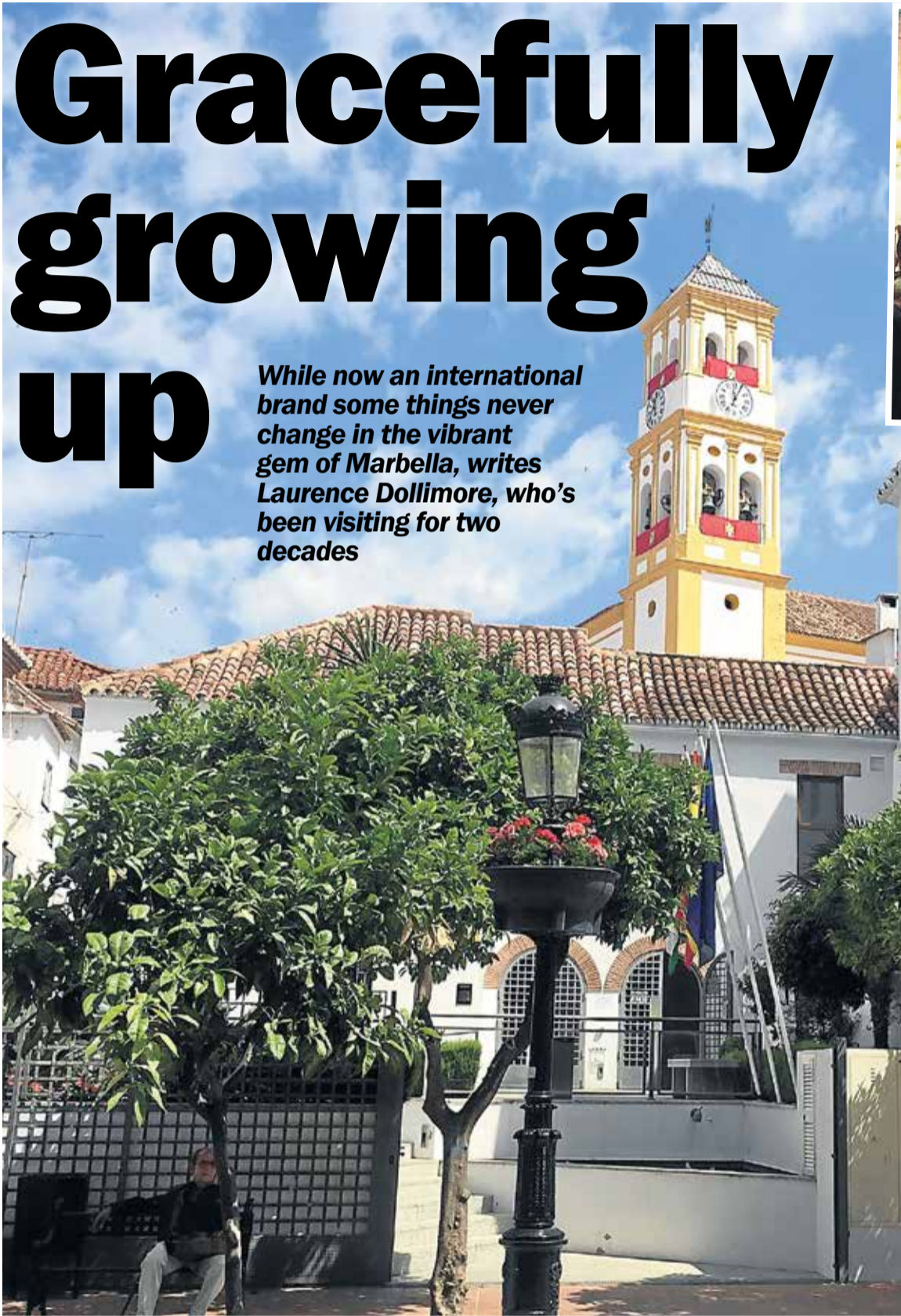


Gracefully growing up

While now an international brand some things never change in the vibrant gem of Marbella, writes Laurence Dollimore, who's been visiting for two decades



QUAINT: A tourist rests under a tree near the main church in Marbella old town



PARTY TIME: Revellers in Puerto Banus bring huge amounts of money

THINK Marbella and a glamorous jet-set lifestyle springs to mind. The classiest hotels, the liveliest nightclubs and the most fashionable clientele Andalucía, even Spain, has to offer. But peeling back 'Marbs' mask (you know, all the Arab billionaires, reality TV stars and ex-Premiership footballers) and you'll find a town steeped in charm and history. Before we go any further, I'll admit it. I was one of those lucky enough to grow up with a holiday home here, up in the leafy Guadalmina hills. Now while this pretty much meant sun, sand and sea on tap, it also meant many a late night staggering along the infamous second row of Puerto Banus, sometimes known as 'hurricane alley'. Sprawling on award-winning beaches by day and crawling out of head-spinning bars by night, for years I was totally oblivious to how much more Marbella had to offer. Over a decade later - and no longer a teenager - I am doubly lucky to be living here again (albeit having to work hard at *the Olive Press*). While all the best bits about this tourist honey-pot remain more or less the same, I am finally appreciating the culture and history, and so much else has changed, and for the better. And I am

certainly making the most of it. The resort has grown into an international brand, becoming one of Spain's most lucrative tourist destinations. The stats don't lie. In 2015 Marbella welcomed around three million international tourists and this year is set to welcome more.

People come here to see and be seen, whether its a bunch of 20-something girls thirsty for a splash of glamour, rubber necks desperate for a glimpse of a TOWIE star, or a top politician or celebrity looking for a cultural break. This chameleon-like jewel of the Costa del Sol can adapt to every visitor.



VISITOR: Michelle Obama

Let's start with one of the places I know best, more lounge lizard than chameleon: Puerto Banus. Stroll into the port just to the west of Marbella and you'll witness a scene like no other, depending on the hour. This could include hen-doers trying their best to pull off ill-fitting fancy dress costumes after celebrating their last night of freedom, or members of the '1% club' disembarking from mega-yachts or Ferraris to shop 'till they drop' at the likes of Gucci and Prada.

Banus has become an unashamed melting pot of the rich, famous and

Turn to Page 18

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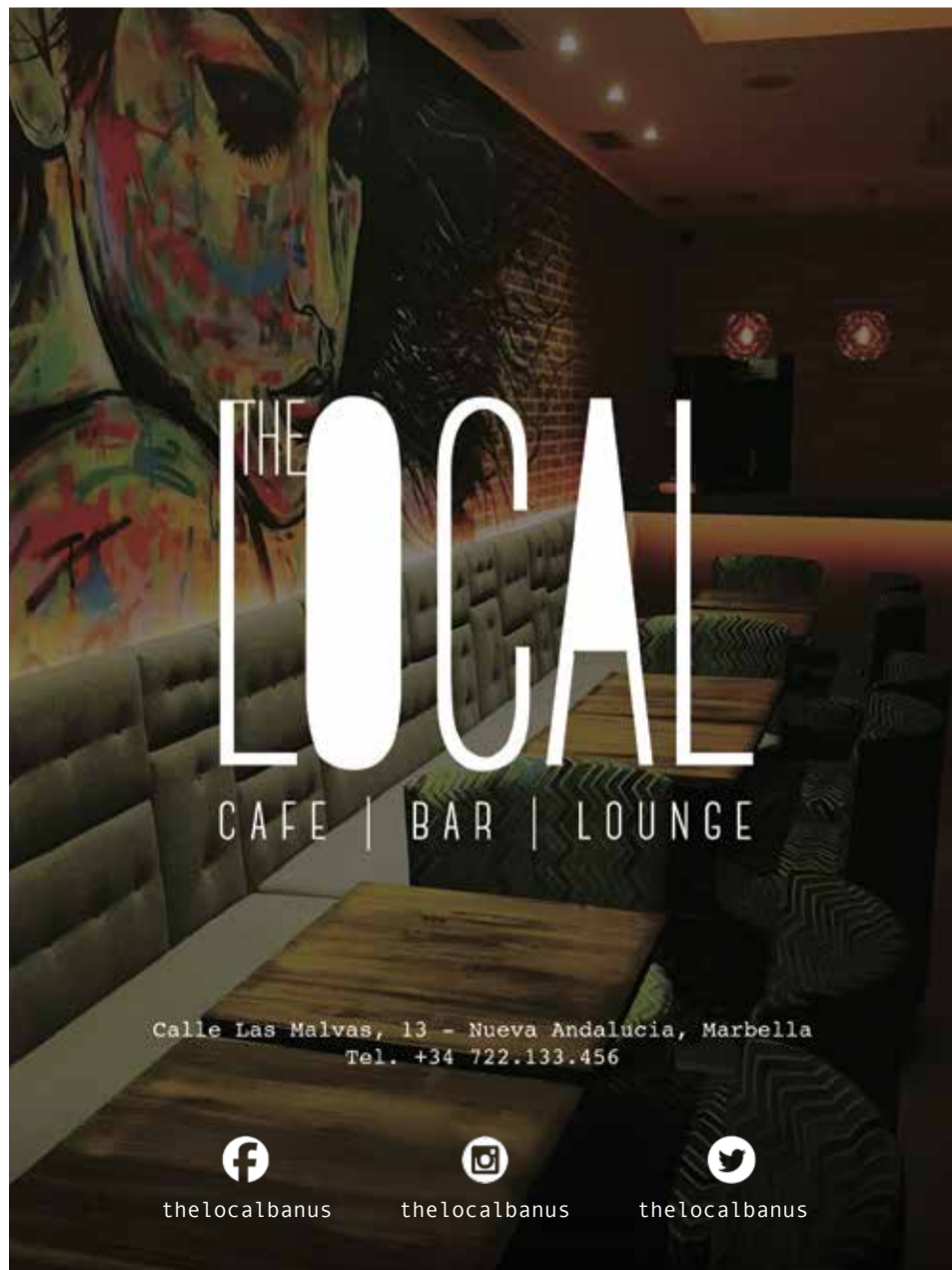
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Ever rising profile



LIFE'S A BEACH: For Marbella yoga class

From Page 17

wannabe glamourpusses. The glitz and glamour flows out of the port and along Marbella's notorious golden mile, home to luxury hotels and exclusive nightclubs - where a round of drinks could probably blow your weekly budget, if you haven't already blown it on a swanky designer outfit - an essential to mingle with the who's who of Marbella. It is on this elusive stretch where the likes of Lord Alan Sugar, Simon Cowell, Sean Connery and the Saudi Arabian royal family have invested in their own villas. Labelled as the new Ibiza, Marbella recently exploded onto the international party scene thanks in part to reality TV shows *The Only Way Is Marbs* and *Made In Chelsea*, whose drama-packed shows helped shape the area's image as the place-to-be for the young and famous. When TOWIE aired a two-episode Marbella special last year, hotel searches increased by an incredible 72% overnight. But it's not just reality TV stars who are raising Marbella's profile and putting Malaga airport's second runway into action. World leaders too, like to flock to this Andalusian gem.

The Olive Press revealed in 2014 that Russian president Vladimir Putin had bought an estate in the hills above San Pedro, while we were the only newspaper to speak to Michelle Obama on her famous visit to the 'casco historico' in 2010.

And then there is Britain's very own David Cameron who has chosen the tourist capital to take a break from running the Western world, not to mention former PM Tony Blair, who has been spotted here twice in the last four years. Actor Hugh Grant meanwhile who was visiting last week is now said to own a home here up in the Zagaleta hills, as does Mark Thatcher (Maggie's wayward son).

It's quite a list, which could go on and on... and these guys are not here to attend champagne spray parties. So what brings the global political elite to Marbella?

Cue the beautiful old town and Plaza de los Naranjos, AKA Orange Square.

The Moorish pueblo is just a five minute walk from the world-renowned beaches and stunning 17km promenade that runs from Marbella to San Pedro.

At its heart beats Orange Square - named so for its abundance of orange trees - which has been nestled among quaint white houses and narrow streets since the town was re-conquered from the Moors in 1485.

An 11th century Arab wall still surrounds the square, while churches, its town hall and the Old Governor's House all date back to the 16th Century.

The most important building in the town is the Church of Saint Mary, whose construction began in 1618. Its main facade is adorned with a



PRETTY: Old town fountain

stunning red stone entrance worked in Baroque style, while the interior holds the most impressive church organ built in Spain in the last 125 years - consisting of 5000 pewter, copper and wooden pipes and four manual keyboards.

The old town oozes charm as you navigate your way through its mosaic-cobbled streets, and after a tapas and *cana* in the sunshine, there are stylish boutiques, jewellers and wine and jamon shops around every corner, not to mention amazing restaurants (mostly away from the square).

For the romantics, hop onto one of the horse and carriages for an old school tour, or if you'd rather stay on foot just enjoy a gentle stroll around its narrow streets and nearby parks and gardens.

The town has come a long way since the Romans settled here in 1 AD, but you can still see mementos from their use of it as a population centre - whether it's the first century Roman bridge (see Built by Romans, opposite) embedded in the Hotel Puente Romano resort or the baths and settlement ruins in Guadalmina.

Even 2000 years ago, the Romans knew that the beach was the place to be, becoming the first civilization to have a coastal real estate boom.

Fast forward to 2016 and it seems this hasn't been lost on the ruling elite of Marbella, who, alongside foreign investors, have invested millions to bring the beaches to the highest of global standards.

The 27 kilometres of coastline feature over 24





NARROW:
Backstreets
of the old
town alive
with music
(left) while
restaurants
jostle for
trade (far left
and right)



BUILT BY ROMANS...

MARBELLA began its life as a town in the seventh century BC, when it was a Roman settlement called 'Salduba'. This is also the name of a well known bar at the entrance to Puerto Banus that has been there for centuries too. Meanwhile an original Roman bridge (above) still stands surreally in the middle of the Puente Romano Hotel and a few kilometres away is the restored Roman villa at Rio Verde with its beautiful mosaics. A sleepy town during the period of Al-Andalus, Marbella was retaken by Christians in 1485. The Plaza de los Naranjos (Orange Square) has been the focal point of the town since then and the town hall is still located there today.



beaches, and San Pedro and Puerto Banus fly the prestigious blue flag after being awarded it for their quality by the Foundation for Environmental Education.

From May to October, the beautiful and wealthy splash the cash on sunbeds and cocktails at the coolest sandy spots, now with the new sunbed reservations ap.

But beyond sun, sea and sand, a gastronomical awakening is selling Marbs as a foodie's paradise.

With an incredible four Michelin star restaurants, the resort's competitive gastro-scene is ensuring vast top quality dining options that will make it almost impossible not to load up on quality carbs in Marbs.

Recent event *A Cuatro Manos* at the Puente Romano resort, saw chefs with a constellation of 71 Michelin stars cook culinary feats over four days, are giving Marbella some serious food street cred.

Its art scene is also booming, with plenty of galleries. Meanwhile, the Marbella International Art Festival will see hundreds of pieces of works from artists from more than twenty different countries.

Pair this with its booming film scene and its seventh annual Marbella International Film Festival, which is growing in notoriety and hopes to, one day, rival Cannes, and you're looking at a future culture capital of Europe.

Marbella has come a long way from its fishing village days in the early twentieth century; all thanks to the German Prince Maximilian de Hohenlohe-Langenburg and his son Alfonso

- with a little help from some good old British engineering.

The pair had to stop in Marbs when they were having trouble with their Rolls-Royce in 1946, but Alfonso liked the area so much he decided to buy some land and build himself a house, before selling plots to his Rothschild and Thyssen friends (see Celebrity playground on P22).

The resort has gone from strength to strength, and continues to grow despite the economic and political woes that have plagued Spain since the financial crash of 2008.

Elected last year, mayor Jose Bernal has campaigned on ending the institutionalised corruption that plagued the town for decades, in-

roducing new transparency rules for those in office, including himself, having most recently made his spending figures public. So with a booming restaurant scene and an international art and film community,

beautiful world class beaches alongside thriving nightlife and shopping, all backed by a corruption-fighting mayor, the future looks rosy.

Whether you're a foodie, an urban junkie looking for a city break full of history and culture, a beach addict after a classic family holiday, or even

a 18-30 reveller thirsty for the best party break, Marbella will always have something for everyone.

Marbella has come a long way from its fishing village days in the early twentieth century



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Out of the shadows

Skate parks, ice rinks and architecture, as modern urban planning goes San Pedro takes some beating, writes Rob Horgan

If proof was needed that San Pedro has stepped out of the shadow of sassy sister Marbella, it's the town's head-turning pedestrian bridge.

Coupled with the buzzing boulevard, the bridge has become a focal meeting point for locals; be it families ice-skating on the all-weather artificial ice rink, teens hanging out at the skate park or work colleagues enjoying Friday night drinks at one of the boule-

vard's swanky watering holes.

The bridge itself is more Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao-meets-Calatrava's City of Arts and Science in Valencia than typically Andaluz. But it has bridged the gap between the former farming community and its glitzier sibling and brought San Pedro screaming into the 21st century.

The €85 million tunnel diverting dangerous high-speed traffic below the town centre, an under-



COOL: At the skatepark

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OLD AND NEW: (Above) new bridge and (inset) Iglesia de San Pedro

ground car park and the boulevard's amphitheatre, children's play areas and ample green spaces are other examples of the shiny new image being heavily promoted by the municipality of Marbella, to which the town still belongs. Although perhaps in name only now, rather than in spirit. Nowadays, Sanpedreños no longer feel the need to cling onto the Swarovski crystal-studded coat tails of Marbella. They have long called for their own municipality, although as yet to no avail. Nevertheless, the San Pedro success story continues. Plans for a massive new commercial centre on the outskirts of town are now in motion and the beachfront has moved upmarket

too. Its swanky new promenade, ornamented with sculptures and water features, can easily compete with Marbella's elegant elephant beach showers now! With jogging tracks and extended cycle paths, its waterfront piles on the wow factors. The town centre conceals other attractions amidst rows of white-washed houses, tree-lined roads and shady plazas. Home to the impressive 19th-century Iglesia de San Pedro, the main plaza is laid out as a square within a square: the inner square, dominated by the church, is bordered by statues, benches and water features; the outer square of bars and restaurants look inward on the architecture of a by-



SCENIC: New 17km promenade

gone era. It's a perfect example of how San Pedro subconsciously reflects the greater regional culture of southern Spain, while consciously at-



STATUESQUE: Don Miguel Gutierrez and (right) on the ice rink



tempting to be progressive and different. Behind the church, the city flaunts its patriotism with a Spanish flag, hoisted 15 metres into the air behind a statue of Don Manuel Gutierrez de la Concha - the man who set the ball rolling for San Pedro in the 19th century. Gutierrez, an army general, acquired nearly 5,000 acres of agricultural land which extended across Marbella, Benahavis and Estepona in the 1860s and formed the farming colony of San Pedro. As workers arrived from Valencia, Murcia, Granada and Almeria, San Pedro evolved into a sizeable town. Growth came to a standstill during the early 20th century, when Spain was torn apart by civil war. But the town was back in business during the late 1940s and 50s when street lighting was introduced and the main road was

built. Independent in spirit if not in practice, a stroll around town - do-able in an hour - shows that San Pedro is very much its own place. Growth may have been less dramatic than that of other tourist towns and cities but the slow-and-steady transformation has allowed San Pedro to cling onto its character. Despite its 21st century additions, it retains the essence of Andalusia other towns lack. It is distinctly Spanish with a friendly feel. It may even be one the last resorts on the Costa del Sol that can rightfully make that claim. But that won't stop go-ahead San Pedro from planning a racier, rosier future.

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HIP: Daniel Boardman

NOT STUCK IN A RUT

HE has worked in some of the hippest hair salons in London. And now, Daniel Boardman is taking Marbella by storm, running his own stylish boutique and lots, lots more. While just 28, the Croydon lad, already counts Errol Douglas, in Knightsbridge, and Headmasters, in Mayfair, on his CV, as well as three years at top local salon Reflexions. But now he has his own joint opposite the H10 hotel, which specialises in 'beautiful, confidence-boosting hair'. "I've worked in salons since I was 13, so I have a good idea about giving clients the most fashion forward looks. "I give them what they want, but don't let them get stuck in a rut," he insists. And, best of all, it even includes his mum and dad, who got married in Gibraltar this month. "Of course, I couldn't let my mum tie the knot without my help," he adds.

Celebrity playground



FILLING HIS BOOTS: Sean Connery and Jackie Lane



STARS: Sinatra and Ava Gardner flew in

WHETHER it was Diana Dors or Sean Connery, Ava Gardner or Audrey Hepburn, James Hunt or Rod Stewart, none would have come to Marbella without the influence of Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe.

For the German aristocrat was the svengali with the necessary capital to turn the dusty village into a *highfalutin* millionaires playground to rival the likes of Cannes and Deauville, in France.

It was in 1947 that the charismatic playboy had been sent to the coast by his father Prince Maximilian to purchase some land. The family already had business interests in southern Spain, particularly in Malaga.

The 23-year-old was told to hook up with his eccentric uncle Ricardo Soriano, who had been eulogising about the merits of the coast for a number of years.

A huge fan of watersports, Soriano especially liked powerboat racing and lived an enviable bohemian life.

He was soon chaperoning his nephew up and down the coast in his vintage Rolls-Royce looking for land.

The bilingual Alonso - who was a keen painter - was immediately taken by what he saw in Marbella.

Sheltered by the dramatic Sierra Blanca and with crystal-clear waters just a stone's throw away, the savvy prince immediately saw a

The Olive Press looks back at the lives of the aristocrats and celebrities that turned a small fishing village into a glitzy, star-studded resort for the 'jet set'

wealth of opportunities.

He ordered his father to sell off his wine cellars in Malaga and began developing his now seminal Marbella Club hotel, which opened in 1954.

But that was not enough and the well-connected prince soon embarked on a European-wide campaign to convince all his high-flying friends that Marbella, not San Sebastian or Cannes, was the only place to be.

And his campaign worked with the grand families of central Europe, including the Bismarcks, Rothschilds and Metternichs, coming to see what the fuss was about.

A string of celebrities followed suit, with actresses including Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren, photographer Patrick Lichfield, footballer George Best, model Brigitte Bardot, and Rolling Stone Bryan Jones joining the in-crowd. Even British aristocracy got in on the act, with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (Edward and Mrs Simpson) visiting the hotel.

"The people I met in Hollywood, in New York, and in Europe, they were the roots, the bridge that brought people to Marbella... who made



ON THE BALL: George Best spent time in Marbella

Marbella," explained Alfonso.

Marbella took pride in being cut off from the hectic, stressful and often scary modern world. Indeed, news of the Cuban Missile Crisis did not reach the resort until it was over.

"Everybody had the most gorgeous parties when the rest of the world was trembling that World War III was starting," explains Count Rudi Schonburg, a former manager of Marbella Club.

Coining the nickname the 'King of Clubs', Alfonso's reputation quickly preceded himself and he soon opened up a disco which got the club swinging every Tuesday and Friday nights.

Despite revelling in its exclusive status, the Marbella Club was anything but formal.

"At dinner everybody arrived with a dinner jacket, but I said 'Stop! This is not the Marbella way! You only wear a dinner jacket on New Year's Eve,'" recalled Alfonso.

As the inspired prince's creation boomed, so did Marbella and its surrounding hillsides. New restaurants, bars and sports clubs began sprouting up as the Costa del Sol quickly entered its so-called golden era.

Developers included Jose Banus, who built Puerto Banus marina and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who built a white palace (still there today) that is modelled on both the White House and a mosque.

The likes of multi-millionaire arms dealer Ad-

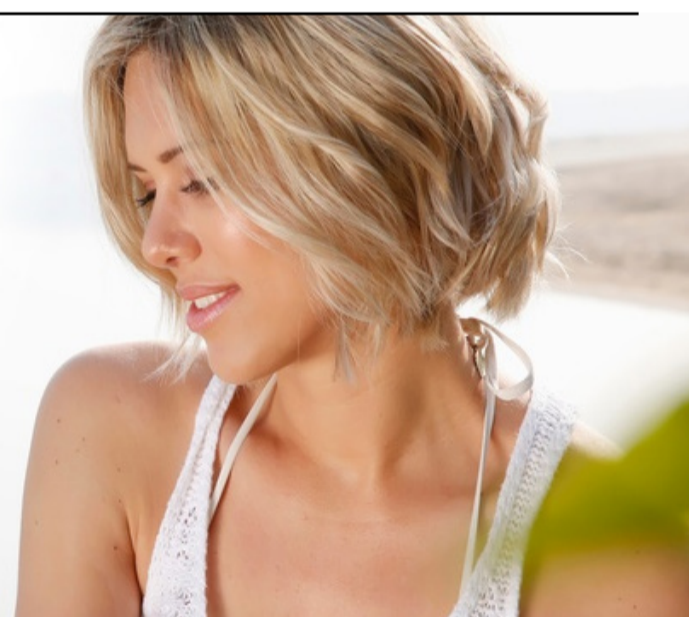
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Golden days remembered

GLAMOROUS: Diana Dors sunbathing, while (Top right) nuns on a beach, (right) the Romeria near San Pedro and fishing boats



nan Khashoggi (who formerly owned La Zagaleta, Spain's most expensive urbanisation) were able to dock their luxury yachts in the port.

"Thanks to my initiative, Marbella's Golden Mile alone now provides 60,000 jobs," Alfonso once said. While his friends called him the 'King of Clubs' or the 'Little Prince', locals came to know him affectionately as Ole-Ole, because of his difficult to pronounce surname.

Yet as the Costa del Sol dream began to spiral into uncontrollable development, Alfonso became aware of the monster he had helped stir. Concrete towers were sprouting up as far as the eye could see, from Malaga all the way down to Estepona, almost 100 kilometres away.

Worse still, wanted British criminals began to take advantage of a lack of an extradition treaty between England and Spain.

This influx of crooks and subsequent crime left the idealistic Alfonso disillusioned with the vision of rich grandeur he once envisaged for Marbella.

After growing weary of the mass tourism that was

lowering the tone of his town, he sold up all his Marbella business interests in 1978 in search of a new vision.

Entering his 60s, the prince settled in his last home with his third wife Marilys Haynes, a Gibraltar divorcee. He plumped for a mountain retreat, in the hills close to Ronda, with a trout lake, partridge wood and an impressive library.

And the ever-inventive Alfonso decided on another successful business pursuit – producing the soon-to-be award-winning wine Principe Alfonso. And it was nestled in the heartland of Andalucia, close to the sleepy village of Arriate, where Alfonso finally found true happiness before passing away, leaving his estate to his children, in 2003.

"I have lived in castles, in Venetian palaces and the world's finest hotels. I have watched the sun rise over the beaches of five continents and I have looked into the eyes of the most beautiful women of the universe," he famously remarked.

"Everywhere I sought my dreamed-of city and at last I have found it in Ronda."

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Laurence Dollimore joins the hen crowd at Linekers Bar, albeit a little overdressed in white shirt and blazer

“MY office is like NASA these days,” explains Lina Hodgkins, marketing director of Puerto Banus’ famous Linekers Group.

It is hardly surprising, as she launches into yet another weekend of hen party fun and games, which involves the management of somewhere in the region of 5000 people.

“It’s a massive task organising so many hen and stag-do’s,” adds the star of reality TV shows *Life on Marbs* and soon-to-screen *Playa in Marbella*, with Elliott Wright. “We’re taking care of 40,000 people on these breaks this summer alone.

“It’s crazy and involves working silly hours, but I love it.”

While the bar, founded by Paul Bowcock and Wayne Lineker, is still popular with partygoers of all ages, it has managed to brand itself as THE must visit for hens and stag do’s in Marbella.

It was just over a decade ago since Lina came up with the idea to focus on the then-neglected hen party sector.

“I saw a massive gap in the market, after coming here 14 years ago with a hen party and there was nowhere to go.”

So she put together a package for the Linekers group - which is still in use to this day - and



DREAM TEAM: Lina and Laurence



SHIP SHAPE: Smart and clear-headed before a night to remember (top left) clients outside Linekers main entrance

Clucking good fun

they have never looked back. “We even grew through the recession and we have already sold out for the summer months. This will be our biggest summer yet and, these days, we get groups booking a year in advance,” explains Lina, 55, who lives in Marbella. The monopoly on hen do’s is impressive but it’s not surprising given the service. Meeted and greeted at the door with bubbly,

the groups are waited on hand and foot by a dedicated waiter in their own roped off VIP area, complete with personalised plasma TV’s which the hen-doers can upload photos to. In the heart of Hurricane Alley, as it is sometimes known, you can really feel the buzz of the place as you approach midnight. The place is on fire and hordes of hen nights and revellers are dancing like there is no to-

morrow, with the resident DJ banging out everything from 90’s club classics to the latest house tunes.

Within five minutes of getting in I am taken in under the wing of a hen do from Belfast.

The bride-to-be, Courtney Speers, waxes lyrical about her choice of venue, as do her friends.

“I can’t say I’m original. A friend of mine came here for hers and said it was amazing, but

we’ve had such a good night and you get so well looked after here!”

A few shots later and we were adding shots each other on Facebook and making plans to meet up at the weekend.

Cousins, mother of the groom and friends were all out in force to celebrate the 23-year-old’s last night of freedom.

It wasn’t long before I regretted my outfit choice - dancing your heart out to ‘I’m a dreamer’ in a blazer and shirt will only leave you looking like you have just stepped out of a sauna.

Just as I was to have a dancing break the pole dancing competition kicked off - the break would have to wait.

While the Belfast girls did their best to impress the DJ-cum-pole-dancing judge, it was another hen night group from Wales who took home the bubbly.

The sign of a good night is how sad you are when it’s over, and very sad I was.

Puerto Banus can get a bad rep from time to time, but it seems to me Linekers will always be a safe bet if you want a fun and crazy night out with your mates - and who doesn’t want that?

For more information visit www.linekersgroup.com or Linekers Bar Puerto Banus on Facebook



BROS: Wayne and Gary Lineker (above)



STAGS AND HENS: Enjoy a night out at Linekers



MUMMY MARBELLA: Lina (centre) with guests

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ROLEX ROADSHOW

IT'S not just British royalty, Premiership footballers and Saudi princes who head to Marbella in the summer months. Ian Shaffer, founder of BQ Watches, one of Europe's leading buyers and sellers of luxury watches and specialising in Rolex and all luxury watches, has also been coming to Marbella for many years.



He comes to relax but is always inundated with questions about watches and jewellery - after all, his firm is a top buyer of Breitling, Omega, Patek Philippe and other high end jewelery, dia-



EXPERT: Shaffer

For more information call +34 911 230 491 or email info@bqwatches.com

monds, and gold coins. The company has been buying watches and jewelery from all over the world for more than 30 years.

In fact, on a recent trip to Luxembourg an elderly gentleman came to a BQ Watches roadshow with a badly beaten old Rolex Submariner from the 1960s expecting around €600.

The watch turned out to be the same model Rolex as worn by Sean Connery in an early James Bond movie.

He was astounded when BQW paid him €41,600 for his watch.

Founder Ian has decided to bring his roadshow to the Coral Beach Hotel in Marbella this year and will be there with his team from June 13-15 from 10am until 5.30pm.

Bring your goods for a free valuation without any appointment or obligation to sell.



THE TEAM: Real Capital Solutions have seen €50 million of sales in just two years

REAL Capital Solutions has successfully acquired and sold more than one billion euros of assets in the US.

This will soon be mirrored in Spain with €50 million of sales in the first two years alone.

The American private equity fund arrived in 2013 with a clear vision of what it wanted to achieve, firstly turning redundant buildings into valuable real estate and then watching local prices start to rise.

Fund partner, Taylor Cox, explains: "We analysed the economy and saw an affinity to market conditions back home - especially where second-homes are popular, such as in Florida. "Our first task was to acquire and add value to projects that had ceased due to lack of funding during the downturn.

"The second phase is about providing new properties planned, designed and built to the high standards that our buyers expect."

The strategic concept - now involving the launch of developments in Benahavis, Estepona and Mijas - is to bring quality property to the whole Costa del Sol - 'developing property with integrity, transparency and care'.

Real Capital Solutions unveils development plans

Each site has been designed specifically to suit its location with a choice of entry-level apartments, ultra-high-luxury apartments and villa properties.

Real Capital Solutions is based in Centro Plaza, Nueva Andalucia. Tel. 951 239 866.

Styling Marbella

IN the heart of Marbella old town sits a dazzling trove of Louis Vuitton holdalls, Chanel handbags and nostalgic Frank Sinatra LPs - not to mention classy pieces from Gucci and Dior.

Coining 'vintage' long before it was cool, Richard and Amanda Zizzi-Knight opened Déjà Vu Marbella Vintage in 1997 and have been riding the classic wave ever since.

They are soon to celebrate 20 years running the boutique and three decades in fashion on the coast.

Bath-born Amanda's mother was a model in the 1940s and an eye for style runs in her blood.

"If you have a special piece for us from the three big designers - Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Chanel - we will buy it outright in cash but generally work by giving you the money after your piece is sold," she tells the Olive Press.

"The beauty of being in Marbella is that iconic fashion models from the 1960s and 1970s bring in clothes to sell - and you just never know what treasures will come through our door," adds Richard.

"Vintage to us is anything top quality, great design and perfectly preserved."

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LA Concha is to Marbella what Table Mountain is to Cape Town or the statue of Christ the Redeemer is to Rio de Janeiro.

Wherever you are, its 1,215-metre shell-shaped peak rises up before you like a talisman, its colour changing with the angle of the sun.

If you haven't been tempted to climb it yet, you will be.

The mountain is best reached from the north, diverging off the main road up towards the Refugio de Juanar.

Set amid pine trees, the wonderful old hotel and restaurant - once a Parador - could be a perfect overnight base camp for your ascent which, truth be told, is no pushover.

However, anyone used to hiking and not afraid to get their hands dirty should have no problem, and the soaring panoramic views are definitely worth it.

Former cavalry officer James Hewitt, he of Lady Diana fame, once told *the Olive Press* he regularly climbed it (there and back) when he lived there in 'well under three hours', and not at a forced charge.

But, being realistic you should leave four hours to include a couple of nice breaks and to enjoy the view at the top, which is really something else.

The peaks of Africa's Atlas mountains can be seen in the distance, as can the Rock of Gibraltar down the coast, sticking out into the shimmering sea.

Here, walking guide Guy Hunter Watts, gives a breakdown on the way to the top.

THE WALK

From the Refugio de Juanar, descend 100m to a junction, then turn right at the 'Mirador' sign.

Looping up through the pines you reach a parking area, then pass a green metal gate and continue along the track following the sign, GR243.1 Istan.

After passing a ruined stone hut you reach a sign that says PR-A 168 La Concha, pointing right off the track. (20 mins)

Cut right away from the track towards the green mesh fence of Cortijo de Juanar, then angle hard right down through an olive grove for 100m to a four-way junction.

Cutting left into a stand of pines you come to a three-way junction. Here, angle left following another sign that says PR-A 168 La Concha.

Reaching the top of the ridge, head straight on for a few metres, then angle right and continue along the ridge, now heading almost due west between low-growing oaks.

Having run just left of the ridge, the path cuts up right to its highest point and passes a large cairn (1 hr 10 mins) before descending for a short distance.

Cairns mark the way from here.

Angling slightly left, the path passes beneath a steep cliff face, El Salto del Lobo, where there are steep drops to the right: care should

One of Andalucia's most rewarding mountain adventures lies in wait among the pine trees just a few miles inland from Marbella



BREATHTAKING: Views over Marbella

be taken on this section.

Zigzagging steeply up left (a hands-on approach at this point will be useful) it then drops steeply back down to a more level path running towards La Concha.

Cairns still mark your path as you head on just south of the ridge, before angling back up to the top.

A massive panorama opens out to the south as you reach a cairn where you'll see blue and red stripes on a rock. At this point you're actually a few metres higher than the official summit of La Concha.

From here, angle down left following cairns and red and blue way-markings, sticking close to the ridgetop. The Istan reservoir comes into view to the west.

The path runs a few metres beneath the ridge, on its southern side, before cutting up to a three-way marker post. (1 hr 45 mins)

Here, carry straight on, following a sign saying 'La Concha 15 mins' along the ridge to a large cairn.

Here the path angles right, descends, then picks up the continuation of the ridge before climbing steeply once more. (You may feel safer using your hands from time to time, as there are steep drops to your left.)

Red and blue flashes still mark the way and lead you up to the summit of La Concha (1,215m). (1 hr 55 mins)

After enjoying the amazing panorama, retrace your footsteps back to the Refugio. (3 hrs 45 mins)

Above the clouds



This enchanting trail begins in the pine forest, continuing across stunning open fields of olive groves before the rocky climb to the peak begins. It takes between 90 minutes and two hours to reach the summit, and the same to come back, so



NUTS AND BOLTS

bring plenty of water and, if you're a picnic person, a decent lunch to enjoy at the top.

For more information and walks: www.guyhunterwatts.com



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Buyers and holidaymakers continue to flock to perfectly situated Guadalmina, writes Laurence Dollimore

Location, location, location



LIFE OF LUXURY: In Guadalmina, home to Jose Aznar, Princess of Monaco (left) and Lyndsay Parfitt (below)



JUST a stone's throw away from Marbella's Golden Mile sits the luxurious urbanisation of Guadalmina.

I was lucky enough to spend the summers of my youth at my home away from home, Guadalmina Alta. Some 15 years later and this quaint village-esque resort still boasts a neighbourly and tranquil atmosphere in an envious location.

It's just five minutes from Puerto Banus and ten minutes from Marbella, while the charming old pueblo of San Pedro is a short walk away.

The development may have a tranquil exterior but don't be fooled, it can still pack quite the punch. When you're done sunning by the pool, try a round of golf at its sprawling 18-hole course, or get your kicks down at its famous cable ski - where thrillseekers are thrust around a scenic lake on a pair of skis or wakeboard.

The quality of its restaurants has also sky-rocketed over the last ten years. Boasting almost 20, the variety ranges from the unrivalled Argentinian steak house La Rosa to the longest-standing spot for a traditional English breakfast, Tricky Ricky's. The latest additions include a vegan cafe and a Japanese wok spot.

Pop over the road from the restaurant front and you'll find Guadalmina Baja, home to huge villas which wouldn't look out of place in Beverly Hills. If you're there at the right time, you might even spot a celeb - ex-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Aznar is often seen jogging with his four brooding bodyguards, while the Princess of Monaco is also rumoured to live close by.

It's no surprise then that the Spanish, Irish, British and otherwise, whether holidaymakers, expats or royalty, continue to set up shop here. The food is exquisite, the scenery is stunning and everything you need is right on your doorstep.



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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

After victory over a dodgy dentist, Adolfo Martos Gross of GAM Abogados aims to reclaim hundreds of thousands of euros for expats who lost off-plan deposits

It took six years and a lot of perseverance but eventually lawyer Adolfo Martos Gross came up with the goods. Winning the Olive Press costs of over €5,000 from dentist Raj Rao, who had wrongly sued us, came as quite a coup when it finally happened last month. But for Adolfo, of GAM Abogados, it was merely another day at the office. The gentleman lawyer has been standing up for the rights of expats for two decades from his two offices in Marbella and Malaga.

"It was merely a case of hanging in there, continually reminding the court and insisting that you had a right to get your legal fees paid," Adolfo explains.

"The key is to never give up and while it is outrageous that it took so long, I am delighted that justice was finally done."

Now, the chairman of the international legal association "TEN, The European Network" (www.ten-law.net), Adolfo has a new crusade... to help expats get refunds on deposits put down for off-plan properties that were never built. It has emerged that up to 100,000 British investors could be in line for a payout after their dream homes failed to be built when the recession kicked in.

It comes after a momentous Supreme Court ruling last year, and with payments mostly being between

€20,000 and €80,000 it is generally people's life savings.

The good news is the Madrid-trained lawyer, who has 21 years experience in the trade, is completely in the know on the latest ruling.

"The Supreme Court ruling on December 21 is excellent news for anyone who put down a deposit for a dream home, only to find it was never built and could not claim their money back," he tells the Olive Press. "If you think you are owed money you lost on an off-plan deposit, now is the time to investigate and get it back!"

The Supreme Court decision ruled that banks are now responsible to pay back the deposits that were put into their accounts as down payments against off-plan schemes.

Now banks are liable even if a bank guarantee was never made between them and the developer - which means more people are eligible to claim.

And successful claimants get the money lost, plus interest AND legal fees paid.

"The banks will now be obliged to check, with contracts up until January 1 2016, whether the developers followed through with their promises, which gives people who lost their money at that time a much stronger case," says Adolfo.

"And whether you had an official



ADOLFO; (centre standing) and his team

guarantee or not, you should be eligible to reclaim the money you lost with legal help." It was law 57/1968 that decreed a bank guarantee was necessary for the deposit, but buyers often didn't know or fraudulent developers pretended they already had them.

When developers went bankrupt, without the banks taking responsibility, there was no safety net for those having paid deposits.

But after several local civil court cases were successful in suing banks, the Supreme Court passed the ruling.

"We already have a handful of clients we are representing on this and we expect many many more," Adolfo continues.

You can take action against the banks up to 15 years after the date the properties were set to be finished - or on October 2020, whichever comes sooner. So act fast!

Adolfo advises:

- 1) Send a letter to the bank to determine your eligibility
- 2) Employ a good lawyer to help investigate, make your claim and offer support throughout the process
- 3) Make your claim

For more information visit www.gam-abogados.com or call 952 82 89 43 (Marbella) or 952 22 31 82 (Malaga)



Preloved up

A BRAND new boutique has joined the Marbella circuit of luxury shops.

Preloved Boutique opened on Friday June 3 in Centro Plaza.

Owners Lana and Shelly founded the shop where anyone can bring their new or nearly new designer or high-end clothing and sell it, sharing half the profit.

Fashion shows are set for later this year.



STYLISH: Shop window

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From Michelin stars to Malaysians, Marbella is a true dining melting pot, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke



LEADING LIGHT: Clarke and Dani Garcia and (inset) A Cuatro Manos review



LUNCH AND LOUNGE: At Beach House, while (right) Alvaro preps at Takumi



Capital of food

It was no coincidence that dozens of Michelin-starred chefs from around the world descended on Marbella for the A Cuatro Manos event this Spring.

The town is now well and truly on the global dining map - counting no less than FOUR Michelin starred restaurants - and can be considered the definitive dining capital of Andalucia.

As two Michelin-starred local lad Dani Garcia told me at the event, attended by legends including Joel Robuchon and Ferran Adria: "We keep getting better and better here and pushing the boundaries... and I expect it to continue."

Aside from quality there is a massive variety with over 100 different nationalities cooking in Marbella.

"You have just about every style you can think of," explains Japanese restaurant owner Alvaro Arbeloa at **Takumi**. "But most of all, whatever restaurant you open, if the quality is not good

enough you will not survive. The clientele here is well off and demanding of quality."

One place that certainly epitomises quality is **Ban Thai**.

Attention to detail and customer service is all too apparent from Malaysian boss Efandi, who set up just three years ago. "There are new oriental places opening almost by the month these days and I just keep telling my staff not to worry, focus on customer care and quality and we'll have no worries. It certainly seems to be the case."

Another place that shows no signs of waning is **Beach House**, in Elviria, possibly Marbella's best chiringuito/beach restaurant.

A fabulous location is only matched by the views and top quality food, thanks to its team of chefs, led by Jeff Mynott.

Constantly changing the menu under the watchful eye of livewire owners Guy and Lucy McCrow this is a must-visit for any foodie.

Even better, come for the day and laze out on the amazing new 'luxury' day beds (see above) and fill your boots with the special seafood menu.

Another restaurateur who shows no signs of slowing down is Ian Radford, boss of the **La Sala** group.

Opening a brand new restaurant, **The Oak** (see P51), this week, the ex-professional squash player has been constantly adding to his La Sala brand.

With a series of famous backers, including footballers David Bentley, Stephen Carr and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, he has been able to create two of the town's landmark restaurants; **La Sala** in Puerto Banus and nearby **La Sala by the Sea**, a fantastic Thai restaurant.

The original **La Sala** on the way up to the Nueva Andalucia bull ring is, without a doubt, the most famous Marbella restaurant abroad.

This is a must-visit for any holiday to Marbs and

a huge hit for 'ladies who lunch', not to mention movers and shakers, celebrities, footballers and the wealthy empresarios who make Marbella what it is.

An emporium of glass and seductive lighting, its real strength though, lies in its terrace, that serves as the ideal tourist sun-deck.

But, let's not forget the food, which has so far never let me down. Whether you are after meaty fare (ribs, burgers, etc) or fish dishes and seafood, you are always well catered for and there is always a contemporary twist.

But if you are looking for some romance, you need to head into the heart of Marbella old town, where you are literally spoilt for choice for excellent places to eat.

One of the most celebrated is Belgian-run **Casanis**, where boss Guy Sirre has been constantly evolving for the last decade.

Recently reunited with his former chef Tulio

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36 All about Marbella



HANDS UP: For Tulio explaining a dish (right) at Casanis to waiters



Spoilt for choice...

Zampieri - who has been on a four year cook's tour taking in jobs in Mexico, Fiji and Barcelona - the place gets better and better.

Now in charge of nine chefs at Casanis and seven at the nearby sister restaurant **Cafe Flore**, he has brought in plenty of new ideas, picked up on his travels.

"But I am also trying to stay local with ingredients and love the excellent local food markets and fresh fish," he says.

Even better, the restaurant now has its own nearby organic *huerta* from where, in season, they can get 25 to 30% of their fresh produce. "It saves us between €500 and 800 a month, for sure," estimates Tulio, who has worked at Spain's leading three Michelin-starred restaurant Celler de Can Roca, as well as locally Skina and Messina.

His dishes certainly impress, particularly the fabulous 'tiradito of corvina', a variant on a Peruvian ceviche with tomatoes, coriander, chives, baby red spinach and crispy sweet corn, served up with wafer thin slices of toast, while the 24-hour roasted suckling pig, comes with an original creole sauce from Argentina.

While **Cafe Flore** is more Italian in flavour, with good healthy ingredients, the team are to open

a brand new beach restaurant **La Plage** this month in nearby Las Chapas.

Another *casco historico* restaurant heavily focusing on good quality local ingredients is the appropriate named **The Farm**, which sits in a charming square and counts on its own shady palm-covered courtyard terrace to boot.

Insisting on 'honest food' the charming couple behind this wonderful new restaurant Maria del Oso, from Asturias, and Elio, from Argentina, are working to be as close to KM.0 (or using just local produce from the area) as possible.

"We only use seasonal and almost all of it comes from around the Malaga region," explains Maria, who searched for the ideal restaurant in Tuscany and the Canaries, before finding the 'dream spot' in Marbella. "We try to be as sustainable as possible and even recycle the toothpicks," jokes Elio, whose specialities include delicious sea bass and squid in potato.

Another great spot in the heart of the old town is **Niki's Gastro Bar** and restaurant (also known as **Madre Tierra**), which sits in a wonderful leafy square.

Set up by Italian expat Genesisio, it has a creative menu that includes some fabulous tuna tataki



CHARMING: Cafe Flore



NO foam, no spray parties, just pure harmony for the whole family to enjoy. Situated in the white sandy El Rosario beach, Karma Beach Marbella offers the ultimate chill out experience. With Cabana beds just metres from the water's edge, the beautiful surroundings are perfect for relaxation. And the food alone is worth the trip. A delicious daily fish course, Karma is also famous for its

Asian fusion and Greek tapas. And with a hot stone grill, classic Mediterranean dishes are also popular with diners.

And for *Olive Press* readers, boss Hayley and her crew are offering a free glass of cava with your meal. All you have to do is bring this article along with you. Open seven days a week from 10am, Karma beach offers everything from luxury dining to drinks next to cosy candlelight.

For info visit www.karmabeachmarbella.com



June 8th - June 21st 2016



AL FRESCO HAPPY: Diners at *The Farm*, while (above) owners *Elio and Maria* and (right) dishes at *Ban Thai* and *Macao* (right)



NEW BROOM: *Niki's*

with a tempura of vegetables and algas wakame, as well as original croquettes of 'ossobuco de ternera'. Chef Curro, from Sevilla, is incredibly keen on quality and has a very good eye for fish too, including the amazing turbot I tried. At night the place comes alive with some super fresh original tapas and the best cocktails in the old town, which even apparently the curate who lives upstairs, enjoys. Another continually improving restaurant is **Cibo**, on the Golden Mile, which is beautifully decorated and has a great menu. Owned by the capable Metro Group (Joys, Jacks, Mumtaz, Metro, etc), it is excellent value and a romantic spot for dining out. (see article P38) Up in San Pedro you will be spoilt for choice, but look out for **Macao**, which really stands out as a special place to visit. It was set up by Belgian Michel Dhondt, who heralds from a long line of restaurant owners and

trained with Alain Ducasse on the Cote d'Azur. Open all year, it concentrates on fresh, seasonal ingredients and there are always loads of specials, including, mussels, as well as oysters, shrimp croquettes and ceviche. The black cod is not cheap but it is amazing. In fact, the perfect cod. The Vietnamese nems are stunning and the raspberry creme brulee was as fresh and light as it could be. "All thanks to my training with Ducasse," jokes Michel. Meanwhile, a great place to drink wines with fine food is at the long-time rated **Albert & Simon** restaurant in San Pedro. The brothers Albert and Simon, appropriately, took over the baton from their father, who had one of Marbella's first Michelin-starred restaurants. Also in San Pedro is the very elegant **L'Impronta**, an upmarket Italian joint, run by capable Francisco Vacas, who actually heralds from Cordoba.



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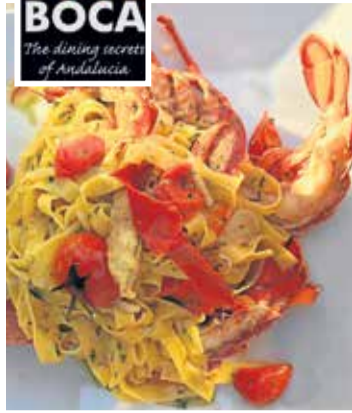
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Good service and great value cuisine is helping to get Cibo noticed, writes Dining Secrets of Andalusia editor Jon Clarke



DELICIOUS: Lobster linguine

Clawing to the top



KIDS DREAM: Pizza heaven and banana split happy



THE attractive outdoor terrace was awash with evening sun as we sat perfectly positioned to watch a slice of Marbella society. This is Cibo, a year after it opened on the Golden Mile, where eponymous Polo House once sat before it. Elegant in the extreme, try and get a banquette seat below the clematis-covered terrace, which is a wonderful place to sit in warmer weather. The feather-in-the-cap of the Metro group (Jack's, Mumtaz, Joys, etc), its chef Simone Riccioni, has been well-trained by the group's culinary boss Lawrence Otterburn, a former Gordon Ramsay protege, who has cooked for Ronnie Wood, Kate Moss and Roman Abramovich.

I was looking for the ideal spot to take my son, 8, for a birthday meal and Cibo hit the spot. A big kids menu, with excellent pizzas and pasta, drawing pad, pencils and puzzles, we were off to a flying start. The service was also excellent with, in particular, half-Italian, half-Spanish Manuel doing an excellent job charming the nippers. While broadly geared towards Italian food, if anything, Cibo pitches itself more towards quality, but with excellent value. There is a simple, easy wine list where even Italy's two best reds Barolo and Brunello come in for just €60. A glass of ice fresh verdicchio was good value at under €5.

But the biggest shock was the price of a lobster, not something this humble food critic (and journalist) usually gets a chance to eat! Here I had a choice of lobster on its own for just €32, while a half weighed in at €23, and for the same price I could also have it with linguini, a better-looking dish being hard to find on the Costa del Sol. Already cracked open and with a slightly spicy sauce, this is one seafood dish that deserves an award this summer. But there are other chestnuts too, such as the 'Vincisgrassi', which is a splendid twist on lasagna, heralding from a 17th century recipe Lawrence picked up from his father.

"It was how we invented lasagna, before we ruined it with bolognese," explains Lawrence. With crunchy minced Parma ham and porcini mushrooms, not to mention a pinch of black truffle, this was a definitive 'posh lasagne', easily the best I have ever eaten. The starters were excellent too. A carpaccio of wild duck ham with rocket and spicy peach was a real looker, while the truffled forest mushroom bruschetta did a splendid job.



The 'sharing' boards looked fun as well, but I tried the 'capesante e caponata', a joyous dish of bacon-wrapped scallops, which were meant to come with courgettes and aubergine, but which had at least half a dozen other vegetables in it, including pine nuts, asparagus and carrots. Pudding-wise, I loved my cheesecake with cherry coulis, but the definite winner was the banana split, which, in the words of my daughter Maia, was 'fabulously fabulous'. It also came in the price of the special kids menu priced at just €6.95. Boom. **Bldv Principe Alfonso Von Hohenlohe, 11, call 952900380 or www.cibomarbella.com**



Local by name, global in style



HE knew instinctively it was the perfect finish for his new cafe-bar The Local. While walking the streets of Los Angeles, the amazing wall collage jumped out at News Cafe boss Sebastian Cohen. "It really jumped out at me and started a chain in motion to get it on the wall," he explains. Finding a

local artist Slovakian Mareck they bit by bit recreated the LA graffiti masterpiece, burning the midnight oil until 6am one night. The end result is a stylish, urbane feel to the new cafe, cocktail bar and lounge, which is an excellent addition to the area behind the H10 in Nueva Andalucia.

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