

Majorca-an island in the sun

Spain's largest island remains one of Europe's top vacation destinations. Located in the Mediterranean's Balearic Islands archipelago, just off the mainland, Majorca has been a synonym for mass tourism since the 1960's.

While its hot summers and mild winters make it a year-round vacation destination, the high-tourist season kicks off in June and runs through September. The island is about 100 kilometers from east to west and 75 kilometers from north to south. It is an island of huge contrasts with busy international tourist centers in the southwest and northeast and a beautiful, unspoiled mountainous region in the north. Vacation packages are offered for every pocketbook, from high-end secluded getaways to a fish-n-chips existence on a sprawling beach.

Working with a travel agent or doing your own research is highly recommended to determine what offerings suit your taste and wallet.

Stunning scenery offers everything from quaint villages and hidden bays to Gothic cathedrals and white-sand beaches. For historically minded visitors, burial chambers and traces of habitation date Majorca back to the Paleolithic period (6000-4000 BC). For the less-historically inclined visitors, hiking, boat excursions, horseback trips, white-sand beaches, and a lively night life can easily help pass the time. The capital, Palma de Majorca, is fast gaining a reputation as one of the Mediterranean's most exclusive holiday resorts and a great place to kick off your Majorcan tour.



The Cape of Formantor on the northeast coast of Majorca

Approximately half the island's 600,000 inhabitants live in Palma. With so many of the residents there, it provides an authentic Spanish atmosphere, rather than a specially built resort to cater to visitors. Palma was founded by the Romans in 120 BC as the town of Palmeria, and it was later substantially developed first by the Moors and then by James I of Aragon, who captured Majorca from the Moors in 1229. James' son ordered the building of the Gothic cathedral of Sa Seu, the Catedral de Majorca, and the defining monument of Palma—a magnificent Gothic structure said to be the only cathedral in the world whose reflection can be seen in an ocean.

The double-decked red Palma sightseeing bus is a good way to visit the sites of the city including Bellver Castle (Castell de Bellver) located high above Palma providing a breathtaking view of the city, its harbor and the Mediterranean. The cost is 13 Euro per person, including earphones so you can listen to the running English commentary. The ticket is good for 24 hours, allowing passengers to get off and on at any of the 16 stops.

There are many tours led by English speaking guides to all parts of the island that will offer an informative overview and greater appreciation of the island.

One tour features a train ride up into the mountains to the village of Sollar, then a boat trip along the rugged island coast to La Calobra. Free time is provided to enjoy shopping there and in several other picturesque villages.

Another tour takes you to the Caves of the Dragon in Puerto Cristo. The Cuevas Del Drach are utterly spectacular underground caves penetrating two kilometers into the limestone and illuminated with dramatically designed lighting that highlights the largest subterranean lake in the world, Lake Martel, named after the Frenchman who charted the caves and lake in the 19th century.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect of the visit features a live classical music concert provided by musicians floating on boats on the lake. A brief ride on the lake is also available.

During the high summer tourist season, this attraction can be very crowded, but the scope and beauty of the caves is well worth the inconvenience.

This tour also visits the world famous Majorca pearl factory in Manacor where manmade pearls are sold at reduced prices compared to department stores.



Sa Seu, the Cathedral de Majorca, a magnificent Gothic structure said to be the only cathedral in the world whose reflection can be seen in an ocean.

The modern resort side of the island is located to the northeast in the area of the Bay of Alcudia and its main city, Puerto de Alcudia, which features many state of the art hotels, trendy restaurants and lively discos.

There are several beautiful beaches to enjoy along with deep sea fishing, parasailing, snorkeling, and scuba diving, just to mention a few of the many attractions of this part of the island.

Whether it is the history and beauty or the fun and sun that is calling to you, make Majorca one of your top vacation considerations.

The island is a little over an hour away; travel agents can help to make it as fun and affordable as you would like; and its sheer beauty and varied amenities will make it a vacation to remember for years to come.