

**Holiday with a religious connection:**  
**The monasteries, churches and retreats of Northern Mallorca**  
**Part 1: Pollenca**



**Cap de Formentor, north east Mallorca. Mallorcans call it 'The Meeting Point of the Winds'.**

Magda and I have, until now, resisted the lure of the occasionally infamous holiday isle of Mallorca. Put off by its reputation as the 'ravers' capital of Europe' and programmes like 'Magaluf Weekender' we've preferred to visit the Costa del Sol on mainland Spain in the summer - or Lanzarote/Fuerteventura in the winter. This was our loss – the island proved to be an unexpected delight, particularly from a 'church tourism' standpoint. We confined our trips out to the north of the island, leaving Palma and the south for another time.



**Villa Geranios, near Port de Pollença in the north of Mallorca was our home for two weeks.**

We rented a very pleasant villa in the north east of the island near Port de Pollenca. It was on a coastal plain, and as such was very flat, lending itself to cycling. We would often encounter large groups of lycra-clad cyclists on our travels, zooming happily along the highways. On the wider roads their progress was frequently facilitated by discrete cycle/walkers lanes.



**We booked a VW Golf through Villa Plus, supplied by Avis. A nice car but I didn't like the electronic handbrake – or the emergency message on the dashboard, in German!**

## Pollenca – the Calvary Steps

Our first outing was to Pollenca, which lies around 5 miles inland from Port de Pollenca.



The 365 Calvari steps leading up to the Calvari Oratory in Pollenca.

On Good Friday, the **Calvari Steps** are the setting for one of the most dramatic parades of the year in Mallorca. First a parade of people walk up the winding roads at the back of the hill till they reach the chapel at the top. This is followed by an enactment of the Stations of the Cross and then a mock crucifixion on the top of the hill. After this the figure of Christ is ceremonially removed from the cross and there is a sombre torch lit parading of the body of Christ down the Calvari steps and through the town.



The view from the top of the Calvari Steps in Pollenca.



The summit of Calvari Hill in Pollença. The Oratory of the Calvary dates from 1799. After a long climb, there are refreshments at the top.

After the conquest of Mallorca from the Moors in 1229, King James I bestowed the district of Pollenca on the military order of the Templars, who owned the hill. After the Templars were disbanded in 1314, it belonged to the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Malta till 1840. It later passed to the state, who built the access path and steps uphill.



**Inside the Calvary Oratory in Pollenca.**



**The glorious view from the top of Calvari Hill in Pollença.**

We made our way down the hill into the town to view the church of Our Lady of the Angels by the main town square.

This parish church was founded in 1236, but only four years later it was handed to the Knights Templar who had been granted swathes of land in northern Mallorca by King Jaime I of Aragon in recognition of the help they gave him during the Conquest of Mallorca in 1229. It was around this church that Pollença began to expand, eventually ending the thirteenth century as one of the main towns on the island.

After the Order of the Knights Templar was dissolved in 1312, all its properties, including this church, were ceded to the Order of the Knights Hospitallers, later known as the Order of Malta, remaining in their hands until 1836. However, the only trace of its original appearance is the base of the bell tower, construction of which began in 1470, although it didn't reach its current height until 1921.



The building we see now was constructed between 1714 and 1790. It is a basilica floor plan church with vaulted side chapels. Inside you can see several valuable works of art, such as the Baroque altarpiece on the high altar dedicated to Mare de Déu dels Angels - created between 1752 and 1764 by Mallorcan sculptor Joan Pere Obrador - and fourteen large canvases depicting the Stations of the Cross.



The altar and reredos in the church of Our Lady of the Angels, which is located by the town's main square.



The wonderful ceiling frescos in the roof of the nave, in the church of Our Lady of the Angels in Pollenca.



The huge doors of the church of Our Lady of the Angels in Pollenca.



The busy town square in Pollenca, surrounded by restaurants, and bordered by the parish church of Our Lady of the Angels.

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**First edit**

**September 2017**

**Next: Part 2 - The mountain monastery of Lluc.**