

Scotland on Sunday - Spectrum
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C: 54,260



Fort among equals

Palma is hard to beat as a weekend destination – even if you do occasionally have to pack your umbrella

WORDS RUTH WALKER

THE rain is bouncing off the cobbles outside, streaks of lightning like strobes in the night sky. Truth be told, we'd prefer to stay where we are, warm, dry and full-bellied, having eaten probably more than was advisable at chef Marc Fosh's newest Mallorcan restaurant. Another bottle of that mouth-watering house white would go down a treat too. But we've been invited for drinks elsewhere, we're not sure where we're going, and we haven't brought our brollies.

The evening had started off warm and bright as we made our way to Misa, a restaurant that manages to be both intimate and airy despite its basement setting, down a narrow lane in central Palma. Fosh is arguably Mallorca's most celebrated chef, a Brit who has lived on the island for more than 20 years. He won a Michelin star while presiding over the kitchens at Read's hotel before branching out on his own with, to date, three restaurants, and there has been much talk about this, his latest venture.

Our 'modern rustic' feast kicked off with pea and lemongrass soup with salmon tartar, and prawn raviolis with crab and sherry sauce, followed by fish of the day with escalivada (Catalan grilled vegetables) and blood orange

hollandaise, and the tenderest of duck confit, served with rocket leaf pesto and beetroot risotto. Oh, and just one waffer then orange and saffron crème brûlée ...

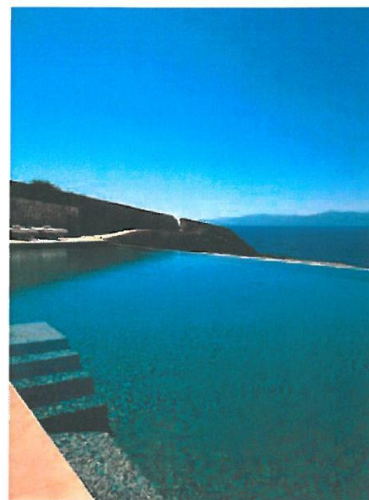
But the weather has taken a turn for the worse. What are two damsels in sandals to do? Fortunately a waiter comes to our rescue, whisking us effortlessly through the kitchens and out of the back door, large umbrella in hand, to escort us to our destination. Barely a drop of water touches our bare toes.

And this – friendly people, fabulous food and so much more – is why Palma is my favourite European destination ever. Even in the rain.

Happily, when we surface the following morning, the sight from our private terrace is blue skies as far as the eye can see, the view stretching across the Bay of Palma to the Tramuntana mountains beyond. The rain has freshened the air, and the herb bushes outside our window are pungent with the scent of rosemary.

A 19th-century fortress set in 88 acres of grounds, Cap Rocat is one part boutique hotel, two parts enchanted castle, with drawbridges and turrets and our own suite set in a former shooting buttruss. The theme continues in the decor – the work of Antonio Obrador, who helped create Claudia Schiffer's island bolthole. There are

FORT BE WITH YOU Clockwise from main: Cap Rocat hotel courtyard; La Calobra beach; Cap Rocat infinity pool; terrace; La Seu cathedral



bullets for door handles, gun carriage tables – and the destination itself so secretive, we are yet to find a taxi driver who has heard of it.

Originally built to protect Mallorca from attack, the fort was never used in battle. But its qualification as a military zone means the coast around it is utterly unspoiled and ruggedly beautiful, with a vibrant bird population performing acrobatics almost within arm's reach.

Breakfast is served in our room, on our sun loungers ... in fact, anywhere we choose. A little white float appears laden with freshly squeezed juices, coffee and tea, breads, pastries, cheeses and cured meats, cereals, yoghurts and fruits.

Fortunately there is also a gym on site where we can work off the effects of such excess, as well as a personal trainer with more bounce than Tigger, who will take us jogging around the coast (assuming we can get out of our four-poster by 8.30am). Guests can borrow bikes too – Mallorca is a popular destination for cyclists, whose colourfully Lycra'd backs and padded bottoms are a common sight bobbing up and down on the surrounding roads.

Alternatively, kick off your Havaianas on the private beach, snorkel or swim in the rocky, clear blue coves or borrow a kayak and simply see where your paddles take you.

Day one sees us catching a cab into Palma – the only downside to Cap Rocat is that, though

just 20 minutes from the airport, it is around half an hour from the city, which means a €25 fare each way. The approach is one in a million though, with the Mediterranean twinkling in the morning sun on the left, the Majestic La Seu cathedral on the right and the masts of the yachts bobbing up and down in the harbour straight ahead.

Buskers ply their trade alongside giant bubble-blowers and mime artists, while high street giants such as Camper, Zara and Massimo Dutti sit side-by-side with the likes of Lowe, Balenciaga and specialist boutique stores. We especially love the contemporary hand-blown glass chandeliers at Gordiola (C Jaime II, Palma) and momentarily consider how we might smuggle one home in our hand luggage.

We have lunch in Plaça Llotja, one of the seafront, tree-lined squares, in the shadow of La Llotja, a gothic building that once housed Palma's stock exchange, while watching the world go by. Crusty bread, juicy olives and a bowl of chips suffice. But soon our terrace at Cap Rocat is beckoning.

Indeed, it's tempting to never leave in the first place, with staff on hand to cater for our every need. Two days earlier, arriving in the dark, we had been offered a "boogie" to our suite. How nice, we thought. A dancing belly-boy. What he meant, we realised to our embarrassment as we started shimmying to an imaginary beat, was a buggie, of the golf variety, of which there are several to deliver guests to whatever destination they choose – whether that be the Sea Club restaurant, which serves lunch cooked on an open fire down at the waterfront, the formal dining room, the beach, the eternity pool ...

The boogying came later, when we followed our ears to find the hotel had laid on a disco for a group of visitors in The Bunker, an old gunpowder store dug out from the rock face.

For a chic and discreet hotel with only 24 rooms and suites, it certainly managed to let its hair down in admirable fashion.

In case you're wondering, we never did manage to get up in time for that morning jog. ■

FACTFILE

Cap Rocat, ctra d'Enderroc, 07609 Cala Blava, Mallorca (0034 971 74 78 78, www.caprocat.com). Rooms from €450 to €800, including breakfast.

A three-course set menu at Misa (Can Maçanet, Palma, +34 971 595 301, www.misabrasaria.com) costs €17.50.

Ryanair flies direct to Palma from Edinburgh daily (except Saturday) from £21.99 each way before taxes and other extraneous costs (www.ryanair.com).

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