

Spain: Majorca, Sierra De Tramontana

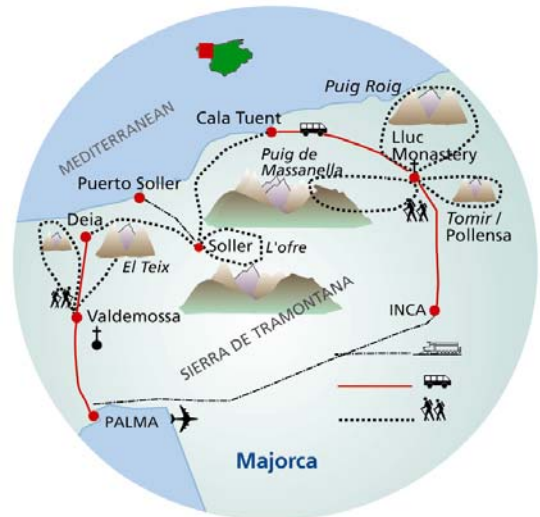
Tour code: JMJ

Revised: December 06

With peaks up to 1370m/4500ft, the Sierra de Tramontana is a rugged limestone mountain range, which runs parallel to the NW coast of the island, forming one of the most spectacular coastlines of the Mediterranean. Mountaintops are bare, but lower slopes are thickly forested with holm oak and Aleppo pine. In the settled valleys there are ancient terraces of olive, orange and almond groves. The range is the habitat of several endemics of flowering plants. A protected length of coastline includes an important bird sanctuary and you may see the rare European Black Vulture near Puig Roig. The villages of the mountains, such as Valldemosa, Soller, Deia, Biniaraix and Fornalutx are particularly attractive, with their mellow stonewalls and flower-bedecked balconies.

Our carefully compiled route descriptions take you to the peaks of El Teix (1063m), along the 19th century "Archduke's trail" above Valldemosa, and the fine viewpoint of Massanella peak (1351m) near Lluc monastery. We follow the restored Pilgrims' Way, which ascends a rugged barranco (gorge) from Biniaraix to Mirador d'Ofre. Also on our itinerary is the spectacular coastal footpath between Cuala Tuent and Mirador de ses Barques. Based at Soller for two nights you may choose to follow delightful footpaths to Deia, or take the vintage tram down to Puerto Soller for a boat trip to the beach of Sa Calobra (below the lofty cliffs which are the habitat of a wide range of seabirds including Eleonora's Falcon) or travel the vintage narrow-gauge railway to Palma and back.

Our tour is based on three centres, the Santuari (monastery) of Lluc, the cathedral town of Soller and Valldemosa, famous for its Carthusian monastery and for its associations with Chopin and the Austrian Archduke Ludwig.



Travel Information

Season: Mid-March to October. (However our accommodation may be heavily booked between mid-July and mid-September, when in addition it will be very hot and not ideal for walking). We strongly recommend that you start the tour on a Friday or Saturday, so that while staying at Lluc you will be able to complete the excellent Circuit of Puig Roig, a walk that is only open to the public on Sundays. For customers with full package from UK we normally arrange outward and return charter flights to and from Palma de Mallorca on Saturdays. Land only customers can start any day - but see note on Puig Roig walk earlier in this paragraph.

Nearest airport: Palma de Mallorca.

Arrival: Your first night's stay is at the Santuari de Lluc. Taxi fare direct from Palma airport to Lluc was about 60 Euros and journey time is about 1 hour. Alternatively one can travel by Airport bus (every 15mn service, journey time 20 mins.) to Palma bus and train station, then by train to Inca (service about every 40 mins. journey time 30 mins.) and a 20-minute taxi ride from Inca to Lluc. Total journey time by this method about 2 hours. You should aim to arrive by about 7pm although we can arrange for late dinner in advance if necessary, for those who will arrive

later than 8.30pm. Note that the Monastery doors are locked from 11pm so special arrangements have to be made if you arrive later than this.

End of Tour: The tour ends after breakfast on the morning of day 8 at Valldemosa. You can travel from Valldemosa to Palma airport either by bus (involving a not-difficult change of buses in Palma city centre) or by taxi fare about 36 Euros. Bus fare to Palma is about 6 Euros per person. Allow one hour by bus, 30 mins by taxi.

Travel options from the UK:

There are charter flights available on Saturdays from most regional airports as well as Gatwick. Palma is also linked via Madrid and Barcelona to the international scheduled airlines network, and it is possible to take (almost every day of the week) a scheduled flight via Madrid or Barcelona at an additional cost. Please note that we advise starting the tour on either a Friday or a Saturday (see paragraph 'Season' above).

Level of Difficulty

This tour is graded as Moderate

Fitness: This holiday should present no difficulties to anyone in reasonable condition, and accustomed to moderate hill walking.

Most of the walking is on well-defined footpaths, although there are a few stretches over rough ground. The ascent of peaks such as Masanella can be awkward for people who cannot cope with rocky terrain with a bit of scrambling.

Day stages: 5 to 7 hours walking per day on 4 days; shorter or optional walks on other days.

Waymarks: There is a limited amount of waymarking and signposting on our route, so in some places it is necessary to use maps and route notes. We supply contour maps to be used with our route notes. In case of mist on mountaintops it is advisable to have a compass. (As with all Mediterranean islands, the weather can change very quickly).

General information

Note:

Baths: it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

Breakfast: in Majorca usually consists of coffee and toast/croissant, if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Single Supplements: are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

Language: Note that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different bring a phrase book, try to learn a bit of Spanish!

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room please politely ask someone if you need assistance

Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is on a half board basis (evening meal and breakfast) throughout. Picnic lunch materials can be obtained from local shops.

□ **Nights 1, 2 & 3:** are spent in well-furnished rooms (not at all cell-like!) with en-suite facilities in the 17th Century monastery of Lluc. Some of the two-bedded rooms are more spacious with both beds normally double size. Clean sheets are provided but the monastic custom is that you make up your own beds. You also switch on the hot water immersion heater yourself. Rooms look either inwards over a peaceful courtyard or outwards to the surrounding thickly forested mountains. The Monastery clock is silent after 10pm. Meals are taken at an adjacent restaurant. The cuisine will be distinctively Mallorcan although with international overtones. There is choral singing in the monastery church at 19:30 on most evenings, which guests can attend.

□ **Nights 4 & 5:** are in a hotel of 2 star standard in the workaday but attractive mountain town of Soller. All rooms have *ensuite* shower and WC. The restaurant offers good traditional Mallorcan dishes.

□ **Nights 6 & 7:** are spent in an unclassified but very well kept hostel (simple pension) of homely character on a quiet street in the flower-bedecked hill village of Valldemosa. The rooms are not large and some are

awkwardly shaped, as the hostel has been converted from a private town house, but most have en suite facilities. There are views of the village and valley from the rooms.

The hostel is noted for its restaurant, which also serves a continental breakfast of freshly, baked hot croissants and rolls. Close by is the former Carthusian monastery where the composer Chopin and his girlfriend Georges Sand stayed in 1831. It is now a museum and well worth a visit. There are occasional piano recitals.

Picnic / packed lunches are not included in the tour cost, but bread and groceries can be bought in local shops at each of the tour's 3 centres on any day of the week except Mondays at Lluc when the shop is closed. However the refectory at Lluc can normally provide packed lunches if the shop is closed.

Outline Itinerary

□ **Day 1:** Fly to Palma and transfer by bus/train/taxi via Inca to Santuari de Lluc

□ **Day 2:** If this is a Sunday, a 14km/9mile/5-6hrs walk around the magnificent peak of Puig Roig. This is a longish day but not too strenuous and the way is clearly marked. It offers fine views of the rugged coastline and of the island's highest peak, Puig Mayor. Note: The landowner opens this route to the public only on Sundays.

□ **Day 3:** Weather permitting, the ascent of Massanella peak (1351m), the second highest peak and one of the finest viewpoints on the island, can be readily accomplished in about 6 hours on foot from Lluc. The lower slopes are thickly forested with holm oak, while above the Font de s'Avenc spring (views) there is open heathland and bare rock up to the summit. Steep in places.

□ **Day 4:** In the morning you and your baggage are transferred by taxi (included in tour price) from Lluc to the small coastal inlet of Cuala Tuent. While your luggage is taken on to Soller by taxi, you follow the magnificently scenic coastal footpath to Sa Costera and beyond, where it turns inland through olive groves to Mirador de ses Barques. From here there is an afternoon bus to Soller. The walk of about 8 miles/13km. 4 - 5 hours walking. Note the cathedral designed by Antonio Gaudi in the main square of Soller.

□ **Day 5:** 14 miles/ 22 km / 5 hours. A full day's walk, following a section of the old 16th century Pilgrims Trail which originally went all the way to Lluc monastery. Starting from Soller we walk to the small village of Biniraix, from where the Pilgrims' Trail climbs steadily (views) to the Mirador del Ofre and Es Cornadors (1009m), a magnificent viewpoint. From here we have a panoramic view over the great natural amphitheatre of mountains, which makes up the valley of Soller. Looking up and down the range we can identify the various peaks of the range. As the direct return footpath from Mirador del Ofre down to Soller has now been closed by the landowners it is regrettably necessary to retrace our steps down the Pilgrims' Way, but it is still a great walk.

□ **Day 6:** Today there are a number of options you may choose before your transfer by bus in the afternoon to Valldemosa (your baggage is transferred separately). You can take a boat trip along the coast from Puerto Soller to the fine, if busy, beach of Sa Calobra, take a scenic train ride on the narrow gauge railway from Soller to Palma and back, visit the fossil museum and botanic gardens at Soller, or walk to the beautiful village of Deia which was for many years the home of the poet Robert Graves. You can then catch the bus on to Valldemosa from Puerto Soller or from Soller or from Deia.

□ **Day 7:** 15 miles / 24 km / 6 hours. The tour ends with one of Mallorca's most celebrated walks incorporating both splendid views and historical interest. Much of the path was constructed in the 19th century for the Archduke Ludwig of Austria who owned an estate at Valldemosa. We start off on a path, which

zigzags up a wooded gully to reach a high plateau. From the Archduke's favourite viewpoint we have a fantastic coastal view. Continuing on along the cliff-top path and across the plateau we climb to the summit of El Teix (1063m). Having rested, we return to Valldemosa down the pretty Cairats valley.

□ **Day 8:** The tour ends after breakfast on the morning of day 8. You travel back to Palma by bus, or by taxi, if you have a morning flight. An evening flight out will allow a day's sightseeing/shopping in Palma. Palma cathedral is rated one of the finest of Spain.

What's Included

The price is based on two people sharing a twin or double room and includes half board accommodation from arrival on day 1 to breakfast on day 8, transfer of clients from Lluc

to Cuala Tuent on day 4, transfer of baggage from Lluc to Soller on day 4 and from Soller to Valldemosa on day 6, provision of detailed route descriptions and maps. Transfers to and from the airport at the start and end of the tour, and transfers by public service bus / taxi from Mirador de ses Barques to Puerto Soller (day 4) and from Soller/Deia to Valldemosa (day 6) are not included on the self-guided tour; neither are tram or bus rides between Soller and Puerto Soller or other excursions. Local bus and tram fares are quite cheap.

Escorted departures

EJM31	Sat 31 Mar – Sat 07 Apr
EJM02	Sat 02 Jun – Sat 09 Jun
EJM08	Sat 08 Sept – Sat 15 Sept
EJM20	Sat 20 Oct – Sat 27 Oct