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Military chic: Former fort Cap Rocat provides a sumptuous getaway for visitors to Mallorca

Ex-military fort offers safe haven

The arrivals lounge at Palma airport is a sea of matching custom-made T-shirts, bride-to-be sashes and the odd L-plate, as a multitude of stag and hen parties invade the island. So much for a quiet weekend getaway.

But then Mallorca has been a honeypot for such frivolity and package tourism in general since the 1950s, so the prospects of finding a tranquil corner on the island seem slim.

So it's amazing the difference 15 minutes can make. After heading away by car from the airport and Palma we soon drive between two grand sandstone pillars and begin descending a ramp with high sandstone walls either side.

Stag and hen party hell, and the stresses of London some two hours before that, are forgotten as we pull up at the bridge across to the gate that welcomes us to Cap Rocat, a former military fort built at the end of the 19th century.

You won't find the sweeping lobbies and grand corridors of your typical luxury hotel here; Cap Rocat's greeting place is an open-air courtyard with mesmeric waterfalls, huge parasols and a distinct lack of other residents, particularly guests of the under-16 variety: there is a child-free policy for reasons of both safety and serenity.

While Palma's popularity as a tourist resort has prompted buildings to spawn out of the old town in every direction, this particular corner (88 acres with a 2km coastline) of the bay just beyond Cala Blava was the property of the military until 1995 and remained development-free. Rather than come in and level the place, the hotel's owners, with the creative vision of local architect Antonio Obrador, who was also responsible for Claudia Schiffer (pictured) and Catherine Zeta Jones's homes on the island, embraced the existing structure with subtle nods to its military past.

Door handles and key fobs are bullets, the coffee tables once served as cannon carriers and the free-standing lights use the old ammunition caskets.

My suite, which is one of only 24 rooms at the hotel, is built in what was one of eight former munitions stores. Inside, though, it's more 'make love, not war' with a four-poster bed, huge rolltop bath and furnishings incorporating *roba de llengües*, the local fabric with its distinctive stripes or tongue-like patterns.



Upmarket Spain: Just 15 minutes from Palma's hectic airport and its wild hen party atmosphere, Cap Rocat offers great service, amazing views of the sea, and a golf kart service for the seriously lazy

BY TOM DARTNELL

Outside, each suite has three private areas: a patio for dining (breakfast is delivered in hampers), a raised terrace with sun loungers to bask in the Mediterranean sun and, closer to the cliff edge, a gazebo offering the chance to recline with direct views out to sea. Along with the military feel of Cap Rocat, my imagination runs riot with the idea there is something about the place that recalls a Bond villain's lair.

Then there are the uniformed staff (who outnumber the guests), going about their business clad in black or white-linen interpretations of traditional Mallorcan countryside dress.

And finally there are the buggies. Yes, guests are ferried around the hotel grounds by staff driving golf carts. Can't be bothered to take the three-minute stroll from your room to the infinity pool, which has views across the bay to Palma? Just hop on a buggy. Short path down to the private sandy beach too much of a chore? Hop on a buggy. Overdone it sampling the Fortress Restaurant's fine-dining menu? You get the idea. One thing's for sure, no matter where you go you're very unlikely to bump into too many other guests.

My favourite destination on site is the Sea Club, a slightly less formal open-air restaurant halfway down the cliff, which actually leads on to another secluded cove exclusive to the hotel guests. The menu offers lighter dishes including pasta as well as locally sourced meat and fish cooked using a traditional Mallorcan firewood oven.

I plump for a gorgeous prawn *agnolotti* with a dry martini sauce and as I watch the sun set behind Palma old town across the bay, I reckon as getaways go there can't be many places this close to London that offer such peaceful hen, stag and child-free privacy.

€450 (£396) per night based on two people sharing a suite including breakfast. www.caprocat.com. Reservation details: +34 971 747 878 / info@caprocat.com Easyjet (0843 104 5000; www.easyjet.co.uk; from £22.99)