



The Interior

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Why Go?

Mallorca's serene interior is the alter ego to the island's coastal buzz. Although the beaches are rarely more than an hour's drive, the interior feels light years away, with its vineyards, hilltop monasteries and meadows stippled with olive, almond and carob trees. It's here that the island's rural heart beats strongly in church-topped villages where locals fiercely guard their traditions – and throw some of Mallorca's most spirited *festas* (festivals). Other towns preserve the time-honoured crafts of pot-throwing, shoemaking and glass-blowing.

Dip into the interior, if only for a day, for winery tastings, country walks and tucked-away *fincas* (farms), where you can spend idle moments lounging by poolsides and silent nights gazing up at the Big Dipper. The food here is earthy and authentic, especially in Inca's vaulted, barrel-lined cellar restaurants, where a jovial crowd gathers to guzzle local wines and eat spit-roasted suckling pig.

When to Go

Unlike the coast, inland Mallorca tends to remain open for business year-round: Palma folk like nothing better than escaping from city life in the depths of winter (such as it is) and finding a rural retreat for a heartwarming meal or a quiet night's sleep. The interior's festivals also rank among the most traditional on the island, from the Easter Sunday S'Encuentro of Montuïri to the 700-year-old livestock markets of Sineu in May or the yearly grape harvest in Binissalem in September.

THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR

Most travellers race quickly through the geographical heart of the island along the Ma13 motorway, although the older route (Ma13a) takes you through some interesting country. Sophisticated rural retreats and some of Mallorca's best vineyards are the main attractions, but charming villages such as Binibona in the Serra de Tramuntana foothills and Sineu further south are also compelling reasons to forsake the rush to the coast.

Santa Maria del Camí & Around

Santa Maria del Camí is a gateway to Mallorca's wine country and home to one of the island's biggest names in wine, **Bodegas Macià Batle** (☎971 14 00 14; www.maciabatlle.com; Camí de Coanegra; ☎9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), based just outside of central Santa Maria. In addition to winery visits and free tastings, you can admire their labels, all designed by renowned contemporary artists.

The village itself doesn't really catch the eye, but it does have a couple of pretty squares. If you're coming from Palma, the Ma13a widens to become the bar-lined **Plaça dels Hostals** as you roll into town. The original heart of Santa Maria del Camí is **Plaça de la Vila**, a quiet medieval square presided over by the 17th-century Casa de la Vila (Town Hall).

The centrepiece of Plaça dels Hostals is the 17th-century **Convent de Nostra Senyora de la Soledat** (Plaça dels Hostals 30), aka Can Conrado. If the main doors happen to be swung open, you can peer into the magnificent front courtyard, while a peek into the rear gardens can be had around the corner from Carrer Llarg.

The **Festes de Santa Margalida** (☺Jul) is held here over almost three weeks, though the key day is 20 July. It involves concerts, traditional dances and communal meals.

Molí des Torrent (☎971 14 05 03; www.molidestorrent.de; Carretera de Bunyola 75; mains €20-26; ☎1-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Fri-Tue) is the area's most atmospheric restaurant – when you spot a stone windmill on the country road north of town that leads to Bunyola, you've found it. Sit in the vaulted interior or on the pretty patio for solid home cooking

that makes the most of the seasons, from Mallorcan *gambas* (prawns) to perfectly cooked steaks. Book ahead.

i Getting There & Away

Santa Maria is around halfway along the Palma-Inca train line. Fares in either direction cost €2.10, and journey times range between 18 and 23 minutes.

Binissalem

POP 7800 / ELEV 131M

The Romans brought their wine-making nous to Binissalem some 2000 years ago and the placid little town at the foot of the Tramuntana hasn't looked back since. Its rich, velvety Manto Negro grapes produce the island's best DO (Denominación de Origen) wines. Besides vineyards, the gently rolling countryside here is cloaked in almond trees that scatter their pale blossom in February.

Like many towns in inland Mallorca, Binissalem has retained its Arabic name.

o Sights

José Luis Ferrer

WINERY

(☎971 51 10 50; www.vinosferrer.com; Carrer del Conquistador 103; guided tours €6; ☎tours 11am & 4.30pm Mon-Fri & 11am Sat, shop 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) One of Mallorca's largest and most celebrated wineries, José Luis Ferrer, at the west end of the town, was launched in 1931. To get a better insight into the wine-making process, hook onto one of the 45-minute guided tours, which include a three-wine tasting. Call ahead to book.

Celler Tianna Negre

WINERY

(☎971 88 68 26; www.tiannanegre.com; Camí des Mitjans; guided tours €10; ☎guided tours 10am-2pm Mon-Fri, shop 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) 🌿 This 20-hectare winery has architect-designed buildings (we love the cork fence) and an aim for sustainability in its wine-production processes. It produces a range of whites, reds and rosés. Guided tours include a tasting of three wines and bread with Mallorcan olive oil.

Casa-Museu Llorenç Villalonga

MUSEUM

(www.fundaciocasamuseu.cat; Carrer de Bonaire 25; ☎10am-2pm Mon-Fri plus 4-8pm Tue, 5-8pm Sat) **FREE** From the mid-18th to the early 19th century, Binissalem's prosperity as a wine-making town was reflected in the construction of several notable mansions. One