

by Vicki McLeod



If you have lived in Mallorca for any length of time, or even just spent time here as a visitor, you may already know that funerals work very differently to the UK. When death happens on the island, things move quickly. For families who are already in shock, that speed can feel overwhelming.

"It's not that Mallorca is rushing people," says Glynis, celebrant and end-of-life doula based on the island. "It's a Mediterranean culture, a warm climate, and historically a very close-knit community. The system here has grown around that."

In practical terms, once a death has been certified, burial or cremation can legally take place within 24 hours. Most local families will hold a funeral within 48 hours. For British families used to a longer gap, to allow relatives to travel or simply to catch their breath, that can feel brutally fast. "And when you're grieving, fast can feel shocking."

Why it feels so different to the UK

In the UK, funerals often take place one to three weeks after death. There is more time for paperwork, planning and emotional processing. In Mallorca, the expectation is different.

"The speed isn't about being insensitive," Glynis explains. "It's practical. Hospitals need beds. Funeral services are structured around quick turnaround. That's just how it works here."

That does not mean families have no flexibility. Funerals in Mallorca can be slowed down, but you have to ask.

"You absolutely can take more time," Glynis says. "But it helps enormously if you already understand the system, and even more if you have talked about your wishes in advance."

Without that knowledge, decisions often have to be made quickly, at exactly the moment people feel least able to make them.

Resident or visitor, the experience is not the same

For residents, there is the option to plan ahead with a local funeral provider. That alone can make a huge difference.

"If your family already knows who to call, what you want, and what you do not want, you've taken away a huge amount of stress," Glynis says. "You're not making big decisions at three in the morning."

For visitors, the situation can be more complex. If someone dies while on holiday, the conversation often turns quickly to repatriation.

"Repatriation is specialist and it's expensive," Glynis says frankly. "That's why travel insurance matters so much. Without it, families can be facing thousands of euros at a time when they're already in distress."

In both cases, the key issue is preparation, not in a morbid way, but in a practical, compassionate one.

"Everything is stressful if you're not prepared," she says. "But if you've had conversations, if you've asked questions, things become manageable."

What exactly is a death doula?

Alongside her work as a celebrant, Glynis is also a trained end-of-life doula, a role that is still unfamiliar to many people.

"Plan a little," Glynis says. "Then relax and enjoy life. Have a cup of tea. Have some cake. And don't be afraid to talk about the one thing we're all guaranteed to share."

"A death doula is not medical," she explains. "We're not nurses or doctors. We're companions and advocates."

Much like a birth doula supports people at the beginning of life, a death doula supports individuals and families as they approach the end of life, or when a death has just occurred. The focus is practical, emotional and deeply human.

"My role is to walk alongside people," Glynis says. "To ask the question, 'What matters to you right now?' and to advocate for that."

That advocacy might mean helping someone understand their options for end-of-life care, supporting a family through decisions after a death, or making sure people feel heard when systems become overwhelming.

"I'm there to help families slow things down, ask the right questions, and not feel railroaded by a process they don't yet understand," she says. "Especially here in Mallorca, where the system works differently to what many British families expect."

Sometimes, the role is simply about presence.

"People often just need someone steady in the room," Glynis says. "Someone who knows the system and who will advocate for them when they don't have the energy to do it themselves."

Fast does not have to mean impersonal

One of the biggest fears people have is that a quick funeral means a cold or impersonal one. Glynis is clear that this does not have to be the case.

"A meaningful ritual is not about how long it takes," she says. "It's

about intention."

Some families choose a traditional ceremony. Others opt for something smaller and more intimate, followed later by a memorial when family and friends can gather, either on the island or back home. Slowing things down does not mean ignoring local customs, it simply means shaping them to fit your family.

The power of planning ahead

Much of Glynis's work centres on end-of-life planning, the conversations most of us avoid until it is too late.

"I've accompanied some very chaotic deaths," she says. "And the chaos nearly always comes from paperwork not being in order, or nobody knowing what the person wanted."

That chaos does not just add stress, it steals time.

"If a family is drowning in admin, that's time taken away from being with their loved one," she says. "Especially in a foreign country."

Planning does not need to be complicated. Knowing who to call, understanding costs, and having basic wishes written down can transform the experience for those left behind.

"Make a plan, then tell someone you've made a plan," Glynis says, laughing. "They'll probably laugh at you. That's fine. At least they'll know."

Glynis has also created a wide range of practical resources on her website, glynisgermanfunerals.com from simple checklists to questions people may not even realise they need to ask. She is very happy to be contacted for advice, whether someone is actively planning ahead or simply wants to understand how funerals and end-of-life care work in Mallorca.

Talking about death without making it heavy

Alongside her funeral and doula work, Glynis has been running Death Cafés in Mallorca for



From top: At a Death Café in Inca, At the 10th anniversary of the Death Café Speaking about her work at a conference last year.

Spoiler alert:

we're all going to die, so let's talk about it

more than a decade. The name alone makes some people nervous, but she insists that is part of the point.

"If the name puts you off, ask yourself why," she says. "Then come along." A Death Café is not a grief counselling session and not a lecture. There are no experts, no agenda, and no pressure to speak.

"It's tea, cake, and two hours of listening with an open mind and an open heart," Glynis explains. "Nobody is dead, so nobody knows more than anyone else about what happens after life."

People come for many reasons, elderly parents, a recent diagnosis, or a loss they have never spoken about. Sometimes they just

come out of curiosity.

"What I've seen, again and again, is the best of humanity," she says. "People feel heard. They feel less alone. And they leave lighter than when they arrived."

A gentler invitation

If there is one thing Glynis wants people to take away, it is permission.

"Permission to talk. Permission to ask questions. Permission to sit with discomfort," she says. "Being frightened of death doesn't protect us from it. But understanding it can help us live better."

And perhaps that is the real message. "Plan a little," Glynis says. "Then relax and enjoy life. Have a cup of tea. Have some cake. And don't be afraid to talk about the one thing we're all guaranteed to share."