

Spain's best festivals and parties 2012

Spain sure knows how to throw a party. From clubbing in Ibiza to the running of the bulls in small towns, here's our pick of this year's best festivals



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Ibiza Rocks kicks off at the start of June. Photograph: Alamy

Ibiza

Ibiza is still Spain's undisputed party capital. Greg Sawyer from Defected Records, which has been holding club nights there for a decade and has the Saturday night residency at Pacha, has the lowdown on the 2012 hotspots. First is the **Ushuaia Beach Hotel** (ushuaiabeachhotel.com) at Playa d'en Bossa, which was the most talked-about new party hotel last year and is opening for its hotly anticipated second season on the last weekend in May.

"They're upping their game even more this year," says Sawyer, "with some amazingly big names. Luciano is doing the opening party on 26 May, followed by Fatboy Slim the day after, and David Guetta and Avicii are doing weekly nights throughout the season."

Sawyer also points to **The One Ibiza Hotel** (thearesorts.com) in Talamanca, under new ownership and reopening in late June/early July. The One sounds like a more chilled version of Ushuaia, with a similar daytime beach bar/pool and evening parties. Partygoers should also keep an eye out for **Ocean Club**, opening soon in San Antonio (ibiza2012.net/ocean-club-ibiza).

"This is another open-air venue, but rumours are that it will have a below-ground club for after-hours parties," says Sawyer. "It could be a real shot in the arm for San An's kudos."

If you're more into guitar-based tunes, check out the summer lineup at **Ibiza Rocks** (ibizarocks.com). The opening party on 6 June features Brit Award winner Ed Sheeran; We Are Rockstars is a new night at the poolside stage every Friday from 8 June; and a new Ibiza Rocks bar/diner is planned for Playa D'en Bossa, hosting live gigs and DJ sets. A new **Rocktronic Festival** is launching from 1-3 July in San Antonio. Ibiza123 (ibiza123festival) promises to "blow this island apart". Rockers, you have been warned.

Barcelona

If you only spend one night in Barcelona, make sure it's 23 June. **La Nit de Sant Joan** – the night before St John's Day – is the biggest all-night party of the year. There are fireworks and bonfires, and every bar and club hosts a party. But the real action takes place at the beach, with around 75,000 people singing, dancing, drinking, leaping over fires (for luck) and taking a late-night swim (to wash away sin). It is the only night when you can legally sleep on Barcelona's public beaches. If wild beach parties aren't your thing, Montjuïc Castle is a good spot to watch the fireworks over a bottle of cava and a midnight feast. Barcelona isn't the only place to celebrate midsummer, though; those in the know head along the coast to one of the more underground parties – make some new friends and ask around to find them.

Teruel

Pamplona may be the most famous running of the bulls festival, but it is also busy and expensive. Similar events in towns and villages across Spain offer the party atmosphere but without the crowds. Try **La Vaquilla del Angel** in the underrated city of Teruel (vaquillas.es), an hour's drive inland from Valencia. On the second weekend in July the town centre is full of song, dance – and bulls. The town itself boasts fantastic Mudéjar architecture, but the best hotels are in the surrounding countryside – try Hospedería El Batán (elbatan.es, doubles €71 B&B), a converted wool factory in Tramacastilla.

Festival news



Hot festival weather at Benicassim. Photograph: Axiom

Mainland Spain's music festivals are getting better and better. Why risk mud at Reading when you could soak up the sun in Barcelona? This year, the Stone Roses are headlining **Benicassim** (12-15 July, benicassimfestival.co.uk) north of Valencia; The Roots are top of the bill at **Sonar** (14-16 June, sonar.es) in Barcelona; and The Cure lead the lineup at **Bilbao BBK Live** (12-14 July, bilbaobbklive.com). Other top festivals include **Monegros** (21 July, monegrosfestival.com), essentially a 20-hour non-stop rave in the desert near Saragossa, and **SOS 4.8** (3-6 May, sos48.com) in Murcia, a more cerebral gathering that opens the European festival season and features Pulp in their only Spanish concert of the year. **Primavera Sound** (30 May-3 June, sanmiguelprimaverasound.es) is back for another year in Barcelona, and is launching a spin-off a week later in Porto, Portugal.

Salamanca

A large proportion of the population of "Spain's Oxford", known as La Dorada (the golden) for its glowing stone buildings, are students – and it shows in the nightlife. Salamanca's **Feria** (7-15 September, whatsalamanca.com/feria-salamanca.html) kicks off with the feast of La Virgen de la Vega, but once the religious procession is out of the way, Salamatinos kick up their heels with a week of eating, drinking and partying. Food fairs and bullfights by day are followed by nightly concerts, fireworks and a fairground. A very short stagger from the Plaza Mayor is atmospheric Hotel Toboso (+34 923 271462, hoteltoboso.com, doubles from €45, apartments sleeping three or five from €76 a night).