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**WINTER FOOD
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**REMODELING THE
MASTER BATH**

AMAZING CYCLING VACATIONS FOUND YEAR ROUND IN MALLORCA

A Thousand Places Waiting To Be Discovered

By Carolyn Worthington, Michael Chauner and David Chauner

From breathtaking ocean views atop its green mountains and rocky cliffs to rolling farmlands of vineyards, horse fields, and historic churches, the island of Mallorca is a spectacular country that is best explored by bicycle. Nestled in the Balearic Sea off the eastern coast of Spain, Mallorca is one of the globe's hottest underground cycling destinations. It's sprinkled with riders of abilities that range from top European racing cyclists to touring adventurers seeking unforgettable bike riding and a unique cultural experience.

Mallorca is mainly known as a summer beach vacation spot for the nearby Europeans. But it has become a major hotbed for cycling clubs and teams due to its diverse terrain, dry and sunny weather, and its quiet and scenic countryside. If you are a cyclist, recreational or serious, Mallorca is an absolute *must* for a beautiful bicycling experience...

Mallorca 312



C. Worthington

Mallorca's Unique Place in the World of Cycling Events

There are iconic events in every participatory sport that stir the imagination and make the inspirational bucket list of average Joes and Janes who seek ultimate personal challenges: finish the New York Marathon, survive a Tough Mudder, conquer the Hawaii Ironman triathlon.

Exotic locations help. And great hotels, fantastic meals, pre- and post-event parties, and a great venue where the spouse and kids can have fun usually narrow the choices.

For today's cycling set, those choices are many with one of the best being in **Mallorca**.

Known throughout the world as *cycloportifs*, or *Gran Fondos*, literally "big rides," variations of these events have grown in size and stature to cater to every type of cyclist that range from an indoor Peloton rider to a recreational biker and amateur racer. They often have a theme like the Farm to Fork Fondos in the eastern U.S. that promote the ecological connection between bikes and farm-to-table foods. Almost all of them feature some challenging hills; scenic backroads; timed sections, for the competitive; and shorter distance options, for the more pedestrian.

The hardest of hardcore racer wannabes will sign up a year in advance to join some 15,000 amateurs for *L'Étape du Tour*, a daily leg of the Tour de France. This is where participants can get an honest-to-goodness taste of what the pros experience during a stage in the Alps or Pyrenees, complete with closed roads, mountain passes, and leg cramps.

One cycloportif that has it all takes place every April in Mallorca. Cycling fans know the Spanish island like baseball fans know Florida. It's where spring training takes place and where international pro teams flock to limber up and get ready for the long European season.



C. Worthington



C. Worthington

Mallorca is a Hidden Gem for Training

For decades, pro racers and their fans have gone to Mallorca from Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Germany, and the U.K. to exchange the cold and snow of late winter for the balmy temperatures, quiet roads, and varied terrain of the beautiful island.

They pile on the miles and fill preseason resorts, which is a boon to Mallorca's tourist industry that doesn't peak until summer. Every March and April afternoon, Mallorca's outdoor cafes fill with cyclists returning from their morning rides. Every nationality, age, and shape are represented along with colorful uniforms, exotic racing bikes, and animated conversation in dozens of languages.



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Mallorca 312

From this tradition sprung the **Mallorca 312**, the name of which comes from the distance in kilometers of the original route around the island.

The event was conceived by Xisco Lliteras, the current technical director, and former pro Miquel Alzamora a decade ago in Playa de Muro.

This resort area located on the north side of the island which accommodates 70,000 to 80,000 cyclists per year. A surreal haven that includes a fleet of rental bikes that would put a pro team to shame.

Now held annually toward the end of April with some 8,000 participants, the Mallorca 312 has become known as one of the few major sportifs that run over roads and are completely closed to vehicular traffic.

The full cyclosporitif tour of Mallorca covers 312 kilometers and has an altitude gain of 5,050 meters. The start and finish are located in Playa de Muro, near Alcúdia. And participants have 14 hours to complete the course.

The mammoth 312-kilometer route contains 5,050 meters of climbing, while there is also a 225-kilometer ride with 3,973 meters of climb and a 167-kilometer course with 2,475 meters of altitude gain.

In all routes, cyclists will ride through the Serra de Tramuntana mountain range, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO under the Cultural Landscape category, which makes the Mallorca 312 worth adding to any bucket list.

From Emily Chappell, a British woman who checked it off her list in 2017:

"No sportif is as downright enjoyable as the Mallorca 312. Like the island that hosts it, it's a cyclist's dream – everything's been thought of, the sun is shining, the tarmac's smooth and inviting, the food is great, the locals are friendly, the hills are gentle but dramatic, and you get to pretend you're a professional bike racer all day long. What's not to love?"



Mallorca 312

Planning to Tackle the Mallorca 312?

Well, you better start planning for 2020 because 2019 is completely sold out. That's not to say you can't visit and watch. But this is one of the hottest cycling tickets around. Event organizers say the event for 8,000 participants sold out in less than a week. So, mark your calendar for 2020.

Most of the hotels in the area are 4 or 5 stars and specialize in cycling. Like hotels that cater to golfers, these hotels are for cyclists with areas to clean, fix, and store the bikes. Many of the restaurants have menus adapted to cyclists' needs. And most of them have spas where athletes can recharge their batteries.

Why the Playa de Muro Area is Perfect for Cycling in Any Season

Whether you choose to sign up for the Mallorca 312 or just bring your bike some other time to explore the area, you will be rewarded with charming seaside villages. 5. The beauty of this part of Mallorca is buoyed by the quiet, unspoiled towns and villages

Some of the spots you might like to visit are Colonia de Sant Pere, a small, non-touristy fishing village; the beach resort of Cala Mesquida; and laid back Betlem on the Alcúdia bay.

Mallorca 312





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Mallorca: A Beautiful Bicycling Experience No Matter What Your Level

Here are our top five suggested rides on the island:

1. Playa De Palma

The easiest and most popular cycling route in Mallorca would be a sun-soaked cruise along the beach paths of Palma, located on the southern coast of the island that passes by beach resorts, shops, and cafes, and also the magical Catedral-Basílica de Santa María, a magnificent, ornate Gothic cathedral that watches over the city's harbor. There is plenty of site seeing and photo ops along this route.

2. Coll de Soller

An iconic mountain directly north of the capitol city, Palma, the Coll de Soller is a twisting road that zigzags up a seemingly endless series of hairpins that rewards ambitious cyclists with an outrageous view of the lowlands below and a coffee and refreshment cafe at the summit. Known for its switchbacks and snakelike approach to the summit, the Coll de Soller is worth the journey. Be sure to visit the Port de Soller before or after at the northern coast for food, hotels, and entertainment.

3. Cap de Formentor

Perhaps the most sought and legendary mountain on the island, the Cap de Formentor is literally and figuratively breathtaking because of its massive beauty, harsh ocean winds, and limitless views of the northern cliffs and mountains that overlook the vast sea below. From the sea line at the island's north-easternmost tip, the climb peaks after almost 4 kilometers with a proud and stern 19th century light-house that stands up to the water's gusts at its crest with boundless blue waters as its backdrop. Don't miss out on this one!

4. Sanctuary of Sant Salvador

An underrated scenic and historic destination by bike is the 14th-century monastery Sanctuary of Sant Salvador, which is located on a small isolated mountaintop plateau that overlooks Mallorca's southeastern rural farmlands. From this vista after another climb to the top, your camera can capture the island with a panoramic view of its southern side that features flatter terrain amidst farms and villages, which makes a rare mountain such as Sant Salvador even more dramatic.

5. Port d'Andratx

To the western side of the island, you will find greener countryside and even hillier terrain. The Port d'Andratx is a serene fishing village and upscale tourist destination nestled on the coast and hidden by the wooded and rugged Tramuntana mountains. Once you make it over the hills, the town has some of Mallorca's best restaurants, finest shopping, and beautiful Italian-style villas that surround the harbor.

Clockwise from top left: Cyclists stop in Port de Soller before mountain climb; Mallorca Cathedral, Palma; Riders training on one of mountain passes; Scene from town of Banyalbufar, Mallorca; Monastery Santuari de Cura on the Puig de Randa mountain; Cala Mesquida beach on the north side of the island.



C. Worthington



Deposit Photo





Iberostar Playa de Muro

Where to Stay

Iberostar Playa de Muro Hotel

No matter what season you choose to visit this cycling-friendly area, you might take a look at one particularly bike-friendly hotel in the area: Iberostar Playa de Muro Hotel. The hotel serves as an ideal base for all outdoor activities, which includes hiking, mountain bike riding, and more.

Don't want to bring your own bike? Rent one there. The hotel also offers a bicycle repair shop and guided tours around the island.

Cyclists and all guests will enjoy Gust Restaurant at the hotel where they'll find the freshest local produce, regional specialties, and international cuisine served.

After their rides or hikes, the active traveler can unwind with a massage or take advantage of the sauna or heated sun beds.

Iberostar Grand Portals Nous

For an exclusive stay near Palma, Iberostar Grand Portals Nous offers a perfect mix of sustainable architecture, cutting-edge design, and premium services.

This adults-only boutique hotel is situated in Portals Nous, just outside of Puerto Portals, one of the Mediterranean's most prestigious marinas. And it's also held by many as one of the most exclusive.

Located a little over 6.5 miles from Palma de Mallorca and with direct access to the beach, the Iberostar Grand Portals Nous boasts an outstanding location in a paradisiacal setting.

This new hotel is part of Iberostar Grand top-of-the-range category that creates experiences tailored to suit each guest and guarantees the most exclusive services: concierge, butler and room services, and personalized advice and recommendations.



Assortment of Spanish tapas

Deposit Photo



Iberostar Grand Portals Nous

Iberostar Grand Portals Nous



Riders enjoying La Terraza Frank en Carmen after the ride.

After the Ride To-Do List

There's nothing better than a cold beer or hot coffee after a long bike ride. And a must visit for cyclists is a hidden gem called **La Terraza Frank en Carmen**. It would be unfair to list the wonders of Mallorcan cycling without mentioning this little bar and cafe that's located along Palma de Mallorca's main beachfront promenade. It's owned by a cycling-loving Dutchman Frank who invites global cyclists to ride from his place, which is decorated with multicolored cycling jerseys from around the world. The bar features a variety of Belgian beers, excellent coffee and espresso, and great food for any meal of the day. It's *the* place to check out before, after, or even as a pit stop on your cycling adventure!

Discover Local Wines

A visit to Spain isn't complete without learning about the many, many varieties of wine.

For a relatively small island, Mallorca boasts more than 70 wine producers. Perhaps there is such a variety of wine on the island thanks to its early proximity to seafaring trade routes and the influence of ancient civilizations.

It's likely that the first grapevines were brought to the island by the Phoenicians. Romans, as they did everywhere they ruled, brought some vinicultural expertise and more precise farming practices to the island beginning in 121 B.C. But all that came to a halt for almost 800 years when Spain was under Muslim rule from 711 A.D. to 1492 and wine-making was forbidden on the island. Fortu-



Mallorcan vineyard.

nately, some defied the rule and continued to cultivate vines.

After the Moors were defeated and expelled from the island, wine-making and viticulture once again began to flourish, only to be devastated by the phylloxera virus in the 19th century, which was the plague that destroyed most of vineyards in Europe. It took years to rebuild to what the quality is today.

To taste the amazing wines of the island, you must go there! Although it is certainly possible to find some of the wonderful wines from Mallorca in the U.S., the selection is still limited

Tasting Wines of Mallorca

There are vibrant white wines made from a local grape Prensall, red wines from grapes

like Manto negro and Fogoneu, and rose wines made from these reds.

Many of these local grapes are blended with more common French varieties, such as chardonnay, chenin blanc, syrah, cabernet sauvignon, and merlot, which all create interesting wines that are quite delightful.

Wine Routes to Explore

When you visit Mallorca, you can taste your way around the island by touring the wine routes. In the center of island, 14 wineries participate in the **Binissalem D.O.** wine route. The trail traverses the towns of Santa Maria del Camí, Consell, Binissalem, Sencelles, and Santa Eugènia.

Wine notes contributed by Hudson Austin, sommelier and wine educator, The Wine Merchant, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania



Mallorcan Food to Try

Ensaimada: A sugary yeast pastry that's shaped in a coil and has been made in Mallorca for as far back as the 17th century.

Mallorcan Grimalt Cheese: Made from cow's milk.

Cocarroi: It's like an empanada; filled with vegetables, raisins, and pine nuts; shaped in a half-moon.

Sobrassada, an Mallorcan sausage.

Patatas Bravas: Cubed potatoes fried in oil and served with spicy tomato sauce

Turrón: Nougat candy.

Greixonera de Brossat: A cottage cheese cake.

Clockwise from top left: Riders from cycling clubs and teams enjoy the terrain and the local cuisine; Local fresh fruits and vegetables; Local cheeses; World-famous Iberian ham



Can't Miss Cultural Activities

Mallorca Cathedral, Palma:

An imposing 14th-century cathedral that's built over the city walls of Palma de Mallorca.

Alfabia Gardens: A house, garden, and orchard that's located in Bunyola, which is in the middle of the Serra de Tramuntana.

Son Marroig Estate: Manor houses that belonged to Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria. They're located between Valldemossa and Deià on the northern mountain range and have outrageous views.

Bellver Castle: The royal residence of King James II of Aragon was built in the 14th century and later converted into a mint in the 19th century. It's located just over a mile and a half from Palma.

Clockwise from top left: Catedral-Basilica de Santa Maria, Palma; Bellver Castle; Son Marroig Estate; Alfabia Gardens



PLANNING YOUR TRIP

The **Tourist Office of Spain** and **Mallorca Tourism** websites are a treasure-trove of information and the best places to start your research. You can always find a person to talk to at the tourism departments who are not only knowledgeable but passionate about their country and loaded with insider things to do and see. We found both the Tourist Offices of Spain in the U.S. and the offices located in Palma, Mallorca to be enormously helpful in planning our visit to the region.

Tourist Office of Spain: <https://www.spain.info>

Mallorca Tourism: <http://www.infomallorca.net>