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ISSUE 84
NOV 2023

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Valley of Ricote & Cieza

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Zamora

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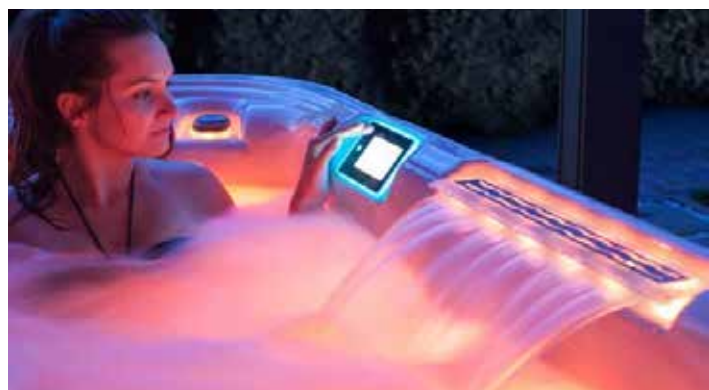
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A Life in SPAIN

Welcome to the November edition of ALIS.

November already. The quiet month when there's less tourists. This usually means the weather is still good enough to go to the beach, but you can actually sit on the beach without someone sitting right next to you.

Christmas is round the corner with all its festive cheer so enjoy the peace while you can. At least that's what i will be doing.

So what's in this edition....

We have some great new series of articles continuing this month. Including
Page 16 - Events Calendar
Page 18 - Region of Murcia
Page 21- Spanish facts
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I hope you like the new articles as we continue to crack the whip and get our team of researchers working their magic to bring you interesting facts and articles about Spain.

Enjoy!

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A Life in
SPAIN 05

Places to visit in a day

Alhama de Murcia

Alhama is one of those places you can go to visit, park your car and spend a full day just wandering around. However, there are certain places that you must see on your walk about.

The first port of call needs to be the excellent tourist office in the centre of the town not far from the Ayuntamiento (town hall). Indeed a prior phone call is recommended to check opening times and events for the week ahead (+34 968 63 35 12).

Tuesday is a busy day in Alhama as it is Market day. It is one of the largest markets in the region with goods to buy varying from fresh fruit, vegetables and fish to clothing, plants and fresh roast chicken. After you have bought your goods visit any of the many cafes within a five minute walk and enjoy excellent coffee and cake or "tostada" and give your feet a rest. On the theme of food, there are so many restaurants and cafes in the town you are really spoilt for choice. We have never encountered a bad one and most will do a really good value lunch and be open in the evenings for a more varied menu.



For the more adventurous, there are walks around the town and to the castle which is still undergoing renovation but is still accessible. If you want to head for the hills, the Sierra Espuna is a short drive away. Maps are available at the tourist office and look out for guided walks. Many are free.

At the foot of the castle you will find "Los Banos" Archeological Museum. It is close to the church "San Lazar Obispo". Los Banos were constructed to preserve the 2000 year old Roman and Arab baths. It is a very authentic experience and entrance is free so there is no reason to miss it. Opening times are varied so it is worth checking but is open to the public all year round. The church next door is a beautiful building built, allegedly, over an old mosque. Given the proximity of the baths ((for cleansing before prayer) this would be logical. The plaza to the side of the church is the site of the original cemetery. There is a very imposing entrance which is very practical as the starting point for the Easter Parades (Semana Santa).

Alhama is very cultural with art exhibitions, craft fairs, free outdoor concerts and much much more. Too much, in fact, to include here. There are also regular bus services to nearby cities and a train service to Murcia (and beyond) and in the opposite direction to Aguilas via Totana and Lorca.

If you prefer, you can just explore the town and find all that is available at random but to plan your trip make us of the excellent Tourist office where English is spoken or visit

<https://www.eventbrite.com/d/spain-alhama-de-murcia/events/>

Finally, maybe you should consider going more than once!!

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Let's Learn Spanish

TAPAS



Phrases

English / Spanish / Pronunciation

What can I get you? / ¿Qué te pongo? / Kay te pohngo

I'll have / Pon me(item) / Pohme (see list below)

An individual portion / una tapa / oona ta-pa

A portion for sharing / una ración / oona rah-thi-on

I'd like to pay / Quiero pagar / kyer-o pag-ar

In cash / en efectivo / enn eff-eck-tee-vo

By credit card / con tarjeta - kon taar-het-ta

Cold tapas

Ensaladilla Rusa / en-sal-la-deeya roo-sa /
diced cooked vegetables and tuna in mayonnaise

Ensaladilla de Marisco / en-sal-la-dee-ya dayma-
reesk-o / diced seafood in mayonnaise

Tortilla / tor-tee-ya / omelette cooked with potatoes or
another ingredient

Jamón y Queso / ha-mon ee kay-so / Spanish dry cured
ham and cheese

Embutidos / em-boo-tee-doh-s / a selection of dried,
cured meats and sausages

Hot tapas

Magra con tomate / mag-rar kon tom-ah-tay / cubed
pieces of pork in a thick tomato sauce

Croquetas / kro-keh-tas / often jamón or cheese, fish or
even game, with a thick creamy centre with breadcrumbs
and then fried.

Albóndigas / al-bohn-dee-gas / meatballs, often served
in a watery broth or tomato sauce

Buñuelos / boun-nwel-los / often made with cod, a deep-
fried batter with fish pieces

Revuelta / rrr-well-ta / scrambled eggs with another
ingredient, eg. mushrooms

Now try our wordsearch:

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



VALLEY OF RICOTE & CIEZA

Also known as the Valle M o r i s c o (“Moorish Valley”), due to the fact that this was the last redoubt of the Moors in Spain, the River Segura has made this a lush and almost unknown corner of Murcia, creating a fertile landscape of fruit and palm trees. Any visit to the valley must start at the Visitors Centre in Archena, a good starting-point for discovering the area and enjoying a form of tourism based on active tourism and rural and health pursuits.

VALLEY OF RICOTE

Things to see

Archena. Set among dense gardens located on the banks of the River Segura, we find the thermal waters of the Spa, which were used during the Roman Age and in whose enclosure we can visit the Shrine of the Virgen de la Salud (1854) and the Casino, of Neo-Classical style. The cultural itinerary includes the Church of San Juan Bautista (18th century), the Castle of Don Mario and the Visitor Centre at the Small Palace of El Parque Villa Rias.

Villanueva. This secluded and peaceful town invites us to stroll up to the Church of La Asunción, of Neo-Classical style and then walk down to the river bank by crossing the paths of La Huerta Vieja, the "Nuns' Meadow", or climb up to the viewing-point at the Hermitage of San Roque.

Ulea. From the viewing point of El Corazón de Jesús we can admire the town, with its Church of San Bartolomé (16th century), the Casa Parroquial (Presbytery) and the Small Temple of El Henchidor, where the Cross is washed every 3rd of May.

Ojòs. The houses of noble families still preserve their coats-of-arms and grilles dating from the 17th century. Visitors really must see the Church of San Agustin, the Dam of El Azud, the Wash House and the Natural Beauty Spot of El Solvente.

Ricote. Set in the mountains and surrounded by palm trees and lemon trees, the town's streets and small squares transport us back to another age. Visitors will find two marvellous examples of Baroque architecture: the Small Palace of Llamas, with its magnificent stairwell, and the Church of San Sebastian. These two buildings preserve two veritable jewels: a sculpture of San José de Salzillo and the organ of Llamas, of Baroque style and the oldest instrument of its kind in the diocese.

Blanca. Departing from the Moorish Fortress located on Pena Negra, we cross the old Moorish neighbourhood and reach the Church of San Juan Evangelista, the House of La Favorita (19th century) and the Mansion of El Conde de Trenor (19th century), which has been converted into a hotel and restaurant. On the outskirts of the town we find the Hermitage of San Roque (18th century).

Abaran. Visit the Hermitage of the Holy Doctors, San Cosme and San Damian, the Shrine of La Virgen del Oro and the Church of San Pablo (17th century) or take a stroll along the Route of the Water Wheels.

Cieza. Visitors will admire the remains of Medina Siyasa, a Moorish site located on the Castle Hill, the Shrine of La Virgen del Buen Suceso (panoramic view), the Church of La Asuncion (18th century), the Balcón del Muro with its ancient fortress and walls, the La Serreta cave and the interesting Wind-power Station (guided visits), not to mention the Museums of Medina Siyasa, the Teodoro Mill and the Small Esparto Museum.

Things to do

Archena. Enjoy the charms of the Spa, which still preserves its late 19th century atmosphere, while also offering the latest in health and beauty treatments. Riverside walks or bike rides.

Villanueva. Walking route across La Huerta Vieja, "El Golgo" and "El Pilarico". Route along the banks of the River Segura, which features information boards and areas for fishing

Ulea. Routes through the town to enjoy its unique buildings and riverbank landscapes. Don't miss "El Gurugú", where you can enjoy views across the area's agricultural landscapes

Ojòs. Stroll through the gardens and paths along the river to discover the multiple uses of water.

Ricote. Enjoy the excellent local food and wine. Excursions on foot or by bicycle through magnificent mountain ranges.

Blanca. Canoeing and rafting along the river, horse-riding routes, and trekking and bicycle routes. Ecological routes. Go swimming at the river beaches at El Arenal or the canoe club.

Abarán. Route of the Water Wheels, including the Great Water Wheel that dates back to 1805, this being the largest wheel still in use in Spain.

Cieza. Climbing on the Peak of El Almorchón. Why not have a dip in the beauty spot known as La Presa and visit the Spring of El Gorgotón, located in the Canyon of Los Almadenes, Trekking and mountain bike routes.

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E & CIEZA

Things to Buy and Eat.

Archena. Horn of Merengue y Pitisús. Traditional sausage meats made in accordance with handcrafted methods.

Villanueva. Murcian rice, roast lamb and bread baked in wood-fired ovens. Palm leaf brooms.

Ulea. Esparto products. Fresh fruits and vegetables.

Ojós. Bizcochos borrachos (a typical sweet dish).

Ricote. Home made wine, roast lamb and suckling pig. Local handicrafts.

Blanca. Esparto rugs, traditional sausage meats and honey

Abaràn. Picardias, turones (nougat) and handmade sweets. Lacework and Nativity Scene accessories.

Cieza. Split olives seasoned with fennel and salt, peaches, horchata de avellana (ground hazelnut drink) and tortas de pan domino (flat bread cakes),



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If it's a place that you're looking to reside in permanently, or a place you can enjoy holidays, then Ciudad Quesada is definitely the perfect place to be.

Established back in the 1970's Ciudad Quesada belongs to the small Spanish village of Rojales and offers a multitude of places to shop during the day with entertainment at night. Quesada itself is famous for it's "La Marquesa" 18 hole Championship Golf Course, with Putting Green and Driving Range. The Golf Club House with restaurant facilities are open to the public year round, which makes it inviting to both professional and novice golfers.

Entertaining kids of all ages, is the water park that operates from June to September. A popular attraction since opening in the 1980's!

From the well known "Arches" at the entrance of Ciudad Quesada, the main street welcomes even the most discerning resident or guest into its warm and diverse culture. Especially with so many different nationalities living here!

Numerous restaurants, bars, banks, supermarkets and medical centres you'll find located amongst this vast village, together with a bus service if you're more inclined to take things easy and not drive!

A mere 15 minute drive from Ciudad Quesada, you'll find beautiful white, sandy and safe bathing beaches of Guardamar del Segura, or Torrevieja.

Ciudad Quesada is a highly sought after area, as the 30 minute drive from Alicante-Elche airport, means you're never far away for a speedy commute.





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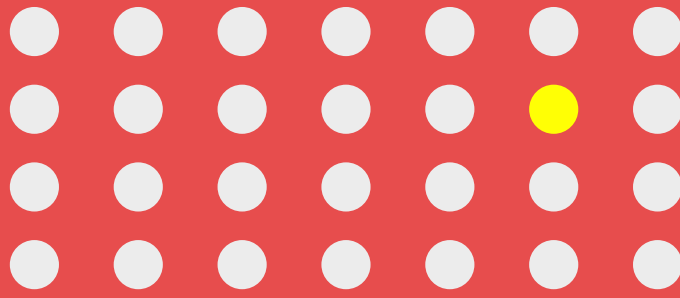
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SPAIN 15

Spain's Events Calendar



In December, Spain celebrates several festivals and celebrations, including religious and cultural events. Here are some of the most notable ones:

Christmas (Navidad): Christmas is widely celebrated throughout Spain. The festivities begin on December 24th with the Nochebuena (Christmas Eve) when families gather for a big dinner. On December 25th, Christmas Day, people attend church services and exchange gifts. In some regions, such as Catalonia, the Tió de Nadal (Christmas log) and the Caga Tió (a hollow log that “poops” gifts) are traditional elements of the celebrations.

New Year's Eve (Nochevieja): New Year's Eve is a lively celebration in Spain. Many people gather in town squares, such as Madrid's Puerta del Sol or Barcelona's Plaça Catalunya, to eat grapes and welcome the New Year. It is a tradition to eat twelve grapes, one for each stroke of the clock at midnight, for good luck in the coming year.

Three Kings' Day (Día de Reyes): On January 6th, Spain celebrates the arrival of the Three Wise Men (Los Reyes Magos) who brought gifts to baby Jesus. The night before, on January 5th, there are colourful parades (Cabalgatas de Reyes) in many cities and towns across Spain. The Three Kings throw sweets and small gifts to the crowd, and children eagerly await their presents on the morning of January 6th.

Immaculate Conception (La Inmaculada Concepción): Celebrated on December 8th, this is a religious holiday in Spain. It commemorates the belief in the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. Many people attend Mass and participate in processions, particularly in places like Seville and Granada.

Feast of St. Nicholas (San Nicolás): In some regions, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, the Feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on December 6th. Children receive gifts and participate in festive activities to honor the patron saint of children.

Winter Festivals: In various regions of Spain, there are winter festivals and celebrations during December.

For example, in Granada, the Festival of the Virgin of the Anguish (Fiestas de la Virgen de las Angustias) takes place with processions, music, and traditional dances. In Barcelona, the Fira de Santa Llúcia is a traditional Christmas market that runs throughout December, offering crafts, decorations, and other seasonal goods.

It's important to note that specific traditions and celebrations can vary by region in Spain. The above-mentioned festivals and celebrations are widely observed, but you might find additional local events and traditions depending on the area you visit.

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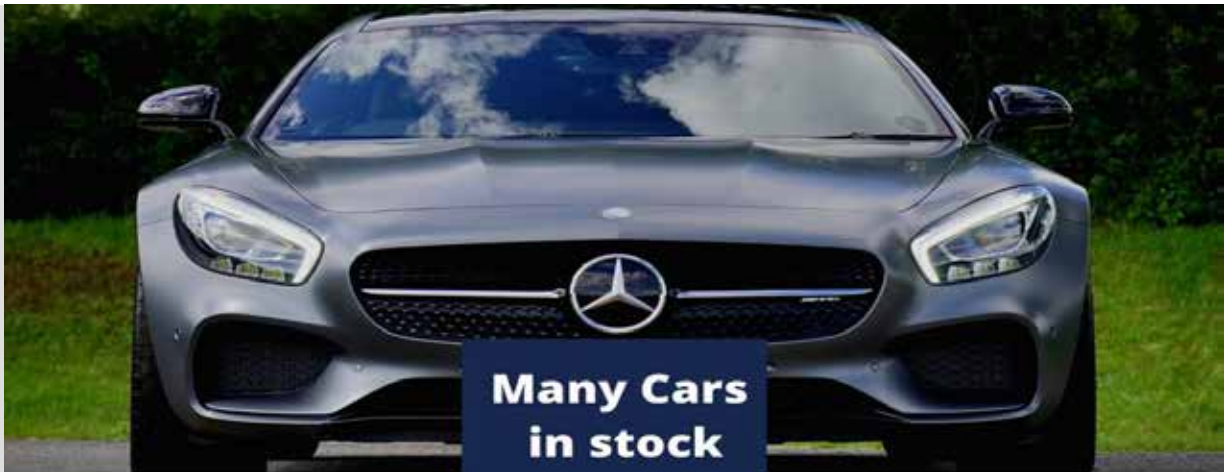
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Region Of Murcia

By José Sanchez



And why do we love Murcia?

It is the very relationship with this region that is similar to finding true love: one approaches it with a gaze, judges it with some doubt, then searches for a receptive echo. through touch, smells and tastes, and, if you find it. you stay. explore it, and then suddenly, you are in love. It will almost certainly be love at first sight when you discover the people, the nooks and crannies. and the wonderful food of this captivating region.

There are many reasons why you will fall in love with the Region of Murcia, why it will give you so much joy, and make you want to return as often as possible. Some of them are detailed below.

Discovering the cultural heritage of Murcia,

Cartagena, Lorca and Caravaca de la Cruz is like travelling back in time. Visit the Cathedral of Santa Maria in Murcia, with its Baroque façade, its Islamic remains and the work of Salzillo. Cartagena has a rich Roman legacy, of which the Roman Theatre and Forum stand out. The Archaeological Museum and its Calle Mayor with modernist buildings are other places of great interest. Lorca, known as the baroque city, and the town of a hundred coat of arms, is famous for its Renaissance square with the Collegiate Church of San Patricio, the Fortaleza del

Sol, and the synagogue, an exceptional example of Jewish religious art in Spain. The Basilica with the Lianum Crucis relic, said to be a part of the True Cross, in Caravaca de la Cruz, where the Jubilee Year in perpetuity is celebrated, makes it one of the Holy Cities of Christianity.

While here, and in close contact with nature, you will experience unforgettable sensations as you get away and practice sports on the coast in unique enclaves such as the Regional Parks of Calblanque, Cabo Cope and Puntas de Calnegre, on the Mediterranean coast, exceptionally well conserved; or inland, in the Sierra Espuña Regional Park, a territory assigned to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, which has the largest tree mass in the region, thanks to the forestry engineer Ricardo Codorniú, nicknamed “Apostle of the Tree” for his reforestation work, and where ecotourism companies are very involved with the sustainability of the territory. The visitor should also check out the various activities on offer in the Sierra Espuña Territory.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY YOU WILL FALL IN LOVE WITH THE REGION OF MURCIA, WHY IT WILL GIVE YOU SO MUCH JOY, AND MAKE YOU WANT TO RETURN AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.

Enjoy dreamlike places such as the Strait of La Arboleja in Aledo, the Salto del Usero in Bullas Fuente Caputa in Mula, Mount Arabi in Yecla, and the Mirador Alto de Bayna, a high vantage point, in Blanca. These are ideal places to enjoy the landscape and find peace and quiet, and all very close to picturesque villages.

Make your stay a relaxing one, escape from the hussle and bustle of modern life, or take a bath in one of the spas and thalassotherapy centres in the Region of Murcia. Play golf on one of the more than 20 courses with holes of various levels, all of them within a radius of 35 kilometres. and just a few kilometres from the main cities, or go scuba diving at any time of the year thanks to the mild temperatures both in and out of the water, and in either of its two protected marine reserves Cabo de Palos and Islas Hormigas in Cartagena and Cabo Tiñoso. There is a third reserve planned in Cabo Cope in Águilas. Or if you prefer, enjoy an authentic seafaring activity, experiencing the art of fishing first-hand, discovering how a fishing boat works, and visiting a fish market where the catch is auctioned.

Being surprised by the gastronomy and wines of the region is quite a normal occurrence here. Vegetables from the land, excellent meat, the precious treasures provided by the two seas, the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean, are the basic ingredients with which the mouth-watering morsels of "1001 flavours" of the Region of Murcia are made.

Thanks to the mild climate, you can have "tapas" in the open air throughout the year. Enjoy the gastronomy of the Region of Murcia by tasting starters such as the "marinera", the "zarangollo" the "michirones", the "arroz caldero" - a rice dish prepared with different varieties of fish stock, a "paparajote", a typical dessert in this region, and an "Asian coffee", made with condensed milk and cognac, to round off a delicious meal. And all this paired with the excellent wines of three appellations of origin: Bullas, Jumilla and Yecla, each of them having its own wine route, where you can visit wineries and carry out activities in their vineyards. They also provide accommodation, and their restaurants give you the opportunity to taste the exceptional gastronomy of this region.

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There are 44 regions in Spain. Here we look at Granada and it's controversial bullfighting

Bullfighting, also known as *corrida de toros* in Spanish, is a traditional spectacle that has a long history in Spain. It is a controversial form of entertainment that involves a bullfighter, also known as a *matador*, who confronts and fights a bull in a large arena called a *bullring*.

The origins of bullfighting in Spain can be traced back to ancient times, with evidence of similar practices dating back thousands of years. However, the modern form of bullfighting as we know it today emerged in the 18th century. It became popular in Spain and eventually spread to other Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, Colombia, and Peru.

A typical bullfighting event consists of several stages. It begins with a procession called the *paseillo*, where the participants, including the *matadors*, assistants, and bullfighters on horseback, enter the arena. The main event is divided into three parts called *tercios*.

In the first *tercio*, the bull enters the ring and is tested for its strength, aggression, and bravery by the *matador* and his assistants. The *matador* uses a large cape called a *capote* to perform a series of passes, showcasing his skill and agility. The bull is also lanced by a *picador*, who rides a horse and stabs the bull's neck muscles to weaken it.

The second *tercio* involves the *banderilleros*, who are the assistants of the *matador*. They place pairs of colorful, barbed sticks called *banderillas* into the bull's shoulders, further weakening and enraging the animal. This stage adds to the spectacle and is considered a display of bravery and skill.

Finally, in the third *tercio*, the *matador* re-enters the ring alone with a small, red cape called a *muleta*, and a sword. He engages in a series of passes, known as *faenas*, demonstrating his artistry and control over the bull. The ultimate objective is to deliver a well-placed sword thrust, called an *estocada*, between the bull's shoulder blades, severing its aorta and causing a quick death.

If the *matador* successfully kills the bull, it is considered a "clean" kill, and the crowd may award him with an ear or even both ears and the tail as trophies. However, if the *matador* fails to kill the bull cleanly, it may be finished off by a specialized executioner, called a *puntillero*.

Bullfighting is deeply ingrained in Spanish culture, with dedicated fans and supporters who appreciate it as an art form and a display of bravery. However, it is also a subject of significant controversy. Animal rights activists and many others condemn bullfighting as a cruel and outdated practice that inflicts unnecessary suffering on the animals involved.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the popularity of bullfighting in Spain, and some regions have implemented bans or restrictions on the practice. Several cities have also converted their bullrings into cultural centers or other facilities. However, bullfighting continues to be a significant cultural and historical tradition in Spain, despite the ongoing debates surrounding its ethics and future.





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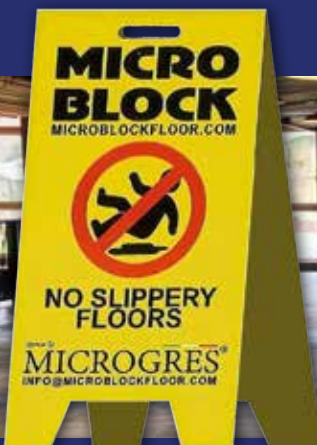
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Discover The Secrets of Orihuela City

By Heidi Wardman

Steeped in history and culture, Orihuela is one of the jewels of the Costa Blanca, and the perfect choice for anyone wishing to relocate to a traditional Spanish city.

Scenery

If you are dreaming of settling down in a charming Spanish city, which is well connected, and yet far enough away from the rat race to offer a calm and peaceful atmosphere, then Orihuela city is just the ticket. Orihuela spans nearly 400 km², and is known as the historical capital of the Vega Baja with a history dating back to September 1437, when it was declared the first city of Alicante Province. The district of Orihuela can be divided into three very distinctive areas with contrasting landscapes and industries, including the coast, known as Orihuela Costa, which has a thriving expat community and is an extremely popular tourist destination.

Then there is the countryside which takes in the beautiful Pedrera Reservoir and surrounding orchards. As one of the region's principal agricultural areas, the roads surrounding the city are lined with green fertile valley where acres of orange and lemon groves thrive. Finally we come to the city itself, which has expanded dramatically over the past decade, also due to the influx of foreign residents, but managed to retain its Spanish charm and character.

From a population of some 54,000 people, the vast majority of the city's residents are Spaniards, giving expats the perfect opportunity to adopt the culture, make new friends and learn the lingo. In fact, if it weren't for the cluster of shops, bars and restaurants, along with the multitude of historical buildings and places of interest, you might easily mistake this for a village, with a buzz of community spirit and locals bumbling around in no great hurry to be anywhere.

Climate

One of the first questions which expats tend to consider when deciding upon their new location is "What's the weather like?" After all, if the UK and Ireland could offer us 365 days of beautiful sunshine the chances are that we wouldn't be leaving! Although Orihuela cannot quite promise wall to wall sunshine all year round, it does give an average 315 days per year, with the average temperature leveling at 20 degrees and extremely low levels of rainfall.

July and August are generally the hottest months, with temperatures rising to about 42 degrees in the city, and falling to around 10 degrees in January and February. In that sense, you can quite comfortably take advantage of "outdoor living" throughout the year, and may even find that its warmer outside than in during the daytime, even in the winter!



Closer To Nature

If you are a nature lover, you will be happy to learn that Orihuela city is bordered by a multitude of flora and fauna, and is even home to the second largest palmeral park in Europe! In this part of Spain a palmeral is a type of farming which was introduced by the Moors, who used to plant palm trees in between plots- a tradition that worked well and thus has survived over centuries. Orihuela's palmeral is located on the borders of the historical centre, starting at the foot of the Sierra de Orihuela mountain range.

The area has been declared a Cultural Heritage Site and provides the perfect location for nature spotting, picnicking, or a pleasant stroll. A second natural park, "Pinar de Bonanza" is situated just outside of the city, and is also a popular route for natural trails, cycling and hiking. The River Segura runs through the heart of Orihuela, lending itself to a leisurely walk, which the locals will usually follow up with a glass of wine (or two) and a selection of authentic tapas at one of the bars en route. The majority of restaurants along the river walk also offer a "Menu del Dia", menu of the day, with a choice of regional specialties at extremely low prices- an affordable ritual that you will be happy to get used to!

Beaches

You will need to drive some 19 kilometres to Orihuela Costa to enjoy a day at the beach, but won't be disappointed when you get there, as

there are five golden sandy stretches to choose from: La Zenia, Mil Palmeras, Cabo Roig, Punta Prima and Playa Flamenca. All of the beaches are accredited with a European standard "Blue Flag", and surrounded by a variety of amenities to guarantee a perfect family day out.

Orihuela Costa has now become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region, so you may find that the beaches get rather busy during high season. However, as a local you will have the liberty of picking your times, and will find that you have the beach almost all to yourself during cooler months, which are still pleasant enough for bathing.

History and Culture

Orihuela certainly offers an education in history and culture, with a plethora of churches, galleries, museums, and monuments to explore. You will find that the locals are extremely proud of their heritage, and those of the older generation in particular will be more than happy to share some of the finer points with you as a newcomer. You will be encouraged to note that some of Europe's most influential composers, novelists, artists and poets hail from the city, including the likes of the great literary figure, Miguel Hernandez, whose legacy lives on through the "Casa Museo Miguel Hernandez", a house which he inhabited from 1914 to 1934.



Hernandez was born and raised in Orihuela, and worked as a farmhand and herdsman on his Father's land for many years. The solitary years in the fields led him to develop a special bond with nature; and a creativity that he began to express through writing poetry, and thus he became one of the greatest Spanish poets of all time. The Miguel Hernandez Museum retains the furniture which was typical of the last century, as well as a collection of original photographs and important aspects of his life.

Places of Interest

Orihuela is known for its deeply religious connections, which are reflected in its buildings, daily activities and annual fiestas. There are a number of churches and other religious monuments located within the city, including the Gothic and Baroque style "Santa Justa y Rufina" Church; the Santiago Parish Church; and Our Lady of Montserrate, which is a Baroque temple in the form of a cross. The Salesian Monastery also lies within the heart of the city, on the remains of a Jesuit College.

Today it operates more like a museum, housing a fascinating collection of works by the Court Painter, Vicente Lopez. Then there is the city's Cathedral "El Salvador y Santa Maria" which was built as a church on the grounds of an ancient mosque during the 12th Century, ascending in importance to become a cathedral in 1510. The building has been renovated several times, with the addition of a very ornate entrance called "Door of Loreto" during the 15th Century, through which you will find a stunning Baroque style organ. The Cathedral also displays evidence of Catalan Gothic and Renaissance style architecture and is well worth a visit.

Another monument which will interest culture vultures is The Palace of Rubalcalva, which was inhabited by a local family up until 1933, becoming property of the town in 1976.

It is now open to the public as a stately home, and features a luxurious sweeping staircase, leading to the noble main salons. These comprise the red salon where family portraits and other memorabilia are displayed; the yellow salon, which is available to hire for weddings and other special occasions; and the French style dance hall or "hall of mirrors" as it is better known. The Casino Orcelitano with its beautiful tiled patio and the Teatro Circo concert hall are also popular haunts for local people, offering a variety of performances that will quickly make your daily soap opera fix a thing of the past!

Fiestas

Finally, Spain would not be the same without its fiestas, and expats are always interested to know what is happening in their new home. With its rich culture and heritage, Orihuela will certainly not disappoint, with a fiesta of some description taking place almost every month! It is particularly famous for the grand processions that take place during Semana Santa, or Easter week, characterized by a group of "Cofradias" who are trained to carry hefty floats and monuments symbolizing the death and resurrection of Christ. The events continue throughout the entire week, reconstructing the story as it unfolded each day.

Another significant fiesta for Orihuela is that of the Moors and Christians, which takes place in July and virtually everyone living in the city becomes involved in some way! In fact, as the activities are incredibly loud and continue throughout the day and night, if you live locally you have little choice but to join the party! Otherwise known as the Reconquest fiestas, the celebration gives a dramatic interpretation of how Christian troops arrived during the 13th Century, and triumphed over the Saracens to claim back the land. Impressive costumes, ferocious battles and endless firework displays are all central to the fiestas. ¡Viva España!

Taste The Traditions of Orihuela.

Largely based around fresh fruits, vegetables and pulses, the Mediterranean diet is reportedly one of the healthiest in the world. And with its rich fertile land giving way to the freshest, ripest produce, Orihuela's gastronomy is a prime example.

Traditional Recipes

Orihuela is as proud of its fine cuisine as it is of its heritage, with its local dishes also dating back for hundreds of years. The cuisine from across the Vega Baja is largely based around high quality garden produce from the mountains and valleys of the province. The basic ingredients that you will find in an average Spanish kitchen, whether at home or in a restaurant, will be fairly similar relying predominantly on rice and pulses, crusty loaves of bread and fresh vegetables. To these the locals will add a variety of red and white meats, seafood, stock and spices to give them their unique flavour.

In spite of the mild climate, Spaniards love a hearty stew, throwing in any combination of things that they can find in the fridge and often leaving it on the stove to pick at over several days. Traditional stews enjoyed in Orihuela include "Olla Churra" which combines various meats, vegetables, legumes, boiled bones, and occasionally rice or potatoes; and "Cocido con Pelotas", which is a stock liquid with meatballs added. The same method applies with their soups, which are again an inexpensive way to feed the family using basic ingredients, will keep well and require very little effort to prepare. Soup will generally be served warm in the winter, with cold alternatives such as gazpacho, which is made from tomatoes and peppers, remaining a popular choice throughout the summer.

Rice, Rice And More Rice!

Rice is certainly part of the staple Spanish diet, and whilst the regional Paella Valenciana, combining rice, chicken, seafood, green beans, olive oil, saffron and seasoning, is a firm favourite in most households and the chef's specialty in all good restaurants, this is not the only recommended rice dish in Orihuela! Others which you should expect to come across include "Arroz a banda", where the rice is slowly cooked in fish stock, with a little fish, peppers and garlic.

The secret to this dish is in good quality rice and freshly made stock, and if cooked properly some will argue that it is a tastier alternative to paella. In fact, if you asked a bar full of locals, which was their preferred choice, you could quickly start a heated

debate over the contentious topic! "Arroz al horno" (oven-baked rice), "Arroz negro" (black rice with squid in inky sauce), "Arroz y costra" (rice cooked with sausage and beaten eggs then baked in the oven), "Arroz y serranas" (rice with snails) and "Arros amb fesols i naps" which combines a moist rice with mixed beans and turnips, are all popular rice based recipes. Locals will also serve their own take on the creamy Italian rice dish, risotto, to which restaurants will usually add mushrooms for a simple, yet tasty vegetarian option.

A Treat for Meat Lovers

As far as meat is concerned, Oriolan's love nothing more than a plate full of juicy cuts, the bigger the better. Various cuts of steak are available at most restaurants, and be aware that they will be served medium rare unless you specify otherwise! Pork chops are a firm favourite, and you will also find the thin cut lomo steaks appearing on most daily menus. Lamb is relatively expensive on the Spanish coast, and the chops small compared to those sold in the UK, so for a lamb dish you are best to think big and opt for a knuckle.

Poultry is less popular, although you can usually find a chicken dish of some description on most restaurant menus, often slow roasted with onions, peppers, tomatoes and olive oil. Orihuela is particularly proud of its local sausages, "salchichas" which along with the typical spicy chorizo and salchichon, also include black pudding specialties such as "morcilla de verano", "morcilla de cebolla", "morcilla de pícaro", "morcón" and the white and red variety, "blanco, longaniza blanca y roja".

Fresh From The Sea

Lying only a stone's throw away from the coast, Orihuela is a great place to sample some of the country's freshest and tastiest fish and seafood dishes. The more up market fish restaurants will have the day's catch on display in large glass tanks, allowing diners to pick out their dinner, while it is still moving- now you cannot get fresher than that! Aside from those dishes which are combined with rice, seafood is often served alone with bread and salad. Typical fish choices include salmon, swordfish, hake, sole and panga, with the most popular cooking methods being grilled, baked in salt or in a creamy sauce.

De Tapeo

Being located within a traditional city, the majority of bars in Orihuela serve the typically Spanish nibble- tapas, with heading out for tapas being one of the most popular pastimes and a great way to socialize and meet new people. It is a tradition that is sorely lacking in other cultures including British, whereby as long as they are kept fed and watered, people are happy to stay out and chat until the sun goes down, even on a weeknight! Busier bars will often have their own signature dish that is a twist on an old favourite, and some even offer a varied tapas menu with about twenty nibbles to choose from. Meanwhile, smaller establishments may have between five and eight dishes displayed in a chiller, which are altered daily.

These might include various types of salad, such as Russian, crabstick, tomato and olive oil or potato based recipes; along with Swiss chard fried with garlic, Spanish omelete made with broad beans, spicy sausage, potato omelete, pork in tomato sauce, and a variety of croquettes. The nibbles are usually served with a slice or two of crusty bread to mop up the sauces (or soak up the alcohol as desired!)

Something Sweet

In spite of the fact that most Spaniards will not say no to a tasty treat, baking is a relatively new industry to Orihuela. The few bakeries that do exist here still rely upon trusted Arabic traditions, which they use to create a multitude of handcrafted sweet delights.

Exquisite cakes and pastries such as the pasteles de Gloria (meringues), zamarras, chatos (buns filled with dried fruit), pezuñas, valarinos, and tortadas de yema (which are made with egg yolks) are just a few of the local specialties.

The bakeries will usually alter their produce in accordance with the time of year, and cater for any special fiestas taking place within the region, introducing for example, bolas de San Antón, almojábanas and paparajotes (both types of fried pastry) and buñuelos por Adviento (buns for Advent). Yemas and acarameladas are typically sold over Easter, whilst gachas con arroyo y calabazate are symbolic of All Saints Day; and toñas, polverones and mantecados are available during the lead up to Christmas. These are all best teamed with one of Alicante province's award winning muscatel wines or liqueurs, particularly during fiesta times, when it would be rather rude not to!

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To Toast or not to toast....

In these times we know mostly the toast as the moment of a celebration in which the guests get up and clash the glasses to express good wishes. The definitions according to every dictionary of "a toast" is an expression of good wishes or respect for someone that involves raising your glass and drinking.

This is the most beautiful part of a toast. Everybody loves to raise and drink, it is also the best way to express gratitude, and sometimes we could say a toast is the starting line of a celebration or party. CHEERS!

It is curious to know, unless you speak German, that the term toast comes from the German phrase "bring dir's" which means 'I offer this to you' and it was said at the moment of the raising.

Centuries before we assigned this 'Germanism' to refer to the toast, is when the act itself was originated. The darkside of the TOAST.

According to studies in the IV century B.C. in ancient Rome, people normally liked to poison people. It was a common habit in the high society; Political conspiracies, crimes of forbidden lovers and family quarrels could be solved by poison.

The best way to use this functional and effective troubleshooter was in the wine glass of the victim. This way the taste of the Wine will hide the strong flavours of the poison and the poison will be served with the Wine. To keep safe, people started to strong clasping their glasses (horns and pottery glasses) between the guests in the event, which caused the liquid to pass from one glass to the other. This simple gesture would make every glass at the celebration have the same content, making it clear that there had been no poisoning by any of the guests and thus they drank the same.

Fortunately those times have passed and now it is not so usual to poison people through drinking. So we can drink again without fears and with passion, You have no excuses to offer and choose a good wine since this way you will enjoy more of the experience and enjoy the toast as a form of celebration and good wishes. To complete the enjoyment of the senses that the wine gives (sight, smell, taste and touch), now we can hear the 'clink' between glasses, sounds also participate in this tasting ritual.

Cheers.....



Wine of the month

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Pairing: Carabinier tartar, bass cebiche grapefruit and orange salads with crunchy bacon, white asparagus, white prawns, grilled scallops, all the croquettes you can find, marinated sardines and anchovies ...

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North Town...



ZAMORA

The city of Zamora in Castilla-León, preserves in its old town an important legacy of Romanesque art, which has earned it the declaration of Historic-Artistic site. Set on the banks of the River Duero and right on the Via de la Plata (Silver Road) route, its medieval importance has left a mark in the shape of walls, palaces and churches. To get to know the history and art of the province better, there is nothing better than looking round one of the towns on the Duero Route or the Via de la Plata. You can get to know it in more depth through its cuisine and traditions, like the celebration of Easter, declared to be of International Tourist Interest.

ZAMORA

The Puente de Piedra (Stone Bridge) that crosses the Duero takes you into the city with a strong medieval imprint, known as the City of Romanesque. Its buildings effortlessly take you back to the Middle Ages, a period when the city withstood sieges and attacks. Known as "the Well Protected", because of its triple defensive ring, it preserves the first of these walls almost entirely. Among the stretches of wall, three gates, the Portillo de la Traición, the Puerta de Doña Urraca and the Puerta del Obispo, are outstanding.

Dominating the whole layout are the Castle and the Cathedral. Romanesque Jewel Surrounded by the Castle Park is a fortress of Arab origin which still preserves its Keep, gate and the moat. Beside it stands the tower and dome of the Cathedral of Zamora, which are undoubtedly its most characteristic elements.

The gadroon dome and roof with flakes of stone, in Byzantine style, were built in the 12th century; while the Romanesque tower that accompanies them dates from the 13th. Inside the church, the wrought iron screens and pulpits, the bas-reliefs of the choir stalls and the Neoclassical cloister, which houses the Cathedral Museum, are the outstanding features.

On your way to the Plaza Mayor, through narrow cobbled streets, you can admire a fine set of Romanesque churches, like those of San Ildefonso, La Magdalena or San Cipriano. Vaults with Gothic arches, apses and doorways decorated with plant motifs and the oldest reliefs in the city are some of the jewels that you will encounter in this lovely walk among the monuments.

It is worth stopping amid the capitals and archivolts of all the Romanesque churches you will find on your way. In civil architecture, we should point out some emblematic buildings of Renaissance design: the Hospital de la Encarnación, seat of the Provincial Council; the Old City Hall, ordered to be built by the Catholic Monarchs; the Palace of the Momos, nowadays the seat of the Provincial Courts; and the Cordón Palace, which houses the Museum of Zamora.

Another jewel of Renaissance architecture is the Palace of the Counts of Alba de Aliste (15th C.), nowadays a Parador de Turismo. In it you can relax on a canopied bed, admire its courtyards and try the region's culinary specialities. Zamora-style rice, stuffed hake and custard with almonds are some of the suggested of a varied menu centred on products of Castilla-León. However, if what you want to do is to follow the customs of this place you should go to the area around Calle Herreros, which you will be served wine from the Toro Denomination of Origin (chato) accompanied by a slice of bacon or fried pork (a tapa).

The best to come to Zamora is during the Easter celebrations, a Festival of International Tourist Interest, or in summer, when visitors can walk around the city guided by the medieval legends of the Romancero, which are staged in the most charming corners of the city.

The province of Zamora has interesting historic places set in countryside of great landscape and natural value, which you can get to know through some of the best-known tours of this region. The Vía de la Plata route that links Seville with Oviedo has passed through here since Roman times. On it, you will discover the treasures preserved in Benavente, Valparaíso, and La Hiniesta.

The other great spine route through this landscape is the Ribera del Duero. Among its scenery you will find many castles as, in the 10th century, it was the frontier with the Muslim world. Toro, covered in vineyards, and Arribes del Duero are other points of interest. Lovers of natural areas have the opportunity to go to the Lago de Sanabria Natural Park, where they will find, among lovely mountain landscape, the largest lake in Spain. Its Interpretation Centre shows the best paths for walking around the area.

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Liberty's pet insurance sales up 25% in last six months



Liberty Seguros' pet insurance has grown by 25% in the past six months, surpassing one million euros in annual revenue. According to company data, this growth follows the trend of the last two years, as this segment grew by 12.7% in 2021 and 13.6% in 2022.

The new Law on Animal Welfare, which came into force on 29 September, makes it compulsory for dog owners to have civil liability insurance. And this fact has been reflected in the demand for both Civil Liability insurance, which in August alone has shot up by 623%, and Liberty's specific product for pets, which in the same month has increased by 70%.

However, compulsory civil liability insurance for natural or legal persons owning dogs will not be effectively applicable until the corresponding regulatory development takes place. In this sense, Liberty stresses that behind the growth of these insurances recently there is also a growing concern of pet owners to cover their main needs and risks.

José Luis García Camiñas, Liberty's Executive Director of Product in Europe, says: "We expect this segment to continue to grow in the future not only because of increased regulatory requirements but also because of society's growing concern to protect the welfare of their pets and to have cover for issues such as veterinary expenses, theft and travel assistance. Specifically, more than 90% of the claims reported to Liberty under pet insurance correspond to veterinary expenses. The rest correspond to the death of the animal, liability issues and theft or kidnapping".

The number of dogs in Spain is estimated to be more than nine million, but having them insured is not a widespread practice. This contrasts with countries such as the USA where 70% of households have a pet and between 20% and 25% of them, especially dogs and cats, are insured. In the EU, 25% of EU households have a dog, according to the European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF). "Due to all of these factors, this insurance product, which was ini-

tially demanded by residents in Spain from other countries, and which has been increasingly valued by national clients, presents a significant growth potential in the forthcoming years", says José Luis García Camiñas.

What Spain's new animal welfare law will change

The Animal Welfare Law, which came into force on 29 September, establishes new obligations for pets, and in particular for dog owners. One of these is the obligation to have Civil Liability insurance to cover possible damages and injuries caused by dogs, whatever their breed, to other people, animals, or things. However, this obligation **will not be effectively applicable until the regulatory development of the rule takes place.**

On the other hand, the classification of potentially dangerous dogs (PPP) disappears and the concept of special dog handling is created. An individualised sociability study will determine whether a dog is a special dog handling. In addition, a compulsory training course for dog owners will be introduced. The development of these two elements is also still awaiting a regulation.

Customised Insurance also for Pets

Liberty Seguros has comprehensive insurance policies for pets, a product that is defined by its many adjustment options to provide protection for the insured animal against risks such as accident and illness and which can be taken out as a basic package with the possibility of adding others with optional guarantees.

As for civil liability, it also offers specific insurance for this legal cover for damage to third parties or as optional cover within home insurance. José Luis García Camiñas explains: "Each pet owner can personalise their pet policy in the way that best meets their particular needs and pay only for what they really need".

Visit www.libertyexpatriates.es for more information or call 91 342 25 49 for the name of your nearest Agent/Broker.



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There are 44 regions in Spain. Here we highlight the region of Malaga

Malaga is a vibrant and historic city located in the southern region of Andalusia, Spain. It is the capital of the province of Malaga and is situated on the Costa del Sol, a popular tourist destination known for its beautiful beaches and Mediterranean climate.

Malaga has a rich history that dates back thousands of years. It was founded by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BC and has been inhabited by various civilizations, including the Romans, Moors, and Christians. The city's historical significance can be seen in its architecture, which features a blend of Roman, Moorish, and Renaissance styles.

One of the most prominent landmarks in Malaga is the Alcazaba, a Moorish fortress built in the 11th century. It offers stunning views of the city and houses archaeological remains from different periods. Another famous attraction is the Roman Theatre, which was discovered in the 1950s and is still used for performances today.

Malaga is also the birthplace of the renowned artist Pablo Picasso. The city pays homage to its most famous son with the Picasso Museum, which houses an extensive collection of his works. Visitors can explore Picasso's early paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and other artistic pieces.

Beyond its historical and cultural offerings, Malaga is



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known for its lively atmosphere and vibrant nightlife. The city has a bustling city centre with numerous shops, restaurants, and bars. The streets are lined with palm trees, and the pedestrian-friendly promenade, known as the “Paseo del Parque,” offers a relaxing escape near the harbour.

Malaga’s climate is Mediterranean, with mild winters and hot summers. This makes it an ideal destination for beach lovers, as it boasts a wide selection of sandy beaches along its coastline. The nearby towns of Marbella, Torremolinos, and Fuengirola are also popular tourist spots in the region.

In recent years, Malaga has experienced significant urban development, including the transformation of its port area into a cultural and entertainment hub.

The city has invested in museums, public parks, and modern infrastructure, attracting both tourists and businesses alike.

Malaga is well-connected both domestically and internationally. It has an international airport that serves as a gateway to the Costa del Sol and welcomes millions of visitors each year.

Overall, Malaga is a captivating city with a rich history, stunning architecture, beautiful beaches, and a vibrant cultural scene. Whether you are interested in exploring its historical landmarks, enjoying the beach, or indulging in the local cuisine, Malaga offers a delightful experience for visitors.

Spanish recipe

Spanish Migas

Ingredients...

Ingredients for 4 people:

- 150g of stale sourdough, crusts removed
- 2 tbsp of milk
- 2 tbsp of olive oil
- 200g of cooking chorizo, sliced into 1 inch pieces
- 100g of pancetta lardons
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 red pepper, sliced
- 1 tbsp of pimentón salt
- 4 eggs, (optional)

How to cook it...

Preparation:

- 1.Place the stale bread in a blender and pulse to a chunky crumb. Alternatively, dice into 1cm cubes
- 2.Place in a bowl, pour over the milk and stir to coat the bread evenly.
- 3.Leave covered for at least 1 hour, or overnight if you have the time
- 4.Heat a splash of oil in a large frying pan and add the chorizo and pancetta.
- 5.Fry until the fats start to release then add the onion, garlic and peppers. Cook until soft
6. Next add the bread and paprika and season with salt, you may need to add a little more oil too.
- 7.Fry the bread until soft with the juices of the chorizo but not too crunchy



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History of Spain Part 5

The beginning of Alfonso's reign was marked by a new constitution of 1876. Spain's last two remaining colonies (Cuba and the Philippines) were lost to Spain in 1898. So, at the start of the 20th century, Spain had lots of unsolved problems: Whole areas of land had been left uncultivated, the population had nearly doubled, and, among other things, capital funds were low. The infrastructure still needed a lot of work too.

In 1879 the Spanish Socialist Workers Party was founded, and in Catalonia, powerful regional parties were formed. In 1902 Alfonso XIII took the throne. Social unrest was beginning to rise. Spain's neutral position during World War 1 caused price increases and the contraction of the European Market caused enormous instability. In 1917 a Parliamentary Assembly was called and a reform of the Constitution and a General Strike was called for. Social unrest and the revolution in Russia caused great concern for the Spanish people.

Above all of this, the crisis was rooted in the Moroccan War. After Spanish troops had been massacred General Primo de Rivera staged a coup in 1921 and installed a military government. Francisco Franco took charge of the army in Morocco and soon, the unrest led to a Civil War which lasted from 1936-1939, with General Franco winning for the Nationalists, and a loss of around 70,000 people!

The new regime after the Civil War suffered from repression of the defeated people, economic hardship, and the change of internal balance of internal power. The beginning of the so-called "Cold War" provided a boost for Franco's regime, although Spain was excluded from the reconstruction of Europe. In the political arena the UN accepted the renewal of diplomatic relations and, in 1955, Spain occupied its seat at the International Forum.

Since the early 60's opposition to Franco's rule became stronger and stronger. In the political arena, the monarchy in the person of the Count Of Barcelona, Juan de Bourbon, proposed a need for the return to democracy. At the end of 1969 a new cabinet with a technocrat majority was formed. This was subsequently replaced in 1973 by a cabinet with similar leanings. In July 1974 Franco was afflicted with Thrombophlebitis (Blood Clots, usually in the legs). Prince Juan Carlos took over as provisional head of state and, on November 20th, Franco died. On November 22nd Juan Carlos was crowned King of Spain. Another chapter in Spain's history closed and the doors of freedom and hope opened for all Spaniards.

From the very beginning, the new monarch adopted a determined, but prudent, approach to ensure the rapid democratisation of Spain. Following the resignation of Arias Navarro, the king entrusted the leadership of the country to a group of young reformists headed by Adolfo Suarez. He was sworn in as President of Spain on the 3rd of July 1976. Numerous left-wing politicians and intellectuals returned from exile and, on the 15th of June 1977 the first general elections were held.

The transition, in which Adolfo Suarez played such a pivotal role, transformed Spain in all respects. New freedoms were readily accepted by the population. The Spanish people had overcome the tragedy of the Civil War and looked forward to the future.

On the 23rd of February 1981, members of the Civil Guard burst into Congress and held the representatives hostage, while one of the military headquarters ordered troops onto the streets. However, the decisive intervention by the King foiled the attempted coup and the Spanish people took to the streets in defence of democracy.

Our host country has been through many changes, but now it is a Parliamentary Democracy and a Constitutional Monarchy. We at Taquilla Tickets fully intend to see as much of this beautiful country as we can. By the time this magazine is printed and dispatched, we will have been to: Concentina Medieval Market, Seen the Chinese Terracotta Warriors, Enjoyed a Tribute to The Beatles, and visited Salamanca. WOW!!!

On the 22nd of November, we are visiting (by popular demand) the ever-popular Licor 43 establishment in Cartagena. Licor 43 is made here. Never tried it? Well, Licor 43 is a "Golden-Hued Spanish Liqueur" made from 43 different Herbs and Spices, and the flavour is unique, with notes of Cinnamon, Vanilla and Orange Peel. We will get to taste one or more of these cocktails along with a guided tour of the facility where it is made. This will be followed by a trip to Cartagena where you can buy the lunch of your choice, and maybe a little shopping!

On the 26th of November, we are taking our guests to Orihuela to see the Graceful and Stunning performance of "The Nutcracker" performed by the Kiev Ballet. Come with us to see this stunning art form at its best!!

IKEA on a coach? YES!! On the 29th of November we are taking our guests to the Nueva Condomina shopping centre and then on to the world-famous IKEA store, both of which are situated in the lovely city of Murcia.

The 2nd of December sees Mary Poppins "popping" into Molina de Segura. Taquilla Tickets will be taking guests to see this ever-popular show. This show will be in "Spanglish". You all know the words, so come with us on this lovely magical adventure.

The 7th of November will see us at Caravaca Medieval Market. We will take you back to the Middle Ages on this trip. This is where "The Running of The Wine Horses" is held. You could look around the "Wine Horse" museum too. Now that is brilliant!!

Ever been to the Sierra Nevada mountains? The snow lift will take you to the top of the mountain where you can watch the skiers. This place is stunning, and is "picture perfect". You will love it! Join us on this one on Monday the 11th of December.

The 18th of December will take us to Hacienda de Alamo for a very special Christmas Variety Show. A Peter Kay tribute act, Vincent Simone from "Strictly", with his Dancers. A Buffet before and a Disco after will take us late into the night. NOW, THAT IS ONE NOT TO MISS.

As usual, you can contact us as follows
Al Kazar office is open 7 days a week from 09.30 - 14.30 AND in the evening from 17.00 - 21.00 also 7 days a week !!!

We are pretty sure that you know how to get in touch with us BUT, just in case:

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Pedestrian access is via an ornamental, metal gate leading onto a tiled, covered porch with a traditional Spanish wooden door, with rejas and tall windows to each side, leading into a large glazed terrace.

The terrace is an impressive 86m², a stunning room, currently set up as an additional lounge, games room, and dining room, the perfect room for entertaining. Stylish, a quirky mix of modern and traditional, with a tiled floor, ceiling fans, and sliding blinds to the windows.

The main house is accessed via traditional double wooden doors, opening directly into the lounge, with high ceilings and exposed beams, this room is breath-taking. With rustic floor tiles in a rich warm red, a tiled feature wall, fabulous iron chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, dual A.C, a log burner, two windows overlooking the terrace, and to the left is a hallway leading to 3 of the bedrooms and family shower room.

To the left, is the family shower room, beautifully reformed, fully tiled, with a large walk-in shower, a glass block shower screen, pebble feature shower tray, rainfall shower, W.C, hand basin, a traditional wooden window with shutters, adding to the charm and character, with the high ceilings, and exposed beams continuing throughout the property.

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Hobbies

Natural Swimming

Spain offers numerous natural swimming spots that are truly breathtaking. Here are some of the best places for natural swimming in Spain:

Costa Brava: This stunning coastal region in Catalonia is known for its crystal-clear waters and picturesque coves. Cala Pola, Cala Salions, and Cala Futadera are among the beautiful spots for swimming.

Costa del Sol: Located in Andalusia, the Costa del Sol boasts gorgeous beaches and hidden coves. Playa de Maro, Playa de la Rijana, and Playa de los Muertos are popular choices for natural swimming.

Asturias: The region of Asturias in northern Spain offers pristine beaches and stunning landscapes. The Playa de Gulpiyuri, a hidden inland beach with crystal-clear water, is a unique and beautiful spot for swimming.

Canary Islands: This archipelago off the northwest coast of Africa has a range of incredible swimming locations. The natural pools of Garachico in Tenerife, the Playa de las Conchas in La Graciosa, and the Charco Azul in La Palma are all worth a visit.

Mallorca: The largest of the Balearic Islands, Mallorca, is home to some stunning natural swimming spots. Cala Varques, Cala Mondrago, and Es Trenc are a few examples of its beautiful beaches with turquoise waters.

Sierra de Cazorla: Located in the province of Jaén, this natural park offers pristine rivers and lakes ideal for swimming. Embalse del Tranco and Río Borosa are popular spots for a refreshing dip.

Picos de Europa: Situated in northern Spain, the Picos de Europa mountain range features magnificent landscapes and natural swimming options. The Fuente Dé River and Covadonga Lakes are fantastic places to enjoy a swim surrounded by stunning scenery.

Remember to check local regulations, safety conditions, and weather forecasts before visiting these natural swimming spots.



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Why Spain! BY

“My contribution to A Life In Spain aims to share my personal experiences in deciding, planning, moving and now living in Spain. My hope is that someone finds it useful, helpful, insightful or helps anyone considering moving to Spain (or another country), the courage to follow that dream.”



2nd October 2023

First Impressions! Pozo Alcon, Jaen to Los Carriones, Granada It 's February 23, 2023, the first morning of our new chapter, adventures, challenges, and opportunities in Spain. I feel super pumped for the journey ahead. I can't wait to get this show on the road and explore Andalucia.

We're about 3km outside Pozo Alcon, Jaen, at a farm stay called „Cabanas Cortijo el Helao“. It's an amazing place with the most welcoming host. Rustic, comfortable, and warm cabins, a hobby farm with all sorts of well-cared-for farm animals. Vex is so happy and interacts beautifully with the farm animals, except for the cats, they're a no-go zone! The property is fully fenced and surrounded by almond trees, magnificent views, and that sweet, sweet Springtime almond blossom scent that scintillates all your senses.

Why is this little town in Jaen our first stop? In case you missed it in last month's publication, we are here to collect Vera, a 1989 Volkswagen T-25 T-3 Reimo camper. The plan is that Vera becomes our new temporary home while we cruise around Andalucia for the foreseeable 3-6 months looking for our next community, our next home, and the right place to establish our small adult-only Guesthouse business. Some three months after my arrival in Andalucia, I've realized my Guesthouse dream is somewhat of a cliché. Anyway, I digress, that's a story for another day!

Hiking gear on. Vex and I are heading out for our morning sunrise hike, a routine well-embedded in our daily life in Cyprus. The morning connection with nature is a crucial part of our every day. Three little dogs living at Cabanas Cortijo el Helao tag along with us.

It is breathtakingly stunning, all the orchard dogs we pass, with mixed reception, are securely fenced in big fields, have good weather protection, water, food, and they all look reasonably healthy. That's a massive step up from animal welfare practices in Cyprus. I feel safe out exploring the campo with my boy, and his 3 tag-along mates with my walking sticks, just in case a boar or stray dog decided to try and take us on.

Ana, the lady who collected us at Madrid International Airport the day before, arrived with delicious hot Churros and Cafe Con Leche for breakfast. Not long after that, Vera's seller arrives, then the moderator from the Volkswagen (VW) T-25 Facebook

Group in Spain. He is inspecting Vera on my behalf. I know nothing about these (or any other kind of) classic campers. Vera passed her inspection. I paid the Seller the balance due and took physical possession. Not long now, we can start our epic Andalucian-wide property search soon.

And then, oh no ... Vera is difficult to drive, for me. I did not expect this for some reason. Difficult to start on cold winter mornings, the absence of power steering means being extra cautious about how and where you park her. Checking oil and water before setting off anywhere. Her height difficult to navigate during high winds.

Driving Vera for the first week reminded me of how automated cars have become. I couldn't help but ponder if that was a good or bad thing because for me, it appears that I have forgotten how to drive! My modern-day car, also a Volkswagen but an



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The Spanish/English-speaking agent handling my purchase and transfer of legal ownership for Vera is admitted to the hospital. Thankfully she made a reasonably quick recovery over the next week or so but, Vex and I had to move on to Los Carriones, Granada, 47km from Pozo Alcon, Jaen, before finalising Vera's legal ownership transfer.

We are now off to meet the owners (and sellers) of Cave Holidays Andalucia. I had booked a cave house to stay in for a couple of nights while I check out the area, their business for sale, and a few other properties I had short-listed. I also had Vera booked in for a full service fifteen minutes down the road.

I had a strong sense for many months that Cave Holidays Andalucia was the business for me. It's a great package deal. It's located in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Geopark Granada and in the area referred to as the "bad lands". Sounds super cool, right? It comprises a complex of 3 cave houses. Owners 3-bedroom cave plus two two-bedroom cave houses for short stays. It has a transferrable Rural Tourism license, website, etc. It's a turnkey business opportunity. Absolutely nothing needs doing or buying. It's stunning. It's legal. The owners have put a lot of love into this business. It's in my budget. Nonetheless, I am focused on keeping an open mind at this very early stage of our Andalucian-wide property search.

I extended our stay at Cave Holidays Andalucia due to Vera delays. New parts had to be ordered and my agent was still trying to transfer Vera into my name. The latter ended up taking just over four weeks to resolve!

The mornings during this week ranged between -2 and -7 degrees Celsius. Vex had to wear my Zara puffer vest over the top of his winter coat for morning hikes. It was very cold. We walked a lot. It snowed on the mountains surrounding the area. I made several trips from Los Carriones to Baza (30 minutes) for groceries and bureaucratic matters, Benamaurel and Galera. I was building up some confidence in driving Vera but still finding it very nerve-racking and frustrating. All I could think of was "who in their right mind buys a classic campervan with zero bush-mechanical skills? Clearly me. Maybe this plan of mine sounds better on paper than real life?"

As each day passes, Vex's fear of Vera's noises, the road noises, the other cars and trucks passing us was getting worse. The inside heat of the cabin, even in winter, was quite frankly overwhelming and that's with both windows down. He starts refusing to walk anywhere near where Vera is parked. I have to start to carry him, 17kg, to Vera. Its breaking my heart. How has a traveller ended up with a pooch that hates travel?

In comes the constant reassurance of self that "we just need time to settle into nomadic life, it's a big adjustment". I decided to hit the road on Saturday. For the first couple of weeks, we will change campervan parks every couple of days, or so. We need access to power, showering, and laundering services as well. There can be no wild camping without first being set up with solar power capabilities and for that, almost everyone in the FB groups suggested to head for Vera in Almeria to get that and other Vera related items organised.

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