

Eastern Mallorca



It's as though someone came in with a giant spoon and gouged out cove after rocky cove along Mallorca's east coast, creating some of the island's most iconic scenery in the form of scorching white sandy beaches, turquoise waters and dramatic beachside cliffs. Of course, such beauty is hard to keep a secret, and the coves here are some of the most popular tourist destinations on Mallorca. Package tourists, families, last-minute weekenders...they all want to experience a bit of island bliss.

We can't lie; there are some true monstrosities along the east coast. When Mallorca's tourism industry began growing in the 1950s and '60s the floodgates were swung wide open, permitting the overdevelopment that's transformed former fishing villages into endless strings of whitewashed apartment buildings, curry restaurants, 'authentic' Spanish eateries and souvenir shops.

Yet, contrary to the stereotype, not everything is geared toward mass tourism. All you need is a bit of curiosity and a decent map to hunt down the charms of this region – unspoilt coves, seaside towns that still retain their fishing-village air, ancient Stone Age ruins, pretty hilltop hamlets, fine rural hotels and excellent dining. Having your own car helps a great deal as you navigate Mallorca's farm roads and country lanes, but those armed with patience can make good use of the local bus system. If you have the time (and the leg strength), eastern Mallorca is a great place to explore by bike; several popular routes are indicated in this chapter.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dig into Mallorca's ancient history at **Ses Païsses** (p167), one of the most important *talayotic* sites on the island
- Delve into the centre of the earth at the **Coves del Drac** (p177), a spectacular cave system
- Hike through the wooded hills of the **Parc Natural de la Península de Llevant** (p169) to reach gorgeous, unspoilt coves
- Soak up rays on Cala Ratjada's pretty **Platja de Cala Agulla** (p171)





ARTÀ & AROUND

Boasting the poetic distinction of being the first place in Mallorca to see the morning sun, the island's northeastern corner is a refreshingly low-key area where rounded hills stubbled with green stretch out in every direction, and calm, pine-lined beaches (some accessible only by foot, horseback or boat) dot the coastline. Fascinating historic monuments, good hiking territory and one of the best beach resorts on the east coast all provide convincing excuses for a visit.

ARTÀ

pop 6730

The antithesis of the buzzing resort culture found just a few kilometres away, the quiet inland town of Artà beckons with its maze of narrow streets, appealing cafés and medieval architecture, which culminates in an impressive 14th-century hilltop fortress that dominates the town centre.

Information

Locutorio Artà (Carrer del Mestral 10; internet per hr €2; 11am-10pm) This call centre, ironically, won't give out a phone number. Opening hours are notoriously flexible.

Police station (☎ 971 829595; Plaça d'Espanya 1) Located in the *ajuntament* (town hall).

Post office (☎ 971 836127; Carrer de la Ciutat 12; 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 971 836981; Carrer de Costa i Llobera s/n; 10am-2pm Mon-Fri) Located in the old train station, it sometimes hosts art exhibits.

Sights

Begin on Carrer de la Ciutat, the prettiest street in town, which is lined with shops, restaurants and squares rimmed with cafés. Head uphill to reach the historic centre, which is basically a maze of pedestrian-friendly (though unkempt) streets lined with old, often neglected homes. At its heart is the shaded Plaça d'Espanya, home to the *ajuntament* (town hall) and the Museu Regional d'Artà (☎ 971 829778; Carrer d'Estel 4; 10.30am-1.30pm Tue-Fri, 11am-1pm Sat), where those interested in ancient and traditional Mallorcan culture will get a small thrill out of the mismatched curios on display.

Follow the signs uphill to Sant Salvador, but before you reach the famous sanctuary you'll pass the Gothic *Transfiguració del Senyor*

OUR TOP PICKS

- **Hotel** Hotel Sant Salvador (p169)
- **Restaurant** Bar Parisien (p169)
- **Resort** Cala Romànica (p178)
- **Festival** Festes del Carme, Cala Ratjada (p173)
- **Beach** Cala Mesquida (p170)

parish church. Here, a small museum (admission €2; 10am-2pm & 3-6pm) shows off religious art. The church, built atop the foundations of a Moorish mosque, was begun soon after the Christian reconquest, although the façade dates to a 16th-century renovation. Inside, highlights include a large rose window, an ornately carved wooden pulpit, and an altar painting depicting Christ on Mount Tabor.

From here, 180 steps lead up along the grand, cypress-lined Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) toward the *Santuari de Sant Salvador*, a walled fortress built atop an earlier Moorish enclave and enclosing a small church. Far and away the most famous sight in town, this much-restored castle-like complex boasts all the elements of a medieval fortress, down to the stone turrets ringing the top. The views from here take in the entire town and pastoral scene surrounding it – fertile fields dotted with stone farmhouses and backed with the bald, bumpy peaks of the Serra de Llevant.

The walls were built in the 14th century to encompass the town itself and protect it from pirates or invaders. Now you'll find only walkways, a simple cafeteria (see p169) and an unremarkable salmon-coloured church, which was built in 1832 after the modest chapel that pre-dated it was purposely burnt to the ground following a cholera epidemic.

You can also reach Sant Salvador by a steep, curvy road (worth considering if the sun is really blazing), but most people find the walk pleasant exercise.

SES PAÏSSES

Just beyond Artà proper lie the remains of a 3000-year-old settlement, the largest and most important *talayotic* site on Mallorca's eastern flank. The looming stone gateway to Ses Païsses (☎ 619 070010; admission €1.30; 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) is an impressive transition into



the world of prehistoric Mallorca, a world that is still shrouded in mystery despite ongoing archaeological investigations. While we know little about their social or religious lives, we can easily glean that safety was an issue for these ancient peoples; they lived behind a double ring of stone walls. Today you can only see the base of these walls. Within them,

small stone houses whose foundations are still clearly visible were built in a circular pattern around a central *talayot*, or watchtower.

You could easily spend an hour or two wandering among the 13,500-sq-metre site, which is dotted with shady trees. To get the most out of your visit, buy the guidebook for sale at the site.

It's easy to get here from Artà. From the large roundabout east of the tourist office, follow the signs toward Ses Païsses; if you're walking or cycling, it's less than a kilometre from the main road.

HIKING & CYCLING

The tourist office gives out an excellent brochure called *Bike Tours* that includes a dozen routes through the area that you can complete on foot or by bike. Detailed maps, photos and route notes make this an excellent source for planning your own excursion.

Many cycling routes follow farm paths through the countryside. Particularly recommended are the Artà–Cala Ratjada route, which passes by Ses Païsses, and the route (about 7km) from Artà to the Ermita de Belem hermitage (p151).

Festivals & Events

Don't miss the curious *Festa de Sant Antoni Abat*, held on 16 and 17 January, when every one gets in traditional costume and heads to the Santuari de Sant Salvador for dancing, music and a downright odd display of backwards-facing equestrians swinging long sticks around.

Sleeping

The sleeping options in Artà itself are few but fantastic.

Hotel Casal d'Artà (☎ 971 829163; www.casaldarta.de; Carrer de Rafel Blanes 19; s/d €46/86; a) A wonderful old mansion in the heart of town, this charming hotel gives a glimpse of traditional living. Tall ceilings, tiled floors and antique wooden furniture all have a distinctly Mallorcan air.

Can Moragues (☎ 971 829509; www.canmoragues.com; Carrer del Pou Nou 12; s/d €86/125; pas) A cheery yellow country-house-turned-hotel, Can Moragues offers cosy, impeccably clean rooms that respect the house's original architecture, with touches like exposed stone walls and wood-beam ceilings.

Hotel Sant Salvador (☎ 971 829555; www.santsalvador.com; Carrer del Castellet 7; r €185-225; pas) The eight rooms of this luxurious boutique hotel echo the dignified character of this restored manor house, with canopied beds and antique furnishings. Surrounded by a lush garden, the hotel also runs a stylish bar and two classy restaurants. There's a steep price drop October through to April.

Eating & Drinking

The gastronomy in Artà is top rate, with a string of charming eateries (many with terraces or sidewalk seating) running along Carrer de la Ciutat and other finds scattered around town. On Tuesdays, a market sets up on Plaça Conqueridor.

Pedra i Flor (☎ 971 829536; Carrer d'Antoni Blanes 4; h 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 5-8pm Sat) This delightful flower-shop-cum-café serves coffee, tea, wine and sandwiches on a few small sidewalk tables.

Cafeteria Sant Salvador (☎ 971 836136; Carrer Costa Sant Salvador; mains €6-12; h Tue-Sun) Up beside the Santuari, this simple cafeteria serves sandwiches and a few mixed plates (meat, veggies and salad served together) in the spacious dining room or breezy terrace. The best thing about it is the panoramic view over the town and countryside.

Sa Plaça (☎ 971 829352; Carrer de la Ciutat 18; mains €7-12) A simple but charming pizzeria just off the Plaça Conqueridor, this is a great spot for a quick lunch or pizza to go.

Bar Parisien (☎ 971 835440; Carrer de la Ciutat 18; mains €11-19) An appealing mix of old and new draws a sophisticated crowd to this stylish restaurant, famed for its fresh market cuisine, Moroccan specialities (served Sundays only) and exquisite desserts. Occasional concerts at night.

Getting There & Away

Nine bus lines service Artà, all of them coming and going from the bus stops flanking Carrer Costa i Llobera at the main entrance to town. Major lines include Bus 411 to Palma (€8.10, one hour 20 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) via Manacor (€2.40, 25 minutes) and Bus 446 to Alcúdia (€4.80, 50 minutes, six daily Monday to Saturday) and Port de Pollença (€5.60, one hour).

PARC NATURAL DE LA PENÍNSULA DE LLEVANT

About 5km north of Artà begins the Parc Natural de la Península de Llevant, a mountainous park covering a good chunk of the Serra de Llevant mountain range, culminating in the Cap de Ferrutx.

This often windswept and rugged territory is popular with bird-watchers – cormorants and Audouin's gulls are common – and offers the hiker plenty of options in a fairly small space. A classic walk takes you through the

heart of the park from **S'Alquera Vella d'Avall** (where you can park – take the Ma3333 north of Artà for the **Ermita de Betlem** and follow the signposted turn off right at Km4.7) to the coast and a little beach at **S'Arenalet des Verger**. Reckon on two hours' walking time. To reach the same point from the east along the coast, you could start at **Cala Estreta** (where it is also possible to park). This walk follows the coast to **Cala Matzoc**, on past the medieval watchtower **Torre d'Albarca** and west. It takes another hour to reach **S'Arenalet des Verger**. Beyond that, the coast becomes harder to negotiate.

The **park office** (☎ 971 836828; Carrer de l'Estel 2) in central Artà (virtually on Plaça d'Espanya) can help with itinerary maps. It also stages guided walks, generally in Catalan and Spanish only, Saturdays from 10am until noon.

CAPDEPERA

pop 11,074

Eight kilometres due east of Artà, this small, dusty village is at first glance a bit run-down, but if you stick around for a visit its charms shine through. Most people head straight to the top of the village, where the early 14th-century **Castell de Capdepera** (☎ 971 818746; adult/child €2/1.50; 11 9am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4.45pm Nov-Mar) stands guard. A walled complex built on the ruins of a Moorish fortress, the castle was constructed under the orders of Jaume II (son of the conquering Jaume I), who envisioned it as the boundary of a protected town.

The **church**, a simple stone affair, contains a valuable wooden crucifix dating to the 14th century but is otherwise fairly nondescript. The watchtower, called **Torre Miquel Nunis**, predates the rest of the castle and is probably of Moorish

construction. In the 1800s a taller, round tower was built inside the original rectangular one.

In the town below, you can grab a coffee or quick lunch at one of the quaint cafés lining the **Plaça Orient**. On Wednesdays, a small fresh market sets up here.

Things around here are generally calm and quiet, except during festivals like **Sant Bartomeu**, a week of exhibits, concerts, parades and fireworks (18 to 25 August). Other festivals include **Sant Antoni** (Saint Anthony's feast day; 17 January), which includes a traditional animal-blessing ceremony, the **mercat medieval** (medieval market; third weekend in May) and **L'Esperança** (Virgin of Hope's feast day; 18 December).

For accommodation in the area, **Cases de Son Barbassa** (☎ 971 565776; www.sonbarbassa.com; Camí de Son Barbassa, Capdepera; s/d €144/246; 11 Feb-Nov; p a i s) is a lovely rural estate with a 16th-century stone tower watching over it and is dotted with olive and almond trees. The hotel itself has 12 rooms, all individually decorated in a rustic chic style that preserves the original architectural elements of the house. The hotel is located just off the road to Cala Mesquida.

Bus 411 links Capdepera to Palma (€9.05, 1½ hours, up to five daily), via Artà (€1.10, 10 minutes) and Manacor (€3.30, 35 minutes). Bus 441 runs along the east coast, stopping at all the major resorts, including Porto Cristo (€2.75, 55 minutes, up to 10 daily) and Cala d'Or (€7.75, one hour 25 minutes).

CALA RATJADA

pop 5960

With its tight hub of a town centre, a handful of petite sandy beaches and a pretty promenade meandering along a rocky, wave-beaten

coast, Cala Ratjada is easily the most photogenic of the large eastern resorts. Still, the place is very popular with German tourists and is not immune to overcrowding, especially at the height of summer. To find a quiet spot to lay your towel you might choose to head to one of the coves just out of town.

The main drag, **Carrer de l'Agulla**, has several worthy shops, but it's marred by a string of tacky Chinese restaurants, cheapo souvenir shops and video games rooms. More-stylish shopping options are found along **Carrer de Elionor Servera**. Along the seafront, the **Passeig Marítim** (aka **Avinguda América**) provides the ideal spot for an evening stroll, while the sprawling **harbour** nearby is an endless chain of restaurants, bars and ice-cream parlours.

Information

MYM Informàtica (☎ 971 565636; Carrer de Nereides 32; internet per hr €2; 11 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, 5-11pm Sun) Check your email at this tidy spot.

Tourist office (☎ 971 563033; www.ajcapdepera.net; Carrer del Castellet 5; 11 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat, 9am-3.30pm Mon) This small office off the Plaça dels Pins has a wealth of information about nearby attractions.

Sights & Activities

BEACHES & WATER SPORTS

Cala Ratjada's most accessible beach is the busy **Platja de Son Moll**, just in front of **Passeig Marítim** in the centre of town. Perpetually crowded with sunbaked tourists, it's one long carpet of sizzling flesh in the summer.

If you don't mind the walk, drive, bike or tourist-train ride, you're much better off heading either north or south of the resort to lovely and less-crowded beaches. North of town is the **Platja de Cala Agulla**, a calm bay bathed by turquoise waters and hemmed in by hills blanketed in pine trees. There's precious little development to be seen from the sand, but the beach itself is packed with umbrellas for rent. Just north of Cala Agulla is the quieter **Platja de ses Covasses**, where the lack of a wide beach keeps visitors at bay.

Just south of Cala Ratjada is **Font de Sa Cala**, a beach suburb accessible via the tourist train where the crystalline waters are perfect for snorkelling. The serene beach is surrounded by a harshly beautiful rocky coast.

Divers can get their scuba fix at **Mero Diving** (☎ 971 565467; www.mero-diving.com; Avinguda de Na

GOLF IN NORTHEASTERN MALLORCA

A handful of golf courses are within easy reach of Artà, Capdepera, Cala Ratjada and Cala Millor. Find well-maintained greens and great views at the following places:

- **Capdepera Golf** (☎ 971 818500; www.golfcapdepera.com; Carretera Artà-Capdepera Km3.5; 18 holes €75; 11 8am-7pm)
- **Canyamel Golf** (☎ 971 841313; www.canyamelgolf.com; Avinguda d'es Cap Vermell, Urbanización Canyamel; 18 holes €80; 11 8am-8pm)
- **Pula Golf** (☎ 971 817034; www.pulagolf.com; Carretera Son Servera-Capdepera Km3; 18 holes €125; 11 8am-7pm)

Lliteres s/n; per dive from €29; 11 9am-6pm May-Oct) on **Cala Lliteres**, or at **Dive & Fun** (☎ 971 818036; www.mallorcading.de; Font de Sa Cala; per dive €46; 11 9am-6pm Apr-Nov), located in the **Beach Club Hotel** in **Font de Sa Cala**.

Illa Balear (☎ 971 810600; www.cruceroscreuers.com; adult/child return €22/11; 11 10am-4pm) runs cruises between Cala Ratjada and east-coast resorts like Cala Bona, Sa Coma and Porto Cristo.

WALKING & CYCLING

To beat the crowds, take the **walking trail** that leaves from the far northern end of **Cala Agulla** (aka **Cala Nau**) and head through the pines of a protected natural area toward the pristine **Cala Mesquida**, a beach backed with dunes. The round trip is 10km. Along the way, a smaller trail veers off to the right at the signpost for the 'torre', the **Talaia de Son Jaumell** watchtower. The trail (7km round trip from Cala Agulla) is marked with red dots, and the reward at the end is a spectacular panoramic view.

You can rent bicycles as well as in-line skates and mopeds at **JB Bicis** (☎ 971 565178; Carrer de Nereides s/n; bike rental per day €8; 11 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 5-7pm Sat & Sun). **Mountain bikes** are the speciality at **M Bike** (☎ 639 417796; www.m-bike.com; Carrer de l'Agulla; bike rental per day €10-28; 11 9am-12.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11am & 6pm (for returns only) Sat, 10am-11am & 5-6pm Sun).

The tourist office offers daily guided hikes or bike trips May through to October.

HORSEBACK RIDING

Stables where you can sign up for day trips and equestrian classes are popular in and

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Heading north from Cala Ratjada, you'll find a wonderfully undeveloped stretch of coastline specked with beaches. Long-time favourites of nudists, these out-of-the-way coves are no secret, but their lack of development has kept them calm and pristine.

Cala Mesquida, surrounded by sand dunes and a small housing development, is the most accessible, with free parking and regular bus service (Bus 471) from Cala Ratjada (25 minutes, up to 15 daily).

It requires more determination to access the undeveloped coves due west. **Cala Torta**, **Cala Mitjana** and the beachless **Cala Estreta** are all found at the end of a narrow road that ventures through the hills from Artà, yet a more interesting way to arrive is via the one-hour walking path from Cala Mesquida.

Further west, and following a 20-minute trek along the coast from Cala Estreta, **Cala Matzoc** comes into view. The spacious sandy beach backs onto a hill where the ruins of a *talayot* (watchtower) once used to guard the coast from pirates still stands.

of Canyamel. Although the dramatic lighting (sometimes in disco-lounge-like colours) may seem hokey, there's no doubting that this is a seriously beautiful work of nature.

The guided visits, which last 25 minutes to 40 minutes depending on the size of the group and are offered in English, German, Spanish and French, lead visitors through an unassuming fissure in the rock wall that buffers the coast. Soon you'll find yourself in a soaring vestibule, walking along a raised footpath past the 22-metre-tall 'Queen of Columns' and through several other rooms, including the 'Chamber of Purgatory' and 'Chamber of Hell'. The interesting stalactites and stalagmites are the stars of the show, although the management tries to add a little spice to the visit with light-and-sound features.

To get to the caves, follow the signs toward the Coves d'Artà from the Pm404 coastal highway that runs between Capdepera and Son Servera. The tourist boats run by **Barcas Coral** (☎ 971 563622; to Font de sa Cala/Cala Ratjada €10/12; ↷ Apr-Oct) make three 45-minute trips daily in high season between Cala Ratjada and the caves, stopping at Font de sa Cala on the way. A series of steep stone steps means that there is no disabled access.

After a visit to the caves, head just a few hundred metres south down the coast to the pleasant **Platja de Canyamel**, a busy but not overbuilt beach resort. Just 3km off the shore stands the famed **Torre de Canyamel** (☎ 971 841134; Carretera Artà-Canyamel; admission €3; ↷ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat), a defence tower of Muslim origin. A short drive away, on a little dirt

path near Canyamel Golf, is an even older reminder of the past, the ancient settlement **Claper des Gegant** (↷ 10am-6pm), featuring a circular *talayot*, defensive walls and several rooms.

SON SERVERA & AROUND

pop 10,950

The inland agricultural village Son Servera may seem like little more than a quick blip on the highway to the coast, but it is worth a brief stop. Settled since ancient times (the countryside is scattered with megalithic monuments) and an agricultural village since the 13th century, Son Servera enjoys a privileged setting among woods, meadows and groves of almond and fig trees. This is prime cycling territory, and many popular routes trace the country roads branching out from town.

In town, you can't miss the unfinished **iglesia nueva** (new church), which was begun in 1905 but left partially built when the money ran out 25 years later. These days occasional concerts are held in the neogothic shell that would have been the church's choir stall and main nave. Also look out for the **Pont d'en Calet** aqueduct, on the Manacor road at the town entrance.

On Friday a fresh market sets up in town, and on the second Sunday of each month, a flea market is held on the **Plaça de Sant Joan**. Important festivals include **Sant Antoni** (17 January) and the holy week preceding Easter, when **Good Friday** sees an elaborate re-enactment of the taking down of Christ's body from the cross.

JAIME FERRIOL, OWNER OF MERO DIVING

Jaime Ferriol has been diving on Mallorca since 1969, when he opened Mero Diving (Spain's oldest dive shop) in the heart of Cala Ratjada. After nearly 40 years of diving in the cave-rich waters around Cala Ratjada, he says he 'wouldn't trade this place for anything'.

Why is Cala Ratjada a great place to dive? It's famous for its underwater caves, like La Catedral, Jaume I, Jaume II and Jaume III. The mouths of the caves are only 7m or 8m below the surface, but the caves extend up to 150m into the earth, so you need to be an experienced diver to explore them.

What is your favourite dive spot? I love a place we call the 'Big Cheese'. It's a rock so full of holes that it looks like a huge piece of Swiss cheese.

When is the best time to dive here? You can dive May through to the end of October, but the very best times are in September and October, when you'll see more marine life and when there aren't so many people.

What species can divers expect to see? We spot barracudas, tunas, dolphin fish and many other species.

Several rural hotels inhabit picturesque farmhouses nearby. **Elegant El Encinar** (☎ 971 183860; www.elencinardearta.com; PM-4041 Km3; r €90-170; ↷ Mar-Oct; p a s), off the highway that runs from Artà to Son Servera, is an 18th-century farmhouse that has been tastefully converted into an intimate 12-room hotel surrounded by lush gardens. Details such as the locally woven *roba de llenguès* (striped cloth) textiles in the bedrooms, and the lounge with fireplace and library add a homy touch.

Overlooking the Pula golf course and run by the same owners, **Petit Hotel Cases de Pula** (☎ 971 567492; www.pulagolf.com; Finca Pula s/n; r €121-199; p a s) is a beautifully restored 16th-century estate. Ten immaculate rooms (most of them sprawling suites) offer indulgence and comfort in a luxuriously rustic setting.

Bus 414 links Son Servera with Palma (€7.85, two hours, twice daily Monday to Saturday) via Cala Millor, Porto Cristo and Manacor.

CALA MILLOR TO PORTOCOLOM

The coast stretching from Cala Millor to Portocolom is either loved or loathed, depending on who's talking. For the millions of tourists who descend every year on its sandy beaches and splash in its gentle waves, this place is paradise. But for those who mourn the loss of Mallorca's once-pristine coastline, the abundance of gleaming white hotels and sparkling turquoise swimming pools is nothing short of an abhorrence.

If you're looking for all-inclusive mega-resorts, look no further. Cala Millor, S'Illet and Cales de Mallorca have bargain-basement accommodation, all-you-can-eat buffets aplenty, and so many restaurants touting food 'just like mum makes' that you could feel as though you'd never left home.

If, however, you're seeking a quieter, more Mallorquin style of holiday, don't despair. This stretch of coastline is popular for a reason – it's undeniably beautiful. And the crowd-weary don't have to shy away. Stay in one of the cosy rural hotels and drive, cycle or hike to off-the-beaten-path beaches such as **Cala Romàntica** or **Cala Varques**, or dine in one of the farmhouse-style restaurants that hide just beyond the bustle.

CALA MILLOR & AROUND

Too bad you can't keep a place this pretty a secret. At twilight, when the sun turns the sky violet and the water a soft shade of aquamarine, you can almost imagine that the concrete jungle inland was just a mirage. Alas, by day it's all too obvious that tall apartments and hotels stretch as far as the eye can see, and a big KFC is one of the more prominent restaurants on the coast. The saving grace of Cala Millor (Best Cove, a dubious name) is that its nearly 2km-long beach is large enough to absorb masses of sun worshippers on all but the busiest summer days. Also, the seaside promenade running behind it is an enjoyable place for a stroll.

Get a map and brochures about local attractions at the **tourist office** (☎ 971 585864; www.visitcalamillor.com; Passeig Marítim s/n; ↷ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat), a kiosk right on the promenade. Another, larger office is located in the town hall. Get online at **Cala Millor Cyber Centre** (☎ 971 587557; Avinguda d'en Joan Servera Camps 1; per hr €1.50; ↷ 10am-2pm & 4-9pm Mon-Sat).

To escape the crowds, set off for a challenging seaside hike to the **Castell de n'Amer**, which overlooks the sea.

South of Cala Millor, near-unbroken development continues south through the mushrooming resorts of **Son Moro**, **Sa Coma**, **S'Illet**, **Cala Moreia** and **Cala Moranda**. The only people likely to go to these sprawling examples of out-of-control urbanisation are those who have booked package holidays in these hotels.

Beyond the resort sprawl is the **Safari-Zoo** (☎ 971 810909; Carretera Portocristo-Son Servera Km5; adult/child €13/9; ↷ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar), where you see wild animals from the comfort of your car. If anything, it's an interesting cool-day activity.

Just north of Cala Millor the construction boom gives one last sputter at the former fishing village of **Cala Bona**, a resort that's managed to hang on to at least a few of its fisherfolk. There is no natural beach here, although thanks to modern technology three small coves have been topped off with imported sand. Just beyond them stretches a lovely rocky coastline.

Bus lines 441, 446, 447 and others run up and down the east coast, linking Cala Millor with Cala Bona and resorts such as **Cala d'Or** (€6.85, 1¼ hours). Bus 412 heads to Palma (€8.20, 1½ hours, up to 15 daily). To get to the

airport, book the **Ultramar Express** (€ 902 102521; per person €18) airport transfer service.

PORTO CRISTO

pop 6620

Home to Mallorca's grandest caves, Porto Cristo is above all a day-trip destination and attracts thousands of would-be spelunkers to

its vast underground caverns. It's true that as a resort it lacks some of the bang of glitzy destinations elsewhere on the coast, but what Porto Cristo is missing in glamour it makes up for in unassuming charm.

First established as the medieval fishing port of Manacor (although few historical constructions remain), it later became one of the

island's first beach hot spots thanks to its calm natural harbour. The town's glory has faded, but its setting on a pristine harbour is as pretty as it ever was, and the fact that so many of its visitors bus out at the end of the day is just added appeal for those that like their seaside holiday on the quiet side.

The **tourist office** (€ 971 815103; www.manacor.org; Carrer del Moll; h 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) sits at the end of a wharf. A sprawling **market** (h 9am-2pm Sun) selling produce, artisan goods and the tacky souvenirs sold in resorts across the globe takes over the **Passeig de la Sirena** on Sunday mornings.

Sights & Activities

Most of the activity crowds alongside the **Passeig de la Sirena** and the harbour, where a small crowded beach provides the perfect place to observe the comings and goings of fishing boats and yachts in the marina. Beside the beach you'll find the **Coves Blanques**, a handful of small caves that were inhabited during the Talayotic period and were later used by fishers for shelter.

No-one comes to Porto Cristo without passing by one of the grand underground caves nearby. A 15-minute walk from the centre on the southern edge of town, the **Coves del Drac** (Dragon's Caves; € 971 820753; www.cuevasdeldrac.com; Carretera de les Coves s/n; admission €9.50; h entry on the hr 10am-5pm mid-Mar-Oct, staggered entries 10.45am-4.30pm Nov-mid-Mar) attract a long stream of visitors who descend 25m underground to follow a guide through breathtakingly beautiful (and cleverly exploited) chambers, theatrically lit in bright colours and adorned with impressive stalactites and stalagmites. The hour-long tour delves into the most beautiful parts of the 2km-long limestone tunnel and also includes a visit to the subterranean lake where a classical music concert is held. Get here early, especially in summer, as the long lines can have you waiting for hours.

With a very similar style and only slightly less tourist appeal are the **Coves dels Hams** (Hams Caves; € 971 820988; www.cuevas-hams.com; Carretera Manacor-Portocristo Km11; adult/child €12/free; h 10am-5pm Mar-Oct, 11am-4.30pm Nov-Apr), another underground labyrinth where you can walk around marvellous rock formations and hear an underground lakeside concert. For €4 more, you can also see a 15-minute digitally enhanced video about Jules Verne inside a cave auditorium.

Scarcely 150m from the Coves del Drac is the **Aquari de Mallorca** (Aquarium of Mallorca; € 971 820871; Carrer del Gambi 7; adult/child €5/2.50; h 10.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-3pm Nov-Mar), a modern aquarium focused on Mediterranean marine life.

To swim with the fish, head to **Skualo Adventure Sports & Dive Centre** (€ 971 822739; www.sportextreme.com; Passeig del Cap d'es Toll; per dive €35, plus equipment €16; h 9am-6pm Mon-Sat). Or take a cruise on a **glass-bottom cruise boat**. Several companies, including **Illa Balear** (€ 971 810600; www.cruceroscreuers.com; adult/child up to €22/11; h 10am-4pm) tour the coast.

Festivals & Events

Porto Cristo goes all out with a bonfire and 'dance of the devils' for the eve of **Sant Antoni** (16 and 17 January), the traditional blessing of animals. Another party comes 16 July with the feast day of the patroness of fisherfolk, the **Verge del Carme**.

Sleeping

Hotel Sol i Vida (€ 971 821074; Avinguda d'en Joan Servera Camps 11; s/d from €26/43; s) The friendly roadside Hotel Sol i Vida sits between the aquarium and the Coves del Drac. Rooms are stark and services simple, but with a pool, bar-restaurant and tennis court this is a cheap and cheery place to stay.

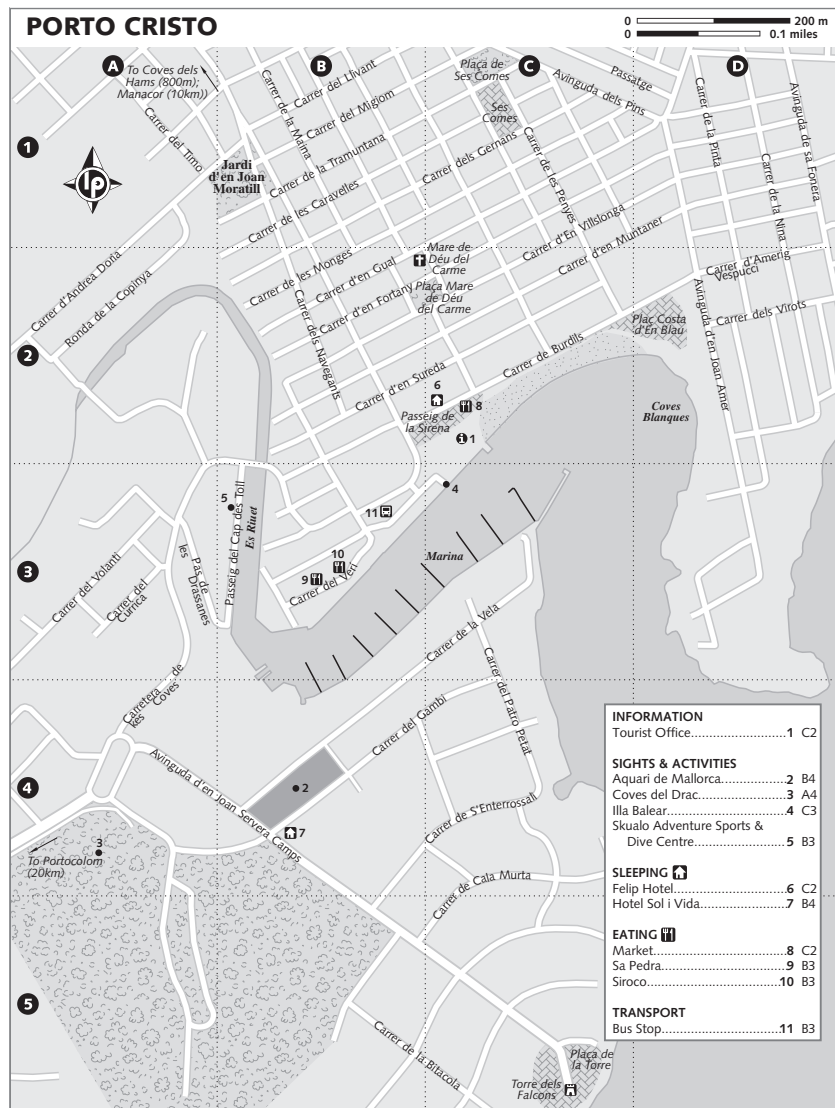
Felip Hotel (€ 971 820750; Carrer de Burdils 41; s/d from €70/110; a i s) Since 1890 this once-stately hotel has dominated Porto Cristo. While no longer the grande dame it once was, the Felip still retains an old-world elegance. Rooms are on the small side but artfully placed mirrors make the most of the space. Dark wood, bronze lamps, marbled bathrooms and bullfight-themed art on the walls reveal its old-fashioned soul.

Eating

Running along the waterfront is a string of restaurants all serving essentially the same thing: a wonderful seaside view accompanied by an internationally flavoured menu of salads, rice dishes, grilled fish, and meats smothered in sauces.

Siroco (€ 971 822444; Carrer del Veri s/n; mains €11-17; h May-Oct) For inventive seafood dishes and Mallorcan specialities, this waterfront restaurant is a great option.

Sa Pedra (€ 971 820932; Carrer del Veri s/n; mains €12-25; h May-Oct) The varied menu at this upscale



eatery includes everything from pasta to paella; there's a little something for everyone.

Getting There & Away

A dozen bus lines serve Porto Cristo, among them lines 412 and 414 to Palma (€7.20, 1½ hours, up to 11 daily) via Manacor and Vilafranca; lines 441, 442 and 443 connect to the east-coast resorts (varied prices, scores of buses); and line 445's once-daily trip north to Port de Pollença (€7.05, two hours 10 minutes) via Artà (€3.40, one hour).

SOUTH OF PORTO CRISTO

The coast running south of Porto Cristo is pocked with a series of beautiful, unspoiled coves, many of them signposted from the Ma4014 highway linking Porto Cristo and Portocolom. The largest and most developed of the bunch is *Cala Romàntica*, where a few hotels form one of the island's more serene resorts and a rough promenade has been hewn out of the rock face by the sea.

Beyond *Cala Romàntica* you can seek out caves and caves such as *Cala Varques* (known for the complex cave on the cliff above the cove), *Cala Sequer*, *Cova del Pilar* or *Cala Magraner* (see right). None has direct car access; plan on walking at least the last few minutes.

In this area, you could sleep at the fairy-tale *Es Rafal Podent* (☎ 971 183130; www.topfincas.com; Carretera Manacor-Cales de Mallorca Km6; r €85-154; p a s), a restored 15th-century manor house on an organic farm. The house has been divided into five romantic apartments, ideal for couples or families. You'll find it on a country lane 4km from *Cala Romàntica*.

Nearby, you can stay at the charming rural hotel *Es Picot* (☎ 667 735276; www.espicot.com; Camí de Sa Mola Km3; r €113; p a s), 5km from *Cala Varques*. Six simply decorated rooms with terraces and amazing views comprise this intimate hotel, whose restaurant featuring 'authentic Mallorcan cuisine' is a real treat. Free internet access for laptops from the terrace.

CALES DE MALLORCA & AROUND

A series of once-pristine beaches and coves was the *raison d'être* for the proliferation of unattractive mega-hotels that goes by the name of Cales de Mallorca. The prison-style architecture of a few of these 1970s monstrosities is undeserving of the surroundings – broad white-sand beaches walled by limestone cliffs and caressed by a calm sea. Unsurprisingly,

this area is popular with beach goers looking for easy access to sea, sun and sand.

When you just can't handle another day at the beach, there are other diversions. Just beyond the resort you'll find *Jumaica* (☎ 971 833979; Carretera Portocolom-Porto Cristo Km4.5; adult/child €6/3; r 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4.30pm Oct-Mar), a small tropical park complete with banana grove, where young'uns may get a kick out of the small animals and birds.

For a dose of history, seek out the prehistoric settlement of *S'Hospitalet Vell*, at Km1 of the Carretera de Cales de Mallorca. There's no visitors centre at this 2200-year-old *talayotic* site; just let yourself in and pull the gate closed behind you.

Cales de Mallorca offers no end of large hotels, many of which can be booked only through big travel agencies, but you don't have to veer far from the coast to discover places with infinitely more charm. Just 3km from *Cala Murada* sits serene *S'Aigo* (☎ 971 833050; www.fincasaigo.com; Carretera Portocolom-Portocolom Km2.4; r €230-345; p s), an ivy-smothered rural estate whose two self-catering stone houses sleep 12 people each. Ideal for groups and families, the rustic stone houses are set amid the shady Mallorcan countryside.

WALK: FOUR COVES

Just north of Cales de Mallorca the chaos of the resorts falls away and nature takes over. Over the 6km between Cales de Mallorca and *Cala Romàntica*, there's only pine-specked rocky coves, pitted cliff faces and the aquamarine of the Mediterranean. The walk begins at *Finca Can Roig*, a rural estate near Cales de Mallorca. To get there, take the Carretera Porto Cristo-Portocolom (Ma4014) and at Km6 turn east toward Cales de Mallorca. Continue 2.2km and veer left; after 200m you'll reach the entrance to *Can Roig*.

Leave your car here and strike out along the wide, rocky track that parallels the coast. After about 15 minutes, a slightly narrower path turns off to the right. Follow it alongside a small gully and through patches of trees to reach *Cala Bota*, a sheltered cove with a small sandy beach. A steep trail meanders around and above the cove, giving a bird's-eye view of its beauty.

From *Cala Bota*, backtrack on the trail you came in on, and turn right toward the next cove, *Cala Vigili*. The track brings you to a smaller trail that heads off right down to this narrow cove,



WALK FACTS

Start Finca Can Roig
Finish Finca Can Roig
Distance 13km
Duration 2½ hours

where a small shelter houses a dinghy. (The walk down takes about 10 minutes.)

Return to the main trail and continue to your right. You'll pass a small trail on your right, but keep straight until you come upon a second path. Take it towards the third cove, *Cala Pilota*, backed by vertigo-inducing cliffs.

Head back to the main trail and walk just a couple of minutes before coming to a fork. Take the left-hand path, which rolls down to the final cove, *Cala Magraner*, the grandest of the bunch both in size and beauty. The trail is wide at first but stops in a clearing; another, narrower trail leads you the last few minutes. After splashing in the crystalline waters, exploring the small caves that dot the rock and keeping an eye out for the rock climbers that frequent this spot, turn back and walk the full length of the main trail back to *Finca Can Roig*.

PORTOCOLOM

pop 3813

A sleepy place as far as east-coast holiday resorts go, Portocolom cradles a natural harbour (one of the few on the island) and at-

tracts German, British and Spanish families in equal numbers. Fishing boats, sailing boats and the odd luxury yacht bob in the calm waters here, creating an idyllic view from the bars, restaurants, villas and hotels that line the horseshoe-shaped bay. Within reach of town are some fine beaches, such as the immaculate little cove of *Cala Marçal* and, on the northern end of town, *Cala's Arenal*, the locals' preferred beach.

There's not much left of the old port town that was once a key part of the island's wine exports. The village itself is a mix of haphazardly built apartment buildings scattered among hardware stores and banks, and shady streets lined with big villas.

Get maps and brochures galore at the tourist office (☎ 971 826084; Avinguda de Cala Marçal 15; r 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 4-6pm Tue & Thu, 10am-1pm Sat). Next door, check your email at the Eurocafé (☎ 971825081; Avinguda de Cala Marçal 10; per hr €2; r 11am-10pm).

Activities

Most of the activities here are focused on the Mediterranean. Scuba fans can head to *Bahia Azul Dive Center* (☎ 971 825280; www.bahia-azul.de; Ronda de Creuer Balear 78; per dive €39; r 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-noon Sun Apr-Oct), the diving centre in the *Hostal Bahia Azul* that offers courses, try dives and equipment rental. To get out on the water, sign up for a day cruise with *Caribia Yacht Charters* (☎ 656 288179; www.caribia-yachtcharters.com; Carrer del Llop 3, no 6; adult/child €95/67; r 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat). You can also hire skippered yachts by the day (from €500) or week (from €2390), or rent a motorboat by the day (from €260 per day if you have a boating license). You could also take a kayak trip with *Mallorca Aquatica* (☎ 649 077313; Avinguda de Cala Marçal 14; 2hr tour €18; r 10am-6pm May-Oct), which acts as a diving centre as well and offers dives from €40.

Walkers and cyclists have plenty of options nearby. South of town, starting from *Cala Marçal*, an 8km walking trail links a half-dozen coves, many of which are accessible only by foot or boat, eventually reaching *Cala Ferrera*. The tourist office can provide a map and route description for this and other excursions. Inland, many of the country lanes are signposted for cyclists and are also used by equestrians. You can rent a bike at *Moto Sprint* (☎ 971 824858; Avinguda de Cala Marçal; per day €9.50; r 9am-1pm & 4-9pm Apr-Oct).

