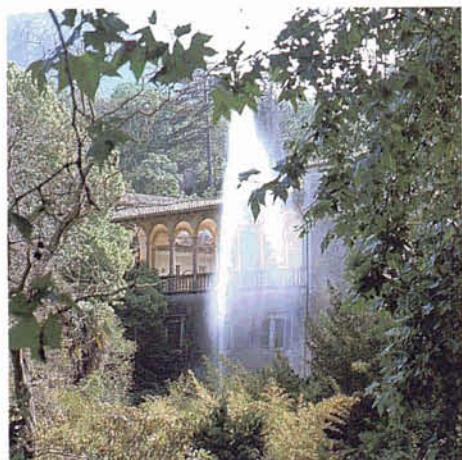




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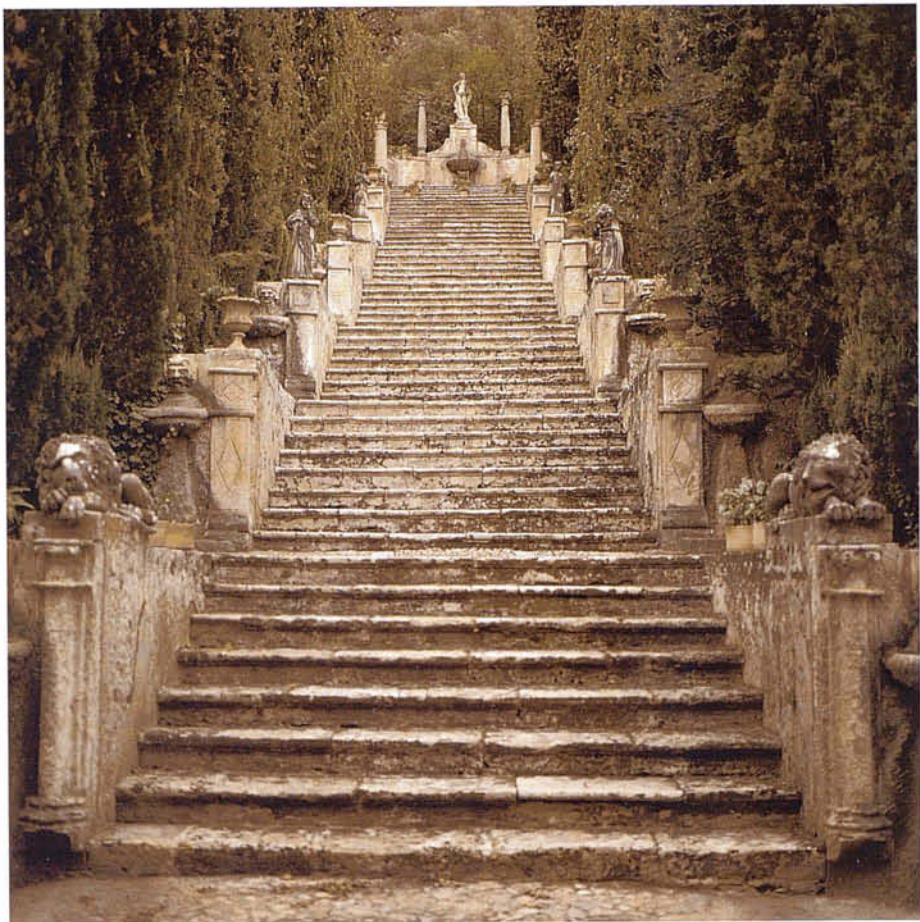
SA GRANJA

IN MALLORCA, MEDIEVAL GARDENS



MALLORCA TODAY STILL HAS MANY DIFFERENT FACES TO OFFER US. EVERYWHERE WE GO, THERE ARE PATCHES OF LIGHT AND SHADE HIDING AROUND UNEXPECTED CORNERS, WAITING TO REVEAL FORMS OF EXTRAORDINARY BEAUTY.

MARIA DE LA PAU JANER AUTHOR



RAIXA

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All the island is a garden, said the Romantics. And even today, we Majorcans often believe it, in spite of the proliferation of golf courses and hastily built residential estates that in the last few years have grown up as though they were the work of some unfortunate spell. Because, regardless of the construction fever that upsets the age-old harmony of these lands, Mallorca has many different faces to offer us. Everywhere you go, there are patches of light and shade hiding around unexpected corners, waiting to reveal forms of extraordinary beauty to anyone prepared to linger on their way. These places come down to us across the centuries, maintaining intact the strength of the things that live on in time. It's so easy to lose oneself in the island's gardens. To start a long journey through the restful green and the playful waters, where life seems to slow down for an

instant. We could choose the oldest, the medieval orchards, or the Italianate gardens –relics of the Baroque–, or those that reflect the atmosphere of Romantic landscaping, or those that arose at the beginning of this century with innovative pretensions, in a search of new airs. The road can be a long one, a journey through the routes of the gardens of Mallorca: Es Salt de Son Forteza, Son Vivot, Alfàbia, Sa Granja, Raixa, Defla, Son Marroig, Miramar, Bendinat, Sa Vall, Ca n'Ayamans... The list of names extends in an assortment of places that order nature and make her theirs. Perhaps because a garden is no more than that: the hand of man in his environment, measuring it and shaping it. On this walk we would explore the entire island, and stop in the villages to seek out their secrets.

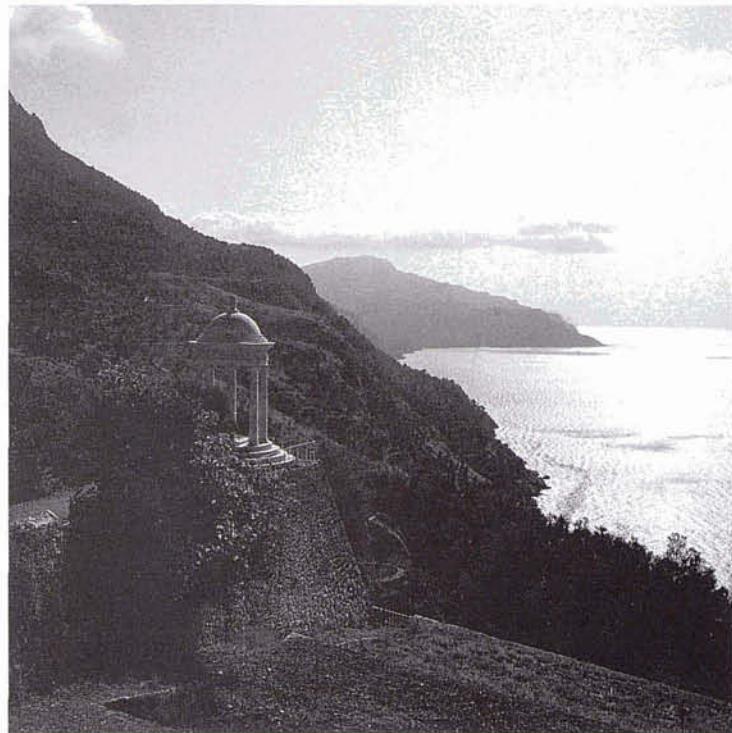
Now though, we shall concentrate on the oldest gardens, the ones that repro-

duce the medieval models preserved in Mallorca until the first half of the eighteenth century. Gardens that were one with the orchards, that preserved the mixture of what was beautiful and what was useful. Fruit trees loaded to breaking point beside splendid rose bushes. Irrigation ditches that distributed the water for the crops and that at the same time maintained the aesthetic function inherited from the Arab world. Vine arbours that give shade, and orange trees, the trees we find during the Gothic period in the cloisters of the monasteries and cathedrals, in the royal gardens, in the courtyards of civic buildings. Places dominated by the simplicity of the water and the intensity of the green.

The wild beauty of Es Salt de Son Forteza, in the village of Puigpunyent, is an example of the traditional Hispano-Arab orchard. This was an outlying pos-



ARAB BATHS



SON MARROIG

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session, whose houses, of an imposing appearance today, were reformed in the first half of the seventeenth century by a rich nobleman, Joan Mir i Ramis. The path that leads there is soft, flanked by a large line of plane trees. Here we find palms, cypresses and orange trees; and lots of firs planted at the beginning of this century, their thick growth stealing the light from the rest of the trees. The garden centres on the channelled stream and the waterfall which tumbles like a natural spring, and which gives the place its name. Austerity is its chief characteristic, a feature that brings to mind the atmosphere of another garden, Son Vivot, in Inca, belonging to the Sureda family, where the simplicity of the pool and the stone benches combine to ease the mind.

One of the most famous gardens on the island is that of Alfàbia. Perhaps because of the multiplicity of elements it contains, or maybe because it's a place that favours discovery and recreation.

Its structure, which echoes the orchards of the Islamic farmsteads, shows how old it is. Once again, it stands out for its sobriety of style, even though it has received later additions and reforms of a Romantic type, and the combination of fountains that draw elegant patterns of water and light. The Baroque façade of the house was doubtless the inspiration for the fountain in the courtyard. More than a hundred jets of water, pergolas, and, from the loggia, a view over the orchard and the valley. Then, behind the house, the incorporation of a Romantic park that follows English landscaping patterns. Everything here is green and fresh, beside the lake where the bamboo grows and the canes wave. The last stop on the way is Sa Granja, in Esporles, on the banks of a stream and at the mouth of the valley of Superna. Here we're surrounded by thick woods, we hear the murmur of water all around us. The house, rebuilt in the eighteenth century along Italianate

lines, combines traditional Majorcan forms with newer ones, in a mixture of sensation and calm. Many of the travellers who dropped anchor at the island in the last century described the fascination they felt for this place. Georges Sand, the writer at odds with the Majorcans and bewitched, nevertheless, by the land she lived in, the Archduke Louis Salvador of Austria, Josep Maria Quadrado... Sa Granja has footpaths amongst rose bushes, pools, and the lake. Here there are two gardens, the orchard garden, full of orange trees and recently added fountains, and another, smaller one, behind the house, in a neo-Classical style, where we discover with surprise the white figure of Apollo with his marble lyre. In the orchard garden, there are the highest fountains on the island. A fountain that hurls the water high up into the air and sends it floating over the orange trees. Perhaps not all Mallorca is an island, but it abounds with them. ■