

A Life in

SPAIN

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inside...

South Town

Gibraltar

North Town

Toledo

Top 10

Destinations in
Southern Spain

ISSUE 39
DEC 2019

FREE

**Wine
Article**

Let's Talk Wine



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 **VNBenny**
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*Most Amazing
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**"ABUS",
Sportif Murcia
2019.**



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**Welcome to the
December edition of
ALIS.**

Christmas is here. Friends have gone to the UK to visit the grandchildren, or the family are here visiting. Either way, let the party commence. Have a lovely christmas and prosperous new year from all of us at ALIS.

So what's in this edition....

This month we have an exclusive blog from Carol Hughes. Mapping out their journey and time in Spain. Funny but informative. well worth a read. See page 28

Then on pages 19-22 we have the top 10 most amazing destinations in Southern Spain. How many have you visited?

Whilst on page 27 we have a must read article about the Spanish christmas traditional days and events.

Enjoy!

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PER MONTH

A Life in
SPAIN 05

Places To Visit In A Day

San Javier



With the demise of San Javier Airport, we can highlight the fact that there are many other attractions this busy little town has to offer. The municipality includes La Manga which offers enough to warrant a separate report but it offers the possibility of two seas with different waves, saltiness and temperature.

Probably most spectacularly, and with a bit of luck, you may witness the Patrulla Aguila aerobatic team which is based there. Now that commercial aircraft have been relocated to Corvera, it is possible that there may be more opportunities to see a free and spectacular display.

The local History Museum is well worth a look. Check out times etc on cultura@sanjavier.es

Like the rest of the Mar Menor, San Javier is perfectly placed to offer a wide range of water sports. Even just watching the paragliders whilst having a sumptuous meal or just a drink, can fill a couple of hours. The club and restaurants can be found by walking along the beautiful beach promenade from Los Alcazares towards the airport.

If you are in the area between 1st and 31st July 2020, you will catch the annual San Javier Jazz Festival. So far the acts are a work in progress (as usual every year) but confirmed artists include many world renowned musicians and singers. Next year there will be more free outdoor concerts so look out for those. For obvious reasons most concerts will be in the evening.

Check for more updates on www.jazz.sanjavier.es There is much to explore in the area including the adjacent towns of Lo Pagan, Santiago de la Ribera and the salt flats nearby with its nature walks.

There is so much shopping to do in San Javier including (if you really need them) Lidl, Aldi and Iceland. There must be hundreds of smaller local shops where you can satisfy all your retail therapy needs.

Eating out is no problem here. The bars and restaurants are superb and varied with an emphasis on sea food but a really good steak would not be hard to find.

In Santiago de la Ribera you will find a superb tourist office who will give even more information about what to do in a day in this vibrant area. Check out their website:- <http://www.turismo.sanjavier.es>



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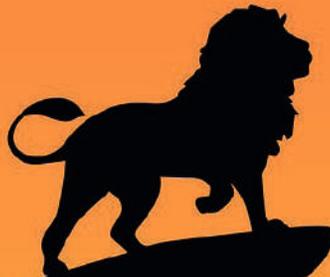
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TIPS for a Christmas Gift

Maybe because wine is so versatile or because the good "foodies" always appreciate a drinkable gift, giving wine at Christmas as a present is a true classic whether you are a wine lover or just a fan of it. Giving wine is not only something that we can consider as part of Santa's stocking, but also as something to share in any dinner or social gathering that is part of the festive period.

Although for many, giving wine at Christmas is a natural exercise, for many others this act automatically falls from our list of gifts because it is considered complicated to get the right one. A doubt that we like to solve today, we will talk about four tips that will help us to choose the right wine at Christmas.

TRY NOT TO BE CONVENTIONAL

The simplest is to buy the most common wine, or to choose wines because you know it, or you know that this special person has already tasted or usually likes to order in the restaurants. It is safe, without any doubt, but the truth is that giving the usual wine can make our good intention fail because of the lack of originality. Also, remember that giving wine is a way to entertain, to search an experience and a funny moment. We have to look for a wine that breaks up the expectation and goes out of the ordinary. One who, after being uncorked and aired, reminds whoever enjoys it who has given it to us.

However, let's put it in a positive: knowing what wines you drink on a regular basis can help us get an idea of what your tastes or preferences are. An authentic guide that can help us choose the gift according to them, either in the composition of the grapes that make up the wine or even opting for a wine that has spent more time ageing in the cellar.

ASK AN EXPERT

What about us? with a sommelier or a wine lover expert to guide you. it can really turn on the light in the middle of the darkness!!! Search for your professional wine assistant, they will help you to illuminate this exciting world of wine. Without a doubt, they will be the ones who can guide you in choosing the most suitable wine. And, returning to the previous point, it will be with that information that they will be able to identify what type of wine is suitable for the person to whom we give it. Maybe you have to visit La Diligente store !!!

But what happens if we don't know what wine they usually drink or what their preferences are? Well, curiously and as incredible as it may seem, aspects that are not relevant to us, such as how they like coffee, what type of food they prefer or how their character is, will help an expert to decide which is the right wine.



WINE RECEIVER

Giving wine to a customer is not the same as to a friend or a couple. But, above all, when we gift wine, we have to do an exercise that is rarely done when we make gifts: park our preferences and personal tastes to get in to the skin of the other person. A real key to succeed with our choice.

DON'T DECIDE QUICKLY, TAKE YOUR TIME IN THE WINE STORE

Wine and its enjoyment require calm. But we lose it when choosing a wine to give away? It is here when, perhaps, more time is needed choosing not only the winery or the type of wine but also checking other aspects that will define the character of the bottle. Select the vintages and tasting cards of each wine will be a fundamental review before purchasing a bottle; almost in the same way that, if the wine is intended to be enjoyed at a certain Christmas dinner or lunch, you need to know the menu to be able to pair it.

And, if after these four tips to give wine at Christmas, we still have some doubt there is only one option and that is not to buy a single wine but to buy three different ones. A way to make our gift even more personal and to expand the range of what the person may like or even notes that may accompany the dishes. And it is that wine has that virtue: offer a wide range of flavours. Wine lovers will enjoy the gift better if we choose a new range of flavours to enjoy. It will be the right one if the choice of wine is made as the wines themselves are made: dedicating time and care. Like "la Diligente" wines are.

PLEASE NOTE THE



Wine of the month

Carabo de Confesionario Rumbo Sur 2018

100% Malvasia Grape
1200 numbered edition bottles

The character of this white wine is really special. It is from Rioja, but is made similar to typical Sherry ageing (Rumbo sur meaning).

Malvasia grape has certain sweet flavours like peach jam, and the special ageing of this wine in french oaks for 6 months, with the typical Sherry “velo Flor” will change it and make it really unique.

Taste: Almonds, White flowers, apricot and honey aromas in a dry wine with a medium body in the mouth.

The perfect pairing for this wine is the Iberian Ham, Manchego cheese and also the the typical “dry in salt tuna” from this area.



You can find and buy this wine in LA DILIGENTE.

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A Life in
SPAIN 09

Spanish Walks

Spain has some of the most diverse countryside in Europe. With spectacular mountain ranges and vast open spaces. We have discovered some excellent walks and over the next few months we will help you to discover them as well. Good luck and enjoy.

El Berro – Gebas

This walk gives you a good impression of how hard the local population has to work to grow almonds, figs and olives in this inhospitable area. The irrigation canal La Noguera that you follow is a silent witness of this. You walk along the ridge of the Llano del Pico with beautiful views of the Sierra Espuña and the Barranco de Gebas. You also go through a tunnel and an old excavated canal.

The walk leaves at the info sign next to the entrance to Camping Sierra Espuña. You walk into the village and via a staircase you arrive at an old washing place that was still used until the 50's of last century. You leave the village and walk by a rock wall where you have a nice view of El Berro. A little further you arrive at the junction where you come out of the forest on the way back. Here you keep following the GR252. Along the way you will encounter some beautiful almond orchards and eventually arrive at an irrigation canal. You literally walk on the irrigation canal until you come to the excavated canal. The path runs through the wide excavated canal with a glimpse of the valley here and there. In a bend you suddenly come at a tunnel.

You go through the tunnel, a flashlight is not really necessary but can help. Once through the tunnel you start to turn to the valley where Gebas is located. At the information pole, you leave the GR252 that descends to Gebas. You continue on the flank and quickly reach the comb that keeps following you a long way. Here you have beautiful views of the surrounding valleys and on the Barranco de Gebas, the impressive moon landscape. You leave the path of the ridge to continue through a forest. At a certain moment you turn right and you start a fairly steep descent to get back on the path of the way out. From here it goes back to El Berro by the same road.

Courtesy of www.trailexplorer.eu

Distance: 8 km

Duration: 2 1/2 h

Grade: Easy

Type: Circular

Height gain: 272 meters

Way mark: PR-MU 69 - White-

Wheelchair: Not suitable

Dog: Allowed on a lead



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SUNDAY 23 FEBRUARY
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Let's Learn Spanish

Shopping - Hardware

Phrases

Would you like me to help you?	¿Quieres que te ayude?	Ky-er-es kay tay eye-you-day
How much is this?	¿Esto, cuánto es?	Ess-toe kwan-toe ess
Do you have one of these?	¿Tienes uno de estos?	Tea-yen-ace oo-no day ess-toss
Could I borrow a tape measure?	¿Me puedes prestar un metro?	Maypwed-ace press-tahoonmet-tro
Give me a dozen.	Dame una docena	Dah-may oo-nah doh-ther-nah
I'd like 5 of these.	5 de estos, gracias.	Thin-ko day ess-toss grah-see-ass
Do you deliver?	¿Se hace entrega a domicilio?	Say ah-they en-tray-ga ah dom-me-see-lee-oh
Do you need anything else?	¿Necesitas algo más?	Nay-say-see-tasal-go mahs
I hope that's everything, thank you.	Espero que sea todo, gracias.	Ess-pear-roe kay say-ah toe-doe, grah-see-ass
How much do I owe you?	¿Cuánto te debo?	Kwan-toe taydeb-boh

Vocab

Long / length	Largo / largura	Lah-go / lah-gur-ra
Wide / width	Ancho / anchura	Ann-cho / ann-chour-rah
Tall / height	Alto / altura	Al-toe / al-tour-ra
Deep / depth	Profundo / profundidad	Pro-foon-doh / pro-foon-dee-dad
Some nails	Unos clavos	Oo-nosclav-oss
A hammer	Un martillo	Oon mar-tea-yo
Some screws	Unos tornillos	Oo-nos tor-nee-yos
A screwdriver	Un destornillador	Oon des-tor-nee-ya-door
A garden hose pipe	Una manguera de jardín	Oo-nah man-gehr-ra day har-dean
A light bulb	Una bombilla	Oo-nahbom-bee-ya



Now try our wordsearch:

S D U O F K O L L I T R A M K U
D V K L M A X A R U G R A L R R
D E D Z D B L I P R Z C F M J P
G S T F W K Q L X M E L Z X O P
T D E S T O R N I L L A D O R F
I A N C H U R A R B X V U X N V
H V A A R E U G N A M O G A I L
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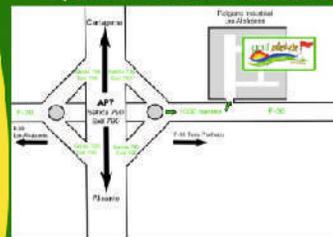
Gibraltar is an amazing co-mingling of past, present and future, and the list of things that a visit to Gibraltar should take in reality are as long as your arm, but there are some things that you just cannot miss.



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Those things that literally speak to you or beckon you in to view their stories are things that every visitor to Gibraltar wants to be certain to take a peek at. What do you want to do first? Well of course that depends on what you like most. If nature is your thing the whales or dolphins, or the rare plants, or the monkeys are going to appeal to you.

Gibraltar is not just history or shopping or outdoor sports, or even beaches. In reality, it's all of the above.

If you're into shopping, well Gibraltar has some of the best goods and some amazing prices. What's your pleasure? Hiking, boating or just wandering around the town in search of something interesting?

The, tax status of Gibraltar makes it a place that is well worth shopping with the smaller stores and local shops as interesting and intriguing as the larger ones.

Experience a unique drive across the airport, where both pedestrians and vehicles cross, this is controlled by traffic lights and barriers Both RAF and civilians use the airport with daily flights from UK. See the land frontier with Spain.

Gibraltar diving schools are among the best in the world today, and feature dives for the beginner, the advanced and the very experienced open water diver, as well as wreck divers. There are various diving schools that will allow you to try out your new sport, give you on site, and see that you have all the equipment you need to safely dive the wrecks of Gibraltar. They offer equipment rental so that all you need to bring with you when you arrive is a towel.

If you are, however an experienced diver and you would prefer to bring your own equipment with you, there is absolutely no restriction what so ever in bringing your own diving equipment to Gibraltar.

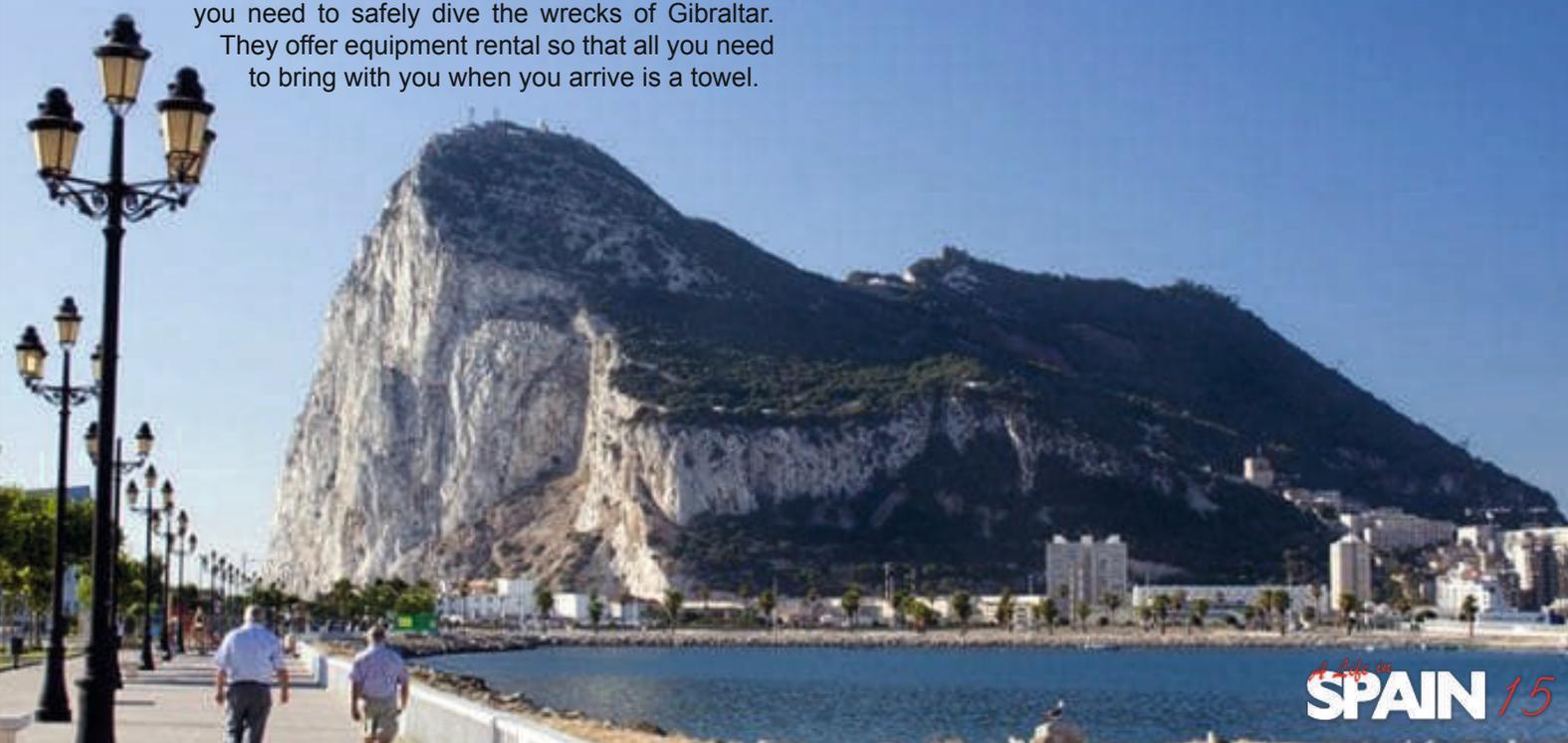
Gibraltar features one of the most spectacular underwater scenery in the world today, and for the diver, it features a vast array of things to see and explore.,

Cradle of History, A welcome monument that's shaped like the rock, showing the first skull of Neanderthal man from Gibraltar as well as other photos that show the civilizations throughout the history of Gibraltar

The Changing of the Guard, Several times daily on Gibraltar, undertaken by Gibraltar's own Guard Company.

Whale Watching in the Strait - If you're interested in nature, then Gibraltar is one of those places that has some diverse nature to show you. Whales in the area include Humpbacks, Killer Whales False Killer Whales and several others. Dolphin Watching- Dolphins seems to love the Gibraltar and use the area waterways as a nursery. It's not at all uncommon to see them playing with their mothers in the waters around Gibraltar.

Barbary Macaques, The Gibraltar Monkeys in other words, the last free ranging primate in Europe



Puerto de Mazarron

This once quiet port is now a thriving, bustling hive of activity. With new shops being added all the time there truly is something for everyone.

Opposite Lidl you will find the Centro Comercial La Piramide. Where you will find several British run businesses. The latest edition to be bought to the area is the Food Co. selling exclusive Tesco products this is the first Tesco's in Spain. They stock all of your favourites from baked beans to ready meals and from fresh dips to mushy peas.

The Food Co, or rather Tesco's, is on C/ Thomas Alva Edison. It is a large well stocked store. Offering an extensive frozen range, Dried products, a chilled cabinet, beauty and Toiletries and of course plenty of Xmas goodies.

This area has seen a lot of transformation recently and now houses some great shops. In fact it is fast becoming the one stop shopping area for British and Spanish alike. Here is a selection of what is on offer.

Opposite Tesco's you will see a car ramp to take you upstairs. Here you will also find a host of British run shops and businesses including:

karalees: The only british owned Hair salon in the port

Yorkshire Linen: With regular deliveries from the UK and Spain, a lot of the collections are unique to Yorkshire Linen and customers know that they can choose something a bit different for their homes. There is a huge selection of quilt sets, bedspreads, sheets and valances in percale, poly cotton, Egyptian cotton and flannelette. The range of curtains, voiles, blinds and accessories is fabulous. Yorkshire Linen is the best place to find all your essential products such as towels, quilts, pillows, mattress protection and mattress toppers. Cushions, throws, rugs, and many other products can be found in the store.

Legs & Co: Which is the longest established British lingerie shop having been established for over 17 years.

Stocking UK branded Lingerie, clothing, Night wear and swimwear it carries all your favourite makes. They have an extensive Bra range covering most sizes and offer a free fitting size by their helpful staff.

Furniture Plus: Stocking UK inside and outside furniture. From beds to settees, and sun loungers to parasols and all at great prices.

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Close to the Piramide centre is a new retail area called Mazarron Park. This boasts some large retailers such as Aldi, JYSK, Sprinter, Tedi and much more

After all that shopping you will probably just want to sit down with a cup of tea and a piece of cake. Well they have that covered too. The Tea Pot can be found opposite Tesco and have a good range of all your English sweet and savoury snacks

This truly is a one stop 'home from home' shopping centre. So what are you waiting for? Come on down, you wont be disappointed.



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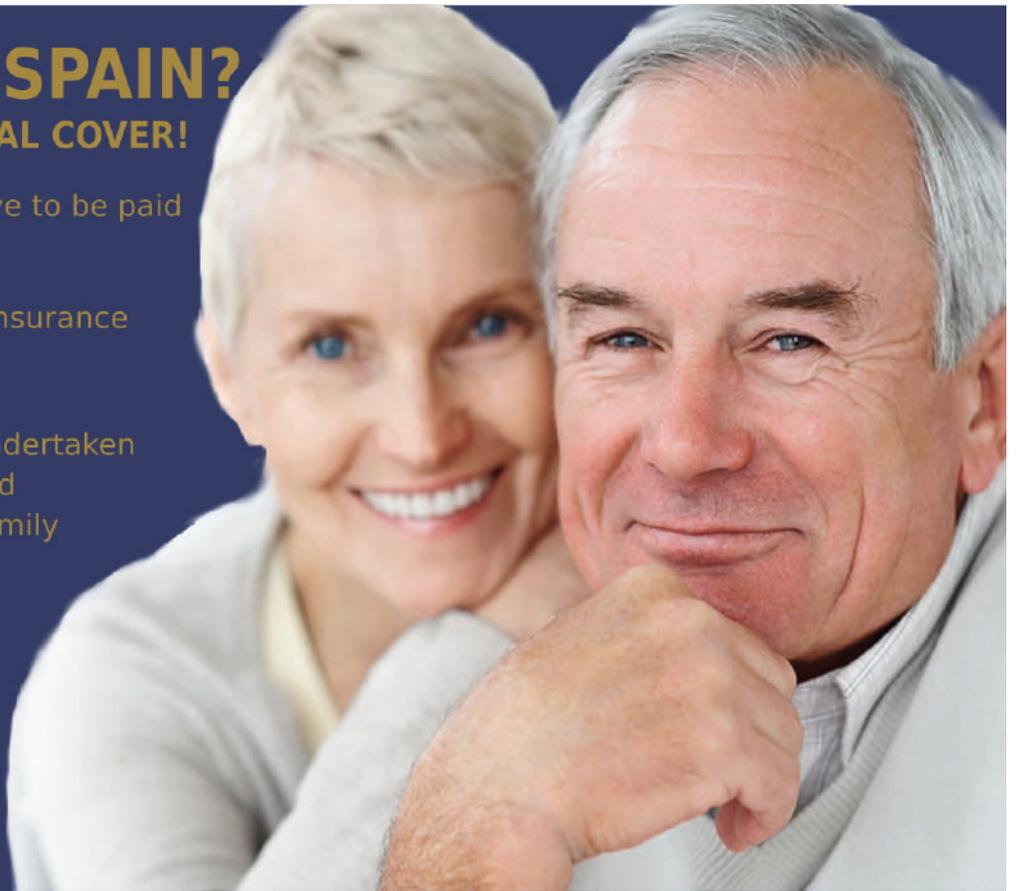
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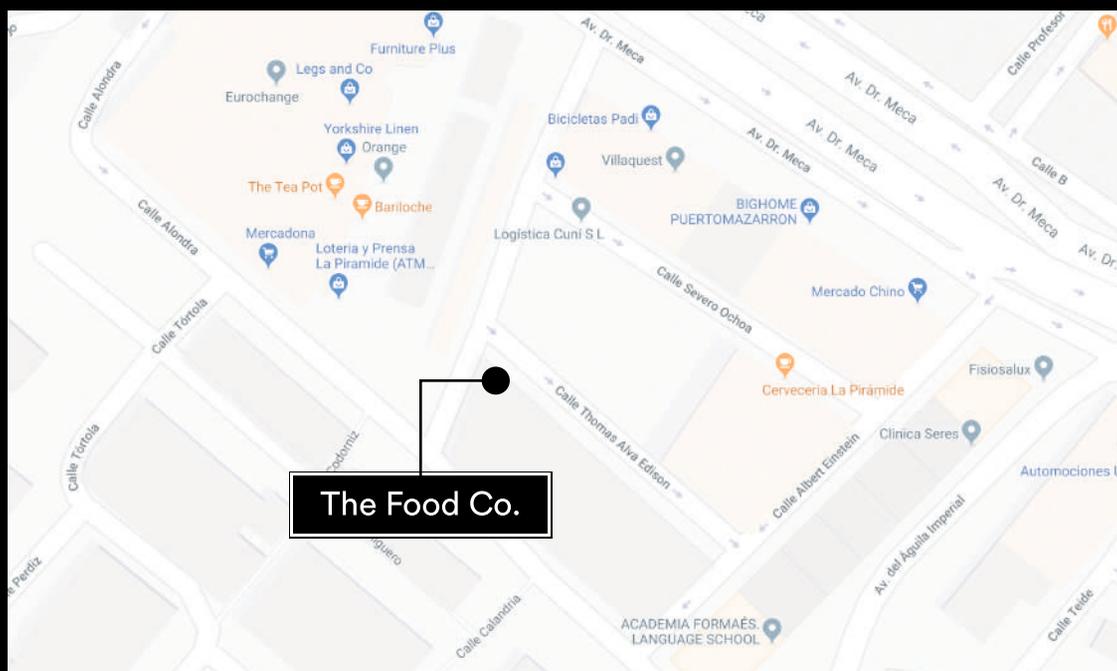
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TOP 10

Most Amazing Destinations in Southern Spain

Andalusia is an autonomous community that covers most of southern Spain. It has a diverse landscape, with a long Mediterranean coastline and its own mountain chain, and is known to have the hottest average temperatures in Europe. Andalusia is a rough translation of an Arabic word meaning “vandals”, due to the fact that it was raided and claimed by many different cultures and nations because of its prime location. This has created a series of cities and towns with a very multicultural architecture, cuisine, and history. They are home to a celebratory culture full of festivals and flamenco dancing, tapas and sherry. Here is a look at some of the must-see destinations in southern Spain:

10. Jerez de la Frontera

This small city is believed by many to be as quintessential Andalucía as anyone can find. Though larger cities like Cadiz and Seville will advertise this honor, Jerez is well known on several fronts without much lip service at all. It is the center of Spanish horse culture, and home of the invention of fortified sherry wine.

Eleven European palaces and one looming Moorish palace and fortress are available for tours. During one of the many festivals here, there is ample opportunity to see traditional flamenco dance in the city where it was invented.



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9. Doñana National Park

The Doñana National Park is located in the fertile river delta where the Guadalquivir meets the Mediterranean Sea. It is an ecological paradise of sand dunes, marshes and plains that serves as a refuge for many species of wildlife. Birders will be treated to views of thousands of different African migratory species.

More local endangered species can also be seen by lucky people, like the Iberian lynx and the Spanish Imperial Eagle. As it was once a home for nobility, the visitors centers and marine museum are all housed in repurposed castles and manors, and are worth seeing as well.

8. Marbella

Once a small white village of fishermen, Marbella is now one of the most cosmopolitan beach resorts on the Costa del Sol. The beaches with its fine sand and the Mediterranean with its clean blue water are the main attractions here, although there are numerous historic attractions well worth exploring too.

An ancient walled city boasts virtually the same footprint as it did during the 16th century. When not sunning on Marbella's palm-tree-lined beaches, visitors can walk the Golden Mile to view some of the most luxurious homes and resorts in Europe. The area around the yacht-filled marina Puerto Banus boasts the city's best boutiques, restaurants and bars.

7. Cadiz

This is believed to be the oldest continually inhabited city in all of Western Europe, and was founded over three millennia ago by Phoenician sailors. A visit here means seeing long coastlines of public beaches, waves on crashing seawalls, and examples of thousands of years of architecture.

The must-see time to visit is during Carnival, which is the third-biggest celebration of this kind in the world. During the rest of the year, guests flock here for seafood, surfing and flamenco dancing.







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6. Malaga

From the outside, this city has a subdued and modern shell. The historic, Gothic heart of town is another world completely. This is the birthplace of Picasso, and has a large collection of museums to enjoy. Those seeking older historic sites will enjoy the Roman theatre and Azcalba, the Moorish castle.

The grand 11th Century Gibralfaro castle is a must-see for those who love lavish manors. Malaga is well-known for its tapas bars and has a reputation of being one of the tastiest cities in the region when it comes to this kind of cuisine.



5. Sierra Nevada

This mountain range in Spain is one of the southernmost ski destinations in all of Europe. It also contains the highest mountain of continental Spain, Mulhacén at 3,478 meters (11,411 feet) above sea level.

The range towers over the city of Granada, and offers a number of fun activities for travellers. In addition to winter slopes, visitors here can enjoy the National Park that serves as a biosphere reserve, an astronomical observatory and telescope, and access to a number of adventure guide services. During summertime, these mountains are a mecca for hiking, rock climbing, and mountain biking.



4. Ronda

Located in and around the deep El Tajo gorge, Ronda is one of the oldest cities in Spain. It's nearly impregnable position made it a stronghold against Catholic troops in the 1400s. Completed in 1793, the Puente Nuevo bridge spanning the 30-story high gorge is one of the city's most impressive features.

The city's architecture received its influence from the Romans and Moors who once ruled the area. Ronda is also home to the Plaza de Toros, the oldest bullring in Spain, an arena that has attracted writers ranging from Ernest Hemingway to Alexandre Dumas.



3. Cordoba

The architectural splendor of Cordoba is well-known, and comes from a multitude of cultures. Of worldwide renown is the Mezquita, or great Mosque-cathedral of Cordoba. Both the exceptional design as well as the combined religious histories bring a steady stream of international visitors.

The middle-aged architecture that comprises the Jewish Quarter stretches out from the Mezquita, and offers a lovely stroll through the past, as does a trip across the Roman Bridge over the Guadalquivir River. Spring visitors will especially enjoy their trip here, as this is when several citywide fiestas fill the streets.





2. Seville

This is the largest tourist destination in southern Spain, and home to many attractions. The cathedral here, adorned with a Moorish bell-tower, is the third largest church in the world by some measurements, though some say the world's largest by measurement of volume.

A host of museums, ancient architecture, palaces and churches are available to explore in Seville, along with the usual big-city amenities of excellent food and cultural activities. Finally, a two-week visit here in April can be amazing- the somber Santa Semana (holy week) and celebratory Feria de Abril that follows is a world-renowned celebration.

1. Granada

This city at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains was founded as a Celtic settlement and has been inhabited for over 2500 years. Its breathtaking location near mountains is one of the loveliest in Andalusia.

Granada's most famous attraction is the fortress/palace complex known as Alhambra, which was a Moorish palace for the emirs when the city was under Islamic rule. The adjacent Muslim neighborhood and many other cathedrals and castles are also worth the trip while here. Tapas and flamenco lovers will find that both are easy to find and quite excellent.

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“ABUS”, Sportif Murcia 2019.

Well this is one local Sportif that we have not entered before as last year was the first event and we were participating in another at the same time and so 12 of us decided to take part on Saturday 28th September, however due to the storms and flooding the week before half of the route had been washed away and some of the roads were still closed due to landslides so the organisers cancelled it and rescheduled it for Saturday 9th November.

Well unfortunately many of our riders had other things planned or were not here including myself as I now had to work, I was so looking forward to it as I had just been given the all clear from the surgeon the week before, but never mind I gave my entry to Nobby as the event was full and he couldn't get in. 7am on Saturday 9th November 2019, 6 of our riders from Team "Cyclogical" based in Ciudad Quesada are up early all excited as they loaded up and left the shop travelling to El Corte Ingles (one of the main sponsors) in the centre of Murcia for parking, registration and the start line. Abus the main sponsor are a German company who have been operating since 1924 specialising in home security and safety products worldwide. They also sponsor many clubs, teams, companies and sports events and now manufacture cycle helmets.

The guys made their way to the nearest bar for the customary coffee and tostada to start the day off. Today's event started at El Corte Ingles at 9.30am sharp with 1000 riders making their way through Murcia town following the safety car as the first 25km was controlled. Once they had

left the town the signal was given for Trama libre (free ride) and they were off racing uphill towards Garruchal the first climb of the day then down to San Pedro, up to Cabeza de la Plata, back to Garruchal, then the final climb to Cresta de Gallo and finishing with a fast downhill to the car park at the Monastery Fuensanta, a total distance of 100km with 1500metres of climbing thrown in for good measure and is a route that we do every 6 weeks so the guys knew the road and climbs like the back of their hands.

This was another Murcia cycling federation organised event that was exceptionally well managed from the start to the finish with 3 x water and food stops on route, on completion there was also paella and beer available for all competitors and all the usual cycle stalls.

There were quite a few accidents and technical issues on the way with the bin wagon collecting a few, there were only 655 riders finishing and the first rider was back in 3hr 15 mins with our guys not far behind, Dom TJ 31st 3hr 21min, Moth Robertson 44th 3hr 22min, Harry Morrow 116th 3hr 32min, Turbo Buckley 190th 3hr 43min, Nobby Nobbs 203rd 3hr 45min, Graham Hope 489th 4hr 8mins. Brilliant effort by all. All of the Team had an excellent but very windy day's cycling and are looking forward to their next event in Albufiete in a couple of weeks time our last Sportif of 2019.

Team "Cyclogical" meet every Tuesday and Thursday night at 5.30pm and Sunday mornings at 8am and cover between 90 and 120kms at a moderate to fast pace so if you fancy a challenge come along and join us. Looking to improve your fitness, riding ability and speed and also have a new group of friends to train with then why not come along and give it a try or call Gary on 637487377.



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Calendar of Christmas events

December 8th—Red Day -This is the public holiday of *Immaculada* (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) which marks the beginning of the religious Christmas celebrations. Most notable in Seville

21st December—In a few cities including Granada the celebration of *Hogueras* (bonfires) takes place. This date marks the winter solstice (shortest day) and where it is celebrated involves people jumping through fires to protect themselves against illness.

22nd December—All over Spain people never stray far from a TV or radio as the Christmas lottery is drawn over a period of many hours. Everybody in Spain buys tickets for this lottery in the hope of winning *El Gordo* (the fat one) and the winning number usually means that a good number of people from the same village become a lot better off overnight. Besides the big three prizes there are thousands of smaller prizes shared by people all over Spain. You can buy Spanish Christmas lottery tickets online.

24th December—Christmas Eve is called *Noche Buena* in Spanish (Goodnight) and it is the most important family gathering of the year. In the evening people often meet early for a few drinks with friends then return home to enjoy a meal with the family. Most bars and restaurants close in the evening. Prawn starters followed by roast lamb would be a typical meal rounded off with a typically Christmas sweet called *turrón* which is a nougat made of toasted sweet almonds. Another typical festive sweet is called *Polvorones* which is made from almonds, flour and sugar. Cava, Catalan champagne, would be the chosen drink for the Christmas toast though plenty fine Spanish wines will also be consumed with the meal.

25th December—Red Day -Children may receive a small gift on *Noche Buena* or this morning but the day for presents is 6th January, Epiphany, when the Three Kings bring gifts for the children. Christmas Day is a national holiday in Spain so shops are closed yet it is not a day of great celebration but rather a calm day when people go out for a walk, drop into a bar, etc. Another large family meal at lunchtime is common though it's becoming more common to see families eating out on the afternoon of Christmas day.

28th December—This is the day of *Santos Inocentes* (Holy Innocents) and is the equivalent of April Fools' Day when people play practical jokes on one another. Often the national media will include a nonsense story in their broadcasts. In some villages youngsters light bonfires and one of them acts as the mayor who orders townspeople to carry out civic tasks such as sweeping the streets. Refusal to comply results in fines which are used to pay for the celebration.

31st December—New Year's Eve is known as *Noche Vieja*. It is a big celebration all over the country with street parties and special nights in hotels and clubs everywhere. Until midnight people tend to stay at home and on the stroke of midnight it is traditional to eat 12 grapes, one on each stroke of the clock to bring good luck for the new year. In Madrid and other main cities revellers congregate in the main square (*Puerta del Sol* in Madrid) and eat the grapes along with a celebratory bottle of cava then head out into the night until after sunrise.

1st January—Red Day -A low key public holiday with plenty people sleeping off their excesses.

5th January—There are processions all over Spain this evening where sweets are thrown from the floats to all the people who come out to watch. Every town has its own variation such as in the Sierra Nevada where the Three Kings (Wise Men) can be seen to ski down to the village.

6th January—Red Day -This is the Feast of the Epiphany (*Día de los Reyes Magos*) when the Three Kings arrived in Bethlehem. For Spanish children this is the most important day of the year when they wake up to find that *Los Reyes Magos* (the Three Kings/Wise Men) have left gifts for them in their house. Santa may leave them a token gift on December 25th but the Three Kings are their favourites, especially *Baltasar* who rides a donkey and is the one believed to leave the gifts. During the day of the 6th the Three Kings continue their good work and are seen distributing gifts to children in hospitals all over Spain.

7th January—The day after receiving their gifts children return to school, their parents go back to work and Christmas in Spain is all over for another year



North Town...



Toledo is one of the Spanish cities with the greatest wealth of monuments. Known as the “city of the three cultures”, because Christians, Arabs and Jews lived together there for centuries, behind its walls Toledo preserves an artistic and cultural legacy in the form of churches, palaces, fortresses, mosques and synagogues. This great diversity of artistic styles makes the old quarter of the capital of Castile - La Mancha a real open-air museum, which has led to it being declared a World Heritage Site.

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Toledo is also a city linked to deep popular traditions, as the procession of the Most Holy Corpus Christi, a festival declared of International Tourist Interest, demonstrates every year. The city of Toledo has its origins in Toletum, the name the Romans gave to this settlement on the banks of the River Tagus after its conquest in 190 BC. The city maintained its importance for centuries and, in the Visigothic era, became the capital of Hispania (6th C.).

The maze of streets making up the historic centre of Toledo is only bounded by walls in which many gates were opened. The Bisagra gate, presided over by two bodies and a great imperial shield forms the main access to the city within the walls. This noble gate, of Muslim origin, includes a central courtyard and was altered during the reign of Carlos I (Emperor Carlos V). The Alfonso VI gate or Vieja de Bisagra gate, built in 838, is one of the most faithful reflections of Muslim art in the city. The Sol gate was built in the 13th century in Mudejar style and contains the remains of a paleochristian sarcophagus. Via these and other entrances you can reach picturesque places, like the Plaza de Zocodover. In the Arab period, this central space housed an important market, and festivals and all kinds of social events were held here. Nowadays the square, surrounded by buildings with porches, continues to be one of the busiest places in the city.

Synagogues, mosques and churches jostle in the narrow streets of Toledo, which is characterised by the mixture of artistic styles. The Mosque of Cristo de la Luz, which predates the Christian reconquest, was built in 999 as a copy of the Mosque at Córdoba. It is an unusual building with a square floor plan covered by nine caliphal vaults (a type of groined vault leaving the centre free). To this, a Romanesque-Mudejar sanctuary was added in the 12th century. Good examples from the Mozarabs (Christians who lived under Moslem rule) are the churches of San Sebastián and Santa Eulalia, while the Mudejars left in Toledo a style with rich Arab decoration. Horseshoe arches, lobed windows and other architectural elements can be appreciated in various buildings in Toledo.

Santiago del Arrabal is one of the best examples of this style in the city, which has led this church also being known as the Mudejar Cathedral. The origin of its construction is uncertain, although it was probably in the time of King Alfonso VI when the church was built, taking advantage of an old mosque. The outstanding features of the early structure are a tower which recalls a Muslim minaret. The same Mudejar style can be seen in the church of Santo Tomás, famous for housing El Greco's famous picture entitled "El entierro del Conde Orgaz" (The burial of Count Orgaz).

A 14th-century Mudejar tower stands above the rest of the building, which dates from the 12th century and has Visigothic elements on its main façade. If there is one person's name that defines Toledo it is that of El Greco (16th-17th C.). His House-Museum, a palace with the atmosphere of the period, exhibits some of the best works of the painter who made the city world famous. Remains of the Jewish community are still preserved in the city in the synagogues of Santa María la Blanca and El Tránsito.

The former, built possibly in the 12th century, is also a good example of Toledo's Mudejar art. It has five naves with decreasing heights as well as the characteristic geometrical and botanical decoration and horseshoe arches. Meanwhile, in the synagogue of El Tránsito, built in 1357, you can admire one of the best Mudejar coffered ceilings of all those preserved in Toledo, along with walls richly decorated with geometrical and botanical designs and Hebrew inscriptions.

Nowadays, this Jewish place of worship houses the Sephardic Museum, in which an interesting collection of pieces of art and various objects used in Jewish ceremonies are exhibited. One of the most outstanding buildings in the city is the Cathedral, considered one of the high points of Gothic art. The construction of this monumental building, with a basilica floor plan and five naves, started in 1226, although it was not finished until the 15th century. This is reflected in the great superimposition of styles in the building and the large number of renowned artists who left their mark on the church: from Pedro Berruguete, to Enrique Egás, Petrus Petri and Juan Guas. On its main facade the outstanding feature is the doorway, made up of three doors: Infierno (Hell), Perdón (Forgiveness) and Juicio (Judgement). The exterior is topped by the two cathedral towers, one of them in flamboyant Gothic style and the other in Gothic-Renaissance

Cuisine, festivals and surroundings Toledo's cuisine has various specialities based on game products, like stewed partridge, Toledo-style quail or venison with wild mushrooms. With the other provinces of La Mancha it shares pisto (based on pepper, tomato and onion), Castilian soup and migas (dish made with breadcrumbs and pork products). To round it off there is the famous La Mancha cheese and marzipan (made from ground almonds and sugar). These dishes may be accompanied with the wines of La Mancha and Méntrida, each with a Denomination of Origin. The most important date in Toledo's calendar is Corpus Christi, which is celebrated nine weeks after Easter. This festival, which has centuries of tradition and has been declared of International Tourist Interest, has its culminating moment in a large and colourful procession going round the historic centre of the capital of La Mancha.

There are many possibilities for accommodation in the city, although it is advisable to book well enough in advance at any time of year. One of the best options is the Toledo Parador, situated on the neighbouring Emperador Hill and from where you can get a wonderful view of the city. Other interesting places in the province of Toledo are Talavera de la Reina, with its Collegiate Church of Santa María la Mayor; Ocaña, with its Gothic-Mudejar church of San Juan Bautista; Guadamur, with a beautiful castle; and Oropesa, whose 14th-century castle-palace houses the local Parador de Turismo. In the south of the province, at the foot of the Montes de Toledo, is the Cabañeros National Park, a protected area that combines Mediterranean woodland in the mountains and meadows on the wide plains.

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As we start planning our festive celebrations and parties, and all of these begin to take a place in our calendar. It is then the really tricky decisions starts, the dreaded present search! For children of a certain age it's so easy, they are even quite willing to provide us with a lengthy list! But as we get a little more mature, most of us seem to have accumulated everything we want and need.

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Year Built 2005

Designer/s Dave Thomas

Manager Ramón Carrión

President José Luis Pérez Ros

Greenkeeper David Francés

Golf Professional Manuel Guirao

Layout difficulty 2 (1 easy to 5 hard)

Approx. tee interval 10 min.

Buggy recommended Not necessary

Buggy allowed in fairway yes

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See advert on page 15

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The Journey - Vintage Pilgrim

By Carol Hughes

Let the adventure begin

30th January 2019

Slept like a log the chateau was so cosy, breakfast arrived fresh coffee, orange juice, and pastries all tasted home made it was a fabulous start to the day, walk with Charlie and he's had his breakfast yes I managed to get him some food on the way down. We are all refreshed and ready to set off in the direction of Zaragoza, I haven't booked accommodation for tonight I will book it when we see how we are doing, and what the weather is like.

10.30 this morning I have had an email off the solicitor, she has a agreement to occupy the property but needs my authority to go ahead and sign it on our behalf, the conditions are I have to pay the balance of the house into a escrow account where it sits until completion but we can move into the house straight away, so I don't need to find somewhere to rent when we arrive.

6.30pm we have arrived just outside Zaragoza. Whoops not sure about this hotel in the middle of an industrial estate, hey ho it is only one night, very basic and I have to leave Charlie in the room while we go for food, but when we arrived she did let us sit in the lounge area with him as there was no one else in and she brought us coffee lovely gesture which she didn't have to do think we must have looked worn out lol after food we took Charlie for a decent walk around the factories then bed.

31st January 2019

Up early and on the road with take away coffee they do nice coffee in this hotel, also slept very well just not the most visually beautiful hotel think we were spoilt by the chateau lol.

Today we are heading towards Alicante weather is clearer although not that warm but it is January, must say apart from first day when the weather was horrendous the scenery has been beautiful we have had rain, winds, snow, fog and sunshine I am really pleased we drove. Charlie has handled it really well, every time we have stopped for coffee or food he has had a wander round there has been plenty of places to walk him most of the service stations in Spain have a little park or grassy area, just make sure you take plenty of poopy bags if your travelling with your puppy.

Hubby is irritated at driving on the wrong side of the road! we are driving through city of Valencia which is beautiful every time I point something out to him, he tells me to shut up he's concentrating cantankerous old git!

When we were about an hour from Alicante I found an apartment for the night, right in the centre of Alicante, turns out this is definitely one of my better choices beautiful apartment really clean and right in the centre, we got there late afternoon so we got showered and changed and went for a wander got some shopping, it was relatively warm so a jacket was all that was needed. We didn't wander far we ended up having some food then chilling in front of Spanish TV and looking out of the window watching Spanish life.

1st February 2019

Today we set off for Mazarron I cannot collect keys to our Home until the 2nd so I have booked us into a hotel in Mazarron, well turns out I have booked us into a hotel in Bolnuevo address is in Google as per confirmation email I have received, its getting dark when we arrive in the area trusting Google maps as you do we follow directions, which nearly took us over a cliff ! really! we ended up at the top of a very precarious road with a very steep drop, after a very tense 10 minutes and a 35 point turn we finally got the car turned round and headed off back the way we came less than 5 mins down the road next to the "Ciudad Encantada " the heavily eroded sandstone shapes sculpted by the water and wind over thousands of years we found what has become one of my favourite places to stay, the apartments are owned by a very pet friendly French lady, it was pretty cold when we arrived (yeah, Spain gets cold this time of year who knew!) they let us take Charlie into the restaurant with us to eat even though it was busy and had a band playing this is one of the most friendly places I have stayed in Spain

Continues next month.....





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