

# IBIZA... FOR GROWN-UPS

Leave the lights of Ibiza to the 1990s, says **MARTIN DEESON**. Instead, try its more sophisticated neighbour, Mallorca, for a Balearic bolthole

**SAY MALLORCA AND** my mind always turns to some posh girl in 'The School of Street Credibility' saying to her cockney tutor Ron, with can of lager in hand, "The water in Mallorca don't taste like what it oughta." (*Heineken advert, 1984*)

It's true to say that the instant mental associations with Mallorca are not brilliant – and this is the island's greatest strength, for unlike its far more exploited Balearic neighbour Ibiza, its charms are still relatively undiscovered. Apart from Richard Branson making his second home in the bohemian magnet of Deià, few know that Mallorca is now an island where serious luxury and relaxation can be found far from the madding crowd.

It's because the island is a land of well-hidden gems that you need to

put yourself in the hands of a good island-based tour operator – and we were lucky to find Balearic Discovery, an operation specialising in bespoke luxury run by Jane Stanbury and Anthony Quayle, two expats who make tailor-made itineraries for everything from banks wanting to use the island

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for a discreet off-site conference to, in our case, two stressed-out Londoners desperate for a long weekend away.

We stayed the first night in the hotel Es Ratxo, a series of converted and purpose-built stone buildings that nestle at the bottom of a Mallorcan ravine, so insulated from the outside world that relaxation was instant and total. The next morning, the other-worldly sense of isolation was not so much shattered as taken and shaken in a moment straight from Bond when the electric blue dragonfly of a helicopter from Sloane Mallorca Helicopters came to land on the hotel's back lawn to take us for a tour of the island. Sweeping over the ravines of the mountains and along the coves of the islands rocky coast it was easy to see why isolation ►



**THREE DAY ESCAPE**



# CHEQUELIST



PHOTOGRAPHS (this page, bottom left, bottom right and middle right) by Anthony J Quayle

ISLAND PARADISE: (clockwise, from top left) The private beach at Hotel Formentor; the rooftop terrace at Tres Hotel overlooked by Palma cathedral; on the bow of the *Miami Sun*, a 47ft Sealine super yacht; taking a helicopter tour of the island is a must; poolside pleasures at Es Ratxo; three men (and a woman) in a boat

► is so easy to find on Mallorca – and why a helicopter charter is by far the best way to get a literal overview.

Landing at the Hotel Formentor – renowned for many years as being the most exclusive traditional hotel on the

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island – we stopped for lunch at the hotel’s beachside restaurant, Platja Mar. The hotel was for many years the annual summer retreat of Peter Ustinov and it’s easy to imagine the Hercule Poirot actor lounging around in its restored 1920s splendour, sketchbook in hand.

Afterwards a sunset cruise on *Miami Sun*, a Sealine 47 available for charter from [charterdays.com](http://charterdays.com) would have finished the day off in true Bond fashion – were it not for one more treat lined up by the luxury hounds at Balearic Discovery. The villa they had booked us into that night was big enough to take several families of investment bankers and their children and nannies in one go. The six-bedroom ‘Denga’ boasts an indoor and outdoor pool, games room, guest or nanny house

and enough marble to resurface the Parthenon. As if the day’s luxuries were not already complete, that night we were treated to a multi-course feast cooked in the Denga kitchen by Mallorcan visiting gourmets, Chef a Casa – the perfect answer if your family wants the seclusion of a villa from Mallorcan specialists Keys & Concierge with the simplicity of five-star hotel-standard food. After barely a day by the pool to recover from such a whirlwind of luxury, we spent Sunday evening feasting once again, this time at the chef’s table at the island’s most famous new restaurant at Reads Hotel.

A five-star hotel with just 23 rooms located in a substantial 16th-century house, Reads boasts a Michelin-starred restaurant, a 200-sq m pool, an eclectic

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

Martin Deeson toured the Balearics with Balearic Discovery, which offers tailor-made trips and holidays designed with your particular requirements in mind. [balearicdiscovery.com](http://balearicdiscovery.com)

Monarch Airlines offers up to four flights a week to Palma from April to November flying from London Luton. Prices from £76.99 rtn [flights.monarch.co.uk](http://flights.monarch.co.uk)

Es Ratxo Hotel, [esratxohotel.com](http://esratxohotel.com)

Sloane Mallorca Helicopters, [sloanemallorca.com](http://sloanemallorca.com)

Hotel Formentor, [barcelo.com](http://barcelo.com)

Miami Sun, [charterdays.com](http://charterdays.com)

Keys & Concierge, [keysandconcierge.com](http://keysandconcierge.com)

Reads Hotel and Spa, [readshotel.com](http://readshotel.com)

Chef a Casa, [chefacasa.es](http://chefacasa.es)

Macia Batle Vineyard, [maciabatle.com](http://maciabatle.com)

Hotel Tres, [hoteltres.com](http://hoteltres.com)



HOTEL GURU MALLORCA



sense of interior design and even its own vineyard. In 2003, Reads was awarded ‘The Most Excellent Country Hotel in Europe 2003’ by *Condé Nast Johansens* – and it is, indeed, as Bill and Ted would say, “most excellent”. Reads also boasts carbon-fibre bikes for those who want to cycle: a sport for which Mallorca is rightly famous. We did not indulge.

Monday morning was greeted by a far more pleasing sight than battling to work on a Tube train full of worker drones as we took in a guided tour of the Macià Batle vineyard where some of Mallorca’s surprisingly excellent red wines (not to mention olive oils, pâtés and dessert wines) are made.

That night it was back to the more familiar pleasures of Palma – one of the Mediterranean’s best preserved medieval cities – where we stayed in the urban boutique modernity of the Hotel Tres and still made it back to work (despite some protest) on Tuesday afternoon.

If the account sounds breathless it’s because the range of high life to be experienced on such a small island is breathtaking. After years of renting villas in the north of Ibiza, we found Mallorca to be a beacon of grown-up pleasure. Never mind the water, the wine in Mallorca tastes just like it oughta. ■

FIONA DUNCAN picks her three favourite Mallorcan hotels

Best for Seaside Style

In the pretty village of Puerto de Sóller, the revamped Hotel Esplendido is a breath of fresh air. The only thing that hasn’t changed is the original name for this large 1950s building that occupies the very best position on the seafront. So close is the water that you will hear the waves lapping in your chic room, with magical views. Downstairs, the retro/contemporary interiors are airy, colourful and cool, with intimate bistro and buzzing cocktail bar. Outside: terraced gardens, two pools – and the sea.

Best for City Glamour

More private museum than boutique hotel, Palacio Ca Sa Galesa is a treasure trove of beautiful objects and Spanish modern art in Palma’s gothic quarter. A stone staircase leads to a floor of public spaces, including a faithful

reproduction of Monet’s yellow kitchen in Giverny, a patio with fountain and sunny terraces. There’s also a Roman-style plunge pool in the cellar. The 12 rooms have recently been refurbished, with raw silk curtains and sleek bathrooms.

Best for Country Comfort

An old stone finca, Reads is one of the most relaxing hotels on the island, a mix of British and Mediterranean, where English antiques, Sèvres china, fine paintings, sculptures and old clocks juxtapose with palms and white parasols around the enormous pool set in acres of lush garden. British owners; superb service.

*Hotel Esplendido, Puerto de Sóller (+34 971 63 18 50; [esplendidohotel.com](http://esplendidohotel.com)). Doubles from €150 per night, including breakfast.*  
*Reads Hotel, Santa María (+34 971 14 02 61; [readshotel.com](http://readshotel.com)). Doubles from €246 per night, including breakfast.*  
*Palacio Ca Sa Galesa, Palma de Mallorca (+34 971 715 400; [palaciocasagalesa.com](http://palaciocasagalesa.com)). Doubles from €397 per night, including breakfast. See [thehotelguru.com](http://thehotelguru.com). ■*