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Edition 2024

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TOP 5 PORTS!

We continue our series of articles in each issue, and this time is no different. Previously, we explored the best places on the Costa del Sol and the prettiest white villages in Andalusia. Since we are so close to the sea, it's time to dive into the beauty of marinas. Here are the TOP 5 ports on the Costa del Sol! We'll start in Malaga and move westward.



Puerto de Málaga

Spain's second-largest port, the Port of Málaga, has transformed into a vibrant hub that beautifully blends its historic maritime roots with modern attractions. Over recent years, this port has seen significant expansion, turning it into one of the city's main highlights and a must-visit destination.



Photo credit: Matein Leszczyński, MacLenphoto

The promenade, a favourite for locals and tourists alike, stretches along the waterfront, offering scenic views perfect for leisurely walks, bike rides, or even a romantic evening out. Lined with lively cafés, trendy restaurants, boutique shops, and charming arcades, it offers something for everyone. The mix of culinary delights and retail therapy makes it a hot spot for both daytime activities and evening relaxation.

Beyond the promenade, the port plays a critical role as a marina for some of the largest cruise ships in the world. It's also an important commercial hub, a bustling fishing port, and home to a shipyard and naval base. The port's operational significance harmonises with its recreational offerings, making it a unique blend of industry and leisure.

As you explore, you'll encounter charming green spaces, children's playgrounds, and sleek yachts moored in the marina. Adding a touch of history to the modern surroundings is the 1732 Chapel of the Port, a beautifully preserved relic that contrasts with the contemporary atmosphere. This fusion of old and new captures the essence of Málaga's charm.

Continuing along the promenade, you'll reach the iconic Malagueta Beach, known for its golden sands and lively chiringuitos (beach bars) serving fresh seafood. Nearby, the La Farola lighthouse, built in 1817, stands as a local symbol. It's not only the only lighthouse in Spain with a female name but also provides breathtaking views of the city and the sparkling Mediterranean Sea.

Whether you're there for a scenic stroll, a meal with a view, boutique shopping, or embarking on a boat tour, the Port of Málaga brims with energy and offers an unforgettable experience for any visitor.



Puerto Marina Benalmádena

Just a short drive from Málaga, Puerto Marina Benalmádena is a captivating destination that seamlessly combines leisure, entertainment, and architectural charm. Built between 1972 and 1982, this unique marina is often celebrated for its striking design, which blends Arabian, Indian, and Andalusian styles. The result is a visually stunning complex of artificial islands connected by picturesque red bridges, offering a dreamy waterfront experience.

Puerto Marina is a hub of activity, drawing visitors with its lively atmosphere and diverse offerings. The marina's waterfront is dotted with restaurants serving cuisine from around the world, boutique shops, and bars perfect for sunset cocktails. For those seeking entertainment, the Sea Life Aquarium is a popular family-friendly attraction, showcasing fascinating marine life.

Boats from across the globe dock here, and the marina's international appeal has earned it several accolades, including being named the world's most beautiful port in 1995 and 1997. It also proudly holds the prestigious Blue Flag award for its excellent water quality and top-tier facilities.

Whether you're visiting for an afternoon stroll, a romantic dinner, or simply to admire the elegant yachts, Puerto Marina Benalmádena is a must-visit on the Costa del Sol.





PUERTO BANÚS

Marbella 1970

For those seeking a touch of glamour, Puerto Banús in Marbella is the epitome of luxury. This world-famous marina, opened in 1970 by José Banús Masdeu, was designed by architect Noldi Schreck to emulate a sophisticated Andalusian village. From the moment it opened with a star-studded event attended by dignitaries and international celebrities, Puerto Banús has been synonymous with wealth and style.

Today, this marina is one of Spain's most iconic destinations, attracting over 5 million visitors annually.

It boasts 915 berths for yachts of all sizes, some valued at millions of euros. Along its glamorous harbour, you'll find an array of high-end designer boutiques like Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Dior, as well as luxury car displays showcasing Ferraris, Lamborghinis, and Rolls-Royces.

Puerto Banús is particularly lively in the summer months, when its nightlife scene comes alive with exclusive beach clubs, fine dining restaurants, and vibrant parties.

Even during the quieter winter months, it exudes an understated elegance, offering a more tranquil experience. Framed by the La Concha mountain and the Mediterranean Sea, Puerto Banús represents the pinnacle of the Costa del Sol's luxurious lifestyle.



Puerto Deportivo de Estepona

Puerto Deportivo de Estepona is a more laid-back alternative to the bustling Puerto Banús. Known for its white-and-blue buildings and cosy ambiance, this smaller marina offers a tranquil escape where visitors can enjoy fresh seafood, sip coffee at waterfront cafés, or simply admire the boats swaying in the harbour.

Once a hotspot for nightlife, the port has evolved into a family-friendly destination with a more relaxed atmosphere. In the evenings, the harbour lights create a picturesque setting, perfect for romantic walks.

On Sundays, the marina transforms into a lively mercadillo (market), where you can browse local crafts, fresh produce, and souvenirs.

Estepona's fishing heritage remains strong here, with local fishermen celebrating the Virgen del Carmen festival on July 16th, honouring the patron saint of sailors.

Visitors can also book fishing excursions, dolphin-watching tours, or even day trips to Gibraltar.

Adjacent to the marina is Playa del Cristo, a sheltered, family-friendly beach with shallow waters and plenty of amenities, making it ideal for a relaxing day by the sea. With its cosy charm and authentic feel, the Puerto Deportivo de Estepona is a hidden gem that's worth exploring.





Puerto Sotogrande - PST

Sotogrande is no longer on the Costa del Sol or in the province of Malaga, but rather in Cadiz. However, it is only 25 kilometres from Estepona, with Gibraltar just a little further on.

It is said that the 'big fish' live here, not in Marbella. A stroll around the harbour and villas quickly confirms this: wider roads, taller palm trees, perfectly manicured lawns, and luxurious homes resembling those in Hollywood.

Sotogrande was founded by Filipino couple Joseph McMicking and Mercedes Zobel de Ayala y Roxas, modelled after Palm Beach in Florida, USA. They succeeded in creating one of Europe's most luxurious urbanisations.



Built in 1988, the harbour is relatively young but sprawling enough to require water taxis during the summer. The marina is divided into sections, each with distinct house styles and colours. YES, the vivid colours play a central role, giving the area a lively, tropical feel reminiscent of towns in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. Residents even have water garages right next to their estates.

Sotogrande is peaceful, with no discos or late-night parties. Even in summer, a strict nighttime silence is observed. The area offers fine restaurants and shops, though not the exclusive brands found in Puerto Banús. Nearby, you'll find a 27-hectare wetland and natural area, the Andalusian National Park.

Sotogrande is also renowned for its sports facilities, including golf courses, polo fields, a rugby club, and tennis and padel courts. It's a serene yet luxurious destination for those seeking both relaxation and activity.

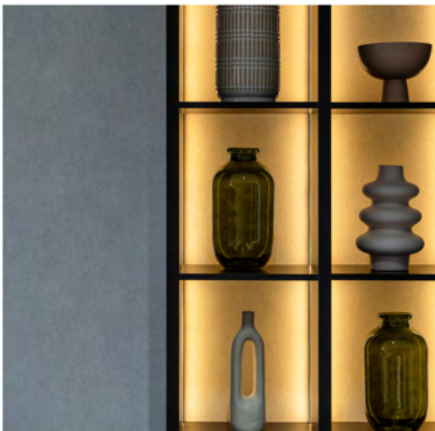


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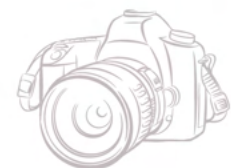
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Ronda

Welles and Hemingway Fell in Love with Ronda

Ronda is more than just one of Andalusia's most iconic cities; it's a timeless destination that has captivated visitors for centuries with its dramatic landscapes, rich cultural history, and romantic atmosphere. Located in the northwest of Málaga province, it's the perfect choice for a day trip from the Costa del Sol, just 50 km inland near San Pedro.

The city's extraordinary charm left an indelible mark on two great figures of the 20th century: Orson Welles, who loved Ronda so much that he chose to be laid to rest here, and Ernest Hemingway, who described Ronda as: "The whole town, as far as the eye can see, is nothing but a romantic theatrical backdrop."

Today, visitors can enjoy the very views Hemingway admired by strolling along the aptly named Paseo de Ernest Hemingway, a promenade that offers breathtaking panoramic vistas of the surrounding landscapes.

Ronda itself is like a phenomenon: perched atop two massive rock formations at an elevation of about 740 meters above sea level, the city appears to defy gravity. Its dramatic gorge, carved by the Guadalevín River - whose name harks back to Arab times, meaning “river of milk” due to the sediment-laden waters - divides the city into two parts: the ancient Moorish quarter and the Christian-founded district. The latter is home to Ronda’s famous Plaza de Toros, a bullfighting arena steeped in history.

Thanks to its nearly impenetrable location, Ronda boasts a long and storied past that stretches from Roman times through centuries of Moorish rule, culminating in its conquest by Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Monarchs, in 1485.



Top Recommendations for Exploring Ronda and Beyond

To fully appreciate Ronda, make sure you’re prepared:

- Wear comfortable shoes, as you’ll be doing plenty of walking.
- Keep in mind that Ronda’s climate differs from the coast-it’s warmer in summer and considerably cooler in winter.

The most convenient parking spot is the underground garage on Avenida Martínez Astein, from where you can cross Calle Infante to reach the historic old town.



Plaza de Toros – Spain’s Oldest Bullfighting Arena

www.torosronda.com

Ronda’s Plaza de Toros is not only the oldest surviving bullfighting arena in Spain but also one of the most beautiful. Built in the late 18th century, it has a massive diameter of 66 meters (larger than the standard 60 meters), and its design includes two tiers of Tuscan-columned arcades, which shelter around 5,000 spectators.

The arena holds a special place in Spanish bullfighting history. It is the birthplace of Pedro Romero, who formalized the modern rules of bullfighting. This arena was even immortalised by Francisco de Goya in his engravings. Visitors can tour the bullfighting museum, equestrian exhibition, and the Real Maestranza de Caballería de Ronda history hall, all located within the arena.

Visitors can also explore behind the scenes: the nooks and crannies where bulls are kept and selected on the day of a corrida. Bullfights here are now rare and only occur in September during a traditional festival where participants wear period costumes inspired by Goya.



Puente Nuevo – The ‘New’ Bridge

This architectural marvel is an 18th-century engineering masterpiece. The Puente Nuevo, standing nearly 100 meters above the Guadalevín River, features massive stone pillars and three beautifully symmetrical arches. Beyond serving as a vital connection between the city’s two halves, the bridge holds fascinating historical significance. A room built into the structure above the central arch once functioned as a prison. Its height and location made any escape attempts utterly impossible.



Palacio Mondragón – A Nobleman’s Palace

This 16th-century noble palace, built in the mudéjar style, blends Christian and Moorish architectural influences. According to legend, it once housed the Moorish king Abbel Malik. Inside, visitors can explore intricately designed rooms and courtyards while learning about Ronda’s fascinating history at the Municipal Museum, housed within the palace.



Casa Don Bosco – A Charming Andalusian Manor

www.casamuseodonbosco.com

For a taste of traditional Andalusian life, a visit to Casa Don Bosco is a must. This beautifully preserved manor house features a quaint inner courtyard, a lush garden, and a small balcony offering sweeping views of the gorge and the iconic bridge.



Puente Viejo – The Old Bridge

Step back in time by visiting the Puente Viejo, which dates to Arab times but was later rebuilt by the Christians. This smaller bridge offers equally stunning views of Ronda from a different angle. Once you cross, take a stroll through the gardens on the way back toward the Puente Nuevo, soaking in the surrounding beauty.



La Mina de Agua (a lot of stairs) – Palacio del Rey Moro

La Mina de Agua is a flight of 231 steps from the garden of the Palacio del Rey Moro and culminating at the Guadalevin River. The steps were used for centuries by slaves, to bring water up into the city. This water source was a lifeline for the Moors during the 1485 siege of Ronda when the Christians tried to starve the city into surrender. It is a very different experience but please be aware that the steps are also the only way out. Wear suitable shoes and take your time. It's worth it.



Dining Highlights in Ronda

Catalonia Ronda Hotel

www.cataloniahotels.com/es/hotel/catalonia-ronda

Located next to the Plaza de Toros, this elegant hotel features a rooftop bar with unparalleled views of the arena and nearby mountains. Perfect for enjoying coffee, wine, or a light snack.

La Taberna Bar

www.latabernaderonda.es/WEB

Situated in Plaza de Socorro, this spot is beloved by locals for its hearty Andalusian cuisine. Be sure to try the bull's tail (rabo de toro) or pig's cheek (carrillada de cerdo). Arrive early (before 2 pm) to secure a table.

Pedro Romero Restaurant

www.rpedroromero.com

Opposite the bullring, this traditional eatery is adorned with bullfighting memorabilia and specialises in rabo de toro. Dining here offers a truly local experience.



Descalzos Viejos Winery

www.descalzosviejos.com

In the Guadalevín River gorge and surrounded by three natural parks, the Descalzos Viejos Winery occupies a 16th-century monastery. The estate includes scenic vineyards, lush gardens, and a natural spring.

Tours, hosted by the family owners, provide insights into winemaking and culminate in a tasting session. Advance booking is required.



Setenil de las Bodegas – A White Village Like No Other

Located just 18 km from Ronda, Setenil de las Bodegas is one of Spain's most unique pueblos blancos (white villages). Unlike other towns, many of Setenil's houses are carved directly into rock niches, with huge overhanging stone shelves providing natural roofs.

The town's name reflects its storied history. Derived from the Latin Septem Nihil (seven times nothing), it refers to the Christians' seven failed attempts to capture the city. Only on the eighth siege in 1484 did the Catholic Monarchs succeed.

Park in the upper part of town to enjoy panoramic views before descending into the winding streets. Morning is the best time to visit, when the sun illuminates the unique rock formations, and you can enjoy a quiet coffee at one of the local bars.





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The Essence of Andalusia: Olive Oil, the Liquid Gold

Andalusia's landscape is dotted with olive groves and cultivated fields, creating a characteristic sight for travellers. This Spanish region is renowned globally as the largest producer of olive oil, often referred to as "liquid gold."

Spain's love for olive oil stems from a rich blend of historical, cultural, climatic, and economic factors. Olive oil has been a staple of the Mediterranean diet for centuries, with its roots in ancient civilisations. The Phoenicians and Romans played pivotal roles in developing olive cultivation in Spain. Over time, olive oil became deeply embedded in Spanish cuisine and traditions.

During the Roman Empire, Spanish Andalusia was already celebrated for its exceptional olive oil. Archaeological evidence in Rome includes olive amphorae from Hispania Baetica—an ancient Spanish province under Roman rule—discovered along the Tiber River.

Regions like Andalusia, Catalonia, and Castilla-La Mancha offer ideal conditions for olive cultivation, with their hot summers, mild winters, and well-drained soils. Today, Spain leads the world in olive oil production, contributing nearly half of the global supply. Andalusia alone accounts for a significant share, aided by robust promotion through national and international campaigns emphasising its quality, flavour, and health benefits.



Andalusia: A Global Leader

Globally, more than 3 million tonnes of olive oil are produced annually, with Spain leading the charge at 1.7 million tonnes - over 50% of global output. Spain far outpaces Italy (294,000 tonnes) and Greece (208,000 tonnes). The country boasts the largest expanse of olive groves worldwide, covering over 2 million hectares.

Within Spain, Andalusia dominates with about 60% of the nation's olive groves. Jaén, the region's "olive oil capital," exemplifies this dominance, while Castilla-La Mancha, Navarre, Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and Aragon are also notable for their oil production.

Spain not only excels in production but is also lauded for the quality of its olive oil. Generations of Spanish producers have mastered the art of creating virgin olive oil. Some groves even feature trees planted as far back as the 11th century.





The Art of Olive Cultivation

Olives thrive in warm climates with extended sunshine and moderate rainfall, making Spain's conditions ideal. The harvest occurs between November and January, with methods ranging from handpicking (to ensure quality for extra virgin oil) to mechanised processes.

Extra virgin olive oil is the highest-quality oil, produced from the first cold pressing, without refinement. Its full flavour, aroma, and nutritional value make it highly sought after. Strict regulations, including Protected Geographical Indication systems, ensure the authenticity and quality of Spanish olive oil.

Modern farming techniques, such as drip irrigation, help maintain high yields even during droughts. Many producers are shifting toward organic farming, eschewing chemical fertilisers and pesticides to create certified organic olive oil. Sustainability initiatives also promote biodiversity and reduce environmental impact.

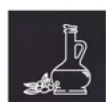


Popular Olive Varieties

Spanish plantations cultivate around 260 olive varieties, harvested between September and March.

Among the most popular are:

- **Manzanilla:** Common in Andalusia, these round olives have a distinctive flavour and small seeds.
- **Hojiblanca:** Similar to Manzanilla but with firmer flesh and an intense green hue.
- **Gordal:** Known as "royal," these large, heart-shaped olives have a robust flavour.
- **Picual:** Representing 50% of Spain's crop, this variety is resilient to climate change and ideal for oil production, offering large, slightly bitter fruit.
- **Picuda:** Known for its firm, delicately flavoured fruit.
- **Lechín:** Resistant to drought and frost, with slightly bitter, whitish flesh.



Jaén: The Olive Oil Capital of the World

The Andalusian province of Jaén is home to 66 million olive trees across 550,000 hectares, producing about 45% of Spain's olive oil and 20% of the world's supply. This surpasses Italy's entire production.

Jaén's olive industry drives the local economy, with cooperatives producing oil and offering tourist activities such as olive culture workshops. Visitors can explore the Cultural Centre of the Olive Groves and Olive Oil in Jaén to learn about the region's history, gastronomy, and production techniques.

Beyond olive groves, Jaén boasts diverse landscapes, earning it the nickname "Switzerland of Andalusia." National parks such as Sierra de Andújar, Sierra Mágina, and the expansive Sierra de Cazorla, Segura, and Las Villas offer scenic beauty. History enthusiasts can visit the UNESCO-listed towns of Úbeda and Baeza.

Health Benefits of Olive Oil

Rich in monounsaturated fats and antioxidants, olive oil is a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet, promoting heart health and longevity. It's a key ingredient in dishes like gazpacho, paella, and tapas.

Extra virgin olive oil, packed with polyphenols, combats oxidative stress and reduces the risk of chronic illnesses, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Studies highlight its ability to lower cholesterol, improve blood vessel elasticity, and support cardiovascular health.

Although calorific, olive oil aids in weight management by promoting satiety. Its vitamin E content also protects skin against UV damage and ageing, while its moisturising properties benefit skin and hair health.

Olive oil supports digestion, reduces symptoms of ulcers and constipation, and helps stabilise blood sugar levels. With its nutritional and health advantages, it remains an integral part of Spanish culture and cuisine.



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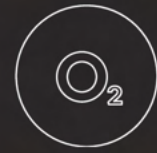


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With its rich history, stunning landscapes, and two meticulously designed courses, this prestigious club has long been a favorite among golf lovers worldwide. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a casual player, Atalaya offers an unforgettable experience that blends challenging play with breathtaking scenery.



Established in 1968, Atalaya Golf & Country Club boasts a heritage that few courses can match. Designed by the renowned German golf architect Bernard von Limburger, the club's first course, the Old Course, quickly gained recognition for its impeccable layout and strategic design. Over the decades, Atalaya has continually evolved, enhancing its facilities while maintaining the classic charm that has defined it for over half a century.

Atalaya Golf & Country Club is home to two magnificent courses: the Old Course and the New Course, each offering a unique challenge and style of play.

The Old Course – A true classic, this par-72 championship course is renowned for its wide fairways, well-protected greens, and a championship layout. Measuring 6,142 meters from the back tees, the Old Course is both challenging and rewarding, demanding strategic play and precision. The rolling fairways and breathtaking views of La Concha mountain provide an unparalleled golfing experience.

The New Course – Opened in 1990, the New Course offers a different yet equally captivating challenge. Slightly shorter than its predecessor, this course features undulating terrain, elevated greens, and narrow fairways that require accuracy over power. Its elevated positioning affords players spectacular panoramic views of the Mediterranean and surrounding countryside, making every round a feast for the eyes as well as a test of skill.



World-Class Facilities and Services

Beyond its two exceptional courses, Atalaya Golf & Country Club offers an array of amenities that cater to every golfer's needs. The expansive driving range and state-of-the-art practice facilities, including chipping and putting greens, ensure that players can fine-tune their skills before heading onto the course.

Here's an improved version of your paragraph with a stronger emphasis on PG Golf & Sport Academy being one of the best practice facilities in Europe, highlighting its advanced technology, multilingual coaching, and family-friendly offerings:

At Atalaya Golf Club, we are proud to partner with PG Golf & Sport Academy, one of the finest practice facilities in Europe. Equipped with TrackMan technology, the Academy provides golfers with cutting-edge training tools to refine their skills. Our team of highly skilled professionals offers coaching in five different languages, ensuring a world-class learning experience for players of all levels.

For families, PG Golf & Sport Academy goes beyond traditional coaching, offering engaging kids' camps, junior group lessons, dedicated ladies' group sessions, and so much more.

These programs create a welcoming and enjoyable environment for golfers of all ages, making the Academy a perfect destination for the whole family. Whether you're an experienced golfer looking to fine-tune your swing or a beginner taking your first steps in the game, our personalized coaching will help you elevate your skills and confidence on the course.

With its top-tier facilities, expert instruction, and dynamic programs for all ages, PG Golf & Sport Academy at Atalaya Golf Club is the ultimate place to improve your game and enjoy an unforgettable golfing experience.



Destination Beyond Golf

Atalaya Golf & Country Club is not just a haven for golf enthusiasts—it is a complete lifestyle destination. The clubhouse, a charming Andalusian-style building, offers a warm and inviting atmosphere where guests can unwind after a round. With a top-tier restaurant serving exquisite Mediterranean cuisine and a spacious terrace overlooking the greens, the clubhouse is the perfect spot to relax and enjoy the Costa del Sol's glorious sunshine. The club's location is another major draw. Situated just a short drive from Marbella and Puerto Banús, Estepona, and Benahavis Atalaya offers easy access to some of the region's finest beaches, luxury shopping, and vibrant nightlife. Atalaya serves as the perfect base for an unforgettable trip.

Atalaya Golf & Country Club stands as a testament to the enduring appeal of classic golf course design, blending history, natural beauty, and modern amenities into one exceptional experience. Whether you're drawn by its challenging fairways, world-class facilities, or simply the stunning setting, a visit to Atalaya promises memories that will last a lifetime. For those seeking a premier golfing destination on the Costa del Sol, Atalaya Golf & Country Club remains a top-tier choice—where every round is a journey through elegance, history, and sporting excellence.

Semana Santa

HOLY WEEK

Semana Santa, or Holy Week, is a deeply solemn and profoundly significant time in the Christian calendar. As the oldest and most important Christian celebration, it is observed with immense respect and reverence.

The atmosphere during this week is both captivating and reflective, encouraging a sense of community and togetherness. The streets glisten with wax from countless burning candles, creating an almost magical setting. Amidst this solemnity however, the sight of children running and laughing or groups of "the faithful" enjoying tapas along the processional routes is not uncommon.

These contrasting images - reverence alongside revelry - are a hallmark of the celebration.

Andalusian Easter festivities in particular, are famed for their grandeur, blending tradition, artistry, and devotion.



Easter Traditions & Symbols

The roots of Andalusia's Easter traditions stretch back to the 16th century. During this period, great importance was placed on bringing religious observances closer to the people by taking the liturgy beyond the church walls and into the streets. This approach ensured the faithful could engage more directly with the sacred rituals.

One of the most iconic aspects of Semana Santa is the elaborate processions, which have become a major draw for visitors to Andalusia.

Organised by religious brotherhoods or cofradias, these processions are now the centerpiece of Holy Week and the most recognisable feature of the celebrations in the region.





HERMANDADES, COFRADÍAS PENITENCIALES, NAZARENOS

Members of these religious brotherhoods, known as hermandades or cofradías, play an essential role in the processions. Among them are the Nazarenos or Penitentes, who are clad in robes or habits—often black for Penitentes, and in the distinctive colours of their community for Nazarenos. Their pointed hoods, called capirotos, often conceal their faces, leaving only their eyes visible. This anonymity symbolises humility and penance.

In acts of devotion, some walk barefoot along the entire procession route, while others carry crosses, candles, or symbols of their confraternity. The procession centres around the massive platforms, or pasos, which carry statues of Christ and the Virgin Mary. These intricately decorated floats are true works of art, adorned with gold or silver, fresh flowers, and lanterns. Carrying these heavy floats, often weighing several tons, is a physically demanding task requiring skill, endurance, and seamless teamwork.

Musical setting

Music is an integral part of Holy Week processions, amplifying the solemnity and evoking deep emotions among the participants and onlookers. The sombre sounds of drums and trumpets create an atmosphere that resonates deeply, stirring not only the ears but also the hearts and souls of those who listen.

Vigils and fasting

Holy Week in Andalusia also includes quiet moments of reflection. On Holy Thursday, the faithful gather in churches to pray in silence by candlelight before images of Christ. Good Friday is marked by fasting, with many Andalusians abstaining from meat and instead enjoying traditional fish dishes, particularly cod.

Traditional Sweets

Easter in Andalusia brings its own array of sweet treats, distinct from the confections enjoyed during Christmas. The traditional Roscón de Reyes, turrón, and polvorones give way to Easter specialties like torrijas. These delicious bites are made from slices of bread soaked in milk and egg, fried in olive oil, and sprinkled with sugar or cinnamon - or sometimes drizzled with honey. Another favourite is pestiños, which are crispy fried pastries flavoured with white wine and dipped in honey or dusted with sugar. Resembling Italian cannoli in shape but without filling, they are a beloved Easter indulgence. The Mona de Pascua, or "Easter Monkey," is another traditional treat, though it is less common today. This yeast-based pastry, often baked with a chocolate egg or occasionally a boiled egg at its centre, is a symbol of joy and the end of the Lenten fast. Its sweetness knows no bounds, representing the celebratory nature of Easter.



Mantillas

The mantilla, a traditional Spanish lace shawl or scarf, is another striking element of Semana Santa. Worn over the head and shoulders, often secured with a high comb known as a peineta, the mantilla is both elegant and symbolic. Women dressed in black gowns and mantillas during Holy Week embody respect and mourning, paying homage to the suffering of Christ.

Saeta

The saeta holds a special place in the processions. These deeply emotional, religious songs are performed without any instrumental accompaniment and are often likened to the passionate style of cante jondo in flamenco. The singer, known as the saetero, delivers the song with raw intensity, pouring emotion into every note. As the saeta is sung, the float carrying the sacred image halts or slows, allowing the crowd to absorb the moment fully. The saetero usually performs from a balcony above the procession, their voice piercing the air and touching the hearts of all who listen.

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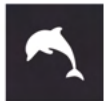
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Coastal Dolphins on the Costa del Sol

Nature's Charismatic Swimmers

The Costa del Sol, renowned for its sunny beaches and vibrant culture, is also home to an extraordinary natural spectacle: coastal dolphins. These fascinating marine mammals, often seen gracefully navigating the Mediterranean waters, captivate both locals and tourists alike with their playful behaviour and undeniable charm.



A Rich Marine Habitat

The Costa del Sol's warm, nutrient-rich waters create an ideal environment for various dolphin species, including:



Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*):

Known for their striking hourglass pattern and agile swimming, common dolphins are highly social and often found in large pods. They are one of the most frequently sighted species in the region.

Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*):

Recognisable by their robust bodies and curved dorsal fins, bottlenose dolphins are highly intelligent and adaptable. They are often seen close to the shore and are known for their curious interactions with boats.



Striped Dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*):

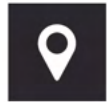
These dolphins are easily identified by the blue and white stripes running along their sides. They are known for their acrobatic leaps and are often spotted in deeper waters.



Risso's Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*):

These dolphins are characterised by their robust bodies and distinctive scarring, which becomes more pronounced with age. They have a bulbous head with a vertical crease and lack a pronounced beak. Risso's dolphins are typically found in deeper offshore waters but can occasionally be seen closer to the coast. They are known for their calm demeanour and are often observed in smaller groups compared to other dolphin species.

While these four species are the most observed in the region, the rich biodiversity of the Mediterranean means that other cetacean species might occasionally be spotted, especially during migration periods.



Where to Spot Dolphins?

Dolphin sightings are common along the Costa del Sol, particularly in areas such as Marbella, Fuengirola, Estepona, and Nerja. Many local companies offer boat tours that bring visitors closer to these majestic creatures in their natural habitat. While sightings are not guaranteed, the chances are high, especially during the warmer months when dolphins are more active.

For those who prefer to stay onshore, dolphins can occasionally be spotted from coastal viewpoints, especially early in the morning or late in the afternoon when they are most likely to be near the surface.

Dolphins play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the marine ecosystem. As apex predators, they help regulate fish populations, ensuring that no single species dominates and disrupts the marine food web. Their presence is also an indicator of the overall health of the marine environment, as they are sensitive to pollution and other ecological changes.

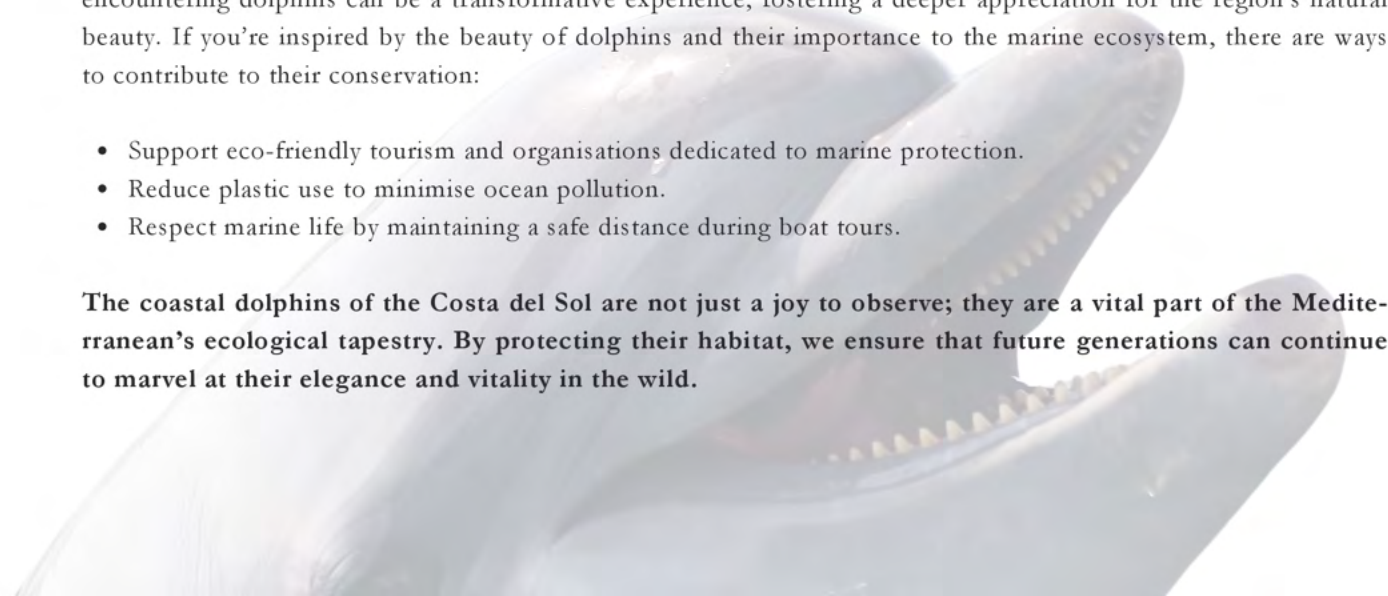
Despite their adaptability, dolphins face numerous threats, including habitat degradation, pollution, and accidental capture in fishing nets. The Costa del Sol has taken steps to protect these iconic animals. Several local and international organisations work tirelessly to monitor dolphin populations, educate the public, and promote sustainable fishing practices. Tour operators are also increasingly adopting eco-friendly practices to minimise their impact on marine life. Visitors are encouraged to choose responsible tour companies that prioritise dolphin welfare and adhere to guidelines for observing wildlife respectfully.

A Unique Connection to the Sea

Dolphins have long held a special place in the hearts of those living on the Costa del Sol. Their playful leaps and curious nature remind us of the incredible biodiversity that thrives just beyond our shores. For visitors, encountering dolphins can be a transformative experience, fostering a deeper appreciation for the region's natural beauty. If you're inspired by the beauty of dolphins and their importance to the marine ecosystem, there are ways to contribute to their conservation:

- Support eco-friendly tourism and organisations dedicated to marine protection.
- Reduce plastic use to minimise ocean pollution.
- Respect marine life by maintaining a safe distance during boat tours.

The coastal dolphins of the Costa del Sol are not just a joy to observe; they are a vital part of the Mediterranean's ecological tapestry. By protecting their habitat, we ensure that future generations can continue to marvel at their elegance and vitality in the wild.



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World of Luxury Kitchens and Bespoke Interior Design

Molini is redefining the world of luxury kitchens and bespoke interior design, creating extraordinary spaces that seamlessly blend functionality with sophistication.

The brand has become synonymous with craftsmanship, innovation, and meticulous attention to detail, setting new benchmarks in high-end furniture manufacturing.

Every Molini project embodies a fusion of creativity and precision, where designers and carpenters work in unison to craft unique solutions tailored to the needs and preferences of homeowners. With an unwavering commitment to quality, each piece is developed with a deep understanding of both aesthetic appeal and practical usability, ensuring that every space is as functional as it is breathtaking.

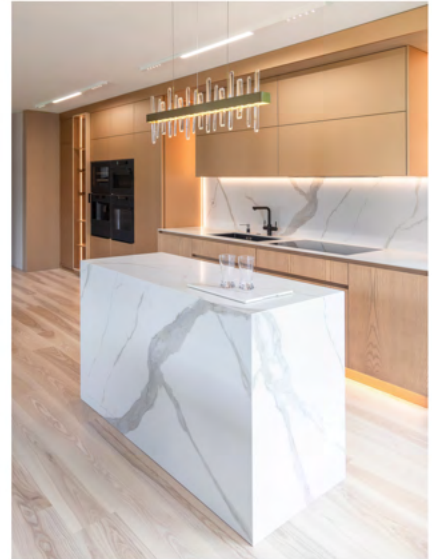
A kitchen is more than just a culinary workspace-it is the heart of the home, a gathering place where stories are shared, and creativity is unleashed.

Molini understands that a kitchen should be a personal statement, a reflection of its owner's taste and lifestyle.

Every design is carefully curated to harmonize with its surroundings, resulting in kitchens that are both inviting and efficient.

Whether it is a contemporary, minimalist approach or a richly detailed, classic aesthetic, Molini adapts each creation to the individuality of its clients.

Beyond kitchens, Molini brings its expertise to the entire home, crafting custom interior furniture that elevates everyday living.



The brand's personalized approach ensures that each design seamlessly integrates with the existing architecture, maximizing space while enhancing comfort and style.

Furniture dimensions are meticulously adjusted to optimize every inch, allowing homeowners to enjoy interiors that are both elegant and practical.





Kitchens - Wardrobes - Dressing Rooms Bathroom Furniture & other unusual furniture

The manufacturing process at Molini is a testament to the artistry and skill of its carpentry team. With a deep respect for traditional craftsmanship combined with cutting-edge technology, Molini's production process guarantees unparalleled precision in every project. The company's ability to handle bespoke orders with the highest level of professionalism ensures that each piece meets the exacting standards of even the most discerning clientele.



Molini is more than just a brand-it is an experience, a journey into the world of refined living. By shaping spaces that inspire and transform, Molini continues to push the boundaries of luxury interior design, making every home a masterpiece of elegance and functionality.



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Tarifa

The Dance of Wind and Waves

The southernmost tip of mainland Europe, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, lies the enchanting town of Tarifa. Known as the "wind capital of Europe," this vibrant coastal gem boasts a unique blend of history, adventure, and natural beauty that makes it an irresistible destination for travellers. Its location at the crossroads of continents and seas creates an atmosphere that feels both ancient and alive, as centuries-old traditions meet the energy of modern-day adventure seekers.

Tarifa's unique position makes it a true gateway. Just 14 kilometres across the Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco's coast rises dramatically on the horizon, giving Tarifa a direct connection to two continents. This proximity has shaped the town's identity for centuries, enriching its culture with a mix of Spanish, Moorish, and African influences. The regular ferry to Tangier offers a tempting opportunity to experience both sides of the strait in a single trip, making Tarifa a natural hub for adventurers and explorers.

It's not just a symbolic crossing point but a geographic spectacle. Standing at Punta de Tarifa, Europe's southernmost point, you can gaze at the meeting of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The changing hues of the water and the shifting breezes create a dynamic energy that's felt throughout the town.



Universo
Tarifa

Photo credit: M. Falicka



The Thrill of the Wind

One of Tarifa's biggest draws is its reputation as a global hotspot for kitesurfing and windsurfing. The unique geography of the strait, funnels winds toward the town, creating ideal conditions that attract thousands of water sports enthusiasts every year.

The beaches, such as Playa de Los Lances, stretch endlessly along the coast and are lined with kites of every colour as surfers glide across the waves.

For beginners, Tarifa offers a wealth of surf schools that cater to all skill levels, while seasoned professionals flock here for the challenging wind and waves.

Even for those who prefer to stay on land, the spectacle of colourful kites flying against the backdrop of turquoise waters is mesmerising.

Tarifa is more than just wind and waves.

Its location at the heart of the Parque Natural del Estrecho makes it an ecological haven, with rugged cliffs, golden dunes, and crystal-clear coves waiting to be explored. The convergence of seas creates a unique marine environment, and the region is home to dolphins, whales, and other marine life that thrive in these waters. Tours to spot these majestic creatures depart daily from the harbour, giving visitors a chance to witness the natural richness of the Strait of Gibraltar. Bird enthusiasts flock to Tarifa during migration seasons, as thousands of birds, from storks to raptors, use this narrow crossing between Europe and Africa as a vital link in their journeys. It's a spectacle that underscores the region's role as a connector, not just for people, but for wildlife as well.





Photo credit: M. Fancek



Artistic soul of the city

Amid its natural beauty and historical significance, Tarifa pulses with a bohemian energy that sets it apart from other Andalusian towns. The influx of surfers, artists, and free-spirited travellers has shaped the town into a creative haven. Local boutiques sell handmade goods, and quirky art galleries showcase the talent of regional and international creators.

The culinary scene in Tarifa is equally diverse, with everything from traditional tapas bars to innovative restaurants that highlight fresh, local seafood. The town is particularly famous for its atun rojo (bluefin tuna), which is prepared in countless ways, from sashimi to grilled steaks. Dining in Tarifa often means sitting at a breezy terrace, savouring a plate of seafood as the sun dips below the horizon.

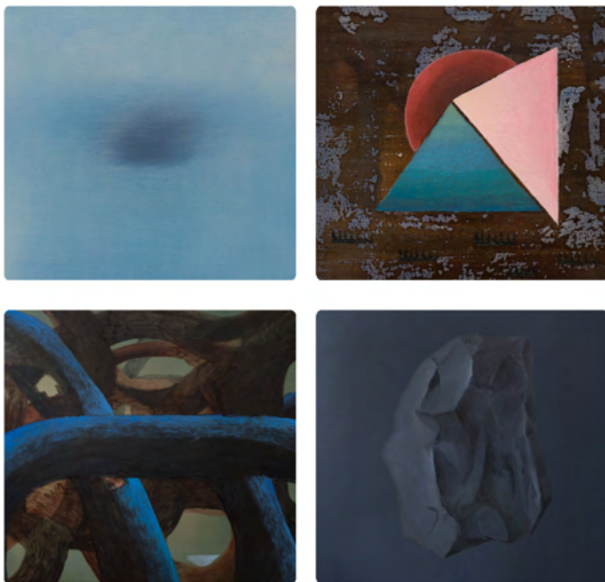
When night falls, Tarifa comes alive in a different way. The town's nightlife is a reflection of its carefree spirit, with beachside bars, cosy taverns, and open-air clubs hosting music and dancing well into the night. It's a place where days of adventure blend seamlessly into nights of celebration.

New Space for Art

21 Art Gallery Combines Passion and Professionalism

STUDIO 21
 PUERTO BANÚS

Heidi and Maciej, the owners of Studio21 in Puerto Banús, have decided to expand their love for beauty by creating 21 Art Gallery. This unique concept blends daily creativity with a passion for art, offering a space that promotes contemporary artists. While the gallery primarily operates virtually, the first pieces can already be admired at Studio21, which has become a temporary exhibition space.



Clients can explore and purchase works by Polish artists displayed at the studio.

"We have invited talented young Polish artists to collaborate with us. We are confident that the names currently gracing the walls of our studio offer our clients a chance to acquire extraordinary works 'on the spot.' However, we don't limit ourselves to exhibition space alone. With the help of our expert, Basia, we work on a broader scale. We can offer our clients works by world-renowned artists."

says Heidi.



Featured Artists

Kuba Słomkowski

A painter, illustrator, musician, and installation artist, Słomkowski's works balance abstraction and symbolism, experimenting with form and colour.

This combination evokes strong emotions in viewers. As an artist, Słomkowski has gained considerable success both in Poland and internationally, with his works continuously increasing in value.

"WhaleElephant"
 oil on canvas, 90/110 cm, 2021



Tomek Bieniek

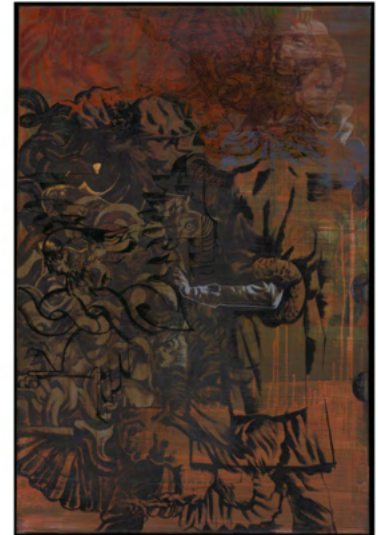
An artist with a broad spectrum of creativity, Bieniek's works are characterised by dynamic compositions and vivid colours. He often merges painting with elements of sculpture, creating pieces that radiate energy and emotion.



"Totem XIV"
oil on canvas, 80/120 cm, 2024



"Muzzle"
oil on canvas, 90/130 cm, 2022



"Night"
oil on canvas, 80/120 cm, 2019

Magdalena Lenartowicz

An artist with an extraordinary sensitivity to detail, Lenartowicz creates her works without a brush, using only her hands. This technique imparts a unique and distinctive quality to each piece. Her artworks exude subtlety, harmony, and tranquility. Complementing her paintings are high-quality wallpapers, which play an essential decorative role in modern interiors.





Art as an Extension of Creativity

Maciej, an acclaimed hairstylist, treats his work as a form of applied art.

Maciej Wróblewski

"Each meeting with a client is a kind of collaboration – a conversation, discovering individuality, and giving it the right expression."

he explains.

This daily creativity and sensitivity to beauty inspired Heidi and Maciej to elevate their artistic pursuits, supporting contemporary creators.

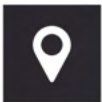


Heidi's Artistic Passion

Heidi, co-creator of 21 Art Gallery, merges her love for art with extensive artistic and cultural experience.

Marlena Heidi Wróblewska

She graduated from the Ballet School in Poznań and, at the age of 13, began performing on the stage of the Grand Theatre in Poznań. She worked in theatres both in Poland and abroad, gaining invaluable stage experience. Additionally, she completed cultural studies, allowing her to combine a practical approach to art with a profound understanding of its cultural significance.



Studio21 - Where Art Meets People

Studio21, located in Puerto Banús, a luxury district of Marbella, is a space where creativity meets sophistication. **"We wanted art to be present in our everyday environment"** says Maciej. Clients visiting the salon can admire unique artworks, demonstrating that art can be accessible and integrated into daily life.

The gallery's development is supported by Basia Polkowska, an expert in art and business, associated with the prestigious F2 Gallery in Madrid. **"Basia helped us understand that a gallery is not just an exhibition space but also a place for building relationships."** Heidi emphasises.

Heidi and Maciej believe that art can enrich anyone's life. **"We want people to stop being afraid of art. You don't need to be an expert to enjoy the beauty and emotions it evokes."** says Heidi.

21 Art Gallery plans to expand its collection, organise temporary exhibitions, and collaborate with local cultural institutions. **"We dream of a space that connects artists and audiences, blending everyday life with something truly exceptional."** Maciej concludes.

We invite you to visit Studio21 in Puerto Banús.



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The History of Coffee in Malaga & the Coffee Classification System

The coffee culture in Malaga is as deeply rooted as in the rest of Andalusia. The tradition dates back to 1954 when three cafes – Swiss Café, Café Central, and Café Munich – decided to join forces.

As a result of this merger, Café Central was born, and it became one of the most important landmarks on the coffee map of Malaga. It was here that the coffee classification system originated, which is now recognised as a tradition and a distinctive element of the coffee culture in this region.

This system was initiated by the café owner, Mr José Prado Crespo, who noticed that customers often didn't know exactly how to describe the strength or mildness of the coffee they desired. Wanting to simplify ordering while also paying tribute to local traditions, he decided to create a system that would precisely define the coffee-to-milk ratio. Thanks to this system, cafés in Malaga began offering various types of coffee tailored to customers' individual preferences.



Initially, this system applied mainly to espresso and its variations, and the names (such as Solo, Largo, Cortado) were easy to remember and intuitive for locals. Soon, this system gained popularity, and other cafés in the city began implementing it, making it a real standard throughout Andalusia.



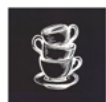
Impact on Malaga's Culture

The coffee classification system quickly became an integral part of coffee culture in Malaga. It's not just a matter of practicality, but also a tradition that has lasted for decades. Café Central, which pioneered this system, became a gathering place for people from various walks of life – from locals and tourists to artists and intellectuals. The coffee culture in Malaga, which dates back to the 19th century, was fully developed thanks to this system.

Today, Café Central remains a symbol of the Malagueño lifestyle, and the coffee served there has become the foundation for social interactions in the city. Coffee culture in Malaga is not just about taste but also a social ritual - a way to spend time with family and friends and take a break during the day.

Malaga is now a permanent fixture on Spain's coffee map. Thanks to the coffee proportion system, both locals and tourists can enjoy a wide range of beverages that cater to their personal preferences.

The history of Café Central and its impact on the development of local coffee culture demonstrates how coffee can bring people together, create traditions, and become an inseparable part of a region's identity.



Types of Coffee in Malaga

In cafés and bars in Malaga, there are nine basic types of coffee, each with a different amount of milk or, none at all. Here is the full list:

Solo

This is the classic black espresso, served without milk. It is the purest form of coffee, intense and strong, ideal for true espresso lovers.

Solo corto

A short espresso served in a small cup with a more intense flavour than the standard solo. This is a coffee with a higher concentration of taste.

Corto

Nearly half a cup of espresso served with a small amount of milk. A very strong coffee with a subtle delicacy from the milk.

No me lo ponga

A playful type of coffee that literally means "don't serve me this." It's an empty cup with no coffee or milk, used in humorous situations when someone wants their cup to remain empty.

Largo

Espresso served in a larger cup with a few drops of milk. A very strong coffee, but with a touch of softness given by the milk.

Mitad

Where half the volume is espresso, and the other half is milk. This is the classic choice for those who appreciate a balance between the intensity of the coffee and the softness of the milk.

Sombra

Coffee where 20% is espresso and 80% is milk. This is a very mild coffee with a creamy texture, ideal for those who prefer milky coffee.

Semi-largo

Strong, black coffee with about a quarter cup of milk. Suitable for those who want to soften the intensity of espresso without overdoing the milk.

Entrecorto

A smaller portion of coffee (about a quarter cup) with a large amount of milk, perfect for those who prefer a very mild coffee flavour.

Nube

Literally "cloud." This coffee consists of only 10% espresso and the rest is hot milk. The mildest and most milky version of coffee.



Lubina A LA SAL

Sea Bass Baked in Salt

Chef  Tomasz
MARBELLA

Baking sea bass in salt is one of the best ways to prepare this fish. The method results in incredibly juicy meat with a perfectly balanced flavour. If you've never tried baking fish in salt, you might think it's a complicated process, but nothing could be further from the truth – it's incredibly simple, and the result will satisfy even the most discerning food lovers!



Ingredients:

- 400g fine salt
- 2 sea bass (approximately 600g each)
- 2kg coarse salt
- ½ cup of water



Preparation:

- Clean, wash, and dry the fish. You don't need to scrape off the scales, as the skin will peel off easily after baking along with the salt, keeping the fish extra juicy.
- Preheat the oven to 220°C (top and bottom heat).
- In a large bowl, combine the coarse salt, fine salt, and water, mixing well.
- Spread a layer of salt on the bottom of a baking sheet or ovenproof dish. Place the fish on top and cover them entirely with the salt, making sure none of the salt gets inside the fish.
- Place the fish in the preheated oven and bake for 20 minutes.
- After baking, use a kitchen mallet to crack the salt shell in a few places, then gently remove it. Peel the skin off the fish, and the meat will be tender and ready to serve.

This dish pairs wonderfully with a wide variety of sides, such as roasted potatoes, grilled vegetables, or a variety of fresh salads. Enjoy!

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FIESTA POLACA

Poland, Chile & Portugal returns to the Map of Feria de los Paises!

Over the years, the International Fair of Peoples (FIP) has grown into one of the most significant cultural events on the Costa del Sol.

Established in 1994, the fair was created to celebrate and showcase the traditions, folklore, cuisine, and cultural heritage of the many nationalities that have made Fuengirola their home.



The International Fair of the Countries of Fuengirola returns this year on Wednesday, April 30, bringing together **33 nations in a vibrant celebration of culture, tradition, and gastronomy**. Open from 13:00 until 04:00, the fair will offer an immersive experience, with booths ceasing music at 2:00 on May 1 and 4, and at 3:30 on the remaining days. On May 1, the casetas may open at 12:00 to prepare for the much-anticipated inaugural parade.

This year, the fair will see a qualitative leap in the projects presented, enhancing booth decorations and increasing the quality of activities. The use of side streets and the back of the booths will be reinforced, bringing new energy to these spaces. While India will be missed, **Chile, Portugal, and Poland will make a notable return, contributing to the fair's diverse and dynamic atmosphere.**



Poland is making a special comeback after more than 20 years of absence. This marks a unique opportunity to showcase Polish heritage through its cuisine, music, and folklore.

"Our presence at the event is also a response to the growing number of Poles settling in Andalusia. This is a great opportunity not only for Poles, but more importantly for our Spanish and international friends to get to know our culture better." says Karolina Zabrzaska-Haack, co-organizer of the Polish zone.

The Polish pavilion will be bursting with culture and flavors, inviting visitors to engage in workshops inspired by Polish traditions. The musical program will blend folk sounds with modern arrangements, while Polish culinary specialties will take center stage.

A major highlight will be the inaugural parade on Thursday, May 1, featuring over a thousand representatives from various countries, including Poland, proudly presenting its rich heritage. This colorful and energetic display of traditions, music, and costumes promises to be an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

FIESTA POLACA

Sabores y Tradiciones

FERIA DE LOS PAÍSES

FUENGIROLA | 30.04-04.05.2025

Free Entrance

Feria de los Países, Recinto Ferial de Fuengirola, Av. Nuestro Padre Jesús Cautivo, 29640 Fuengirola

The official media partners of the event Fiesta Polaca!



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