

8 >>> WEEKEND

Enjoy the best magic Majorca has to offer

AS the sun slips silently behind the mountain we celebrate the end of another beautiful Majorcan day by ordering a round of giant gin and tonics.

The waiters have transformed the act of pouring drinks into a full blown performance and are very generous with measures.

We are in Puerto Pollensa in the north of the island, lazily gazing over the glass-flat Mediterranean after a hard day doing nothing. We have taken the traditional evening stroll along the impressive Pine Walk lined by verdant trees and ancient walls.

As a small fishing village, Puerto Pollensa was historically praised by poets and immortalised by artists but it successfully re-invented itself as one of the island's pioneer tourist destinations. It is charming, friendly and perfect for families.

You should not expect a break in Puerto Pollensa to include action packed options for teenagers, it is more a mooching round shops and sitting outside restaurants holiday, although the regular bus services from the harbour make the rest of the island easily accessible if more excitement is required.

The pedestrianised sea front esplanade is always busy but never crowded as tourists meander along, marvelling at the outstanding sand sculptures which decorate the beach at regular intervals.

There is a café on every corner and a tempting array of high quality clothes and gift shops. The harbour dominates the centre and glass bottomed, sight-seeing boats share berths with the Menorca and Formentor ferries.

The main square, with its modern church and bars and restaurants, is only a couple of hundred yards from the sea. It becomes the focal point for evening activities as the ubiquitous street traders tempt you with hair braids, sunglasses and snide watches. The most popular bar is Bonys, which is owned and run by José who cleverly tempts parents to his tables by throwing handfuls of sweets into the path of the kids. The excited youngsters then demand to return the following evening.

The choice of places to eat is enormous and ranges from an English style chippy to Catalan



IMPRESSIVE Puerto Pollensa's pine walk is lined with verdant trees and ancient stone walls

classics. Highlights included Mallorquin specialities such as tumbet (ratatouille with potatoes), lechon (roast suckling pig), seafood paella and rabbit stew with vegetables.

Puerto Pollensa is nestled within one of Majorca's most exquisite bays and framed by the Tramuntana mountains, which provide a spectacular backdrop. Most of the time it is hot and sunny, refreshed by light sea breezes, but the proximity to the mountains means the occasional low cloud does bring with it some showers, particularly in the early part of the season.

The mountains also offer the chance of a reasonably challenging walk to the idyllic resort of Cala San Vicente. Once at the hillside, the views fall away at the Coll de Siller drawing you in this beautiful cove. If you prefer to travel by car, you must experience the spectacular cliff side drive to Cap Formentor, known for its seclusion, crystal clear sea and remnants of 4th Century Roman occupation. En route you will pass the belvedere or lookout, known as Mirador d'es Colomer, a vertical rock sheer dropping of 760 feet. Scary, but a wonderful photo opportunity.

Pollensa old town is 8km inland and a visit should be high on your agenda. It boasts a history that saw Egyptians, Romans, Moors and Ottomans all having a say in how the town developed and a day soaking up the history is time well spent. You will be tempted to climb the 365 steps up Calvari to visit the small chapel and enjoy a panoramic view. Although situated at the bottom of the steps, you may choose the option of browsing the galleries and art shops.

Back in the port, Wednesday is market day. The square is closed to traffic and the roads lined with stalls. I was not tempted by hooky Manchester United shirts, or beaded bracelets, but

was drawn to the colourful rows of huge fruit and vegetables.

I have never seen such tempting peppers, onions and melons. I need to get out more. Even if you do not intend to buy anything, there is something about a bona fide European market that is culturally attractive, particularly when accompanied by an 'authentic' band of Andalusian pan pipers.

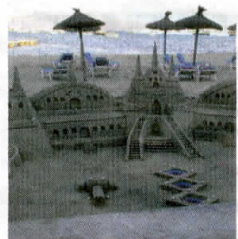
We stayed at the Oro Playa Aparthotel two minutes from the sea and a five minute walk into the town. The one-bedroom apartments are basic but adequate.

The living room, which doubles as the second bedroom, leads to a balcony and there is a small kitchenette with hob, microwave and very noisy fridge. Around half overlook the two pools and there is a restaurant, bar and shop on site. We chose self catering, although half and full board options are available. The usual procession of entertainers and speciality acts can be enjoyed most evenings and younger guests are kept busy through the day by activity reps.

Puerto Pollensa, with its medallion of clear blue sea, relaxed way of life and warm welcome is an alluring proposition.

Within fifty minutes of landing at Palma airport, you can be sitting by the sea in your shorts and flip flops, enjoying those G&Ts.

Eamonn O'Neal



BEACH LIFE Intricately carved sand sculptures

FACTBOX

Eamonn flew with Monarch from Manchester to Palma and flights in June start from around £25 one way plus taxes and extras.

The Oro Playa Aparthotel can be booked directly oro_playa@cadenammar.es. Prices vary depending on occupancy. A shuttle bus from Palma airport to the resort costs approximately £16 and can be booked through resorthoppa.com