

By James & Caroline Warne

A STUNNING MORNING WALK



This beautiful island is a walkers and cyclists heaven. It's an island of ancient treasures, beautiful coastline, caves, gorges and reminders of a rich and turbulent history, all sitting side by side with nature and a landscape of outstanding natural beauty.

Many of Menorca's walks are well documented in several books and of course the 180km Cami de Cavalls coastal path which circumnavigates the whole island is the most famous of them all. But for us, living in Mahon, we were keen to find a varied and unspoilt morning or evening walk we could do from our front door, without getting in the car; one we could do time and time again and never get bored. The coastal path along the estuary to Es Castell is lovely but a little short. We have, however discovered a real gem of a walk, one that keeps you away from traffic the moment you leave the port, cuts through beautiful countryside, past a pretty, little-visited Chapel with a rich history, along a gorge – and back home in just six miles. We call it "the figure of 8" and for those living in Mahon, it's an absolute treat.



The walk starts from the busy roundabout at the far entrance to the port, at beginning or the road along the port, Moll de Ponent (the junction for the road to Fornells and Cala Llonga) Take none of these main roads but cross onto the little lane, the Cami Baix Sant Joan. (Pic 1) This lane winds peacefully out into countryside, passing pretty little farms, allotments and fields boasting a stunning variety of crops. This rich farming land is here by no accident, it was the exceptionally important "garden of Mahon" – a large area of former marshland – drained, cultivated and developed by Nelson in the late 1700s to feed the hungry sailors of his huge fleet during the English occupation. A walk along here for a mile or so rewards us with so many different crops seen in on Mahon's market stalls – and the landscape changes throughout the year. In May for example, many of the fields lush with wild flowers and poppies.(Pic 2)



You soon arrive at another hugely important emblematic sites in Mahon for the British navy, the chapel of Sant Joan dels Vergers. (Pic 3) Dedicated to St John the Baptist, it dates back to 1533 with origins in 1287. When King Alfoso 111 recaptured Mahon from the Turks he ordered that a Te Deum be celebrated here in thanks to God and reputedly built the first chapel. A cavalcade used to ride to the Chapel to celebrate Compline and High Mass. The nearby fountain of Sant Joan filled the little reservoir next to the church and the British built a sophisticated pumping station to transport the water to a spectacular underground tank at the naval base in Mahon.



For a shorter walk, you can climb the path up the beautiful and fascinating Alfafaret gorge behind the Chapel which eventually arrives at the main road not far from Ikea, from where you can walk back into town.

But for our walk, continue away from the site of the Chapel along the lane we approached on (Pic 4), which bears right past a strawberry farm to the little bridge over the stream. Just before the stream there is the interesting remains of an old water wheel/well and the sophisticated irrigation system that used to run in hollowed out stones along the tops of the walls.(Pic 5)

Crossing the bridge turn immediately left along the pretty lane flanked with bamboo and the stream on your left. After approx. 500 metres, watch out for a path on the right, Cami d'en Ceba, a lovely shady path (Pics 6 & 7) which arrives at the main Mahon to Fornells road. Here turn left along the side on the road for 100 metres, turning left at the sign for the mushroom farm onto Cami dels Alzagotzars. Follow this lane, bearing left at the bottom, passing the most lovely fields and fincas (Pics 8 & 9)– the lane turning into a pretty shaded cobbled path which arrives at the Font d'en Simo, the now dried up source of the spring of Simo.

It's a crossroads where we now must turn left along the footpath, the Cami Font d'en Simo which brings us back to the lane we walked up lined with bamboo. Here we turn right across the same bridge and back to the Chapel, but now we take the Cami de Dalt Sant Joan (Pic 10) directly opposite the chapel which takes us back to Mahon. We carefully cross straight over the road down the hill from the Repsol Garage (the Rda.de Mao) which is now cobbled and gives a lovely view over the gorge (Pic 11) before we arrive back in Mahon – entering through the old town gate. This stunning walk is approximately 6 miles and one you'll return to again and again. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do!



Enjoy a walk that just keeps giving- follow the map!