

REPORTAGE: MENORCA

in collaboration with





MENORCA

Welcome to Menorca, the island that's all about tranquillity, nature and slow living. Menorca has always been a crossroads, a haven of many cultures. Nowadays the island remains a place of welcome, open to the world, a wonderful place for unique experiences.

Menorca's best known attractions are without a doubt its coves and untouched beaches. However there is so much more: countryside activities, outdoor sports, local culinary delights, handicrafts and products Made in Menorca, a history thousands of years old as well as a whole range of cultural activities. Menorca is infinite.

Before going into more details about

the island, here are a few facts to get to know the place: Menorca is a remarkable place, like an iceberg of nature and tranquillity right in the heart of the western Mediterranean. Like an iceberg because there is so much more here than at first glance: most of the island's treasures are apparent only to those who actively seek them out. Only then is Menorca's essence revealed.

The island is calm and serene, but there is at the same time an impression of strength and energy. Over the centuries Menorca has been a prized possession, strategically and commercially; its history of invasions and dominations have contributed to its cosmopolitan nature.

The landscape is like a mosaic of shades and contrasts, over a surface area of just over 700 square km. The island is about 53km across from east to west. Right in the middle is Monte Toro, the highest point at 358 metres. The northern coast is compelling: harsh and wild, with scarce vegetation and islets and beaches of dark reddish sand. The southern coast is formed of beautiful sheltered ravines and woodland groves leading down to picture postcard coves of white sand and turquoise seas.

The climate is particularly mild and temperate, although a characteristic of the

island is the force of the tramontana wind. It's a wind that is so strong it has molded the landscape. The island is divided into eight administrative councils: Maó, Ciutadella, Alaior, Es Castell, Sant Lluís, Es Mercadal, Ferreries and Es Migjorn Gran.

BIOSPHERE RESERVE & TALAYOTIC MENORCA

Farming has altered the shape of the land significantly over the centuries, traditionally in a sustainable way. Economic growth strives to be compatible with the preservation of the island's natural heritage. The



whole island was declared a Biosphere Reserve in October 1993 by virtue of the close association between man and territory.

Local farming practices are perceived quite clearly in the landscape, in the ancient custom of making use of natural resources. Miles of dry stone walls traditionally lattice the farmlands. Menorca is highly valued for its environmental diversity because most Mediterranean ecosystems can be seen here.

The Natural Park Albufera des Grau is the nucleus zone of the Biosphere Reserve, an area of about 5.006,7 hectares that includes a saline lagoon, a stretch of coast-

line and several islets.

The ancient land that is Menorca accumulates a vast archaeological heritage unique in the world. Spread out over the island, these monuments are in a magnificent state of conservation, two thousand year old witnesses of the era when they were built. The density of these archaeological sites is remarkable: there are on average two monuments to every square kilometre, forming a lasting element of the Menorcan landscape. The most emblematic buildings are the navetas, although the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site has been named after the talayot.



NATURAL MENORCA

The countryside in Menorca is generally unspoiled. Most of the ecosystems typically found in the western Mediterranean can be seen here. They are still biologically very diverse as a result of diligent preservation of natural resources. Almost 70% of the island territory is protected. There is also a Marine Reserve on the northern coast which includes the longest stretch of unspoiled coastline of the island.

There are a hundred or so islets dotted along the coastline, unblemished by humans and of great ecological value. These little islands are inhabited by endemic animals, including eight subspecies of Lilford's wall lizard, each subspecies unique and different. There are a number of ecosystems well worth exploring: woods, cliffs, wetlands, torrents, vernal pools, as well as ravines carved by erosion of the limestone rock.

The best known aspects of Menorca's scenery are its beaches. Along the 216km of coastline, there are about eighty sandy bays, as well as numerous coves and inlets tucked into the shore.



Along the northern coast the landscape is wild and untamed, with predominantly earthy, ochre and golden tones. There are amazing beaches and coves, as well as fantastic snorkelling and scuba diving locations. Cala Pregonda might well be the best known natural beach, but Cavalleria and Cala Pilar are equally stunning. The beautiful landscape of La Vall is where Es Bot and Es Tancat are located, the twin beaches of Algaiarens. Cala Presili and Cala Tortuga are neighbouring beaches located in the nature reserve Parque Natural la Albufera des Grau. Those who prefer beaches with some facilities but still want a stunning setting will love the beaches at Cala Morell, Arenal de Son Saura (Son Parc), the wide sandy beach at Es Grau, or Cala Mesquida.

The southern coastline is irresistibly appealing, with turquoise blue sea, fine white

sand and leafy woods providing shade almost down to the water's edge. The best known natural beaches are: the twin beaches of Son Saura, the famous beaches of Cala en Turqueta, Cala Macarella y Macarelleta, as well as Cala Mitjana and Mitjaneta. Trebalúger and Cala Escorxada beaches are two jewels which are somewhat quieter as it is quite a long walk to reach them. Binigaus is another delightful option: it is the widest unspoilt beach of the south coast and is easily accessible for a day at the beach, as is tiny Atalis beach, at the end of Son Bou beach. The most beautiful beaches next to resorts are: Son Xoriguer; majestic Cala Galdana, which is almost always calm, sheltered as it is by the cliffs; the long stretch of sand at Sant Tomàs and Cala en Porter.



CULTURAL MENORCA

You can go on a journey through time when you visit the many monuments that have been built over the centuries. They reflect all the different cultures that have come to the island over the course of its chequered history. Menorca is traditionally very artistic; the oldest opera house in Spain is located here, putting on frequent productions.

Menorca has long been a source of inspiration to artists. This small Mediterranean island has earned a solid reputation over the years as a land of culture where all the

art forms - music, art, theatre, and cinema - are embraced. Music lovers can enjoy live performances of the highest standard.

There is the Opera Season that has been taking place every year since the 1970s. The Jazz Festival of Menorca and the Classical Music Festivals (in both Maó and Ciutadella) are yearly events. The latest addition to the musical calendar is the Festival Pedra Viva. The performing arts hold annual events in Menorca. The main event is the Premi Born de Teatre award, one of the most important drama awards

in Spain. The Teatre Principal de Maó is the oldest opera theatre in Spain and schedules a full programme every year. The Teatre des Born and the Orfeó Maonès are two other theatres regularly staging performances.

The International Film Festival of Menorca and the micro theatre shows are both getting bigger and more popular every year. There is a range of activities regularly held in the Museu de Menorca and the Museu Municipal de Ciutadella, as well as in other museums, art galleries and exhibition halls.

The patron saint festivities take place all over the island during the summer months. Horses play a prominent part in these festivities, but the local councils also put on a range of cultural events for everyone to enjoy.

The local bar and restaurant associations organize culinary events every year featuring the island cuisine.



CUISINE

Menorca is an island full of flavours. Entering restaurants have given a delightful modern twist to traditional homely dishes. Local products such as the cheese, wine and gin have gained worldwide renown.

Simplicity is the essence of Menorcan cuisine; its foundation lies in people who are down-to-earth, but who know how to enjoy life and how to make the most of what they have. Within every apparently humble dish there lies a touch of refinement, a delightful hint of foreign cultures.

Traditional cookery books all contain recipes for oliaigua and other vegetable dishes, seafaring delicacies such as caldeta de langosta, meat and game recipes,

stuffed aubergines and other oven baked dishes like perol. There are lots of recipes for pastries as Menorcan have a very sweet tooth. Carquinyols, flaons, pastissets and amargos are some of the sweet and savoury pastries that are made here.

The one Menorcan product known worldwide is surely mayonnaise. Experts agree that it was originally a local sauce made here on the island and that it spread to the rest of the world after the French invaded Menorca in the 18th century.

The theory is that the Duke of Richelieu tasted the sauce while he was on the island, and then took the recipe back to the French court where it became known as





maionnaise, in reference to the town Maó

The local food industry has created a hallmark of guarantee Made in Menorca. A prime example is the cheese which has obtained the protected designation of origin (PDO) Mahón-Menorca and has recently been classified among the best in the world. Menorcan cheese is square in shape, with a darkish reddish brown rind and a slightly salty flavour.

The Gin from Maó has been attributed a protected geographical indication (PGI) and is very well known both in Menorca and abroad.

The Menorcan gin is the oldest gin in Spain. It is distilled from wine alcohol with juniper berries and a selection of herbs in old copper stills heated by wood fires and is one of the most aromatic gins on the market.

There are some traditional liquors and spirits as well as the Menorcan gin that are produced on the island, such as herb liquors, the native chamomile liquor and citric fruit liquors which are drunk after a meal as a digestif. In recent years some artisan breweries have started up. The beer they brew is made from natural unpasteurised ingredients. The result is a range of signature brews of different flavours and characteristics.

Olive oil is another quality food product. There are a few extra virgin olive oils produced in Menorca, thanks to enterprising

local producers, although only very small amounts are made at the moment.

The hallmark 'Made in Menorca' recognises some of the local meat products, particularly cured pork. Carn-i-xulla is the most characteristic product, dating back to ancient roman curing methods. Other types of cured pork products are 'sobrasadas' (both mild and mature), 'botifarrons' and 'cuixots'.

There is a small amount of honey made on the island. Prized for many centuries, the Roman author Pliny claimed the island's honey was the best in the world

next to Greek honey. On an island surrounded by sea, there can be no shortage of salt. By the end of the 20th century, however, sea salt production had ceased, but it has started up again very recently, the result being high quality sea salt sold either pure or mixed with herbs and spices.

Special mention must be made of the Menorcan chamomile, a particular variety of Santolina chamaecyparissus subspecies magónica, which grows here. The plant is exceptionally aromatic and is renowned for its many health benefits.



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MENORCA ALL YEAR ROUND



From October to April is when the island gets its second wind, when everything calms down. This is the time of year when the island reveals its lesser known aspect, its true unspoilt side. It's a great time for those who want to get away from a frantic city pace, getting back in touch with nature for a well earned rest. It is without a shadow of a doubt a great place for a break whatever the time of year.

There are cultural events all year round. It is true they are lots in the summer months, but Menorca still has an interesting range of cultural activities in the winter months, including the Jazz Festival of Menorca, the Opera Season, the Day (Diada) of Menorca and the Festivity of Santa Cecilia. There is a full programme put on by the local entities such as the Teatre Principal in Maó, the Orfeó Maonès, the Cercle Artístic in Ciutadella and the Teatre de Calós.

The archaeological and architectural heritage of Menorca is of course an excellent reason to come for a cultural break. Many talayotic sites are open all year round, as are the monuments that are part of the British route, the Fortifications route, the Religious monuments route and the Museums route.



THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR REPORTER FABIO CAMPANELLA INVITED BY THE MENORCA TOURISM OFFICE

MENORCA, THE ENCHANTED ISLAND: A JOURNEY THROUGH NATURE, POETRY AND AUTHENTICITY



There are places that capture your heart from the first breath, and Menorca is one of them. As soon as I landed on the island, even out of season, I felt a pure, enveloping air, capable of regenerating body and mind. Nature here dominates unchallenged, with wild landscapes, Mediterranean scents and glimpses that seem to have come out of a painting.

My stay at the Hotel Catalonia was characterized by comfort and attention to detail: impeccable cleanliness and a buffet breakfast that every morning transformed into a journey through the flavors of the island.

During the week I explored some unique structures, authentic jewels immersed in greenery and perfectly integrated with the surrounding environment. The Menorca Experimental, the Torralbenc and the Amagatay offer a refined and intimate experience, ideal for those looking for a romantic refuge or a regenerating stay. Fontenille and the central Faustino also left an indelible mark on my heart, with the desire to return as soon as possible.

A surprising experience was the visit to the Golf Club Son Parc, a corner of paradise immersed in infinite nature. Here, the contrast between the green of the course and the blue of the sky merges with the song of the peacocks in freedom, creating an atmosphere of absolute peace. Playing golf and meditating in such a magical place was an unexpected emotion, made even more special by the professionalism and kindness of the director Paola.



Menorca is also an island of authentic flavors. The dinners at the Arjau Restaurant and at Sao Fonda were an explosion of taste, a real sensory journey between typical dishes and very fresh ingredients. I cannot forget the genuine atmospheres of Ses Forquilles and Ses Quelleres, where every bite tells the story and traditions of this land.

What made my trip even more special was the guide Isabel, who with her passion and expertise helped me discover the historical and cultural wonders of Menorca, revealing hidden corners and fascinating stories.

Menorca is a pearl of the Balearics that enchants in every season. Its wild beaches, secret coves, imposing cliffs and relaxed pace make it a perfect place for those seeking beauty, authenticity and serenity. An island to be experienced with all the senses, an experience that leaves its mark and a desire: to return, again and again.

FAB
EDITION