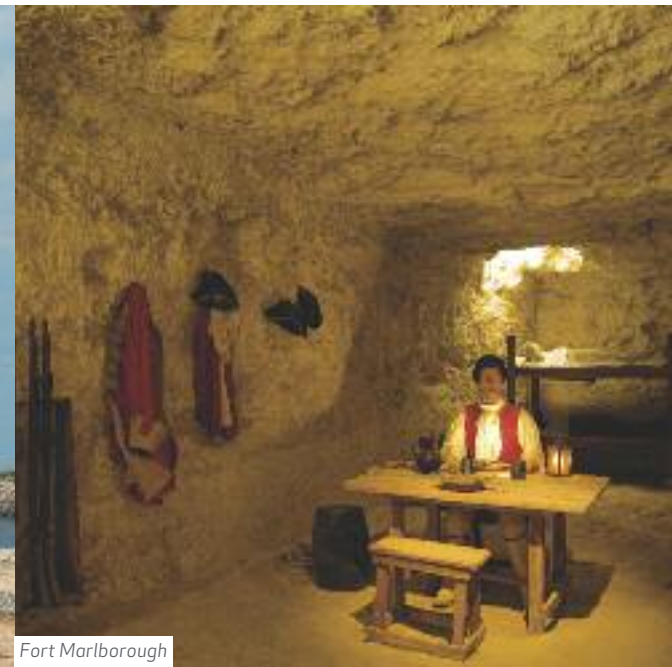
Menorcan prehistory is a fascinating chapter, accessible to all. All you need is sensitivity to perceive that half-barbaric, half-enigmatic message from the past. And you can complete your knowledge of the monumental sites by visiting highly-interesting museums: the Museum of Menorca (Maó), Museu Municipal des Bastió de sa Font (Ciutadella) or the Diocesan Museum of Menorca (Ciutadella).

Equally important, the festivals of Sant Joan, held every June in Ciutadella, occupy one of the top places on the traditional calendar of the whole country. Ciutadella is an extremely monumental town, with churches, palaces, narrow streets and a thousand nooks and crannies with a medieval feel to them. hat

personality, enhanced by the port that extends to the foot of the old town wall, by the play of white and green of the buildings, reaches its height during the fiestas. They are an ancient tradition, during which the social classes (nobility, craftsmen, clergy and commoners) interact symbolically. They represent ancestral rituals in which the horse - the elegant black Menorcan horses - always plays the leading role. No visitor can remain unmoved by the fiesta. It is a time of personal communion, of shared joy, of ancient rituals, of eye-catching games and of hospitality. And the best of all: the fiestas in Ciutadella are only the first ones. All through the summer one can enjoy them in each and every one of the island's villages,



Sant Nicolau castle



Fort Marlborough

the last one being held in Maó, the capital, on 7th and 8th September.

Another cultural item of the first order is the legacy left by British occupation. This is clear from certain expressions used in everyday speech, such as “bòtil” (from “bottle”), to the manufacture of Menorcan gin. A drink that is still made in exactly the same way as in the 18th century and which, mixed with lemonade, constitutes the famous “pomada”, the Menorcan drink par excellence. The British presence on the island also left an interesting monumental heritage behind, from many of the coastal watchtowers, to military complexes like Fort Marlborough (Es Castell), a visit to

which – not to be missed – is like travelling back through time.

In this same sphere of military architecture, and as an overview of the island’s history, a visit to the Fortaleza de la Mola fortress of Isabel II, at the entrance to the Port of Maó, gives one an idea of the significance controlling this port held. The castle of Sant Nicolau (Ciutadella) and the tower of Fornells or Alcaufar are other monuments worth visiting.

Ethnology, in a land with so much personality, must necessarily be important. Rural architecture displays an unusual combination of Palladian and palatial



Confectionery



Cheese with D. O. Mahón - Menorca



Lobster casserole

features and the simplest of shapes. The best example of that sumptuousness is the famous "Golden Farm" or Sant Antoni estate which presides over part of the port of Maó with its beautiful silhouette. In other "llocs" on the island one can see broad honorary staircases, sumptuous façades. Very European elegance.

Maó is the capital of the island now, a town that preserves a very 18th-century atmosphere, too. Narrow streets, low, very uniform "trast" houses. An enormous, blue sky, contrasting with the always freshly-whitewashed walls. And in the background, the magnificent natural port, 5 kilometres long, the best in the Mediterranean and the second-largest in the whole world. The church of Santa María,

with its valuable 19th-century organ, is one of the places to visit. Like the former convent of Carme, with a market (Sa Plaça) in what was the cloister.

Ethnology also leads us to the most immediate popular inheritance. For example, one of the most highly-prized products of Menorca are the famous "avarques". For many years the humblest of footwear items, they are now an internationally-recognised fashion product. And the gastronomy. Menorca is the land of the lobster casserole, a dish to be tasted in its ports, like Fornells, just a few feet from the sea. History also preserves the memory of mayonnaise, or 'mahonesa', said to have been picked up by French soldiers

during their occupation of the island. The cheese with the Mahón-Menorca Designation of Origin is another star product, ranging from uncured to cured cheese, historically the primary gastronomic fruit of the island. It is a kind of tradition in the language of taste of Menorcan values: green landscape, farmhouses, authenticity, vigour, tradition.



Cala Galdana

A coast full of remote spots and secrets

Menorca's personality also extends along its 216 kilometres of coastline. It is an island to be experienced from the sea, as the Menorcans do. The sea can change from the absolute calm of the coves, to the force and fierceness of the north coast when the Tramontane wind blows. A coast of contrasts, so full of details and remote spots it can seem inexhaustible.

The Port of Maó itself is the best example. The town huddles on top of some cliffs, overlooking the end of the port. Opposite is the area Maó-dwellers very sensibly call "S'altra Banda" (the other side). Hills covered in dark vegetation and a series of privileged homes, on the very shore of the sea. To the point that you would say they could dangle a fishing rod out of their window. In this way the port is split into a much more built-up area to the south and another one merely dotted with a few groups of houses to the north. With lost, highly romantic and almost secret nooks and crannies, like the tiny "Cementeri dels anglesos" where many British and American sailors lie in repose.

After passing Illa del Rei, on which the remains of a large military hospital stand, one can see the lazaret island. These installations, used in their day as a quarantine hospital, primordial for an island with as much naval traffic as Menorca, were held up as a model all over Spain in their day. In the 19th century they represented modernity in health care. Today, both the islet of Illa del Rei and the Lazareto can be visited from the small port of Es Castell.

If you continue to leave the port you pass the pretty little inlets of Cales Fonts on the right, until reaching the mouth. On the right are the remains of what was Menorca's most powerful castle: Castell de Sant Felip. Construction on it was started by Felipe II, but the British reinforced it until making it a near-impregnable stronghold. When the Spanish recovered the island, the first thing they did was dynamite it. On the left, rising up from a small plateau, stands the impressive fortress of La Mola, inaugurated in the days of Isabel II.

From here on there are two very distinct routes: the north coast and the south coast. Turning south, a low coast appears, with many remote marine spots, running past the pretty cove of Cala Alcaufar and the more touristy area of Punta Prima. The most eye-catching presence is that of Illa de l'Aire, with its monumental lighthouse. It looks like the signal that you are arriving in Maó.

Turning towards the west you travel along the whole of the Migjorn, or south coast. To gradually discover the promontories, the caves, the coves, the torrents, the beaches like Binibeca from the sea is an experience indeed,

nautical



Illla de l'Aire

Son Bou or Binigaus. The south shore, protected from the Tramontane wind, is a perfect place for sailing. With plenty of shelter and splendid coves where one can take delight in bathing.

After the beach of Son Saura the western part of Menorca begins. The coast becomes rocky, low and rugged. With the silhouette of the Artrux lighthouse marking the island's south-western seaboard. Here we find Ciutadella, a uniform, rocky coast, with a few coves like Cala Blanca or Cala Santandria. Until reaching the mouth of the port of Ciutadella, extended by a modern breakwater. The port of Ciutadella is smaller and narrower than that of Maó. But as a result it affords an incredible vision. When you enter on the boat from Mallorca you pass by the houses that cluster on either side of it practically at eye level. You see their windows, their gardens. As though the port were the central lounge of a home.

Heading northwards out of Ciutadella, the coast rises up in the form of cliffs weathered by the wind. Headlands like those of Bajolí or Punta Nati are spectacular. Monochromatic, bare. Cala Morell lies in this rocky area that changes as you move further east. The hills covered in vegetation begin, and the sandy beaches, the landscape mellows without losing its majesty.

The most frequently visited part of the north coast is the port of Fornells. First you pass by the Cavalleria lighthouse, raised up on top of a promontory. And afterwards you go in through the narrow mouth of this natural port which has a small islet inside it. The port of Fornells is one of the chosen places for

practising windsurfing. When there is a strong wind, one can put in here with no problem, as it is very sheltered.

From Fornells, you can sail out to other extremely beautiful enclaves. The port of Addaia, with its bays that look like lakes, the Favàritx lighthouse facing the storms, the island of Illa d'en Colom off Es Grau, the Cap Negre point. The north coast is very varied, picturesque, with strong profiles and deep colours.

The characteristics of the island make it an ideal place for practising different sports. Because the distances are always short and one can enjoy different landscapes, the range available is extremely broad. On land, hiking, excursions on horseback or following the rural trails by mountain bike or trying out the bicycle touring routes.

And at sea, there are even more possibilities. Travelling along part of the coast by kayak, diving and snorkelling, launch trips that also enable one to enter coves and inlets that are difficult to access from land. Different "multi adventure" packages are operational, including these activities and others, such as wooden raft sailing, for example.

All these activities can be reserved quite simply at the island's three ports, Maó, Fornells and Ciutadella, and they will also give personal recommendations in response to any consultation. Support is also offered for enjoyment of other kinds of services, such as contacts for practising other sports, accommodation, vehicle hire, table reservations in restaurants, etc.



Port of Ciutadella

meetings



La Mola fortress



Teatro Principal in Maó (Theater)



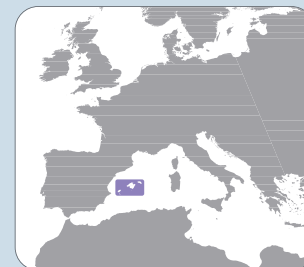
Canteras de s'Hostal (Quarries)

An exceptional
setting for
meetings and
congresses

One activity that is becoming increasingly important in Menorca is the hosting of meetings and congresses. The island's approachable dimensions, a varied range of hotels, and above all the attraction of the beaches, the natural spaces and the very varied options with regard to sports, culture and leisure activities work as powerful incentives.

In this regard, the historical Teatro Principal de Maó, the Lítica quarry (Ses Pedreres de s'Hostal) or the Fortress of La Mola are spectacular and at the same time unusual settings that can easily be combined with modern installations, such as the Multipurpose Room in Es Mercadal. Business meetings, professional congresses,

events, conventions, incentive trips. The possibilities are many and varied and have given rise to the creation of the Menorca Convention Bureau, an entity formed by hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, businesses related to congresses and centres of both cultural and leisure activities. The goal is to turn Menorca into a meeting point, making the most of its exceptional natural potential and possibilities in terms of heritage.





Port of Sanitja



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