

Palma & the Badia de Palma



Set on a magnificent broad bay, Palma de Mallorca is a city of light that can happily compete with any European regional capital. Its old heart oozes centuries of history in its twisting lanes, powerful churches, traditional pastry shops and baroque mansions. For those who think of Mediterranean islands as being all about sand and sea, the cultural charge and sophistication of this city can come as a surprise. The wedding of culture, history and seaside recreation is perhaps best symbolised in the position of its Gothic cathedral, one of Europe's finest, overlooking the sparkling Mediterranean and a short walk to the nearest beach.

The city lies at the midpoint of a sweeping bay, the Badia de Palma. To the west, a series of idyllic, aqua-hued beaches and inlets have managed to retain their beauty despite the tourist development. People of all walks of life crowd into the resorts to swing, chill and, in some cases, wreak nocturnal havoc in the heart of the Magaluf party zone. Other beaches spread east from central Palma, with more Euro-partying happening at Platja de Palma and S'Arenal. Then, suddenly, all the ruckus ends at the quiet, residential eastern tip of the bay, with several hidden inlets to swim in.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the fantasy of Barceló within the magnificent Gothic **Catedral** (p68)
- Shudder at the sharks in the brand-new **Palma Aquarium** (p101)
- Wander into the exquisite Gothic cloister of the **Basilica de Sant Francesc** (p76)
- Take in the contemporary art inside the one-time city walls at **Es Baluard** (p80)
- Get lost in Old Palma's labyrinth and search out the courtyards of **baroque mansions** (p80)
- Get a quick lesson in modern Spanish art at the **Museu d'Art Espanyol Contemporani** (p78)
- Wander around the towers and enjoy the view from **Castell de Bellver** (p83)



