



# Understand Mallorca

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After decades of tourism, Mallorquins are responding to uncertain times by seeking to reclaim their roots.

## **HISTORY ..... 178**

Join us on a journey through the great ebbs and flows of Mediterranean history.

## **LANDSCAPE & WILDLIFE ..... 188**

Rugged natural ramparts, quietly beautiful cliff-encircled coves and birdlife in abundance – we introduce you to Mallorca's natural wonders.

## **MALLORCAN ARCHITECTURE..... 192**

Learn all about Mallorca's architectural story, from prehistoric watchtowers to Palma's iconic cathedral, Modernista masterpieces and palaces with patios.

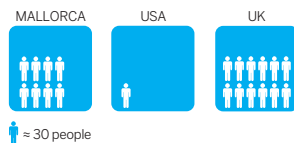
## **ARTS & CRAFTS..... 195**

We give you a taster of Mallorca's impressive portfolio of literature, painting, music and traditional crafts.

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## population per sq km



# Mallorca Today

## Struggle for the Soul of Mallorca

Mallorca stands at a crossroads. On one level, this is an island eternally grateful for the economic windfall that comes from being the favourite summer escape for many travellers from northern Europe: were it not for tourism, Mallorca would most likely be an impoverished provincial backwater. As it is, a staggering three out of every four Mallorquins rely on tourism for their livelihood, and this shift away from a largely agricultural society has radically transformed Mallorquin life in every way.

But therein also lies the problem: tourism since the mid-1950s and the accompanying massive development have turned the island's values on their head. In a process known as *balearización*, great swaths of the coast have been scarred by thoughtless construction and all too often builders and the authorities have cheerfully ignored regulations limiting construction. Furthermore, the massive arrival of mainland Spaniards and Europeans, buying up property across Mallorca (20% of Mallorca's inhabitants are foreigners), has pushed housing prices beyond the reach of many locals and unleashed debate on island identity. Some fear that local culture and language are being swept aside. How to hold on what remains of the past has become the central question in modern Mallorquin life.

## A Question of Language

One way in which Mallorquins have asserted their fidelity to their roots is through language: Mallorquin, a dialect of Catalan that has evolved since the conquest in 1229. Their tongue was edged out of the public realm under Franco, but it has returned as a badge of pride for many Mallorquins. You're not expected to speak it, but you'll hear it spoken everywhere.

### Top Reads

- » *Mañana Mañana* (Peter Kerr)  
The pick of the books about trying to live like a Mallorquin.
- » *Bread and Oil: Majorcan Culture's Last Stand* (Tomás Graves)  
Food-dominated book centred on traditional Mallorca's greatest passions.

- » *British Travellers in Mallorca in the Nineteenth Century* (eds Brian J Dendle and Shelby Thacker)  
An intriguing anthology of Mallorcan travellers' tales.
- » *Die Balearen* (Ludwig Salvator)  
Classic German-language study of the islands.

### Top Films

- » *Woman of Straw* (1963) Stars Sean Connery with Artà as the backdrop.
- » *The Magus* (1968) Features Anthony Quinn, Michael Caine and Candice Bergen with Mallorca standing in for a Greek island.