

Magic of the Orient

'The sugar-canes rattled like bones on the wind, and the dark-blue mountains stood close around, sharp and jagged, like a cordon of police'

SO wrote Laurie Lee of his first visit to the Costa Tropical, just before Spain was engulfed in its murderous civil war. Drive along the coast today and you can still appreciate his dramatic imagery. Once upon a time this stretch of the Mediterranean was dubbed the Costa del Sol Oriental. Then, believing that they were being sidelined by the rival resorts up the road in Malaga province, the folk in Granada province woke up. They decided to call their coast the Costa Tropical. And with good reason... not only does it play host to one of the best climates in Europe, it is also one of the most scenic stretches of coastline on the Med. To be exact, the Costa Tropical extends from the eastern edge of Malaga province close to Nerja, to the frontier with Almería and La Rabita; some 80 kilometres of stunningly varied scenery. Development has yet to make heavy inroads because of the rugged terrain, so forget the miles of ribbon developments you see around Benalmadena and Fuengirola. It's unspoilt here. Soaring headlands and cliffs are interspersed with small coves, except where the Guadalfeo river flows across a flat, fertile delta near Motril. Here and there, on prominent headlands, ancient watchtowers guard the coast. These *torres vigía* or *atalayas* are a reminder of the time when the cry "¡Hay moros en la costa!" warned of invaders from Africa and sent whole communities rushing for the hills.



David Baird takes a drive through the fabulous, little explored region of the Costa Tropical

These days they are great to have a poke around and get a photo with the stunning backdrop of the mountains dropping into the sea. The first village encountered heading east out of Nerja is La Herradura, on a beautiful horseshoe bay. Until tourism arrived it was one of the poorest villages on the coast. These days it's a charming spot, sitting on a pretty stretch of coastline and with an attractive low rise feel to it. Plenty of expensive homes dot the Punta de la Mona area, and include that of Spain's celebrated guitarist Andrés Segovia, who had a house

here. Make sure to head into town to see the seafront monument that recalls Spain's biggest naval disaster. It occurred in 1562 when 28 ships carrying provisions and the families of soldiers from Málaga to Orán on the African coast took refuge here from a storm. The wind turned, with extreme violence, trapping the fleet between two headlands, Cerro Gordo and Punta de la Mona. Altogether, an incredible 25 vessels sank leading to 5,000 people losing their lives.

Moving along, we come to the other key resort of the Costa Tropical, Almuñécar. When Laurie Lee trekked across Spain in 1935 — vividly recorded in his book *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* — he came to a halt in 'Castillo', a village, 'backed by a bandsaw of mountains and fronted by a strip of grey sand which some hoped would be an attraction for tourists'. Castillo was in fact Almuñécar. Lee changed the name to protect his friends. To

Continues on Page 28

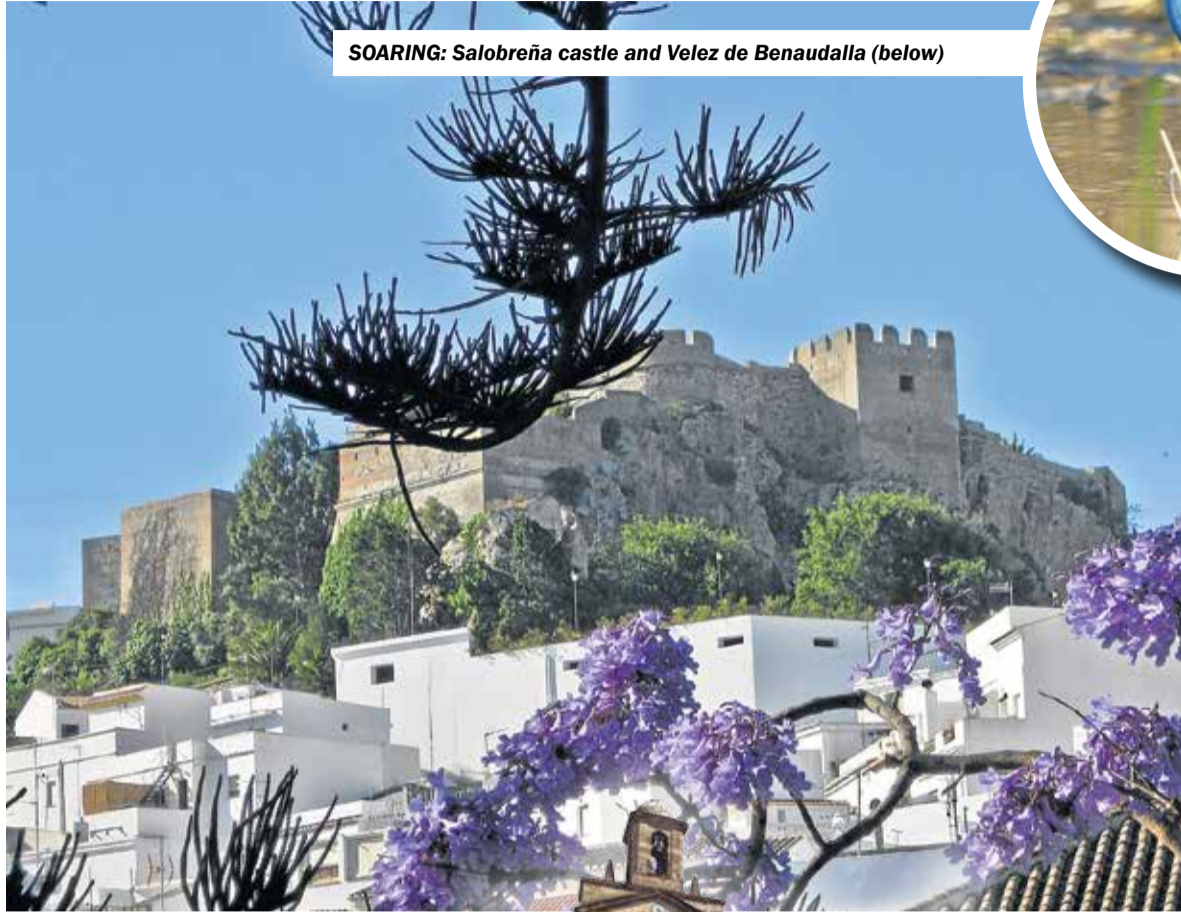
From Page 28

day modern apartment blocks line the coast here, but fortunately the old town, crowned by castle ramparts, has been preserved. It is an attractive labyrinth of narrow streets. While large numbers of north Europeans visit in winter, it attracts mainly Spanish visitors and retains its Spanish character. Behind the town thousands of tropical fruit trees flourish in the sheltered Río Verde and Río Seco valleys. The unique micro-climate allows the growth of mangos, custard apples and avocados. Sadly though, 1000 years of sugar production on the southern coast of Spain came to an end in 2006 when the last *azucarera* (cane refinery) closed at nearby Salobreña.

Rum is produced in the area on a small scale. You can buy Ron Pálido in local shops

Few towns are as impressive on first sight as Salobreña. Its dazzling white houses, topped by ancient ramparts, clothe a huge rock rising steeply from flat farmland. A long sandy beach, split by a large rock (reminiscent of a basking whale), juts into the sea. Nearby is Motril, the bustling administrative centre of the Costa Tropical. It was known in the 18th and 19th centuries as 'Little Cuba' because of the importance of its sugar production. Rum is still being produced in the area on a small scale. You can buy Ron Pálido in local shops. It comes from the surviving distillery, run by Paco Montero. Since the decline of that industry last century, Motril has opted for tourism. It's worth paying a visit to the Parque de los Pueblos de América, which claims to be the most important tropical botanic garden in Europe, with 36 botanic species imported from the Americas, including coconut palms, jacarandas, magnolias. Meanwhile, learn all about sugar cane production at the Centro de Interpretación at this park. And you can gain a fascinating insight into the rise and fall of Motril's sugar industry at the Museo Pre Industrial

del Azúcar, in the El Ingenio de la Palma. Inland from here you will find the motorway to Granada city and a short drive inland you will come to some spectacular mountain scenery, dotted with sleepy villages including charming Velez de Benaudalla (right) You must visit Lecrín valley, or the Valley of Happiness as it was known to the Moors. This is a pleas-



SOARING: Salobreña castle and Velez de Benaudalla (below)



EXPLORE: The caves by Costa



ant, slow-paced corner of Granada province where comedian Alexei Sayle has a home. Seismic movements and erosion have gouged deep ravines and soaring cliffs out of these foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Towering over the valley is the Cerro del Caballo, 3,013 metres high. In winter it is often capped with snow while in the sheltered valley below oranges

ant, slow-paced corner of Granada province where comedian Alexei Sayle has a home. Seismic movements and erosion have gouged deep ravines and soaring cliffs out of these foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Towering over the valley is the Cerro del Caballo, 3,013 metres high. In winter it is often capped with snow while in the sheltered valley below oranges

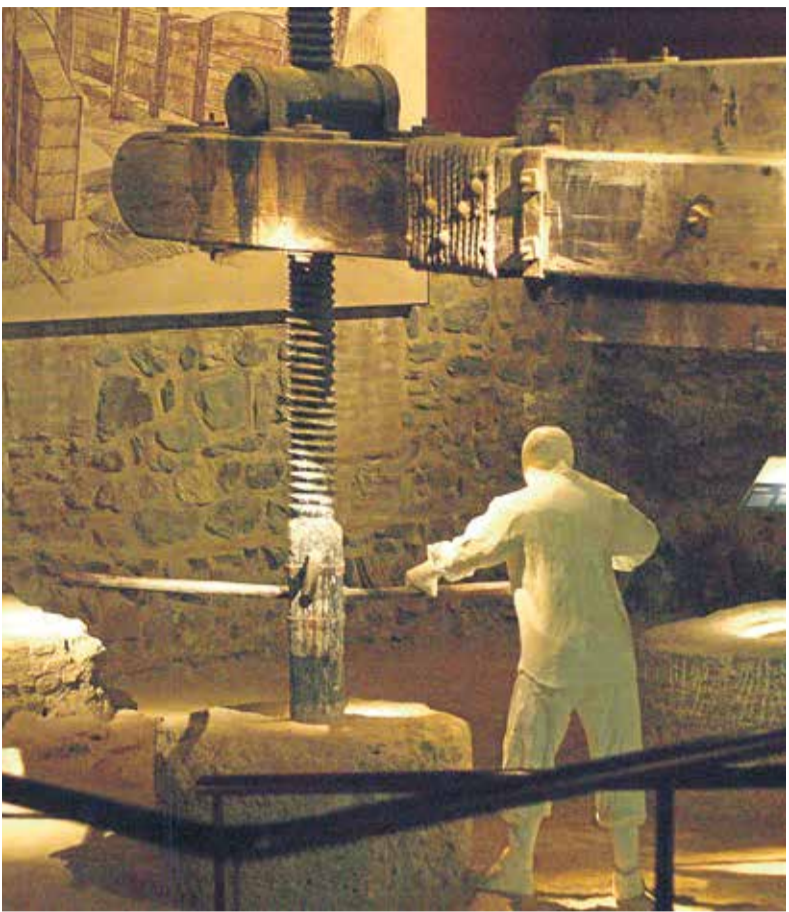


Monday to Sunday: 10am - 11:30pm tel: 958 82 83 95
s/n Calle Playa del Peñón, 18680 Salobreña, Granada



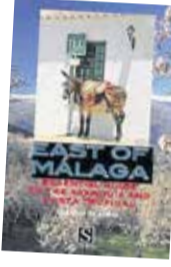


Tropical and the olive oil museums



Instead of continuing east into Almería province, turn left and head up into the mountains. Soon you reach La Contraviesa, a bleak, largely uninhabited range of beautiful mountains. From its upper reaches, rising as high as 1,800 metres, you look across the deep Guadalfeo valley to the villages dotting the Alpujarras, as the area on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada is known. The panorama is particularly spectacular in Spring when the almond blossom contrasts with the distant snow-capped mountains. A traditional part of meals along the coast and in the Alpujarras is the *Vino de la Contraviesa*, a hearty rosado. Until recently the region's wines never rated much attention from connoisseurs. Today, however, half a dozen bodegas are making serious attempts to produce quality vintages by introducing new grape varieties and modernising their methods and making some fine reds and whites. Conditions are unique, as the Tempranillo, Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon and native vines are wafted by breezes from both the Sierra Nevada and the Mediterranean. Definitely worth a little exploration.

David Baird is the author of the best-selling *East of Malaga - Your guide to the Axarquia and Costa Tropical*. He has lived in the area for decades and also written about the infamous rebels who fought on against Franco after the civil war in his book *Between Two Fires - Guerrilla war in the Spanish sierras, much of it based in the Costa Tropical*. His comprehensive guide to Granada province, *The Glories of Yesterday*, is due out soon.



and lemons flourish. If you head east of Motril on the Almería road the coast loses some of its charm. The beaches, backed by steep rocky slopes, tend to be grey and gritty. New farming methods have enhanced local incomes but not the scenery. Terraces have been hacked out of the hillsides and shrouded in plastic to allow intensive crop produc-

tion. Guaranteed sunshine and sophisticated irrigation methods produce crops from once-barren terrain. Hemmed in by greenhouses, Castell de Ferro has grown into a minor tourist resort, with mainly Spanish visitors. Breakwaters protect the beaches here and at tiny La Mamola, which has acquired a promenade. It

attracts summer vacationers and apartment blocks have sprung up. If you are seeking a tranquil hideaway, this could be the ideal spot. Backed by arid, bleak mountains, La Rábita (population around 1,500) has spruced up its seafront and boasts a handsome promenade bordered by palm trees. The name comes from *rábitas*, fortifications built by the Moors as military-religious sanctuaries.

Nº20

RESTAURANT

Come and be surprised

Call 634 09 02 07 or email us on numero20laherradura@gmail.com
 Paseo Andrés Segovia, 20, 18697 Almuñécar, Granada

WELCOME

THE Costa Tropical of Granada is a real paradise. It's a place to enjoy beaches, mountains and fertile valleys, cut through with rivers and with woodland areas above, perfect for outdoor sports.



We also have a great range of quality places to stay and a rich cultural heritage, which frequently comes alive in the streets, squares and theatres. On top of that we have an extensive and varied gastronomy, numerous museums and historic monuments, which range from the Prehistoric to the present day.

We invite you to come and get to know better our region, an area of privilege, full of life and much to discover. Welcome to the Costa Tropical!

Sergio García

President
Mancomunidad de Municipios de la
Costa Tropical de Granada



Drama unravels

The dramatic curves and peaks of the Costa Tropical are all thanks to the African continental plate, which is pushing its way under the Eurasian plate, causing a climate and geology unlike any other in Spain.

Winter rains and melting snow has cut deep ravines into the once-forested hillsides, which having lost their fertile topsoil, are mostly now home to almond, olive and carob

trees.

Above towers the imposing Sierra Nevada mountain range, which protects the coastline from the worst of the central plateau winter, while Africa shields it from the harsh effects of the Mediterranean and Atlantic weather. The result is a sub-tropical climate which explains the variety of exotic local produce, including mangoes and avocados.



Salobreña
Vacaciones

tel: 625 284 146

info@salobrenavacaciones.com

www.salobrenavacaciones.com

FOR RENT from €1,850 per week



Villa El Último Gavilán - Monte De Los Almendros
5 bedroom 5 bathroom

This is a luxury holiday home. It faces due south with a panoramic, uninterrupted view of the sea. Situated on high ground, the open countryside is only a few minutes away.

FOR RENT from €2,400 per week



Villa El Oasis - Monte De Los Almendros
4 bedroom 4 bathroom

This south facing villa has stunning views across the Mediterranean sea and the village of Salobreña. Centrally located within an hours reach of Malaga, Almeria and Granada airports.

FOR SALE €205,000



House - Costa Aguilera
REF: 0393 3 bedroom 2 bathroom

Beautiful property located on an urbanization with 22 houses creating a small Andalusian white village. South facing with stunning views to the sea, and distributed over three floors.

FOR SALE €270,000



Country Property - Alfamar
REF: 0365 2 bedroom 1 bathroom

South facing property with beautiful views, lounge/dining room with open plan kitchen and a beautiful terrace with pool, barbeque area and fruit trees. Plenty of parking.

FOR SALE €285,000



Attic - Salobreña
REF: 0385 3 bedroom 2 bathroom

Beautiful attic with stunning views and an amazing terrace. This amazing property comprises of a lounge / dining room, fully equipped kitchen, three bedrooms and two bathrooms.

FOR SALE €550,000



Chalet - Monte De Los Almendros
REF: 0405 2 bedroom 2 bathroom

This property is move in ready. Distributed on two levels, with a garden in the lower area of the plot. This property has its own private infinity pool and has stunning views.

Gillian Richardson is known locally as 'Lady Di'... and increasingly for selling houses

Queen of sales

SHE is one of the true expat godmothers of the Costa Tropical. Having lived in Salobreña since 1992 there are not many corners of the Granada coastline that Gillian Richardson, of Salobreña Vacaciones, has not explored.

Well integrated in the area, the mother-of-two, from Henley, near London, is the oracle on just about every apartment and farmhouse for sale or rent, particularly in the Salobreña area.

She explains that the huge range of nationalities that own in the area bought here, precisely because it is not the Costa del Sol.

"People come to the Costa Tropical because they like the real Spain. They don't want to live in the Nerja area with its fish and chips and every other voice being a foreigner.

"Here in Salobreña it really feels like a Spanish village and we haven't been swamped with foreigners."

She fell in love with the coastline having first visited on holiday in 1978, with her late husband, a dental surgeon.

"It was just fields of sugarcane and stunning views," she says. "We decided to move here 25 years ago and put our young kids, then four and nine, into a lo-



cal school.

"It didn't take long to get integrated and we were quickly adopted by the village, who nicknamed me 'Lady Di' and helped me learn Spanish."

Both her children have found professional careers (James, 36, is a photographer, in Granada, while Marie Claire, 30, is a lawyer working with her mother) and are now set to marry local Spaniards this year.

The company, which initially just dealt with holiday rentals but is now also an estate agency, has seen an increase of almost 50% in sales over the last two years.

"There's been a lot of growth and we are getting lots of requests," she explains.

"The biggest sales are down in the village of Salobreña, particularly with Spanish, while I have lots of foreign buyers looking in the Monte area or for fincas inland," she adds.

The company has a great range of properties from a small one-bedroom flat for €35,000 to a €2m villa.

"We also have a great range of beautiful old fincas in the nearby countryside, for less than €100,000, perfect to do up," she continues.

"All in all this place is a sleeping giant and in many ways I hope it stays that way."

Visit www.salobrenavacaciones.com or call 858123401



DREAM TEAM: Some of the office girls with Mathilde (second right)

Dream break

WHEN Mathilde Haalstra saw the opportunity to swap her life running a busy town hall in Holland for a permanent life in Spain, she jumped at the opportunity.

And in two short years she has worked extremely hard to turn her company Villas Colores Spain into one of the leading rental companies on the Costa Tropical.

From their base in Salobreña, they currently rent and manage nearly two dozen luxury attractive villas.

All guaranteed to have stunning views, they range from villas, sleeping 15, to three-bed properties, all carefully managed by the office and cleaning team of 20.

"We don't just rent them, we make sure they are carefully managed and run to perfection," explains the mother-of-three from Utrecht.

"In summer they get fully booked but in the winter and spring they are perfect for holidaymakers looking to be near the beach, golf courses as well as the ski slopes. Granada and Malaga are both less than an hour away.

"From here you can be strapping on your skis in the Sierra Nevada just one and a half hours away."

The company's clients include Europeans as well as Ca Americans and even Russians.

"We have a big team of cleaners, gardeners, poolmen and three people specialising in laundry to make it all tick over

"Our goal is to increase the number of our luxury rental villas, maintaining the high service for both guests and our

To rent a villa or enquire about their property management service contact the team at +34 958612027 or rentals@villascolorespain.com visit www.villascolorespain.com



VILLAS COLORES SPAIN

RENTALS, SALES AND DEVELOPMENT

*"Dozens of beautiful properties for your perfect break on the Costa Tropical
ALL with stunning views!"*



email: rentals@villascolorespain.com
www.villascolorespain.com
tel: +34 958 612 027

Carretera de Malaga 2A
18680 Salobreña (Granada), Spain

Contact us at any time for inquiries regarding our beautiful villas. We are ready to answer any question you might have.

Carla van Asten, Carmen Sanchez,
Mathilde Haalstra, Maribel Navarro





HARDY: Laurence was impressed with the area - and its prices

No tropical downpour can dampen the delights of Motril and Almuñecar, towns with different pasts whose Costa Tropical location makes them siblings under the skin, writes Laurence Dollimore

COSTA 'Tropical' it certainly was. The monsoon-like March rains lashing southern Spain showed no mercy as I arrived in Almuñecar, one of the most important tourist towns in the province of Granada.

But no time for complaining, I headed to lively seafront eatery Mar de Plata, where four glasses of wine, two soft drinks and an oversized tapas of hearty Irish stew came in at just €12. It's one of many food bargains you'll find in this ancient town, where tapas is often provided free of charge with every drink - not something you would see in the likes of Marbella, where one drink alone can cost the equivalent of my entire lunch bill.

After a short sprint back to the hotel, it wasn't long before tums were rumbling again.

It was off to Da Nicola's pizzeria, owned by friendly British expat Nigel, who moved to the seaside village 12 years ago after more than 20 years in Lanzarote.

"Life is just so much more tranquil here," he told me, "there's a great international community too, mostly British, Swedish and German."

The businessman set up his restaurant just over two years ago.

"People move here for a relaxed way of life and they definitely get that, it's not as chaotic as the Costa del Sol but there's still a nice buzz about the place, especially in summer."

An hour's drive from Benalmadena, Almuñecar is more famously known as an important setting in British author Laurie

Lee's account of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. His book - *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* - referred to the town as 'Castillo', in an attempt to disguise people's identities.

But Almuñecar's history goes much deeper than the Civil War. It was originally called Sexi when it was founded as a colony by the Phoenicians around 800 BC - a fact not lost on some residents today, who still refer to themselves as *Sexitanos*.

Over the next 600 years it would become an important port and town with a large fish salting and curing industry that was a major supplier to Greece and Rome.

The Romans took over the town during war with the Phoenicians in 218 BC.

Almuñecar thrived and was recognised for its loyalty to Rome in 49 BC thanks to its fishy forte.

Evidence of this was uncovered during excavations in the Majuelo Botanical Gardens in the 1980s, a large section of which is still on display.

As they needed huge amounts of fish and sea salt and a constant supply of fresh running water, the Romans built more than 8 km of water conduits in the valleys of the Rio Seco and the Rio Verde in 1 AD, including five significant aqueducts.

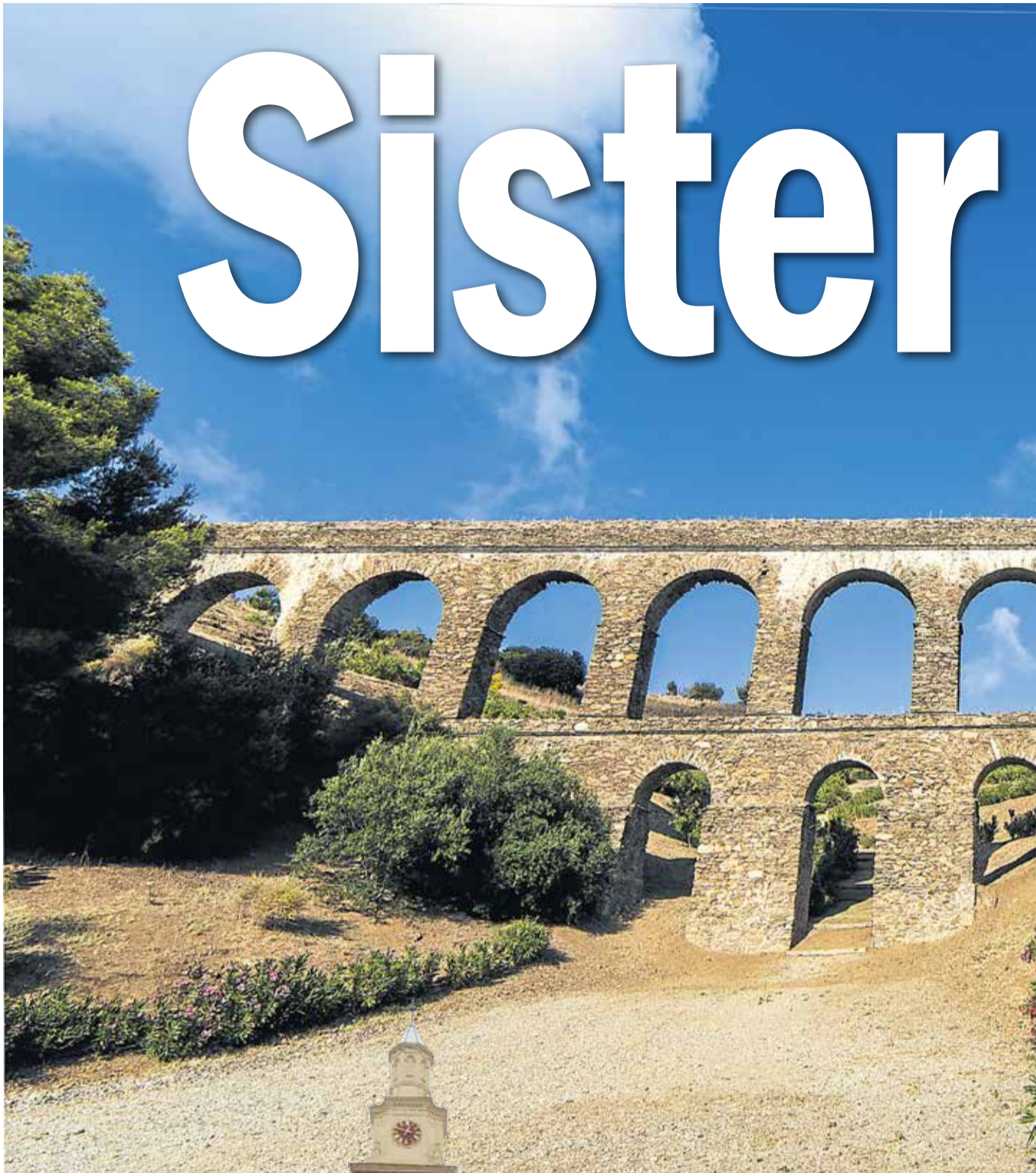
They are all still standing and amazingly, after 2,000 years, four of them are still in use. The Roman water supply also served the town and recent excavations in the centre uncovered the fifth aqueduct and a Roman baths.

You can see the most impressive aqueduct (top) just a three-



STRONG FOUNDATIONS: Roman water system in Almuñecar still stands today

The Roman aqueducts are still standing - and in use - after 2000 years



Sister



PICTURESQUE: One of the many beautiful historic buildings in Motril

minute drive from the centre of town.

The Romans are believed to have been the first to fortify the Castle of Saint Miguel, although frequent rebuilding has destroyed most of its very extensive fortifications.

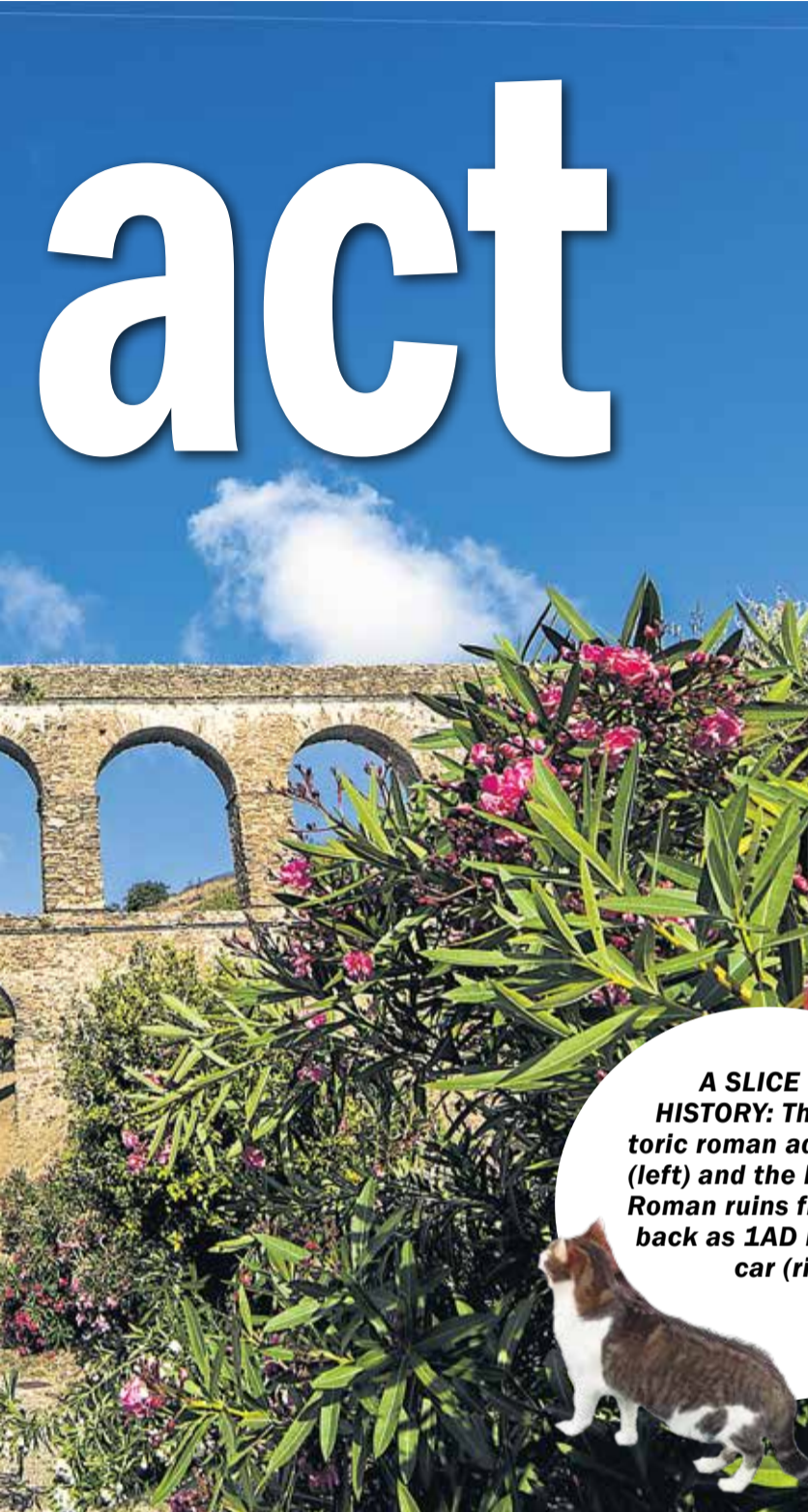
Just below the castle on the landward side is the Cueva de Siete Palacios, although it is less a cave and more the largest

remnant of a Roman palace yet found in Almuñecar.

It survived for hundreds of years as 'social housing' until the 'cave dwellers' were re-housed in the 1970s. Only then did its true origins become apparent and it now houses the town museum.

It means there is lots to do and see if you need to pass the

act



A SLICE OF HISTORY: The historic roman aqueduct (left) and the leftover Roman ruins from as far back as 1AD in Almuñecar (right)



WHAT A VIEW: You can see from the coastline to the snowy mountains from the Castillo de San Miguel and (right) Motril cruise ship



time on the very few rainy days here. In summer, you can head to one of over a dozen beaches that play host to thousands of tourists every year. And if you're looking for more of a city vibe, drive 20 minutes east to Motril, Granada's second biggest town and the capital

of its coast. Here you'll find great food at great prices, and of course, the legendary free tapa per drink. Once the sugar refinery capital of Andalusia and, arguably, Spain there are still eight old sugar refineries standing tall

today. They were once seen as the future of the city, now they are legacies. The Nuestra Señora de la Cabeza is another vestige of the town's commercial heritage. Both a refinery and a distillery, it sits next to the public swimming pool and the Parque de las Américas. It was founded by the Larios gin family in 1885 but due to the low salaries paid, the workers tried to burn it down. The town hall also wanted rid of it but the Junta disagreed and has declared it a property of historical heritage to protect its distillery, chimney, store and terrain. Study the history of gin or drink it and get your free tapa, a trip to the Costa Tropical can offer both ... whatever the weather.

ON YOUR HIKE!

There is so much beauty to see by foot along the Costa Tropical



THE Costa Tropical offers great hiking opportunities for all ages all year around.

There is a complete network of trails along the coastline while the inland villages offer a perfect way to enjoy the stunning nature and subtropical climate while getting in some exercise too!

There really is a route for everyone, from beginners to experts.

They include gentle walks between coastal beaches along the Costa Tropical coast path, easy circular

trails through the valleys among tropical fruit farms, rural tracks that connect the small villages of the Rio Verde and the trails of the Junta de los Rios.

For tree lovers, be sure to check out the Camino del Nacimiento and the ancient olive trees of Velez de Benaudalla.

There are also beautiful trails running through vineyards and almond trees in blossom in Polopos, Sorvilan, Rubite, Albondon, Murtas and the charming village of Turon.



COME AND LET THE HISTORY WASH OVER YOU

Historic 19th century hotel with award-winning 18th & 19th century gardens, Arabic roots and luxurious service

Restaurant open by appointment

Email.: info@casadelosbates.com

Telephone restaurant.: 672 35 73 36

Carretera Nacional 340 – km. 329,5

(Motril – Salobreña) 18600 – Motril

Tel.: (+34) 95 834 94 95

www.casadelosbates.com

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Iconic Spanish architects complete stylish cliffside pad on the Andalusia coast

It brings a whole new meaning to the concept of living life on the edge. Perched above the Med, Casa del Acantilado (The Cliff House) is the creation of weird and wacky Madrid architects GilBartolome. Something of a challenge, it was created by Pablo Gil and Jaime Bartolome on a 42-degree slope on the Costa Tropical coastline. Commissioned by a young couple from Madrid, every window of the home, near Salobrena, boasts stunning views of the sea. The state-of-the-art design split over two floors features a 'dragon-scale' curved roof, floor-to-ceiling windows and an infinity pool. Its position dug into the hillside helps the inside stay cool in the summer months and warmer in winter. "The project combined joyful living, innovative construction techniques, the return of craftsmanship and the cave as an environmental strategy," explains Bartolome.

Photo by: Jesus Granada

Restaurante El Peñon

Open since the 1950s - How times HAVEN'T changed!



Horario de apertura: 12:00 h a 00:00 h.
Paseo Marítimo S/N, 18680 SALOBREÑA (Granada)

Teléfono/Reservas: 958 610 538 / 958 611 198
E-mail: gomezvillaescusacb1@gmail.com
www.restauranteelpenon.es



hotelmiba

restaurant & skybar

C/N340, Km 325, 18680 Salobreña,
Granada, España

Tlf: +34 958 617 228
www.hotelmiba.es



Méson Nacimiento

RESTAURANT & TAPAS BAR

An incomparable setting where you enjoy homemade food,
and delicious pizzas and meats in our wood-fired oven



Open 12.00-17.00 & 19.30-23.00 Closed Tuesday
paconacimiento@hotmail.com tel: 958 622 196
Paseo de Nacimiento, 14, 18670, Velez de Benaudalla

WHERE TO EAT

Coast with the most

The food scene on
the Costa Tropical is
really starting to grow,
writes Jon Clarke

FOR foodies and hotel snobs there is an exciting adventure to be had away from the famous Granada ski slopes.

The food scene on the Costa Tropical just gets better and better with new restaurants opening every month.

One of the most exciting is **No.20**, which combines the very rare, and usually volatile cocktail of a Frenchman and an Englishman.

Combining the food skills of English chef Mark Parris, 43, with the business nous of French manager Laurent Hue, 40, this La Herradura eaterie is one place not to be missed.

Mark, from Kent, has considerable pedigree in the kitchen, having trained under Albert Roux at Le Gavroche in London, before doing stints at the Oxo Tower, Harvey Nichols and Souffle.

He made a name for himself locally at Los Laureles, in Almunecar, before setting up No20 with Laurent, who trained at Switzerland's top cookery school.

I was very impressed with the attention to detail and the lovely mix of flavours in Mark's original starters, which came (sort of) in combos.

Take the duck number, it truly quacked with duck foie, duck ham and duck breast, flavoured with feta cheese, raspberries and apple sauce.

Meanwhile a series of blinis, with vodka and dill cured salmon, with salmon pate was a true winner, while a superb vegetarian starter of grilled halloumi cheese, with courgettes, asparagus, pine nuts and baba ganoush was a treat.

I even ate my first souffle for years in Andalucia, a passion fruit number, which rose like the messiah!

Up the coast in Salobrena, I found another equally alluring local dish, which combined the superb mangoes and avocados from the area with a splendidly cooked red snapper.

Whipped up by Motril chef Jose Miguel, at **Restaurante La Bahía**, it was as surprising as it was delicious, served in a pesto sauce, with shavings of mozzarella on top.

The chiringuito-style restaurant is certainly anything but your usual fried fish affair, and apart from the cool jazz music, there were a number of interesting dishes.

These included the so-called 'queda bien', a clam and langoustine stew, which was delicious, as well as an excellent value rich and creamy fish soup at just €6.

Literally next door, you must also look out for the legendary **Restaurante el Peñon**, which sits in pole position literally built on the famous rock



BEACH FARE: Squid at El Peñon

below the town.

I've eaten here on various occasions over the last two decades and rarely been disappointed, not just with the excellent ambience and views, but also by the service.

Professionally run, by two local friends, it focuses on top quality fish and seafood, including lobsters, and has an excellent wine list to boot.

And in Salobrena there is now even more with the exciting addition of **Arais** restaurant in the heart of the town.

This stunning spot is the creation of Francisco 'Paco' Izquierdo, an ambitious chap, who has not only cooked since his teens, but also makes his own rum, from a factory in the town.

Dubbing his food as 'an adventure' his place is certainly well out of the ordinary.

Beautifully decorated, it is split into two parts, a bustling bar area, full of creative furniture and lighting, and a stylish dining

room next door.

With a kitchen to die for and a team of chefs from around Spain, this is one place that, if he gets it right, could be tilting for a Michelin star one day.

A big fan of local and seasonal produce, his menu changes regularly and there are two choices of Menu Degustacion, one starting at just €36. The food presentation is second to none.

I ate with him in the bar, where he explained why the celebrated Motril shrimps are partly blue and how to make rum from the local sugar cane.

We tasted the shrimps in a passion fruit soup, as well as a delicious braised octopus, all washed down with some excellent local Granada wines - and a couple of chestnuts from Bierzo.

This is a man to watch.

My next port of call was up in the hills, towards Granada at the atmospheric spot, **el Nacimiento**, in Velez de Benaudalla.

This is one trip well worth the journey, particularly to take in the Museum of Olive Oil, en route. Hidden up a tiny track on the edge of the village, you will find this charming spot beside a roaring stream and waterfall.

Once an olive mill, it is a great place for lunch or dinner and the menu is a good range of dishes typical from the Granada region.



TRIP TO THE SOURCE: El Nacimiento



TEAMWORK: At No.20, chef Jose at La Bahia and (below) Arais and its chef Paco



WHERE TO STAY

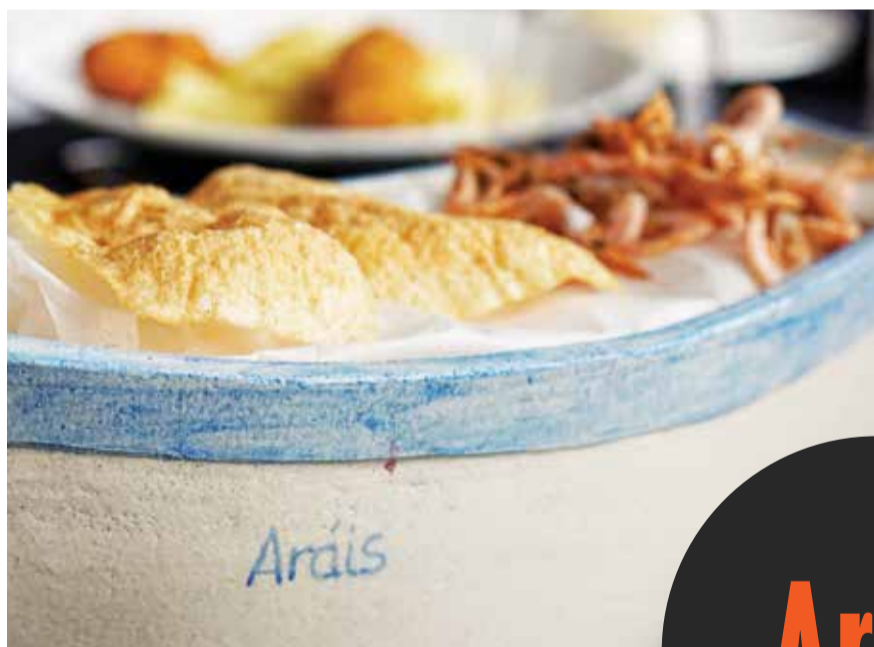
Bedding down

ANCIENT AND MODERN: Casa de los Bates and Hotel Miba

YOU are spoilt for choice with excellent places to stay on the Costa Tropical. There is something for every budget, from cheap hostels to incredible inland estates. These include the stunning Palacete de Cazulas, which costs from €4,600 a week in low season. An ancient Arabic redoubt, it still has its deeds from when it was sold by its Moorish owners to a Christian in the 16th century. Almost as old and also with Arabic roots, **Casa de los Bates** is an amazing 19th century Italianate mansion, with sumptuous bedrooms and well appointed dining and sitting rooms. The place oozes history and the family home, now owned by two charming brothers Borja and Inaki, is full of antiques and photos of its illustrious guests, which have included Nelson Mandela and the King of Spain. It sits in amazing grounds, divided into two distinct sections, one from the 18th and one from the 19th century. In total contrast, you must consider the ultra-hip hotel **Hotel Miba**, which perches on an escarpment overlooking Salobreña town. Every inch of this modern hotel maximises on the incredible views, be it across to the breathtaking



nearby town, which soars up like a wedding cake from stage left, or stage right to the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains. The creation of South African Martin and Swedish Eva it is a true cornucopia of style, and its bedrooms are spacious and comfortable to the max, each with their own terrace. Best of all, you can also eat in the hotel, which has a restaurant highly-rated locally and rapidly garnering a reputation further afield. It's a regular hang out for local business folk and the food has plenty of contemporary twists and a hip dining room.



Aráis
Restaurante

Reservas: 958 61 17 38 | Calle Granada, 11, Salobreña, Granada





Costa Tropical

GRANADA

Mucho por descubrir
So much to discover



MANCOMUNIDAD
DE MUNICIPIOS



Costa
Tropical
De Granada