



ISLANDS OF THE

sun

Spain's sun-drenched Balearic Islands offer our intrepid senior editor a chance to use his language skills and seek adventure at the same time.

*Story and Photography
By Capt. Ken Kreisler*

Mr. Larkin, my freshman high school Spanish teacher, would have been proud of me. There I was, in Barcelona Airport, jabbering away like a native while on a layover to the Balearic Islands and trying to impress my traveling companions. "Como esta usted?" I asked the woman at the information booth. "Quiere es un gato por el plano a Palma de Mallorca?"

"Gato means cat," she replied, her voice laced with a familiar accent. "And what's a plano?"

"Australian, right?" I said, a little taken aback. "Nah," she replied, "I'm from New Zealand."

Luckily my polyglot services weren't necessary once I got through customs at Palma de Mallorca's airport. Capt. Phil Burgess, master of the charter yacht *Marriah*, was waiting for us. While he chatted up a Spanish storm with the local baggage handler, I listened carefully, trying to pick up a word or two in case he needed my help.

Once we cleared the airport, a 20-minute ride to the yacht along the coast offered lovely country vistas that gave way to a bustling cityscape dominated by La Seu, a huge, gothic-style cathedral (c. 1230) surrounded by old and new buildings whose architecture reflected Roman, Renaissance, Baroque, Middle Eastern, and modern influences. I was tempted to stop, but I knew we'd have plenty of time to explore Palma and Mallorca on our return from Ibiza.

Molded by wind and sea on a beautiful palate of azure waters, verdant rolling hills, and dramatic mountains and cliffs, the Balearic Islands are a diverse group of four land masses off of Spain's eastern boundary with the Mediterranean. Mallorca lies 132 miles from Barcelona and is the largest of the island group. Its capital is Palma.

Once we arrived at the yacht, Burgess offered us a welcome snack prepared by *Marriah's* chef. We sipped on chilled glasses of frigola, a strong herb liqueur, and feasted on a variety of coques. These small, rectangular tarts covered by minced vegetables, fish, and meat are a favorite throughout the islands.

By the time Burgess was ready to give us a tour of the yacht, I had my bottle of frigola safely tucked under one arm and a shot glass clutched in my hand. "Jet lag, cap," I explained. "Strictly medicinal."

Marriah is a lovely yacht. Built by the Cantiere Navale Nicolini shipyard, this 126-footer has all

the amenities and accommodations necessary for luxury cruising. Besides the aforementioned stock of frigola (her wine cellar can, and did, complement any meal), there are the requisite watertoys, including a pair of PWCs, waterskis, snorkeling gear, a windsurfer, and a tender. As for comfort, her interior features

an elegant formal dining room, spacious saloon, aft-deck seating area, sun deck, and exterior lounging and dining areas. But even with all these amenities, it is Burgess and his crew who make this yacht work. As I would find out, they spare no effort in ensuring guests have a splendid time.

We planned to go from Mallorca to Ibiza and back; unfortunately, *Marriah's* timetable couldn't accommodate visits to Menorca and Formentera. Visits to these lovely and tranquil islands, known for their natural beauty and serenity, would have to wait for another time. Once back in Mallorca, *Marriah* would take on fuel and provisions for the crossing to

Fort Lauderdale. As Burgess and I looked over the charts, we received a weather notice informing us that a slow-moving front had stalled and the crossing to Ibiza would be on a beam sea. And so I made a frigola decision: Five rolling hours later, we were entering the harbor at Ibiza, over which loomed the walled citadel of Ibiza Town.

Ibiza dates to 654 B.C., when Carthaginian traders founded what is now Eivissa, Ibiza's capital. The next five centuries saw the island under Roman, Barbarian, Byzantine, and Arab rule.

With *Marriah* safely Med-moored, we set out into town for a look-see. "Your best bet is to take your afternoon up on top, at the citadel," said Burgess. "On your way down, grab a seat at a quay-side cafe and nurse a pint for a while," he added, with a wry smile. "Come late afternoon, the locals take on a bit of—let us say, a different air about them."

We took Burgess' advice and made our way through the Mercat Vell (Old Market) and Place de Vila (Commerce Center) to the

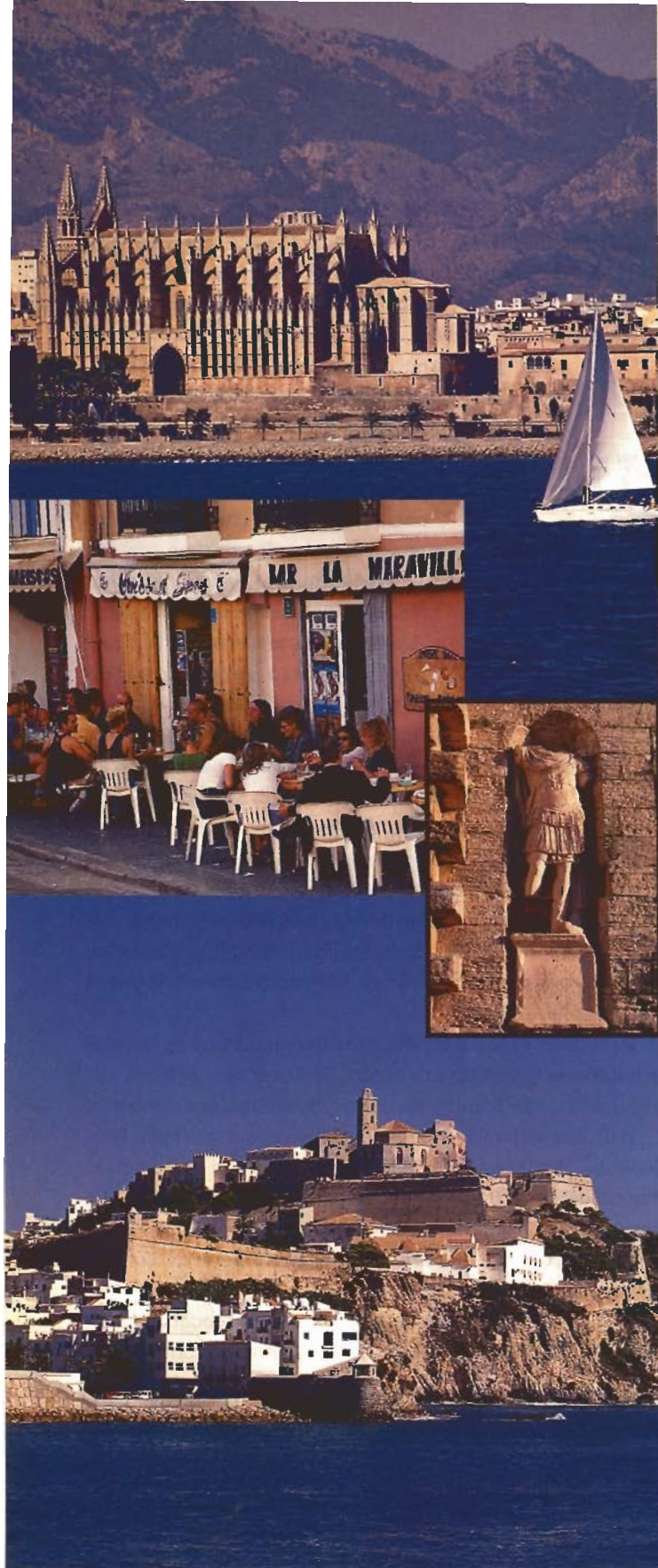
Patal de ses Taules—the guardhouse at the entrance to the walled city. While the hike up the serpentine roadway took us more than an hour, the view and the sense of history made the trek worth the effort.

Dalt Vila (High Town) was built in the 15th century around a castle, and succeeding generations added walls to repel invaders. At the top is

FROM SUNSET TO SUNRISE, IBIZA TOWN RESEMBLES NEW ORLEANS' MARDI GRAS



Above: Beauty and a dedicated crew make *Marriah* a perfect charter yacht. Opposite page: Deia Beach has a spectacular vista.



Top: Dating back to 1230, the imposing La Seu Cathedral dominates Palma de Mallorca's skyline. Center: Ibiza's nocturnal revelers take a break as dawn finds them at a local cafe. Inset: Worn away by time and perhaps vandals, a Roman statue still guards the portaled entrance to Ibiza's walled city. Bottom: Seen from the sea, the Citadel looks down on the rest of Ibiza.

the Cathedral of The Virgin Mary, started in the 14th century, finished in the 15th century, and restored in the 18th century.

By the time we made our way down, the sun was low on the horizon, and we parked ourselves at a street-side cafe. Three pints later we began to understand what Burgess had meant when he said the locals take on a different air about them. From sunset to sunrise, Ibiza Town resembles New Orleans' Mardi Gras by way of Sodom and Gomorrah, as outrageously costumed partygoers roam the town handing out invites to local discos and nightclubs, some of which don't open until midnight and stay open until 9 a.m.

We did pop in at Le Inferno, The Cave, and one place with no name at all, and later we found our trusty bottle of chilled frigola waiting for us back aboard *Marriah*. The chef had prepared a meal centering around grilled giant prawns, a wonderfully seasoned salad, galley-baked bread, and a dessert of flan, fresh berries, and light sugar wafers.

The next morning saw us having breakfast underway as Burgess took us to a beautiful anchorage with nearby Formentera prominent on the horizon. By lunchtime he had found a spot around several small atolls where we swam, sailed, ate, and then swam, sailed, and ate some more. At dusk we dined on rack of lamb accompanied by an outstanding claret. After dinner, we settled into comfortable chairs on the aft deck with snifters of cognac and watched the last of a flame-red sun disappear into the darkening Mediterranean.

The next day dawned calm and clear as *Marriah* gently made her way around the spectacular rock formations of Ibiza's coastline. Burgess took us on a tour of the uninhabited terrain before finding another picturesque anchorage for the lunchtime meal. A wonderful vegetable *sopa* (soup) served with slices of homemade bread soaked in the cooking broth and seasoned with paprika, tomatoes, and garlic began the service. The main course consisted of partridge a la menorquina (herbed and spiced fowl) served with el tumbet, a pie-like layer of potatoes and eggplant. The afternoon activities consisted of waterskiing, a PWC expedition to some spectacular rock outcroppings, and a visit to an atoll beach. Afterwards, with a selection of cheese, fresh vegetables, and several tantalizingly delicious dips set out before us, the rest of my crew settled in to catch up on some reading while I honed my Spanish vocabulary skills. Another spectacular evening anchorage saw us snuggled into our staterooms while *Marriah* gently swung on her anchor.

By the time our next morning's breakfast was served, Burgess had the yacht back on the quay at Mallorca while we made arrangements to explore the largest of the islands. Having had time on the cruise to sharpen my vocabulary, I decided that the best way to get around would be by taxi, so I enlisted the services of two cabbies, Angel and Rafael, to show us around. This turned out to be a great experience. Not only did these two know



The mountaintop town of Deia offers the chance to watch a spectacular sunset on Mallorca's western shore.

the island, but their limited English blended with my limited Spanish so that we were able to meet somewhere in the middle—at a place known as Spanglish.

The city was quite breathtaking: the busy downtown district with its ancient walled fortifications of bygone eras, the majestic La Seu cathedral, the outer farmlands dotted with windmills, the seemingly endless fields of pecan trees, and the spectacular beaches of Cala Major, Alcudia, Arenal, and Es Trenc. However, as Angel, Rafael, and I discussed—I think—the New York Yankees, fishing, the Hubbell space telescope, and “just how does that Etch-A-Sketch work anyway?” they suggested we dine in the mountaintop village of Deia at a restaurant named Sebastian.

Lots of laughs and an hour and a half later, we arrived at Deia. While Angel went on ahead to make the reservations for dinner, Rafael took us to a spectacular overlook where we could see the setting sun, the expansive Mediterranean, and the rocky and craggy coastline of western Mallorca. Dinner was wonderful, especially the rich, red Madeira.



The next morning after breakfast, Burgess took us to the airport for our trip back to the States. My time aboard *Marriah* was wonderful, and my only regret is that I didn't get to experience Formentera and Menorca. Nevertheless, I left with the notion that *las islas Baleares soy solamente bajo el sol del verano*: The Balearic Islands are always under the summer sun.

And Mr. Larkin, on the chance that you happen to read this, I'd like you to know that I've finally learned to correctly conjugate the verb *ser*. *Muchas gracias*. □

A one-week charter onboard *Marriah* costs \$65,000. For more information, contact: **Northrop & Johnson** (401) 848-5540. Fax: (401) 848-0120. Circle Reader Service No. 247

