

GRAND ISLAND TOUR

Cristine Bedfor, the effortlessly elegant imaginary character who helped to shape Mahón's newest hotel, leads PAMELA GOODMAN on a tour of the best shops, restaurants and sites on Menorca

PHOTOGRAPHS DANIEL SCHÄFER



Hotel

So who is Cristine Bedfor and why has her rather unlikely name been used for a hotel? It is tempting to think she is one and the same as **Cristina Lozano**, the hotel's owner, whose style perfectly befits this gem of a guesthouse. But there is more than Cristina in Cristine – primarily a bit more Britishness.

While the two – real and fictional – share a love of travelling, shopping and entertaining, Cristine is modelled on a Great British hostess, running a small hotel much like she might her home, welcoming guests as friends, sharing local knowledge, shaping unique experiences and instilling a sense of personality into every decorated corner of the house. The decoration is where celebrated interior designer **Lorenzo Castillo** comes in; he masterminded the look and feel of the hotel with his friend Cristina.

Theirs is the kind of symbiotic relationship in which each has total faith in the other's taste. 'I have no rules: my signature is mixing styles, memories and beautiful objects,' he says, capturing the essence of this guesthouse, where colour, texture and pattern sit happily alongside treasures old and new; where eclecticism is natural, not contrived. It feels characteristically British in so many ways, overlaid with a dash of Spanish panache and a smothering of Mediterranean sunshine. Together, Cristina and Lorenzo talk of their next project, when Cristine Bedfor will spread her wings to a prime location in Málaga.

Of the 21 rooms, some are tiny and some have private terraces; some have views of the street and some of the garden. All are individually decorated. But it is the common parts – the library, the sitting room, the dining room, the exquisite courtyard and garden with swimming pool – that make this place sing. And all a stone's throw from the centre of town.

Beach

Cristine, I imagine, though she is a city dweller, likes to take a morning dip. Her favourite beach closest to the hotel is **Sa Mesquida**, a sandy, east-facing bay with excellent swimming. Menorca's famous **Camí de Cavalls** coastal path passes through. ▷



OPPOSITE Hauser & Wirth on Illa del Rei in Mahón harbour. THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cristina Lozano, owner of Cristine Bedfor hotel, with interior designer Lorenzo Castillo. Comfort is key to the decoration, with richly patterned textiles. The garden is a cool oasis





ABOVE FROM LEFT Lawyer-turned-ceramicist Blanca Madruga in her studio. Turid Tarabay of Bona Soca makes linens using natural dyes and materials. BELOW Tableware at Papillon. BELOW RIGHT Cantina restaurant at Hauser & Wirth serves traditional Menorcan dishes

Shopping

Browsing the shops with an imaginary person is a little tricky, but having already admired some of the clothes and objects in the cabinet-cum-boutique in the hotel's inner courtyard and, having met both Cristina and Lorenzo, I get a feel for Cristine. I imagine her in an elegant summer dress from **Tembo**, designed by Vichy Mozo Cervera for his popular shops in Mahón (Plaza de España 32) and Ciutadella (Santa Clara 4). She is wearing jewellery – a little bohemian perhaps – from **Vives** (Carrer Nou 29), the oldest jewellery shop in Mahón and, on her feet, not a pair of typically Menorcan *avarcas* (leather sandals), but some strikingly unusual espadrilles from **Boba's** (Pont de l'Angel 7). With her presence at my side, I visit **The Family** (Carrer del Carme), a treasure trove of antiques and interior design run by Esteban Matera – clearly something of an icon on the island, who sources quirky furniture and decorative pieces from all over Europe. For more contemporary lifestyle and homeware pieces, we head to Ciutadella and Mónica Colomar's enticing shop **Papillon** (Carrer de Santa Clara 31).

Artisans

Among the Balearic islands, Menorca has always operated a little below the radar, largely shunning the razzmatazz of Ibiza and Mallorca in favour of quieter simplicity. Numerous artisans are at work on the island, preserving old techniques and traditions, and trialling new. With Cristine, I get to meet a few.

Ceramicist **Blanca Madruga** makes earthy tableware at her home-cum-studio in Mahón (Calle de Sant Jordi 29). Norwegian textile designer Turid Tarabay of **Bona Soca** (en.bonasoca.com) works with recycled fabrics and natural plant dyes to fashion table linen, cushions, curtains and clothes. Both artisans have work on sale in the shop at **Hauser & Wirth**, a new exhibition complex on Illa del Rei in the middle of Mahón's harbour. Traditional carpenter **Miguel Gomila Carreras** (Carrer de Tramuntana 25, Es Mercadal) works with wild olive tree wood to create Menorca's distinctive gates and fences, plus furniture and interior-design pieces.

Finally, I meet **Marc Casanovas**, whose restaurant in Ciutadella is undergoing a transformation into a cheese-tasting *posada*, which will open next year. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, he can be found at his stall in the town's market (email formatgescasferrer@gmail.com for details).

Food and drink

Mornings in Menorca are traditionally launched with a sugar kick, in the form of an *ensaimada*, a local pastry that falls somewhere between a doughnut and a Danish whirl. **Panadería La Mejor** (Plaça del Carme 5) is the best place in Mahón; **Herbera Bakery** (Carrer de Maó 28) is the best in Ciutadella.

For Cristine, there are two important people I must meet: Oriol Castell (aka Uri) and Marco Collado. They are the duo behind Ses Forquilles, a small restaurant group that includes the breezy, fishy **El Rais** on Mahón's harbour front (Moll de Llevant 314) and the soon-to-open principal restaurant at the **Cristine Bedfor** hotel. Located in the adjacent street (Carrer de San Fernando), the restaurant will be linked back-to-back with the hotel via its gardens.

At the opposite end of the island, I am directed to Joan Canals, who has the best wine shop on the island and the wonderful bar and restaurant **Ulisses**, located together on the edge of Ciutadella's beautiful covered fish market. For evening sundowners and tapas, there are venues aplenty, but **Los Bucaneros**, a hippie-chic thatched *chiringuito* on the beach at Binibeca, feels like the place where Cristine and I might end the day.

Don't miss

Cristine Bedfor's entrance into Menorcan life has proved to be timely – coinciding with the island's big news: the opening in July 2021 of **Hauser & Wirth**. Comprising galleries, an outdoor sculpture trail and a garden designed by Piet Oudolf, the complex is the beating heart of Menorca's burgeoning art scene. Hauser & Wirth has a beautiful shop here, too, as well as the al fresco **Cantina** restaurant (managed by the celebrated Menorcan winery Binifadet), where an assemblage of simple tables and chairs is strewn romantically under olive trees and swinging lanterns.

Ways and means

Cristine Bedfor hotel is open all year round, with double rooms starting at €180, B&B (00 34 971 635 502; cristinebedforhotel.com) □



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Harbourside eating at El Rais. Vives, the oldest jewellery shop in Mahón. Designer Vichy Mozo Cervera of Tembo. Los Bucaneros is the perfect spot for a sundowner. Ulisses bar and restaurant is beside Ciutadella's covered fish market

