

Holiday with a religious connection:

The monasteries, retreats and churches of Northern Mallorca

Part 4: Rocky mountain 'highs' – Cap de Formentor and the road to Soller.



The majestic Mallorcan coast viewed from the high mountains on the north of the island.

This part of our travelogue concerns two separate mountain-themed days: the first visiting the dramatic lighthouse at Cap de Formentor on the far north east of Mallorca; the second a long and winding drive through the mountains to the west, to the town and port of Soller.



Looking eastwards back along the winding cliff road leading to the lighthouse at Cap de Formentor.

We put off the trip to Cap de Formentor – despite it being widely signposted locally around Pollenca there were also warnings in the guidebooks about it ‘not being for the faint hearted’. It was a drive best done early in the day: a local legend has it that the parish priest and the local bus driver arrived at the Pearly Gates and only the driver was admitted. The reason - he'd led far more people to pray!



The lighthouse at Cap de Formentor.

The 20 kilometre drive from Port de Pollença to Mallorca's most northerly point has scenery as dramatic as anyone could wish for. It is punctuated with Miradors – viewing places – but these tend to get very congested. Towards the end of the journey, you pass through a tunnel at En Fumat mountain. The lighthouse has a bar and shop, with a café inside and out. On a good day you can see all the way to the island of Menorca.



The view from the lighthouse at Cap de Formentor.

On the way back we stopped at Formentor beach and saw the Hotel Formentor, built in 1929 and catering for the rich and famous. The fine sandy beach used to be reserved for the hotel's guests - but we were able to enjoy it as it's now been opened to the masses.



Formentor beach is now open to all – it used to be hotel guests only.

The second mountain drive in the Serra de Tramuntana was westward to Soller. Pirates and other sea-faring invaders were always a danger to the inhabitants of Soller, which is why the main town is situated a couple of miles inland from the sea. During the 16th century, Soller suffered repeated attacks from Moorish pirates from Algeria.

During the 19th century, Soller became a major exporter of olives and citrus fruits. The French Revolution had seen a great deal of French immigration to Soller, and it was these migrants who utilised their links back in France to build trade relations. With trade came wealth and the creation of impressive manor houses and public buildings, giving Soller an air of grandeur rarely seen in other Mallorcan towns.



The road to Soller winds through the mountains, and there are frequent stopping off points with spectacular views. This is the Gorg Blau reservoir.

We arrived in Soller around lunchtime and walked around the town. The focus of the town is the *Plaça Constitució* which is surrounded by cafés and has plane trees and a fountain in its centre. The tram passes through the Plaça on its way to and from the main station. The church of Sant Bartomeu (Saint Bartholomew) facing the east side of the Plaça is flanked by the *ajuntament* (town hall) and the Banco de Sóller, a remarkable 1912 *Modernista* building with defining ironwork, by the Catalan architect Joan Rubió i Bellver, a follower of Antoni Gaudí.



The church of St Bartholomew in the Placa Constitucio in Soller. Its oriel window was under repair.



Soller town hall, by St Bartholomew's church.

After lunch in the town square, we took the tourist tram to Port Soller.



The tram to Port de Soller.



The spectacular harbour at Port de Soller.



Some bizarre fun sculptures occupy a plinth on the waterfront at Soller.

On returning via the tram to Soller, we concluded our visit with a tour of St Bartholomew's Church. The church dominates the town square and was first built in the 13th century. A baroque structure was added in the late 17th century and the modernist facade was created in 1904 by the architect Joan Rubid (an ex pupil of Gaudi). The church also has a 1912 arched tower suspended above the rose window, with spires like huge needles pointing into the air.



Inside St Bartholomew's Church, Soller.



The high altar at St Bartholomew's Church, Soller.

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Next: Part 5: Puig de Maria – a long morning's walk up to the convent in the mountains by Pollenca.