

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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PHOTOS BY DAVID LYON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE; PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE (SALVADOR DALÍ HOUSE)

BY PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

**T**his tiny seaside village at the end of a twisting mountain drive is among the most improbable love nests of the mid-20th century. It's where the impossibly slender but already mustachioed painter Salvador Dalí met his charismatic older muse Gala in the summer of 1929. Surviving photos show that by late August, they were flaunting their passion in the glare of the broad summer light.

Dalí had chosen to paint in Cadaqués precisely because it was so remote. Heading north, it is the last significant village on Spain's Mediterra-

casual seaside fish grills to fine dining rooms run by creative chefs.

It doesn't hurt that Cadaqués is also drop-dead gorgeous. Its jumble of whitewashed buildings spills down the hillside like a Cubist cascade, and the port is a marvelous sweep of tangled narrow streets, a single seaside avenue, colorful fishing boats, and a sea so azure that it gives meaning to the name of the color, "marine blue."

Generations of open-air painters have sought to render Cadaqués on canvases, and just as many photographers have attempted to capture its magic through a lens. And they've all failed. Cadaqués is more than a visual feast. It



## TRULY MADLY DEEPLY

Explore the surreal love nests of Salvador and Gala Dalí in and around Cadaqués on Spain's Mediterranean coast

nean coast before the French border. He was smitten with what he called the "grandiose geological delirium" of the deep cove on the Cap de Creus — a gnarly limestone jab toward Corsica from the Spanish mainland.

And for all the publicity it received during the half century when Salvador and Gala summered here, Cadaqués still feels far off the beaten path. That's part of what makes it a great spot for a honeymoon. The steep cliffs that hem in the village have kept overdevelopment at bay, yet the rim of the harbor manages to support several charming small hotels. Fishermen still sail from the port, and the village restaurants range from

would probably take a physicist to explain how the intense sunlight and the action of the waves splits and recombines the oxygen molecules to create the electric frizz in the air. It's a place where you turn your face toward the sun, close your eyes, and simply feel alive.

The "attractions" in Cadaqués are largely limited to strolling the narrow streets, sunning and swimming on the stony beach, walking the perimeter of the harbor, and deciding where to stop for a drink or dinner. One good, vigorous walk heads up through town to the northern ridgeline and over a

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**FROM TOP** Interior and exterior views of the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Salvador Dalí's hometown of Figueras; Dalí's strange sculptures are everywhere at the Salvador Dalí House Portlligat; the throne room at the Gala Dalí Castle in Púbol.



# Surreal sojourn in Spain to see Dalí love nests

## ► SPAIN

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small corniche road to Portlligat. Salvador and Gala bought a fishing shack in the former fisherman's cove and gradually enlarged it into a sprawling compound that rises from the beach like an oversize, whitewashed rock garden. These days, it's the Salvador Dalí House Portlligat.

The couple began living here in 1930 and Dalí made it his main studio through 1982. Their presence is remarkably palpable. Tours are strictly by reservation, but arrive early to walk the grounds and gardens. Gala planted daisy-like chamomile flowers that have spread into every cranny of the property. Dalí's strange sculptures are everywhere but he also had a hand in the interior décor. A massive stuffed polar bear festooned with souvenir necklaces greets visitors like a butler. The dramatic his-and-hers beds with red and gray draperies seem positively regal. Even the bric-a-brac on every flat surface suggests a compulsion to accumulate, catalog, and then display.

Clearly Dalí found the setting amenable. His famous 1931 "melting watches" painting, "The Persistence of Memory," is set on the beach in front of the house with the Cap de Creus cliffs in the distance.

Gala was perhaps more restless than her husband, and she didn't spend all her time at Portlligat. Their love life was ... complicated. In 1969, Dalí bought a small 11th-century castle in Púbol and proceeded to renovate it as a giant love letter to his wife.

If you become fascinated with this peculiar marriage and want a little road trip to break up your Cadaqués idyll, the Gala Dalí Castle is also a museum. The rural site is about an 80-minute drive from Cadaqués. Road signage is scant, but Google Maps knows the way. Curiously, the abode is more about Dalí's worship of Gala than it is about the woman herself. Perhaps most telling is the Throne Room, which includes a golden throne in the center and a life-size image of Gala in a flowing robe and wielding a short sword looking down from a corner of the ceiling. Dalí visited Púbol only by written permission, but after Gala died in 1982, he moved his studio into the castle for two years. A work in progress on an easel hints at Dalí's enduring wit — a self-portrait reduced to his signature



PATRICIA HARRIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE (ABOVE, BELOW RIGHT); DAVID LYON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



mustache.

If you crave more of the enigmatic couple, it's only a 40-minute drive to the Dalí Theatre-Museum in his hometown of Figueres. Inaugurated in 1974, the bizarre structure is perhaps the largest surrealist object in the world and touring its many rooms feels a bit like sightseeing inside Dalí's brain. He pulled out all the burlesque stops in this ode to his dreams, his memories, and his imagination. Hence, his old Cadillac sits in the courtyard, dripping wet, because it only rains inside the car. His "Face of Mae West" apartment includes sofa-size puffy lips. The painter himself is buried in a crypt beneath a geodesic dome cupola. His view in death is captured on the ceiling: the soles of his and Gala's feet as seen from beneath the ground.

After all this visual overload,

**Top:** a view of Cadaqués harbor. **Above:** The Salvador Dalí House Portlligat was enlarged from a fishing shack into a sprawling compound. **Right:** a statue of Salvador Dalí at the beach at Cadaqués.

it's time to return to the simple sun and sea and dinner by the harbor in serene Cadaqués, where it all began for Salvador and Gala Dalí. By the way, they used to come by boat from Portlligat and order big bowls of zarzuela de mariscos, a Catalan shellfish cousin to bouillabaisse. You might take their peculiar relationship as a cautionary tale, but there's no disputing their taste in food.

Contact Patricia Harris and David Lyon at [harrislyon@gmail.com](mailto:harrislyon@gmail.com).

## If you go ...

Cadaqués is best reached by private car. It is a 2½-hour drive from Barcelona-El Prat Airport. Prices based on exchange rate of 1 euro = \$1.15.

### WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Llané Petit**  
Platja Llané Petit; (011-34) 972-251-020; [www.llanepetit.com](http://www.llanepetit.com)  
Modest oceanfront hotel on the southern point surrounding the harbor. Rooms from \$95, seafront rooms from \$117.

### Hotel Playa Sol

Riba es Planc, 3; (011-34) 972-258-100; [www.playasol.com](http://www.playasol.com)  
Newly renovated spacious rooms with terraces in garden setting on northern point surrounding the harbor. Rooms from \$199, sea-view rooms from \$255.

### WHAT TO DO

The Salvador Dalí Foundation operates all three museums. See the website ([www.salvador-dali.org/en/](http://www.salvador-dali.org/en/)) to check current hours and to make advance reservations at the Salvador Dalí House Portlligat, where admission is timed because only eight people are allowed to enter at once.

### Salvador Dalí House Portlligat

Portlligat, Spain  
(011-34) 972-251-015  
\$14 adults, \$9.25 students and seniors

### Gala Dalí Castle

Gala Dalí Square, Púbol, Spain  
(011-34) 972-488-655  
\$9.25 adults, \$7 students and seniors

### Dalí Theatre-Museum

Gala-Salvador Dalí Square, 5, Figueres, Spain  
(011-34) 972-677-500  
\$17.25 adults, \$12.75 students and seniors