

by
**Amanda J.
Butler**

The Wellness Column

There is something rather liberating about an evening where you don't have to spend half an hour scrolling through Google reviews, debating restaurant choices or wondering whether you've made the right booking. Instead, imagine simply arriving, knowing that someone else has already done the hard work of discovering four great new restaurants for you to try.

That is precisely the concept behind **Food Tours Mallorca**, a self-guided culinary experience that takes guests on a progressive dinner through four of Mallorca's many exciting food and beverage destinations. Launched in Palma's Old Town in late 2022 before expanding into Santa Catalina in January 2023, the tours now also operate in Pollensa, Soller and even Ibiza.

Unlike some traditional guided food tours, there is no guide leading the way. Instead, after booking online (£69 per person), guests receive access to an innovative web app that becomes their digital companion for the evening. When you book, you're asked whether there are any specific dietary requirements to accommodate – otherwise the courses are set. Twenty-four hours before the booking, an email arrives with a link to the app. This provides an itinerary, walking directions between venues and some interesting snippets about the neighbourhood as you stroll from one restaurant to the next. **Available in five languages – English, Spanish, French, German and Dutch** – it makes the experience equally accessible to visitors and residents alike.

Our group of five, including three local Mallorca residents, recently sampled the Santa Catalina route: curious to see whether a self-guided concept could still feel personal. The tour started at 6pm at our first stop, **Ombu Santa Catalina** (which has an older, more established sibling in the Old Town). It was quite early, but that is the nature of a food tour, where restaurants are hoping to expand their customer base. The evening immediately got off to a nice start with a fusion-style fish taco packed with fresh flavour and topped with a spicy sauce that delivered just enough kick. Drinks are included throughout the evening, with guests able to choose from wine, beer, soft drinks or water. One useful tip, however: Ombu also offers an excellent happy-hour cocktail before 7pm, something we only spotted after ordering. G&Ts that proved considerably more expensive. Worth remembering if Ombu is on your list.

Given an hour between courses, we followed the map up through Santa Catalina's lively streets and arrived at **Bankal**, a contemporary Japanese restaurant that none of us had previously discovered. Ironically, just as we sat down, the neighbourhood suffered a power cut, but the team handled the situation with impressive humour and professionalism, keeping everyone entertained.

We were served a very nice house wine while we waited, and when our food eventually arrived, it was well worth it. An Asian-inspired artichoke dish may not sound like something that would excite a table of mixed diners, but it proved to be one of the biggest surprises of the evening. Even the men in our group – who admitted they would rarely order a vegetarian dish – were genuinely impressed. Bankal has

Forget the planning. Just turn up hungry.



Above: Ombu. Below: Nus. PHOTOS: @GEMMABRUNTONPHOTOGRAPHY

Mallorca's FOOD SCENE'S DONE RIGHT



Above: Bankal.



Above: Turpil.

certainly earned itself three new regular customers.

Our third stop, **Nus**, perhaps best demonstrated what Mallorca Food Tours does so well: introducing diners to places they might otherwise overlook. From the outside it appears relatively understated, yet inside is a stylish, welcoming restaurant serving inventive Mediterranean fusion cuisine.

We were greeted by the restaurant manager with homemade vegetable crisps and a dip, and our wine was poured before we were served our next main course – an Asian-style pork dish. Interestingly, every one of us commented that it tasted remarkably like beef, despite our attempts to identify it correctly. It was absolutely delicious. The friendly manager and relaxed atmosphere made it one of the evening's highlights.

Finally came perhaps the most unexpected venue of all. Rather than finishing with another restaurant and dessert, this particular route ended at **Turpil**, a hidden cocktail bar accessed through what appears to be a traditional English phone box. Step through the door and you're transported down into a dimly lit, atmospheric space where cocktails become theatre.

We were offered a choice between an Espresso Martini and their signature Porn Martini. The latter arrived in charming bird-shaped glasses accompanied by clouds of bubbles floating magically across the surface – a wonderfully playful touch that delighted the table. Although both my friend, and our Mallorca Food Tours photographer for the night – Gemma Brunton, and I found the drink a little on the sweet side, the experience itself was enormous fun and a memorable way to round off the evening.

One aspect I particularly appreciated was the pace. With an hour allocated to each venue, there was no feeling of being rushed. Instead, the short walks between restaurants allowed time to digest, chat about each course and enjoy Santa Catalina's vibrant streets before arriving at the next destination.

While groups are limited to a maximum of ten people, each booking enjoys its own private table throughout the evening. This isn't designed as a social dining event, although guests do often find themselves chatting with others following the same route. Solo travellers are also welcomed, and while they dine independently, the variety of venues and interaction with different restaurant teams creates a far richer experience than simply eating alone in a single restaurant. For those specifically hoping to meet new people, Food Tours Mallorca also runs regular Social Diner Club evenings.

Another thoughtful feature is that the restaurant selection changes according to the season and the day of the week, allowing returning guests to enjoy a completely different culinary journey on future visits.

By the end of the evening, we had discovered two restaurants and an unusual bar we'd never visited before, revisited familiar surroundings from a fresh perspective and enjoyed four completely different experiences without needing to organise a single reservation ourselves.

Sometimes the best nights out are the ones where somebody else has already done all the planning. Mallorca Food Tours has simply turned that idea into a very enjoyable evening.

You can find more information on their website: <https://foodtoursmallorca.com>

Amanda J Butler is a Mallorca-based writer exploring the island's evolving culture of wellness, lifestyle and conscious living. Follow on Instagram [@amandajbutler](https://www.instagram.com/amandajbutler).