

Menorca for Swimmers

Javier Díaz-Giménez

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Lodging

Tourism is Menorca's main industry. Therefore there are all kinds of lodging in the island. They range from the luxurious four star Port Maó Hotel to cheap bed and breakfasts. After trying many



Picture A: Los Tamarindos

of them, our favorite spot is Los Tamarindos, the last condominium in Playas de Fornells, which you can see in Pictures A and B. It is flush at the end of the bay. Surrounded by sandy hills and facing the sea.



Picture B: Swimming Pool at Los Tamarindos

The light of the light house at Cavalleria shines into the master bedrooms of some of the units. Drop me a line and I will tell you which. The people at www.sacasetademenorca.es manage two-score of the small but pretty apartments. All of them fully equipped with refrigerators and simple kitchens. As you can see in the picture, the condo has a small swimming pool which is good enough for drills and technique refinements.

Swim 1: Cavalleria

This is our favorite beach. And one of my five top spots in the planet. Obviously Pictures C and D do not even start to do it justice.



Picture C: Cavalleria Beach and Bleda Islet

You arrive on the after an eight hundred meter walk along a path that cuts across a completely unspoilt area of Mediterranean sand dunes. Once on the beach we usually do one of the three swims. A short 250 meter sprint that takes you to the Morro de Ferragut, the point on the left-most end of the beach in Picture C.

When you get there, you can stand up on a large flat and shallow rock and stare into Bleda —the small round islet in the back of Picture C— and into the sunshine. Then we backtrack to the rocks in the middle of the cove and from there we swim out to a small group of rocks that you cannot see

in either of the pictures. We call this swim La Piedrita. When you get back to the starting point (the X in the photo), if you want to get extra credit you must butterfly to the rightmost rocks and back. A longer swim is the approximately 5km stretch to Bleda and back.



Picture D: Cavalleria Beach

Swim 2: Binigaus

Binigaus is our second favorite beach. It faces south and it is the place to go when the Tramontana is blowing, as it is wont to do on occasion.



Picture E: Binigaus Beach

We usually start at the X in Picture E. First we swim out to the rocks in the middle of the beach. Then we backtrack along the coast for a mile or

so until we get to the pirates cave that you can see in Picture F. The cave is long, deep, and narrow. It ends in a doll-house beach. And buried there, amidst the skulls and crossbones, awaits the Pirate's treasure.



Picture F: The Pirate's Cave at Binigaus

Swim 3: Isla del Aire



Picture G: La Isla del Aire

Since I know that you like to swim “from one land mass to another” this is a swim that made my short list, even though I have never actually swam it. The *Isla del Aire* is an islet in the southern most tip of Menorca (see Pictures G and H). It must be about 800 meters from the main island. The idea is to get there, swim around it, and swim back. I would say that the perimeter of the island must be

about 1.5 kilometers (see Picture H), which would add up to a total swim of about 4 kilometers. During the Summer months the channel between the two islands is fairly busy. So a kayak escort is strongly recommended.



Picture H: La Isla del Aire

Local Fauna

Menorca was under British rule for most of the 18th century. The Brits left behind two of their most celebrated traditions: gin and horses. There are two local brands of gin. Both are undrinkable, except when on the island. And, even there, they are drunk with lemon soda and in small glasses.

The local breed of horses is always black —just like the snoopy fellow Picture I.



Picture I: A Menorcan Dancing Horse

And they are used mostly to participate in the local festivals which bring together the two features of British heritage: local youths drunk on the local gin making the local horses dance on their hind legs and trying to touch the horses' bellies while they are dancing. It makes quite a sight. The largest festival takes place on June 24th in Ciutadella.

Jelly fish of the variety shown in Picture J are another salient feature of the local fauna. They are also this swimmer's nightmare —because I am very



Picture J: A Nasty Menorcan Jelly Fish

allergic to their poison, and because they force me to swim always in the lookout. Swimming in the shadow of someone's feet is a partial remedy. But, I advise you to stay alert, in any case, and keep your eyes open for these translucent and vicious stingers.

References

If you want to find out some more about my favorite places in Menorca you can try my “Guía Ultrarrápida e Incompleta de Menorca” (at <http://www.javierdiazgimenez.com/etc/menorca.pdf> —its English translation has been under way for the last few years).

An interesting blog full of pretty and artistic pictures of the island can be found at <http://imatgesdemenorca-magda.blogspot.com/>