

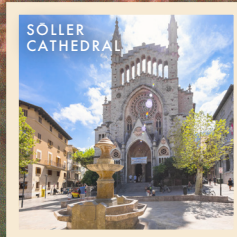
MY MUM IS WEARING A CHIC STRAW HAT for our flight to Palma, Mallorca, but she's left it in the tray at airport security, and because neither of us can remember which line we were in, there are a few minutes of mother-daughter flapping as she remarks that said hat is 'not cheap, darling' and I run back through the hordes of highly-strung-at-6am families, who have little patience for my frenzied quest to find it. Which I do, should you be wondering.

Over the past 10 years or so, I've taken annual mini-breaks with my mother, and without fail she will lose something – her spectacles in Stockholm, wallet in Barcelona, Missoni scarf in Madrid – or there will be a small drama, such as the time she fell off her bike on the Île de Ré,

or tumbled down the stairs of a hip Amsterdam restaurant. She claims she is only this scatty when we're together, and blames her lack of focus on the fact she is just so happy to be spending 72 hours with her much-adored only child, she can't think about anything else. And, because I'm always just as happy to be going on holiday with my much-adored mother, I don't mind having to chuck away half my toiletries at the security gate to make space for hers. We're only taking hand luggage and she's brought 2,000 mini Aveda products that do not in any way fit into the designated one plastic bag per person.

We first went away together, just the two of us, the summer my dad left forever. My parents had been married for 32 years, so his new re-

lationship with another woman wasn't something my mother and I would get over on a short trip to Nice, but at least we'd be crying on the Croisette rather than at home. Our yearly jaunts (always to a stylish boutique hotel in Europe, either in a city with great shops and galleries, or a gorgeous resort) became microcosms of joy, no matter what was happening in our lives at home. When I'm asked by a yoga teacher to picture my 'happy place', I often retrace the steps of one such journey to mostly sunnier climes (dis-



Travels with my mother

From St Tropez to Stockholm, Madrid to Antwerp, LOTTE JEFFS and her mum have hit some of Europe's hippest cities on their yearly mini-breaks. So how would a long weekend in Mallorca compare?

Collages by
GUS
& STELLA

counting a weekend in Antwerp where the rain didn't stop, but we were holed up in the Mode Museum for most of it).

So, we're off to Mallorca together amid the summer's usual horror stories of airline strikes, power outages and reports of Palma being the World's Most Delayed Airport in The World Ever. I brace myself for the worst, thinking back to the time we waited eight hours for our Eurostar to Paris but refused to take up the offer of travelling the following day because we had booked Christian La Croix's Hotel du Petit Moulin for one night only and, by God, we were sleeping there that night, even if it killed us (and it almost did). But this journey to Mallorca is unremarkable – right until the taxi pulls up outside Hotel L'Avenida in Sóller, where plain trees line the narrow streets and the cobbles are dappled with golden sunshine. In a lovingly renovated turn-of-the-century townhouse, the hotel is boutique in the truest sense of the word, with only 12 rooms. My eyes are peeled for potential trip hazards (on behalf of my mother) as we navigate the cool marble lobby and make it on to the balcony overlooking the pool. Champagne materialises and we clink to the start of another adventure.

My mum is 72 years old now, but with her trademark henna-red hair, penchant for a COS ensemble and fabulous line in statement jewellery, she is anything but a 'little old lady', a horribly ageist term we agree should go the way of blue rinses. Sure, she's not exactly sprinting up the six flights of stairs to our room on the top floor (there isn't a lift), but that and her preternatural ability to complete the Guardian Quick Crossword in three minutes flat are about the only clues she's a 'woman of a certain age'.

There is a sumptuous four-poster bed in the room and a rickety-looking roll-away camp bed made up in the corner, which I insist on taking. My mum doesn't argue – she's never been one to turn down luxury. We both sleep well after a day of eating, drinking, swimming and, in my mum's case, sketching the other guests around the pool with the mini watercolour palette she keeps in her handbag.

Sóller is about a 45-minute drive from the capital Palma and the airport. It's a beautiful little town with a wooden electric tram dating from 1913, which clatters its way from the railway sta-

MUM REVIEWS

HOTEL OMM,
BARCELONA

'It has exquisite desserts. So divine.' hotelomm.com

GLENDOWER HOTEL,
EDINBURGH

'Fabulous restaurant, amazing grounds and a great spa.' andana.it

BERNS HOTEL,
STOCKHOLM

'Breakfast in a ballroom? What an experience!' berns.se

tion down to the beach. The town square is buzzing at night with outdoor restaurants serving patatas bravas and paella. One night in the plaza, a saxophonist plays jazz classics; on another, a couple dances the tango. We've booked a table for dinner at Luna 36, a lovely courtyard restaurant in the historic centre of Sóller. I always like to do a bit of research before heading out in

on the town with my mum to avoid ending up in a dodgy area or having to hike up a hill. I've discovered that this place, a few minutes' walk from the hotel, was built in 1870 and was once a chocolate factory. According to the website, it makes 'wonderful food, all from the bottom'. The mistranslation has us laughing like a pair of schoolgirls, but the food – gazpacho, salads, fresh fish and some richer meat dishes – is delicious.

My mother and I often end up in hysterics over something; in Brussels, it was the fact that every person who walked past us as we sat in the window of a trendy bar was wearing the exact same puffer jacket (maybe you had to be there). In a posh restaurant in Barcelona, it was because we accidentally held the ostentatiously large menu too close to

a candle and the whole thing went up in flames.

Our first night in Mallorca ends without hilarity, but with a cocktail and game of cards back at L'Avenida. We're in bed by 11pm, >



EXPLORE



so when I wake up early the next morning to creep out of the room and go for a run, my mother's voice stops me dead in my tracks. 'Darling, I don't want you to go out running on your own,' she says from beneath the sheets. 'Why on earth not?' I ask, trying not to sound confrontational. 'Cars,' she says. 'I'll run on the pavement,' I say. 'You'll get lost.' 'I've got my iPhone.' Having exhausted all possible reasons a grown woman shouldn't go for a jog, we agree to meet for breakfast in an hour, and I know not to be late.

The hotel is owned by a British couple who have handed over the day-to-day running of the place to a small, friendly staff of fellow Brits. It makes the vibe easy and laid-back – and it also means there's Marmite at breakfast, with various gluten- and dairy-free options. This suits my mother, who is on a complicated medical diet that means she can't eat grains or sugar, but she can have potatoes – or is it the other way around? I still haven't quite worked it out. I'm in even more of a muddle when, while we're on holiday, she orders ice cream and eats bread. 'Oh, bugger it,' is her explanation.

I've always loved the fact that my mum knows when to relax and how to have fun. In St Tropez, she bought a packet of Gitanes cigarettes because they reminded her of the French boyfriend she had when she was 16, and we smoked them while drinking beers in a pavement cafe. In Barcelona, we went to a gay bar where a semi-naked man was dancing in a cage. And in Edinburgh, we saw some very dubious cabaret indeed. Here, in Mallorca, we spend our last day in Palma, the beautiful capital. In truth, we don't see much of it as we fritter away the whole afternoon enjoying a lavish four-course lunch and polishing off a bottle of wine on the terrace of the Es Baluard modern art gallery. It's the perfect spot for a sunny, inter-generational afternoon, as it looks out over the sea and is frequented by a handsome, arty crowd. We intend to go to the gallery (my mum likes nothing more than looking at paintings), but by the time we finish lunch, it is closed and we are drunk.

I'm definitely in charge on our trips. I book everything, navigate and tend to pay. She spent 25 years doing the same for me, so it's the least I owe her. Plus, she's good at going with the flow, a necessary attribute in any travel companion. I've often wondered why more of my friends don't go away with their mothers, and I think it's the fact that they aren't as easy-going as mine, and that makes everything more stressful.

It's our shared penchant for saying yes to things that sees us spend one afternoon in Mallorca lunching with the fashion designer Katharine Hamnett in a glamorous restaurant on Agapanto beach. She emerges from the sea with a snorkel on top of her head, wraps a towel elegantly around herself and joins us at the table, ordering prosecco for everyone. She's the mother of a friend of a friend who is staying in her family home on the island, and we find ourselves swept up for a hot second in this

fabulous beach scene, sharing a table with Katharine's delightful sons and their tanned posse of friends. She's just two years younger than my mum, and is another inspiring septuagenarian.

We talk about sustainable fashion, her recent Reverse Brexit T-shirts, and I tell her I'm writing about travels with my mother. She's worried that nothing dramatic enough has happened on this trip and jokingly suggests that we try microdosing on LSD together to give the story a more compelling narrative. I catch my mum's eye from across the table, a warm breeze rustles the agapanthus flowers that spill over a wall on to the sand. I smell salt and sun-cream. Caesar salads and chips have been ordered and I'm just on the happy edge of tipsy. A look passes privately between us that says, actually, this is all we need. □

Hotel L'Avenida, Sóller, Mallorca (avenida-hotel.com). Doubles start from £175, B&B. Monarch (monarch.co.uk) has return flights from London Gatwick and Luton, as well as selected regional airports, from £68

LA RÉSERVE HOTEL, ST TROPEZ

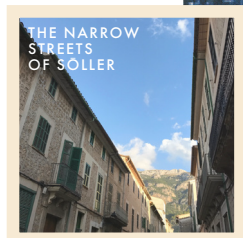
'I'll never forget lying on my back in the garden, looking at the stars.'

lareserve-ramatuelle.com

L'ANDANA, TUSCANY

'The drive up to the hotel was a taste of treasures to come. A beautiful room, a lovely walk down to the restaurant for delicious food, and an amazing terrace.'

andana.it



Photographs: Alamy, Getty