

SLEEPOVER SANT FRANCESC HOTEL SINGULAR

# Majorca's new boutique beauty

This artfully transformed 19th-century manor boasts splendid views of historic Palma

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The historic district of Palma, the capital of the Spanish island of Majorca, is a maze of alleys and sun-blazed plazas, of shuttered homes and gated courtyards that seem to hold ancient secrets. One of the newest arrivals in the Plaza Sant Francesc is the Hotel Singular, a 19th-century manor, artfully transformed into a 42-room boutique hotel. While it embraces its the past, the building is emblematic of a new era in cultural and heritage tourism in Majorca, far from the sun-and-sand resorts that sprawl around the nearby bay.

## LOCATION, LOCATION

There are about eight centuries worth of art and history to be explored within a few minutes walk of the hotel. That includes the luminous yellow sandstone cathedral that rises up from the city's seafloor. The hotel is also a short walk to the Majorca museum or Es Baluard Contemporary Art Museum, with work by Picasso and Miro. You're also minutes to the waterfront promenade, to bike or stroll past the fishing boats, luxury yachts and cruise ships.

## DESIGN

With a €1.5-million (\$2.2-million) conversion, the designers did an exceptional job of keeping the building's elegant bones while adding an airy modern ambiance. Walls of cream, tan and grey set off a contemporary art collection that flows throughout the property. There are three introductory spaces: The high-ceilinged lobby with its bold checkerboard floor, a lovely cobblestone courtyard and then a chic bar where you can enjoy a glass of cava while your bags are taken to your



The roof features a hedge-enclosed bar, sundeck and pool, while guest rooms offer high ceilings and peekaboo windows. FRANCESC BOLUNYA



room.

Guest rooms have high ceilings, baths and walk-in showers. Mine had descending steps at the entrance into what felt like French chalet, with a slanted ceiling and white-painted oak beams. With cable TV, WiFi, Nespresso coffee machines, big fluffy towels and peekaboo windows, the room made for a cozy sanctuary.

Take the elevators to the green space on the roof and you'll find a hedge-enclosed bar, sundeck and pool, with a splendid view of the flood-lit cathedral at night.

## IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

For a contemporary traveller

with a lot of electronic gadgets, the placement of the hotel's electrical outlets can be puzzling. To use the hair dryer in the bathroom, for example, you had to plug it in under the sink and bend over to dry your hair. Weird.

## EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

As a tourist hot spot, Majorca offers everything from McDonald's to Michelin-starred eateries, and the on-site Quadrat restaurant is definitely worth a booking; the food and palm-shaded outdoor dining garden are lovely. Chef Simon Petutschnik treats Mediterranean local fare (fish, meat, rice) with a mixture of Asian and Catalan avant-garde flare. The sea bass

and avocado with swishes of Hollandaise foam and lemon air floats nicely with a local Majorcan white wine. A lunch menu of the day and a dinner tasting menu are also available.

## WHO YOU'LL MEET

Though the hotel was 65-percent occupied in late January, the privacy was so complete I saw no one except at meals. Guests were middle-aged German, Spanish and English couples and singles, who dawdled over the breakfast buffet while reading their guide books, chatting to the multilingual hotel staff and then disappearing for the day, apparently for country drives, shopping or museum visits.

## BEST AMENITY

Each of the hotel's green spaces are a delight, but the sweetest is the courtyard with its olive trees and fountain, a refuge to sit, sip and contemplate the sun on the stones. The sound of hoof beats you hear outside isn't the ghosts of the past – just a Hansom cab driving visitors through the streets outside.

*Sant Francesc Hotel Singular, 5 Plaza Sant Francesc, Palma de Majorca, Spain; hotelsantfrancesc.com; 42 rooms from €285.*

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*The writer was a guest of the hotel.*