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# All about **S**an Pedro de Alcantara

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TRADITION: Found in San Pedro

**S**AN Pedro de Alcantara is dressed for all kinds of success, and I don't mean flamenco costumes (although look out for them if you're down that way in mid-October. The San Pedro fair famously closes the feria season here).

Like this season's debutantes, Marbella's 'kid sister' has come out in style, stepping from behind her sibling's shadow into the limelight with glitzy attractions, gourmet eateries and resident celebs all of her own.

In my 15 years of having a home here, I have never seen the place go through so many transformations.

For a couple of years now, where snarled lines of traffic once backed up along the coast road, a striking urban boulevard sprouting trendy pavement cafes has reclaimed the once maligned area.

With a new skating rink, a skate park and a hat trick of new children's play parks, the seaside town is unrecognisable from a few years ago.

And it is still in transformation, investing more than €2 million in reinventing its town centre, with semi-pedestrianised zones between the boulevard and its commercial heart.

This expat favourite, which continues to offer one of the most authentic Spanish-pueblo vibes on the Costa del Sol, is also getting a new museum dedicated to the artist Vicente de Espona.

And perhaps more fortune will come its way after its main political party, Opción Sampedreña (OSP) helped bring back former Marbella Mayor Angeles Munoz in a dramatic vote of confidence at the town hall this summer.

There are also rumours that former UK premier Tony Blair has bought a holiday home in the town's exclusive Guadalmina urbanisation.

And he wouldn't be the first world leader to set up shop here, with ex-Spanish pre-

**As San Pedro gears up for its feria - the last of the season - Laurence Dollimore discovers a town that can throw a party to match anything big sister Marbella can muster**

mier Jose Maria Aznar among them. Meanwhile, the head-turning footbridge with its serpentine coils, is doing for San Pedro what the Golden Gate did for San Francisco and the Guggenheim for Bilbao.

And although very much part of the municipality of Marbella, San Pedro has forged its own shiny new identity that's quite separate, yet complementary to, its jet-setting neighbour.

**San Pedro has forged its own shiny new identity that's quite separate**

Just 10km west of Marbs, it has been reborn over the last decade as a modernised microcosm of Spain.

But some things have never changed in all the years I have been visiting the town, named after 16th century Franciscan friar, St Peter of Alcantara.

The evenings still see veteran San Pedranos gather on shaded benches around St Peter's statue, outside the parish church; the traditional Saturday market remains a weekly highlight; and the pavement cafes and ice cream parlours are heaving on Sunday nights in summer, when Spanish families enjoy their ritual paseo along the prom.

What has kept San Pedro special has been its ability to hang on to its Spanish persona in the face of massive investment from Marbella Town Hall - nearly €100 million.

It must have felt like winning the lottery jackpot but San Pedro has spent the

Continues on next page

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From previous page

money wisely.

The central boulevard, crowned by its snaking pedestrian bridge, has turned the town from an also-ran suburb into a spanking new social hub where whole families come to skate, hang out and enjoy the regular food truck festivals.

Office workers make a beeline for its congenial cocktail bars on Friday nights.

The bridge may be more Gehry's Guggenheim than typical Andalus but it has forged strong new connections with visitors who used to think Marbs ended at Puerto Banus.

The €6 million boulevard it meanders over boasts an amphitheatre and is now the official site of the town's four-day feria, the last of the year in Andalusia, timed to celebrate St Peter's feast day on October 18.

Other welcome upgrades have included the €85 million tunnel diverting dangerous high-speed traffic below the town centre, and a much-needed underground car park.

"San Pedro really does have it all," says local Sean Woolley, 47, who has run an estate agent from the town for 15 years.

"The new boulevard and urban park have become a magnet for new restaurants and bars and it has created a place that now offers something for everyone," he says proudly.

"There is this charm and tradition of a typical Spanish town fused with trendy and cosmopolitan additions, from organic cafes to lively wine bars. When you couple this with its sandy beaches and fabulous promenade, San Pedro is pretty much perfect."

Beneath the glitzy exterior, San Pedranos are as friendly and unassuming as they were in their 19th century farming days. And if anything is a reminder of those rustic origins, it's San Pedro's resident pig! On any given Sunday this sociable



ANCIENT AND MODERN: New bridge and (right) coastal watchtower



A new road network has also made San Pedro more accessible to visitors and local chefs have cooked up an exciting dining scene in response.

Just behind the boulevard, Alfredo's traditional Spanish fare is always in big demand while next door La Bodega del Cantinero offers an exciting foodie fusion featuring foie gras with apple and honey, tuna tataki with wasabi mayonnaise and shelves of vintage sherries. Further additions like L'impronta, Tutemaki and Restaurant 1870, where you can enjoy spider crab gazpacho in a scenic garden setting, have made San Pedro a key dining reference.

And there's more. San Pedro has its own leafy satellite suburb in the shape of Guadalmina (Baja and Alta), just west of the town centre.

This exclusive neighbourhood - a kind of western golden mile - boasts multi-million euro mansions galore.

Guadalmina Baja is home to ex-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who is often seen jogging along the tree-lined avenues, flanked by four burly bodyguards.

Guadalmina Alta, on the opposite side of the A7, has an 18-hole course and the coast's only cable ski lake which thrill-seekers can circuit on water skis or a wakeboard.

"I adore it here, you feel like you are in the real Spain," raves 39-year-old Guadalmina newcomer and artist Debbie Lush. "You are so close to Marbella and Estepona but without the madness and business of Puerto Banus, it's perfect."

"You can walk to the beach, cycle to Marbella and there are so many good places to eat, you have everything on your doorstep," she adds.

Like most locals, these days, she's proud to tell anyone who asks that, no, she's not Marbelli - she's 'Sanpedrano, actually'.

## SAN PEDRO, ACTUALLY

creature and town mascot can be seen strolling around its new neighbourhood, uttering contented grunts of approval (see next page).

Army General Don Marquez Manuel Gutierrez de la Concha founded the farming colony in the 1860's when he acquired nearly 5,000 acres of agricultural land across Marbella, Benahavis and Estepona.

But with malaria scything through the local populace and poor irrigation, the Marques introduced a series of innovative reforms, including an agricultural school for local farm workers, river bridges, dams and state-of-the-art machinery. Workers soon flocked from Valencia,

Murcia, Granada and Almeria, and San Pedro grew into a sizeable municipality.

A statue of Gutierrez now stands next to the old town, keeping paternalistic vigil over his creation.

Although development slowed during the early 20th century when Spain was ravaged by civil war, the town bounced back during the late 1940s and 50s, with street lighting and a main road. But San Pedro has never seen

the rampant over-development of other costa resorts.

Central to its evolution has been its bustling beach promenade that links seamlessly to Banus and Marbella, putting the town on the map for cyclists, joggers and

walkers.

Its beaches fly the prestigious blue flag, the worldwide standard of excellence, while chic chiringuitos like Macao and Guayaba are hotspots for the cool and hip.

The once-barren wasteland between the boulevard and the ocean now sports shops, restaurants, residential communities and world class amenities like Nueva Alcántara paddle and tennis club, which hosts regular international tournaments.

The beachfront also reveals clues to the presence of less-recent visitors - a 3rd century Roman baths and a 16th century watchtower looking out over the panorama of sun worshippers and jet skiers. While, set back from the waterfront action, you'll also find relics of the 6th century Paleo-Christian burial site, Vega de Mar, excavated in the 1930s.

**But San Pedro has never seen the rampant over-development of other resorts**

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# 'San Pedro is a key boom area'

**Casa Marbella boss Wolfgang Schlesier has known San Pedro well since launching an agency there 35 years ago**

“San Pedro is better than ever, on fire... just look at the boulevard, it's so busy these days,” explains Wolfgang Schlesier. “It is one of the main boom areas on the coast.” And he should know, having worked in real estate in the area for 35 years. His company Casa Marbella, which has an office just off the brand new Boulevard, has seen some enormous changes over that time.

“The main one of course was the tunnel,” he explains. “It might have taken 12 years to finish, but it is really paying off now.”

In the heart of the so-called 'Golden Triangle' of Estepona, Benahavis and Marbella, San Pedro is an enviable place to buy a home or start a business.

It is well connected and has good infrastructure, now that the decade-long urban rejuvenation project has been finished.

“I live next door in Guadalmina, which is a real paradise, so I have the best of both worlds,” says Wolfgang,

who first visited Andalucía on holiday in 1973, while dictator Franco was still alive.

Then just 23, he quickly fell in love with the vibe of the coast, that was then one of the hippest places to live in Europe.

“I got Marbellitis,” he explains. “Just fell in love with the place and after a three year trip to Caracas, where I learnt Spanish, I happily moved here.”

Over the next few decades he mixed with the movers and shakers on the coast, first starting to work in real estate in 1981 in a company called Investasol (empowering individuals towards global change), alongside an English partner Graham Tullah.

He later launched his current agency Casa Marbella in 1992, which at its peak had four offices spread between San Pedro and Elviria. The staunch Buddhist - a regional organizer for SGI - is a spiritual man, who exudes a warm persona. “It has changed my life and helped me find my sense of spirit and place,” explains the father-of-four.

[www.casemarbella.es](http://www.casemarbella.es)



## WALK THE PORK

A LARGE boar-like pig heads San Pedro's list of famous residents and is rapidly becoming the town's mascot. Mythical creature or not, locals report regularly spotting the porker roaming the streets.

Rumour has it the animal has lived in the town since he was a piglet, and often enjoys a stroll around the old quarter at the weekends.

Friendly to all-comers, the sociable cerdo is especially fond of greeting the dogs that share his 'patch' and reportedly has a special affinity for his canine friends.

Try not to squeal if you cross his path- He's a VIP pig and deserves your respect.



DESIGNER: Top gear

## Loving it

PRE-LOVED boutique is celebrating a year in business in San Pedro.

Since arriving from Puerto Banus, the second-hand designer store has made a name for itself as one of the best of its kind on the coast.

And Lana, who began the business almost two years ago, has just launched its brand new website.

“It's been a great year here and we love the location,” she told *the Olive Press*, “There's something here for everyone and it's a really unique shop with competitive prices.”

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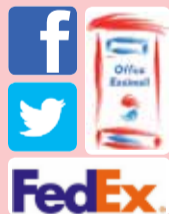
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# A true colony

**San Pedro's evolving commercial centre La Colonia was built by an expat, writes Laurence Dollimore**

It is probably best known as the home of McDonald's and Dia, squatting beside the A7 on the outskirts of San Pedro. But La Colonia shopping centre has so much more to offer, with a fantastic range of shops, services and restaurants, all in one easy location with ample free parking. One of the true nerve centres of San Pedro, anybody who has lived on the coast for a while will have used Passion Cafe or Cafe Verona for social and business meetings ... perhaps before popping into the Twist boutique next door, or the interior shops La Casa Bonita and King of Cotton. With a golf shop, an opticians, a butcher, a card shop, florist and even

a pet emporium all sitting cheek by jowl it's a great one-stop shop for most things you need. It is even the home of radio station Talk Radio Europe. And now there is an even better reason to visit the centre, with a fabulous new boutique wine shop opened here. Called Terroirs, this is the brainchild of Juan Carlos Mackintosh, a long time wine lover, who has worked in the business for over a decade. A wonderful selection of bottles from around Spain, as well as from around the world, this is one of the coast's most exciting places to stock up. In particular look out for his interesting local wines from the Axarquia,



WELCOME: At Cafe Verona



Jerez and Ronda, as well as his picks from the north of Spain. While at La Colonia, make sure to pop upstairs and say hello to Liana Vari-ni, who is fast becoming one of the coast's top interior designers. She and her reliable sidekick Cesar, from San Sebastian, are extremely knowledgeable on everything from wallpaper to materials and both have an exquisite eye. Liana, a former Emirates air hostess,

acquired her qualifications in her home country of Italy - all while serving high-flying travellers. She has opened her shop to capitalise on the international set that frequents the centre. "I want to tap more into the European and Russian markets as well as hold on to my Middle Eastern ones and this spot is great for that," she says. "It's very central on the costa, right next to Marbella and Estepona, and

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## What's in a name

Before rocking up at La Colonia, how about a little history lesson: the name heralds from San Pedro's farming days and refers to a colony launched by one of the coast's earliest expat families.

The story began when Scottish miner John Charles Mackintosh left the chilly Highlands to found his own coal mine just inland from the coast in the early 19th century. He amassed a vast fortune over the next few decades, in particular by exporting his coal from a port depot near what is now Funny Beach, just east of Marbella centre.

Much of it was sold to the British navy.

However the family's luck was not to last and, when the Spanish civil war broke out in the 1930s, things became tough for the founder's son. John Mackintosh junior (yes, the owner of Terroirs wine shop - pictured left - is related) was forced to flee Marbella for Gibraltar, finding much of his property confiscated.

He lived out the rest of his days on

the Rock, and left £20 million to the government when he passed away in 1940 - much of it helping to fund university fees for Gibraltarians.

He is remembered there from the name of the social centre, the John Mackintosh Hall.

However, it was back in Spain that he had the most impact, buying up large swathes of land around San Pedro for his 'unofficial family', the result of a liaison with a Catholic woman from Sevilla.

The Protestant Mackintosh felt so bad about neglecting his 'illegitimate' lover, whom he could not marry due to their families' opposing religions, that he bequeathed all the land to her family on his death.

Cue La Colonia, built by the third generation of the Mackintosh family and still owned today by the fifth generation, with a number of the family actually working here.

Even the square is named after John Mackintosh's mother, Maria Luisa.



**TALENTS:** Include Liana and Cesar and (inset left) Juan at Terroirs

the roads make it very accessible so I can travel back and forth very easily." La Colonia's clientele has expanded a lot over recent years with the key changes in San Pedro.

"There is a lot more footfall now," explains Jane Clark, who has been running the Twist Boutique for a decade. "The shops bring a wide group of people which means more business... you can literally get everything you need from one centre."

In terms of the mix of clientele, Irishman Malcolm Spendlove, who owns Passion Cafe, explains: "We see all types of eaters from businessmen having meetings, families grabbing lunch as well as loads of the locals."



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THERE has been a food revolution going on in San Pedro for the last few years. The knives have been drawn in a turf war between literally dozens of new restaurants that have opened in that time. Everything from Italian to Argentine, and Japanese to French, all nationalities are represented in this pavement tussle, that is great for the punters.

And it is no surprise, with the town offering a wonderful central space off which thousands of people gather to graze at both lunchtime and dinner right through the year.

There is a definite focus on quality and style and to sur-

**Those in the know are swapping Marbella for San Pedro when it comes to dining, writes Jon Clarke**

vive you have to be good. "San Pedro has completely changed over the last few years," explains Ross Duggan, manager at the popular Irish eaterie and pub the **Hogan Stand** on the Boulevard.

"It has a completely different atmosphere and all the scruffy builders and fraudsters we once had have well and truly moved on.

"Now we can concentrate on quality."

The leading purveyors of this drive for haute cuisine

include **L'Impronta**, **Maccao** and **Tutamaki** recently opened on the boulevard, while the town's most famous restaurant **Albert & Simon** continues to impress, despite the death of its celebrated chef Albert Benisty a year ago.

Across the road, Francisco Vacas at elegant **L'Impronta** continues to do a great job an upmarket joint, that is constantly upping its game.

Highly seasonal in his use of ingredients the Cordoba chef left school and began cooking at the age of 13, and always insists on fresh pasta and the best line-caught fresh fish.

If you are looking for something a bit more traditional, then step uphill from the boulevard towards Calle An-

**More Spanish you could not find, with stuffed bull's heads hanging from the walls**

dalucia, where you will find San Pedro's most famous - and well established - restaurants and bars.

Most famous of these is **Restaurante Alfredo**, which has been open for well over three decades and been hardly shut for more than three days in that time. Indeed, this stalwart of a joint stays open for a near-record 364 days a year, only shutting on New Year's Day. More Spanish you could not find, with stuffed bull's heads (and plenty more) hanging from the walls, wooden chandeliers and empty sherry bottles.

A superb shady terrace outside is perfect for business lunches, while inside for winter is rarely anything but packed.

A true family affair, only its chef Ivan is an outsider and he's been knocking around for over 20 years. Father Alfredo and his sons offer a great mix of meat and fish and plenty of seasonal fare to boot.

Next door you should also try out **La Bodega de Can-**



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**FOOD FOCUS**

**AFTER AN EXOTIC UPBRINGING IT IS LITTLE SURPRISE THAT FORMER TEENAGE SOLDIER ABDEL DJEBET HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A TROOPER IN THE KITCHEN**

# Eastern promise

IT is fair to say that Abdel Djebet was destined for life as a restaurateur. With an uncle who teaches at Spain's top cookery school, a cousin with a Michelin star and a mother with one of the coast's longest established cafes, he grew up in a melting pot of flavours and spices. Yet, at the age of 16 the new owner of exciting Japanese restaurant **Tutemaki** in San Pedro de Alcantara decided to join the army. Having grown up in Sotogrande he could have easily gone



into his family's various restaurants in Torreguadiaro. "But I was always looking to do my own thing, make money and see the world," he explains over lunch on the terrace of **Tutemaki**, which is approaching its first birthday. "So when my stepfather suggested the army I jumped at the idea." He has soon enrolled in the Royal Gibraltar Regiment, which quickly fast tracked him to do his A-levels at the Army Foundation College in Yorkshire. But that didn't mean he was in for the easy life. There were plenty of tough weeks in the Brecon Beacons and wilds of Scotland... ten days of continual rain 'with no roof over our heads', forced marches, frostbite, hyperthermia. "It was tough, but I was mentally strong, as well as being fast and versatile, so did pretty well." However, at the end of the two year stint he ducked out of enlisting long-term and enrolled on a tourism and management course at Weymouth College in Dorset. This led full circle to jobs in a string of leading hotels in Brussels, Liverpool and finally at Andalucia's most stylish retreat **Finca Cortesin** in Casares. And now, Abdel, 26, is finally back full circle where he was always meant to be, running a restaurant on the Costa del Sol. Joint owner of **Tutemaki** with Dutch entrepreneur Nawfel, a former mechanic whose Andalucian wife wanted a move back to Spain, he has worked hard to bring in a series of important touches. These include a brand new menu, bamboo fence, Japanese music and an all round new 'zen feel'. "We invested in a Teppanyaki grill and are also working on making the food more gourmet in style and sourcing the freshest ingredients the region has to offer," he explains.



This means a lot more than just sushi, with loads of 'te-maki' handrolls, six in total, which are amazing, as well as the most amazing spicy tuna tartare. "We are buying our own almadraba-caught bluefin tuna from Cadiz, which is sustainable and organic, so we will never run out," he explains. "This is the tuna that the top restaurants in Japan buy." The wagyu beef burger is spectacular and there are some fantastic fresh juices, which are great for the palate and healthy to boot. The taiyaki desserts, which are fish shaped waffles filled with nutella, kinder or white chocolate, are popular with kids. "My uncle, who teaches at Les Roches cookery school in Marbella has been very helpful and I have learnt loads from my mother Laila." He grew up with food in his veins, as his mum has always run restaurants as did his other uncles, back in Weymouth, while his cousin Taher Jibet trained with Marco Pierre White at the Michelin-starred Mirabelle, in London, before running his own place in Dorset.



## 35 YEAR HOTSPOT

PUB CHARLES has been the coolest secret haunt for Sanpedreños since 1982. At its helm throughout has been charismatic owner Jesus Leal, who insists on talking to everyone who walks through the door. The 64-year-old hasn't had much time off since he opened the bar 35 years ago, even completing a brand new refurb last year. "People come here for the attentive service and the ambience," he explains. "Everyone is welcome here." He's not wrong. Any given night sees Brits, Spaniards, Germans, Russians and more sipping on their fish-bowl G&T's or beautifully decorated cocktails, soaking up the typically friendly San Pedro ambience. So when you're next strolling around San Peds, you know where to stop off for a drink.



**tinero**, run by friendly superhost Alberto, who has been working in restaurants since he was 14. This is THE spot for lovers of sherry and he has hundreds of them and many going into the hundreds of euros, including a 1946 Pedro Ximenez and a 40-year-old Amontillado from Azuleta. But aside from the wine list the food is excellent and varied and there are always plenty of specials, including one of the best ajo blancos I have tried on the coast. Best of all though - in fact maybe the winning dish in San Pedro - was the amazing tartaki of bluefin tuna, with a wakame salad, egg roe 'tobiko' and mayonnaise wasabi. In a word; perfect. It is no surprise that last year the restaurant won a national 'gold award' from

**This is THE spot for lovers of sherry and there are hundreds to choose from**



**MEATS GALORE: Ribs ready to cook at Alfredo's**

Radio Turismo and he continues to go from strength to strength. Another man helping to change the face of San Pedro is Malcolm Spendlove, who has been at the helm of the ever popular **Passion Cafe** for the last 15 years and now heads up one of the coast's best hamburger joints, **Mr Gourmet Burger** on the boulevard.

It counts on 100% beef burgers, halal too, while kids are encouraged to make their own 'Junior G' burgers in 'four easy steps'. Next door and rarely quiet look out for popular Irish pub and restaurant **Hogan Stand**, an Irish pub named after the famous Gaelic football stand at Croke Park. As well as having its typical bar snacks it also has a good mix of quality dishes, including rack of lamb and fish, and you dine on a nice terrace at the front. And then there is the new **Gym Junkie Cafe**, Spain's first protein eatery, serving up vitamin-stacked meals - ideal before or after a workout. The cafe's mouthwatering menu includes grass-fed beef, protein pancakes and an omelette bar - complete with seaweed, broccoli and tuna omelettes.

## THE HOGAN STAND

### Bar & Restaurant

### San Pedro de Alcantara

Marbella

**LIVE SPORTS**  
shown on  
**6 screens**

All live games  
being shown  
**Early bird menu**  
5:30 to 7:30

**The Hogan Hackers Golf play every Wednesday and the first Saturday of every month**

**Mouth - watering Fillet or Rib Eye steaks our speciality.**

**Live music Friday, Saturday night and Sunday**

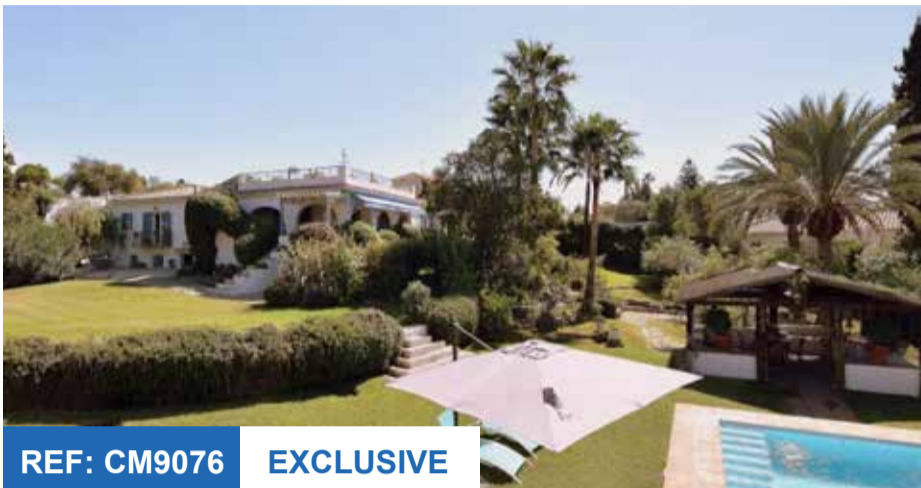
**Quiz night Thursday**



# CASA MARBELLA

## Your Property Specialists

Since 1981  
35 Years Experience!



REF: CM9076 EXCLUSIVE

### Charming Andalusian Villa in San Pedro town

5 Beds - 5 Bath - 347m2 Built -  
3.203 m2 Plot - Price € 1.495.000

This beautiful home is a rare find, completely renovated with modern fixtures in an English country house style completely private, with a beautifully landscaped subtropical garden leading to an inviting swimming pool and gazebo for al fresco dining. A highly recommended property for those looking for space, privacy & tranquility walking distance to town and amenities.



REF: CM9204 EXCLUSIVE

### Beautiful Contemporary Villa in Estepona

6 Beds - 4 Baths - 440m2 Built  
-1756 m2 Plot - 100m2 Terrace -  
Price € 790.000

Situated in the Golden Bay, 5 minutes drive from the port of Estepona. Built on three floors, with sea views overlooking the African coast line, Sierra Bermeja and Estepona town. Enjoy the gated garden and swimming pool or take advantage of the impressive upper summer conservatory room to admire the spectacular views.



REF: CM8661 EXCLUSIVE

### Apartment with sea view in front line beach complex in San Pedro

2 Bedrooms - 2 Baths - 140m2 Built -  
30m2 Terrace - € 599.000

This very well presented corner apartment, in excellent condition, enjoys beautiful views over the community gardens and towards La Concha mountain and the Mediterranean sea.



REF: CM9447 EXCLUSIVE

### Beachside ground floor apartment in San Pedro

2 Beds - 2 Baths - 105m2 Built - 32m2  
Terrace - Price € 275.000

South West facing ground floor property, has been modified for reduced mobility and has a spacious lounge leading to a large terrace with easy access to the communal pool. Five minutes from the beach and San Pedro Boulevard.



REF: CM9070 EXCLUSIVE

### Stunning Townhouse in El Paraiso, Benahavis

3 Beds - 2 Baths - 220m2 Built -  
34 m2 Terrace - Price € 299.000

Situated within an exclusive gated community, this well kept home is a true gem! Relax on its fantastic upper solarium with panoramic views and admire its beautiful landscaped sub tropical gardens.



REF: CM9327 EXCLUSIVE

### Breathtaking views in Mijas Valtocado

3 Beds - 3 Baths - 1 Toilet - 584m2  
Built - 2.328 m2 Plot - 284m2 Terrace -  
Price € 695.000

This beautiful villa was designed by a Spanish architect to reflect traditional Andalusian style. Only 30 km away from Málaga and close to Marbella. All terraces and rooms offer a spectacular panoramic view of the landscape and Mediterranean Sea.

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