

# *A Life in* **SPAIN** *.com*

*Lifestyle magazine and property portal*

ISSUE 57  
AUG 2021  
**FREE**

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in Southern Spain**

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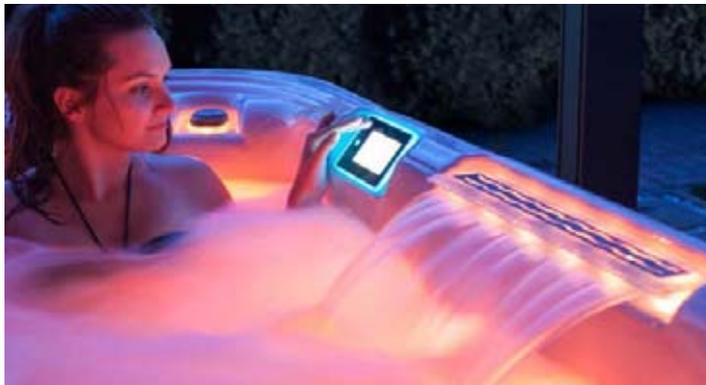
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# *A Life in* **SPAIN**

## Welcome to the August edition of ALIS.

And cook at 40C plus. I think I have drunk more beer this year than in any of the last 20 years we have lived in this beautiful country. Purely for cooling purposes of course. It was forecast to be a warm summer this year and for once the weather men were correct. Maybe because there are less cars on the road due to Covid restrictions? Anyway, soon be Christmas!!!

So what's in this edition?

Las Merindades on page 13. A very interesting place to visit and an interesting read.

Whilst on page 32 we have an article on the Fortuna Springs written by Casa Boquera. Remember there is still time to enter our competition to win 2 nights at this fantastic boutique hotel. Just send an email to peter.clarke@alifeinspain.com. No catch, No spam sent after. Just a simple email will get you in with a chance.

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## *Wine Regions - Green Spain*

The northern and north-western portion of Spain, is exposed to the northern Atlantic and can be cool to cold, wet, and green—thus its name, España Verde.

The sheltering fortification of the Cordillera Cantábrica, looming above Rioja, is unavailable to much of Green Spain as it stretches from Galicia to the Pyrenees.

Green Spain's cool and misty climate necessitates a focus upon earlier-ripening grapes, especially white varieties. Aromatic varieties prosper, with Albariño the most visible success in international markets. Grown along the coast, or along the rivers that give Rias Baixas ("lower fjords") its name, Albariño is the dominant grape; it can vary from crisp and tangy to round and peachy. While Treixadura and Loureiro grow there too, Rias Baixas' single-minded focus upon Albariño has fueled a drive that has seen the U.S. become the region's number one market.



Other white grapes fill the vineyards moving inland; the rich and even complex Godello grape rules in Valdeorras (the “valley of gold”, reflecting Rome’s interest in the place 2000 years ago). Godello, Treixadura and others serve the regions of Monterrei and the picturesque DOs of Ribeiro and Ribeira Sacra. But away from the coast temperatures rise, so red grapes do well too; the Mencia grape is arguably northwest Spain’s best red. Its lip-smacking raspberry tones and floral aromas are fun and bracing.

Thus far, the grape’s top iterations are found on the precipitous mountainsides above the town of Bierzo and the steep banks along the Sil River in Ribeira Sacra. The vineyards plummet downward; wine produced from old vines there is as dramatic as the view.

Green Spain’s vineyards extend all the way to Basque Country, often backing into the Pyrenees or the Sierra Cantábrica, sheltering more famous wine regions such as Rioja. Climatic challenges are a consistent theme, as is the reliance upon tangy, tart wines ideal with the shellfish and



seafood from the well-stocked Atlantic Ocean. But Txakoli wines are shockingly tart, lemony, and even spritzzy. Waiters will pour your wine from high above the glass to emphasize the fizz. Light in body and alcohol, Txakoli wines go down easily at the table or on a sunny afternoon.



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# Let's Learn Spanish

## ELECTRICIANS AND PLUMBERS

### Phrases

I need an English plug adapter	Necesito un adaptador de enchufe inglés	Ness see <b>see</b> toe <b>oon</b> ah dap tah <b>dor</b> day en <b>chew</b> fay in <b>glaze</b>
Is the electricity working?	¿Funciona la corriente?	Funk thee <b>yoe</b> nah lah core ree <b>yentay</b>
Is this bulb suitable?	¿Es esta bombilla la correcta?	Esses <b>stah</b> bomb <b>bee</b> yah lah core <b>recttah</b>
Is the power cut local?	¿Es el corte de luz de esta zona?	Ess ell <b>coretay</b> day <b>luth</b> day <b>esstahthon</b> nah
I cannot light my water heater	No puedo encender mi calentador de agua	No <b>pweh</b> doh en then <b>dareme</b> callentah <b>dor</b> day <b>aggwah</b>
My toilet is blocked	Mi aseo está atascado	Me ass <b>sayyoesstah</b> ah <b>tascah</b> doh
Where is the stop cock?	¿Dónde está la toma principal?	<b>Don</b> day <b>esstahlahtommahprin</b> thee <b>pal</b>
Where can I buy a bottle of butane gas?	¿Dónde puedo comprar una botella de gas butano?	<b>Don</b> day <b>pweh</b> doh comm <b>prahoon</b> nah bot <b>tay</b> yah day gass boo <b>tan</b> no

### Vocab

A bulb	Una bombilla	<b>Oon</b> nah bomb <b>bee</b> yah
A switch	Un interruptor	<b>Oon</b> inter rupt <b>ore</b>
A socket	Un enchufe empotrado	<b>Oonenchoo</b> fay em pot <b>tra</b> doh
A plug	Un enchufe	<b>Oonenchoo</b> fay
The cables	Los cables	<b>Losscablays</b>
An outage	Un apagón	<b>Oonappagone</b>
A tap	Un grifo	<b>Oongree</b> foe
A boiler	Una caldera	<b>Oon</b> nah <b>caldare</b> rah
A radiator	Un radiador	<b>Oon</b> rad dee ah <b>dor</b>
A water heater	Un calentador	<b>Ooncal</b> lent ah <b>dor</b>
The pipes	Las tuberías	<b>Lass</b> two bear <b>ree</b> ass
A blockage	Un atasco	<b>Oon</b> at <b>tasscoe</b>



### Now try our wordsearch:

M C B O M B I L L A R G B T J T  
H N A D T R R M Z A R U U V Y G  
S H E B V W A O D I N M P Q H P  
A O N E L L Z I F O X V M D L Z  
I K C V A E A O G A T A S C O W  
R S H A Y D S A T S N T X U O E  
E F U V O W P S L M M J O G H A  
B K F R C A L D E R A Z Y P V S  
U K E I N T E R U P T O R G L W  
T E I J M Z O Q T O C I J U X Q

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Aged 8

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Aged 13

The small classes are great, there are only 3 other students in my class.

Aged 14

I have made new friends who help me to learn.

Aged 9

I now love maths again, because the classes are fun in this school.

Aged 16

They (the teachers) explain things better.

Aged 10

My children have never been so enthusiastic about school.

I can't stop them from telling me all the great things they have learnt that day.

Parent S

We learn lots of new and interesting things.

Aged 12

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Parent P

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# Best Spanish Islands - *Mallorca*

**Mallorca or Majorca is the largest island in the Balearic Islands, which are part of Spain and located in the Mediterranean. The local language, as on the rest of the Balearic Islands, is Catalan, which is co-official with Spanish.**

The capital of the island, Palma, is also the capital of the autonomous community of the Balearic Islands. The Balearic Islands have been an autonomous region of Spain since 1983. There are two small islands off the coast of Mallorca: Cabrera (southeast of Palma) and Dragonera (west of Palma). The anthem of Mallorca is "La Balanguera".

Like the other Balearic Islands of Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera, the island is an extremely popular holiday destination, particularly for tourists from Germany and the United Kingdom. The international airport, Palma de Mallorca Airport, is one of the busiest in Spain; it was used by 28 million passengers in 2017, with use increasing every year since 2012.

The name derives from Classical Latin *insula maior*, "larger island". Later, in Medieval Latin, this became *Maiorica*, "the larger one", in comparison to Menorca, "the smaller one".

Enjoy coves of turquoise water so clear that boats seem to be floating in the air, venture into hidden caves, visit lighthouses with endless views, and see unforgettable sunsets. That's life on the largest of the Balearic Islands, a place of idyllic landscapes where the mountains are just a step away from the beach, and the inspiration for generations of writers, musicians and painters.

A trip to the island could start in Palma, its lively capital, and continue in villages where you can forget about the

outside world, like Valldemosa or Sóller. The climate is always mild, and everywhere you go, you'll find the true Mediterranean lifestyle and cuisine. Because Mallorca really embodies the Mediterranean spirit.

## Charming places

Palma is one of the most delightful cities to explore on foot in all of Spain. As well as the Cathedral, Bellver castle, Es Baluard museum and the Pilar i Joan Miró Foundation, we recommend venturing into its courtyards, eating at restaurants with cuisines from all over the world, shopping in the exclusive boutiques of Passeig del Born, and soaking up the sun at a pavement café.

You'll be tempted to stay there forever, but Palma is just the entrance to a fascinating island. Travellers will find enchanting villages like Valldemossa, where the composer Chopin and the writer George Sand stayed in the Charterhouse. Very close by is Sóller, where you can take an antique train. Other options include Deià and the stunning gardens of Son Marroig, Pollença and its lively port, or Alcúdia and its unspoilt coves.

In all of these places, you can try the "slow food" trend in Michelin starred restaurants, at the harbours, or in the cake shops where they sell the famous *ensaimada* pastry. You can take the opportunity to buy some local crafts, or just relax over a cocktail in any of Mallorca's exclusive beach clubs.



The island was occupied by the Romans in 123 BC under Quintus Caecilius Metellus Balearicus. It flourished under Roman rule, during which time the towns of Pollentia (Alcúdia), and Palmaria (Palma) were founded. In addition, the northern town of Bocchoris, dating back to pre-Roman times, was a federated city to Rome. The local economy was largely driven by olive cultivation, viti culture, and salt mining. Mallorcan soldiers were valued within the Roman legions for their skill with the sling.

### Moorish Mallorca

In 902, Issam al-Khawlan conquered the Balearic Islands, and it became part of the Emirate of Córdoba. The town of Palma was reshaped and expanded, and became known as Medina Mayurqa. Later on, with the Caliphate of Córdoba at its height, the Moors improved agriculture with irrigation and developed local industries.

### 20th century and today

A Nationalist stronghold at the start of the Spanish Civil War, Mallorca was subjected to an amphibious landing, on 16 August 1936, aimed at driving the Nationalists from Mallorca and reclaiming the island for the Republic. Although the Republicans heavily outnumbered their opponents and managed to push 12 km (7.5 mi) inland, superior Nationalist air power, provided mainly by Fascist

Italy as part of the Italian occupation of Majorca, forced the Republicans to retreat and to leave the island completely by 12 September. Those events became known as the Battle of Majorca.

Since the 1950s, the advent of mass tourism has transformed the island into a destination for foreign visitors and attracted many service workers from mainland Spain. The boom in tourism caused Palma to grow significantly.

In the 21st century, urban redevelopment, under the so called Pla Mirall (English "Mirror Plan"), attracted groups of immigrant workers from outside the European Union, especially from Africa and South America.

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# Las Merindades



Las Merindades is a region full of interesting sights. One of its characteristics is the mixture of natural and cultural elements. For example, Ojo Guareña combines a series of spectacular caves with a hermitage full of frescoes. In this respect, Puente de Dios stands out, a place in Burgos that, as its name indicates, is defined by a structure that was considered divine for a long time. It is a rock arch that the river Nela has been carving for millions of years on which a town has been built.

## **A perfect natural bridge**

The geographical landmark has been known since the Middle Ages as “Puente de Dios” (God’s Bridge), from which the current toponym of the village derives directly. It is a long natural gallery, which was gradually widened due to the action of the river. The Nela River is in its upper course as it passes through the town, at its source in the northwest, near the border with the province of Cantabria. The effect of erosion is that an elongated hole was opened in the wall.

Initially, it is considered that the passage would be narrower and longer. However, it eventually took on its present dimensions. The structure is 15 metres high and over 30 metres wide at its widest point. It also stretches for a total of more than 70 metres. Robustness is undoubtedly one of its strong points,

something that becomes clear when one sees both the thickness of the arch and the buildings it supports.

It can be crossed, which allows one to get to know the interior of the enormous stone arch. Something to pay attention to is how loaded the Nela is. During the different times of the day, the reflections of light on the rocks make different shades appear. Therefore, in the same day you can see how the natural bridge varies. It has several cavities, such as the Puerta del viento (wind gate), which is said to have been used to clean the grain.

## **The monuments of ‘Puente de Dios’**

There are written records from Puente de Dios since the Middle Ages. At that time it is believed that the town was protected by a wall. From this it can be deduced that it was not immune to conflict. Be that as it may, its protection was relatively easy due to the combination of the defensive infrastructure and the privileged orography. In the middle of the 14th century it was under the authority of Aguilar de Campoo.

Over time it became a lordship area and later the head of the town council, the Junta de Puente de Dios. A hollow in the surroundings of Puente de Dios, the Cueva de los Santos (“Cave of the Saints”), was

the place where meetings were held between the leaders of this town, Quintanabaldo and Brizuela. Until 1900, when it became part of the Merindad de Valdeporres, it maintained its municipal status.

Two buildings over the rock arch stand out from this past. The church of San Pelayo still has elements from its original Romanesque period. As is usual in the area, over time it acquired other styles to generate an eclectic whole. What stands out the most is its old façade, in which the image of a snake stands out. It has been interpreted as St. George's fight with the dragon. However, more folkloric hypotheses have also been launched, tied to a mythical origin of Puente de Dios.

At the other end of Puente de Dios is the Brizuela Palace. This Modern Age castle was built by the Fernández-Brizuela family and consists of a couple of strong towers. These are joined by intermediate areas, which complete the complex. The family that built it held important positions throughout Castile, from Las Merindades to Madrid. From its original form in the 15th/16th century to the present day it has undergone changes, but still shows a powerful silhouette. Its main warlike actions were related to local revolts in the 17th century.

### **Puentedey and its surroundings**

Puentedey's location makes it perfect for great hiking trails. Thus, the easiest option is to head north. There, the Mea waterfall awaits and its ravine leaves behind some spectacular postcards. Between stone walls and forests, it presents its best face during the rainy and thawing seasons. In summer and early autumn, however, it is usually lightly loaded. In any case, the rock surrounding the waterfall is always spectacular. It is not even 4 km long in both directions, so it is suitable for everyone.

A little further on are the canals of the Dulla. This is a series of deep canyons that are distributed on the border between the Valdeporres and Sotoscueva areas. It is usual to plan a route that starts from Puentedey and returns in a circular way, passing through Quintanilla de Valdebodres. In this case, the distances can be more than 15 kilometres if you want to see several ravines, although you can always shorten them according to your taste. Once again the forest accompanies, in a purely natural environment.

However, the main attraction just a stone's throw away from Puentedey is the natural monument of Ojo Guareña and its San Bernabé hermitage. Both,

already referred to at the beginning, make up a truly unique whole. On the one hand there are more than 400 caves that generate a complex of 110 kilometres of galleries. If you like the telluric formations, the Palomera cave is the best option, since it displays a remarkable range of them. Meanwhile, the temple stands out for being completely adapted to the natural hollow. Modern frescoes narrate the life of San Tirso, the original dedication of the place.

Finally, there are some interesting towns in the surrounding area. Espinosa de los Monteros is famous for the tradition that led it to provide a royal protection corps that was responsible for the night-time surveillance of the Castilian monarchs. Nowadays it is an enclave that stands out for its stately homes and traditional atmosphere. Medina de Pomar, which came to be the capital of Las Merindades, stands out in turn for the Alcázar de los Velázquez.

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# 10 Top Destinations in Southern Spain



# 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.

Marbella is, without a doubt, one of the Costa del Sol's major tourist centres, thanks to the high quality of the facilities and services it provides. Puerto Banús, one of the main focal points for tourists in the town, houses an exclusive leisure area inside the excellent facilities of its marina.

But Marbella is also a paradise for golf lovers. A dozen magnificent courses allow the golfer to play the sport before the unusual backdrop provided by the sea and the mountains. The historic part of town, sitting on a beautiful bay, shelters lovely corners of a typically Andalusian flavour, with whitewashed houses and orange trees adorning the streets and squares. An ideal setting for sampling any one of the tasty recipes of the local cuisine.

Marbella is deservedly one of the Costa del Sol's prime destinations. Its excellent climate, beaches, natural surroundings and its major sports complexes are just some of the countless attractions which this town on the Málaga coast offers. Clear proof of the high quality of its infrastructure is Puerto Banús, one of the most emblematic spots in Marbella. Surrounded by exclusive housing developments, this famous marina each year welcomes some of the biggest and most luxurious yachts in the world. Its facilities also offer a select leisure area made up of restaurants, business premises and shops selling the big international designer labels and luxury items.

From Cabopino to Guadalmina, Marbella offers the visitor 26 kilometres of beautiful coastline with a succession of sun-drenched beaches equipped with all kinds of services, which include modern hotels, residential complexes, shops and restaurants. The beaches of San Pedro de Alcántara, a major population centre less than ten kilometres from Marbella, are a fine example of the balance struck between nature and tourist development.

Sports lovers will be in paradise in Marbella. A dozen magnificent golf courses allow the sport to be played at the highest level year-round, in surroundings of striking natural beauty.

Those who prefer water sports will find the town has three marinas where they can take up the activity they prefer. In addition, Marbella has several riding schools, tennis clubs and other facilities to suit the most varied tastes. All this, and not forgetting the enormous possibilities the Sierra Blanca hills offer for all kinds of outdoor pursuits.

### **The historic quarter of Marbella**

At the foot of the Sierra Blanca hills, on a beautiful bay, is Marbella's historic quarter. A delightful layout which displays its typically Andalusian charm through neat whitewashed façades decorated with grilles and geraniums or the orange trees which spring up on every corner.

The heart of the town is plaza de Los Naranjos, from the Renaissance period, flanked by noble buildings such as the City Hall (16th century) and the old Chief Magistrate's Office (17th century).

In the small church square you will find the Greater Church of la Encarnación, built in the 16th century. In this same setting stands one of the two towers which formed part of the city's old Arab fortress, from the 9th century.

Testimony to the city's Roman origins are the many archaeological sites to be found in the area, outstanding among which are the Paleochristian basilica of Vega del Mar, the Roman baths of Guadalmina or the Roman villa of Río Verde.

The considerable cultural offer of Marbella is completed by the Spanish Contemporary Engraving Museum, considered to be the most important of its kind in Spain. Situated in the Hospital Bazán (16th century), it houses an interesting collection of engravings from the 19th and 20th centuries, with works by grand masters of the stature of Picasso, Miró or Dalí.

### **Gastronomy, festivals and surrounding area**

Fried fish, "ajoblanco" (cold soup with almonds, oil and garlic) or "gazpacho" are some of the tasty suggestions from Marbella's cuisine. Under the Designation of Origin Málaga standard, excellent sweet dessert wines are produced.

From Marbella's calendar of festivals, it is worth highlighting the Fair and Festivals of San Bernabé, which are held during the first half of June. The programme includes concerts, bullfighting festivals and other activities.

Holy Week and the festivals in honour of Marbella's patron saint, San Pedro de Alcántara, which take place in October, are other red days.

Countless excursions can be made from Marbella all along the Costa del Sol. A few kilometres from town is Mijas, a traditional mountain village whose coastline has much to offer the tourist. Torremolinos, Estepona, Benalmádena and Fuengirola are other locations with a deep-rooted tourist tradition.

The natural surroundings provide incredible landscapes in the Sierra de las Nieves Nature Reserve, in the heart of the hills of Ronda. Deep in the Sierra Blanca hills, very near Marbella, are Istán, a town famous for its springs, and Ojén, of great ecological wealth.





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# Most Iconic hotels in Spain

## *Marbella Club in Marbella*

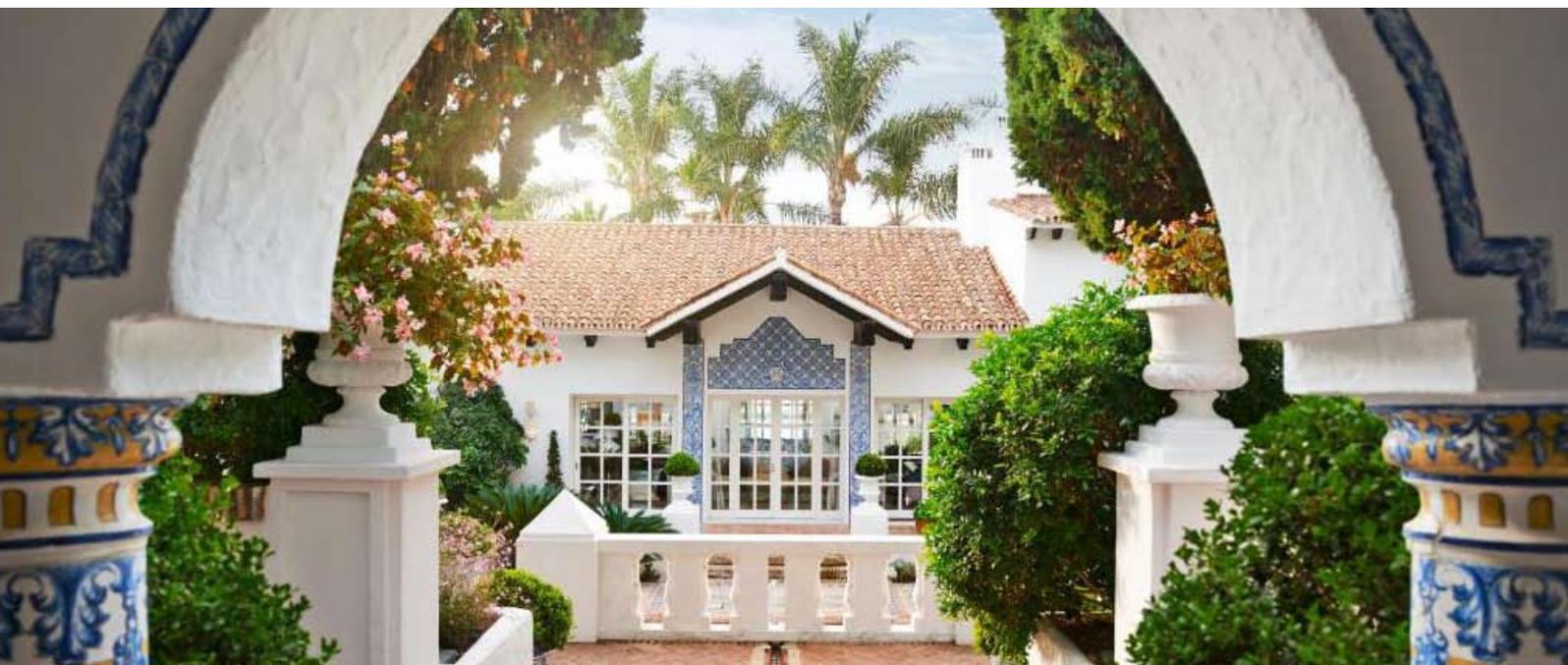


Large hotel buildings are synonymous with luxury. In a continuous flow of customers, they are usually among the best-known buildings in their cities, next to cathedrals, former colleges or old fortresses. It is no coincidence that the image that their guests receive depends to a large extent on their stay. They are also places where major festivals, events and celebrations are held. Resisting the passing of the decades or rising from the ashes, the most iconic hotels in Spain continue attending to those who can afford to pay for one of their rooms.

### **Marbella Club**

The origins of the Marbella Club, one of the emblematic hotels in Spain, on the Costa del Sol are closely associated with the highest circles. The German Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe-Langenburg decided in the 1950s to create a complex in the surroundings of the private residence of his father, Prince Max. They had come to the site on the recommendation of his relative, Ricardo Soriano Marquis of Ivanro. With these precedents, success was assured.

Since it opened its doors in 1954 it has been a centre of reference for the high nobility. The parties were combined with activities such as donkey riding or eating Spanish tortilla. Entertainments that were very exotic for the aristocracy and the world jet set. Over time, the 20 rooms were expanded to the current complex. It has bars, restaurants and 55 suites. In the heart of Marbella's golden mile, Puerto Banús and the old town are just a stone's throw away. Great beaches such as Manilva are also nearby.



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# Mediterranean diet

It was awarded the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity designation in 2010 because it is much more than just healthy food, and because it has been consolidated as culture that promotes social interaction, respect for the land and biodiversity, and preservation of traditional and craft activities connected with agriculture and fishing.

The main ingredients are olive oil, cereals, fruits, vegetables, a moderate amount of meat, fish and dairy products, and a lot of seasoning and spices. It is usually consumed with wine or infusions. The UNESCO mentions Soria, in Castile-León, as a clear example of a city that is committed to the Mediterranean diet, even though it can be enjoyed all over Spain.

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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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# Asturias

## Asturias, a natural and culinary paradise

Without a doubt, Asturias is a magnificent natural sea, mountain and country paradise with a very diverse environment. Protected on one side by the Bay of Biscay and on the other by the Picos de Europa mountain range, this region has always been isolated and protected from possible invasions and therefore has many deep-rooted traditions and rituals. The typical Asturian is friendly and open, always willing to receive outsiders who wish to get to know their land. Its cuisine is based on cider, fabada (bean stew) and cheese, together with shellfish and fish.

If Asturian cuisine had to be described in few words, it could be defined as slow cooking over low heat. The Asturians do not use many spices or other condiments in their dishes which could distort the natural taste of the ingredients. The kitchens use old-style stoves which conjure up an atmosphere from another era, contrasting strongly with the stress of modern day life. Asturians delight in their stews, the “fabada” being the queen of them all.

## Fabada

“Fabada asturiana” is prepared with dried white beans called “fabes”, accompanied by chorizo, black pudding, cured pork shoulder, potatoes... this dish is of international renown and there is no set recipe - it can be varied according to the chef’s fancy: clams, lobster, hare and partridge have all been used in its preparation. Although the “fabada” is the most famous of Asturian dishes, it is by no means alone - soups or “potes” also form an important part of the local cooking. These include “asturiano”, which is made with dried white beans (fabes), cabbage, chorizo, cured pork shoulder and potatoes; “pote de castañas mayuques”, made with chestnuts and parsnip top stew, typical from Ibias.

## The generous sea

The Asturian chef carefully chooses his ingredients from many sources: from the sea, the rivers, the market gardens, the mountains... Both freshwater and seawater fish and shellfish are used in local recipes. From the sea, we have anglerfish, which is known as “pixín” in Asturias, hake, conger eel, bonito, sea base, scorpion fish, etc. Shellfish include barnacles, shrimps, small crabs and clams. The “oricio” (sea urchin) has become a real institution, especially in the winter months at Gijón, where they are eaten raw or cooked in various different ways. River fish such as salmon, trout, sea-trout and lamprey complete the range of aquatic species which can be tried whilst visiting Asturias. However, it is also very important to keep the local meat dishes in mind. The “vacuno mayor” (meat from large bovine animals, such as ox, bull, etc.) is very much appreciated by Asturians and it is also exported to nearly all other Spanish regions: entrecote with Cabrales cheese, ox hotpot... “pitu de caleya” (chickens bred in the open air in small villages or hamlets). The partridge, wild boar, roe deer and venison are always prepared with aromatic herbs and truly taste of the mountains. The flavour and character of “carne gobernada” (beef with bacon, eggs, peppers and olives) and tongue “cachopo” are very much appreciated by the locals.

## The cheese legacy

Cheese is another extremely important component of Asturian cuisine. In fact, every valley or mountain usually makes its own cheese and as a result, Asturias offers one of the widest ranges in Europe. They can be made from cow’s milk, goat’s milk or even using three different types of milk, but without doubt the most famous of all is the celebrated Cabrales, a blue cheese included in a Denomination of Origin together with Gamonedo, Pría, Porrúa, Beyos, Casín or Afuega’l Pitu, Peral, Urbiés, etc. The Principality of Asturias also boasts a wide variety of confectionary products which are found in specialist shops throughout the region. The Asturian is known for his sweet tooth and therefore there are endless specialities on offer. The most traditional Asturian dessert is rice pudding, but the traveller should also try almond tart, “brazo de gitano”(a type of Swiss roll), “milhojas de crema” (custard millefeuille), “pastel carbayón” (almond pastry), “carajitos del profesor de Salas” (hazelnut biscuits), or the festival specialities, such as “frixuelos” (crepes), “casadielles” (walnut popovers), “panchones de Carnaval” (type of brown bread) or the “huesos de santo” (made from marzipan) and “teresitas” (made from tea) eaten on All Saints’ Day, and “tocinillo de cielo” (pudding made with egg yolks and syrup).

## Cider

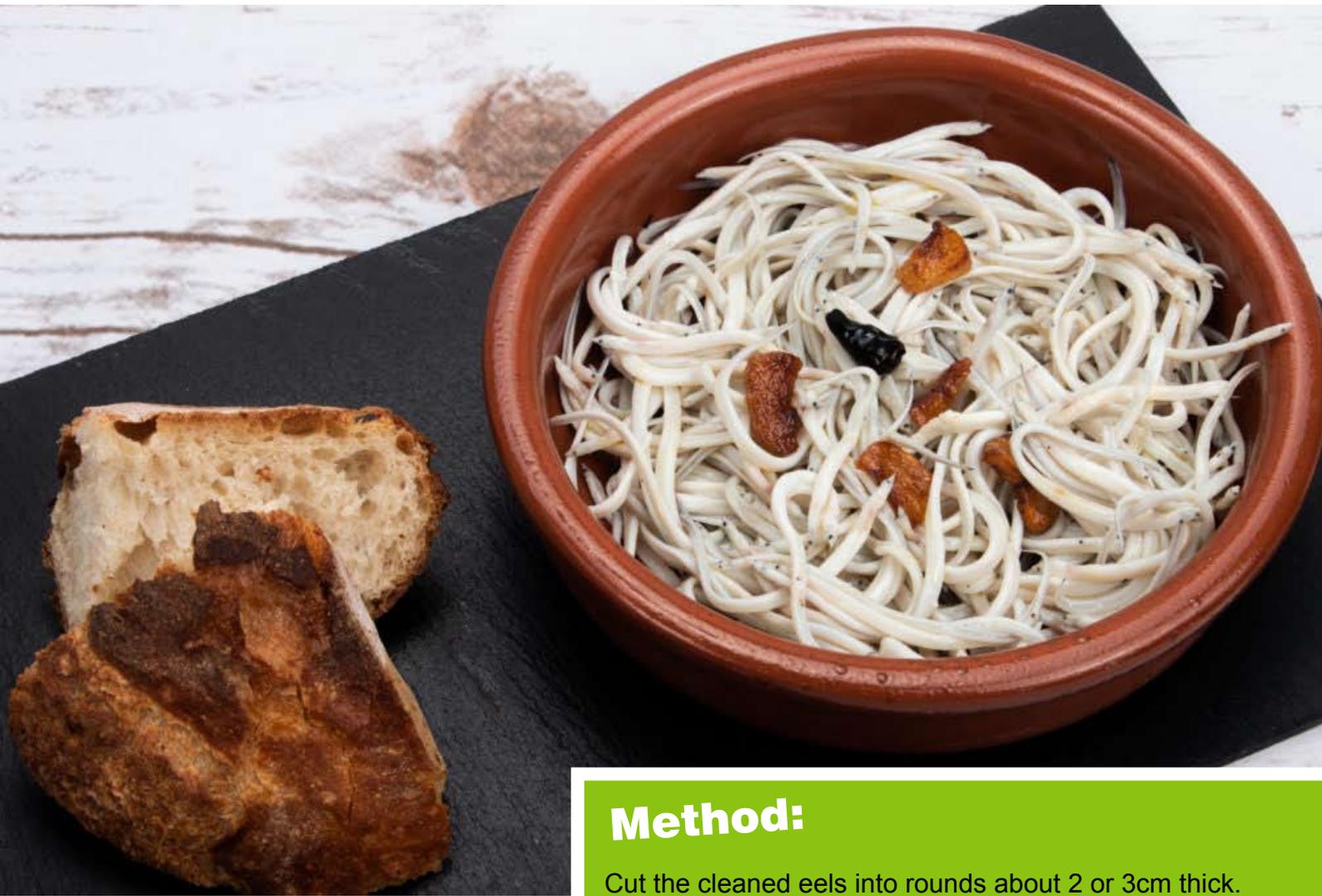
Asturian cider is the local drink which is drunk socially and used in the preparation of many dishes; it has almost become a cult. It can be drunk in the cider bars called “sidrerías”, in restaurants and at times in the “llagares” themselves (where it is pressed). The cider is poured from a height (a practice known as “escanciar”) into a wide-mouthed glass only just covering the “culín” or bottom and induces friendship and festivity. Everybody should experience this type of fiesta when visiting Asturias.

## Christmas food in Asturias

If you want to taste the flavours of an Asturian Christmas, take note: try some fabes a los pisones (bean stew with seafood) or Asturian lamb. It can be accompanied with some of the almost 50 varieties of cheese (the most international is the Cabrales). The perfect drink is cider (Asturias is Spain’s land of cider-making). And to finish, a dessert such as the traditional casadiellas (pastry rolls filled with walnut). Incidentally, you can try a version of the traditional Epiphany cake made with puff pastry.



# Baked eels



## Ingredients:

Ingredients for 4 people:

Eel

Fish stock

Flour

Lemon juice

Oil

Salt

## Method:

Cut the cleaned eels into rounds about 2 or 3cm thick.

Season to taste and pour on lemon juice.

Flour them and fry them in plenty of oil.

Put them in an oiled roasting tin, half cover with fish stock, pieces of butter and round sliced of lemon without the peel.

Bake with a medium heat for about 20 minutes

# Rice puddings



## Ingredients:

150 g of rice

100 g of butter

150 g of sugar

2 l of milk

Rind of half a lemon

1 stick of cinnamon

Vanilla

## Method:

Place the rice in a wide flat earthenware dish with almost twice as much water.

Simmer and when it is almost dry, add the milk, which you have previously heated in a separate earthenware dish with the sugar, cinnamon and lemon rind. After an hour, add the butter and stir continuously.

Leave it to simmer for a further hour so that it thickens and becomes creamy and thick in consistency.

Remove the lemon peel and the cinnamon.

Presentation

Pour the creamed rice into a serving dish or share out between six individual earthenware dishes or bowls.

Sprinkle with sugar mixed with a little vanilla powder. Place on a very hot griddle so that a layer of caramel forms on top.

It can also be served without caramel, garnishing with powdered cinnamon.

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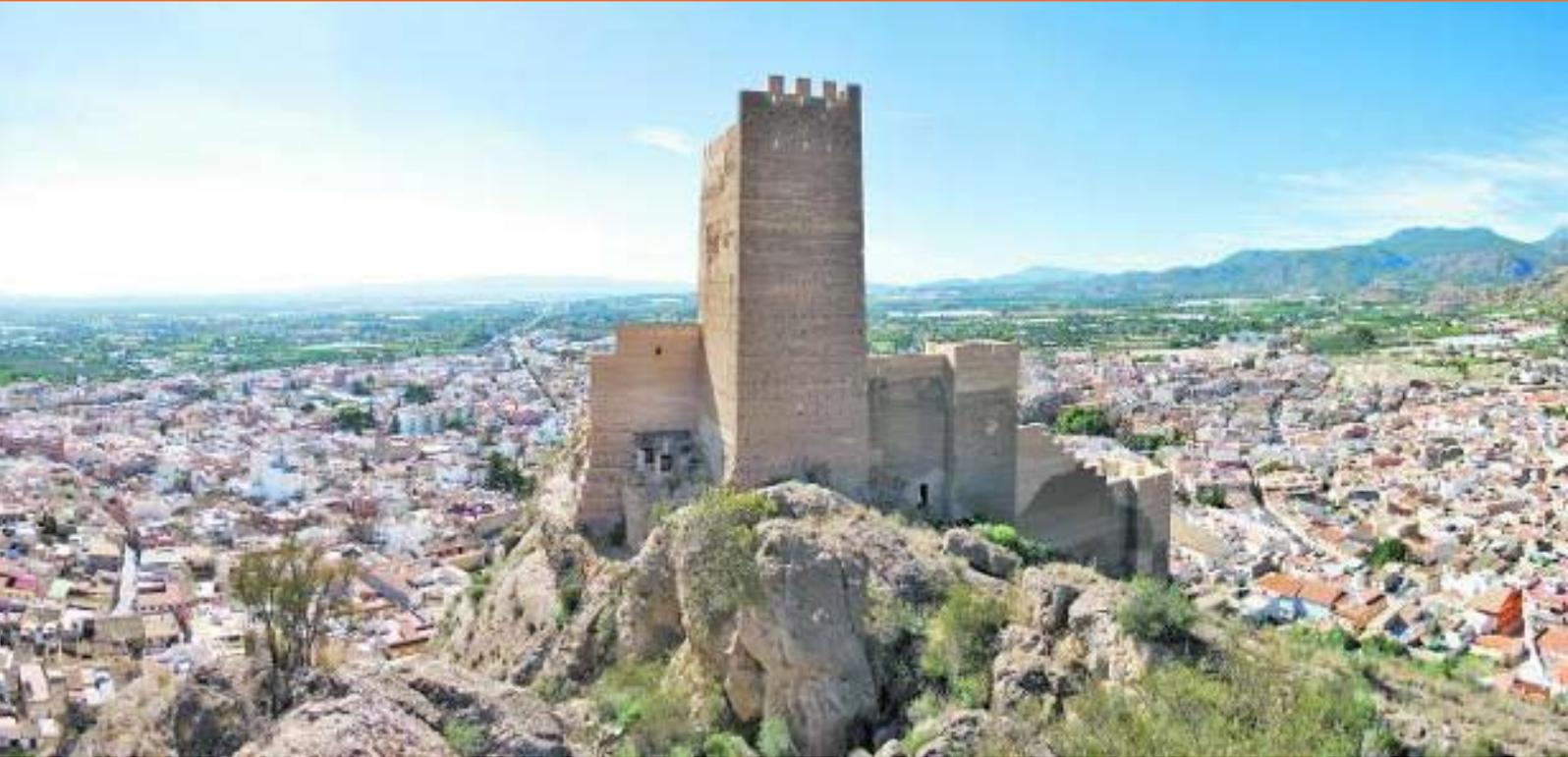
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*A Life in*  
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Alhama lies in the Valley of the river Guadalentín and at the foot of the Espuña and La Muela mountain ranges. Defence towers, ruined town walls, renaissance-style palaces, and mansions of the former nobility are all part of the legacy of the valleys varied history.

To the Romans and Moors this town meant the thermal

springs flowing off the mountain. This is, in fact, what gives the town its name, Al-hama, meaning hot springs in Arabic. There are also the ruins of the older Roman baths that demonstrate the great age of the utilization of the springs in the area. It was the Roman baths established in the 1st century AD that were further developed and used into the Islamic period. On the rocky outcrop overlooking the town stands a 12th-century Arab castle around which the town eventually grew.

A walk through the town reveals a surprisingly rich range of colours used in the façades of the houses; red, ochres, violets and blues all add to the pleasantness of a stroll through the town. Walking and cycling enthusiasts will find the gateway to Sierra Espuña in Alhama. In addition to hillwalking and climbing, the park offers other points of interest such as the 16th- and 17th -century snow cellars.

The history of Alhama de Murcia is closely linked to the emergence of hot springs. The presence of thermal baths, along with the natural resources provided by the physical environment, contributed to the existence of human activity from the Eneolithic period, in the year 3000 BC.

The “Andalusi” (Andalusian) footprint is well imprinted in Alhama’s lands, giving the town its name, and these lands preserve important vestiges of history from Romans, and Muslims and Christians, having been the stage for battles between the kingdoms of Castile and Granada.

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Within the overall setting of the Guadalentín Valley, Alhama de Murcia has kept a similar location for its population from prehistory to present time. Archaeological sites are distributed by the municipality based on the natural resources of the physical environment: water springs, fertile lands, pastures, mid-elevation hills easy to defend, etc. The Roman Baths are without doubt the most important archaeological site of the municipality, dating back two thousand years, allowing visitors to tour the typical Roman bathroom with 2 distinct sectors: thermal-medicinal baths, and recreational baths; for Islamic baths and for the remains of a 19th century spa. It is now a museum site.

Outside the village, the rural settlement is spread throughout the municipality with small communities associated with a lookout tower, as in the cases of towers Inchola, La Pita, the Azaraque and, in other cases such as Ascoy, Torre del Lomo, or Torre de la Mezquita, which have no remains of habitat but have a defense control function and visual connection with the rest of most important fortifications. Other settlements are more residential in nature like the fortification of La Pita or Los Palacios. A walk through the architecture of 18th century starts with the Iglesia de San Lázaro with its magnificent façade, continues through the Iglesia de la Concepción, and it ends with the buildings linked to the economic activity that are a true example of the so-called Arquitectura del Grano (Grain Architecture). La Casa de la Tercia, barn of Marqués de Villafranca and Velez, located on Calle Larga, which keeps the Marquesado shield surrounded by the Toisón de oro; the Municipal Pósito located in calle de Fulgencio Cerón Cava, and the Centro Cultural Plaza Vieja, privately owned building that was later acquired by the municipal Government to host the City Council from 1923 to 1986 – all these are examples of these landmark buildings characterized by classical brick architecture next to plastered masonry sections. Further examples of the architecture of this period are the landmarks of the Orden de Santiago and La Iglesia de Cartagena from 1760, as well as the mills from Espuña river banks and the Guadalentín river.

The artistic mark of the 19th and 20th centuries is reflected in the old town houses in Plaza Vieja, Calle Larga, Corredera, which, with their classical and colorful facades, submerge the visitor into an atmosphere of peace and tranquility at the foot of Cerro del Castillo. The population growth has defined new architectural spaces and gardens splattered with last century public buildings such as La casa de los Saavedra (currently, Centro Cultural V Centenario) and the current City Hall, both dating from the early 20th century, or the Plaza de Abastos, built in 1928. In recent years, the Plaza de la Constitución, the Parque de la Cubana, and El Jardín de los Patos, along with their surroundings, frame the new social and economic centre of the city, to the detriment of the former Plaza Vieja which nevertheless still remains a mandatory meeting point for the visitor with its impressive noble mansions and the unforgettable Fuente del Caño.

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The Leana resort is known for its hot springs, and has been used as a health bath dating back to Roman times. The natural hot springs rises from the earth in several places and has a temperature of 52-53 degrees Celsius. The water should be very rich when it comes to healthful content, and has always been popular for people with chronic diseases and rheumatism. In addition, it is also popular as a bathing resort for another and very logical reason: The water is warm all year round! The resort offers other activities like spa or arabic baths.

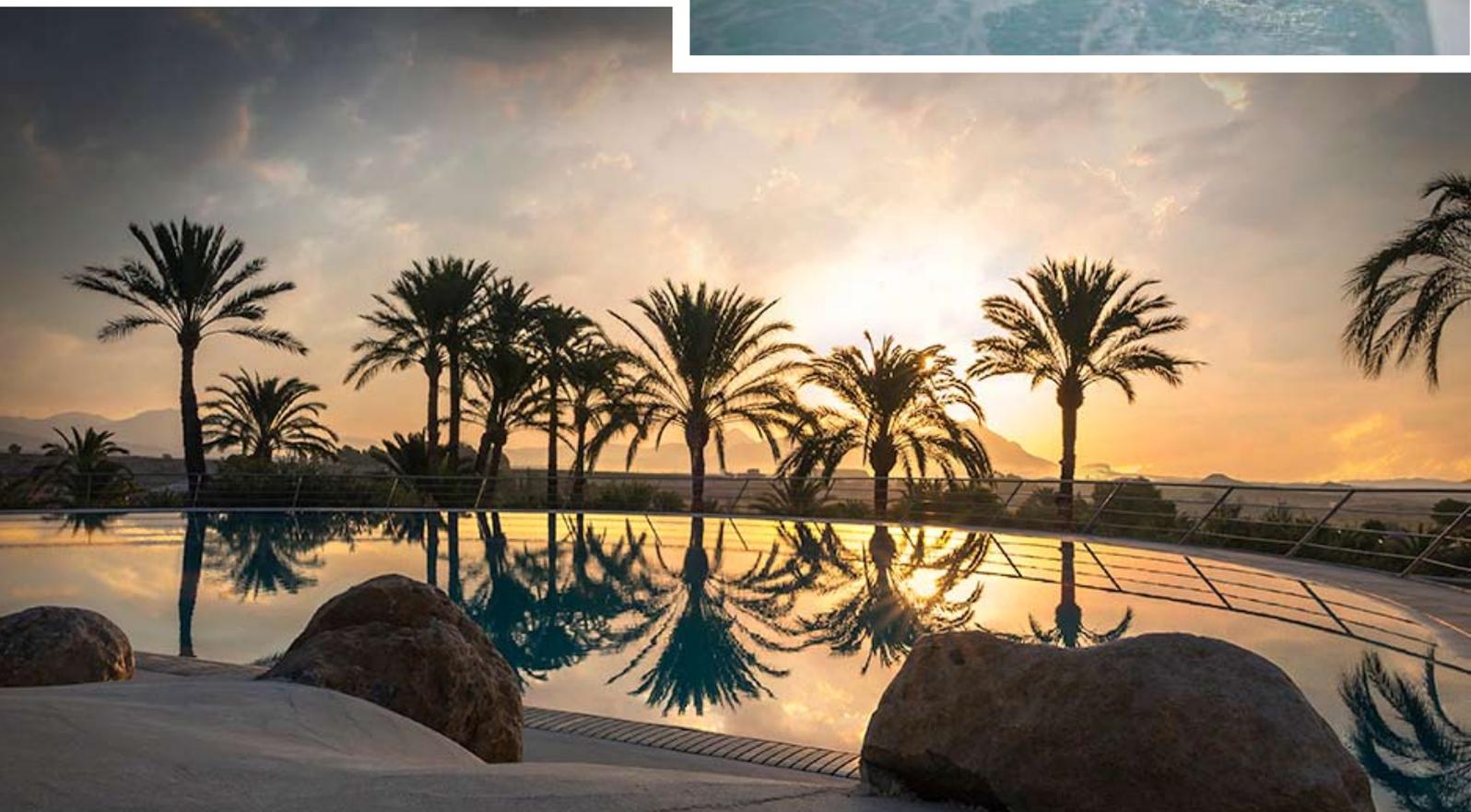
There is also another, although a bit more unknown, bathing and health location: La Fuente.

La Fuente is below Leana, and at first glance it looks just like a campsite. This is wrong. La Fuente also has its own hot springs, and boasts a 15 meter pool consisting of a variety of jacuzzis, bubble beds, jacuzzi, jets and massage facilities for back and neck. The water has a temperature of around 36 degrees,

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The rugged mountain and rocky landscape of Cabo de Gata is isolated and geologically one of Europe's most special. The Sierra de Gata mountain range is the largest volcanic rock formation in Spain, with sharp peaks and ochre-colored steep rocks.

This beautiful walk will introduce you to the rugged but beautiful nature of the Cabo de Gata. The route starts on a narrow stony path up to the main road. Follow the main road for a short while and then turn right. It is allowed to climb over the fence that you reach after a short while. The walk then continues on unpaved roads. You do not hear anything outside the song of birds. Along the way you also have a beautiful view of the Mediterranean Sea.

Distance: 8.5 km

Duration: 3h

Grade: Easy

Type: Circular

Height gain: 140 meters

Way mark: None

Wheelchair: Not suitable

Dog: Allowed on a lead



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## 10 Top Destinations in Northern Spain



# SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

For centuries, thousands of pilgrims have travelled on St. James' Way every year, finally reaching the capital of Galicia and entering the iconic Cathedral. According to tradition, this is the burial place of the relics of James the Apostle, discovered in the 9th century.

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Santiago de Compostela is very much a living city, with other attractions for travellers, pilgrim or not: countless restaurants and bars where you can enjoy the delicious seafood of Galicia, a UNESCO World Heritage old town centre, daring contemporary art... There's plenty to do in this city which combines history with a younger modern side.

### Life around the Cathedral

Perhaps the most special place in Santiago is Plaza del Obradoiro. Life in the city seems to revolve around this point, the site of the Cathedral, Raxoi Palace, and the luxurious Hostal de los Reyes Católicos, said to be the world's oldest hotel. On this square you're likely to see pilgrims with their inevitable walking sticks and scallop shells.

There is a ritual for visiting the Cathedral for the first time: admire the Portico de la Gloria, embrace the figure of St. James on the main altar, go down to the crypt, go up to the rooftop (what a view!) and if you're lucky, see the botafumeiro (an enormous censer) in action—they only use it on religious holidays or if requested in advance.

Around the Cathedral, every step is a discovery, with other very charming squares such as Praterías (with the best view of the belltower, La Berenguela) or Quintana with its pretty stairs and other monuments like the imposing Monastery of San Martiño Pinario. It's curious that even the far outskirts of the city seem as if they were designed for admiring the Cathedral.

An example is the quiet Alameda Park and the viewing point of Monte do Gozo, with sculptures of pilgrims which have starred in so many photographs.

### Fine dining and the modern city

To be tempted by delicious smells and tastes, and see why Galicia's food is so famous, there's nothing like a visit to the Mercado de Abastos food market, the second most visited place in the city. Here you can buy and taste seafood fresh from the rías, cheeses and Padrón peppers, or try the famous tapas.

You can also feel the real atmosphere of Santiago on Calle Franco and Calle Raiña, in the heart of the old town, where locals and visitors have been enjoying tapas "since forever" and where you will find plenty of restaurants for trying octopus "a feira", scallops, Santiago cake or wines like Albariño, considered one of the world's best white wines. Beyond the winding streets and the stone mansions, the modern side of Santiago can be seen around the university area, in its art galleries, and above all in two places.

The Galician Contemporary Art Centre and Cidade da Cultura by the New York architect Peter Eisenman, one of the most surprising examples of Galicia's contemporary architecture. Many people say that taking the Way and arriving in Santiago is an adventure that can change your life. This city certainly seems capable of keeping you here.



# Property of the MONTH!

## 139,995€

Camposol, Murcia, Spain

Well-presented 4 bed, 3 bath unique semi-detached Rosa Quad Style villa on A sector close to the shops, sitting on a plot size of 150m<sup>2</sup>. The villa comprises of a glazed sun terrace, spacious lounge, separate dining room, fully fitted kitchen, log burner fire, electric panel heating, dual air conditioning, ceiling fans with light, TV and telephone points, solarium, gated entrances, off road parking and car port, converted under build, rejas, black out blinds, mosquito screens communal pool. Being sold part furnished.

There are two street level ornamental gated entrances into the grounds, one being a pedestrian, the other for vehicle access to the fully tiled driveway, which is covered by a car port. The current owners are using this as their garden and BBQ area. Both gated entrances lead to marble tiled steps that has a decorative balustrade handrail that leads to the covered glazed sun terrace and entrance to the villa.

The glazed sun terrace is currently being used as an additional lounge area, with electric sockets, ceiling fan with light, wall lights and double-glazed sliding windows.

The front door opens into a spacious lounge with log burner fire, central heating, ceiling fan with light, TV and telephone points, double glazed sliding windows with black out blinds. Through a large feature archway is a separate dining room with double glazed sliding windows with black out blinds and ceiling fan with light. There is an archway that looks through to the kitchen which can be used as a serving hatch or breakfast bar.

Through another archway off the lounge area is the fully fitted kitchen which has wall mounted cupboards and base units for plenty of storage and worksurfaces. There is an integrated electric hob and oven, extractor fan, stainless steel sink with draining board and ceiling fan with light.

Down the hallway through a feature archway is the second bedroom, which comprises of a ceiling fan with light, double-glazed sliding window, a double wardrobe with sliding doors with extra above storage and blackout blinds.

Across the hallway is the family bathroom which has a wc, hand wash basin, walk-in shower with glass screen and a washing machine.

At the end of the hallway is the master bedroom with en-suite. The bedroom comprises of central heating, dual air conditioning, ceiling fan with light, TV and telephone points, double wardrobe with sliding doors with extra storage above. The en-suite bathroom has a bath with shower, wc, bidet, storage cupboard, wash hand basin with wall mounted vanity unit and mirror with lights.



The bedroom also has a glazed patio door that leads out to a sun terrace which has a wind out awning, lounge furniture and decorative balustrade as a safety railing. The terrace also leads to the marble tiled staircase that has a metal handrail, which leads up to the solarium which is gated.

The solarium has a raised 'band stand' section that is reached by tiled marble steps and has decorative balustrade as a safety feature. The solarium has electric power points, lighting and under eave storage. There are stunning views of the mountains and surrounding countryside. Back down the staircase to ground level, besides the stairs and under the sun terrace, is an area that has been converted to a workshop/utility room which is completely tiled. From here down tiled steps leads to the converted under build through sliding double glazed patio doors. Here there is a hallway that leads to two bedrooms and a bathroom.

The bedrooms both have electric points, wall mounted lights and glass block windows. One bedroom has storage space, which has the potential to be upgraded to a fitted wardrobe. The bathroom has a huge walk in shower, wc, wash hand basin and bidet.

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# 12 new 'most beautiful' towns in Spain

## *Pastrana, Guadalajara*

Pastrana is the capital of the Alcarria region, south of Guadalajara. Sitting 760 metres above sea level, what it lacks in size it sure makes up for in rich architectural heritage.

Cue the 16th century Ducal palace and the 16th century church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. There's also a fascinating tapestry museum, exhibiting the medieval equivalent of Snapshot stories.

Pastrana was founded in the thirteenth century under the domination of the Military Religious Order of Calatrava, probably as a repopulation village after the definitive expulsion of the Arabs. In 1369, it was granted a title of Villa. In this same period, its wall and its primitive church were built.

It is this first Lady of Pastrana who begins the construction of the well-known Ducal Palace. Dead Doña Ana, passes the manor to her sons D. Gaspar Gastón and Mr. Baltasar Gastón, who sold these properties in 1569 to the Princes of Ebola, Ruy Gómez de Silva, counselor, valid and personal friend of Felipe II and the famous Doña Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda. Subsequently they obtain from the

King the title of Dukes of Pastrana.

With the first Dukes, his time of great splendor arrives for Pastrana, as they perform great works in the Villa. In 1569, they called Santa Teresa de Jesús in order to found a convent of Carmelitas Descalzas, creating san José for women and San Pedro (today Carmen) for men.



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In 1570, they brought a large group of Moors expelled from the Alpujarras of Granada to work silk and build one of the most prestigious upholstery factories in Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Later, the Dukes complete their work by ascending the parish church to Collegiate Church, providing it with a Cabildo of 48 Canons, which totalled more in number than all of the Cathedrals of Spain, except the Primate Cathedral of Toledo.

Ruy Gómez died, in 1573, the Princess of Eboli entered the Convent of San José, repeatedly breaching the Carmelitan rule. Soon after, Philip II ordered her to leave the convent to take care of her heritage and her family. In 1576, she returned to Madrid, as one of the most wealthy and respected ladies of the Court.

There she begins a restless life, and for her intrigues in court with Antonio Pérez, Secretary of Philip II, she is arrested in 1579. She is then locked in the tower of Pinto, a few months into the castle of Santorcaz, where she will meet her children and finally be brought to her own palace in Pastrana, from where she would not leave until her death in 1592.



Her remains are currently preserved in the Crypt of the Church-Collegiate Church of this Villa Ducal. Later the Dukes, when they moved their residence to Madrid, in the eighteenth century, Pastrana began her rural life. Today, Pastrana continues to preserve much of its medieval layout and the artistic richness it treasured during the Golden Century.



# BENALMADENA & GIBRALTAR

By **Taquilla Tickets**

Once again Taquilla Tickets is going “out and about”. This time, on the 6th September until the 8th September, Taquilla Tickets will take you for a three day Mini Break to Benalmadena (in the beautiful historical region of Andalucia), and Gibraltar.

**Benalmadena:**

In the 7th century BC the Phoenicians arrived, followed by the Romans in the early part of the 8th century. However, the name Benalmadena came from the Moors who arrived in the late 8th century. The original name was Ben-Al-Madina which, in Arabic, means “Children of the mines”. At the time there were Iron Ore and Ochre mines all around the area.

The 14th century saw the population of the area diminish due to the many coastal attacks by the infamous Barbary pirates. These were Muslim pirates from North Africa and were based primarily in the ports of Sale, Rabat, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli (Just a short sea journey really!!). The town was known as Vigia de la Costa or “Lookout for the Coast”. The town’s coat of arms still portrays this today ! To this end, three watchtowers (or Torres) were built. The remains can still be seen. One is situated in Benalmadena Costa near the (now) beautiful Marina with it’s Moorish style architecture. The others are in Torrequebrada and Torremuelle. In 1680 much of Benalmadena was destroyed by an Earthquake and the following tsunami.

From lovely Benalmadena we take you down to Gibraltar: What a history this place has. A small peninsular on the Southern Iberian coast near the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, dates back nearly 3,000 years. One historian has called this area “One of the most densely

fortified and fought over places in Europe”. Gibraltar’s location is militarily important because it is said that whoever controls Gibraltar, controls the passage of ships into, or out of, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Seas.

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, Gibraltar became part of the Visigoth Kingdom of Hispania. In 711 AD it came under the rule of the Moors, and was named Jebel Tariq or “The mount of Tariq”. This was later corrupted to Gibraltar. The Christian crown of Castile annexed it in 1309 and lost it again to the Moors in 1333 and finally regained it in 1462.

Gibraltar became part of the united kingdom of Spain, under Spanish law in 1704. It was captured during the war of the Spanish succession by an Anglo-Dutch fleet in the name of Charles IV of Austria. At the end of this war, Spain ceded the territory to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. Spain tried to regain the territory during three wars between Britain and Spain, but was repulsed on every occasion. By the end of the last siege, in the late 18th century, Gibraltar had faced 14 sieges in 500 years !!

So, whatever you decide to do on this trip, remember that a Taquilla Tickets representative (or two) will be travelling with you, and will only be a phone call away if you need any help or advice. All current Coronavirus precautions will be in place at the time of travel.

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# Can I have Spanish and British dual nationality?

## Welcome to Typical Non-Spanish: for expats living in Spain

The dreaded B word (Brexit) has raised a lot of questions for Brits living in Spain and the EU, not just in terms of practical things like travel visas and health insurance, but also in terms of bigger life decisions such as dual nationality or citizenship.

On the bright side, becoming a Spanish citizen post Brexit means that you would continue to have an EU passport and be able to travel and work freely within the EU and all the countries within the European Union. You would also have the right to vote, not only in Spain but in the EU as a whole.

But the key question is... "Is it possible to have Spanish and British dual nationality or citizenship?"

From the UK standpoint, the webpage states that British citizens can have dual citizenship, that is, you can be a British citizen and also the citizen of another country. If you wish to do this you do not have to apply for dual citizenship in the UK, you apply for the foreign citizenship and you keep your British citizenship. BUT, and it's a BIG BUT, this actually depends on which other foreign country you wish to be a citizen of.

Many countries, including Spain, DO NOT accept dual citizenship with all countries. So, you need to be careful and do your research into the rules and laws

of the country that you wish to apply for citizenship in. To put it simply, Spain does not currently recognise Spanish and British dual nationality, and in fact it only recognises dual citizenship from a select few countries that fulfil requirements set out in the Spanish constitution. These include Spanish-American countries, Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea and Portugal, and you are also eligible if you are of Sephardic Jewish origin.

So, if you are not on the list above, you have to renounce your original nationality to become a Spanish citizen and, as far as the Spanish authorities are concerned, you would be considered to be Spanish only and would not be considered to be a citizen of any another country.

But what does this mean for British citizens who wish to apply for Spanish citizenship? And what are the implications and considerations that need to be understood?

### Probably the most asked question is... "Do I have to give up my British Passport?"

This is a bit of a grey area, as technically, as part of the Spanish Citizenship application you sign a declaration denouncing your British citizenship, but you do not actually have to surrender your British passport with the application or give it to the Spanish Authorities. To officially renounce your British Citizenship you would actually complete the relevant documents and pay for this service with the British authorities, not the Spanish Authorities. In fact, it is



not an official requirement of the British authorities to surrender your passport to them as part of your Spanish application. However, you need to be aware that even if you still have possession of your British passport you would not be able to use it in Spain, as this could affect the status of your Spanish Citizenship and you could risk losing it altogether. In the eyes of Spain, if you have Spanish citizenship, you are Spanish and you are not a citizen of the UK so your identity documents or rights as a British passport holder do not apply in Spain.

Therefore, applying to change your nationality or citizenship is not a decision to take lightly, and it is highly recommended that you seek legal advice in both your country of origin and the country of application, as you need to be clear about the rules and regulations and the rights you have in each country in order to make the right decision for you.

For example, if you do officially renounce your British citizenship, although this only affects you and not the other members of your family, it could directly affect the status of future children you may have. In addition your right to live in the UK would also be affected. You also need to be aware that if you become a Spanish Citizen but then choose to live abroad for 3 years or more you may lose your Spanish citizenship, which would mean you need to go back to your previous nationality or take up another nationality.

### **Another key question is... “Am I eligible for Spanish citizenship?”**

If you have been a resident in Spain for more than 10 years you are eligible for citizenship by residency, or citizenship by naturalisation. In addition to having 10 years long term legal residency you also have to have no criminal records, pass 2 exams or tests (one focused on Spanish Language (A2 level DELE) and one focussed on Spanish culture, named the CCSE) and have your documents translated and legalised through the consulate. However, this process isn't a quick fix, and may take a number of years to complete. If you are considering making this move,

but are still not sure I would recommend investigating the process as soon as you can so that you know what you need to do and you can gather all required documents together in order to speed up the process once you have made your final decision.

There are some exceptions to the 10 year rule for citizenship by residency, depending on your situation, and further details can be found in English on the Spanish Ministry website or via contacting the British embassy/consulate in Spain.

There also a couple of other types of citizenship applications that may be relevant to you. For example, if you are lucky enough to have found love in Spain and married a Spanish citizen you can apply for Spanish citizenship by marriage. In this scenario you can apply if you married a Spaniard and have been a legal resident for more than 1 year. However, again it is important to check the legislation on this, regarding where the marriage took place, as it may not apply if you did not marry within the country.

Another route that may be a possibility for some people is Spanish citizenship by option, which doesn't require proof of residency but is for those who have a Spanish mother or father, or have been adopted by Spanish parents. You are also eligible for Spanish citizenship if you or one of your parents was born on Spanish soil.

For more details regarding Spanish and British dual nationality I would suggest the first port of call is to check the government websites of the UK and Spain. You should also contact your local embassy/consulate for up to date advice and relevant information about where you can access full details of the requirements, documents of proof and the application process.

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# FROM WIGAN PIER TO ANDALUCÍA

Spring comes early to Andalucía in a riot of wildflowers that shrivel to tinder in the heat of June, so in the early years at El Cortijo del Rector, my first task when we arrived home for the summer holiday was to tackle the dry jungle beneath the olive trees. This meant raking the tangle into small heaps on cleared ground where, I thought, it could be safely burned. Olive trees are evergreen but of course they continuously renew their foliage and in 2003 after years of neglect the accumulation of dry leaves beneath each tree was half a metre deep and burned slowly with the scent of incense. In those days, when I was even more clueless than I am today, I had not yet cottoned on to the fact that in Spain summer bonfires are never safe. The smallest smouldering heap can flare without warning, scorching a nearby tree and revealing one's shamefaced incompetence to the passing critic.

In my early attempts at ground-clearing, fortune favoured the foolish and lured me into taking shortcuts with near disastrous results. The jungle was generally confined to the lower, more-or-less level, part of the huerta, the drier, steeper slopes merely producing a thin wispy grass. Raking is an arduous business, but I discovered that when this grass was really dry all I needed to do was put a match to a small pile of it and little flames would gradually creep up the hill clearing quite large areas of ground and twinkling prettily as each tiny grass seed exploded in the heat. Naturally, I kept pace with the fire, ready with my rake to deter it from going into places where it might do harm. This, I told myself, was controlled burning, the kind of thing done by experts like me.

My system worked perfectly well until I reached the very highest part of our terreno behind the house. By this time it was late morning and the tiny current of air which had kept the flames moving ever upwards had almost imperceptibly begun to stir the leaves of the olive trees. There was only a small patch of grass to clear before lunchtime. But this time the flames did not creep. The tinder caught with an audible whoosh and rushed up the slope, driven by the freshening breeze.

In the very top right-hand corner of our huerta there is a dense stand of scrubby holm oaks. The flames, rushing uphill much faster than I could run, leapt across the cordon of clear ground and into the first of oaks which went off like a firework. Holm oaks

are evergreen with dense fleshy leaves and the smoke was both choking and blinding.

The first of my neighbour's olive trees stands just behind the oak grove and I scrambled with my rake into the intervening alleyway with the half-baked idea of protecting the tree if, as seemed highly likely, the whole stand of oaks caught fire. To this day, I have no clear idea as to why it didn't. Perhaps there was a momentary change in the direction of the breeze. Perhaps fortune really does favour fools. The grass burned itself out and after the first angry crackling burst the scorched oak subsided into sullen, acrid smouldering.

Mono, our builder, came yesterday to do a couple of jobs in the kitchen. He went to his van to pick up some tools and while I was re-potting some plants on the middle terrace I heard him chatting below with our next-neighbours, Pepe and his eighteen-year-old-son José Angel. A moment later the three of them were striding up the slope past our boundary and I heard Pepe's deep voice call 'Venga, John!' so I followed.

'¿Que pasa? What's going on?'  
'José Angel is going to find water.'

José Angel solemnly crisscrossed the clearing between the olives and sure enough, whenever he reached a certain point, his two brass rods swivelled obligingly. But when Mono, his face a study in scepticism, did the same, they remained obstinately inert.

I had almost forgotten the dowsing incident when, several weeks later, the guillotine appeared on the skyline behind the house. Though it looked uncannily like the apparatus the French revolutionaries used for abbreviating aristocrats, it was actually a drilling rig, operated not by bloody executioners but by two serious-looking men in dungarees, baseball caps and wellies. Like the original, it drew a crowd, and José Angel's mother Josefina and her aunt, Tía Zanahoria, ensconced themselves on a flat rock like the tricoteuses who knitted in Paris while the heads fell into the bucket.

Over the next couple of days, the crowd of observers thinned as the work rumbled on and there was nothing much to see.

## Part 5: Earth, Air, Fire & Water

I strolled up to the drilling site.

‘How many metres?’

‘Almost a hundred and twenty.’

I looked at the ring of faces, some anxious, some impassive and ambled back to the house, so I was sitting at my desk, checking my emails when Val came in with the wash basket.

‘They’ve done it.’

‘Done what?’

‘Found water.’

‘How many metres?’

‘A hundred and ninety.’

At first the water was brown but there was plenty of it. The crowd now consisted of practically everyone in La Cañada, plus a couple of cats and three small dogs. To clear out the liquid mud, the shaft had to be vented.

‘Stand back!’

A broad column of water the colour of milk chocolate exploded into the blue sky above the top bar of the guillotine. The little dogs yelped, the crowd laughed and José Angel’s mum Josefina beamed with pride.

Many scientists reject the claims of dowzers as paranormal poppycock, because if you dig deep enough you can find water almost anywhere, but whilst this may be true of Britain or the USA, it is much less so of the dry zones of Africa, where dowzers have also had well-documented success. Here, in arid Andalucía, a dowser located a spring for Rev Doreen, who lives far above La Cañada, though I’m not sure if this counts as evidence as he almost certainly benefited from divine guidance.



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