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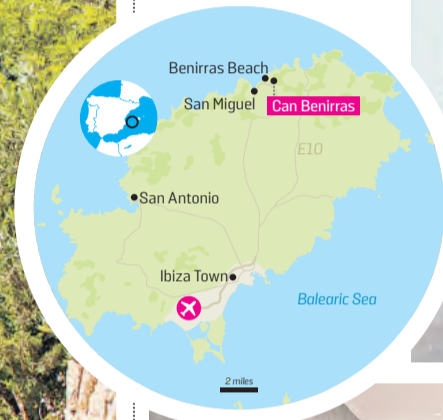


E-commerce

As Ibiza's party people grow up and get proper jobs, the island's appeal is shifting. Hugh Graham meets an entrepreneur whose £5.5m pad lets him do business between trips to the beach

Sound investment

Nicko Williamson, pictured right with his fiancée, Justine Wood, bought the hilltop plot at Benirras in 2011, and built a six-bedroom villa that avoids the 'white cube' cliché



they were younger, and, as they start to make a bit of money, they come again. It's so easy. When I started, there were only three Ryanair flights a week in winter. Now BA has a flight from London City airport every day." Williamson often mixes business and pleasure, popping down to stay with fellow entrepreneurs. They're not quite minibreaks (he often still has his phone glued to his ear), but it's not the office grind, either — it's all very digital economy. "You often see four people clustered around my kitchen table with their laptops, all working away. We might work for a few hours a day, then head to the beach. It's a great place to write and do research. And with technology, you can quite

"We juice oranges and grapefruit, and grow a lot of mint. We all like a mojito!"

happily sit here and do a Skype call. I sold my first company in May, and spent loads of time here doing legal calls."

So it's the new Ibiza, where club culture merges with corporate culture and you're connected digitally, rather than spiritually or chemically. "I'll normally do a bit of work each day. I'm not good at switching off. I actually like working while travelling. I love flying — you can clean your inbox and you don't get any new emails."

Williamson points to a circular pouffe in the living room, overlooking the Med. "That is insanely comfortable. You can twist it round to face the sea. I lie there and look at the view in the early evening, when the light is pouring in. You get a bit of sun on your legs, you feel the breeze. It's one of my favourite places to sit and catch up on my email."

■ *Can Benirras is for sale with Aylesford International; 020 7351 2383, aylesford.com*

Williamson says. "In Ibiza, you get a lot of harsh modern houses with white lacquered furniture and huge pieces of photography with half-naked girls with a cherry in their mouth. Ours is different."

The best bits are the textured microcement floors (luxury brutalism), the funky orange hues and all the gnarled wood pieces, which look as if trees have been genetically modified to furnish a cool villa. The traditional Spanish wooden front door prevents the modernism from feeling too "Russian gangster", and the sexy bathrooms could be the backdrop for an al fresco shower-gel advert: the rain showers are topped by glass roofs, and one cubicle turns open-air at the tap of a finger.

Four of the six bedrooms are outside the main house, one overlooking an infinity pool that's straight off the cover of a chillout compilation. The grounds are pure Mediterranean romance,

Smooth operators

The sliding windows open electronically, providing a seamless transition to the outdoor spaces. Four of the six bedrooms are outside the main house, including one with views of the pool

with ochre-red Ibizan dry-stone walls and hundreds of fragrant trees — almond, orange, lemon, grapefruit, olive, fig and mango.

"We have a juicer, and we do loads of oranges and grapefruit. We went through a beetroot phase, too," says Williamson, who has held yoga retreats here, and has taken to reiki. "We grow a lot of mint as well, as everyone likes mojitos in this place." They have house parties a few times a year — Can Benirras sleeps 12 — and let it out for about 10 weeks in summer (it commands £24,000 a week) and sporadically in winter.

"Lots of wealthy people absolutely love Ibiza," says Williamson, who wants to do another project after he sells this one. "They partied here when



Since the summer of 1987, when the DJs Paul Oakenfold and Danny Rampling visited Ibiza, tried ecstasy and discovered Balearic beats, the White Isle has been seen as a cool, hedonistic clubbers' paradise.

Almost 30 years on, Ibiza compilation albums are still being released, but the zeitgeist is morphing from edgy DJ culture to smart and swanky. James Blunt and Jade Jagger own property on the island; Made in Chelsea filmed an episode there; and Nikki Beach, the five-star coastal club chain, has opened an outpost.

The clubbers who raved in the 1980s are coming back for yoga retreats and luxury detox holidays — healthful green juices now rival ecstasy as the substance of choice. Ibiza's posh credentials were sealed in May 2013, when David and Samantha Cameron were photographed chilling at a cafe on Benirras beach, on the unspoilt north coast.

"He was a few feet away from me when that picture was taken," says Nicko Williamson, 32, a London entrepreneur and sometime Ibiza resident. "My mates and I were lying on sunbeds, and one of them whispered to me, 'Isn't that David Cameron?'"

"There were secret-service guys standing around in their swimming trunks. We were close enough that we could overhear bits of conversation, and it seems the Camerons were staying in a house with friends nearby."

Benirras beach is worlds away from the Geordie Shore crowd in San Antonio; there are no foam parties here, only hippies and families. High above this idyllic scene is Williamson's sleek holiday home, Can Benirras. On the market for €6.9m (£5.5m), the 5,700 sq ft villa is the stuff of coffee-table books, and emblematic of the new Ibiza.

It was built by the British architect Mark Guard, of Guard Tillman Pollock, a practice whose modernist designs can normally be found in north and west London (guardtillmanpollock.com). The arty fusion interiors were fashioned by a boutique hotel designer, and the London lighting guru Alexander Stileman angled the LEDs just so.

It's wired to the gills with media gadgetry for the minted entrepreneurs who rent it out — when Williamson isn't using it for brainstorming. His first company, Climatecars, an ecofriendly taxi company, was set up in 2007, when he was 23; he has just launched WeFlex, a lending business that helps Uber drivers lease cars even if they have a poor credit rating.

Williamson reflects Ibiza's changing demographic. He never partied here as a teenager — his nocturnal activities back then included reading Richard Branson's autobiography after lights out at Marlborough College. He is well off: he lives in Notting Hill with his fiancée, Justine Wood, 28, an events planner, and recently sold Climatecars to the cab firm Addison Lee for an

undisclosed sum. The launch party for one of his recent ventures was attended by cast members of Made in Chelsea.

He describes himself as ambitious, and admits that he built the villa solely as an investment project. Yet he is the antithesis of a flash City boy: he's fresh-faced and low-key, does yoga and has impeccable manners. It's hard to picture him havin' it large at Amnesia.

"I came here quite late — the first time I visited was in 2008," he recalls. "I'd heard it was a horrible party place, so that put me off. Then people started saying, 'Ooh, Ibiza's really nice.' I'd been working hard, so I came with my girlfriend, completely exhausted. We stayed at a little hotel, a Mr & Mrs Smith one, called Les Terrases.

The 1980s clubbers are coming back for yoga retreats and luxury detox holidays

"I didn't go to any nightclubs, but I fell in love with the island. I'm not really a party person. We might go out to a big club two or three times a year. I know that sounds lame, but if you're not here for that long and you go out until 6am, it destroys your next day."

The entrepreneur prefers classy daytime beach clubs such as La Escollera, where the clientele sip cava on the sand and graze

on seafood while listening to a chillout soundtrack that, on my visit, included a 20-minute instrumental version of Céline Dion's Falling into You. "I also like El Chiringuito," he says. "It has delicious, uncomplicated food. You have lunch, swim in the sea, and there's quite nice music. It's not all flashy and loud."

All that chilling on his first visit prompted Williamson to look for a property, along with a business partner, the London developer Pete Thompson. He saw 100 plots, but in 2011 bought the first one he had viewed: a rugged 5.44-acre site up a bumpy dirt track, with a view of the sea framed by two hills. He had heard about it from a local architect, who knew it was for sale off-market, with a licence to build — a rarity in Ibiza.

Williamson declines to say how much he spent on the project, which he finished in 2013, but it was a big undertaking: he had to dig a well and trenches for cables to bring in electricity. He was loath to buy a ready-made villa in an urbanization: "They look good in magazines, but what you don't see is that there are houses right next door, or it's beside a golf course. I grew up in the country, near Shaftesbury, in Dorset, and I wanted this place to have a country feel."

Well, except for the architecture. Yet, though he loves modernism, he didn't want a white box. So his architect studied the Ibizan vernacular and, instead of building a boring cube, broke it up into