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Escape Ibiza

Far from the madding clubbers

There's more to Ibiza than sweaty, sozzled, all-night raving... there's also sweaty, stimulating, all-day biking as Lulu Le Vay discovers

Words & photos Lulu Le Vay



Above: Golden sand, blue water and beautiful cycling routes

One might not consider the notorious party island of Ibiza as a cycling destination of choice. Most Ibiza virgins have preconceived notions of what it will be like: foam parties, gurning teenagers puking up on street corners, over-packed beaches and bad dance music. This is a true snapshot of an element of the lifestyle on the White Isle, mostly found within certain not-so-hot spots such as San Antonio and Playa d'en Bossa (home to notorious superclub, Space). Luckily, it has a lot more to offer, particularly for cyclists.

The third-largest of the Balearic islands, Ibiza is also known as one of the 'Pityusic' or 'Pine Islands', alongside neighbouring Formentera. Thus, this explains, particularly north of the island, the beauty of the lush, green mountainous landscape, and the intoxicating red-copper glow of the soil, created by fallen pine needles. It's a serene scene far removed from (and for us wholly preferable to) the clubbing tourism for which the island is so renowned. Clubbing can be fun, but there's nothing quite like adrenaline, endorphins and fragrant fresh air to get your heart racing.

Over the past few years, there has been a marked increase in the number of cyclists, both road and mountain, exploring the island's 'other side', where not only is the scenery stunning and the off-the-map beaches idyllic, but there are many areas accessible only by bike. The Ibiza appeal doesn't attract only the serious head-to-toe Lycra cyclist brigade, but also those who love jumping on a bike and going off to explore the outdoors, keen to make their booze and beach holiday a little more active.

DJs who are regular visitors on the island have also started to incorporate

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HEADS UP

Ibiza is perfect to explore all year round, including spring and the cooler months of October to November



Distance: Up to 150km
Big hills: Yes, up to 500m
Challenge: ★★★★★
Cafe stops: Plenty



Above: The rocks aren't just for couples and crabs
Left: During the day, the beaches come alive with clubbers and holidaymakers

cycling into their schedule. Radio One's Pete Tong recently completed a 135km ride on the island for Great Ormond Street Hospital, and British-Canadian electronic whizzkid Richie Hawtin hits the Ibiza track every visit. It is possible to find a balance between both worlds that vibrate on the island's heady energy.

Mesmerising scenery

The beauty of Ibiza scenery is mesmerising, so to avoid being fixated on a map or getting lost, it's not a bad idea to hire a cycle guide. Not only is it liberating to have a professional with local knowledge take the lead and create a bespoke route to suit your level and objectives, but having someone who's aware of the best timings, for climate and light (darkness falls quicker than you can say 'Cerveza, please!') is really useful. Your guide will lead you to the best cafes and beaches to take that well-deserved rest stop, too.

One such company, which launched in Ibiza in summer 2013, is Velo Club Ibiza. It's run by British cyclist and ex-record label manager Simon Rose, and is based in Talamanca near Ibiza Town. VC Ibiza provides one-on-one and group touring, as well as mountain and road bike hire. After a decade of visiting the island, Simon moved to Ibiza with his family in early 2013. His approach to touring makes VC Ibiza unique; its tours take in the social aspects of the island as well as its hilly challenges.

"VC Ibiza caters for everyone, and the cocktails taste so much better if you've made the effort to do some exercise during the day," says Simon. "I love the idea of harking back to what cycling clubs were traditionally, when they played the role of social

Escape Ibiza



STOP!

Getting there
Regular flights available from Easyjet, Ryanair, British Airways, Jet2, Monarch

Cycling tours and bike hire
Velo Club Ibiza
www.veloclubibiza.com

Above: Club culture is never far away
Below: Luckily, there are other ways to make the most of your visit

clubs that brought all types of people together for the simple pleasure of riding their bikes. Here, the scenery is stunning, and you can get emotional because of the smell of the pines and the view of the orange trees and golden barley you're riding through."

We're sold.
VC Ibiza took us on two routes: moderate and challenging. The first to Salinas on the southern tip (24 miles, mostly flat, 215m elevation), and the second to Cala San Vicente, on the north-east (40 miles, hilly, 725m elevation), both starting from Talamanca, north of Ibiza Town.

The first ride was a coastal road that took us past a few of the island's biggest clubs, Pacha in Talamanca and Space on Playa d'en Bossa, then up to the stunning salt flats where techno club DC10 is found, close to the natural park of Ses Salines.

Giant iceberg

The sight of the giant iceberg of salt collected on these planes was truly remarkable. We could taste the bitterness as we cycled past. Alongside salt, the other biggest exports out of Ibiza are dye and fish sauce. If you were after more of an off-road challenge, you can follow the mountain bike trail from Salinas beach across to the west coast, which takes you down a jagged, rocky route to Cala Colador, where drinks at the Experimental Beach bar await.

Drinks are, for the most part, reassuringly expensive, but worth it for the secluded spot and incredible view — even if you get funny looks from the dolled-up holidaymakers as you appear from the hills drenched in sweat and caked in an earthy layer.

Cycling back through Playa d'en Bossa when the sun is out is a visual treat of a different kind. The area starts to come alive as the clubbers awake from their post-rave slumber for another night of partying. But don't get too distracted by the racy outfits — we saw a woman with no knickers on parading up the road — keep your eyes on the road and be extra-vigilant. There's no shortage of hazardous drivers and pedestrians to avoid when you're breezing through the more condensed areas.

For the second ride, we wanted a hillier road challenge, so Simon planned a route that would take us to the most northern tip, taking in some scenery and beach-hopping in the process — this time, without clubs acting as geographical landmarks.

We stopped off at cafe Laurelito in Jesus for caffeine and sugary fuel, before we took on the first and longest climb of the ride, at 160m, on the main road heading east towards Santa Eulalia. In the afternoon heat, this packed quite a punch.

After this main climb, we were feeling adapted to the terrain and the heat. Simon took us past the serene Roca Llisa golf course development, then past villages Cala Llonga and Siesta. We then stopped off at Playa Niu Blau near Es Canar, which was amazingly secluded and tranquil, and then to the hippy beach Cala Martina, which couldn't have been further removed from the scenes at Playa d'en Bossa the day before.

Cove of mystery

Flying through the touristy centre of Es Canar, we took the scenic route towards Cala Boix, stopping off at the stunning Cala Mastella, the 'cove of mystery', Ibiza's smallest beach, ideal for snorkelling and accessible only by those 'in-the-know'. To make the most of the beaches, one has to dedicate a whole day to this route, with plenty of rest stops and hydration. After skirting the pretty town of San Carlos, the rolling coastal road soon took us to Cala San Vicente and a carb-load of bread, aioli and olives, washed down with a double espresso. We took the direct main road ride route back, to reach home before dark.
Don't fancy biking round the island? There are plenty of other activities on offer. Take your pick from lazy beach days — the peaceful Santa Eulalia is perfect for families as well as shopping in Ibiza town and taking an evening stroll through the Marina Botafoch on the northern side of the port, where the array of restaurants and bars offer an enviable view of some of the world's most luxurious boats and cruisers. And if you're after some post-cycling pampering, there are plenty of spas to help soothe your fatigued muscles, such as Atzaro Spa in the municipality of Sant Joan, and the Spa La Posidonia in San Miguel, which boasts incredible cliff views.



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