

# THE TIMES



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WEEKEND

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Fast salads

MAGAZINE



# Tories punished in south

### Conservative MPs voice doubts about Johnson's leadership as hundreds of council seats lost

Steven Swinford Political Editor  
Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor  
Oliver Wright, Geraldine Scott

The Conservatives have lost hundreds of council seats to Labour and the Liberal Democrats as Tory MPs in the party's southern heartlands openly question Boris Johnson's leadership.

The prime minister conceded yesterday that his party had endured a "tough night in parts of the country" as it was defeated in a string of totemic Tory councils in the south of England and its vote share fell across the country.

In London the Conservatives lost three councils to Labour, including

Wandsworth, a council that was symbolic of Margaret Thatcher's victory, and Westminster, which had been Tory since 1964. Elsewhere in the south the Liberal Democrats seized control of traditionally Conservative areas such as Woking and Somerset.

The Conservatives lost control of Huntingdonshire for the first time in 46 years and Tunbridge Wells for the first time in 22 years.

Labour won Worthing for the first time and also made gains from Southampton to Cumbria while strengthening control in Wales and pushing the Tories into third place in Scotland.

Despite the losses Johnson was said

to be "buoyant" as he pointed to Labour's failure to make significant inroads in traditional red wall seats in the north of England. The Conservatives gained control of Newcastle-under-Lyme and won increased numbers of councillors in areas such as Teesside.

The results highlight the party's fragile coalition as it attempts to avoid alienating traditional Tory voters in the south while appealing to working-class Brexit supporters in the north and Midlands. Southern Tory MPs said that they were increasingly concerned that Johnson would cost them their seats.

The prime minister said he wanted

his government to pursue a renewed focus on carrying out its policies. He is confident that his position as party leader is secure. "It is mid-term and it's certainly a mixed set of results," he said. "We have had a tough night in some parts of the country but in other parts ... you are still seeing Conservatives going forward and making quite remarkable gains in places that haven't voted Conservative for a long time, if ever."

Marcus Fysh, the Tory MP for Yeovil, said that he was "devastated" after the party lost Somerset county council to the Liberal Democrats. He said: "The  
**Continued on page 2, col 3**

# Police inquiry into Starmer's office beer

Fiona Hamilton Crime Editor  
Henry Zeffman Associate Political Editor

Sir Keir Starmer is facing a police investigation into whether he broke lockdown rules after he was photographed drinking a beer in an MP's office last year.

Durham police said yesterday they would examine whether an offence had occurred during the Labour leader's visit to the office of Mary Foy, the City of Durham MP, in April last year.

The police reviewed the incident in February and concluded that there was no offence. The force says that it has received "significant new information" about the event, at which Labour staff drank beer and ate curry.

Labour said that it was a work event during the local elections. Conservative MPs have challenged this and called on the Labour leader to resign.

Starmer demanded that Boris Johnson resign in January after the Metropolitan Police announced an investigation into illegal parties at Downing Street and Whitehall. He posted on Twitter at the time: "Honesty and decency matter. After months of denial the prime minister is now under criminal investigation for breaking his own lockdown laws. He needs to do the decent thing and resign."

The Labour leader has also called for Rishi Sunak to quit after the chancellor was fined for attending a lockdown-breaking birthday party.

Starmer's deputy, Angela Rayner, who also repeatedly called on the prime minister to step down, is likely to be contacted by police. Labour's belated admission, after months of denials, that Rayner was present at the event was a key factor that prompted the police decision. Starmer said last night that he did not believe he had broken any rules.  
**Labour make gains, page 7**



Royal ban The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will attend the Queen's Platinum Jubilee but won't be allowed on the Buckingham Palace balcony to greet crowds Page 5



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# Palma — the perfect weekend break

Boutique hotels, exciting galleries and top cuisine — Mallorca's capital is on a roll, says **Antonia Windsor**

**W**alk through the narrow, medieval streets of the old town of Mallorca's capital, Palma, and you'll begin to notice discreet gold plaques on the ochre-coloured walls of grand Renaissance houses. These mark their transformation into high-end hotels, many aimed at adults and all of them a long way from the sprawling resort hotels that hug the coast.

This handsome port city, with its tree-lined boulevards and seafront gothic cathedral, has long been a day-trip destination for cruisers or a quick overnight stop for visitors before they go to a hotel by the beach or to stay in the majestic Serra de Tramuntana mountains. But now Palma is very much a destination in its own right, with an exciting culinary scene, contemporary art galleries and luxury stores encouraging visitors to linger for longer.

On the Saturday I arrive, the streets are lively with locals as well as tourists, something that was not always the case. "Saturdays used to be dead," says Jesús Cuartero, the president of Essentially Mallorca, a not-for-profit organisation that promotes Mallorca as a luxury destination. "At weekends locals would go to their second properties in the country, but now the city has changed. It's become international — you can eat Japanese, Korean and Peruvian cuisine here."

You can have your pick of top hotels too. I'm checking into the Palma Riad, the latest boutique offering to open in the historic centre. On narrow Carrer de Sant Jaume I almost walk past the 17th-century former family home, so the dramatic interiors that greet me are a surprise. Dark painted walls meet grey slate floor tiles strewn with Turkish carpets; thick velvet curtains separate the reception area from the bar and the ceiling is hung with wax-encrusted candelabras. An elegant woman in a silk kimono checks me in, then I'm led through an internal gate into a palm-filled internal courtyard.

"When I first saw this patio it reminded me of a riad," says the general manager Miguel Barceló, as I watch the sunlight catching the ripples in the black and white tiled pool, which is reflected in a giant mirror behind it. "There have been so many boutiques opening in Palma over the past ten years taking their inspiration from traditional Mallorcan design. I wanted to do something different."

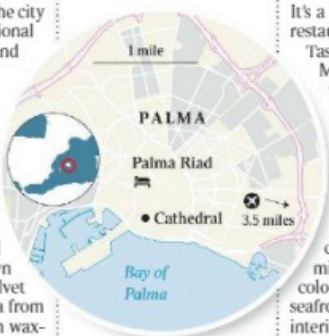
The Moors ruled the island from 902 to 1229, so it's not incongruous to bring in the flavour of north Africa to this traditional property — and the Barcelona design studio Pablo Peyra has done so playfully. There are birdcage lamp shades in the restaurant and lacquered wardrobes, gilt



La Seu Cathedral in Palma

## Need to know

Antonia Windsor was a guest of Essentially Mallorca (essentiallymallorca.com) and Palma Riad, which has B&B doubles from £300 (palmariad.com)



mirrors and glass chandeliers in the suites. The look is grown-up and sultry while still celebrating original features, such as the painted floor tiles and wooden windows opening on to Juliet balconies.

"There are 11 suites and each is a little different, but all have oversized bespoke baths. "We don't have a spa," Barceló explains. "And so we decided to create a personal hammam experience in the suites." The Molton Brown bath products have been decanted into handmade glass bottles bought in Marrakesh.

The restaurant, Morokko, will open this month serving fusion food and cocktails. It's a new project for Tast, the Mallorcan restaurant group that runs the tapas bar Tast Club a few doors down, and the Middle Eastern Za'atar restaurant at the Born hotel next door (there's a secret passage between the Born and the Palma Riad and Barceló has a vision of guests moving seamlessly between the two).

The Riad is located at the top of "El Born", the wide, tree-lined boulevard that brims with outdoor cafés and luxury stores. It's a ten-minute walk to La Seu, the honey-coloured cathedral that dominates the seafront. I pop in to admire the gothic interior with its huge stained-glass window — one of the largest in the world

— and the modernist flourishes of Antoni Gaudí. He lived in the city for ten years at the turn of the 20th century, and I can see his influence on other buildings, including the art nouveau façade of the Gran Hotel in Plaça Weyler, created by his friend, the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

On my way back to the hotel I spot

another of those gold plaques freshly bolted to the wall of a house on C Palau Reial. "This used to be a shop," says Cuartero, who has accompanied me. It is now the four-star Hotel Can Cirera. I ask when they are opening. "Today," they tell me.

It's all change in Palma, and there's never been a more exciting time to visit.

## 3 more five-star, grown-up stays in Palma

### El Llorenc Parc de la Mar

Right on the old Roman rampart that runs along the coast, this stylish hotel is only a dawdle from the cathedral. Lounge on day beds on the roof terrace while watching water swilling over the edge of the infinity pool and planes taking off and landing at Palma airport, or choose a lounge by the subterranean, teal-tiled swimming pool. Chef Santi Taura translates typical Mallorcan recipes into fine dining dishes at Dins, the hotel's restaurant, which was awarded a Michelin star last year. Your stay entitles you to a free drink at his other restaurant, Cor, a lively tapas bar by Mercat de l'Olivar.

**Details** B&B doubles from £200 (elllorenc.com)

### Can Cera

This former 17th-century palace in the gothic quarter is now a 14-room hotel. Like Palma Riad, its entrance has been recently refurbished to create a light-filled reception and restaurant. Upstairs on the first floor a series of living rooms make guests feel like the aristocrats who once lived here, while a tiny sun-trap roof terrace is the spot for a pre-dinner glass of vermouth. Guests can book private



Can Alomar

sessions in the petite spa with sauna, steam room and hot tub. **Details** B&B doubles from £200 (cancerhotel.com)

### Can Alomar

With large green-shuttered windows overlooking El Born, this converted 19th-century neo-gothic mansion (which was created from a 17th-century palace) occupies perhaps one of the most prestigious addresses in the city. After all, it has the Louis Vuitton store as a neighbour. The popular second-floor restaurant with its large outdoor terrace serves up contemporary Asian-influenced food and cocktails, while only guests can access the rooftop with its refreshing plunge pool and comfortable sofas. The contemporary art on the walls has been curated by Galeria Pelaires and includes works by up-and-coming Mallorcan artists. **Details** B&B doubles from £180 (canalomarhotel.com)



A patio suite at the Palma Riad