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# Who needs the beach when you have this?

Forget the buckets and spades. Majorca's countryside offers everything you could want on a happy family holiday, as **Tony Kelly** discovers

WORLD PICTURES



With its pretty orchards and charming hideaways, the Majorcan interior appeals to people of all ages. There are plenty of intriguing trips within easy reach



"DO WE have to go to the beach today?" asked eight-year-old Adam on the last day of our summer holiday in Majorca. "Couldn't we just stay here instead?"

I have been visiting Majorca for several years and have grown to love the interior of the island, with its orchards and vineyards, pretty little villages and romantic rural hideaways. Yet think of a Mediterranean holiday with children, in high summer, and it has to be buckets and spades.

Would it be possible to enjoy a peaceful stay with the family away from the high-rise resorts, or would we simply have a bored child on our hands? Would Adam enjoy the Majorcan countryside, or would the lure of the beach prove irresistible?

We stayed at Raims, a 17th-century manor house in Algaïda, 20km east of Palma. The owners produce wine on a nearby estate, and the name of the house means "grapes" in the Majorcan language. The outbuildings have been tastefully converted into five self-catering apartments, set around a pool in a shady garden of palm and orange trees. Steep stairs lead to the cellar where you can help yourselves to bottles of local wine.

Adam would have been happy to spend the whole holiday here. Each day began with a leisurely breakfast in the garden, dipping *ensaimadas* (fluffy Majorcan pastries) in cups of strong coffee. While my wife, Kate, and I finished breakfast, Adam would be up on the balcony potting balls at the pool table with the best view in the world, looking across to a monastery on the summit of a nearby mountain.

Afterwards there was the swimming pool to enjoy, and the added attraction of a freezer stocked with lemon and orange sorbet. Who needs a beach when you have all that?

Algaïda is a typical Majorcan town, not pretty enough to attract tourists and all the more authentic as a result.

Within five minutes we could be shopping in local bakeries, or sipping a coffee and watching a football match on TV in one of the cafés on the square. Because Raims is situated on a quiet road on the edge of town, it felt like a townhouse in the country, or perhaps a country house in the town, with a perfectly restored

windmill across the street. A short walk led to two excellent restaurants, one smart and expensive, the other rustic and cheap.

At Ca'l Dimoni ("the house of the devil"), sausages hung from the rafters and the walls were decorated with demonic masks. Tart green olives were served with country bread and a jug of red wine. We ordered roast suckling pig and grilled chicken and an omelette and chips for Adam. When the coffee arrived, the waiter put a bottle of herbal liqueur on the table. You don't get that in Palma Nova or Magaluf.

The one real tourist sight in Algaïda is the Ca'n Gordiola glass factory. When we told Adam we were going, he pronounced it "boring" but once there, was captivated as he gazed at workers blowing glass through long tubes and fashioning it with tongs before placing it in a roaring furnace. He didn't want to leave without spending his pocket money on a glass dolphin which now occupies pride of place in his room.

A narrow road from here, enclosed by dry-stone walls, leads towards the village of Santa Eugènia. Here we found Natura Parc, a small zoo and nature reserve featuring Majorcan varieties of farm animals as well as a butterfly house, flamingos, pelicans and black vultures. The biggest excitement occurred when a young German boy allowed a goat to escape from its pen and it had to be chased around the reserve by a keeper holding out a carob branch.

Another day we discovered a festival in the town of Felanitx, where we followed dancers, people in devil costumes and children on hobbyhorses in a procession through the streets. We had thrills and spills at Aquacity waterpark, where I split my trunks coming down a fast slide, the cause of much amusement for Adam and embarrassment for myself. And eventually we went to the beach.

If you are staying in one of the big resorts, you don't think about which beach to go to — you simply walk to the nearest. Staying in the middle of the island, we had a wide choice of beaches all within a 30- to 40-minute drive. When the locals head for the beach in summer, they go to the south coast, to wild, undevel-

## NEED TO KNOW

**Getting there:** Tony Kelly and family stayed at Raims (00 34 971 665157, [www.raims.es](http://www.raims.es)). An apartment costs from £70 per night, based on two sharing. Additional adults pay an extra £20 and children from 3 to 12 pay £10 per day. They flew with easyJet (0871 7500100,

[www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) from Stansted to Palma. Return flights start at £51. **Other options:** The launch of daily flights from Stansted to Palma on Air Berlin (0870 7388880, [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)) from £19 each way means more options for families visiting Majorca. A new website,

[www.mallorcaatradicional.com](http://www.mallorcaatradicional.com), has rural properties suitable for families. Several tour operators offer accommodation-only deals in response to the rise of low-cost flights — British Airways (0870 8509850, [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)) and bmibaby (0870 2642229, [www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com)) also fly to Palma. "Many clients book their flights direct," says John Fallon of Vintage Travel (0845 3440464, [www.vintagetravel.co.uk](http://www.vintagetravel.co.uk)), which features villas with private pools in unspoilt areas of Majorca. Mallorca Farmhouse Holidays (0118-947 3001, [www.mfh.co.uk](http://www.mfh.co.uk)) has a number of family properties in stunning rural locations. **Further information:** [www.visitbalears.com](http://www.visitbalears.com) Reading: Tony Kelly is the author of *Essential Mallorca* (AA, £4.99).



Adam Kelly did not miss the sea

oped beaches well away from the crowded tourist ghettos.

We drove southeast towards Campos and took a narrow lane through the salt pans to emerge behind the beach at Es Trenc, where the only facility is a dusty car park set up by an enterprising farmer in summer. Majorcan families played in the surf. Nudists sunbathed in the dunes. We ate our sand-

wiches with sand blowing in our faces and tested ourselves against the strong waves.

On the last day, we headed down to the coast, to the fishing village of Colònia de Sant Jordi, just around the headland from Es Trenc. We hired a pedalo and rode out to sea, where we swam with a view of Cabrera, the island off the south coast. We had lunch at a beachside pizzeria and got back to Raims in time for a final dip in the pool.

We sat on our own private terrace drinking wine beneath the palm trees before walking to dinner at our favourite local restaurant. In one day we had experienced both sides of Majorca, the fun of the seaside and the tranquility of the interior. Tired of package holidays but not yet tired of Majorca? Perhaps it is time to see the island from a different angle.

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