

# Country Walks

## Undiscovered Mallorca: Moderate 'B' Grade 12 – 19 May 2010

- Full programme of guided walks and one excursion to Palma; 2 leaders throughout
- Small, elegant 4-Star family-owned hotel with walled garden, pool, jacuzzi, sauna and fine Mediterranean cuisine
- Quietly situated in the heart of old 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; exotic flora and fauna
- 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 paths through the island's most picturesque towns and villages, the air heavy with the scent of wild thyme, garlic and rosemary. 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 C 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

**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.

**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.

**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, satellite television, mini-bar

**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; £789 for single occupancy of a twin room, £872 for single occupancy of a twin room with balcony

### 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 €8-15 a day)
- Drinks and items of a personal nature

*Regardless of fluctuations in the exchange rate, the price of the holiday will not change.*

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

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

Wed 12 May dep. London Gatwick 1240, arr. Palma 1555 Flight No 8627, duration of flight 2 hours 15 minutes £42.99

Wed 19 May dep. Palma 1630, arr. London Gatwick 1755  
Flight No 8628, duration of flight 2 hours 15 minutes £22.93

*Please be aware that flight times could change before May 2010; you would be advised by email from EasyJet. Please also note that the above fares are those published 13 October 2009. Fares normally increase over time and in fact have already increased since they were first published. You can book online on EasyJet's website or, if you prefer, for an additional fee 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 by coach to Soller and your hotel (40 minutes). An informal Welcome Meeting and briefing will take place before 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 same family has been pressing oil for over 300 years. We stop for a freshly squeezed juice in Biniaraix before following quiet country lanes with splendid panoramic views over the Soller valley. Down ancient stone steps into Fornalutx with its honey-coloured stone houses, to Es Turo restaurant for lunch on the vine-covered terrace. We explore the village, said to be the most beautiful on Mallorca and return to Soller along the centuries-old wayfarers' route via tiny Binibassi. Finally, a drink in the colourful Placa d'Espanya then 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, the former home of Robert Graves who is buried in the village church. Strolling through cobbled streets of pastel-coloured houses, we explore twisted hidden alleys and descend to the picturesque bay of Cala de Deia for a swim before lunch. Then ancient cobbled mule tracks take us across scenic agricultural landscapes with wonderful views of the mountains of Tramuntana towering above. We stop at the charming Finca Son Mico farmhouse and sip freshly-squeezed juice (and perhaps savour a delicious home-made Mallorcan pastry!) from little terrace tables, admiring the exotic trees and flowers surrounding the estate. More picture-book panoramas unfold, date-palms rising above the bell tower of a tiny 13th century chapel, the majestic backdrop of Puig Major soaring beyond. We descend into the port of Soller through ancient olive and citrus groves, perhaps time for a drink before taking the tram back to Soller, our journey's end.

## *Saturday*

**Valldemossa & The Archduke's** (5 miles, moderate; morning walk, afternoon visit) Bus to Valldemossa then a magnificent circuit through holm oak woods to the Coll de S'Estret de Son Gallard, a mountain 'crossroads' where we join the 'Cami de S'Arxiduc'. The bridlepath, perfect for walking and the creation of the Archduke Luis Salvador, takes us across a high limestone plateau with magnificent views towards the rugged coastline below and towards distant Palma. We descend through holm oak woods where wild goats graze, to Valldemossa. After lunch we visit the magnificent Carthusian monastery whose cloisters were once home to those famous lovers, Frederic Chopin and George Sand. Chopin described Valldemossa as 'the most beautiful place in the world'. In the monastery, you can view the piano on which Chopin composed the famous Preludes and enjoy an excellent art collection that includes works by Picasso and Henry Moore.

## *Sunday*

**Cuber Lake & The Barranc de Biniaraix** (9 miles, moderate) By bus to the Cuber Lake situated 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 its serenity and beauty, watching the occasional trout leap out of deep blue water. The far side of the lake reflects the rugged ridges and peaks of Sa Rateta and Na Franquesa. A gentle rise up through pine woods towards the Coll de L'Ofre at 875 metres rewards us with spectacular views of the lake glistening in the distance below, the imposing slopes of Puig Major towering above. We descend into a beautiful gorse-covered valley and walk down through the dramatic Biniaraix Gorge on an ancient cobbled pathway cut by Carthaginians 2,500 years ago to transport olive oil down to Biniaraix. The path was also once part of the pilgrims' route crossing the mountains between Soller and the monastery at Lluc. This spectacular descent brings us finally down into Biniaraix and back to Soller. Picnic lunch today overlooking the gorge.

## *Monday*

### **Guided Visit to Palma or Independent Visit to Soller Port**

(4 miles, easy) No visit to Mallorca is complete without visiting Palma, its vibrant and cosmopolitan capital. We take the old wooden train that rattles 'wild-west' style for 27 km along its narrow-gauge track. The train retains its original character, the journey through orange, almond and olive groves remaining virtually unchanged since its inception in 1912. Palma, a beautiful Mediterranean city, is full of architectural and cultural delights. We take you on an optional tour to give you a taste of Palma's varied and cosmopolitan character, bringing in elements of past and present. After an authentic Spanish lunch at our favourite tapas bar, you can spend the afternoon visiting the spectacular Cathedral, a Gothic masterpiece, Es Baluard Museum, Renaissance city walls, Bellver Castle, or of course, simply shopping! Instead of visiting Palma, you could take the tram to Soller port with its handsome, horseshoe-shaped bay to enjoy beaches, restaurants and an hour's walk to the lighthouse. In the afternoon could return to Soller to visit the impressive botanical gardens or to enjoy the facilities of the hotel.

## *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, 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 a 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 to enjoy some of the best sea views on the island. Time for a drink among the boats in the bay 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 back to Gatwick.

Please note that we reserve the right to change the above itinerary if circumstances dictate.