

Country Walks

for the best in guided walking holidays and weekends away

Undiscovered Mallorca: Moderate 'B' Grade

5 - 12 May 2010

- Full programme of guided walks and excursions
- Small, elegant 4-Star family-owned hotel with walled garden, pool, jacuzzi, sauna and fine cuisine
- Based in the heart of the old village of Soller, minutes from the central square
- Dramatic sun-drenched landscapes and spectacular coastal scenery, framed by the backdrop of the Tramuntana mountains
- Unspoilt picturesque villages of honey-coloured stone
- Swimming opportunities on some walks

Eight days in the central Tramuntana, a walker's paradise in the northwest of the island where Mallorca is at its scenic best, far away from the crowded and overdeveloped coastal resorts often associated with Mallorca. Here, from our delightful base in Soller, you will discover the island's indigenous and rural character as we follow scenic trails through the island's most picturesque towns and villages including Fornalutx, Soller, Deia and Valldemosa. We make use of a widespread network of buses, trams and trains.

Climate: *May is perhaps the best time to walk on Mallorca, when days are warm and meals can be enjoyed al fresco. The island has a typical Mediterranean climate, with mild winters and hot summers tempered by sea breezes. The average temperature in May is 22 and 4 days of rain can be expected during the month.*

Our base: *Soller is easily accessible from Palma, 45 minutes by road. It is idyllically situated amongst orange groves with easy access to the sea and varied mountain countryside, an ideal base for a walking holiday*

Nordic Walking: *This holiday is suitable for both nordic and non-nordic walkers. Although qualified Nordic Walking instructors will be present, formal tuition will not be available on this holiday.*

Grading of Walks: *The walks in our programme are designed for the average walker and our walks in Mallorca are flexible, allowing on occasion some options for shortening or lengthening the walks. The routes consist mainly of former mule tracks and ancient pilgrim paths through citrus and olive groves, pine forests, mountains and valleys, coastal paths, gorges and lakes.*

Hotel: *The Ca'l Bisbe is a 4-star hotel occupying a sensitively refurbished former bishop's palace, complete with beamed ceilings, pool and garden, jacuzzi and sauna. Whilst retaining its authentic character, the hotel boasts modern-day comforts and particularly friendly staff. It is situated in a quiet street in the heart of Soller, just a few minutes' walk from the lively main square with its many pavement cafes. All rooms have air-conditioning, telephone, internet connection, etc Our allocation of rooms includes*

Accommodation Available: 6 double rooms for single occupancy, 2 with balconies, 6 rooms for double or twin occupancy

Holiday Price: £757 per person for 2 people sharing a twin room; single occupancy of a twin room £789 or single occupancy of a twin room with balcony £872

Price Includes:

- Transfers to and from Palma Airport
- Guided walks every day
- Guided tour of Palma
- Hotel accommodation as described above
- Access to pool, jacuzzi, sauna and small gym
- Buffet breakfasts, three-course dinners and one packed lunch
- All tips
- Services of two leaders throughout
- Unique experiences that money can't buy

Price Excludes:

- Flights (see below)
- Local bus, train, tram and boat fares (allow approx €50)
- Insurance
- Lunches in local restaurants and bars (allow €6-12 a day)
- Drinks and items of a personal nature

These prices have been based on a current exchange rate of 1.09 euros to the pound. We will absorb any rate increases up to 5%; for example if the rate drops to 1.04, you will not incur any surcharge. However if the rate drops below 1.04 there will be a surcharge.

Flights: EasyJet offer the most reasonable fares and departure times as follows:

EasyJet (<<http://www.easyJet.com>>)

Wed 5 May dep London Gatwick 1240, arr. Palma 1555
Flight No 8627, duration of flight 2 hours 15 minutes £37.99

Wed 12 May dep Palma 1630, arr. London Gatwick 1755
Flight No 8628, duration of flight 2 hours 15 minutes £18.89

Please note that flight times may change before May 2010 and the above fares are those published mid-September 2009. Fares normally increase over time. You can book online on EasyJet's website or, if you prefer, for an additional £12 you can book the same flights by phone with Expedia by calling 0871 2229483. We are happy to talk you through online booking of airline tickets if you are unfamiliar with the process: call us on 020 7233 6563

Itinerary

Wednesday

We meet you at Palma airport to transfer you to Soller and your hotel (40 minutes). After an informal Welcome Meeting to meet your fellow guests we meet together for dinner.

Thursday

Villages of Fornalutx and Biniaraix *(6 miles, easy to moderate with gentle gradients)*

A walk designed to give you an overview of the Soller Valley. We walk straight from the hotel on a stunningly beautiful circular walk, deep in the Soller valley, among terraces of olive and citrus groves, high above the coast, surrounded by the island's highest peaks. We visit Ca'n Det, a beautiful old Mallorcan town house where the family has been pressing oil for over 300 years. We stop for a freshly squeezed juice in Biniaraix before following quiet country lanes between beautiful olive tree terraces with splendid panoramic views back down over the Soller valley. Down ancient stone steps into Fornalutx with its honey-coloured stone houses, to the beautiful terraced restaurant of Es Turo for lunch on the terrace, admiring extensive views across the valley. We explore the village, said to be the most beautiful on Mallorca, returning along the centuries-old wayfarers' route via tiny Binibassi, back to Soller. Finally, a drink in the colourful Placa de Sa Constitucio before returning to the comforts of our hotel.

Friday

Deia via the Cami de Castello to Soller *(7 miles, moderate)* Bus to Deia, to visit this beguiling village tucked at the base of formidable cliffs and famous as the former home of Robert Graves who is buried in the village church. We stroll through cobbled streets of pastel-coloured houses and explore hidden alleys before descending to the picturesque bay of Cala de Deia for a swim and lunch. Then to the old postman's route which links Deia with Soller taking us through a charming agricultural landscape with wonderful views of the mountains of Tramuntana towering above the valley basin of Soller. We pass a threshing circle before descending to the Finca Son Mico for a rest and a freshly-squeezed orange juice, (and perhaps a delicious home-made Mallorcan pastry!) enjoying views into the valley from little tables on the terrace. More picture-book panoramas, in the foreground date-palms rising above the bell tower of a tiny 13th century chapel, a majestic backdrop of Puig Major beyond. Through ancient olive groves surrounded by lemon and fig trees, we descend towards Port de Soller, journey's end, and the tram back to Soller.

Saturday

Valldemossa & The Archduke's *(5 miles, moderate; morning walk, afternoon visit)*

Bus to Valldemossa then a magnificent circuit which takes us initially along earthen tracks through holm oak woods. Our way rises gradually up to the Coll de S'Estret de Son Gallard, a mountain 'crossroads' where we join the 'Cami de S'Arxiduc'. The Archduke was a keen rider and the bridlepath above Valldemossa was one of his major undertakings. This stone-laid trail across the plateau, ideal for walkers, was built purely for his riding pleasure, taking him up onto the high plateau from where he could admire many of his properties below and from where we can admire magnificent views towards the rugged coastline below and towards distant Palma. We descend through woods of holm oaks before lunching in Valldemossa. Then we visit the magnificent Carthusian monastery whose cloisters accommodated those famous lovers, Chopin and George Sand. Chopin described this as 'the most beautiful place in the world' and here you can view his piano and an excellent art collection that includes works by Picasso and Henry Moore.

Sunday

Cuber Lake & The Barranc de Biniaraix (9 miles, moderate) We travel by bus to the Cuber Lake in the heart of the Tramuntana mountain range, an area rich in birdlife where ospreys and red-footed falcons circle high on the thermals. We walk around the lake, enjoying this spectacular spot of serenity and beauty, watching the occasional trout leap out of deep blue water, the far side of the lake reflecting the rugged ridge and peaks of Sa Rateta and Na Franquesa. Then a gentle rise up through pine woods towards the Coll de L'Ofre at 875 metres with spectacular views of the lake glistening in the distance below, the imposing slopes of Puig Major in the background. From here we descend in the shadow of the mountains into a beautiful gorse-covered valley, before beginning our descent through the dramatic Biniaraix Gorge on an old cobbled pathway that was once part of the pilgrims' route between Soller and the monastery at Lluc. This spectacular descent brings us down into Biniaraix and back to Soller. Picnic lunch today overlooking the gorge.

Monday

Visit to Palma or Soller Port (4 miles, easy) No visit to Mallorca would be complete without a visit to its vibrant and cosmopolitan capital, Palma. We take the old wooden train which rattles 'wild-west' style for 27 km along its narrow-gauge track into Palma, a service that has connected Palma to Soller since 1912. The train has completely retained its original character and the journey is a delight through orange, almond and olive groves and lovely landscapes. Palma is a beautiful Mediterranean city full of architectural and cultural delights. We take you on an optional tour designed to give you insight into Palma's varied and cosmopolitan character, bringing in elements of past, present and future - and a spectacular 'aerial' view from magnificently sited Bellver Castle. After an authentic Spanish lunch at our favourite tapas bar, you can spend the afternoon visiting the spectacular Cathedral, Sa Llotja, a Gothic masterpiece, Es Baluard Museum, Renaissance city walls, Bellver Castle, or of course, shopping! Instead of visiting Palma, you could take the tram to Soller port with its handsome, horseshoe-shaped bay ringed by forested hills. The main attractions are the beaches, a wide selection of restaurants and an hour's walk to the lighthouse. The afternoon could be spent visiting Soller's impressive botanical gardens.

Tuesday

Mirador de Ses Barques to Cala de Tuent (7 miles, moderate) Today's walk is a classic hike taking us high above the sea and displaying the entire scope and beauty of this wild, deeply indented coastal landscape with its many bays and capes. From the viewpoint at the Mirador we take the Cami Vell de Balitx, through a wonderful terraced valley of ancient olive trees, almond groves and bubbling springs. Our route takes us past farmhouses and one of the watch towers which is a prominent feature of this coastline. We stop for a rest and a freshly squeezed orange juice at a charming farmstead in idyllic surroundings before climbing up out of the valley to the Coll de Biniamar. Further spectacular views await us as we wind our way picturesquely above the turquoise-blue sea. A descent through rosemary and myrtle brings us to Es Vergeret for lunch on the terrace with panoramic views out to sea. Finally we descend to unspoilt Cala Tuent for a swim or a paddle in crystal clear waters. Then, weather permitting, we take the boat back to Soller Port. Here, time for a drink among the boats before boarding the tram back to Soller for our farewell dinner.

Wednesday

Morning at leisure before our late afternoon departure for Palma airport and our flight to Gatwick.