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Lifestyle magazine and property portal

ISSUE 53
APR 2021
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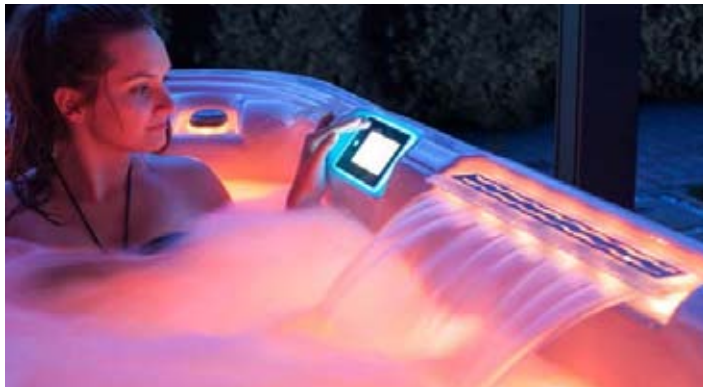
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A Life in SPAIN

Welcome to the April edition of ALIS.

I need to start this month by saying what a fantastic meal we had at the Grove on Camposol. Alex runs front of house and is so careful to cover every detail. It was our wedding anniversary. When we arrived we were shown to a specially decorated table and given a glass of bubbly. All restaurants and businesses are struggling at the moment so please support them if you can.

So what's in this edition?

We have a new writer on board. John Sharrock Taylor has written a book entitled Wigan Pier to Andalucía. over the next few months we are printing a condensed version of the book. See page 38 and 39

Page 26 sees the return of the Walking Routes. Back by popular request, this month is the Barranco de Gebas. A nice and gentle walk to get things started.

Enjoy this month's magazine

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A woman in a black suit pointing towards the text.

Wine Regions - Galicia

Galicia is one of the 17 top-level administrative regions (known as comunidades autónomas) of Spain. It occupies the north-western corner of the Iberian Peninsula, and is exposed on two sides to the Atlantic Ocean. To the south lies Portugal, to the east Castilla y León.



Santiago de Compostela, Galicia

Winemaking has long been a tradition in Galicia, brought to the region by the ancient Romans and continued by the monks throughout the Middle Ages. Today, Galicia is best known for its Rias Baixas wines – crisp, aromatic whites made predominantly from Albarino. Galician wines bear striking similarities to those of Minho (particularly Vinho Verde), just across the border in Portugal.

Shaped by the waves and winds of the Atlantic, the Galician coastline is dramatic; steep cliffs alternate with coastal inlets known as rías. The region's inland areas are characterized by lush green rolling hills, which climb gently eastwards towards the Cantabrian Mountains, reaching heights of 6,600ft (2000m). The region is often referred to as the “green corner” of Spain, and as “the country of two thousand rivers”; most of the region's vineyards are located in the valleys of the River Miño (Minho in Portugal).

Cool, moisture-bearing winds blowing in from the Atlantic make Galicia one of the wettest parts of Spain. Coastal areas receive more than 50 inches (1300mm) of rain a year. Happily, Galicia receives abundant sunshine (more than 2000 sunshine hours per year on average), without which the grapes would seriously struggle to ripen. Even

so, very few red-wine grapes can achieve full ripeness here, so Galicia produces mainly white wines, both varietals and blends. Apart from Albarino, the main white grape varieties are Loureiro, Torrontes, Godello, Treixadura and Caiño Blanco, a Galician obscurity often mistaken for Albarino. Red wines are produced only in warmer inland areas – typically light in style and made from Mencia.

Galicia is home to five DO-rated wine zones. Running west to east they are: Ribeiro, Ribeira Sacra, Monterrei, Valdeorras and the most celebrated, Rias Baixas. Each has its specialities and traditions.



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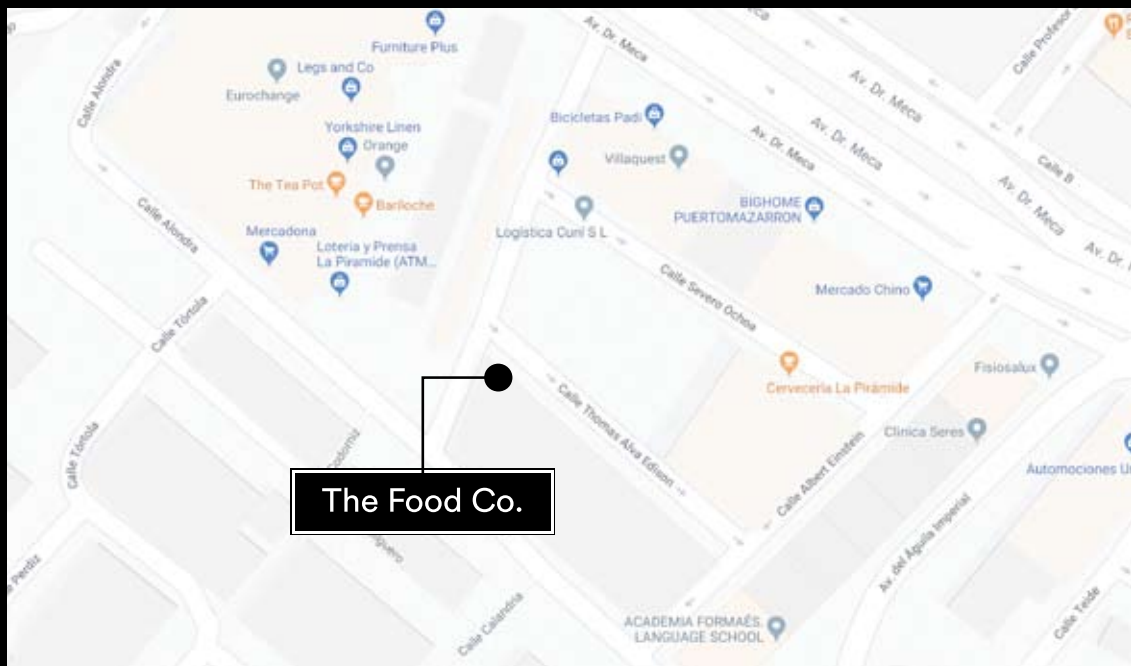
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Best Spanish Islands - *Eivissa/Ibiza*

A nucleus for the convergence and interchange of numerous cultures – Punic, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Visigoth, Muslim and Catalan – Ibiza today is known throughout the world for the beauty of the ‘ship of stone’, as poets have been known to call Dalt Vila, the best-preserved walled fortification in the Mediterranean region and a location that has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Ibiza is also renowned for its privileged natural surroundings and for the millennial swards of *Posidonia Oceanica*, which were included in the World Heritage declaration as they help maintain the marine ecosystem and ensure both the preservation of the sand on the local beaches and the crystalline transparency of the waters around the Pityusic Islands.

Eivissa is a celebrated tourism destination, and not only for its cultural heritage but also for the availability of arts, sports, gastronomy, shopping and leisure opportunities for all ages and for possessing a lively, cosmopolitan ambience that attracts visitors from the world over.

Welcome to Eivissa (Ibiza), a voyage that never ends since the town is constantly reinventing itself and never fails to surprise. Eivissa is your home, your dream world, your paradise ... a place to which you will always want to return.

On 4 December 1999, UNESCO included the category Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture in its World Heritage collection. Thus the Pityusic Islands became a member of this exclusive international club, of which Spain is the member with the greatest number of assets.

Ibiza is essentially a tourist island, and this recognition was exactly what it needed to promote all of its attractions, going beyond the typical notion of sun, sea and nightlife that it has become famous for worldwide. The declaration of Ibiza as a World Heritage site has been the ideal means of promoting Ibiza's thousand-year-old culture and rich biodiversity. In the past few years, Ibiza has experienced an increase in cultural, rural and sporting tourism, one of the island's most solid focal points for the future.



The following sites have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage list: the acropolis of Dalt Vila (the old town of Eivissa), the underwater Posidonia meadows, which are the source of the rich marine biodiversity of the Pitiusas Islands, the Phoenician archaeological site in Sa Caleta and Puig des Molins Punic necropolis, the latter are vestiges of the first settlements on the islands.

Eivissa city is located on the eastern side of the island with the same name, an island internationally known as Ibiza. Its economic activities are based essentially on the services sector, with the tourist industry and small businesses being at the heart of these activities.

As it is the main city on the island, Eivissa is responsible for the functions of a capital, which is why it offers many of its services to the rest of the municipalities on the island and Formentera. It is also the seat of the headquarters of the Island Council of Eivissa and Formentera, the governing body of the Pitiusan Islands.

The almost 40,000 inhabitants currently living in the city share an area of 11 square kilometres with three beaches: Ses Figueretes, Talamanca and Platja d'en Bossa.

The port of Eivissa, situated in a natural bay, where the first settlers on the island have left their mark, is the main sea access to the city, as well as being the basic arrival point, along with the airport, to access the whole island and compulsory stopover to reach the island of Formentera.

With regards to climate, it should be highlighted that from October to March there are on average 6 hours of sunlight, with maximum temperatures ranging between 14 and 23 degrees and minimum temperatures ranging between 7 and 15 degrees; the average temperature of the water being around 15 degrees.

Throughout the year the town council offers a variety of possibilities for touring the World Heritage site of Ibiza's old town, either alone or in the company of friends or family, including dramatized visits, audio guides and programmed tours. The town's museums also offer activities for all ages, including weekends.

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SPAIN 11

Let's Learn Spanish

Spring

Phrases

Which is your favourite season?	¿Cuál es tu estación del año favorito?	Kwaless two esstath eeyon del annyo fav or ree toe
When are the holidays?	¿Cuándo son las vacaciones?	Kwan doh sonn lass vac katheeyoness
Is tomorrow a public holiday?	¿Es mañana festivo?	Ess man yan ah fess teevoh
Have you seen the almond blossom?	¿Has visto a los almendros florecidos?	Hass vee stow ah loss al men dross florreethee dos
Make me a floral bouquet	Hazme una rama de flores	Ath may oon nah rammah day flor res
I'd like a potted plant	Quiero una maceta	Key airrohoon nah mahthettah
What a beautiful view!	¡Qué vista más bonita!	Kay veestah mass bon kneetah
Have you seen the Easter Bunny?	¿Has visto al conejito de Pascua?	Hass vee stow al con nay he toe day passkwa

Vocab

Spring	La primavera	La pree mahverrah
Summer	El verano	Ell ver ran oh
Autumn	El otoño	Ell ottonyo
Winter	El invierno	Ell in vee airnoh
Easter	La Semana Santa	Lah say man nah santa
Easter egg	Un huevo de Pascua	Oon wev oh day passkwa
Chocolate	El chocolate	Ell choc oh lahtay
Lambs	Los corderos	Loss corrdare ross
Chicks	Los pollitos	Loss poyyee toss
Ducklings	Los patitos	Loss pat tee toss
Flowers	Las flores	Lass flor res
Blossom	La floración	Lah flor rah thee yon



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 U B T I W Q T J S U P G P Y A I
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 A J T I Y B L V T B J K A M T M
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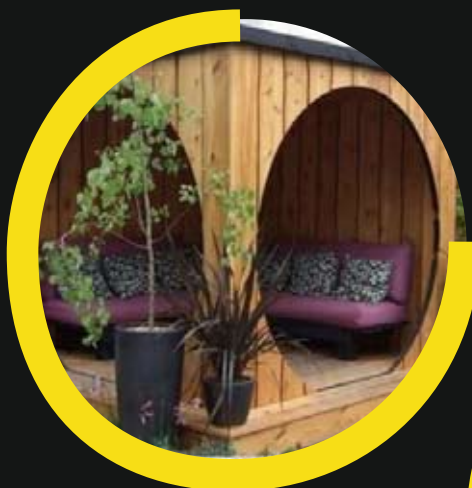
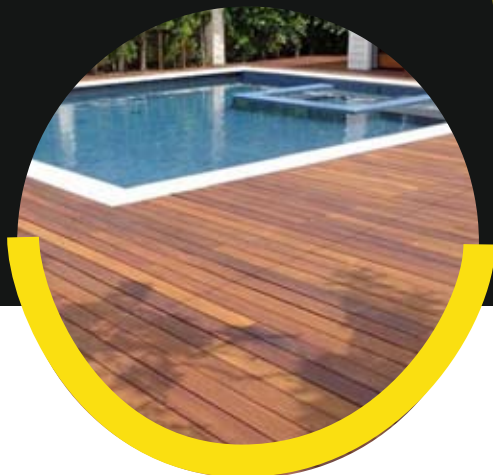
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10 Top Destinations in Southern Spain



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-storey 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.

This town in the Málaga region sits on either side of the Tajo del Ronda, a narrow gorge more than 150 metres deep. Its old town has been declared Property of Cultural Interest. Celts, Phoenicians, Romans and Arabs all inhabited these lands, which were reconquered by the Catholic Monarchs. The historic quarter, reminiscent of the Arab age and with a medieval layout is scattered to the south of the Guadalevín, while more modern Ronda, the part which sprang up after the 16th century, unfolds to the north of the course of this river. Several bridges unite the two halves of one of the most interesting towns on the route of the Whitewashed Villages, in the heart of the Ronda hills, only a few kilometres from the Costa del Sol.

The so-called “city of the castles” stands on a natural vantage point defended at its most accessible point by a citadel. It still preserves its walls and the most important gates which gave access to the city. The Almocábar Gate (13th century) provided access to the south side of the town, the Carlos I Gate dates from the 16th century, while the Exijara Gate led to the Jewish quarter.

Outstanding in these walled surroundings is the Gothic-Renaissance construction of the church of Espíritu Santo, ordered to be built by Fernando the Catholic to commemorate the reconquest of Ronda. Another major religious work is Santa María la Mayor, where Arab and Christian features combine. On the site of an old Roman temple, the Arabs built the Main Mosque of Ronda in the 13th century. Preserved from this period are the mihrab arch, decorated with stucco, and the minaret, transformed into a belltower. In the following centuries, its interior was enriched with Renaissance and Baroque decoration, as can be admired in its Main Chapel, choir

and altars. The Mudejar style, with stucco and horseshoe arches, can be seen in the San Sebastián minaret, later used for Christian worship. Another Muslim legacy are the Arab baths, on the banks of the river. They date from the 13th century and are very well preserved.

The civil architecture of Ronda is reflected in its ancestral homes and aristocratic small palaces. The palaces of Mondragón and the Marquis of Salvatierra, and the House of the Moor are some of the delightful examples to be enjoyed. The first of the palaces was for centuries the residence of Muslim and Christian kings, and today it houses the city’s Archaeological Museum. Outstanding in the former home of the Marquis of Salvatierra is a wrought-iron balcony in the purest Ronda style.

The whitewashed villages, of Arab origin, in the Ronda mountains, combine popular architecture with striking natural surroundings. Other towns, however, are famous for their Phoenician ruins (Jimena de Líbar) or Roman remains (Acinipo). A Moorish essence, among olive groves and vineyards, is the distinguishing feature of Algatocín or Atajate. The Ronda region is located in western Andalusia, where the variety of vegetation makes for spectacular landscapes, such as the Sierra de las Nieves Nature Park, the Bermeja mountains or Sierra Crestellina hills. The Málaga coast is a step away, offering us a coastline where Benalmádena, Fuengirola, Marbella or Estepona are the most lively places for recreation.



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Little life change no 3.

By Hilary Quinlan and Murcia Golf Homes

Towards plastic free living, I have used up the last of my bottles of shampoo and plastic bottles of conditioner and ordered online Lush products, shampoo bar, conditioner bar and face bar.

They do deliver to mainland Spain and standard delivery is less than €5. I also ordered 2 little Lush soap tins. I can't wait to see and try these products from Lush, they have had great reviews. ...update, the products arrived quickly, Lush have very good service and delivery. I was intrigued to see all the products arrived in brown paper bags, the little tins are lovely but too small for the shampoo and conditioner bar. I had to cut them in half to fit in the tin! Then I was shocked to see what I thought were plastic fillers in the box but it turned out they even they dissolve in water. Go Lush! The face soap, Fresh Farmacy is very nice but it came in a huge wedge, like a wedge of cheese. I cut off what I need and put the rest away.

I have washed my hair a couple of times with the products and I am happy with the result. It takes a while to get used to lathering up the product, like being a kid again with soap, but it's a great experience. I love the minimal lack of bottles around my bathroom and this has got to be the answer for travelling. No liquids to squash into tiny plastic bags at airport security, just little bars in tins. Much better

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POOL COVERS SPAIN

Having a pool can be a heap of fun for the family, not to mention a great way to deal with a Spanish summer. However, swimming pool maintenance and cleaning can be a laborious and never-ending job. It is not only nice to have it sparkle and looking great, it is also critical for pool hygiene and safety. Likewise, it is a laborious job ensuring your pool quality is maintained during the winter months too and that garden debris, dirt and leaves are also kept to a minimum.

Installing a swimming pool cover and roller can save you more than just money; you'll be saving the sun's natural **warmth, water loss, heat loss, cleaning, chemicals, time, evaporation** and your pool's lifespan will be **longer lasting**, allowing you and your family to swim for longer.

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Food & Drink

Spanish cuisine is one of the best in the world due to the quality and variety of ingredients it uses, it is the pride of the country.

It is difficult to talk about the national cuisine of Spain as a whole. But the traditional food is made up of many regional cuisines. Each one influenced by the climate, history, and customs of that region. However, you can distinguish common characteristics in all Spanish cuisine. First of all Spanish food is, in fact, quite simple. The base is onion, garlic and peppers. Usually, it uses herbs, sage and olive oil. The simplicity and the quick preparation are also common in many regional recipes. Typical Iberian Peninsula cooking methods include stewing in wine, cooking with pecorino cheese, or grilling or roasting.

Modern Spanish cooking is very varied, unique and impossible to recreate. It was influenced by the Romans, Moors and Americans.



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Pan Fried Chicken Served With Creamed Potatoes, Broccoli And A Creamy Wild Mushroom Sauce	10.90€
Homemade Steak Pie A Grove Favourite, Served With A homemade Chips Or Mash & Garden Or Mushy Peas	12.50€
Grove Fajitas - tender Strips Of Chicken Or Beef with peppers & onions served with tortillas, sour cream, homemade guacamole, Spicy salsa & grated Cheese	11.90€
Classic Caesar Salad - Served With Your Choice Of Grilled Chicken Or Prawns	9.90€
Seared swordfish with capers, Cooked in lemon, garlic & olive oil, served with anna potatoes	12.90€
Vegetable Moussaka - Our vegetarian take on The Traditional Greek Classic, served with garlic bread	10.50€
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Valencia

The city of Valencia is no stranger to gastronomic tourism, with its characteristic “Mediterranean Diet” (a healthy lifestyle, kept along for generations and recognised as World Heritage). In the last years, the city has earned a position among the most important cuisine destinations in Spain.

A wonderful mixture between the modern and the traditional make Valencia a perfect city to savour. In the Central Market, you can find a variety of high-quality prime products.

Many of the bars and restaurants in the area offer what is known as “market cuisine”, which refers to the place they buy their products as a way to prove their quality. Apart from them, up to 4 Michelin restaurants can be found in the Turia capital.

The secret of rice

Rice is the ultimate Valencian product. The Muslims started to grow this cereal and passed on their production techniques to the Christians who continue to use them to this day. Rice can be accompanied by almost anything. It is interesting to see that in Valencia, the way rice is cooked is determined not only by the ingredients it contains but also by the type of vessel in which it is prepared. Therefore, if it is to be cooked in a cooking pot or deep fry pan



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Paella de Pollo

Chicken paella



Ingredients:

Ingredients for 6 people:

- 1/2 pint of oil
- 1 chicken, cut to 8 pieces
- 2 bowls of rice (1lb. 5 oz. approximately)
- 5 bowls of meat broth
- 1 green pepper cut square 1/2 in pieces
- 1 red pepper
- 1 small can of peas
- 1 small onion
- 2 tomatoes, seeded and peeled
- Saffron
- 1 clove of garlic (optional)
- Parsley
- Salt

Method:

Heat half of the oil then add the chicken and cook for 15 min. Once it's brown, reserve it in a dish. Add the chopped onion. After 5 minutes, add diced tomatoes.

Let it braise about 5 minutes more, mashing the tomatoes with a skimmer. Strain it and throw it in the paella pan.

Add the rest of the oil to the paella pan. Throw the green pepper in and add the chicken. Keep stirring with a wooden spoon. add salt, and the meat broth, hot but not boiling. This is completed with the 5 broth bowls.

Meanwhile, in a mortar mash a little bit of garlic (optional), the parsley and saffron, with a little salt so that it doesn't slip, and wet it with a couple of soup spoonfuls of water. Add to pan and shake again.

When the broth has reduced to half decorate the paella with the red pepper cut to ribbons, and the peas.

Let it cook for about 20 minutes.

Once the rice is cooked and the broth has reduced, leave it to rest for about 5 minutes.

Tecula Mecula

Almond and Egg Tart



Ingredients:

Crust

5 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
5 tablespoons lard, at room temperature
6 tablespoons water
1/3 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
Pinch of salt

Filling

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/2 cups water
Grated zest of 1 lemon
1 pound slivered blanched almonds
1/2 cup (1/4 pound) unsalted butter, at room temperature
8 egg yolks
1 cup all-purpose flour

Method:

To make the crust, combine the butter, lard, water, sugar, flour, and salt in a bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until the ingredients combine together in a rough dough. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for about 10 minutes, or until soft and no longer sticky.

On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough into a thin round at least 14 inches in diameter. Transfer the dough to a 10-inch pan. Trim away the excess dough evenly. Place in the refrigerator until needed.

In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, water, and lemon zest and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Decrease the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, until a thick syrup forms. Remove from the heat.

Preheat the oven to 400F.

In a bowl, combine the almonds and butter and beat with a handheld mixer until butter is creamy. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks until foamy. Add the flour to the egg yolks a little at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add the almond-butter mixture and mix until thoroughly blended and smooth. Add the cooled syrup and mix again.

Transfer the filling to the crust. Bake the tart for 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Transfer to a wire rack and leave to cool in the pan.

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Types of Spanish Chorizo

While the basic ingredients of Spanish chorizo are more or less the same all over Spain, pork, pimentón (the smoked Spanish paprika), garlic and vinegar, there are different types of this delicious Spanish sausage, depending on the length of curing and the use it is intended for.

A typical Spanish household will have two types of chorizo hanging in the larder. There will be a firm, cured chorizo to be sliced and eaten as a snack or tapas and a softer one for use in cooking. The lean to fat ratio in the initial preparation determines the uses of the chorizo. Ones to be used in cooking have more fat, to flavour stews and prevent drying out when grilled. Chorizo for slicing is leaner and cured for a slightly longer time so that it is firm and slices well.



Another choice to be made is whether the chorizo is smoked or not. Spanish chorizo already has a gently smoky aroma from the pimentón spice, but in the wetter climate of Northern Spain the chorizo was typically smoked during the curing process to help the preservation process and this tradition continues today, even though industrial drying rooms mean that the smoke is no longer essential for preservation.

Chorizo comes in various degrees of spiciness, depending on the pimentón used and the addition of hotter spices. It can be dulce, sweet, when the mildest sweet paprika is used, picante, spicy, when the stronger pimentón is used. It is only very hot when additional chilli has been added which is less typical in Spain.

At the top of the chorizo range is the Chorizo Iberico de Bellota. Like the famous hams, it is made from the meat of Iberian pigs who have roamed free among the holm oaks and enjoyed an acorn diet in their finishing period. They have a unique sweetness and richness of flavour and are the most highly regarded chorizo of all.

As well as chorizo, Spain also produces the very popular lomo and salchichon, cured and air-dried in a similar way. Lomo is a delicious lean cured meat to slice, made from the loin of the pig, which is marinated and then air-dried. Salchichon is another cured sausage without the pimentón seasoning of chorizo, but flavoured with cracked black peppercorns instead.

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SPAIN 23



The town of Águilas stands on a coastal area of 35 km, under the surveillance of its beautiful castle of San Juan de las Águilas and on the southernmost tip of the region.

This municipality has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic age, and many other cultures, including The Argaric, Phoenician, Roman and Moslem people, have left traces here. Of particular interest are the Roman remains, especially the baths, which date from the 1st to 4th century.

As a modern town, Águilas was born of the enlightened thought of Charles III and his ministers Aranda and Floridablanca, who sought a port for the export of the agricultural products of the river plain of Lorca, and Águilas was the natural departure point for the entire region.

The new town, with its rectilinear layout, became a commercial centre on the up, reaching its zenith in the 19th century with exploitations of silver, lead and iron and the construction of the railway line and the pier of El Hornillo by British companies.

Nowadays, Águilas conserves its seafaring tradition and its deep-rooted vocation as a tourist resort.

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Walking routes

Barranco de Gebas



The moon landscape in Gebas is unique within the Murcia region, with undulating cultivation areas and steep slopes of light chalk. The play of sunlight on the erratic forms of this area makes this walk something special.

The walk leaves at the Mirador Barranco de Gebas viewpoint and goes by an unpaved road winding through this half desert. In the end, you reach the reservoir of Algeciras, where you have a fantastic view of this unique area. You go back to the starting point via the same route.

Distance: 9 km

Duration: 3h

Grade: Moderate

Type: Back and forth

Height gain: 371 meters

Way mark: None

Wheelchair: Not suitable

Dog: Allowed on a lead



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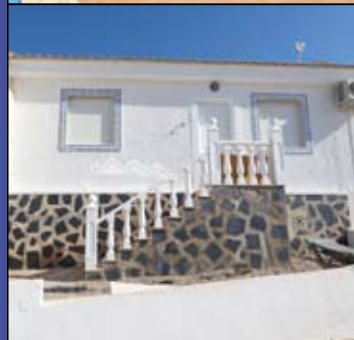
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10 Top Destinations in Northern Spain



PAMPLONA

On the fertile plain of the river, Arga sits Pamplona, a city full of history and deep-rooted traditions. The streets and squares of its historic quarter still preserve a significant collection of monumental buildings dominated by its churches and medieval walls.

Pamplona is a city in which tradition and modernity live in harmony. Founded by the Roman general Pompey in 75 BC, the city grew in importance in the 10th century with the kingdom of Pamplona. During the reign of Sancho III el Mayor (11th century), the current route of the Way of Saint James was established through the lands of Navarre, a fact that would influence both the city's appearance and its historic development.

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A visit to Pamplona, capital of the Navarre region, should begin in the “hamlets”, a group of districts of medieval origin representing the seed from which today’s city grew. In the centrally located Plaza Consistorial square stands the majestic Baroque façade of the Town Hall. This building, from 1752, commemorates the union of the hamlets of San Cernín, San Nicolás and Navarrería. Next to the town hall is the Gothic church of San Saturnino or San Cernín, built in the 13th century.

The Plateresque façade of the interesting Museum of Navarre, which houses an important collection of archaeological pieces and works of art, and the Gothic church of Santo Domingo, from the 16th century. The Castle square, tree-lined and surrounded by beautiful 18th-century buildings, has become the heart of the city. The Palace of Navarre, the site of Navarre’s government, was built in the mid-19th century and preserves its neoclassical façade (visits by prior arrangement).

The cathedral was begun in the mid-13th century, on the site of the former Romanesque cathedral, although work on it was not completed until the 16th century. This magnificent building has three Gothic style naves, as well as several neoclassical additions.

The cities newer districts have extensive green areas: Ciudadela Park, Taconera Park and the Media Luna Gardens are fine examples of a city that has enjoyed model urban growth. Cuisine, festivals and the surrounding area The old town is an ideal place to sample the delights

of the varied Navarre cuisine. In any of its restaurants, you can taste the traditional produce of Navarre’s vegetable gardens –asparagus, piquillo peppers, haricot beans. Roast lamb or lamb cooked with tomatoes and peppers are the classic dishes, accompanied always by a fine wine with the Navarra Designation of Origin.

One of the biggest attractions at these festivities in honour of the city’s patron saint is the running of the bulls (a tradition of running in front of the bulls), which mainly takes place on the hill of Santo Domingo, continuing afterwards along Calle Mercaderes street up to the crossroads with Estafeta, which leads to the Bullring. However, to take part, you should be fit and take certain precautions.

To the north, the villages and valleys of the Navarre Pyrenees offer some of the most beautiful landscapes in the entire province. The Atlantic Pyrenees, the most westerly area of the mountains, has major nature areas, such as the Bertiz Nature Reserve.

The main attraction of the Eastern Pyrenees is The Way of Saint James. Coming down from France, it enters the lands of Navarre to reach Roncesvalles, a town established as a sanctuary and hospital in 1132 and a first stopping place for pilgrims. Following the chain of mountains, you come to Selva de Irati, a unique nature area with one of the largest beech woods in the south of Europe. Other points of interest in the eastern Pyrenees are the Salazar Valley and Ochagavía, the most populated town in the region.





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12 new 'most beautiful' towns in Spain

Castrillo de los Polvazares, Leon

This town is located in the region of Maragateria, some 850 meters above sea level. It retains its original medieval architecture, with its streets and houses of red stone with green windows and white frames, which has been declared a Historic-Artistic site by Leon. It's also famed for its fantastic and varied offerings of traditional Leon cuisine.

Castrillo de los Polvazares is a historic maragato village in the province of León, near Astorga that is part of the region of La Maragatería and is considered a Historical-Artistic Ensemble.

Astorga, the capital from which it starts and ends. The route to the Camino de Santiago, is also one of the points through which one of the routes passes. Which since the time of the Romans, links the north and south of Spain, The Ruta de la Plata.

Its inhabitants were the so-called maragato arrieros. They marketed with wines, fish saltings, and many other goods, which they transported into the Galician coast, and when they returned loaded with cold cuts and dry goods. They inhabited the so-called arrieras houses, the structure of which was arranged according to their activity. Currently, the main economic activity is based on tourism and handicrafts. Its main tourist attractions are its typical architecture and its gastronomy, with the Cocido Maragato as its hallmark.

Cuisine:

El Cocido Maragato is a stew consisting basically of cabbage, potatoes, chickpeas and seven varieties of meats.

El Cocido Maragato is the typical dish of Astorga, León and specifically Castrillo de los Polvazares, land of the Maragatería.

it is mainly characterized because it is served backwards. First the meats of the stew, then the vegetables, and finally the soup of the stew



Camino de Santiago

At the beginning of the ninth century, when Muslims dominated virtually the entire peninsula and the Christian kingdoms did not have a figure to lead them, a pastor of Gaul, until the year 813, when Alfonso II the Castus reigned. He thought he saw the light of a star pointing to Mount Libradón.

Not long after, a bishop of the diocese of Iria Flavio, Theodomiro, ordered the mountain to be excavated. During the digging work, human remains were found inside a marble ark. Theodomiro announced that these remains belonged to the Apostle James. This endowed Christianity with a figure capable of unifying the fight against the enemy, the Muslims. Alfonso II had a church of masonry and mud-built on the tomb. Thus starting a pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela that grew as pilgrimages increased.

The Christian kings, aware of the role of hajj in the economic sphere, restored the ancient Roman roads, built bridges, created hospitals, etc., further increasing the cult of the Apostle.

Currently, there are several routes of pilgrimage to Santiago from different points of Spain and France. Castrillo de los Polvazares is the first stop of the Camino after its passage through Astorga on the French and Silver route, so it is not uncommon to see through its streets to the unmistakable symbol of the shell of pilgrims.



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Checklist for moving to Spain for a year or more

Do you want to study in Spain? Have you been temporarily relocated to Spain for work? Or are you taking a gap year or sabbatical there? There are a lot of reasons to move to Spain for a year or more.

Living in Spain for over a year is truly the ideal amount of time. Why? 6 months isn't enough to get the full experience, and several years may be too long for you to be away from your home or country depending on your personal situation. If you're preparing for moving to Spain for a year, discover this essential checklist.

What to do on or before arrival in Spain

Get your documents in order:

Visa/NIE: In order to stay legally in Spain, you need a visa or some sort of legal residency.

Work/study documents: For work, you will need to register your work contract, social security number, and tax documents. For studying, you will also need a student visa and documents such as the NIE.

Bank account: Open a bank account in Spain to deposit your salary or make payments easily. Most banks will require your passport or NIE document.

Healthcare: If you work in Spain, you will get coverage through the public healthcare. But if you're studying or in another situation, you will need to get healthcare coverage by taking out private insurance.

Figure out your transport options: Depending on where you need to go on a daily basis, you will need to figure out your route and transport options. Buy a monthly pass for bus or metro, or buy/rent a car if you need to take long trips or go somewhere that's not well-connected.

Get to know your neighborhood- Just like back home, there are places you'll go each day besides your apartment, such as the bank, grocery store, gym, park, doctor, or dentist. Locate the closest or best one.

Visit the tourist attracts/hotspots - Every city in Spain has tourist attractions. Get these out of the way first so you can move onto the real spots where locals frequent.



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What to do between 3-6 months in Spain

Find a community or network of friends - There are many groups for expats, otherwise you may meet people depending on your interests, hobbies, or work/studies. Try to make friends with locals as it will make your experience more genuine.

Try the Spanish cuisine - Where else in the world can you eat authentic jamón? The food culture in Spain is unique, and you won't get this experience anywhere else. Go out and eat the different tapas, drink a caña or copa, and try regional Mediterranean meals like paella and suckling pig.

Visit all the major districts of the city - By this point, you should know the ins and outs of your neighborhood and the main tourist destinations, but you will also want to explore the city's other districts. Find out what characterizes each neighborhood. You may be surprised at the new places you find like new stores, bars, restaurants.

Go to the doctor/dentist for a checkup - Keep your health at the forefront of your mind. Just because you're abroad doesn't mean you need to skimp on healthcare. Make sure to renew your prescriptions and investigate any colds or illnesses that come up.

What to do in your first year in Spain

Deepen your knowledge of the Spanish language - For most of your time, you may have gotten by on a few essential words and phrases, but you should take advantage of your final months in Spain to immerse yourself in the language. Take a course, speak only Spanish with your friends or roommates, watch show/movies in Spanish. Now may be the only time you have to be exposed to Spanish on a daily basis.

Visit different cities or regions in Spain - Spain is incredibly diverse and if you have the time/budget, you should absolutely take advantage of the easy transport options and small size of the country to travel.

Take part in cultural activities/events - See a Flamenco show, go to a football (soccer) match or a bullfighting match, take long lunches and late dinners, eat the 12 grapes at midnight on New Year's Eve...essentially, find out what it means to be Spanish.

Go to world-famous Spanish festivals - Las Fallas in Valencia. Feria and Semana Santa in Seville. The Running of the Bulls in Pamplona. La Tomatina in Buñol. There are many Spanish festivals that you should attend. Do your research and plan ahead.

What to do when leaving Spain

Get your documents in order, again - End your housing contract, deregister as a resident in Spain (important for tax purposes), cancel your healthcare, close your bank account, etc.

Stock up on Spanish souvenirs/gifts - There are some things you can only get in Spain, like a fan, castanets, flamenco dress, cava... Your friends and family back home will want something especially Spanish, and you'll need something to remember your time.

Pack or ship belongings - First of all, get rid of things you don't need or that you already have back home. If there are things you must take that you can't fit, look into shipping them home or flying with extra luggage (at an extra fee).

Buy your airplane tickets home - Don't wait until the last minute to purchase your tickets. Depending on the time of the year, it can be very expensive.

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And folk like us
If they exist

With its back to the distant snow clad peaks of the Sierra Nevada, El Cortijo del Rector sits surrounded by olive and almond trees on a rocky hill with a vista across distant blue mountains to where the sun sets beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The colours of the earth beneath the dusty green of the olives change from moment to moment throughout the day. At dawn, the iron-rich southward slopes are dull russet and the northward pale grey. For a few minutes, the first rays of the sun turn all to rose, and then the land slides into flat shades from deep red to blinding white, until the creeping shadows of evening restore the softer curves of the hills. The winter sunset is an extravaganza of gold, violet and magenta with tiny points of silver, as the dying light catches the insulators of a distant pylon. With a final green flash, the sun is gone, and Venus, the Hesperus of the ancients, glitters against a theatrical cyclorama of deep blue.

1: I'm from Wigan, me
Val, the love of my life, will tell you she's from Wigan too, but she's really an uptown girl from Orrell, where the leafy avenues were named after poets. They had gardens and inside loos and the young gentlemen played Rugby Union whilst the young ladies rode ponies. In contrast, my earliest memories are of our two-up-two-down on the corner of Warrington Road and Shed Street, in the decidedly unleafy shade of the Westwood cooling towers. I tried to explain the difference to our son Richard, but he has picked up a rather stereotyped view of Wigan.

'I think I get it,' he told me, 'those Orrell people's pies and whippets were bigger than yours.'
We married young, but children were slow to arrive. Then I changed jobs and Val took time off work to organize the 'new' home. Known as Rector's Cottage because a 17th century parson had lived there after being ejected from his parsonage by the Roundheads, it had low oak beams, an inglenook fireplace and a secret passage. There is a cliché about things happening in threes: I wrote this after driving home from meeting Richard for the first time:

A pale brass sun
Slides down a tinplate sky
The level light
Elongates Cambridge fields
Water glitters in the ruts
Like steel
Iron trees stand stark
The hedge is a black mesh

A brown hare darts across
My homeward road
Village lights glow gold
The silent house
Smells of the years and of wood smoke
You are two hours old
My son

We left England in 1991, bought a van in Connecticut, and drove a meandering four thousand miles through the USA, Mexico and Guatemala, where they were fighting a civil war, to El Salvador where they were fighting another one. It ended on January 16th 1992, Richard's twelfth birthday. Returning to Europe ten years later, with two sons about to enter university, we couldn't afford British property prices, so Spain seemed a likely option. Like so many starry-eyed seekers after Shangri-La, we embarked on our expedition armed with a well-thumbed copy of Chris Stewart's *Driving over Lemons*, his idyllic tale of life in the Alpujarras. Trawling the internet, I had found an estate agent's advertisement for a rustic cortijo in the same region, but when we arrived at the bar where we had arranged to meet her, a chill wind was gusting and it was beginning to snow. The better kind of realtor is notable for her enthusiasm and her warm interest in her clients. This was not one of the better kind.

'This is not a good day for house-hunting,' she grizzled miserably, 'wouldn't you like to come back again after the weather improves?'
'Would we like to make another fourteen thousand mile round trip? What do you think?'
We crammed into the agent's tiny old Seat Ibiza and set off along a switchback track. The demisters were not demisting and the windscreen wipers were hardly coping with the driving snow. To our left there was a sheer sixty-foot drop to a raving river.

Prologue

'Hold tight, the next part's a bit rough.'

The Seat fishtailed and shimmied for a moment as we hit the foot-deep mud, then the driver floored the accelerator, and we came out of the other side of the slalom with a plop like the cork from a bottle of chilled cava. The cortijo, surrounded by chestnut trees with the snow-clad sierra at its back and the thundering torrent at its feet, was spectacular but clearly not for us.

A week later we found the old finca we now call El Cortijo del Rector in memory of our old home in Cambridgeshire. The eighty olive and almond trees were wildly overgrown and the rambling old stone house sadly dilapidated. Half the roof consisted of rusting corrugated iron sheets and the rendering was falling away in chunks. Corresponding by email (a risky strategy and definitely not to be recommended) with a local builder who turned out to be semi efficient and not quite totally corrupt, we completed the earlier stages of restoration just on the solvent side of bankruptcy. By the time we returned in June, three poky rooms had become one pleasant living area and the front door opened onto a sunny new patio, with a view down the valley through the olive groves to the distant blue mountains of the Torcal de Antequera and the setting sun beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Our pensions were still in the future, and for the next five years we only saw El Cortijo del Rector during vacations, but we finally had a place to come home to.

From Wigan Pier to Andalucia is about the life Val and I lead on our olive farm in the hills of southern Spain, and the animals who share it. It will also take you via Route 66 through the Mojave Desert and the Grand Canyon to the Black Hills of Dakota and a place where hummingbirds hum amidst the snowy branches. Above all, it's about the people: Jose el Vecino, Mono the Master-Builder, Jos the Geordie Fixer, Rev Doreen, Peter the tone-deaf music critic, and Mad Manolo, whom I buried in a slurry pit for vandalizing my car. From Wigan Pier to Andalucia is available on Amazon in both print and Kindle versions along with all my other books.

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