

# Stay in a historic palace in the heart of Palma's Old Town

Palacio Can Marqués is an 18th-century private residence turned luxury hotel

by **FRANCES HEDGES** 23/04/19



There was a time in the Noughties when Mallorca, much like Ibiza, became synonymous with hedonism: a place designed for off-the-leash teens and twenty-somethings – mostly the dreaded ‘Brits abroad’ – looking for wild nights out, well beyond the purview of their disapproving parents. Fortunately, over the past few years, the island has enjoyed something of a reappraisal, as travellers have begun to see it not purely as a clubbing mecca but rather as a place where art, culture and nature at its most spectacular combine to create a unique holiday destination.



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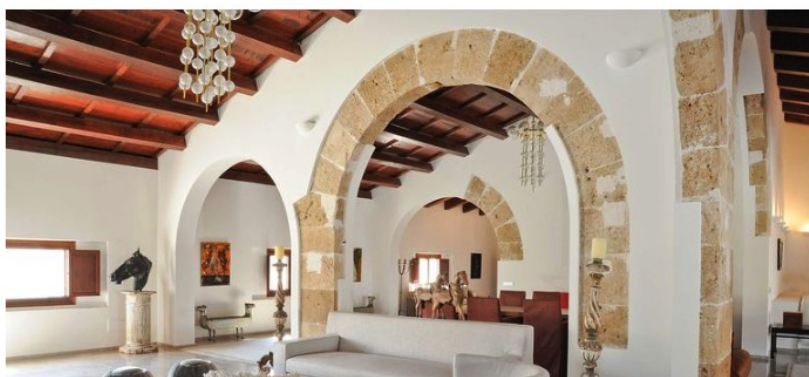
Palma, with its coastal location and wealth of historic fortifications, epitomises this

diversity. It's a youthful, lively city with its fair share of tapas bars, ice-cream vendors and nightlife spots, but it's also visibly steeped in history: the skyline is dominated by the majestic **Santa María cathedral**, a 13th-century Gothic edifice that overlooks the bay from its elevated position (do make time to go inside and see the extraordinary stained-glass windows and architectural features designed by Antoni Gaudí, who worked on a restoration project here between 1903 and 1914).



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To make the most of life in Palma, you need to stay in the heart of its historic Old Town, preferably in one of the traditional 18th-century residences, characterised by their soaring ceilings, alabaster columns and tranquil courtyards. **Palacio Can Marques**, a newly opened luxury hotel in the city's La Lonja district, is one such building. The conversion of this beautifully proportioned home, which for decades belonged to the Marques family, can only be described as a labour of love. Each of the 13 suites has its own unique details, from the six-metre ceilings and colossal panelled doors in Cathedral to the blush-pink furnishings in the feminine-looking Rose. My room for the weekend is Romance, which is remarkable for its enormous dressing-room and for its spacious, marble-floored bathroom, whose freestanding tub the concierge tells me is designed "for two". (As there's only one of me here on this occasion, I can practically swim in it.)





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It would be very easy to while away an entire weekend without leaving the hotel at all. Down in the atrium, with its sweeping staircases and imposing pillars, there's a bar where guests can enjoy a glass of cava and light tapas by way of aperitivo; you can soak up the sunshine in the palm-tree-lined courtyard or up on the roof terrace (preferably with a Gin Mare and tonic in hand); or, if the weather is bad, you can relax in the library with one of the many carefully chosen books that line the walls.



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square (Plaça Major) lined with bright yellow buildings. The city is also a haven for art lovers: meander up to **Es Baluard**, a museum of modern and contemporary art housed in an old military fortress, which not only offers spectacular views but is also home to an impressive permanent collection and innovative programme of temporary exhibitions (the video-installation artist Fabrizio Plessi is currently the subject of a fascinating solo show). Palma is also famous as the place where the artist Joan Miró chose to spend much of his later life, moving to the island in 1956 and creating more than a third of his entire oeuvre there until his death in 1983. The **Fundació Miró Mallorca**, where his workshops and studio have been preserved almost exactly as he left them, is well worth a visit: admire the artist's charcoal drawings, graffitied onto the walls; wander amid the picturesque sculpture gardens; and view a selection of his mature works in the thoughtfully curated museum.

Afterwards, return to the hotel to dine beneath vaulted ceilings at Restaurant Can Marques, which serves French classics such as Burgundy snails, salade Niçoise and sole Meunière – a welcome alternative to the ubiquitous paella and patatas bravas. If this all sounds a world away from the Mallorca you remember from those sangria-fuelled girls' holidays of yore, frankly, that's because it is.

*Palacio Can Marques, C/ Apuntadores 15, Palma de Mallorca. Suites start from £336 per night on a B&B basis, including private airport transfers. For more information about Palma, please visit [www.visitpalma.com](http://www.visitpalma.com).*