

Southern Mallorca



The fortresslike geography that dominates the coast between the Badia de Palma (Bay of Palma) and the outskirts of Colònia de Sant Jordi has made this area one of the least-developed of the island. Much of the coast is buffered by tall, nearly impenetrable cliffs splashed with the sapphire blue waters of the Mediterranean. They may not be very accessible, but their untamed, raw beauty is hypnotising.

Beyond the cliffs are intimate coves and long beaches, true marvels of nature that wow with their beauty. Whether they're the hard-to-access coves enshrouded by fjord-like cliffs, or silky sweeps of sand backed by pines and junipers, these are some of Mallorca's best beaches. Still, the area's often unforgiving coastline, the existence of parks and natural areas, and the proliferation of working farms and rural estates has kept this part of the island blessedly intact – for now.

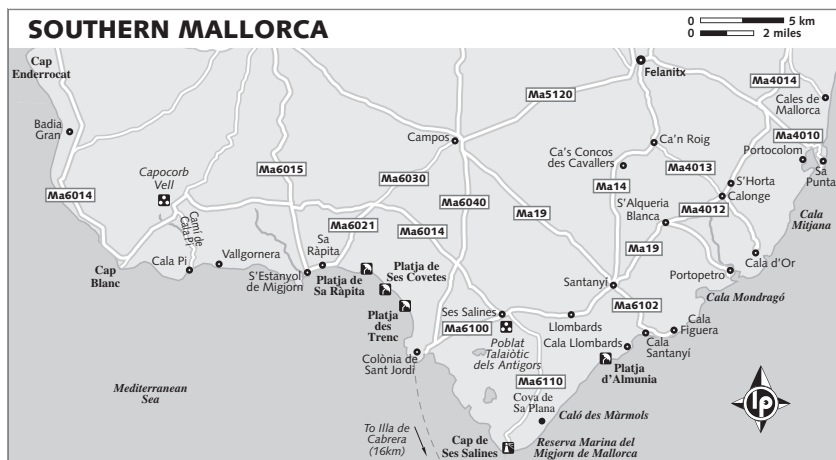
Change, however, may not be long in coming. If the countless cranes on the horizon are any indication, the already impressive number of macro-chalets and planned communities along the coastline is only going to grow. It only takes a glance at over-the-top resorts like Cala d'Or to see how quickly construction can transform the spirit of a place.

While these days much of the southern coast seems rather sleepy, this wasn't always the case. One of the first areas on the island to be settled, the south welcomed settlers from the first millennium BC onward, thanks to its calm bays, protective cliffs and variety of vegetation. A wealth of ancient sites, like Capocorb Vell, allow you to peek in on the area's past.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Step across the thresholds of centuries-old houses at the **Capocorb Vell** (opposite) *talayotic* site, one of the most important ancient sites on the island
- Go all out for a romantic dinner in one of the sophisticated restaurants in Cala d'Or's **Port Petit** (p192)
- Grab the camera and binoculars and log some new species in your bird book at the lovely **Parc Natural de Mondragó** (p191), where wetlands, forest and unspoilt beaches meet
- Hike to the tiny coves and caves that dot the coast surrounding the **Cap de Ses Salines** (p188)
- Take a day trip to the **Illa de Cabrera** (p186), where you can hike its hills and relax on its untamed beaches





FROM CAP ENDERROCAT TO SA RÀPITA

The lonely stretch of coastline running along the island's southernmost flank is pristine and unspoilt, a refreshing sight squeezed between the high-rise hotels on the east coast and the high-speed activity of the Badia de Palma.

CALA PI

This modest resort has the reputation of catering to the retiree crowd, but the truth is that anyone seeking a low-key seaside holiday and a bit of solace can find it here. The beach is found at the end of a steep staircase so, retirees or not, whoever plans to swim and sunbathe should be in decent physical shape. There is no wheelchair, stroller or disabled access.

The beach itself, devoid of services of any kind, is only 50m wide but stretches more than 100m inland. It's flanked on either side by inhospitable, fjord-like cliffs that ensure

the inlet stays as still as bath water, making it a popular place for boats to anchor.

Away from the beach, there is not much going on. On the coast, a round 17th-century defence tower pays homage to the Mallorca of ages past, when pirate threats made towers like this, and the dozens of others that once lined the coast, a necessity. A web of streets lined with large chalets and the occasional restaurant stretches to the east, blending seamlessly with the urbanisation of Vallgornera (p184), a low-key place known for being home to the Balearics' longest cave.

The best places to stay in the area are rural hotels like **Sa Bassa Plana** (☎ 971 123003; www.sabassaplana.com; Carretera Cap Blanc Km25.4; r per person from €34; ♿ ♿ ♿). Set on a working farm, 90% of the food served is grown on the premises. The 10 double rooms and 12 suites (with kitchenette) are outfitted with antique furniture, evoking an old-world elegance. Half-board is available.

our pick **Restaurante Miquel** (☎ 971 123000; Torre de Cala Pi 13; mains €13-20; ☞ Mar-Oct), a Mallorcan-style farmhouse with a huge patio, is warmly recommended, and has a fabulous fixed-price lunch (€15) with specialities like paella, mussels in marinara sauce or grouper with lemon sauce.

Bus 520 links Cala Pi and Palma once in the morning and once in the evening (€4.75, 1½ hours).

CAPOCORB VELL

At the sprawling prehistoric village of **Capocorb Vell** (☎ 971 180155; Carretera Arenal-Cap Blanc Km23; admission €2; ☞ 10am-5pm Fri-Wed), one of the larger and

OUR TOP PICKS

- **Restaurant** La Caracola, Portopetro (p191)
- **Hotel** Hostal Restaurante Playa (p186)
- **Beach** Platja des Trenc (p187)
- **Resort** Portopetro (p191)