

# THE RIGHT ISLE

Ibiza has shimmied off its hard-partying reputation to attract an even younger crowd, says **Amanda Hyde**

**JOIN THE PARTY**  
Playing on the beach  
at Cala Tarida, Ibiza

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itting on the yellow sand of Cala San Vicente as our four-year-old plays chase with the waves and our toddler naps on a towel, my husband Nat and I reflect on our good fortune. We're alone on the sort of beach that features in 10,000 brochures: an empty expanse shielded by a curving palm of wooded cliff, dotted with a couple of sleepy restaurants and a shop selling everything we've forgotten to pack (bucket and spades, goggles, nappies, strong liquor).

'This could be a secret corner of the Balearics the tourists have never discovered,' I say to him smugly.

And then we hear the distant sounds of bongos as a dreadlocked couple clad only in sarongs make their way towards the water, chanting as they go.

'Er no,' he replies. 'It could only be Ibiza.'

We're only two days into our holiday, but it's becoming clear that much of the island has shed its hard-partying reputation to return to the permissive hippiness that attracted the first wave of 1960s ex-pats. People keep telling us that nobody goes to the clubs any more — even the teenagers just stand outside and snap photos for their social media. Instead, many of the island's original ravers (now settled down with children

## 'IBIZA'S RAVERS NOW HAVE KIDS OF THEIR OWN'

of their own) are opening relaxed bars and beach clubs where kids are as well looked after as adults. Combine this new scene with Ibiza's profusion of beaches and the ease of getting around (nowhere is more than 50 minutes' drive from anywhere else), and it's easy to see why families like ours now flock to the island: pre-Covid, the number of tourists with kids in tow had risen by more than 200 per cent in the last decade.

Ibiza has responded with the sort of hotels that the other Balearics have been offering for years, complete with kids' pools, menus and clubs, as well as special touches like all-inclusive ice creams. We'd booked into one of them: a dazzling white behemoth set in tropical gardens on the west coast called the Sensatori, which came with free buckets and spades and swim-up rooms (much to the kids' delight). It wasn't the sort of place to attract the rave crowd, but just to be doubly sure we'd come during October half-term, when most of the tourists had left the island but the sun still shone.

For me, this was a now-or-never holiday. Like many other 1990s teens, →

I'd harboured dreams of visiting Ibiza ever since Club 18-30 was the height of fashion, but I'd never quite got round to going. Our kids, Sonny and Amelie, may only be two and four, but they are growing fast and I wanted to make sure we visited before they were teenagers themselves, too disgusted to be seen with us in Sainsbury's, let alone Ibiza.

Vaughan Afrika has no such problems. As a former podium dancer who founded the Funky Room at renowned Pacha nightclub, he might be the coolest dad in the world. His own kids were front-of-mind when he set up Babylon Beach ([babylonbeachbar.com](http://babylonbeachbar.com)), a slightly trippy beach club on a slither of pine-strewn cliff just outside the resort town of Santa Eulalia, with its own fortress-themed adventure playground.

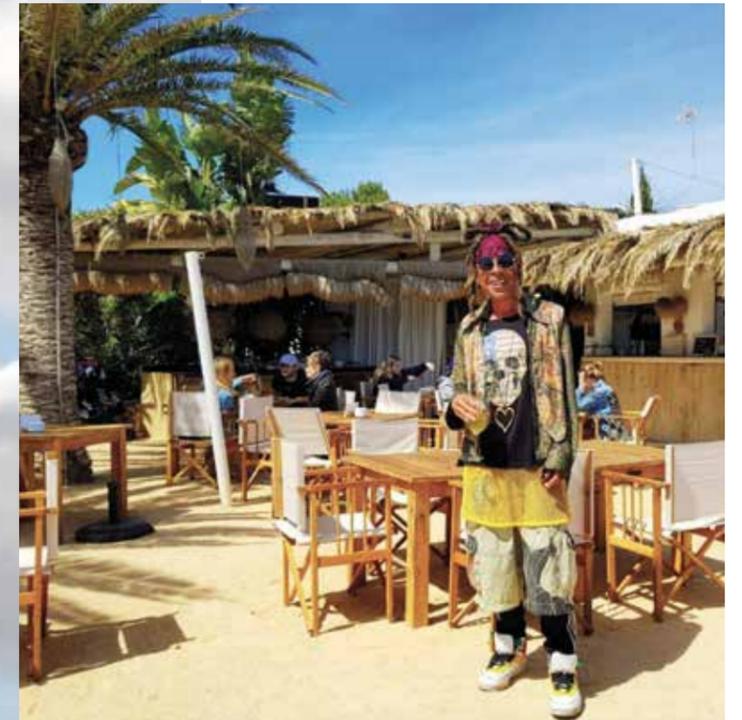
Having heard about Babylon Beach from friends, we booked in for lunch and were greeted by an eclectic mix of tiki umbrellas, chic sun loungers and driftwood chandeliers, accessorised by owner Angie (who dazzled in vintage Pucci slashed to the navel), and the aforementioned Vaughan, who sported a variety of robes in clashing patterns coupled with a topknot of dreadlocks. Flitting between the tables to make sure everyone was having fun, they lent the place a boho air, but it's clear they run a tight ship — the restaurant's produce comes from the club's own local farm and the service is excellent.

A mixture of low-key dubstep and the swish of the sea on the rocks below sweeps away the last of our London tension as Nat and I scoff fresh fish washed down with rosé, while Sonny

#### ALL THE RAVE

Below: kids get creative at Babylon Beach. Right: Ibiza town's Dalt Vila. Opposite: 'Cool dad' Vaughan Afrika

## 'I'D HARBOURED DREAMS OF VISITING IBIZA EVER SINCE CLUB 18-30'



munches on pasta. Amelie runs between our table and the playground, savouring her independence and her important new friend — it turns out Babylon Beach has an on-site nanny to keep kids occupied should your meal go on too long. After watching this saint expertly paint the signature twin cherries of the Pacha nightclub onto the arms of a couple of tweens, Amelie demands a swirl of unicorns on her face before settling down to draw in the restaurant's official colouring book, filled with psychedelic illustrations.

We're all having so much fun that we linger until the other tables have left and the waiters are making moves to shut for the day. When it looks as if we'll be thrown out, we order a taxi and chase the sunset cross-country towards the Sensatori, savouring the incredible dusky views of golden fields topped by a purple sky shot through with neon.

This other-worldly spectacle inspires us to search for a place to have sundowners a few days later. Sunset-watching is pretty much a national sport on Ibiza: aspiring hippies head to Benirrás on Sundays to drum as the sun goes down; those who prefer beer to bongos opt for San Antonio's buzzing Sunset Strip; hardened hikers (of which there are more than you'd think) head to Salinas to see dusk fall over the salt flats, seemingly oblivious to the aggressive mosquitoes that clog the area's air. We wanted to get in on the act, but none of these options →



**ACCESS ALL AGES**

The Sensatori resort combines a tropical setting with swim-up rooms. *Below:* kids on the beach at Cala San Vicente



seemed right with children in tow. Luckily, it turned out that there was a cove with a knockout view just behind our hotel: family favourite Cala Tarida.

It was mid-afternoon by the time we managed to coax the kids out of the Sensatori's pool to embark on our excursion. This turned out to be fortuitous, as it meant we got a discount on the sun loungers at Cala Tarida's chic beach club, Cotton Beach (cottonlifestyle.com), where white umbrellas ran off in neat lines from a restaurant accessed by winding steps up the cliff face.

'This is very fancy,' said Amelie, and she was right – the staff, who seemed to have been plucked from the books of a model agency, swanned around in sleek black outfits, dispensing expensive-looking drinks to women in designer cossies. I involuntarily checked my children's hands for jam,

sand, dirt or worse, but I needn't have worried. Cotton Beach turned out to be another surprisingly kid-friendly Ibizan haunt, with our photogenic server Jaume displaying all the qualities of a laid-back Mary Poppins.

After suggesting some Bahama Mama cocktails for the adults, Jaume drummed up bespoke mocktails for the kids that he served up with big bowls of ice – initiating at least half-an-hour of cooling-off fun that no bucket and spade could ever hope to compete with. He followed this up with a game of sunlounger-hopping that had both kids happily leaping from mattress to mattress until the sun decided to call it a night, tumbling into the sea in an unforgettable blaze of burnt orange. Nat and I wrapped up our sleepy kids in towels as the day's heat subsided, watching the twilight show in the →

## 'THE SUN TUMBLED INTO THE SEA IN A BLAZE OF ORANGE'

## When rain threatens play

What to see and do in Ibiza – when the beach isn't an option



### EXPLORE THE ISLAND'S UNDERGROUND SCENE

Not some dodgy club, but the mystical Can Marçà, once a hideout for the island's notorious smugglers. Featuring underground lakes, dripping stalactites and a dramatic light show, it's a must for wannabe pirates. [covadecanmarsa.com](http://covadecanmarsa.com); 00 34 971 334776



### HAVE A LONG LUNCH

Tucked under a retro raffia canopy at the edge of hidden-away S'Estanyol beach, Cala Bonita is a great place to devour kid-friendly paella on a rainy Sunday – with the added bonus of a kids' club run by renowned childcare provider Kids In Ibiza, the team at Babylon Beach. [calabonitaibiza.com](http://calabonitaibiza.com)



### HEAD BACK IN TIME

Tackle the oversized bruschettas at Bar Anita, an old-school restaurant in San Carlos. The island's first hippy settlers gathered to make telephone calls and collect their post at this beamed-and-whitewashed restaurant, long before Ibiza had a proper mailman. Our kids loved examining the old post and phone boxes decorating the walls. 00 34 971 335090



### GO FISH

Originally a nursery for lobsters destined for the restaurant cooking pot, Aquarium Cap Blanc has been transformed into a turtle rescue centre and home for native fish species – from giant groupers to colourful anemones. Set in a cave, it's good for those days when you need an hour or two's break from the beaches.

[aquariumcapblanc.com](http://aquariumcapblanc.com)

**'THE BEACH HAS EVERYTHING THEY NEED: ROCK POOLS, PERFECT SANDCASTLE SAND AND WATER THAT'S WARM ENOUGH FOR SWIMMING'**



knowledge that their hotel beds were just a couple of minutes away by piggyback.

Cala Tarida proves such a hit with our children that it's hard to persuade them to go anywhere else. The beach has everything they need: rock pools, perfect sandcastle sand and water that's warm enough for swimming, even in autumn. But midway through our holiday, we realise that we should probably see a little more of the island than one stretch of sand... It's time to tackle Ibiza town.

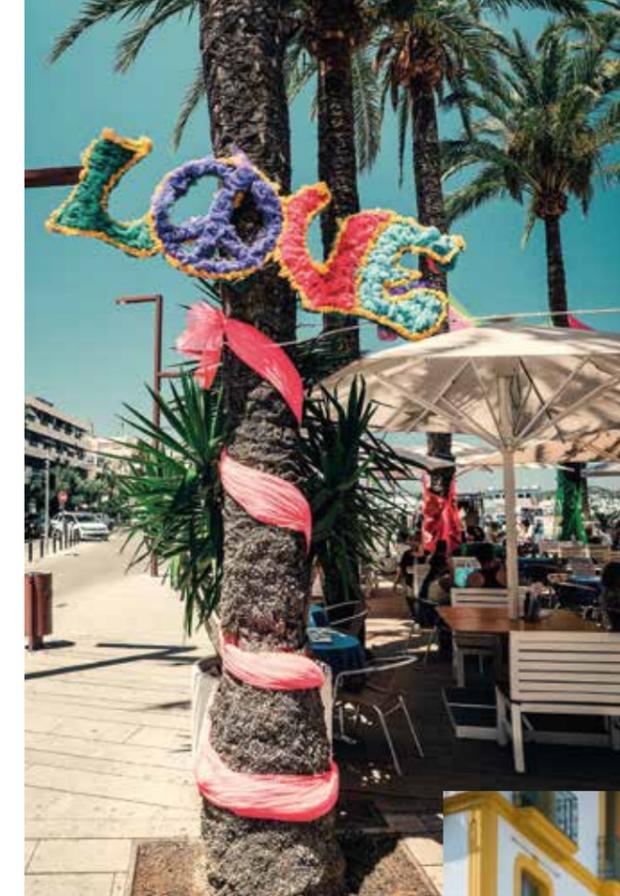
Known for its cobbled lanes crammed with little boutiques and bars, Eivissa is an Ibizan must-see. But after a wander along the side streets and a drink in a bougainvillea-trimmed square, it's apparent that its rather adult charms are lost on our kids. Just outside a shop selling bags emblazoned with diamanté skulls, Sonny stages a sit-in on the pavement. 'No more!' he shouts, before adding authoritatively, 'Boat!'

This sets in place a frantic Google for available options. We're not confident that our kids could do a whole day on the water without tantrums, which rules out the plethora of catamaran trips Ibiza has to offer. Instead, we decide to take the shortest, cheapest boat trip available — a 15-minute ferry hop from Ibiza's old town to its glitzy marina.

It may not be every Ibiza visitor's idea of a good time, but it works for us. The ferry is manned by a seadog who ruffles Sonny's hair and pretends to spot sharks with Amelie, while Nat and I get to see Dalt Vila from the water. Away from all the tourist-trap shops, it's much more beautiful — a sepia-tinted dreamscape rising out of the sea mist. Even better, this boat trip only costs four euros, which means there's plenty of money left over for one of kids' favourite pastimes: souvenir shopping.

It's with this mission in mind that we make for the Sunday market in the whitewashed hill town of San Juan on the last day of our trip. Running on kids' time, we arrive at 9am to find the place tourist-free, with jewellery and kaftan stalls throwing rainbows across the tight knot of empty lanes around the main square. The combination of sunshine, soaring buildings and hot cobbles makes us all so dozy that only Amelie finds the energy to buy anything — a little yellow sequinned fairy costume that's like a miniature of the dresses you might have seen in Ibiza's clubbing heyday.

Retreating to the town square to join San Juan's residents in the local café,



**SUMMER OF LOVE**  
Opposite: the bay at Cala Tarida. Left and below: sun-soaked bars and people-watching in Eivissa

we spend some time people-watching — old ladies gossiping in the street and couples canoodling under almond trees.

'I love Ibiza and Ibiza loves me,' sings Amelie, as she changes into her sparkling new dress.

She's not the only one who's fallen for the island. Thanks to the safe sands, chic beach clubs and kid-friendly service, Nat and I have already discussed booking another family holiday to Ibiza as soon as possible.

Later, we retrace our steps along the town's little lanes to join a crowd watching a group of drummers bashing out infectious rhythms. A little yellow fairy and her brother twirl in time to the beat, shouting 'Again! Again!' at the top of their voices every time the tune threatens to peter out. Ibiza, it seems, is still a place to dance in the sun. 🗨️

## THE LOWDOWN

First Choice has a week for a family of four in a swim-up room at **Sensatori Ibiza** during October half-term from £2,957 all-inclusive, with flights from a choice of 19 airports including Aberdeen, Bristol, Newcastle, Manchester and London.

[firstchoice.co.uk](http://firstchoice.co.uk)

