

CULTURE CRUSH

Heading for Ibiza this summer? Stop off en route in Barcelona, says *Caroline White* – the city superyacht hub drawing the Balearic-bound glitterati off-course

The sloping shapes, turquoise upholstery and lacquered wood panelling of the OneOcean Club make it feel rather like sitting in a Riva speedboat. Even that essential ingredient for a romantic turn on the water – the setting sun – is evoked in the glow from the copper ceiling. But the crowd that stalks this private members’ club and its setting in Marina Port Vell, Barcelona (marinaportvell.com), arrives on rather more imposing hulls, and the ambition behind it is equally grand: to transform Barcelona into a superyacht base, a cultural extension to the Balearic Islands playground only a day’s sailing to the south.

“Barcelona is Spain’s cultural superyacht destination,” says Anne Sterringa, a Palma-based charter broker for Camper & Nicholsons. “It’s one of the most interesting cities in Europe and for clients who come from further away, Americans or Russians, it would be really interesting to spend a few days in Barcelona before cruising overnight to the Balearics for beaches and island cruising.”

Enjoying its first summer season, the marina offers them a slew of genuinely useful yacht and crew facilities, as well as a chic complex of on-water terraces, a cocktail bar and restaurant. And as Paul Cook, Marina Port Vell’s general

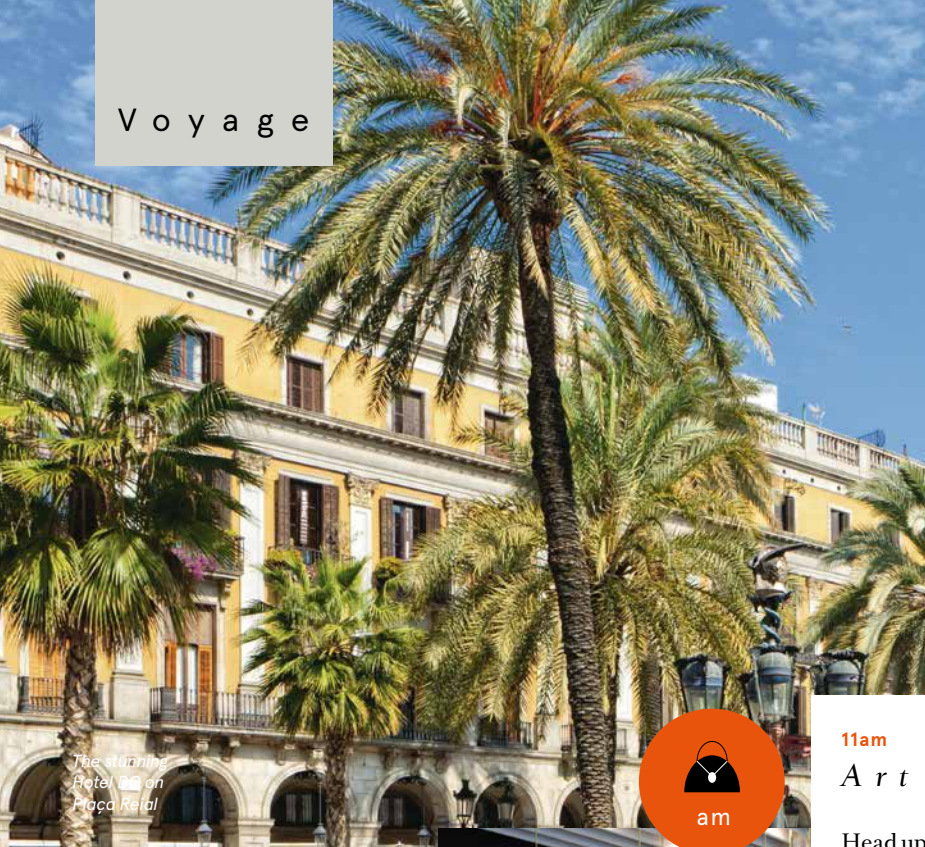


Built for the 1992 Olympic Games, Marina Port Vell now offers superyacht owners the best of Barcelona – and the OneOcean Club (below)



manager, explains: “The commercial ports are at the far end, away from us.” So the marina is actually pleasant to look at. It’s central – in the heart of the fashionable Barceloneta district – and next door to the foremost superyacht refit facility in Europe, MB’92. It also has 148 berths from five to 190 metres. Finally, the €52 million (so far) spent by the owner, the Salamanca Group, really shows, right down to the pearly white honeycomb of polished concrete that protects it from the wind – produced by the company that moulded Gaudi’s architecture.

A recent change in Spanish law means that charter yachts are exempt from matriculation tax. The number and range of yachts in the Spanish charter fleet has therefore improved tremendously. For those who want to add a dose of substance to the beach-and-party Balearic run, Barcelona offers something new. “We are in an area that can really grow and develop; the city and the Balearics have an awful lot to offer,” says Cook. “And that is really, really exciting.”



The stunning Hotel d'Or on Plaça Reial

24 HOURS IN BARCELONA

Dose up on Catalan culture with an off-the-beaten-track guide designed by local experts for superyacht visitors

8am

Breakfast

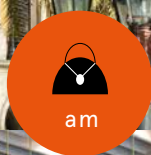
...at DO, Plaça Reial (hoteldoreial.com), a gastronomic boutique hotel on a beautiful square, with a lovely old Spanish feel. It's best experienced early before it starts filling up.

11am

Art & design walk

Head up to the Eixample district for amazing modernist architecture and two of the best streets for art and design. Carrer Seneca has lovely interiors stores and Miguel Alzueta (galeriamiquelalzueta.es), the best gallery for contemporary artists and mid-century furniture. It is in a converted factory, hidden away down some steps - you can't even see it from the street.

Carrer d'Enric Granados also has some fantastic galleries and don't miss Fins De Siècles (finsdesiecles-artdeco.com) for the best selection of art deco furniture. Ailanto (ailanto.com) is a cool, independent designer boutique selling elegant womenswear, all made in Spain. On the same street, bespoke shoes by Norman Vilalta (normanvilalta.com) are themselves works of art.



Chic style at Ailanto and (below) at Fins De Siècles



Noon

Refreshments

Finish your walk at the Champagne & Oyster Bar inside the new El Nacional (elnacionalbcn.com), a trendy gourmet space tucked away down an alley. The former car park was restyled by local interior designer Lázaro Rosa Violán, to recreate the Barcelona of the 1930s and 1940s.



1pm

Lunch

Lunch at Martínez (martinezbarcelona.com), just in front of the Hotel Miramar, with fantastic views of the port. It does a lunchtime menu starting with a delicious vermouth. For architecture, head to the Montjuïc area and the Fundació Mies van der Rohe (miesbcn.com), a pavilion designed by the famous architect in glass, steel and marble for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition.



Great views at Martínez and, likewise, at El Nacional (above)

4pm

Late siesta

If you're feeling energetic, walk up to the Monestir de Pedralbes (monestirpedralbes.bcn.cat), one of Barcelona's best-kept secrets and far from the madding crowds of the Gothic quarter. It's a beautiful gothic monastery built in 1325 and one of the best examples of Catalan architecture.



DAYTIME EXPERTS

Your guides for this page are **Lisa Richardson** and **Niki Robinson**, of Antiques and Boutiques. They offer tours and shopping services focused on art, design, interiors, fashion and food. antiquesandboutiques.com

<#a#>



Boca Chica has an extensive list of signature cocktails



FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

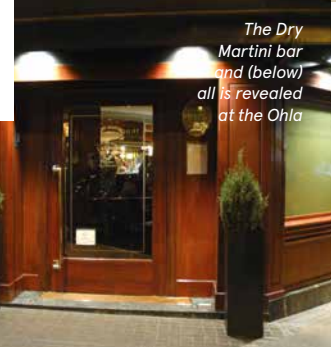
Before you head off to those Balearic beaches, a night in Barcelona will complete your city experience: from fine dining to classy cocktails

8pm Dinner

The Mercer Restaurant (mercerbarcelona.com) lies within the Roman walls of the Mercer Hoteles, surrounded by restored medieval frescoes. The chef, Xavier Lahuerta, is a Catalanian who cooks with great local produce.



The Dry Martini bar and (below) all is revealed at the Ohla



History is everywhere at the Mercer Hoteles

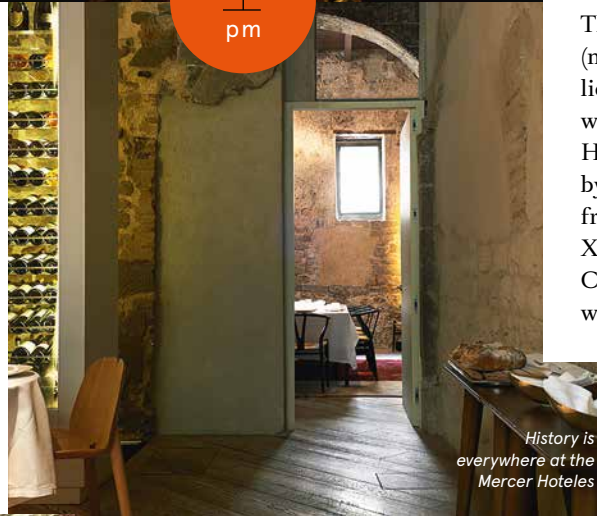
DON'T MISS...

Enoteca is Barcelona on a plate. Catalan chef Paco Pérez may have earned two stars for this restaurant at the Hotel Arts (hotelartsbarcelona.com), but he breaks out of the hushed and reverent Michelin mould in a light, bright dining room with music (gasp). His dishes focus on fish and offer contemporary cuisine with roots in Med classics. The terrace is open in summer and the cellar packs 700 wines.



NIGHTLIFE EXPERT

Your guide is **Daniel Sempere** of the OneOcean Club's Cocktail Bar. His speciality? A Golden Negroni, topped with gold leaf.



<#a#>

10pm Cocktail hour

Next, Barcelona's cocktail scene. Boca Chica (bocagrande.cat) is the classic cocktail bar, glamorous and quirky, with good branded rum and whisky, and a fine selection of Champagnes.

Dry Martini Academy (drymartiniorg.com) is a different idea, where clients pass to the other side of the bar and make their own cocktails, with a bartender at their side. Ohla Boutique Bar (ohlahotel.com) is the new gastro cocktail bar in a boutique hotel in the middle of Barcelona. It's a beautiful space and they use these amazing machines to distil alcohol, then serve the drinks with smoke and other tricks in beautiful glassware.



Midnight

Late snack

Creps al Born stays open until 2-3am and you can order something to eat and some fantastic cocktails. Or Bardot Barcelona (bardotbcn.com) is open until 2am and serves classic food.

FIND THE BALEARICS' MOST BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

The *mistral*, if it is troublesome, will be at your back cruising south to the islands, but uncomfortably on your nose going the other way. The journey is 100-150 miles, depending on your island of choice, and beach bliss awaits. **Anders Pehrson**, harbour master of Marina Port Vell, picks the prettiest beaches in the Balearics...



Menorca

► The south side of Menorca has a bunch of really nice *calas*: beaches and turquoise water. They're pretty sights if you get close enough. On the north side of Menorca you've got Cala Fornells, which is a lovely, well-protected bay.



Mallorca

► The mountainous north-east coast has a few really nice anchorages: striking, dramatic scenery with vivid waters. Cala Sant Vicenç is one. On the south side of the Cap de Formentor peninsula, Cala Murta a beautiful spot.



Formentera

► You choose according to the wind. Es Arenals beach is good for northerlies, Es Caló for southerlies. Formentera shows why the Balearics are so cool. The islands are so small that you can nip around them to avoid any weather.