Article Rules for Geographical Features

Read the paragraph below, from © Cambridge English, about the island of Mallorca. Think about why some of the underlined nouns are preceded by *the*, and others have no article. Do you know any other article rules for geographical features?

Mallorca, the biggest of the Balearic Islands, is situated in the Mediterranean Sea, some 300km from the Valencian coast of Spain, and is an exciting mix of urban energy, rural adventure and coastal calm. Although it isn't popular with the Spanish as a tourist destination, it annually welcomes people from all over Europe (particularly from the United Kingdom, France and Germany), who may head for Alcudia Beach, or go hiking in the Tramuntanas, a mountain range that runs from the northeast to the southwest of the island. The busy capital city, Palma de Mallorca, contrasts entirely with the traditional rural towns and villages in the heart of the island, such as Algaida or Binissalem.

Did you figure out why some of the underlined nouns are preceded by *the*, and others not? Let's make sure together.

- **No article used for**

individual islands: *e.g. Mallorca*
names of most countries: *e.g. Spain, France, Germany, China*
names of beaches: *Alcudia Beach*
names of cities/towns/regions: *Palma de Mallorca, Algaida, Binissalem*
names of mountains: *Mount Everest, Mont Blanc*
lakes: *e.g. Lake Windermere*

- **Use 'the' for:**

groups of islands: *the Balearic Islands*
coastal areas: *the Valencian Coast*
oceans and seas: *the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf*
nationalities: *the Spanish, the Omanis, the Chinese*
countries which are Republics, Kingdoms or Unions: *the United Kingdom (the UK)*
mountain ranges: *the Tramuntanas, the Himalayas*
geographical areas: *the north east, the south west*
rivers: *the Thames or the River Thames*

To practice, think of a geographical area in your country and write a short paragraph like the one above, paying special attention to the correct use of articles.