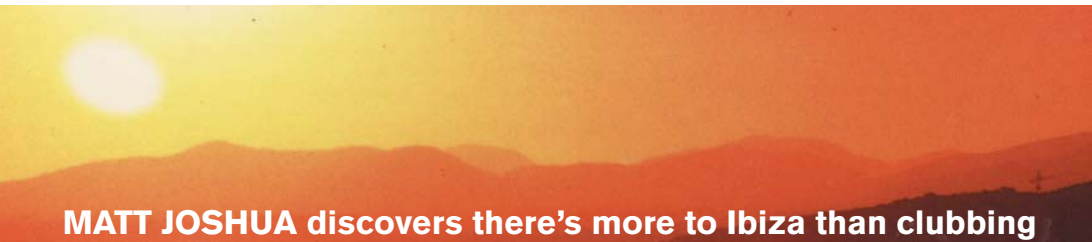
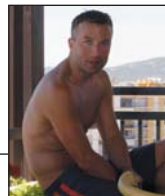


IBIZA REMIXED



MATT JOSHUA discovers there's more to Ibiza than clubbing

A week prior to leaving for "The White Island" I confessed I was an Ibiza virgin. I was immediately bombarded with a regimental itinerary of where to go and what to do: "Space on Sunday, DC10 on Monday, Pacha on Tuesday" ... blah blah blah and Solomon Grundy. Was this to be a holiday, in the proper sense of the word, or a drug-fuelled disco marathon? Having (barely) survived the White Party London weekend I decided to rain check the rave and ditch on the disco. Ibiza without the clubs?

After reading Stephen Armstrong's "The White Island" I now know that it's not just recently that Ibiza has been party central. Around 650BC the Carthaginians turned the island into a place of worship for their goddess of sex, Tanit, and the Island is named after Bez, the lord of the dance. So for over two thousand years pleasure seekers have flocked to the island to rock and fuck.

I thought I'd be the exception and envisaged long hot days lounging by the pool, sampling fresh seafood and perhaps have a bit of a holiday fling. Reverie was brought abruptly to a halt with the booming announcement of a four hour delay at Gatwick and the excessively patriotic abundance of England football shirts in the departure area. For all it's good points, Ibiza still has San Antonio, destination of louts and the like.

Collecting luggage labels at the carousel became a game of "spot the pool" as the Respect Holiday baggage labels are red and quite distinctive. I spotted a couple of Heaven regulars and made my way over to them. We met Kevin the rep outside and we're shown to our buses that were to transfer us to our accommodation. A perfect antithesis to the Chingford Massiva, Kevin turned on the camp and delivered his "Welcome to Ibiza speech". I was staying at Lido Llobet apartments in Figueretas, bang on the beachfront.

I was pleasantly surprised. Clean, spacious, comfortable, nice balcony, and most importantly, it felt secure. These rooms can sleep four – two in the bedroom and two in the lounge, on sofa beds. I guess four would be cosy, but if you simply use holiday accommodation for sleeping, changing, occasional eating and horizontal aerobics: well, what more does one need?

Decided to check out the local bars at around midnight, starting at the Island Bar, which is at the end of the main drag, right on the sea front – the Old Town end. Oh Toto, we're not in the West End now! Those spirit measures! Round the corner and up to Cube Bar and then further up to Bar Kitsch (by name and nature), and finally ending up over the road to Monroe's. Like its namesake, this bar is a total homage to the blonde



bombshell. I also discovered they have internet facilities in the back, one Euro for half an hour. Got acquainted with the rather cute Australian barman, and suddenly it was Sunday morning.

The one downside of Lido Llobet apartments is that it is quite straight. In fact a lot of the other apartments are residential, or at least timeshare. The pool is hetero heaven, with noisy kids and poppable lilos. However, just a short walk up the hill to the other Respect accommodation is the Canit Hotel. The Canit has a pool and poolside café. This very popular homo hangout is the perfect place to booze, cruise, have a spot of lunch and top up the tan.

The view from the Canit is stunning. "Oi Dolly!" Who do we bump into? Geoff, Michael, Rusty and half the Box crowd. A lot of the "serf self-indulgers" have done Ibiza for years and tend to come out for the beginning and end of the Summer season. Popped down to Bar Magnus for Kevin's "What to do and where to go talk". It was very informative and hilariously camp. A Respect bar tour was arranged for that evening, but I decided to skip it in favour of the Geoff Llawellyn bar crawl. Fast forward to the evening (did I mention the copious amounts of sangria and bumping into a notorious Covent Garden coke dealer?). A quick walk (like speedy bloody Gonzales) round past the castle to the old town. The Compton Street of Ibiza Old Town is Calle de la Virgen (you couldn't make it up). On this street you'll find bars like Teatro, Cargo, Galeria 22, Leon and Capricho. On the way to Calle de la Virgen there's Bar Red and La Murralla at Sa Carrossa. One of the most popular bars is Angelo; with its outdoor split-layered terrace it's perfect for having a bowty and a vada.

No clubs? Well, Anfora is not really a club like Heaven or

Trade, it's a little dancefloor, a handful of bars and something called a "dark room", but it's actually built into the hill, so it's a sort of "disco cave". So a visit to Auntie Flora's wasn't really clubbing. Having got the social shenanigans out of the way, Monday was spent simply lying in the sun, getting my blackness back. The seafont at Figueretas has a good mix of restaurants, and of course all the rooms come equipped with cooker and adequate cutlery and crockery. For the best restaurants though head to the Old Town. Tuesday morning 7am I was woken up by a knock on the door. Immediately I thought "Oh fuck, someone's died". How pleasantly surprised was I when the cute Scottish guy from two doors down pushed a G&T into my hand and said, "Thought I'd be room service." Never one to look a gift horse and all that, it was a case of "Give me ten minutes" – hanging onto the G&T, obviously. Now that's why we go on gay holidays, right? Tuesday afternoon involved a trip to the nudist/gay beach, a fifteen minute drive away, to Playa Es Cavallet. This beautiful stretch of beach runs for a couple of miles and is edged by pine forest. Obviously a prime cruising ground, with lots of rumpy pump in the dunes. Unfortunately, the wind was up and so were the jelly fish, so we couldn't get in the water. On Wednesday the sight of Formentera Island in the distance spawned talk of a boat trip. Small world syndrome ensued and we bumped into a carry Geoffie lass that used to go to DTPM when it was at The End. Donna does boat trips, or rather organises them. Formentera, one word: Paradise. Thursday was spent doing the scenic historical thing, checking out the architecture of the Old Town and castle, then to-ing and fro-ing between the pool and the local beach. Friday, much of the same: a few pool-side fumbles and a troll round the ramparts.

"Ramparts", sounds dirty doesn't it? Well, it was Friday night, out for dinner at Mama Pomota in the Old Town. Then it was Saturday and time to go home. Okay, so I didn't get to go over to San Antonio – but it's all egg and chips and Ing-ger-land, Ing-ger-land. No luv. And I didn't go inland – too hot and sweaty. But I did chill out, met some fabulous people and had an excellent time. Ibiza equals Bacchanalian excess, and of course being poofs on a gay holiday there's bound to be boys and booze involved. But it can be done without the clubs.

> **Tour operator, Respect Holidays. Tel: 0870 770 0169. Mention QX for current offers.**