



Giri Café
In San Juan on Ibiza's tranquil north coast, Giri Café serves up fresh organic fare

Bennirás Beach
Dance parties and percussionists accompany the fabled sunset views from this stretch of sand on the north-west coast

Ibiza uncovered

Photography by
Rama Knight



Gone fishin'
Local fishing boats bob alongside private yachts off the Ibiza coast

Las Dalias Market
Ibiza's premier 'hippy market' pops up every Saturday with vendors selling handmade jewellery, crafts and cake





Las Boas

This colourful, Jean Nouvel-designed apartment complex adds a new - if controversial - aesthetic to the isle



Atzaro Hotel and Spa

Even the lap pool at this design-centric spot packs in a ton of Balearic character

Dalt Vila

Climb the cobbled lanes of Ibiza's 'High Town' to reach some of the best vantage points over the island and out to sea

Europe's perennial party capital, Ibiza, always makes for a wild time. And with a new set of hotels, clubs and insiders shaping the scene for 2013, there has never been a better time to check it out. **Lucille Howe** explores



On my first night in Ibiza, I manage to get a table at **Blue Marlin** (bluemarlinibiza.com), a new 'it' spot along the glitzy marina in Ibiza Town. It doesn't hurt, of course, that my dinner companions are Serena Cook and Pascal Azoulay of bespoke concierge service **Deliciously Sorted** (deliciouslysortedibiza.com). With a total of 20 years between them here – Pascal has done eight years full time, while Serena has 12 seasons under her belt – they are the company to keep on the Med's most hedonistic holiday isle. As the three of us feast on artfully assembled plates of zucchini risotto and drink minty mojitos, they let me in on a few of their picks for this summer on Ibiza. "Check the just-opened **Experimental Beach Club** (eccbeach.com) in Cap d'es Falcó, near the salt flats between Ibiza Town and the airport," says Serena with a wink. "It's going to be big."



There's always some of the-moment nightlife guru announcing the new 'can't miss' party

Despite (or perhaps because of) its 30-year reign as Europe's premier party destination, Ibiza's scene continues to evolve season to season. There's always a fresh crop of designer hotels or some of-the-moment nightlife guru announcing the new 'can't miss' party of the summer, giving global pleasure seekers reasons to keep on coming back. While the rest of Spain groans with the pangs of global recession, Ibiza's chic new retreats and star DJ-studded super clubs continue



PASCAL

AZOULAY

Pascal, 34, is part of the Deliciously Sorted concierge team and the man who will get you closest to the superstar DJs at the big-name clubs, from Pacha to DC10. "In St. Tropez it's about the Cristal, the streamers and the sparklers. Here, it's about securing the right table, right at the front, and discreetly enjoying the view. The VIP experience is really growing. In Pacha there used to be 10 tables, now there are 100."

deliciouslysortedibiza.com

Left: Experimental Beach Club

Opened in May, this surfside cocktail bar is one of the island's hot spots for 2013

to make the island the hot summer destination to be on the Med.

"Ibiza hasn't really been affected by the financial crisis that's engulfed mainland Spain," Serena says. "It seems to be protected by a Balearic bubble."

She's right, if the brand new (and controversial) starchitect Jean Nouvel-designed apartments, Las Boas, nearby are anything to go by. With each tier assigned its own colour of flowers, the development is a rainbow splash of hues that has divided opinion. Some call it 'the Clown Building', but even so it's good to see an artistic design project taking shape alongside the more usual sleek and streamlined style that currently dominates the isle. Last year, NYC's Cipriani team opened their **Downtown Ibiza** restaurant in the swish **Ibiza Gran Hotel** (ibizagranhotel.com, doubles from €615), in Ibiza Town. This summer the **Hard Rock Cafe** (hardrock.com) will bring some old-fashioned rock 'n' roll to the centre, while glam beach club **Nikki Beach** (nikkibeach.com) has just added Ibiza ▶

Ushuaia Hotel Club Nights
With its all-night DJ parties, Ushuaia Tower alongside its sister hotel Ushuaia Beach is not for those who value a good night's sleep



to their existing portfolio of Spanish venues in Marbella and Mallorca, with a new club up in Santa Eulalia.

When it comes to hotels, one of the newest super-stays on the block is **Ushuaia Tower** (ushuaiaibeachhotel.com, doubles from €595) on Playa D'en Bossa, which opened this summer – a bombastic, unapologetic, loudmouth of a place that never shuts up. In a nod to the planes that roar shut en route to nearby Ibiza airport, attractive guys and girls dressed

The island beats to the drum of entrepreneurs who came for a season and never left

as pilots guard VIP areas at the hotel's poolside mega-club, which hosts all night parties during the week. Book the right room and your balcony could provide uninterrupted views across the crowd to the DJ booth.

Also worthy of mention is the four-star **Garbi Hotel** (hotelgarbi-ibiza.com, doubles from €198) in Playa d'en Bossa, 10 minutes from Ibiza Town on the south coast. It's hip without the bad attitude, the pool is generous, it backs

onto the beach, and you can have a cocktail at the bar and a burger at the restaurant without breaking the bank.

Newly opened in May, the **Urban Spaces Art Hotel** (urbanspacesibiza.com, doubles from €180) in Ibiza Town describes itself as an 'art project, disguised as a boutique hotel'. Each of the 15 rooms has been stencilled, spray-painted and graffiti'd by a different artist, including London's Inkie.

While the arrival of those big brands like the Hard Rock and Nikki Beach is inevitable for such an alluring destination, the island still beats to the drum of individual entrepreneurs who came for a season and never left. One such new girl is Emma Thomson, founder of **El Colo Ibiza** (elcolobiza.com), an apartment-/boat-/party-finding company. She has only minutes to spare for me when we meet at the entrance to Ibiza centre's **Dalt Vila** (High Town) old quarter. She's en route to get a speed boat to a stag party that she has helped organise for this evening, but I do manage to wrestle a tip off her about a new bar, a stone's throw from where I'm standing. With the Dalt Vila entrance behind me, I turn right and take the stony stairs that wind a little up a hill. There, on the ▶

LAURA FAKS

Fashion designer Laura, 39, hails from Argentina but founded her label, Flor de Vida, in Ibiza, and has seen it flourish on the island. Her pompom-fringed and Latin American-inspired clothes sell at various boutique outlets and Las Dalias Market. "Ibiza is a magical place. I arrived 16 years ago, fell in love, and started my label. The isle's traditional white cotton is wonderful to work with and I add fabrics from Latin America that I get on annual visits back. Ibiza'll change your life if you let it." [facebook.com/flor.devidaibiza](https://www.facebook.com/flor.devidaibiza)





Above: Atzaro Hotel and Spa Sun loungers provide rest and relaxation
 Right: Bar 1805 Classic French flavours and a relaxed, beachy vibe

Calle Santa Lucia, is a buzzing, hole-in-the-wall joint called **Bar 1805** (bar1805ibiza.com), so-called because it's open 180.5 days a year (the high season), serving funky French plates like smoked salmon *tartines* and *moules et frites*. Founder Charles Vexenat took just eight days to put the place together, and an eclectic crowd of customers, some on laptops, wearing slogan tees and sporting funky afros, look like they're in for the night. It's got a great energy and with none of the glam-bling I've been finding elsewhere in the centre.

On our second day I jump in the hire car to go in search of Serena's recommendation, the Experimental Beach Club. I take the road out of Ibiza Town towards Las Salinas beach but before we get there, and when I'm fully immersed in the salt flats, I spot an easily missed navy blue and white wooden sign by the side of the road. We turn onto a dirt track snaking towards the giant salt mountain and stay on it for about three minutes before reaching a small rocky beach, stones piled on top of each other everywhere by mischievous artists to form beachy totem art. This is it. A swarthy and coolly bespectacled Frenchman, Ben Sorment, welcomes me to his co-venture. A wooden boat

JAVIER DOMENECH
 Head chef at the new Girl Café in San Juan, Javier, 37, is all about local produce. "There are ingredients in Ibiza that I like to work with – edible flowers, for example, and our *hierbas* (Ibiza liquor) which I use in our white chocolate truffles. In fact, here's a tip for you: the tobacconist next door to us has the best *hierbas* on the island. It's made with 18 different herbs."
cafe.thegirl.com



forms the frame for the bar of a loungy beach club playing bluesy tunes.

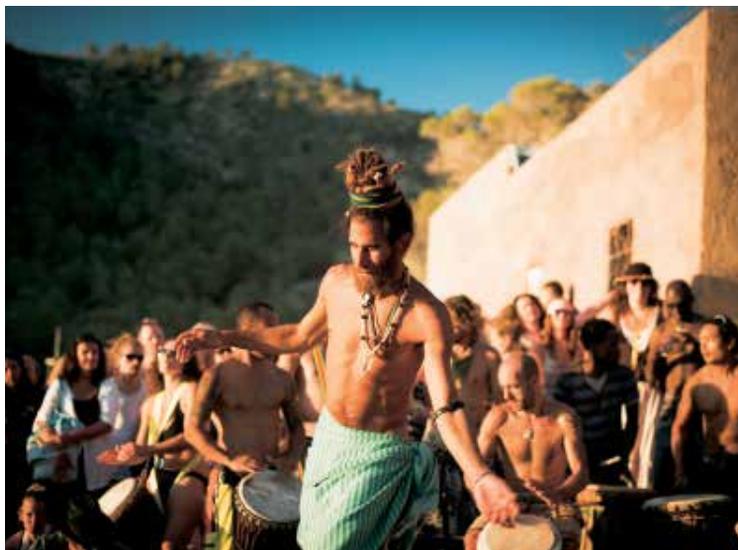
"It was here when we bought the place," he smiles. "We were going to destroy it but then we realised it would make a great bar and spent a few weeks doing it up." I try their take on a mojito which is made of lime, sugar, rum, fresh ginger, Champers and a dash of Angostura Bitters. A group of girls in expensive swimwear shares a *piña colada* served in a giant, rather kitsch pineapple. All the drinks are made from fresh ingredients, brought in daily. It's a great place to watch the sun set behind the magical rock of Es Vedrà.

Yet for the glitz, glam and power parties that define Ibiza internationally, that world is largely limited to just the southern coast. Other island scenes have existed for decades with a vibe decidedly different from the go-go party towns of the south. Since the 1960s, boho hamlets



ripen with yoga retreats, organic farmlands, quiet swimming holes and sustainable farms have blossomed along the island's tranquil north coast. Taking a break from the mega-clubs of the south, I hitch a ride up the coast with World Entourage (worldentourage.com), one of Ibiza's many fine chauffeur services, and the difference between north and south becomes increasingly clear. We pass businesses sustained from the land, more residential areas, and more and more green with lush vineyards, orange groves and fields of wild flowers. This is what makes a hippy happy.

It is, after all, home to **Bennirás Beach**, again discreetly signposted at the side of the road, on the north-west coast just before you hit San Juan. Today is Sunday, when percussionists ▶



Bennirás Beach
A percussion party gets beaded and bearded holidaymakers dancing

get together to drum down the sunset. I kick off my sandals and try a little 'tribal' in the shingle.

Later on, I return for the first time in ages to **Atzaro Hotel and Spa** (atzaro.com, doubles from €390). At every turn there's a gorgeous design feature, be it a statue of Ganesh by a lily pond, a pretty mahogany door decorated with what looks like floral swirls of mother of pearl, or stone walls bursting with purple bougainvillea. The rooms in separate villas are safari-style comfortable, there's a gorgeous lap pool, a rated restaurant and top-notch beauty and massage treatments on offer.

The hotel also has a new offshoot: they've taken over a whole stretch of sand in Cala Nova on the north-east coast and named it, ahem, **Atzaro Beach**. There's a shabby-chic shack of a *chiringuito* (beach bar) at one end and a very funky restaurant at the other, all whitewashed decking, art, a cavernous tented terrace and a chandelier made from flip flops in a nod to the new 'Flip Flop' weekly dance night at the venue.

Just up the road from Atzaro hotel, in the sweet little village of San Juan, you will find the **Giri Café** (cafe.thegiri.com), a fledgling 'green' restaurant perfectly suited to the hippy chic vibe

Below: Rosa Hildebrandt
Danish ex-pat and owner of Giri Residence and Giri Café, on Ibiza's north coast

typical of this part of the island.

Founder of sister property, the five-suite **Giri Residence** (thegiri.com, doubles from €345), 42-year-old Rosa Hildebrandt, shows me their vegetable, herb and edible flower garden and confesses that, coming from Denmark, she had to "let go of being a perfectionist and learn to go with the flow".

But there is nothing that's been compromised when it comes to the details: the stone walls, the glittering mosaics, the statement light shades or the wonderfully stocked garden. The food is fresh and vibrant and has an earthy, organic quality that complements the vibe on this side of the island.

Being on the north side of Ibiza, I feel worlds away from the pleasure ground down south. It is almost as though it is its own destination, unique in spirit and essence, separate and removed from the rest of it all. Yet as I take my ride back down south, my phone rings. News has just broken that Ibiza's most-anticipated new club of the season, **Bomba** (bombaibiza.com), has got its licence approved, and secured Erick Morillo as resident DJ. Tickets are already selling like mad. It would seem that the party – and, in fact, its evolution – really never stops in Ibiza. ■

