

# In Palma of its hand

BY BRIDGET MCGROUTHER

**I was only four on my first trip abroad to Majorca. My mum told me that despite the nervous looks from fellow passengers when I boarded the plane (I obviously had the look of a toddler prone to hissy fits), I slept like an angel from take-off to landing. As it's only three hours to Palma, it's easy to keep kids amused.**

I can still remember the fun I had on that holiday – it was probably the start of the incurable travel bug I've had ever since. Warm sunshine (but not too scorching), sandy beaches, ice cream, paddling in the shallows and the friendly Spanish hotel staff who always made such a fuss of me, my brother and sister.

The beautiful island of Majorca, the largest of the Balearics, has certainly seen some changes since I first visited its empty, dune-like shores (er...em...can it really be?) 40-odd years ago.

Yet despite resorts such as Cala Millor, Magaluf and Port d'Alcudia becoming engulfed by mass tourism, Majorca remains a family-friendly magnet and high on the list of firm favourites for Scottish holidaymakers.

The lure of this idyllic island is that it has something for everyone. The golden beaches and warm, sunny climate are certainly attractive. From Cala Bona ('the good bay') to Cala Millor ('the better bay'), there are miles of sandy shores to sunbathe, swim, build sandcastles, stroll, play volleyball or lap up watersports from banana boats to kite-surfing.

The affordability is also a plus – despite the rocketing Euro matching the former growth of high-rise hotels, there is still a wide range of good-value package deals available from camping or self-catering to guesthouses and all-inclusive resorts – along with a choice of low-cost flights from local airports.

And, of course, there is so much to see and do – water parks, boat trips, train rides, hillside villages, mountain walks, golf, cycling, horse-riding, restaurants, bars and lively nightclubs. Majorca has it all, including – perhaps more surprisingly – peace and quiet in pretty, unspoilt coves or protected nature reserves.

Our most recent holiday in Majorca was with my sister and her family in picture-postcard Port de Pollença. This tranquil, friendly resort is especially popular with families as well as older visitors enjoying the gentle serenity of this sandy bay, shaded by



**ILLUMINATING...** Palma Cathedral



**WAVE HELLO...**  
Palma's secluded coves are real suntraps

Sunseeker Bridget fell in love with Majorca when she was four, and it still has plenty to offer travellers of all ages

aromatic pine trees. Like us, most of the holidaymakers were happy to relax on the beach by day, swimming and sun-bathing.

The cost of sunbeds and parasols can mount up if you're splashing out for all the family but if you pack beach towels and airbeds, you can stretch out on the sand in comfort for free.

Breakfast was eaten on the balcony of our self-catering apartment and being a stone's throw from the beach meant we could nip back for lunch, too, unless we took a picnic, snacked at cafes or treated ourselves to ice creams.

The pine-scented promenade is perfect for an early evening 'passeig' where you can stop for a cerveza (beer) and tapas as the sun goes down or dine in one of the many sea-front restaurants or cafes around the Plaça Major.

Hiring a car meant we could explore the island easily, but at peak times, be sure to book it in advance – along with a child seat, if required. There are also local buses or organised tours to attractions such as hidden coves, grottos and the lighthouse on the tip of dramatic Cap de Formentor, Majorca's most northerly point.

Children love swimming and sliding in the waterparks at Magaluf, Port d'Alcudia or S'Arenal; the dolphin and seal shows create waves of pleasure at Portals Nous Marineland; while diving underwater in Nemo submarines to search for colourful

fish is usually met with a tidal wave of enthusiasm.

Mallorcan farm animals can be found at Santa Eugenia Natura Parc as well as more exotic elephants, giraffes and reptiles at Cala Millor's drive-around safari zoo, while playing all 54 crazy holes at mini Golf Fantasia in Palma Nova provides hours of fun.

Palma's top sights, such as the breathtaking Gothic Cathedral and the magical old Arab Quarter, suddenly become exciting to even the youngest tourists when trotting around the capital's maze of narrow, cobbled streets in a galera (horse-drawn carriage).

Yet my juicy tip for a grand day out is to take the toytown train from Palma to pretty Sóller. On this century-old railway, the vintage carriages shake, rattle and rroll through city streets to the countryside beyond, chugging past farmland filled with almond groves and citrus trees, disappearing into a 3km-long tunnel before re-emerging for the zig-zag descent to the coast.

After a refreshing, freshly-squeezed juice at a café around the leafy square, you can then catch the Orange Express tram to Port de Sóller by the sea. Stand on the outside platform to get the best views of back gardens and orchards as they flash by and breathe in the tangy sea air – bound to a-peel to all ages.

## Factfile

- Fly to Palma from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Prestwick, Aberdeen, Newcastle, Blackpool, Manchester or Leeds Bradford with flythomascook.com, Thomson.co.uk, Easyjet, Ryanair, Jet2.com or Monarch.
- Package deals to Majorca are available at local travel agents or online with companies such as Direct Holidays ([www.directholidays.co.uk](http://www.directholidays.co.uk)) or Barrhead Travel ([www.barrheadtravel.co.uk](http://www.barrheadtravel.co.uk)).
- Further details from The Spanish Tourist Office, Tel 020 7317 2040, [www.spain.info/uk](http://www.spain.info/uk).

## Hot Deals

- MAJORCA** May 19, 7 nights half board at 3\* Majorca Beach, £349pp.
- MAJORCA** May 29, from Glasgow, 7 nights self-catering at 3\* Vista Club, family of three £924.
- MAJORCA** June 4, from Edinburgh, 7 nights, all-inclusive at 3\* Sol Calas de Majorca, £399pp.
- For more info on package deals go to [www.barrheadtravel.co.uk](http://www.barrheadtravel.co.uk) or call 0871 226 1052.