



Come & discover Dénia

By Karen Marco

Miles of beautiful sandy beaches lapped by the warm Mediterranean Sea, a fascinating old town with a picturesque castle, a modern marina with a host of leisure activities (and the chance to pop over to Ibiza for the day), possibly the best cuisine on the Costa Blanca, walking routes through a nature reserve, and an amazing history that goes back to Roman times or beyond...Dénia has it all!

Dénia is the Costa Blanca's most northern coastal resort at the top of Alicante province, a scenic setting framed by the Montgó mountain protected nature park. It has some 20 kilometres of coastline which feature secluded rocky coves, popular urban beaches and vast extensions of dune-backed golden sands.

The main seafront promenade runs along from the fishing port past the old mariners quarter and along to the leisure harbour. Dénia castle sits on a hill behind the quaint old town where there are several interesting sites to see and many restaurants to visit!

There are two main leisure zones jutting out into the harbour... to the left by Punta de Raset a row of classy restaurants and trendy cocktail bars by the ferry terminal. From here you can catch the fast ferry over to Ibiza for a day trip or stay for longer and it's possible to continue on to Formentera or Mallorca, and even Menorca. On the right-hand side of the Nautical Club the exclusive Marina de Dénia with fashionable eateries and pubs, great

during the day and for nightlife.

Baix la Mar is the traditional sailors quarter that borders the harbour seafront. Stroll along the smart promenade then wander around the narrow backstreets, a quaint district full of restaurant terraces and tapas bars, wonderful for dining al fresco.

Dénia's main street Marqués de Campo leads up from the harbour, a wide tree-lined avenue with plenty of street cafés and stylish shops. Wander through the back streets and into the historic town centre and you'll come across some fascinating sites... these include the interesting 16th century San Antonio Franciscan Convent located in Plaza del Convento or La Asunción parish Church in 18th century gothic style with a typical blue tiled dome which you'll find in the Town Hall square (Plaza de la Constitución) just below the castle walls.

The distinctive Town Hall building originally dating to the 16th century and later remodelled in neoclassic style, has an attractive facade with six pillared archways and a characteristic clock tower.

Walk up the steps beside this emblematic building and through the narrow medieval streets till you reach the entranceway to Dénia castle – a fascinating complex of stone walls and turrets.

Dénia castle has stood on this site since the Islamic Period, in a crucial position to defend the port. Over the centuries it has been partly de-

stroyed in historic battles, and subsequently rebuilt on various occasions. You can see the remains of the different eras and visit the castle museum to appreciate the ancient relics from the cultures that have passed this way.

Dénia is famed for its marvellous cuisine, especially fresh seafood and rice dishes... delicacies include the delicious Dénia Red prawns and sea urchins. In December 2015, Dénia was named "Creative City of Gastronomy" by UNESCO. The fish market is located down by the docks, you can see the boats come in with their hauls during the afternoon, watch the fish auction, and then purchase fresh fish.

Dénia has an amazing selection of eateries which range from great beach cafés to the truly exclusive - popular places to dine out include Dénia marina, the old fishing district, and Calle Loreto

beaches stretch northwards along the coast towards Oliva in Valencia province. Some 15 kilometres of sands begin at a succession of beaches: Les Marines, Els Molins, Les Bovetes, L'Almadrava and Les Deveses. These are easy to reach by car along the scenic Les Marines road which runs parallel to the coast through rural countryside fringed with orange orchards.

On the southern stretch of Dénia coastline, the coast becomes gradually rockier with sheltered coves and beautifully clear sea, ideal for diving (partly a marine reserve, permission is need for scuba diving). Marineta Cassiana is a popular sandy beach backed by a smart promenade which leads to the rocky Les Rotes coves, El Trampolí, Punta Negra and Arenetes where there's a viewpoint and steps down to La Cala, a naturist beach.

Drive up into the Montgó natural park to the Cabo de San Antonio lighthouse for fabulous views over the town, across the bay of Valencia to the north, over the Mediterranean Sea to Ibiza and southwards down the coast towards Jávea. There are some lovely walks on the Montgó and great picnic areas. If you're feeling fit you can walk up to the top of the mountain where the panoramas are simply stunning.

Getting there: 100 km to Alicante airport, 113 km to Valencia; **By car:** Ap-7 exit 62; N-332 Alicante-Valencia.

You can see more features about the Costa Blanca on my personal travel blog.

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Photos courtesy of Dénia Tourist Info



(just off the town hall square) where there's a choice of restaurants in beautifully renovated traditional town houses offering gourmet cuisine on excellent set menus.

The beaches

To the left of the harbour Punta del Raset is a popular sandy beach with easy access for the handicapped. From here a succession of immaculate wide fine golden sand