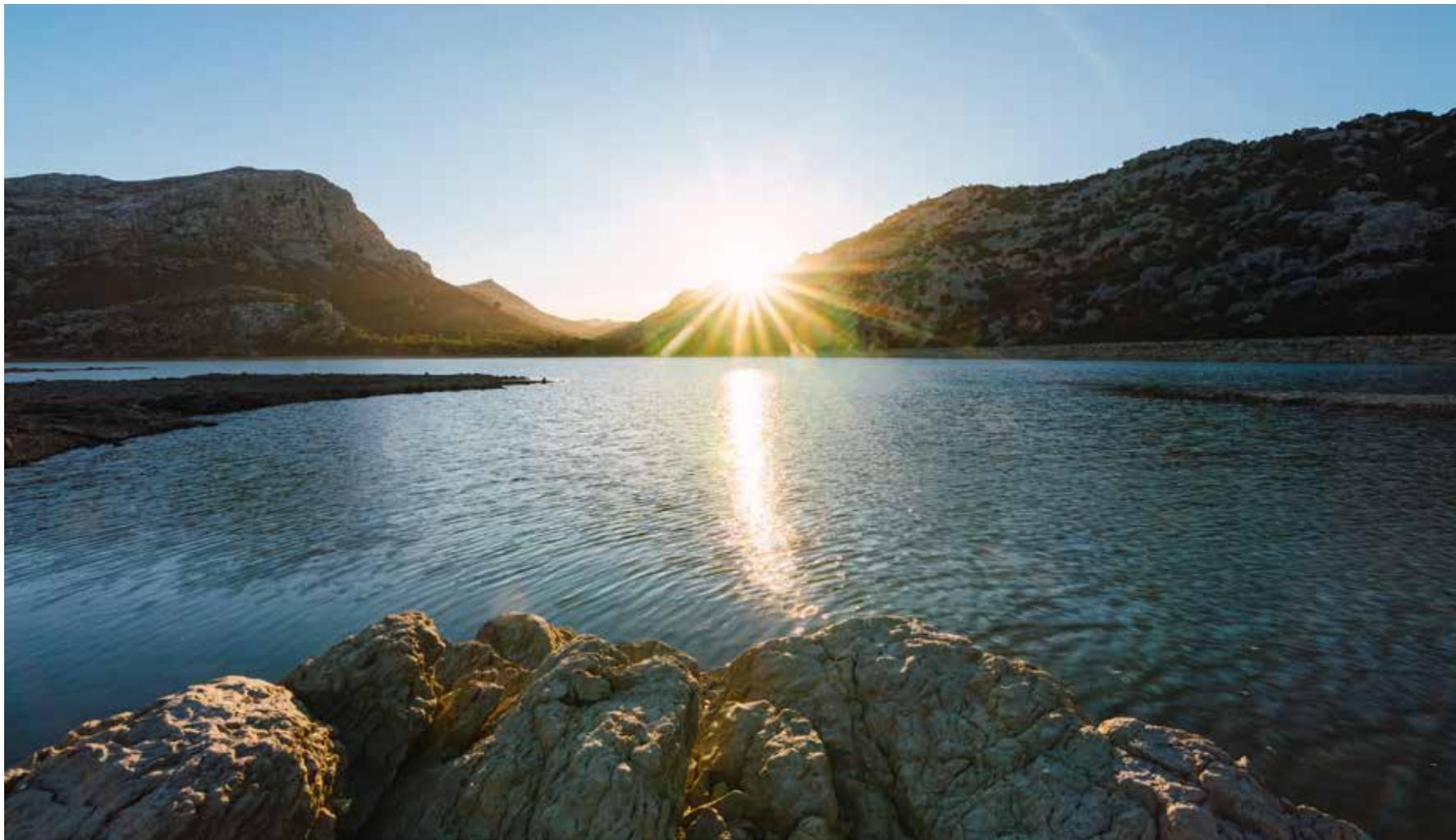


Travel & Outdoors

WISH YOU WERE HERE



Mesmerised by Mallorca

Why the history and landscape of Mallorca has inspired me and other writers down the centuries, explains **Diana Janney**

My relationship with Mallorca began 25 years ago. Even though there have been long periods since then when I haven't visited the island, my love for it has withstood the absence, so that whenever I return, it is as if the intervening years have melted away.

That first visit stands out vividly in my memory, perhaps partly because it was also the first holiday my husband and I ever took together. We stayed in the north of the island in a small, enchanting village called Deià, which is situated where the foothills of the towering, tree-covered Serra de Tramuntana drop down to the sea.

The Serra de Tramuntana is a mountain range that was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the category 'Cultural Landscape', in recognition of its combination, over the centuries, of culture, traditions, aesthetics, spirituality and identity. Its landscape has been sculpted by

the inhabitants with skills passed down from generation to generation – agriculture, fishing, the making of pottery, embroidery, all these traditions having helped create the island that Mallorca is today. The artistic culture is important to Mallorquins too – there are museums of religious art, archaeological displays and contemporary art exhibitions by local artists and sculptors, as well as classical music concerts performed in breathtaking surroundings.

Deià is a tiny village of narrow cobbled streets that meander up a steep incline to the ancient church at its summit. It has intrigued prominent writers for over a century. The poet and novelist Robert Graves, of 'I, Claudius' fame, lived in the

Running through my novel is a sense of personification of the island



Sunset on Serra de Tramuntana, main; author Diana Janney, above

village for many years. He is buried in the cemetery behind the church (his gravestone carved simply with the word 'poeta'). He wrote of the hillside village that became his home; "I found everything I wanted as a writer: sun, sea, mountains, spring water, shady trees." George Sand, who wrote *Winter in Majorca*, lived with her lover Frédéric Chopin in the neighbouring village of Valldemossa, and other acclaimed visitors include D.H. Lawrence, Jules Verne and Anais Nin.

So, I am not the only writer to have been mesmerised and inspired by the beautiful island of Mallorca, known

by the ancients as The Golden Isle. But what is it that draws us back again and again? Why are these ancient villages of Mallorca so very inspirational to writers? And why was it almost inevitable that I would choose Mallorca as the setting for my latest novel *A Man of Understanding*?

There is something compelling about the concept of beauty that has caused it to be discussed and debated by leading philosophers of Aesthetics for centuries. Indeed, it so fascinated me that I chose in the '90s to write my postgraduate thesis on the subject. Like the 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant, I place special importance on the beauty of nature, its sense of design, sometimes experiencing awe at the infinite greatness of the world, the sentiment of the sublime. When we visit a place like Deià, we seek to be moved, we search for what lies beyond the practicalities and distractions of everyday life, we look for what one of the main characters in my new novel describes as 'what shakes your soul'.

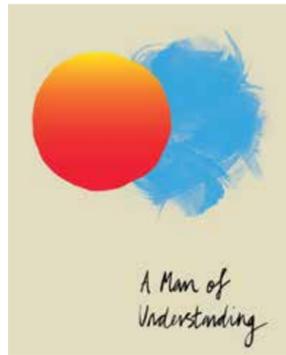
Interestingly, places that inspire creativity are often in the hills and mountains, overlooking calm

or raging seas, somewhere with open, head-clearing spaces, where sunlight sparkles on azure waters and mountain goats roam carefree amongst pine trees and olive groves – a beauty in landscape that is unsophisticated, untamed, rugged rather than formally presented. The Golden Isle certainly fits this description.

Perhaps the first step to an explanation of how Mallorca has inspired my own writing is by reference to a few descriptions taken from *A Man of Understanding*. For the setting of my new novel, I chose the vicinity of a small ancient village in the mountains of Mallorca, reminiscent of Deià. Just outside the village, a long, tree-lined driveway leads to a period sandstone Finca of traditional Mallorcan construction, where Horatio R. Hennessy, an enigmatic and learned philosopher-poet, lives with his recently orphaned grandson Blue.

Here is Blue's reaction to his first encounter with his new home: "It took a few seconds for me to adjust to the strength of the Mallorcan sunlight. The first thing I noticed was how far into the distance I could see without my eyes resting on a single building. Our only neighbours were trees of differing shapes – some clustered together like extended families, others standing alone in the dusty ground. Far away on the horizon I thought I glimpsed the sea, just a tiny blue hint of it but enough to make me feel calmer inside."

Running through my novel is a sense of personification of the island: the forests of pine trees that make you wonder how the world was first created; the Finca, with mighty walls the colour of a sandy beach in the midday sun, built like a fortress to protect and strengthen the life inside; the rocky caves that offer shelter from sudden rain; fresh seabass snuffed out like a candle in a gentle breeze in the midst of what they enjoy doing most, the perfect way to go; the blue of cloudless sky on a summer's day, a transcendent symbol of unreality; the thunder that passes quickly in Mallorca, leaving pools of rainwater



and the sound of dripping from terracotta rooftops and the heavy smell of freshly-watered soil; the warm Mallorcan air that lulls you into a siesta when you least expect it; the clay pots overflowing with brightly-coloured flowers; the scented herbs that need to be savoured in the right setting of mountains, pine trees and amber sunshine to give them back the life that has been plucked prematurely from them.

All these aspects of Mallorca possess a vital individuality, an energy, like a magnificent work of art calling out to you, which is key to an understanding of its influence and creative draw.

In recognising that Mallorca is itself a work of art, its inspirational qualities, I believe, become clearer. Just like Horatio's description of good poetry, or a beautiful novel, or a striking painting, when you leave Mallorca and recall it later in your imagination, it is its aftertaste that lingers, that shakes your soul. This aftertaste is what confirms the essence, the true reality of the island as being more than just a spectacle of nature – it possesses an individual, complex, living, evolving character. That is why I, and so many other writers, have fallen in love with this Golden Isle. That is what draws us back to Mallorca again and again.

Diana Janney is the author of the new novel *A Man of Understanding* (Cogito Publishing, £8.99, out now)



The tiny village of Deià has intrigued prominent writers for over a century

STAYCATION



The city of street art

Along bland Bristolian routes I took as a teenager there are now vast murals, writes **Kate Wickers**

It's a bit of a surprise to start a Bristol graffiti tour by staring at a blank white wall at City Hall on College Green, however, as this is the spot where the pseudonymous street artist, political activist and now global superstar that is Banksy showed up in the middle of the night in 2001 to create a piece called Pulling The Plug, stare at it we do.

The piece (long since scrubbed away) was painted in a daring two fingered gesture to the city council and police who, in the 90s and early noughties, exercised zero tolerance of Bristol's street artists.

I grew up here in the 80s and back then it wasn't yet deserving of its reputation as the painted city.

Grey concrete was considered preferable to expressive often political art and the city council employed a full time clean up squad to keep it that way.

Today, Bristol still feels like home but as though I'm viewing it through a new pair of kaleidoscopic specs.

I'm under the expert guidance of Rob Dean from Where The Wall on a two-hour guided street art tour, and he has a wealth of interesting back stories to share.

We cross the road from City Hall to Park Street to view Banksy's Well Hung Lover, painted in 2006,

depicting a naked man hanging from a window ledge by his fingertips, while his lover hides behind her husband who peers angrily from the window.

"The hanging man is thought to be a former business associate of Banksy," Rob tells us. "And that the real betrayal here concerns their split and how cheated Banksy felt."

It's painted on the side of what was once a sexual health clinic, within plain view of City Hall, high enough to make it difficult to clean off.

"That's just so Banksy," I chuckle, already feeling like I have formed a connection with this shadowy Bristolian artist. The blue splodges over the work are believed to have come from Bristol Rovers supporters after Banksy (a Bristol City fan) insulted their team.

Next stop is the Radisson Blu Hotel for Cheo's take on Bristol-based Aardman Animations' Wallace and Gromit, painted as boys from the hood (complete with baseball caps and gold chains).

It proved to be such a popular image that Cheo was invited back by the hotel to paint a second, this time featuring a gangster rendition of Shaun the Sheep. Along Nelson Street, the once bland route I took as a teenager to my Saturday job, there are

now vast murals decorating the sides of concrete office blocks.

I gasp as we turn a corner and catch sight of Wolf Boy by Aryz; Nick Walker's Painting the Town Red, and the Tats Cru unique take on the 1930s photograph of skyscraper construction workers eating lunch in the sky; created as part of Upfest, Bristol's annual graffiti festival.

In the late 80s I studied A level Art at Filton Technical College, just down the road from the Where The Wall base on Stokes Croft (location of Banksy's iconic Mild Mild West – the one with the teddy bear throwing a Molotov cocktail), but I've never held a spray can.

I adopt the en garde stance, with a spray can at the ready

After signing up for a one-hour Introducing Stencil Art workshop that was about to change.

After a brief history lesson (cave dwellers some 40,000 years ago first used pigment dyes to create stencilled handprints), and the selection of a stencil – two curling Japanese koi – I adopt the en garde stance, with a spray can at the ready.

I'm told to take short sharp sweeps and try a 'windscreens wiper action' to avoid drips. "That's actually very impressive," Rob tells me, when we

Kate Wickers does her research, main; street art in different styles, top and above

peel back the stencil to reveal my artwork.

Whether he says that to all wannabe middle-aged street artists is hard to tell but I've enjoyed the chance to work daringly with such vibrant colour, and am so thrilled with the result that I'm keen to spray another.

Four new self-guided safari tours by Where The Wall are now available, designed to encourage visitors to explore the street art of less-frequented areas.

I trial one, heading out from Temple Meads station and into St Phillips, where I wander along a stretch of the River Avon, past stone walls and bridges covered in artwork from emerging artists.

This is a city with many canvases (walls) left to paint and I'm proud to see what my home city has become: one immense, constantly evolving, art gallery; accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Street art tour (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays), £15 per adult, £7.50 per child. Introducing Stencil Art, £15 per child and £20 per adult. A Piece Of Banksy self-guided tour, £10, www.wherethewall.com – Rooms at The Bristol Hotel start at £115, www.doylecollection.com/bristol



SCANDINAVIA

Simple stress-free pleasures of summerhouse culture

Northern Europeans have found the perfect formula for a relaxing sunshine break, says **Sarah Marshall**

Try to contact a Swede, Dane or Norwegian any time between June and August, and you'll be lucky to get a quick response. For Scandis, holiday time is precious. It presents a treasured opportunity to switch off, focus attention on friends and family, and celebrate the simple pleasures of life.

But rather than racing to foreign climes, most make use of their summerhouse, a holiday home set in the mountains, hidden deep in forests or within skipping distance of the sea.

In the last few years, Scandis have been opening the doors of these second homes to foreign visitors, allowing us all to share in a stress-free holiday culture that's been carefully cultivated over hundreds of years.

What's so special about summerhouses?

Built by his grandfather in the 1960s, Simon Lind Fischer's summerhouse is located in small fishing village Thorup Strand, on the northwest coast of Jutland in Denmark. He spends weekends buying fresh catch from fishermen and enjoys running through the forests where he occasionally sees deer.

"In the summerhouse, we re-discover each other and what life actually is all about: relations and the appreciation of the present time and the small things in life," he explains.

Spending quality time with family is also a priority for Dane Sara Zankal, who owns a summerhouse in Sejerøbugten, just over an hour's drive from Copenhagen.

"I love having a 'second home' where things, habits and daily life are totally different," she says. "In our summerhouse, the kids climb

trees instead of watching iPad and we swim several times a day. In the evenings, we play board games.

"When the car turns the last corner down the little dirt road, you can just feel tensions and stress leaving your body."

What to expect?

Although the concept is similar across Scandinavia, each country has its own characteristics and traditions. Norwegians enjoy hyttekos (cabin cosiness) in their mountain cabins, seaside huts and remote cottages. Sweden, meanwhile, has a soft spot for coastal clapperboard cottages, originally built by upper classes in the 19th century to avoid overcrowded cities. "Traditionally, a Danish summer house is a small tree house offering simple living close to nature," explains Simon Lind Fischer. "Although today, the size of properties is growing, as owners and guests demand more comforts."

Where to go?

According to a 2019 count by Statistics Sweden, there were 607,000 holiday homes in the country. Try the Stockholm archipelago, Skåne, the islands of Öland and Gotland, or the west coast and Småland.

In Denmark, there are approximately 200,000 of which 40 per cent are rented out. Most are located along the coast in Jutland, Djursland and the north coast of Zealand. Islands such as Samsø, Fanø and Anholt and Bornholm are also popular. In Norway, 22 per cent of the population owns a cabin, used both in winter and summer. Find most of them in Oppland and Hedmark, north of Oslo or in Southern Norway.

How to book?

Booking.com and Airbnb feature several Scandi summerhouses. In Denmark, try Landfolk.com for a selection of beautifully-designed homes; in Sweden Stugknuten.com has an excellent selection; and for Norway, Norgesbooking.no is a good bet.



Lillesjö summerhouse, Småland, Sweden, above