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Lifestyle magazine and property portal

ISSUE 59
OCT 2021
FREE

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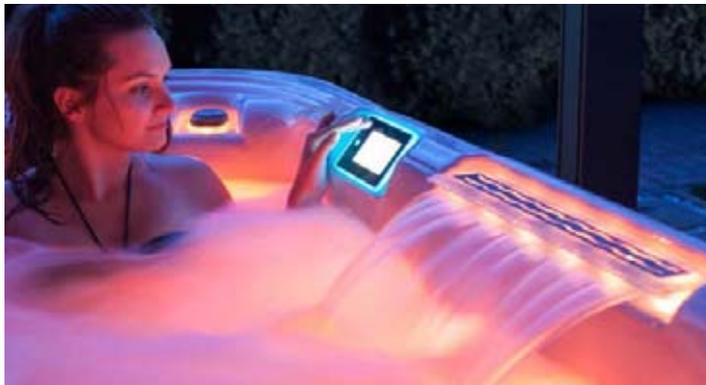
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A Life in SPAIN

Welcome to the October edition of ALIS.

5 years, its now 5 years since the first edition of ALIS. Where does the time go?

We now have regular readers from all over the world. Last month I had an email from S.C. who lives in Australia. She said how she loves reading our magazine and how informative it is.

We also have over 200 drop off points covering from Gran Alacant to Mazarron. This is why our advertisers stay with us month after month, they get results

Whilst we celebrate our 5th anniversary, The Grove Restaurant are celebrating their 2nd year. A big congrats and good luck for the future to Alex, Manjit and the team. See ad on pg23

The prize draw to win 2 nights at Casa Boquera took place last month and the winner is..... Bernard Langley..from Mazarron

Enjoy this month's magazine

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Most Iconic hotels in Spain

María Cristina Hotel in Donostia



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.

María Cristina Hotel in Donostia

In the Bella Easo awaits another of the most iconic hotels in Spain. The work to raise this key example of San Sebastian's belle époque lasted from 1909 to 1912. Charles Mewès was the architect in charge of designing it. At the same time, the Victoria Eugenia theatre was built, promoted by the same company that promoted the María Cristina. Next to the Concha promenade, near the gastronomic old town and the Urumea, it forms the nerve centre of Donostia.

Both theatre and hotel have had intertwined history. Thus, following the creation of the San Sebastian Film Festival, Hollywood stars joined the clientele of the María Cristina. Despite the change of the venue of the event to the Kursaal, the main attendees of the film festival continue to stay at the century-old building in San Sebastian.



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Let's Learn Spanish

School

Phrases

Where do you go to school?	¿Dónde vas al cole?	Don day vass al col lay
How do you go to school?	¿Cómo llegas al insti?	Kohmoyeah gas al in stee
Can British children study here?	¿Pueden estudiar niños británicos aquí?	Pweh den ess stew dee arekneenyosbritan knee kos ah key
Do you study English?	¿Estudias el inglés?	Essstew dee ass ell in glaze
Do you have to wear a uniform?	¿Tienes que llevar un uniforme?	Tee yenays kay yeah varoonoon knee form may
Is there a school canteen?	¿Hay un servicio de comedor?	Eyeeon sir vee thee yo day comm me dor
When do classes start?	¿Cuándo empiezan las clases?	Kwan doh em pee ethann lass class says
What time do you finish school?	¿A qué hora terminas?	Ah kayor rah termenass

Vocab

Primary school	El colegio	Ell col lech he yoh
Secondary school	El instituto	Ell in stee two toe
Classroom	El aula	Ell owlah
Pupil	El alumno	Ell al loomknow
Student	El estudiante	Ell ess stew dee antay
Teacher	El maestro	Ell my strow
A book	Un libro	Oonlee bro
A pencil	Un lápiz	Oonlapeeth
A pen	Un boli	Oonbol lee
An eraser	Una goma	Oon nah gommah
A ruler	Una regla	Oon nah reglah
A pencil case	Un estuche	Oonesstwochay



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 M S F M R M A E S T R O Q D Q A
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 S K A L I I L A I Z W T I I E V
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Aged 13

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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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Best Spanish Islands - *Tenerife*

The ease of wearing summer clothes all year round. The pleasure of walking with the sea always on the horizon. The feeling of your feet leaving prints on the sand. The sudden coolness of the Atlantic when you swim. The joy of sunshine as your travelling companion.

Sometimes, just thinking about it is enough to start the relaxation process. Imagine living every day of your holiday to the full, looking after yourself without even trying, so every day you feel more connected to your surroundings, as you get in touch with nature and the real essentials of life.

A destination to smile about

Tenerife is one of the Canary Islands, also known as the Fortunate Isles. Why? Its springlike climate, its volcanic scenery, its relaxing beaches, its restaurants where haute cuisine and tradition meet, and its many special places to stay always bring a smile to the faces of its visitors.

The south of the island is perfect for enjoying the warm weather on the beaches along practically the entire coastline. You can spend days just relaxing on Las Vistas beach, on Costa del Silencio, or by the imposing cliffs of Los Gigantes. Luxury hotels and boutiques cluster around the Costa de Adeje, where you can alternate time on the beach with a little shopping. You can also enjoy the sea in the north of the island in highly recommended spots like the beaches of Puerto de la Cruz or the famous seawater pools of Lagos Martiánez.

Nature and culture to discover

Nature is one of the major attractions of Tenerife. The volcanic origins of the island produce unique landscapes that you can discover among the rural charms of the north of the island, with a route to see volcanoes or a tour of Teide National Park (a World Heritage site). La Orotava valley, the rural areas of El Palmar, and Teno Alto are tranquil places to enjoy nature.

The Teide is Spain's highest mountain, and you can go to the top of it in a cable car or sleep at its foot if you stay in the Parador de las Cañadas del Teide. Watching a sunset from one of the viewing points of the national park, or spending a few hours stargazing, are wonderful ways to relax in nature.

Not many people have discovered the culture of Tenerife. Most of the notable architecture is concentrated in San Cristóbal de La Laguna and Santa Cruz. San Cristóbal de La Laguna is a quiet town, a pleasure to explore as you stroll around the pedestrianised centre, with historic buildings in a characteristic colonial style.

There are free guided tours of its squares, mansions and monuments, which have earned it World Heritage status. Santa Cruz is the island's capital. As well as its wide range of shops, we recommend visiting Plaza de España, García Sanabria Park, the market of Nuestra Señora de África, the modern auditorium and the TEA art centre.



Mount Teide is probably the most famous tourist attraction in Tenerife and a must see.

Explore life around the tallest peak in Spain. One of Europe's most visited national parks is in the heart of Tenerife, in the Canary Islands. Here, the main star of the show is the Teide volcano, the very pinnacle of Spain, at an altitude of 3,718 metres. Keep your eyes peeled, because there's something amazing to see every step of the way. The ecosystem formed by volcanic eruptions has created a habitat for the impressive local fauna, particularly invertebrates but also the flora that have adapted to the high mountains and unique geological formations in Europe.

What you will find

The region's volcanic scenery creates a unique paradise for nature lovers across all its areas. The variety of invertebrates is particularly outstanding, with more than 1,000 species, as is the presence of a score of different bird species. Alongside them, there are an impressive 168 different species of plant life. Of these, 58 exist only on the Canary Islands, but there is one that reigns supreme: the Teide violet. This purple flower only grows at altitudes of over 2,500 metres, so keep an eye out for it on your trips. The other great spectacle in the park is the red bugloss. A plant that can grow up to three metres high, in spring it adorns the foothills of the volcano with its intense colour. The strange formations and rocks left by the eruptions of Teide are also breathtaking. Magma, lava and volcanic casts create a unique and beautiful landscape.

Don't leave without...

Getting to know the Teide Observatory, where you can find some of the best solar telescopes in the world. Learn about the importance of these kinds of observatories and why Tenerife is the perfect place for studying light. Another gem is hidden in the Roques de García, a collection of volcanic rocks moulded by erosion. They have gradually been eroded into peculiar shapes, making them one of the most fascinating sights in the park. One last idea is to climb to the viewing point on Narices del Teide at the end of the day. At more than 2,000 metres high, the experience of watching the sun set behind its sea of clouds is truly unique.



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BY DENIS BUSSELL



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Elegancia Básica
BY
DENIS BUSSELL



10 Top Destinations in Southern Spain



JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

This small city is believed by many to be as quintessential Andalucía as anyone can find. Though larger cities like Cadiz and Seville will advertise this honor, Jerez is well known on several fronts without much lip service at all. It is the center of Spanish horse culture, and home of the invention of fortified sherry wine. Eleven European palaces and one looming Moorish palace and fortress are available for tours. During one of the many festivals here, there is ample opportunity to see traditional flamenco dance in the city where it was invented.

One of the noblest towns in Cádiz brings together the splendour of aristocratic palaces with the popular flavour of typically Andalusian houses. Features that are shown off every year at the celebration of the Horse Fair, declared of International Tourist Interest. This enormous offer of culture is enriched with the aromas of a regional cuisine in which the Denomination of Origin of Jerez-Xérès-Sherry Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda is outstanding. A visit to one of the city's wine cellars will help travellers to get a deeper understanding of its winemaking tradition.

Founded by the Phoenicians with the name of Xera, during the Middle Ages it was a site of border incursions as it was at the limit of the Kingdom of Granada, which was under Muslim control. When the Catholic Monarchs conquered it, it was already known for the excellence of its wines. The creation of its own breed of horse, the Cartujana, also belongs to the Middle Ages. It is named in honour of the Carthusian monastery of Santa María de la Defensión in Jerez. Its monks were the ones who created and bred this variety for centuries until, after Mendizábal's church land sales, the breeding of horses passed to the region's livestock farmers.

Muslim inheritance

Jerez de la Frontera's Arab past is clear in its walls, the Fortress and the Mosque. The latter is today the chapel of Santa María la Real. The Almohad origin (12th C.) of the building can be seen in the octagonal towers. Among other rooms, the Fortress has bathrooms, covered with vaults in which skylights were opened. The tower of Villavicencio palace, a Baroque building forming part of the monumental site, has a camera obscura from which you can make out the whole city.

The city's main Christian symbol, the Cathedral, is very close by. Standing on the site of a mosque, the former collegiate church of San Salvador combines Baroque and Neoclassical elements in its structure. The tower maintains Mudejar influences. Inside, we can admire works by Zurbarán. On the other side of the Fortress is the square and church of San Miguel, a beautiful open space surrounded by orange trees. Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles have created a special composition, finished off by a notable main reredos.

Once you have passed the Plaza del Arenal, the next landmarks are the Municipal Meeting Rooms and City Hall, the Mudejar looking church of San Dionisio (patron saint of the city), and the Convent of San Francisco, which has a 13th century cloister.

The oldest part of this area, surrounded by the old walls, has valuable examples of religious and civil architecture, like the churches of San Mateo and San Lucas and the Riquelme and Permántin palaces. This former residence of the local aristocracy is nowadays the Andalusian Flamenco Centre. This is a good place for getting to know more about this art, of which Jerez is a master, through its audiovisual facilities, specialised library, and recording library.

Wine cellars and horses

Another way of getting to know the culture of Jerez is visiting its numerous wine cellars, where the wines of the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry y Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de

Barrameda Denomination of Origin are made. Here we can get to know both the traditional and modern winemaking methods and taste the different types of Jerez wine. The unusual architecture of this temple to wine is also outstanding. You can enjoy cellars designed by Gustav Eiffel (González Byass' "La Concha"), structures with more than 4,000 iron arches (Domecq's Gran Bodega), or the "Bodega del Tío Pepe", Andalusian Historic Heritage for being representative of the "Docomomo" Modern Movement. It is also interesting to visit the Museum of 19th Century Labels.

The breeding of Cartujana horses is also intimately linked with the development of this Andalusian city. Here the Horse Fair takes place, a festival declared of International Tourist Interest where horses and riders have a clear leading role. During these days horse-riding and competitions are accompanied by singing, dancing and food, always present on the fair's stands. This equestrian tradition is clear in institutions like the Cartuja Stud, the Military Stud and the Centre for Equine Reproduction. In the Recreo de las Cadenas, work of the French architect Garnier and headquarters of the Royal Andalusian School of the Equestrian Art, you can attend a demonstration of "How the Andalusian Horses Dance".

On the outskirts of the city, the range of culture and leisure on offer is completed by the Carthusian Monastery of Santa María de la Defensión, a National Monument, and various golf courses, one of them a few kilometres from Jerez de la Frontera airport.

The cuisine of Jerez adds its wide range of wines to the preparation of its most typical recipes, so, meat, shellfish and fish are cooked in sherry or Jerez-style, which indicates the inclusion of fino, amontillado, oloroso or Pedro Ximénez. Soup with tomato, gazpacho, and stew with chickpeas are followed by "torrijas" (bread with wine and fried food) and "tocinos de cielo" (egg yolk cakes). The vinegar, wines and brandy must be from the Jerez denomination of origin.

Jerez de la Frontera is also a good starting point for going to the extensive beaches of the Costa de la Luz, where places like Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz or Chiclana de la Frontera are the highlights. The mountain villages making up the White Village Route are a good example of urban development integrated into broken terrain. You can tour through beautiful landscape, among which we might mention the natural parks of Bahía de Cádiz, Entorno de Doñana, and La Breña y Marismas de Barbate.

As well as the range of accommodation in Jerez de la Frontera, two good options for staying in the region are the Cádiz and Arcos de la Frontera paradors de turismo.



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Wine Regions - Valdepenas D.O.

Wine-making country in the centre of the La Mancha Region.

In the heart of La Mancha, on the road that runs between Madrid and Andalusia, you will find Valdepeñas, wine-making country with an excellent Designation of Origin. Special mention should be made of the town's Plaza de España Square, with its white and blue façades, and the Asunción Parish Church, a beautiful Renaissance building.

The town also has three museums. You should visit the wine museum. Wine is at the heart of the local economy, and the museum gives an insight into the history and the cultural notions surrounding the drink. Nor should you miss the chance to go to one of the town's wineries, where they will explain the wine-making process and you can taste the best local produce.

Valdepeñas is a Spanish Denominación de Origen (DO) for wines located in the province of Ciudad Real in the south of Castile-La Mancha (Spain). It is almost completely surrounded by another DO (La Mancha) but is an independent DO due to its long history of producing a distinct style of wine known as aloque or clarete which is made by mixing white and red grapes.

Valdepeñas is a natural crossroads between the south of Spain, the Mediterranean regions to the east, Extremadura to the west and central plains to the north. To the south of the DO is the Sierra Morena range a natural frontier with Andalusia, and to the east and west there are mountains reaching a height of 1000 m. The most prized vineyards are in Los Llanos in the west and in Las Aberturas in the north. The total area planted to vines is 22,332.11 ha (2016).



The authorised white varieties are: Airén, Macabeo, Chardonnay, Verdejo, Sauvignon blanc and Moscatel. The authorised red varieties are: Tempranillo (or Cencibel as it is known in the area), Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Petit Verdot

Grape growing and wine production in the area was practiced by the ancient Iberians and of course by the ancient Romans. During the Moorish era the area became an important wine producing centre, due to a special concession from the Caliphate of Toledo. After the Reconquest by Christian forces there was a huge increase in demand and in production, and wine began to be shipped further afield to cities such as Madrid.

Towards the end of the 18th century annual production was around 200,000 arrobas (3.2 million litres). Fermentation was carried out in enormous earthenware vats (with capacities of up to 1,600 litres) which were partially buried in the ground to help keep the temperature down. During the winter months the lees would fall to the bottom naturally and it was not necessary to clarify the wine.

In 1861 a railway line connected Valdepeñas to the coast and there was a further large increase in wine production this time for export abroad,

especially to the Philippines and to South America. In 1895 the 'Wine Train' (tren del vino) began to ship wine to Madrid.

In 1911 the phylloxera plague destroyed the vineyards, but the producers of the area were able to save their industry by grafting new varieties of grapes (especially Airén) onto phylloxera-resistant New World rootstocks. This moment of crisis forced the different producers to cooperate with each other and a regional federation was formed, which was subsequently transformed into the Regulatory Council of the DO. Official DO status was granted in 1932.



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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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The Basque Country

With regards to food, the Basque Country is probably the most important tourist destination in Spain. A coastal and border region, whose very varied culinary delights are due to the mixture of sea and mountain cultures with modern top-quality cooking. This trend emerged over the last decades with the appearance of the so-called Basque Nouvelle Cuisine. But most importantly, the good food is a reflection of the character of the Basque people, a people devoted to tradition and good food, the centre of any social occasion. The Basque Country, a culinary paradise

Due to its geographical position in the Bay of Biscay, the Basques have been avid sailors for many centuries. Its constant fishing on the shore of Terranova has resulted in the consumption of cod on mass. The cod is a fish which in the past was consumed on the mainland to fight off the famine and which today has been converted into a delicacy, forming part of numerous recipes. The sauces which have emerged due to this fish - "pil pil" (garlic), Biscay sauce, green sauce, "ajoarriero" (eggs and garlic) - have become real institutions over the years and are proof of the region's age-long capacity of producing sophisticated meals with the excellent raw materials at hand.

Fresh fish

Hake, bonito, red bream, spider crab, small cuttlefish, anchovies from Getaria or the very sought-after eels are other sea delicacies which are always present in the local cuisine and which are used to prepare seafood casseroles such as "marmitaco" and "zurrukutuna". Cuttlefish in ink and other local specialities such as barbels, which can be enjoyed in the popular dining-rooms of the fishing guilds in the small towns along the coast, tuna belly and sardines and red bream cooked on the griddle prove the Basque dexterity with regards cooking techniques. In the Basque Country, the griddle has become something of a ritual and is used for cooking both fish and beef. Those in the know ask for their enormous T-bone steaks or the local cut of beef known as "villagodio" to be cooked rare. The wild mushrooms known as "perretxikos" (especially the "boletus") and small game (pigeon, woodcock, turtledove...) are eaten during the months of Autumn, as are the local vegetables which have given rise to dishes such as stuffed peppers from Gernika or haricot beans from Tolosa.

Good desserts

The majority of traditional dishes are prepared using local products, which is logical in a mountain region with isolated hamlets and valleys. Many of the desserts are based on milk: deep fried custard slices, "mamía" (curdled sheep's milk with walnut sauce), "intxaursalsa" (milk pudding with cinnamon and walnuts), fried puff pastry rolls with custard, "pantxineta" (with liqueur), "franchipán" (with almonds), "sopa cana" (cinnamon and capon)... A piece of the famous idiazábal cheese is a must before tucking into a dessert. Apples are used to make the local cider. In one of the many cider bars found in the province

of Gipuzkoa, the visitor can serve himself cider directly from the casks or "kupelas" and accompany the drink with a set menu comprised of cod omelette and T-bone steak served at large collective tables.

Wines and the pleasure of tapas

The other typically Basque drink is wine. It mustn't be forgotten that the Rioja Denomination of Origin lies to the south of the interior province of Álava, giving rise to a sub-zone called Rioja Alavesa where some of the oldest Rioja bodegas are found, such as Marqués de Riscal, next to more recent and innovative companies such as Artadi, which has gained international renown. Together with Rioja, the ultimate Basque aperitif which is served in local bars is the "txakoli" - a light, acid and aromatic white wine which is the perfect accompaniment to the famous "pintxos" (tapas). The very Spanish custom of going from bar to bar eating tapas is seen at its best in the Basque Country and has become an almost daily social ritual which all visitors must try.

In traditional neighbourhoods such as the old quarter of the town called Donostia-San Sebastián, there is a line of bars all down the street and the locals go from one to another with their friends, tasting the different "pintxos" on offer at the bar. Another great Basque tradition with regards collective tables are the dining clubs or "txokos": these mainly male clubs were created during the middle of the nineteenth century and today, in Gipuzkoa alone, there exist more than 300 clubs where the members get together and cook, eat, drink and talk. It is a great honour to be invited to one of these meetings - an experience which shouldn't be missed if the opportunity presents itself.

Christmas food in the Basque Country

The Basque Christmas table is highly recommended for lovers of fish and seafood. The txangurro (Basque-style spider crab) is a must-try and as a main course, the red bream or cod prepared with oil, garlic and peppers or pil-pil style. When it comes to the sweet section, there are two that are particularly famous, the intxaursaltsa (walnut cream) and goxua (a cake with custard, cream and sponge cake, the name of which means sweet or rich).



Clams in a green sauce



Ingredients:

Ingredients for 4 or 5 portions:

1 kilo and a half of clams

1 onion

1 spoonful of breadcrumbs

2 spoonfuls of parsley

olive oil

a small glass of white wine

salt

Method:

Wash the clams well so they release the sand and leave in a pan with a little hot water for them to open.

Next remove from the heat.

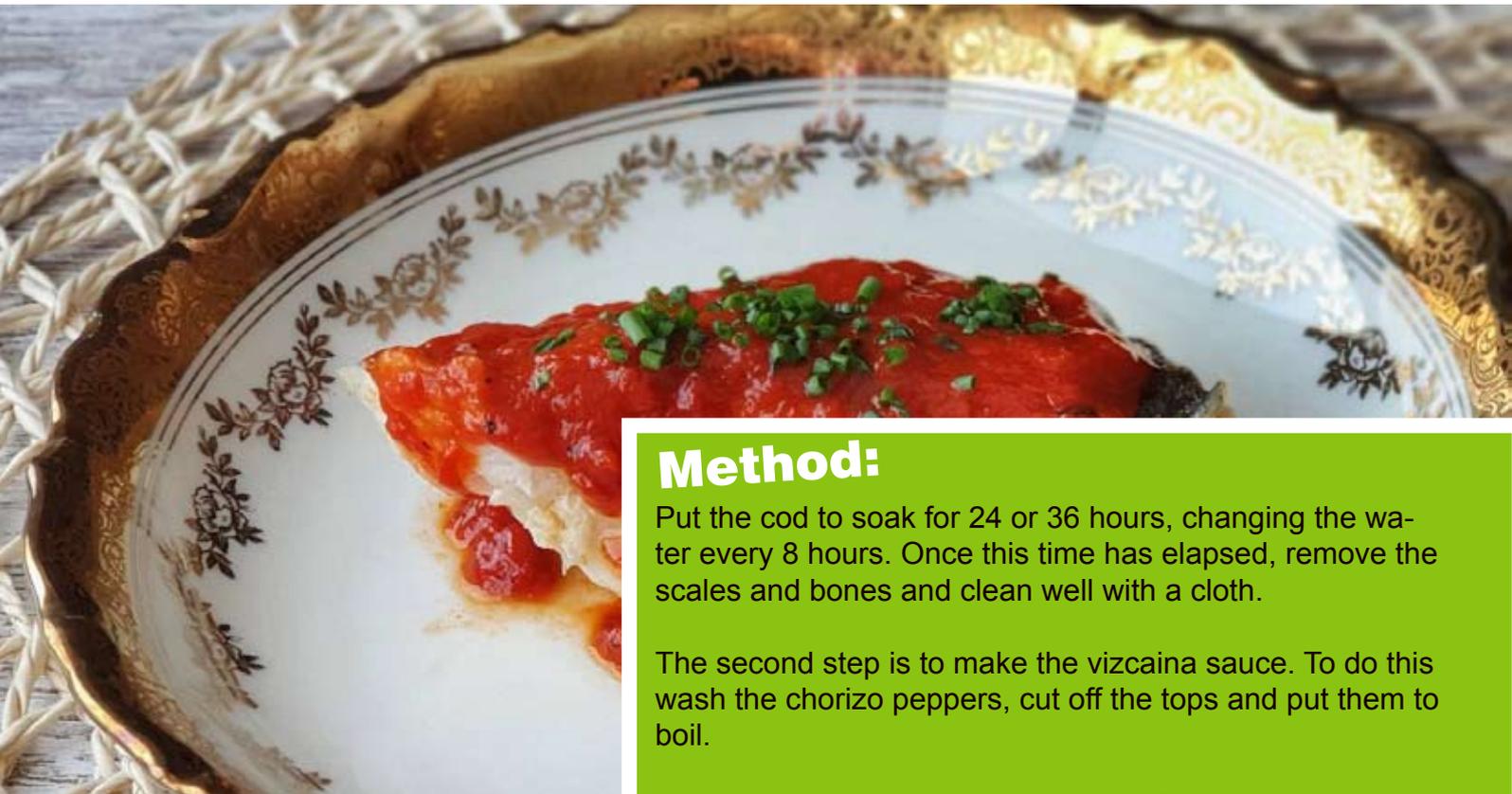
Fry the finely chopped onion in a frying pan with a little olive oil.

When the onion is golden, add the breadcrumbs, white wine, two spoonfuls of fresh chopped parsley and the water used to open the clams.

Season with salt and heat for fifteen to twenty minutes.

Once the sauce is made, put through a blender and then add the clams to cook in this sauce for a few minutes (4 or 5).

Biscayan style cod



Ingredients:

Ingredients for 4 people:

4 thick 250g slices of cod from the loin area

4 red onions

1 ripe tomato

10 chorizo peppers

a little bread

olive oil

2 cloves of garlic

Method:

Put the cod to soak for 24 or 36 hours, changing the water every 8 hours. Once this time has elapsed, remove the scales and bones and clean well with a cloth.

The second step is to make the vizcaina sauce. To do this wash the chorizo peppers, cut off the tops and put them to boil.

Once they are ready, take them out of the water and remove the pulp.

At the same time, put the chopped onions and tomato in a casserole on the heat.

When they are well done, add the pulp from the chorizo peppers, some pieces of bread and a bit of the pepper cooking water.

Leave it on the heat for another 15 minutes. Then pass everything through a blender and tip the sauce obtained into a saucepan.

Put the garlic into hot oil. When it starts to colour, remove it and replace it with the cod for 10 minutes

Once it is ready, put the cod into the saucepan with the hot sauce and leave it on the heat for another 5 minutes.

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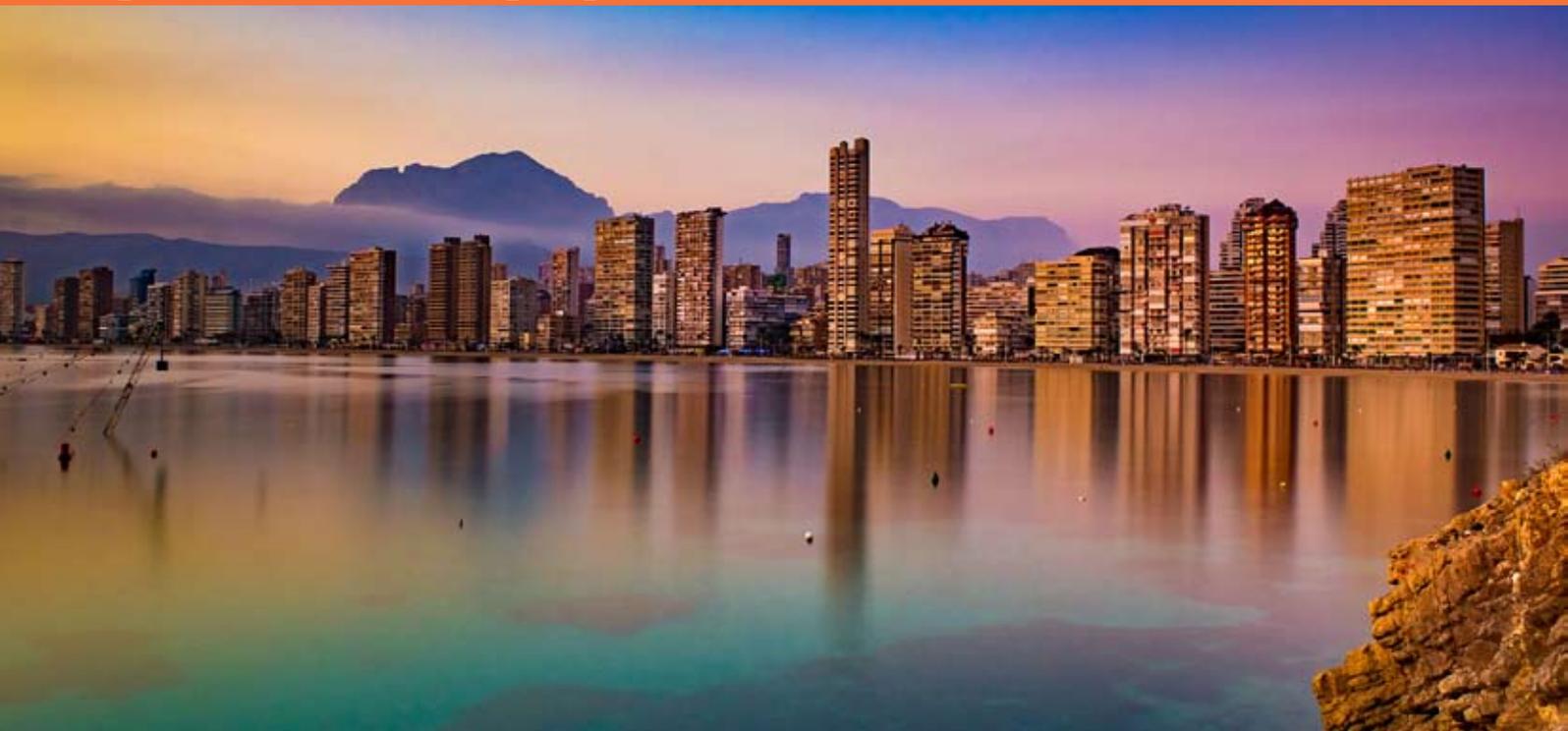
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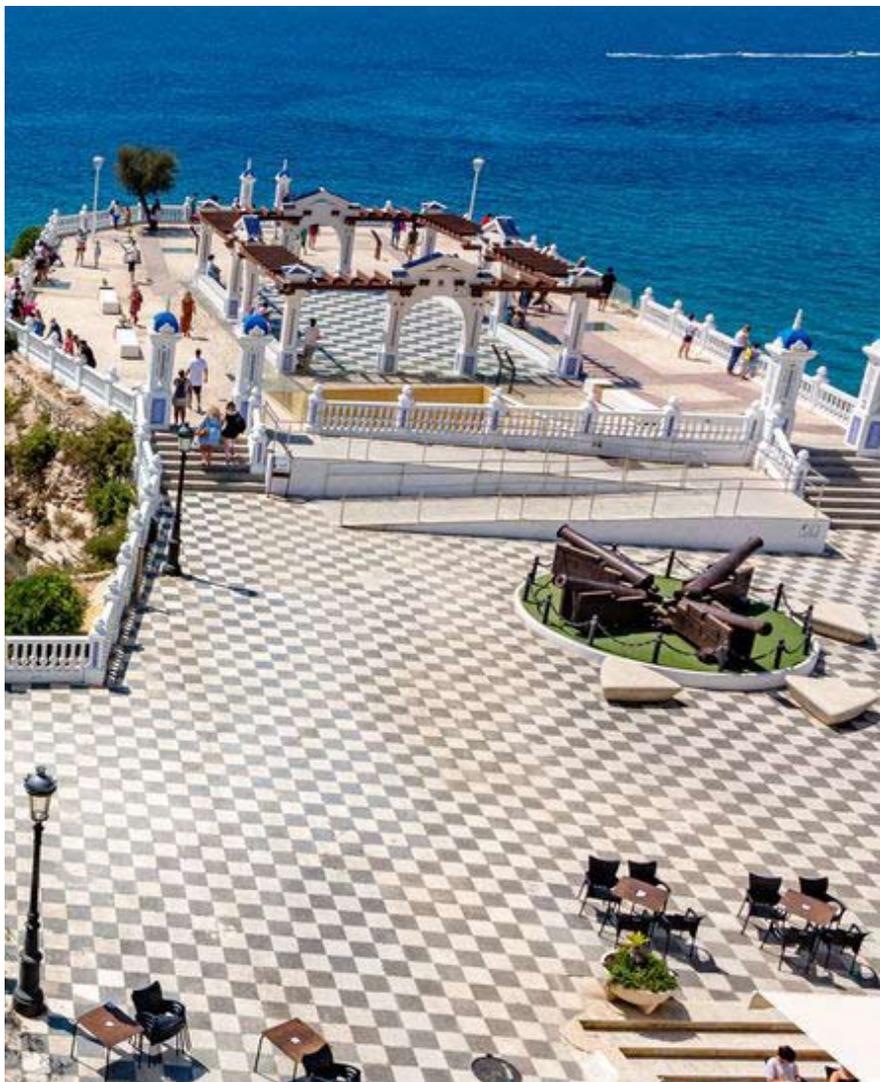
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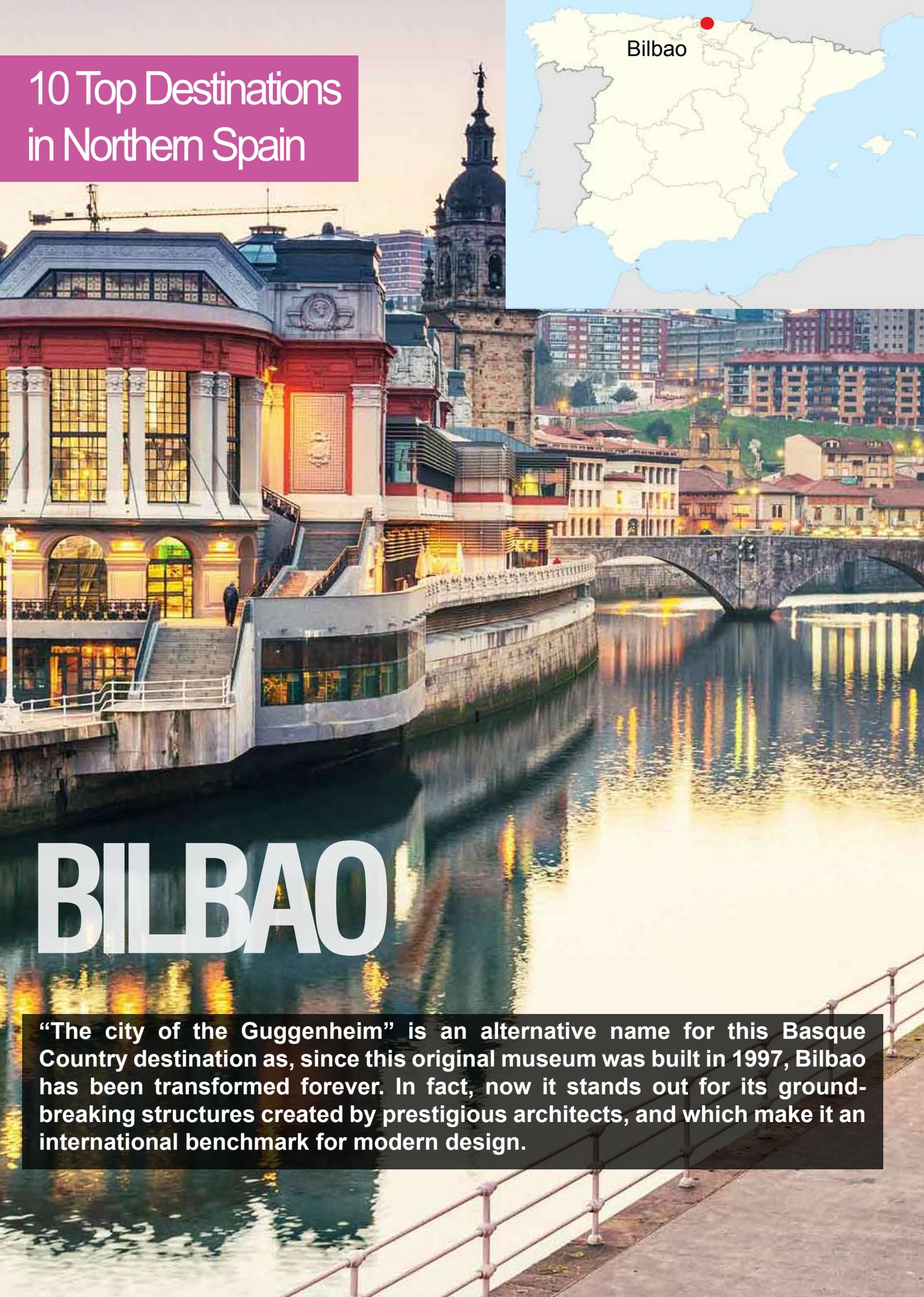


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BILBAO

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Although, curiously, its unique character comes from combining avant-garde with the traditional feel of its old town, full of charming streets and bars offering pintxos, proof that they are passionate about gastronomy around here. All this has earned Bilbao a place of honour on the lists of Spain's most interesting cities.

A walk full of contrasts

A visit to this city in the north of Spain could start with the Guggenheim Museum. It is one of the most surprising examples of 20th century architecture as Frank Gehry used 33,000 ultra-thin titanium plates to create its curious curves. Inside, it shares the world's most important private collection of modern and contemporary art with New York and Venice.

Bilbao is home to another of Spain's most important art museums: the Museum of Fine Arts. The city's commitment to creating a ground-breaking, imaginative image also includes the Euskalduna Conference Centre, Norman Foster's metro stations, the Isozaki and Pelli towers, the Zubizuri bridge designed by Calatrava or new cultural centres such as La Alhóndiga by Philippe Starck, built over an old wine cellar.

On the other hand, it's impossible to imagine Bilbao without its characteristic old town, with over 700 years of history. It's a pleasure to stroll around the famous "Seven Streets" and discover iconic buildings such as

the Cathedral or the elegant theatre inspired by the Paris Opera House, the Arriaga, and a combination of shops and cafes ranging from traditional to cool.

Two strengths: Basque cuisine and a green city

The city of Bilbao is proof that gastronomy is an art in the Basque Country – one of the areas with the most Michelin Stars per person in the world. Plaza Nueva and its surrounding streets are full of busy bars serving their famous pintxos: small, delicious bites of food. Here, foodies can find their place among the buzzing bars, family-run restaurants and prestigious chefs. And they will also have the chance to visit the La Ribera Market, a beautiful building where you can have the produce that you purchase cooked for you, or where you can sample as selection of pintxos and Txakoli wine to the beat of live music.

Cultural and culinary Bilbao is also a green city, with parks such as Doña Casilda de Iturrizar, surrounded by hills (dare to ride the Artxanda cable car, a classic option to get a bird's eye view of Bilbao).

The estuary is another symbol of the regeneration of Bilbao. You can spot people paddle surfing on the water, or take a boat to the famous Hanging Bridge of Portugalete, declared a World Heritage Site. And if that's not enough, the beaches and stunning cliffs of Getxo are just over 30 minutes away on the metro.



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You would be forgiven for thinking that owning a holiday business in Spain during a global pandemic is about as appealing as running an airline, but one company has celebrated record revenues during 2021 despite most travel operators declaring near bankruptcy or worse, and thousands of properties laying empty across Spain.

Murcia Holiday Rentals, who handle rentals for nearly 200 properties in the region, celebrated €1m in rental revenue paid to owners by the middle of August 2021. A near 100% increase year on year. So with the absence of the British tourists, regarded as the staple of Spanish summers, how did this happen? What did they get right and what did others get wrong?

We asked Marcus Glover, Managing Director of Murcia Holiday Rentals.

“Murcia Holiday Rentals was created with the sole intention of embracing the booking channels”, he explains. A booking channel is a web based platform such as Airbnb, Booking.com or TripAdvisor. He continues “People have changed how they book holidays and who they trust. Most people have a channel app on their phone, and they have a trust for that channel that they will help them if they have a disaster”. Whilst many agencies regard the channels as a drain on their commission, he puts their success down to the resilience of a business model that has so many routes to market, that they are not affected by changes in certain countries or even continents. With high level profiles on nearly 60 different booking channels, this local business has a truly global presence and their rental properties enjoy an audience of over 100m per month.

Of course the global response to Covid19 was in the form of travel bans, and only land travellers could really consider Murcia as a holiday destination.

Unfortunately, as so many rental operators in Spain are British, they of course focus on Britain as the main source of guest, and lack routes to other markets. Not the case for Murcia Holiday Rentals, who quickly picked up bookings from Spain, France and Belgian holiday makers keen to get some sun, sea and Sangria as soon as the bans became real.

He continues, “For most rental agencies, synchronising 200 properties across 60 channels is just not feasible. Firstly, because of the logistical nightmare of aligning descriptions, seasonal rates, photos and availability; but also because all the channels charge differently. Some charge a booking fee from the guest, some from the owner and some a split of the two. So a standard commission based model could not work, as the owner would never know how much they were paying or being paid.

Instead, Murcia Holiday Rentals has a compelling and attractive proposition to Owners. They get paid by the channels, and there are no charges at all levied on the owner. This means that the amount paid is fixed depending on the season, and is free of deductions. They also manage all the legal requirements including the (required by law) rental license, and the reporting of guests to the Guardia Civil database, which removes a big headache.

Currently operating with a physical presence in Mar Menor Golf Resort, Marcus explains that geographical location is not important as the entire world is their marketplace. Who knows what will happen in the future but certainly having a robust business model has paid off of this time. We wish Marcus and his team the best of success for years to come.





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12 new 'most beautiful' towns in Spain

Ponte Maceira, A Coruna

Ponte Maceira, in Galicia, wouldn't look out of the place in Lord of the Rings.

Adorned with cobbled streets, the town sits next to the Tambre river, and is accessible by a 13th century bridge which was actually built on the foundations of a Roman bridge.

The natural landscape effortlessly blends in with the town, with plant life, water and vegetation around every corner, offering an 'at-one-with-nature' vibe.

Ponte Maceira was an obligatory passage on the Seaway of Santiago, joining the city of the Apostle Santiago with Fisterra. There are numerous legends related to the Jacobean tradition, such as the one that says that from the north came to all the disciples of the Apostle James, since they did not find who had welcomed the decapitated body of their master. Behind them, the Roman legionnaires tried to hunt them down. The Christians crossed Ponte Maceira and saw how, suddenly, as the Romans did, the bridge fell apart and the persecuted managed to escape thanks to this "divine" intervention.

Here took place, in the early years of the twelfth

century, a battle between the men of the first Archbishop of Compostela Diego Xelmírez and the troops of Pedro Froilaz de Trava and his sons Fernando Pérez de Trava y Bermudo, with which clashes on the border of Tambre de la Terra de Santiago were common. The Compostelana History recounts the fact

In religious architecture stands out the Romanesque church Santa Maria de Portor, is one of the most complete in the entire region of Barcala. Its facade and tower are dated from the seventeenth century. Formed by three pairs of semi-columns and within them, a ship spread over four sections, blind arches, a side portal and an absidal acrotera. The church of Santa Maria de Portor is still a priory of the monks "bieitos", dependent on "San Martiño Pinario" (Santiago de Compostela).



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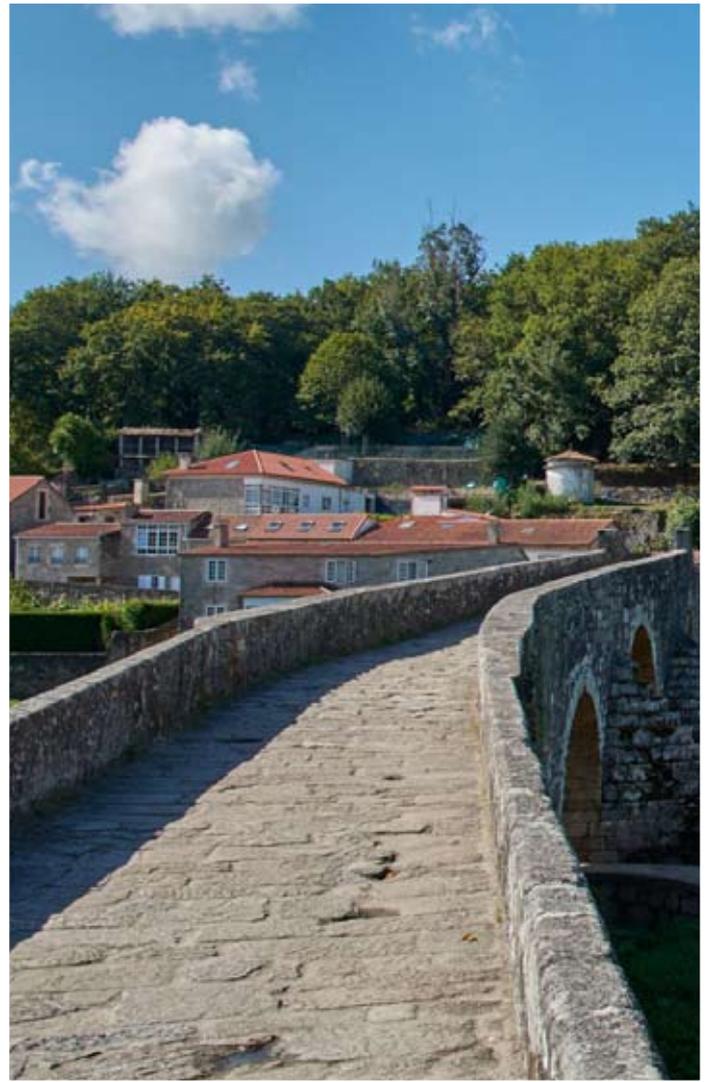
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A Ponte Vella de Pontemaceira was built just at the entrance of this village on the Tambre River in the twelfth century taking advantage of the pillars of an earlier Roman bridge. It consists of five main seating arches and two relief arches at the accesses.

The main ones have a variable light - from six to ten meters - with a fabulous ojival vault in the central arch of the bridge. The great stability of during its long service is due to the foundation of part of the pillars on the mother rock.

Just 17 kilometers from Santiago de Compostela is an obligatory step for pilgrims who make the way from Santiago to Finisterre. Like almost all historical monuments, the Pontemaceira Bridge has a fantastic legend associated with it.

The small hermitage of San Brais also known as Capilla del Carmen, or the Chapel of San Blas was built in the eighteenth century and later (in the XIX) was recently incorporated a neo-Romanesque semicircular apse.



Mini Break to Madrid

By Taquilla Tickets

It won't be too long now before Christmas is upon us. Although we don't want to "wish the year away", we at Taquilla Tickets are busy with plans for next year. We love the New Year Celebrations, and "Three Kings" day is one that we look forward to. We feel that the New Year has begun after this really special celebration.

January and February are not the best of months here in Spain so, to get our year off to a bit of a flyer, Taquilla Tickets is organising a Mini Break to Madrid to see "The King of the Waltz" Mr Andre Rieu and his Johann Strauss Orchestra !! Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen Taquilla Tickets is arranging Travel, Hotel and tickets to see his brilliant show in Madrid on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of February to see the great man and his Orchestra live in Spain's Capital City. Oh boy, we are so looking forward to this show (which is on the 10th), and we want to take you on a journey to start 2022 with a bang to see the worlds' largest private orchestra of 60 musicians. The orchestra was formed in 1987, and had just twelve members. Compare that with today's figures, and the orchestra has grown enormously to give pleasure to audiences all over the world. Europe, North and South America, Japan and Australia have hosted Andre and his orchestra. Audiences have been captivated by the music and style of a man who is passionate about bringing his music to every corner of the world.

Andre's father was conductor of the Maastricht Symphony Orchestra, and Andre studied the violin from the age of 5. The Royal Conservatoire in Liege was home to Andre for many years. He also studied at the Conservatorium in Maastricht. It might sound strange but Andre had ideas of becoming a priest but, despite not continuing down this path, he feels that the kind nature of a priest enables him

to communicate with his audiences. The name Rieu is of French Huguenot origin (a religious group of French Protestants). Andre completed his studies and completed his training with the distinction "Premier Prix" (Grand Prize).

He married his wife, Marjorie Kochmann, in 1975. She was a Language teacher and composer. They have two sons, Marc and Pierre. Andre himself speaks six different languages: Dutch, English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. HOW DID HE STUDY MUSIC AS WELL AS LANGUAGES ??

Andre plays and treasures his 1667 Stradivarius violin and during 2009 he was the world's most successful male touring artist. He also has his own recording studios to produce DVD and CD recordings. His lively orchestral presentations together with effective marketing have attracted worldwide audiences. His recordings and live shows have taken him and his music into people's hearts.

A few of his numerous awards are:
Knight of the "Order of the Netherlands Lion" (2002)
Honorary Medal of the "Province of Limburg" (2009)
Knight of the "Order of Arts and Letters" (2009)

So, come with us to see this lovely man and his wonderful Johann Strauss Orchestra. Please be aware that Taquilla Tickets will follow all CoronaVirus safety precautions and procedures at the time of travel.

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All about dog laws in Spain

Spain can be a great place to be a dog owner because there is so much space and nature. And dogs are a human's best friend! Unfortunately, Spain is also one of the European countries with most stray dogs. According to the ONG Animal Esdaw, there are about 800.000 dogs living on the Spanish streets. This is extremely sad and must change quickly.

If you decide to get a dog, you should be aware that this is for life, at least for as long as the dog lives. Be aware of dog laws in Spain. People tend to look only at the lovely puppies and forget that dogs get bigger, cost a lot of money, and require a lot of your attention. A dog must be walked at least three times a day, might destroy your furniture or shoes, and can get ill and throw up on your floor or worse.

10 Important Dog Laws in Spain

Every country has its own laws regarding owning a dog. Here I will sum up the 10 most important laws to consider. Please follow these laws because the fines are huge. Laws vary per "comunidad" in Spain, so please make sure you read into local laws. The ones I mention here are on a national level.

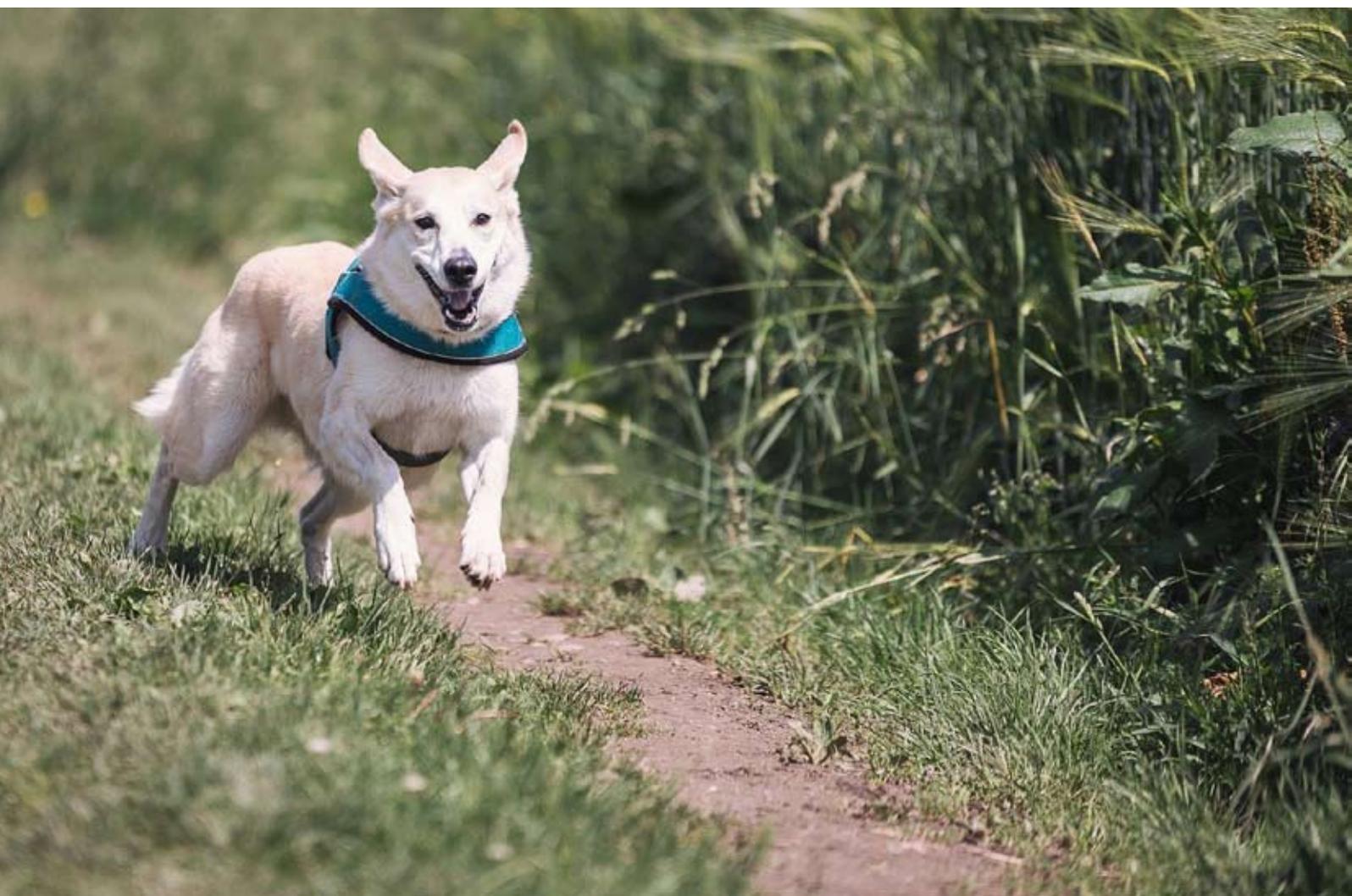
1. **DOCUMENTATION:** Every dog needs to be documented (pet passport), before reaching the age of 3 months. The dog must be microchipped and registered in the "Registro de Animales de Compañía". When a dog gets lost or dies, this must be communicated as well.

2. **HEALTH CARD:** Another obligation is that every dog needs to own an official health card, where all vaccinations must be registered.

3. **CIVIL LIABILITY:** The dog needs to be covered by a civil liability policy. In case the dog is a potentially dangerous dog (PPP) this coverage should be adapted with a higher coverage (180.000 euro) and the chip number must be mentioned.

4. **ADMINISTRATIVE LICENSE:** in case of potentially dangerous dogs, they need to obtain an administrative license and be registered in the Potentially Dangerous Animal Registry.

5. **CLEANING:** When walking the dog in public spaces, the owner must clean all the faeces of the dog and spray water over their urine.



6. ONALEASH: Dogs need to be walked leashed; the owner must be in control of its movements. Potentially dangerous dogs are obliged to always wear a muzzle in public spaces. For this type of dogs, the dog leash cannot be any longer than a maximum of 2 meters.

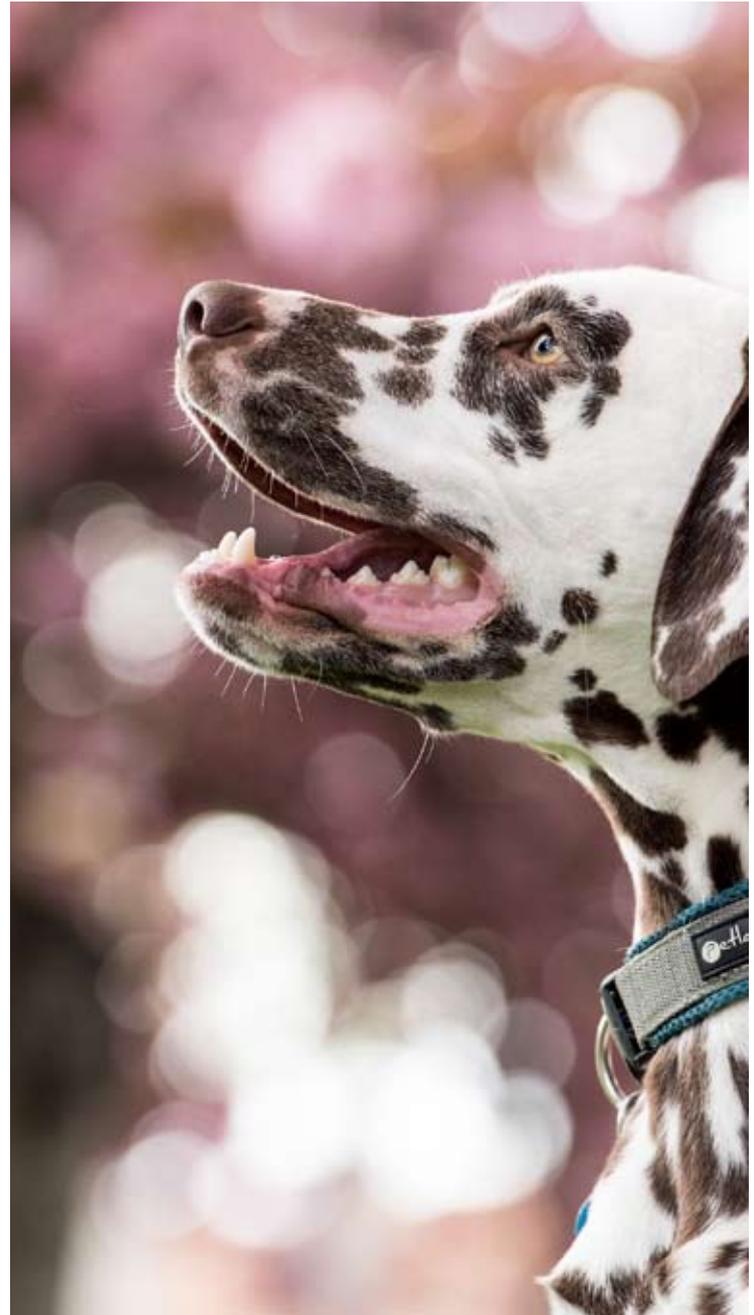
7. CHILDREN'S PARKS: Dogs are never allowed in children's parks or other children's areas. Dogs cannot take a bath in public fountains, nor drink directly from water taps in public spaces.

8. OBLIGATIONS FOR THE OWNER REGARDING THE DOG: The dog needs a safe and sheltered space to live and sleep. The dog needs to receive the correct hygiene and medical attention when necessary. The owner should also make sure the dog gets all necessary vaccinations on time, to prevent diseases.

9. PROHIBITED: the constant stay in a car, on a terrace, balcony, or other limited spaces.

10. INSURANCE: Pet insurance is optional but recommended. For more information regarding pet insurance in Spain, consult Caser Pet Insurance.

Treat your dog the best way possible! Owning a dog is one of the best things in life, but it has its responsibilities too and with that some downsides. Here some more detailed information about the responsibilities dog owners has, especially about dog laws in Spain. Think well before you get yourself a dog.



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FROM WIGAN PIER TO ANDALUCÍA

When our beautiful, great, golden, Basil died at the age of thirteen we were grief-stricken. We missed him sorely and nothing will ever replace him, but life without a dog seemed unthinkable. I emailed Pepi's refuge: 'We are looking for a big dog, Toys R definitely not Us'.

That was before Biggles exploded into our lives.

Boris is one of nature's gentle dogs, which is surprising, given his start in life. Born of an unlikely relationship between a mastiff and a greyhound, he was clubbed over the head and left to die in a ditch. Workers on the tracks for the new AVE high-speed train heard the puppy whimpering and brought him bleeding and bedraggled to the refuge.

He grew up into a big, white, handsome Borzoi-like fellow with long legs, huge paws and floppy, spotty ears. The helpers at the refuge loved him, walked him and played with him, but nobody had adopted him. Surely, a big powerful dog with such a history would carry a lot of emotional baggage.

Boris does have his hang-ups, but they are amazingly few. One of his pet hates is birds. Having lived in Africa, where the Hammerkopf herons used to swoop down and strafe Basil and his brother Baldrick, then soar away with a mocking 'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!' we wonder if the birds at Pepi's refuge have a similar habit of taunting the inmates.

For quite a while after they joined us the sound of chirping on our terrace would send Boris and his small henchman Biggles skittering out with excited barks to see off the interlopers. Then in spring, a breeding pair of red-throated swallows took up residence under our porch. In the daytime they perched on the reja, the security grille of our front door only half a metre over our heads. At night, they roosted on the lantern above the door and when I opened it at dawn I was greeted by a ringing burst of song which always seemed to end with a loud derisive raspberry. After a couple of attempts to compete, the dogs bowed to the inevitable and decided to ignore them.

When he joined us at El Cortijo del Rector we thought in our innocence that we were adopting Boris but in reality, of course, he was adopting us. When we call him in because we need to go to the village market he reproaches us with a tragic stare and when we return home, he hangs his head in mock misery and raises

a shoulder in a hunchbacked pose reminiscent of Lawrence Olivier in one of his iconic Shakespearean roles. 'Ah,' I tell him understandingly, 'Boris the Third.'

Poppy is small, black, bright-eyed and gentle. The moment we sat down in Rob and Caroline's living room she would hop onto my knee while I scratched her head and played with her silky ears.

'I've only ever had big dogs,' I told Caroline, 'but if Poppy ever has pups I want one.'

That was ten years ago and Poppy's son has been part of our lives ever since. We were not sure how Boris would react to this diminutive interloper, so at first we kept him in his carry-case while the galgo-mastin stalked stiff-legged around it staring disapprovingly down his long aristocratic nose. The puppy was horrified. He missed his mum. He missed the smells of home. Had he been dognapped to this house of horrors merely as a snack for this huge white beast? He yelped his misery.

'He needs a name,' said Val, 'you can't keep calling him Squallocky Baby.'

We named him Biggles. You probably know that the original Biggles was a fictional fighter pilot, so you may be thinking that there was something about him that suggested aviation. There wasn't, but whilst his name was quite literally plucked out of the air, the really strange thing is that over the years our Biggles has gradually acquired distinct rings around his eyes like the goggles of a WW1 flying ace.

When I'm asked what breed he is I say he's an Aspull Terrier, a rare species from my family's Lancashire village, whilst Val, who disapproves of my teasing the unwary, describes him as 'a sort of Jack Russell'.

Biggles loves to be on the go. From the moment Boris accepted him, he was eager to join in our morning rambles over the hills. His little legs need four steps to match each of the big dog's long strides, but he never seems to tire. For Biggles, the main function of any human being is to entertain a dog.

Sit down on the patio with a book and three seconds later a ball will drop at your feet. When I throw the ball he will catch it every time, often setting off before it has left my hand and turning his head to take it out

Part 7: Boris & the Delinquents

of the air while it is still behind him. The only exception is when I throw it badly and the ball goes over the wall and into the campo when he loudly reproaches my incompetence until I retrieve it or supply another ball.

We absolutely knew two dogs were ideal company and three would be a crowd, but Bella gazed imploringly into my eyes as we sat at lunch outside our village bar. The Boris-Biggles nexus had been established for seven years, and whilst the terrier welcomed a young sparring partner, Boris's aristocratic nose remained at a disdainful angle of forty-five degrees for the first two days after the newcomer arrived.

But Bella adored Boris on sight, and literally kissed him into submission. Having been a street dog her morals are a little suspect. From the roast cooling on the hob to the loose covers on the sofas nothing edible, or indeed inedible, is safe. She's grown into a leggy young beauty, tall enough to sweep the goodies off the kitchen worktop and onto the floor where they can be shared with her accomplices. Jos, our Tyneside treasure, calls them Boris and the Delinquents.



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