



8 days from £769

October

Menorca

The island of Menorca may be just 30 miles long and 10 miles across, but it hosts a world of contrasts. The north is comparatively lush and green, with extensive bays and long headlands. The south is much rockier and riddled with caves. At the eastern end lies the island's capital Mahon, a historic city well worth exploring, whose fine deep-water harbour led to British and French occupation in the 18th century (in 1756 the British Admiral Byng was court-martialled and shot for losing it to the French 'pour encourager les autres'!). To the west lies Ciutadella, a former island capital, again with impressive city walls and harbour, but much quieter than the capital. But it is the island's unspoilt beaches and coves that may impress you most of all: our resort area of Son Bou is home to one of the best of them. Menorca was designated a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in October 1993.

• 7 nights hb in Son Bou • 3 included fully-guided walks with an expert guide

PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: Flight to Menorca, transfer to your hotel, half an hour away. Seven nights half board accommodation is reserved for you.

DAYS TWO TO SEVEN: In resort with three included walking excursions:

Walk 1: The South. This is a circular walk from the hotel, passing through Son Bute Valley. You then go through the Ravine of Binigaus, passing the Coloms Cave, and walking along the coast back to Son Bou. Total 10.7 miles, ascent/descents 200m.

WALK 2: The North. After a 30-minute coach transfer to the Cape of Cavalleria, the island's most northerly point, you walk along the coast in the direction of Cala Pregonda, famed for its red and yellow rocks. After your walk, you return by coach, visiting 'El Toro', Menorca's 358m-high 'mountain' to take in the view. 5 miles, 100m of ascent/descent.

WALK 3: The East. You transfer to the Cape of Favaritx, with its black rocks, and follow a path by the s'Albufera lagoon to the fishing village of Es Garau. 8 miles, 100m of ascent/descent.

DAY EIGHT: Free time until your departure transfer to the airport for your flight home.

YOUR HOTEL

HOTEL VALENTIN ★★★★★, Son Bou (seven nights)

This large hotel (214 rooms, plus 98 apartments) enjoys a quiet location on the crest of a hill, a mile from the beach (daytime shuttle service available). It has outdoor and indoor pools, two bars (one restricted to adults only), and a shop. Bedrooms have bathroom, air-conditioning, tv with satellite, telephone, hairdryer and balcony. There are 2 tennis courts, gym, and daytime and evening entertainment programme. Meals are buffet-style. (www.valentinhotels.com)

WALKING & BIRDWATCHING

8 days from £769 May

We know that our walking holiday customers not only enjoy the scenery, culture and history of the places we visit, but also have more than a passing interest in the fauna of the area. This holiday to Menorca and the holidays to Portugal and to the Camargue on the following two pages include three excellent walks with first-rate birdwatching opportunities. This is not high end, specialist twitching and there is no need to buy expensive equipment; your regular binoculars will be ok. But that doesn't mean you'll be short-changed in terms of avine content! Our walking guides are also expert birders who are able at once to cater to all levels of experience – from the complete beginner to the accomplished ornithologist.

PROGRAMME

Walk 1: This walk leaves from the hotel, visiting the marshy area near Son Bou and the Son Boter Ravine. Expected sightings include the distinctively crowned Hoopoe, the Purple Heron, Purple Swamphen, the Booted Eagle and the endangered Egyptian Vulture, also known as the 'Pharaoh's Chicken'. 5.1 miles, ascent/descent 85m.

Walk 2: Transfer to Son Parc beach, on the north of the island, crossing through wetlands of Son Saura, heading towards the salt marshes/mines of Fornells, where you will stop at a farm for a short while to observe the birdlife. You then continue to the Concepción Salines to meet your transport. Expected sightings today include the fastest member of the animal kingdom, the Peregrine Falcon, the Osprey, the Black-winged Stilt and the Kentish Plover. 4.2 miles, ascent/descent 50m. On the return journey we make short stops at the Bee-eater colony near Lluriac, and take in the fabulous views from 'El Toro', Menorca's highest point (over 1100ft above sea level).

Walk 3: Transfer to Algaraiens, in the west of the island, from where you walk via Pla de Mar to Cala del Pilar, to see the wide variety of birds found in the agricultural interior of Menorca – though our varied route also includes a forest of holm oaks as well as a coastal section. On this walk expected sightings include the Tawny Pipit, the elegant Woodchat Shrike, the solitary Blue Rock Thrush and the disputed 'King of the Birds' from a legend told by Pliny and Aristotle, the Firecrest. 6 miles, ascent/descent 100m.

Extend your holiday - extra week available in the Hotel Valentin.