

# 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.

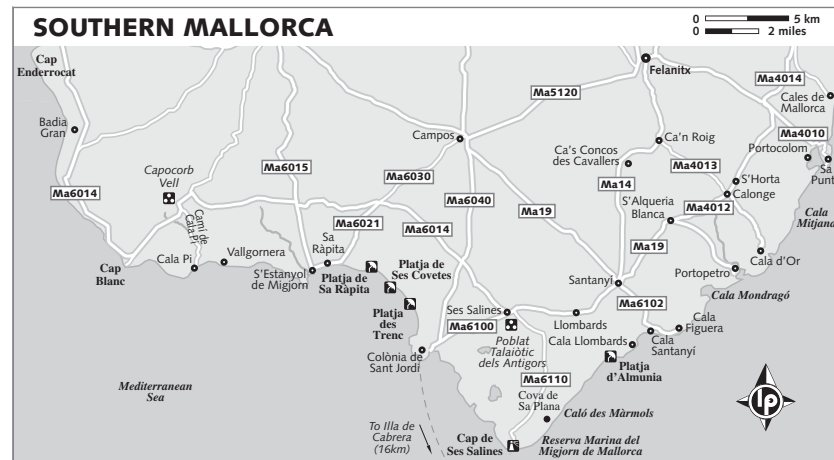
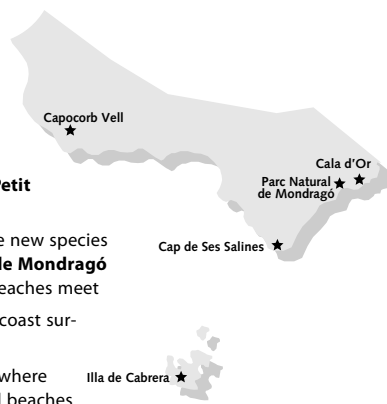
Beyond the cliffs are intimate coves and long beaches, true marvels of nature that wow with their beauty. Whether they're the hard-to-access coves enshrouded by fjord-like cliffs, or silky sweeps of sand backed by pines and junipers, these are some of Mallorca's best beaches. Still, the area's often 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 unspoiled 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 unspoiled, 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)

### GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Take the Ma6014 highway south from S'Arenal to explore the lesser-known reaches of the southern coast. Continue down this prim two-lane highway and turn right at the sign pointing to 'Cap Blanc'. You'll soon come across a lighthouse and desolate-seeming military compound. Park beside the fence.

You can't reach the lighthouse, but a trail setting off from the fence leads you on a five-minute walk through scrubby bushes and over the pitted rocks to a sheer cliff. The views of the Mediterranean are nothing short of majestic. Breezy and sunny, this is a fabulous picnic spot, but be careful with kids or dogs; there is no fence and the drop is abrupt. Be sure to bring the camera; the ruddy-coloured cliffs running up the coast are begging to be photographed and there are often fishing birds nearby.

better-preserved ancient sites on the island, you can wander along maze-like pathways and beside rough stone structures that date to 1000 BC. The site, which includes 28 dwellings and five *talayots* (tower-like structures made with stone and, in the case of Capocorb Vell, no mortar) was probably used through Roman times.

The site sits at a bend in the highway and has ample parking. There are toilets and a modest bar where you can get drinks and snacks. You'll need a car or bike to get here; the site is 4km north of Cala Pi, 5km north of Cap Blanc, and 12km south of Lluçmajor on the Ma6014 highway.

### SA RÀPITA & AROUND

The rural Ma6014 highway parallels the coast for several kilometres, rolling past the gnarled olive trees of old Mallorcan estates and the crumbling rock walls that define their borders. This is a popular route for cyclists, so if you're driving take special care with hills and sharp curves.

Several even smaller highways veer off towards the coast. The Camí de Cala Pi sets off towards the urbanisation of **Vallgornera** (3km east of Cala Pi and accessible by road from the resort), where a half-dozen **caves** burrow their way through the rock underfoot. Some are truly impressive, with underground rivers and lakes or spectacular stalactites and stalagmites. The most famous cave here, **Cova des Pas de Vallgornera**, is also the Balearics' longest, at 6435m. Most caves can be visited but you should go with a guide or local expert, such as **Jose Antonio Encinas** (☎ 609 372888; [www.inforber.com/mallorcaverde](http://www.inforber.com/mallorcaverde) in Spanish), an avid hiker and spelunker who acts as a walking and caving guide in his spare time. A coastal trail linking Vallgornera and S'Enstanyol de

Migjorn (about 5km) leads past some of the caves.

Further east, turn left on the Ma6015 to reach sleepy Sa Ràpita, a seaside village whose rocky shoreline, harangued by waves, provides a scenic diversion from the rest of the shabby town. One glowing exception to this less-than-inspiring destination is the fabulous Restaurant Ca'n Pep (opposite).

Past Sa Ràpita, the Ma6030 highway steers inland and shoots up towards Campos. From the highway, you could turn right onto the potholed country roads that bounce their way east towards the ramshackle hamlet of **Ses Covetes**. A €5 parking fee (which includes a free post-beach shower) allows you to wander among a handful of informal bars and restaurants and down to the long and silky **Platja de Ses Covetes**. This unspoilt (although not uncrowded) beach forms part of the **Reserva Marina del Migjorn de Mallorca** (a protected marine reserve), and no buildings mar its backdrop of dunes and pines. If you walk east along the shorefront, you'll soon come upon **Platja des Trenc** (p187), which is similarly pristine.

### Sleeping & Eating

This area is a popular lunch or picnic destination, yet few people make it their home base. There are no large hotels to speak of, but a growing number of farmhouses-turned-guest-houses make it possible to stay nearby.

**Son Perdiu** (☎ 971 100995; [www.sonperdiu.com](http://www.sonperdiu.com); Pm6014, Km32; house €295-545; 🍷 🍷) Families or groups looking for a bit of rest and relaxation will find it in spades at Son Perdiu, a lovely stone farmhouse that sleeps 14 and dates to 1805.

**Can Canals** (☎ 971 640757; [www.cancanals.es](http://www.cancanals.es); Carretera Campos-Sa Ràpita, Km7; s/d €65/110; 🍷 closed Jan; 📞) A rustic restaurant (mains €16 to €25) and

guesthouse near Ses Covetes where you can sample Mallorcan specialities like fried octopus, roasted lamb or the traditional vegetable stew, *tumbet*. The 12 well-appointed rooms are located inside the lovely farmhouse and are simply oozing with Mallorcan charm.

**our pick Restaurant Ca'n Pep** (☎ 971 640102; Avinguda Miramar 30; mains €8-24; 🍷 Tue-Sun Dec-Oct). One of many seafood eateries in Sa Ràpita, this local institution is rightfully famous for its seafood and rice dishes. The décor is predictably maritime and the menu has a helpful visual listing of all fish served, although some, like the local *cap roig* (red head) are so ugly that you may rather not know what you're eating!

### Getting There & Away

Bus 515 runs to and from Palma (€4.55, one hour, up to five times daily).

## COLÒNIA DE SANT JORDI & AROUND

More than any other resort area in Mallorca, the southeastern tip of the island celebrates its natural beauty. West of the family resort Colònia de Sant Jordi stretches the 7km of the unspoilt **Platja des Trenc**, while to the southeast a vast nature reserve protects a long swathe of rocky coastline softened by pristine beaches. Offshore sits the Balearics' only national park, the **Parc Nacional Marítim-Terrestre de l'Arxipèlag de Cabrera** (usually

simplified to 'Illa de Cabrera'), while inland a smattering of preserved *talayotic* sites interrupt a serene, pastoral landscape.

### COLÒNIA DE SANT JORDI

pop 2380

The biggest beach resort of the southern coast, Colònia de Sant Jordi has long been the summering spot of choice for Palma residents. A prim town whose well-laid-out streets form a chequerboard across the hilly landscape, the Colònia is a family-friendly place surrounded by some of the best and least-developed beaches on Mallorca.

The town itself is none too thrilling, but then again no-one is here to admire the architecture when there's such gorgeous scenery nearby. A supremely romantic boardwalk follows the rocky coast all the way around the Colònia. It's ideal for a hand-in-hand stroll or a leisurely bike ride.

The **tourist office** (☎ 971 656073; [www.mallorcainfo.com](http://www.mallorcainfo.com); Carrer del Doctor Barraquer 5; 🍷 8am-2pm Mon-Fri), located inside the town civic centre on the eastern side of town, has stacks of information, including brochures that outline popular walking and cycling trails.

### Activities

Colònia de Sant Jordi's main attractions are its wonderful beaches, both in town and beyond its borders. Best known is the **Platja des Trenc** (p187), a 20-minute walk from the northwestern end of town.

This is excellent cycling territory; myriad trails cut through the placid countryside near

### JOAN CALDÉS, HOW TO RUN A CASA RURAL

In 1997, then 50-year-old Joan Caldés and his family turned the estate house on their family farm into a *casa rural*. In doing this they joined hundreds of others across the island who have tuned in to the growing number of travellers who, instead of holidaying in a busy resort, want a taste of the quiet countryside.

**Why is rural tourism and agrotourism so popular now?** Because on the coasts we've let people build too much and now all the hotels there seem the same. People want something different. They want to be in the countryside, relax, go at their own pace, get away from the crowds.

**What's special about your casa rural?** This house has been in the family forever, I don't even know when we got it. It's at least 200 years old and we haven't changed it much at all, we only added the modern touches necessary to make it a comfortable, inviting house.

**Why did you decide to invest in rural tourism?** Up until 10 years ago, a caretaker lived in this house and we lived off the farmland surrounding it. We still grow grain and vegetables, and we have sheep and goats, but these days it's very hard to live off the land. So we decided to open the house to travellers. People love being here in the country, but I've never had anyone ask to help with the farm work!

town. Rent bikes at **Team Double J** (☎ 971 655765; www.teamdoublej.com; Avinguda de la Primavera 9; per day from €10; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Feb-Oct), where the team can also give you information on area routes.

Right in the middle of town, the concrete gives way to the fenced-in fields of the **Escola Hípica Reitschule** (☎ 971 655055; Avinguda de la Primavera 26; rides per hr €18; ☎ 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat), a ranch where anyone aged four and up can take one-hour horse-riding lessons.

Get on the water with a little help from **Boat Service** (☎ 659 980659; www.boatsevice.es; Platja d'es Port; boat hire per hr from €10; ☎ 10am-7pm May-Oct), a friendly company near the tourist office that rents sail boats, pedal boats, and small motor boats. It also offers intensive sailing courses (five hours for adults, 10 hours for kids) for €120.

## Sleeping

Although there are a few big hotels, most of what you'll find here is smaller in scale and geared towards families, cyclists or independent travellers.

**Pensiónes Turó** (☎ 971 655057; hostalesturo@telefonica.net; Plaça es Dolç s/n; per person €21-33; ☎ May-Oct) It's definitely worth paying a bit extra for a room with a view at this homy *hostal* right on the water. The 15 rooms, which sit above the Restaurant Es Zuro (right), are pleasantly bright and breezy, with crisp white bed linens and tiled floors. But the real draw is the incredible location. Half-board available.

**Hostal Restaurante Playa** (☎ 971 655256; www.restauranteplaya.com; Carrer Major 25; s €29-36, d €48-60) Traditional Mallorcan fabrics, rustic wooden furniture and a cheerful Mediterranean air make this unfussy hotel by the water an excellent option. Downstairs a seaside restaurant serves island specialities.

**Hostal Colonial** (☎ 971 655278; Carrer de l'Enginer Gabriel Roca 9; per person €32, 2-/4-person apt €70/82; ☎ Mar-Nov) A fresh yellow-and blue-*décor* marks the eight orderly rooms in this friendly, family-run hotel in the centre of town. It also has a famed *gelateria* (right), and bikes are available for guests.

**S'Hort d'es Turó** (☎ 971 649575; www.hortdesturo.com; Carretera Ses Salines-Colònia de Sant Jordi Km2.5; per person €52-71; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Just beyond Colònia de Sant Jordi is a handful of excellent rural hotels and guesthouses, including this restored manor house, now home to five family-friendly apartments.

**Aparthotel Isla de Cabrera** (☎ 971 655000; www.hotelislabrera.com; Avinguda del Marquès de Palmer s/n; 2-person apt incl breakfast & dinner €86-170; ☎ May-Oct; ☎) The 78 one-bedroom apartments of this three-storey hotel a few blocks off the beach are sunny and spick-and-span, with a cheery Mediterranean *décor*, balconies, sofa beds and view of the pool area. The same company also runs the Hotel Isla de Cabrera (☎ 971 655000; Carrer del Roció s/n), where rooms have a similar style (doubles €115).

## Eating & Drinking

Colònia de Sant Jordi's cafés and restaurants crowd mainly along the waterfront. By night all attention is on the Avinguda de Primavera, where nearly all the bars are located.

**Restaurant Es Zuro** (☎ 971 655057; Plaça es Dolç s/n; mains €8-14; ☎ May-Oct) Simple, no-frills fare like spaghetti, Spanish omelettes, and lamp chops are served on the huge seaside terrace. The food is homy and filling but it's the setting that's really amazing.

**Marisol** (☎ 971 655070; Carrer de l'Enginer Gabriel Roca; mains €7-19; ☎ Thu-Tue Feb-Oct) Enjoy Marisol's pastas and pizzas, fish and shellfish, rice dishes and stews at a table on the spacious covered terrace by the water.

**Gelateria Colonial** (☎ 971 655256; Carrer de l'Enginer Gabriel Roca 9) Ice cream-lovers from across Mallorca know this wonderful family-run *gelateria* in the heart of town. There's also a traditional Mallorcan restaurant (mains €15 to €23) serving fresh fish and vegetables grown in their garden. Upstairs is the Hostal Colonial (left).

**Restaurante-Bar Pep Serra** (☎ 971 655399; Carrer de l'Enginer Gabriel Roca 87; mains €15-25; ☎ May-Oct) Famous for its *paella* and seafood (it has its own fishing boat), this appealingly unsophisticated yet still pricey waterfront eatery has a few sidewalk tables and a laid-back air.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 502 links the town to Palma (€5.45, up to eight times a day, 1¼ hours).

## PARC NACIONAL MARÍTIM-TERRESTRE DE L'ARXIPÈLAG DE CABRERA

Nineteen uninhabited islands and islets make up the only national park in the Balearic Islands, the **Parc Nacional Marítim-Terrestre de l'Arxipèlag de Cabrera** (☎ 971 725010; Illa de Cabrera; ☎ 10.30am-3.30pm), an archipelago whose dry,

hilly islands are known for their bird life, rich marine environment and abundant lizard populations. The **Illa de Cabrera** is the largest island of the archipelago and the only one you can visit, sits just 16km off the coast of Colònia de Sant Jordi and is accessible by boat from the resort. Other islands are used for wildlife research.

Although private boats can come to Cabrera if they've requested navigation and anchoring permits in advance from the park administration, nearly all visitors arrive on the organised cruises led by **Excursions a Cabrera** (☎ 971 649034; www.excursionsacabrera.com; Carrer de l'Explanada del Port; adult/child €31/15; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm May-Oct). Only 200 people per day (300 in August) are allowed to visit this highly protected natural area, so reserve your place at least a day ahead. The one-hour trip leaves daily at 9.30am and returns by about 4.30pm.

After sailing past a few small islands swarming with birds, you'll be dropped off on Cabrera, where there's a tiny information office, public restrooms, a canteen and a covered eating area. Although Excursions a Cabrera offers a lunch for €7, you're better off bringing a picnic.

During the day you're pretty much on your own. Many people simply enjoy the wonderfully calm beaches, **Sa Plageta** and **S'Espalmador**. Even the Spanish royal family comes to these sandy shores to escape the crowds on the main island! You could also take one of the guided walks offered by rangers. The island's fragile ecosystem means that at times the park seems overprotected; there are few trails open to the public, and to walk most of them you'll either need to tag along with a guide or request permission from the park office.

On the cruise back to Colònia de Sant Jordi, the boat stops in **Sa Cova Blava**, a gorgeous cave with crystalline waters where passengers can take a dip.

At the time of writing, a new park visitors centre was under construction.

## Sights & Activities

The best-known walking route heads up to a restored 14th-century **castle**, a fortress once used to keep pirates off the island. It was later converted into a prison for French soldiers, more than 5000 of whom died after being abandoned in 1809 towards the end of the Peninsular War. The 30-minute walk (guided walks are sometimes available) to the castle

meanders along the northern side of the island before taking you to the 80m-high bluff where the castle looms. There are great views over the bay.

Guides also sometimes lead the 20-minute walk to **Es Celler**, a farmhouse owned by the Feliu family, who owned the entire island in the early 20th century. It's now a small museum with history and culture exhibits. Nearby stands a monument to the French prisoners who died on Cabrera.

Other possible routes lead to the **N'Ensiola lighthouse** (four hours; permission required), the southern sierra of **Serra de Ses Figueres** (2½ hours, permission required), or the highest point of the island, the 172m **Picamosques** (three hours, permission required).

The island is a wonderful place for **scuba diving** or **snorkelling**. While you need special permission to dive here, you can snorkel off the beach. Or, in July and August, sign up for the guided snorkelling excursions offered by park rangers.

## Wildlife

The Balearic lizard is the best-known species on Cabrera. This small lizard runs the roost on the archipelago, where it has few enemies and has been allowed to prosper and multiply.

This is prime territory for bird-watching: marine birds, birds of prey and migrating birds all call Cabrera home at least part of the year. Common species include the fisher eagle, the endangered Balearic shearwater, Audouin's gull, Cory's shearwater, shag, osprey, Eleonora's falcon and peregrine falcon, as well as 130 or so migrating birds.

## PLATJA DES TRENC

**Our pick** **Platja des Trenc**, the largest undeveloped beach on Mallorca, runs 3km northwest from the southern edge of Colònia Sant Jordi. With long stretches of blindingly white sand and an idyllic setting among pine trees and rolling dunes, des Trenc proves just how pretty the Mallorcan coast was before development got out of hand.

Ironically, it's thanks to the out-of-control building sprees elsewhere on the island that this strip of sand has remained so pristine. Locals outraged by the concrete jungles of places like S'Arenal and Cales de Mallorca fought long and hard to save des Trenc from a similar fate, digging their heels in and eventually freezing the 1980s plan to convert this

### TIME 'MARCHES' ON: THE STORY OF JOAN MARCH

The March family owns nearly 3% of Mallorcan territory, not to mention a hefty portion of the island's grandest manor houses, its weightiest art collections and its biggest bank. The family patriarch, Joan March Ordinas, was the world's seventh-richest person when he died in 1962, leaving his family extensive land holdings and a string of rumours about the questionable sources of his money. Revered and reviled in Mallorca, Joan March was an astute businessman who founded the successful Banca March and invested heavily in Mallorca.

These days the family runs ambitious cultural foundations that dabble in everything from art and archaeology to theatre and music. March's descendants still own more than 100 sq km of land on the island and no matter what their critics say, they've proven to be excellent stewards of it, preserving the vast majority as forest and farmland. The largest *possessió*, or estate, is Sa Vall (opposite), an unspoilt natural paradise near Ses Salines.

For more on the family and its cultural foundations, check out [www.march.es](http://www.march.es) and [www.fundbmarch.es](http://www.fundbmarch.es).

area into a sprawling golf and beach resort, even after some building permits had already been issued. Des Trenc is now considered a 'natural area of special interest'. Officially a nudist beach, it draws a mixed clothed and unclothed crowd.

While there are no buildings in sight, the beach here is no secret, so don't expect to be sunbathing alone. Sun loungers and umbrellas are for rent, and there's a bar where you can get food.

To reach the parking lot (per vehicle €6), take the signed turn-off west off Ma6040. The narrow, paved road passes mounds of yellowed salt at the Salines de Llevant salt fields then winds its way alongside fields sprinkled with wildflowers to reach the low-lying marsh area near the beach. Expect to walk a few hundred metres to des Trenc itself.

### SES SALINES

Used as a source of salt since the days of the Romans, Ses Salines (the Salt Fields) is an unassuming agricultural centre whose main attractions lie beyond the village itself. Replete with walking and cycling trails, this is above all a rural area where nature reigns supreme. The fact that it is so beautifully unspoilt is thanks in large part to the March family (above), who own the island's largest *possessió* (rural estate), Sa Vall, covering 35 sq km of the municipality.

Just outside Ses Salines is the sprawling **Botanicactus** (☎ 971 649494; [www.botanicactus.com](http://www.botanicactus.com); Carretera Ses Salines-Santanyi km1; adult/child €7/4; ☞ 9am-7.30pm May-Aug, 9am-6pm Sep-Apr), which claims to be the largest botanical garden in Europe. Come to wander among its 1000-

plus species of Mediterranean, exotic and wetland plants.

One kilometre out of Ses Salines, heading towards Colònia de Sant Jordi, turn left at the sign for **Poblat Talaiòtic dels Antigors** to sample the area's ancient history. Past the town cemetery and down an unpaved road, the site appears on your left. There's no visitors' centre and only rusted and virtually illegible plaques, so use your imagination to see how these low stone walls would have once constituted a prehistoric settlement.

Follow the Ma6110 highway south of Llombards to reach the **Cap de Ses Salines**, a beautiful bluff with a lighthouse. There's not much here at the cape, but stretching out along either side of it are wonderfully unspoilt beaches protected by the Reserva Marina del Migjorn. The eastern beaches are hewn out of the coastal cliffs that run up towards exquisitely beautiful coves like **Caló des Màrmols**, beaches like the **Platja d'Almunia** and caves like **Cova de Sa Plana**. A rugged coastal path links them all in an 8km trail. The western beaches are covered in the following pages.

### WALK: CAP DE SES SALINES TO COLÒNIA SANT JORDI

Pristine coastline can be hard to come by in Mallorca, but this walk has it in abundance. A coastal trail between **Cap de Ses Salines** and **Colònia de Sant Jordi**, it's a flat but rocky trek across battered coastal rock outcroppings and forgotten sandy beaches perfect for swimming. Be sure to take your bathing suit and plenty of water; there are no fresh water sources and very little shade along the way.

Ideally, you would leave one car at the trail-head and another at the walk's end in Colònia de Sant Jordi, although you could also plan to walk back, or take a taxi (☎ 971 655278; the 20-minute ride should cost about €20).

Leave your car on the shoulder of the road at Cap de Ses Salines, which is signposted from the main highway. From here, head towards the sea and turn right (west). You will see the Mediterranean glistening in a thousand shades of blue to your left, the Illa de Cabrera in the distance and the extensive **Sa Vall** estate, owned by the March family, bordering the walk on your right. This private estate is an endless expanse of scrubby Mediterranean vegetation and is home to two important wetland areas; it's an ideal bird-watching location. You can usually ar-

range a visit through the **ajuntament** (town hall; ☎ 971 649454).

After 30 minutes of a fairly flat walk over the pitted, ruddy-coloured calcareous rocks that populate the coast here (the same ones as those used in Palma's Cathedral, p68), you'll come upon the first 'virgin' beach of the walk, **Platja des Cargol**, which is protected by a natural rock pier. In summer this place can get quite crowded on land and at sea; it's a popular spot to drop anchor.

Plants you'll see along the trail include wild asparagus and leafy *azucena de mar* (sea purslane), whose fragrant white flowers appear in July and August. Along the beaches, dried *poseidonia* (poseidon grass) leaves wash up from the sea floor. Most bathers turn their noses up at these unattractive brown invaders, but *poseidonia* (an endangered sea grass) plays a vital role in marine biodiversity, producing more oxygen and biomass than any other plant. You might also spot cormorants, one of the most common fishing birds.

Continue along the coast to reach other coves and beaches, like **Cala en Tugores** (one hour further on) **Platja de Ses Roquetes**, **Platja**

#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Cap de Ses Salines

**Finish** Colònia de Sant Jordi

**Distance** 9km

**Duration** three hours

#### SOUTHERN MALLORCA WALK



**des Carbó** (after 2¼ hours) and finally **Platja des Dolc** (after three hours). The beaches, with their fine-as-flour sand and gentle waves the colour of turquoise, are truly breathtaking. It can get crowded here in summer but the idyllic setting amid juniper trees and squawking seagulls ensures that it always feels like an escape.

When you get to the town of Colònia de Sant Jordi, you've reached the end of the walk.

## SANTANYÍ TO CALA D'OR

The resorts that creep up the island's eastern flank have grown into a more or less continuous stream of hotels, seafood restaurants and umbrella-packed beaches. The only exception to the sprawl in the busiest part of southern Mallorca is the Parc Natural de Mondragó, a bit of fresh air in the form of immaculate beaches rimmed with ruddy cliffs and junipers.

### SANTANYÍ & AROUND

The busy inland town of Santanyí differs from most of the settlements nearby in that tourism is a mere side effect of its charm, and not its sole purpose. A historic town with a long and often troubled past, it's now the social and commercial meeting place for those living along the coast and in the countryside nearby. Market days (Wednesdays and Saturdays) are the busiest times, but any fine afternoon will see a crowd enjoying the terrace bars of the main square.

Up to six buses head to Palma (€5.55, 1½ hours).

### Cala Santanyí

Santanyí's only real beach access, Cala Santanyí is popular although not overdeveloped. The spacious beach is the star in a scenic show that also includes a gorgeous, cliff-lined cove and impossibly cobalt-coloured waters. The beach sits at the bottom of a ravine of sorts where there is a sandy car park (walking or cycling back to town or to the resort centre requires some substantial leg strength).

A small path leads away from Cala Santanyí and along the coast, where the natural rock arch **El Pontàs** rises out of the surf. This is a popular spot to **snorkel**.

### Cala Llombards

A petite cove defined by rough rock walls topped with pines, **Cala Llombards** is a truly beautiful place. A small informal beach-hut **bar** and rows of sun loungers shaded by palm-leaf umbrellas constitute the extent of human intervention. The main thing that's on offer is the soul-satisfying view – turquoise waters, a sandy beach and the reddish rocks of the cliffs that lead like a promenade towards the sea.

To reach Cala Llombards, follow the sign off the Ma6102 down a stone-walled road bordered by meadows of grazing sheep. Follow the rather circuitous route through a residential area to reach the beach.

### CALA FIGUERA

If you could see Cala Figuera from the air, it would look like a snake with its jaws open wide, biting into the pine trees and low buildings of the resort. Although the town itself is rather dumpy and offers little in the way of entertainment, the romantic, restaurant-lined port is one of the prettiest on the east coast. A few yachts and pleasure cruisers line up beside the painted fishing boats, but Cala Figuera retains its air of old-world authenticity. Local fishers really still fish here, threading their way down the winding inlet before dawn and returning to the port to mend their nets.

You can rent bikes at **Bike Total** (☎ 971 645271; Carrer de Bernareggi 26; bicycles per day €9; 🕒 9-11am & 6-7pm). Several good trails (some of them steep) start out from here.

### Sleeping

Most of Cala Figuera's lodging options are strung out along the pedestrian Carrer de la Verge del Carme that runs up from the port. There are no big hotels, but just about everyone has rooms or apartments for rent.

**Hostal-Restaurant Ca'n Jordi** (☎ 971 645035; www.osteria-hostal-canjordi.com; Carrer de la Verge del Carme 58; s/d €28/42) The simple, spacious rooms with balconies offer splendid views over the inlet. The owners also rent out a few apartments and villas.

**Hotel Villa Sirena** (☎ 971 645303; www.hotelvillasirena.com; Carrer de la Verge del Carme 37 d €66, 2-/4-person apt €71/116; 🕒 May-Oct; 📺) Perched on a bluff at the edge of the resort, this pleasant two-star hotel has enviable views of the sea. Rooms aren't fancy, but extras like a breezy seaside terrace make this a great choice.

**Apartamentos Casa Marina** (☎ 971 645178; www.apartamentoscasamarina.com; Carrer de la Marina 26; 4-person apt €75) Small yet inviting, and done up in a typically Mediterranean style, with simple wooden furniture, bright linens and balconies, these town-centre apartments are a great deal.

### Eating

Most of the eateries are also dotted along the town's main commercial strip.

**Es Port** (☎ 971 645140; Carrer de la Verge del Carme 88; mains €8-17) The intoxicating aroma of pizzas and calzones will draw you to this popular family-friendly place.

**Mistral Restaurante** (☎ 971 645118; Carrer de la Verge del Carme 42; mains €10-15) Choose between tasty, typical tapas or more-elaborate dishes like grilled sole fish with potatoes at this stylish spot (on your right as you descend into the port).

**L'Arcada** (☎ 971 645178; Carrer de la Verge del Carme 80; mains €10-19) Although the pizzas here are popular, this cosy spot also does mean renditions of typical Mallorcan dishes like *tumbet*, stuffed eggplant and various seafood dishes.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 502 makes the trip from Palma (€6, 1½ hours) via Colònia de Sant Jordi and Santanyí no more than three times a day, Monday through Saturday.

### PARC NATURAL DE MONDRAGÓ

A natural park encompassing beaches, dunes, wetlands, coastal cliffs and inland agricultural land, the 785-hectare **Parc Natural de Mondragó** is a beautiful area for swimming or hiking. Most people who head this way come to take a dip in the lovely **Cala Mondragó**, one of the most attractive coves on the east coast. Sheltered by large rocky outcrops and fringed by pine trees, it's formed by a string of three protected sandy beaches (two with a bar each and one with a restaurant) that are connected by rocky footpaths.

**Bird-watchers** have a ball with the varied species found in the area, which include falcons and turtledoves. There are myriad plant species as well, including marine thistles, houseleeks, violets and sea lilies. Taking one of the **walking trails** that crisscross the park will give you plenty of bird-watching opportunities. Get detailed route information at the small **park office** (☎ 971 181022; 🕒 9am-4pm) by the parking lot.

One of the best times to see the Cala Mondragó is by night, when the sunbathers abandon their posts and the beach is left eerily quiet. Experience it yourself by staying at the **Hotel Playa Mondragó** (☎ 971 657752; www.playamondrago.com; Cala Mondragó; per person from €30; 📺 📺 📺), a modest hotel barely 50m back from one of the beaches. It's a tranquil option, and the better rooms have balconies and fine sea views. It also operates its own restaurant downstairs, although there are a couple of other informal beach restaurants here as well.

Just 2km south of Portopetro, the beach is accessible via a web of country roads and bike paths. Bus 507 links Mondragó with Cala d'Or (€1.25, 30 minutes, seven times daily Monday through Friday) and a few other seaside resorts.

### PORTOPETRO

There's something in the air in Portopetro. This intimate fishing port's slower pace and laid-back style is immediately apparent as you stroll its steep, shady streets and look out over the protected natural inlet that originally made this town such a hit with fishers.

Although the ballooning urban sprawl of Cala d'Or (just to the north) means that the two are nearly touching geographically, tame Portopetro is worlds away from the excesses of its neighbour. Centred on a boat-lined inlet and surrounded by residential estates, Portopetro is really just a cluster of harbourside bars and restaurants, with a couple of small beaches nearby.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Restaurant Celler Ca'n Xina** (☎ 971 658559; Passeig del Port 52; mains €5-18; 🕒 May-Oct) Serving delicious Mallorcan specialities like *trampó*, paella, stuffed eggplant and the catch of the day, this homy eatery boasts a shady terrace by the port.

**our pick** **La Caracola** (☎ 971 657013; Avinguda del Port 40; mains €6-12) In addition to the usual suspects of paella and pasta, this enduringly popular place has been pleasing diners with plates of stuffed squid, homemade soups and *tumbet* for 20 years. Not the flashiest place in town, it's usually the most crowded, which is always a good sign.

**Varadero** (☎ 971 657428; Passeig del Port 61; mains €12-27; 🕒 Mar-Nov; 📺) This chic new place has caused a stir across the island with its frisky



international menu and postdinner chill-out lounge, when low music infuses the teak-furnished waterside terrace with a tropical feel. At lunch sample the creative salads and sandwiches (€4 to €14).

**Blau PortoPetro** (☎ 902 222070; www.blau-hotels.com; Avinguda des Far 12; per person from €55 ☎ Mar-Nov; P ☎ ☎ ☎) The only five-star hotel in the vicinity, the Blau made a real splash when it opened in 2005. A chic spa and hotel with all the amenities, this is no intimate boutique hotel, but its 300-plus rooms offer the ultimate in style and comfort.

### Getting There & Away

Up to five buses a day head from Portopetro to Palma (€6, 1½ hours) and Cala d'Or (€1.25, 10 minutes).

## CALA D'OR

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Although the pretty cove beaches and calm, azure waters are still here, it's hard to imagine this flashy, overgrown resort as the quaint fishing village of its roots. These days, Cala d'Or (literally 'Cove of Gold') represents tour-

istic sprawl at its most untamed. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to its haphazardly laid-out streets, which are lined with high-rise hotels and strung out along a series of coves and small beaches. Each *cala* has its own main drag, where pubs, restaurants and souvenir shops flourish, making it very difficult to get a handle on the place.

The largest *calas* from west to east are **Cala Egos**, where there's a tiny, overcrowded beach; **Cala Llonga** (Port Petit), home to the marina; **Cala d'Or** (Cala Petita), with its tree-lined shores; **Cala Gran** (Big Cove), with the widest beach of the lot; **Cala Esmeralda**, considered the prettiest cove; and **Cala Ferrera**, a busy, long beach backed by hotels.

Cala d'Or's real claim to fame is its yacht marina, **Port Petit**, one of the most glamorous on Mallorca. It's thanks in large part to the fashionable yacht set that Cala d'Or is earning a reputation as a stylish, live-large kind of place. The upmarket restaurants around Cala Llonga are proof of the area's highbrow style.

Not everything here is ultra classy. Those who choose to base themselves in one of the

countless cheap 'all-inclusive' hotels that fill Cala d'Or should be willing to share their holiday with thousands of other sun seekers (most from the UK) and should think about renting a car to escape the hordes.

### Information

Get information at the **tourist office** (☎ 971 826084; Avinguda de Cala Llonga, s/n; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri, plus 4-6pm Tue & Thu, 10am-1pm Sat). Check email (and get coffee) at **Cib@café** (☎ 971 060202; Avinguda de Calogne 20; per hr €4; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat Mar, Apr & Oct-Dec, 10am-10pm Mon-Sat May-Sep).

### Activities

There is no shortage of companies offering boat trips up and down the coast. **Sea Riders** (☎ 615 998732; Cala Llonga; 35-min tours adult/child €21/16; ☎ 11.30am-3.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, 11.30am-4.30pm Jul & Aug), in Cala Llonga, offers a kid-friendly boat ride as well as a faster 'adrenaline' ride.

Rent a bike and cycling equipment at **Moto Sprint** (☎ 971 650907; Carrer d'en Perico Pomar 5; bicycles per day €6-12, babyseats per day €1; ☎ 8am-1pm & 4.30-8pm). Or sign up for one of several activities (a kayak excursion, hike, cycling trip or quad outing) with **Xplore Mallorca** (☎ 971 659007; www.xploremallorca.com; day trips €15-50; ☎ May-Oct).

### Sleeping

Most hotels here cater almost exclusively to package tourists and may be impossible to book on the spot. There are, however, a few exceptions.

**Hotel Residencia San Francisco** (☎ 971 657072; antonia@viajestravelldor.com; Avinguda de Tagomago 18; s €21-43, d €24-48; ☎ May-Oct) An unassuming yet perfectly comfortable guesthouse on one of the main inland streets, San Francisco boasts prim rooms with balconies and modern bathrooms. Rooms overlooking the back patio are breezy and quiet.

**D'Or Hotel** (☎ 971 657249; www.hotelcalador.com; Avinguda de Bèlgica 33; s/d €105/180; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎ ☎) Built in 1932 and later used as a military barracks, the D'Or has returned to life as a 95-room hotel overlooking the rocky Cala d'Or. The tidy rooms have balconies and garden

or sea views, and there's a fine restaurant downstairs.

**Ca'n Bessol** (☎ 639 694910; www.canbessol.com; Carrer de la Sisena Volta 287; r €118-168; ☎ ☎) Just off the highway linking S'Horta with Cala Ferrera, on the outskirts of Cala d'Or, lies this sprawling family-run rural hotel, a fantastic alternative to the towers found closer to the resort. Four romantic rooms with antique furnishings overlook a lush garden and pool area.

### Eating & Drinking

There are loads and loads of smoky bars and predictably bad pizzerias in Cala d'Or, but if you try a bit harder you can uncover the town's hidden jewels. The Port Petit is a great place to go for high-quality seafood and atmospheric dining.

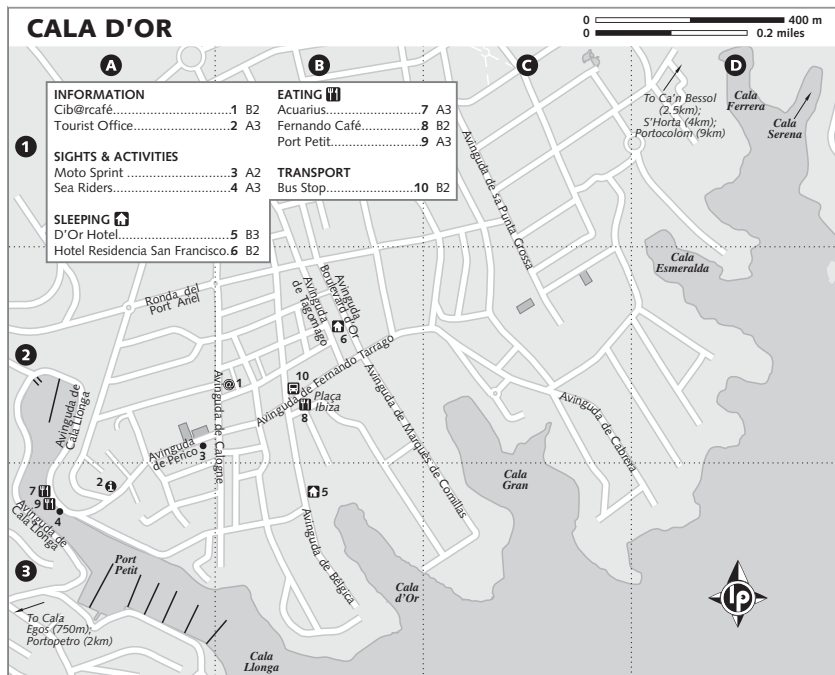
**Acuaris** (☎ 971 659876; Port Petit 308; mains €4-27; ☎ Feb-Nov) A wide variety of salads, fresh fish dishes and a mean *frit Mallorca* (Mallorcan-style fried lamb) are served on this spacious terrace overlooking the yacht port.

**Fernando Café** (☎ 971 657011; Plaça Ibiza 31; mains €6-15; ☎ May-Oct) Amid the cookie-cutter bars and restaurants, this sophisticated place is a real find. The food – pizza, pastas and fish dishes – isn't wildly different from standard resort fare, but the romantic atmosphere created by white tablecloths, candles and a garden setting make it special. After dinner enjoy the excellent coffees, teas and cocktails.

**our pick Port Petit** (☎ 971 643039; Port Petit; lunch menú €19, mains €23-28, dinner menú €39-55) One of Mallorca's top tables, the high-end Port Petit offers innovative spins on classic Mallorcan seafood and produce, served on its sleek, covered upstairs terrace looking down over the yacht port.

### Getting There & Away

Bus 501 heads to Portopetro (€1.25, 10 minutes, five times a day), then on to Palma (€6.80, 1 hour 20 minutes, up to six times a day). Bus 441 runs along the eastern coast, stopping at all the major resorts, before reaching Capdepera (€7.75, 85 minutes, up to 10 times a day).



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