

Fantasy island

They say if you can dream it, you can do it, and the interiors alone at this resort make it worth moving heaven and earth to see.

WORDS

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Karel Balas



ABOVE The stately old bones of the existing ranch house contribute to Menorca Experimental's timeless character and frame magnificent sea views. **RIGHT** Guests dine on farm-to-table Basque and Catalan cuisine made with produce from the area and the original on-site gardens, which have been carefully reconstructed using aerial maps. **OPPOSITE** Morocco-based Belgian Laurence Leenaert of LRNCE has supplied some of her signature textiles and ceramics for the personality-filled interiors, including the hand-woven blankets in the bedrooms and decorative vases overleaf.



Close your eyes, take a calming breath and picture yourself where you'd rather be — in Menorca. This unspoiled Spanish idyll has been a UNESCO-protected biosphere reserve since 1993, preserving it as a juniper- and pine-fringed paradise where a diverse ecosystem thrives, the cornucopia of bird, marine and plant life making it feel a world away from its untz-untz Balearic Islands neighbours Ibiza and Mallorca.

Central to your Mediterranean daydream is a divine new design-led stay on 30 sun-kissed hectares near Alaior, 13km from the capital of Máhon. Here, a 19th-century finca (country estate) has been transformed by Experimental Group and lauded French interior designer Dorothee

Meilichzon (founder of Paris practice Chzon) into a luxury agritourism venture, Menorca Experimental. Conceived as the summer residence of an imaginary artist (à la the homes away from home of Salvador Dalí in Cadaqués, Pablo Picasso on the French Riviera and Le Corbusier in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin), it has 34 flawlessly composed rooms, nine villas with their own dipping pools, a shared infinity pool, indoor and al fresco restaurants and cocktail bars, and even a restored chapel available to host weddings and other events.

Finding yourself here for real is to be surrounded by a colour palette that references the Menorca sky — golden dawn to blazing sunset. >



THIS PAGE Menorca Experimental's material palette champions nature's best and includes items recycled from the former farm, including roof tiles, wooden beams and local marès stone. Rustic drystone, waxed concrete, glazed terracotta tiles, leather and pale olive timber are some of the other materials used to bring the streamlined interior design to life. Further playful touches include the colour blocking and painted architraves. **OPPOSITE** The resort's rebuild was undertaken by a team of local craftspeople, and the furniture made to Dorothée's specifications by skilled artisans.

Capturing the zeitgeist without conforming to any one genre, the playful fit-out infuses the island's laid-back energy into every space and hints at Dorothée's background in toy design. An updated nod to the existing architecture, formed cement and other materials throughout communicate a fun semi-circle motif via built-in shelving, headboards, mirrors and more. It's an immersive crafted experience right down to the graphic design, hand-drawn alphabet and illustrations on which Dorothée collaborated with French art director and photographer Karel Balas, and the customised-clay light fixtures she produced with French ceramicist Léa Munsch.

While respecting the sustainable tourism values that have long been imperative to the island's custodians, Menorca Experimental invites you to contemplate, commune with nature and generally lose track of time within the walled gardens. Attend on-site yoga, pottery and painting classes; pad down the paths to a secluded nearby cove to sunbathe on the pebble beach and swim in the cerulean sea; and hike or horseride to explore the prehistoric stone megaliths that pepper this place. Or, if your island fantasy simply involves slowing right down, pick one of the many private corners on the property, press pause and just be. menorcaexperimental.com



GET THE LOOK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Visage 9 vase, \$263, Irnce.com. Tan Leather armchair, \$1849, corcovado.co.nz. Guava coloured concrete, POA, peterfell.co.nz. Pötae hat, \$45, blackbirdgoods.co.nz.