



All about

# Estepona

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# Flower power

**Estepona's garden city looks bloomin' marvellous in the merry month of May, writes Chloe Glover**

**H**IKE through a cool green mountain forest in the morning, savour mango mojitos and *mariscos* under palm trees on the beach for lunch, then lose yourself in a maze of flower-strewn streets where tapas temptations are served under arcades of orange blossom.

Welcome to Estepona, the unrivalled Garden of the Costa del Sol.

An enviable oasis of greenery blossoming between the concrete jungles of neighbouring resorts, Estepona's picturesque charm is in full flower right now. And in the face of Andalucía's tourist boom, its potpourri of attractions have never been riper for the plucking.

Sandwiched between the Sierra Bermeja and the Mediterranean sea, its surf and turf offer encompasses everything from diving and horse riding to wildlife safaris, flamenco, a modern museum of ancient burial chambers and a nocturnal vibe that will

make you feel very much alive. Estepona's *casco antiguo* (old town) with its kaleidoscopic potted flowers is love at first sight ... and scent. The entire town has been florally rejuvenated over the last five years, with tens of thousands of pots to be planted this year alone!

"It was a wonderful idea," explains one local agent.

"Around 100 streets have been renovated over the last five years.

"The buildings have been restored while plant pots have been added to each one so that now they burst with the colour of the flowers.

"It's really revived the old town."

The four-kilometre Paseo Marítimo is another sparkling jewel in Estepona's floral crown.

Drift along the pretty coastal path, ice cream in hand, to the rhythm of gently swaying tropical trees alive with chirruping birds.

Stop for a breather at one of the styl-



**IN BLOOM:** Flowers bedeck a church steps, while (right) a mural brightens up a tower block

**Continues on Page 18**

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**FAMOUS:** Estepona's love for floral decorations



**SHIMMERING:** The puerto is a delight in the summer

From Page 18

ish wooden chiringuitos along the beachfront serving up rainbow salads, cocktails and freshly-caught sardines chargrilling on spits from freshly-painted old rowing boats making good use of their retirement. The sizzling aroma wafts the whole length of Estepona's 21km shoreline, Estepona's mountain, basking in a purple haze in the background, offers other foodie and floral delights. Towering 1,508 metres into the sky, Sierra Bermeja's dense green woodlands feel like a different continent. You could be in a south American jungle. Get on your bike or hike along one of the dozens of walking and cycling trails or drive up the winding road to appreciate the sheer, jaw-dropping size of the mountain.

# Port side

Biodiverse and the only place to find rust red peridotita rocks and pinsapo Spanish firs together, a huge community campaign is underway to turn it into a national park. You'll wonder why this is still an undiscovered

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**SPANISH VIBES:** The cobbled and flower-adorned streets are a draw

secret side to Estepona as you tuck into a slice of cake and a glass of sweet Malaga wine in the atmospheric mountain top refugio, lit only by gas lamps!

Back in the chocolate box plazas of the old town, a further feast of cultural delights wait to stimulate all the senses.

With 50-odd murals, dozens of poetry wall plaques inscribed with inspirational verses and a trail of modern and classical sculptures, local and national artists have created delightful surprises at every street's twist and turn.

There's a walking route dedicated to them and you can pick up a free trail guide from the tourist office in Plaza de las Flores to make sure you see them all.

"The murals are yet another great source of pride for Estepona, also commissioned by our current mayor," explained a local tourist guide. "With a great mural contest planned for July, we hope to introduce 10 more simultaneously."

"What other town has so many murals or a poetry route?"

Plaza de las Flores, Estepona's largest flower-bedecked square, lives up to its name. With a bubbling fountain and an arc of orange trees, it is easy to see why this idyllic spot and neighbouring Plaza Dr. Arce is so popular with visitors who stop here for a tinto de verano refresher or delicious homemade ice cream from La Italiana.

But the real treasure hunt starts when you venture up one of the adjoining labyrinthine streets, where other secluded squares wait to seduce passers by.

More gems can be found in the town centre, where an impressive number of hip boutiques and artisan shops stretch off in every direction from the main shopping drags of Calle Terraza and Calle Real.

In the winding streets, not unlike The Lanes in Brighton, you'll find everything from the latest fashions and leather shoes to spice shops, delicatessens and decor stores.

Atmospheric any time of year, bank holidays turn up the local colour to full volume.

Stand in awe inhaling the incense-heavy air as pointy-hooded nazarenos navigate huge golden thrones through the town's tight passageways during the solemn Semana Santa processions.

Join the throngs who parade

a giant sardine through town during Carnival and follow the procession of prancing Andalusian horses during May's *romeria*.

Dive for sweets thrown off floats by the Three Kings in January and bring your best fancy dress hat to wear in the Plaza de Reloj while attempting the '12 grapes challenge' - swallow one at every chime of the church bell - that heralds every Spanish New Year.

**You'll find everything from the latest fashions to spice shops**

Aside from its packed fiesta calendar, Estepona promotes its Andalusian charm with a weekly programme of unmissable events.

Experience the passion of flamenco at Teatro Felipe, where spectaculars are presided over by internationally-renowned performers Paco Javier Jimeno and Ana Fargas.

Brush up on your bartering skills at the grand Wednesday mercadillo or the smaller Sunday farmer's market in Plaza ABC where stalls groan under the weight of fresh produce.

The more tourist-orientated Sunday port market is a honey pot for bargain-seekers, who come in their droves to snap up xxx designer goods such as sunglasses and wallets.

A pleasant half-hour walk along the seafront from the centre, it's a mecca for early birds and night owls.

Sailing, diving, paddle and kite surfing are just some of the nautical activities on offer for watersports sorts. Or join the yacht set and rent a boat for a day for a completely different view of the coast.

If all that sea air has given you an appetite, you can weigh anchor and eat right on the waterfront.

With 40 restaurants and bars serving up an ethnic variety of dishes you can take your tastebuds on a round-world cruise. Chinese, Thai, Indian, Italian, Irish, Belgian and American are among the ports of call on offer.

Or dine out on seafood fresh off the boats at Escollera, a local favourite that's always packed to the gunnels.

The port party scene cranks up at 8pm, when revellers descend on Reinaldo's bar to take advantage of its renowned happy hour.

Reggaeton, rock and pop soundtracks fill the air and in typical Spanish stay-out-all-night style, the fiesta doesn't stop until the sun comes up.



**LIVELY:** The town is full of art and there are music festivals all year round

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Erik's Jazz Bar 



**Continues on Page 20**

From Page 19

These days the port has a lot more competition from the town centre where a glut of high quality eateries and character bars have set out their stalls with artisan tapas temptations.

Head to Calle Real for lip-smacking good multicultural fare or venture up one of the winding side streets to unearth other foodie gems.

If you're planning to indulge in the excellent range of local wines and sherries, Estepona will put you up in style.

Rest your head at the wonderfully atmospheric Hotel Boutique Vera Cruz which has breathed fresh life into a historic building, now beautifully restored; wake up to the sparkling sea views from beachfront hotels Mediterraneo and Buenavista; or splurge on

a night of luxury at the five-star Kempinski Bahia or four-star H10 Estepona Palace. Both are equipped with hedonistic spas and pools where a whole weekend could easily be whiled away without leaving the resorts at all.

For self-catering and budget options, the family-friendly neigh-

bourhood of Benavista on Estepona's eastern edge has an abundance of apartments, hotels, shops, bars and restaurants.

As well as having its own beach and children's play area, the laid back zone is the perfect base for taking advantage of Estepona's biggest attractions.

Kids and adults alike will go wild for Selwo Aventura in nearby Cancelada, a safari park without bars where visitors can get up close to giraffes, rhinos and elephants in jeeps.

Or saddle up for a course in Andalucian dressage at one of the biggest equestrian centres in Spain. The Escuela de Arte Ecuestre Costa del Sol nurtures all levels of riders, from experts to absolute beginners.

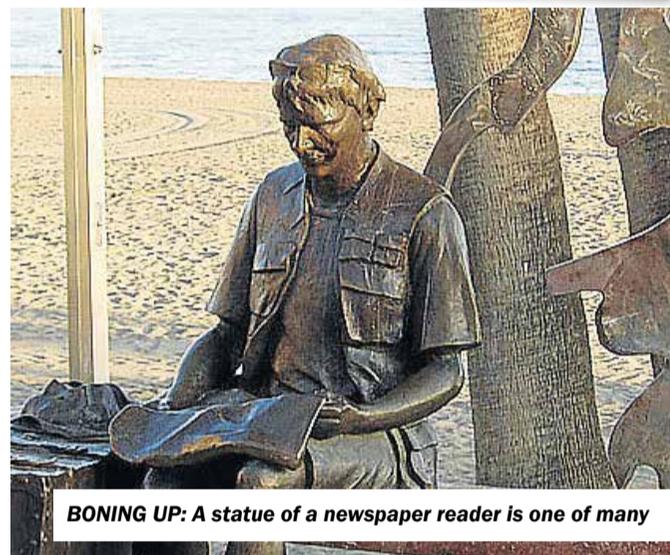
Just 10 minutes away from the town centre by car



## Pretty as a picture

or bus, Benavista is another melting pot of multicultural cuisine, with some top-rated Indian and contemporary Spanish restaurants.

You can work off the calories at one of Benavista's gently-sloping golf courses, a great compliment to the manicured



**BONING UP:** A statue of a newspaper reader is one of many

fairways on the western side of the town. Yes, even the grass looks greener in this fertile Costa del Sol garden where everyone is welcome. No other resort has found a better way to say it with flowers.



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### Estepona boasts two of the Costa del Golf's founding courses, and a whole lot more

**T**WO of the genuine *grandes dames* of the Costa del Golf are found in Estepona.

Both El Paraiso and Atalaya rank with the oldest courses on the coast and were established in the days when you could build a golf course just about anywhere you liked.

As a result, the quality of the courses is fantastic, built on wonderfully flat land with the mountainous backdrop of the Sierra de las Nieves.

It means you don't lose so many balls and the courses are easy to walk around.

El Paraiso caters for every kind of golfer, boasting seven different types of membership and up to eight competitions a week for varying abilities.

It also has an active ladies section, with more than 200 members.

Atalaya Golf Club proudly dates back to 1968, when the design of the course was more important than fitting it between apartment blocks.

Eucalyptus trees, cacti and palms line the club's two 18-hole courses - Atalaya Old and Atalaya New - whose wide, easy-walking fairways pass fountains and flower beds.

As a members' club that is open to guests, the course has a lively community feel and there is always a buzz around the clubhouse.

Although a younger course, dating from 1989, Estepona Golf is famous for superb putting sur-



**PITCH PERFECT:** Estepona courses

## Greens are go!

faces and sea views. Featuring strong par 3s, it provides an excellent round for players of all standards.

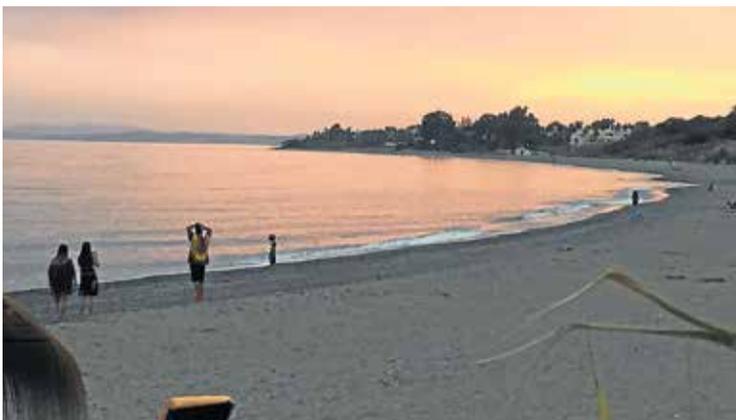
"Estepona has the best golfing temperatures in Europe, with over 320 days of sunshine a year and an average of 22 degrees," explains Jason Callow, of Estepona Golf.

"This coast is one of the best

places in Europe for golf, due to the weather, the breathtaking panoramic views across mountains and sea, and of course the great choice on offer."

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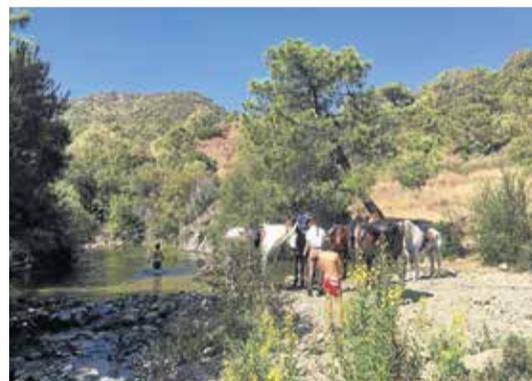
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# So much more than just potted plants and beaches



IT'S the coastline that keeps on giving... from the secret coves to the secret concert venues (far left) at Sonora, while (above right) learning to sail in the port and (left) trick or treating in the old town.



Discover why Estepona is nicknamed the Garden of the Costa del Sol

# Floral tribute

THE first seeds were sown back in 2012, when Estepona Mayor Jose Maria Garcia Urbano and his fellow councillors drew up the design for a green walking city dedicated to culture and art. The mural trail was born that year, an ongoing project that is transforming dowdy tower blocks with eye-catching frescos depicting local scenes. The intention was to shine light on the town's forgotten neighbourhoods and attract more foreign tourists. Ambling through the sinewy flower-laden streets of the old town, it's clear to see how these efforts have borne fruit, and how well-deserved is Estepona's nickname. Marielle Maulenberg, an MA student and English teacher, has watched the whole town blossom. "I'm really impressed with how they've done it up." "Before, it was much quieter but the mural trail and street renovations have really transformed it," she tells me appreciatively. Estepona's flower-pot-strewn pedestrianised streets and squares are some of the prettiest on the Costa del Sol. Its scented town centre is one of the reasons Michael Ventress, a retired bank worker from Basingstoke, chose it as his holiday destination. Michael, along with countless other tourists, come to admire the photogenic centre and wander around in search of the murals. Because not only do they beautify the town, they provide handy landmarks to help navigate the streets. Head in any direction and your walk will take you on a floral trail graced with sculptures by local artists and poetic verses penned



by Spanish bards showcased on ceramic plaques. Potted plants hang off whitewashed walls, scattering a confetti of crimson, lilac and magenta petals. You can see rarer plants at the Orchidarium, an indoor perfumed garden where 1,300 varieties are joined by the notorious *Amorphophallus Titanum* or 'corpse flower', named for its foul odour. Visitors have not yet had the dubious pleasure of taking a sniff as it hasn't yet breached the soil's surface. When it does, it could potentially grow up to three metres high. Then there are the floral plazas, typified by Plaza de las Flores which lives up to its name, where you can get trail guides from the tourist office and study them at one of the pavement cafes. Others you'll happen upon while meandering through the streets, like Plaza de Begines which has a stage set up. Local resident Manuela Reinoso, 50, tells me it's for the May Day celebrations. Let curiosity be your guide to discover these hidden treasures for yourself and you'll understand without doubt why no other town can hold a petal to Estepona's Garden of the Costa del Sol.

Playa del Cristo, 29680 Estepona, Málaga

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**VINTAGE:** Estepona was once a quaint fishing village



**HUB:** The port is still a hive for fishermen, but also offers a melting-pot of bars and restaurants these days

# Fishy finesse



**OLD SCHOOL:** Locals march in a procession



**WHITE-WASHED:** The area surrounding the beautiful centre was once grazing ground for cattle

**S**TILL a working fishing town, much of Estepona's cash flow surges from the port. The importance of the maritime trade is obvious at the Ethnographic Museum, which showcases the ancient craft of boat making and the cornucopia of marine life living off this golden coast. Museum guide Mariano Jobreas, who moved to the town from Madrid, shows me a wall displaying dozens of complicated knots. "To become a fisherman you have to learn to tie every single one of these. "You have to be prepared for all eventualities out at sea," he says gravely. The models of fishing boats still in use look so real, he jestingly assures me that the working vessels are much bigger.

**Estepona's seafaring tradition is the salt adding seasoning to its tourist offer, writes Laura Duckett**

On a trip to the port to see if I can spot any of them in action, I bump into Miguel Ferrer Gonzalez. "I came here because Estepona is more of a family town," he beams, explaining that he spends his days sailing around in search of dolphins. It sounds like money for old rope as dolphins aren't hard to find - beach goers often spot shoals of them frolicking off-shore. "It's not an office job, and if you like the sea, this is the job for you," agrees Miguel.

If you'd like a turn at the helm yourself, the Real Club Nautico houses a sailing and kayak school with a dry dock for sailboats and a nautically-themed restaurant for hungry sailors returning home from the sea. Estepona is still home to hundreds of working fishing families whose ancestors have been casting their nets here for centuries. Now this great maritime tradition is continued by their offspring who continue to brave the elements to this day to put fresh fish on local dining tables.



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# Stepping out of the shadows



VISTA: View from *The Island* and (top right) *Alcazaba lagoon*

**Authentic Estepona is attracting an evermore exclusive crowd when it comes to property, writes Adam Neale, of Terra Meridiana**

**H**AVE you visited Estepona recently? If not, you may be in for an agreeable surprise. Emerging from the shadows of ever-popular Marbella, a remarkable transformation has taken place under the leadership of Mayor José García Urbano. From a sleepy, Andalusian seaside town, Estepona has been revitalised and is seeing a surge of inward investment.

Constituting part of the Golden Triangle, an area encompassing Marbella, Benahavís and Estepona, the town has, however, lost none of the authentic appeal for which it is known.

One of the mayor's grand initiatives, The Garden of the Costa del Sol, serves to enhance its charm with roadside flowers and shrubs in bloom all year round, the walls of the historic town festooned with painted polka-dot pots, large-scale murals and porcelain plaques of poetry.

Estepona is now also gaining a following among the well-heeled, who seek out the best, and it is now registering

on the gastro-maps of foodies who once remained firmly within the borders of the Marbella municipality.

The Kempinski Hotel's recently revamped restaurants and inspiring tapas bars that are appearing in the town centre, as well as the much-anticipated gastro-market, have set the town firmly in the sights of gourmands with a desire to try something new.

## Building for the future

Beneath the cosmetic and culinary improvements, however, lies a serious desire to improve the local infrastructure, attested to by the soon-to-be-completed district hospital.

Due to open in December 2018, this €15 million project affirms the commitment of the town hall and the Junta de Andalucía to the improvement of the area.

Such modernisation, coupled with a town-planning department that is quick and receptive to the needs of property developers, has proved attractive to investors capitalising on a healthy real estate market.

Marbella is as popular as ever, yet a select offering of luxury developments is raising Estepona's profile among a wealthier clientele.

## Unique luxury lifestyle concepts

High on the list is the luxury development of Los Granados del Mar located next to the Kempinski hotel with indoor pool, spa, gym and direct access to the beach. Also worthy of mention is the recently completed luxurious apartments of Les Rivages and Doncella Beach located close to Playa del Cristo to the west of Estepona.

Also located in the west end is the *The Island*, a project of unique townhouses with the qualities of the most luxurious of single homes –situated on a privileged vantage point just metres from the beachfront. Owners are swathed in a luxury lifestyle from the minute they enter the lavishly landscaped environment, relaxing in the on-site spa or within their spacious homes constructed to the highest of standards with top quality materials. Recently launched, *Darya*, a project from the same developer, offers luxury living in a landmark building within an unrivalled seafront setting situated in the heart of the town centre. Several top class developments are breaking boundaries in the Estepona area, using the best and brightest architects and designers in their arena, and we are delighted to see that their efforts are being rewarded, with a new wave of luxury clientele bringing a boost to the local economy. Long may it continue!



**BEACH SIDE:** At *The Island*, inside the Kempinski and (below) the new hospital



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IT'S easy to speak warmly about a wonderful place like Estepona - a genuine town with all year round vegetable markets and ham festivals, solemn processions and spirited parades. Its cultural life is vibrant with outdoor concerts and arty murals.

### Flirt

The beaches are long, wide and invite you to play, flirt or exercise while the popular boardwalk is always active with people rollerblading, walking the dog or just sitting and watching the world go by.

You can enjoy strolling between the town's cafés and the beach's chiringuitos, or the simple restaurants that offer little more than deliciously grilled fish on the spit.

You are rarely dressed up, the line between the beach

# VIKING INVASION

**This is why the Scandis love Estepona, writes resident Swede Lotti Ander, from Nest Bostads Maklarna**

**nest**  
BOSTADSMÄKLARNA  
and the city flows together and gives life that relaxed

feel.

And as if that wasn't enough, the quality of restaurants is remarkably good, with the food market soon to make its culinary contribution.

Estepona was once a slumbering fishing village, but today the city has spread

along the coast and up the mountains while consciously keeping its low skyline.

So even though it has 'grown up', now home to more than 70,000 people, it has managed to maintain its 'Spanish-ness' and its openness towards us foreigners who are curious and want to be involved, understand and participate.

Estepona is a natural and less well-groomed little sister to Marbella, less 'bling bling' and more genuine and cool - and that's why Estepona 'es mejor'!



OFFICE PROUD: Lotti and Peter

## DID YOU KNOW ?



The last quarter of 2017 saw more than 1,000 Swedes purchase property in Spain and a third of these were on the Costa del Sol.

It is a 34% increase compared with the same period in 2016.

The forecast for 2018 is more than 4,000 purchases.

There are currently more than 35,000 Swedes living on the coast



### Home and Away is expanding after 25 years of success

WITH over 25 years experience in property management Home and Away is expanding its horizons with a new manager at the helm.

Established in 1993, the company prides itself on taking care of property owners on the Costa del Sol, in particular Estepona. New boss Mark Hemsley (above), who took over in August 2014, is offering a range of new services and the company's growth speaks for itself, having doubled in size under his tenure.

"Our aim is to build on what was already taking place here," Mark explains.

"We want to build on the property management and maintenance side of the business while offering our clients new and exciting ventures."

A trained photographer and filmmaker, originally from England, Mark is now offering clients the opportunity to take advantage of his expertise. His G10 company offers high

# Silver Service



quality two minute short films aimed at property sales/rentals and promotional business videos. Mark, who has lived around the world in places, including Tenerife and Sweden,

believes his slick video production will give clients the edge.

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# ONLY WAY IS UP

**Things are looking good for one of Estepona's youngest agents, explains Chloe Williams**

## What changes have you seen in the past two years?

We came to Estepona because we had heard that it was one of the nicest places to live on the Costa del Sol - beautiful climate, a welcoming community and a great mix of International and Spanish residents and we are delighted to see that there has been NO change there.

The biggest change is that the town is going from strength to strength with its investment; keeping its traditional Spanish style with improvements such as the new plaza being built above Playa del Cristo, the refurbishment of the central avenue and the new hospital. Every day clients walk into the agency on the Paseo Marítimo, dying to find the perfect place to live in the area.

## Who is buying in Estepona?

As we are a French-based company, the Franco-phone market has always been very important to us. We have clients from all over Europe and beyond, and we have found that French and Belgian clients love Estepona. I think in the past, it was Marbella but for those clients who are looking for new developments with up to date building standards etc, then Estepona beats



*Marbella hands down! The old town of Estepona continues to be a firm favourite, however for many clients they are also looking for a nice resort feel with swimming pools and other facilities. Luckily with the recent new developments in Estepona, we can offer clients both walking distance to everything that the town has to offer as well as a luxury resort destination.*

## How has the company grown since opening in Estepona?

We started the company two years ago with two of us based full time in the business. Now we have eight sales agents who speak seven languages between them and who each have a tremendous amount of experience in the area. We are delighted to think that we are contributing to the local community and bringing business and employment to Estepona. We have also seen a growth in the number of real estate companies opening branches in Estepona. We know that we have to offer the best customer



**ON THE UP:** The Spanish Estate Agent is optimistic about Estepona's future



service combined with a real understanding of Estepona to keep our clients 100% satisfied.

## How do you see Estépona developing over next two years?

*There is no question that Estepona is a prime destination for people wanting to enjoy the top quality lifestyle on the Costa del Sol. We can see that prices are going up and we are advis-*

*ing serious clients to get here as soon as possible to lock in today's price. New developments are going to become increasingly important as clients want to have the latest contemporary designs and top building standards. We are delighted with how we have been able to build the business here and only see Estepona getting better and better over the years to come. With a beautiful town like Estepona as our base, we think we have the best job in European real estate!*

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After living in central Estepona for over 10 years - and the surrounding areas for much longer - Neil is adamant that his local knowledge has been the key to expanding the business and making it through the financial crisis.

Having previously been an engineer in the British Armed Forces before moving into investment management, scouting and acquiring properties, Neil's disciplined and analytical mind means that he revels in making sure you are always getting the best deal and that "The job is done properly" as he puts it.

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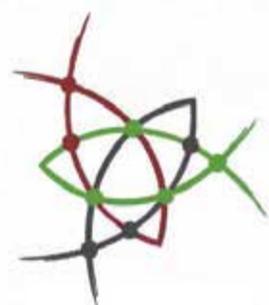
"Strength is no longer in office or staff numbers, it's in the ability to harness the array of tools the modern World provides us with and utilise well established

local connections, that's what makes the difference" adds Neil.

Meanwhile, the team of four are likely to speak your language, covering in particular English, Spanish and German among others. "We may be small, but we are efficient and well integrated. We are like an adopted family in the community and I love that," he said. "We have access to every listing in Estepona old town and our reach goes much further than

that." All aspects can be completed by Neil and his team, from buying to selling, and from holiday lets to project management on both commercial and residential properties as the team also run a registered construction company.

Visit Genius at [www.geniusproperties.com](http://www.geniusproperties.com) or the team from 9am on Monday to Friday at Calle San Nicolas 8. Call 952806373 for the office or call Neil directly on 633913773



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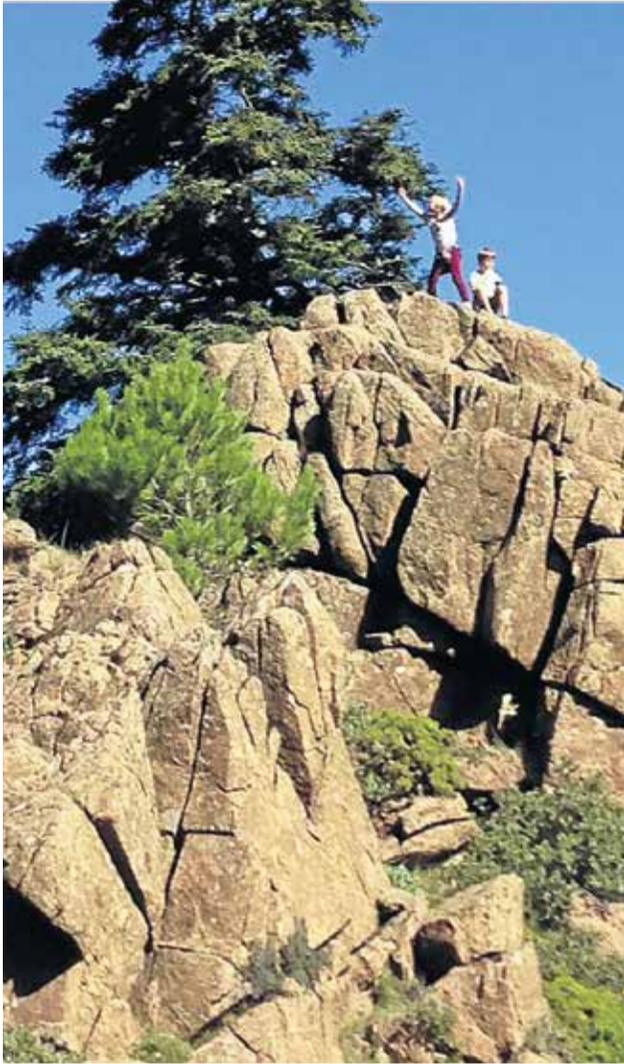
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**PEAK FITNESS:** Two climbers reach the top



### Walking guru Guy Hunter-Watts heads out on Estepona's most exciting hike - the ascent of Pico Reales

**T**HIS easy circuit leads to the highest point of the Sierra Bermeja nature reserve, known as the Pico Reales. Standing just eight kilometres inland from Estepona, this mighty vermilion massif rises to 1,450m - that's not far off the height of Ben Nevis! From its antennae-topped peak there's a dizzy, panoramic vista of a huge slice of Andalucía: north to the Sierra de las Nieves, east to the Sierra de Ojen, west to the Alcornocales Natural Park and south to Gibraltar and Africa. And to add to that, the walk goes through the Pinsapar de los Reales, home to one of the few existing stands of the uniquely beautiful pine, *Abies Pinsapo Boix*. This botanical jewel is only found in less than half a dozen places in the world. Furthermore, there's a second great viewing point on the walk, the Mirador de Salvador Guerrero, which entails a short diversion but

# ROUTE

which is well worth the extra effort. And the drive up to the starting point is something of an adventure in its own right. To reach the trail head you'll need to follow a snaking mountain road inland from the town for about 20 minutes. But that's all part of the fun.

### Getting to the beginning of the walk

From Estepona take the MA8301 towards Jubrique (it begins next to the Mercadona supermarket on the north side of the town) for

# nest

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**VIEW FROM THE TOP:**  
Inland and out to sea,  
and a refugio restaurant  
right at the top



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Call by at Cl. Jan de Herrera 23/25 Estepona polígono to see our facility.

# TO THE TOP

15kms to the top of the pass, Puerto de Peñas Blancas. Here turn left past a sign for Los Reales, pass a green barrier then continue for 2.75kms to a signboard to the right of the road marking the beginning of the Pinsapo walk, Paseo de Los Pinsapos.

### The walk

From the signboard Paseo de los Pinsapos head down a narrow, rocky path which drops away from the road into the pinsapo forest. Just 75m after crossing a small concrete bridge you reach a junction. Cut left following the sign Los Realillos/Los Reales for 2.2km. The path leads past a signboard about pinsapo pines then on past a ceramic sign of a poem by Lorca inspired by trees. The path climbs steeply through dense undergrowth: as you climb higher Mediterranean pines begin to take the place of the pinsapos. Careful! Some five minutes beyond the ceramic sign of Lorca's poem you reach a junction marked by twin stone mounds. Here cut hard left and continue your ascent, zigzagging up through the pines and the reddish rocks. Passing a small breach in the rocks the path runs up to the top of the ridge where views open out to the southwest and the Bay of Algeciras. (30 mins)

Here the path bears left towards the transmitter antennae atop the Reales peak, through another swathe of pinsapo pines. Marker posts help guide you up. Passing across another jagged ridge the path bears right and continues to climb. Reaching a flatter area and bearing left it runs up to the antennae. Here, reaching a white hut, cut right, pass a second hut then follow a narrow path up to the trig point marking the top of Los Reales (1,450m). (50 mins)

**Circuit to the Pico Reales and the top of the Sierra Bermeja**

**THE NITTY-GRITTY**

**Distance:** 8 km (up and down)

**Time required:** About 2.5 hours (inc. breaks)

**Rating:** Easy/Medium

**Total height gain:** 5,300m

**Map(s):** IGN 1:50000 Jimena de la Frontera 1071 (14-46) & Estepona 1072 (15-46)

**Water:** Tap with unchlorinated water @ 1 hr 15 mins

This is a great spot to take a break and drink in the incredible panorama that lies before you. Leaving the peak retrace your footsteps back towards the first white hut which you passed earlier. Five metres before the hut cut right on a narrow path which drops down to the track leading to the transmitter masts where you'll see a signboard for Sendero de los Realillos. Here angle right down a stony track which loops down the eastern flank of Los Reales, shortly passing by another transmitter mast. Looping on down past a group of forestry buildings you reach a junction with another track and a plaque

dedicated to Edmond Boissier who first catalogued the unique pinsapo pine. (1 hr 10 mins)

Here, cutting right for 100m you reach a picnic area, Área Recreativa, where there are picnic tables and, just beneath, the Mirador de la Costa del Sol. There's a tap with water to the right: a sign warns that it isn't chlorinated but the taste is all the better for that. Continuing on along the track you reach a turning circle and a sign Mirador de Salvador Guerrero. From here continue along a narrow path to reach one of the Costa del Sol's most spectacular viewing points. After visting the mirador trace your steps back to the Boissier plaque then follow the track on for approximately 1.6 kms to return to your point of departure. (1 hr 55 mins).



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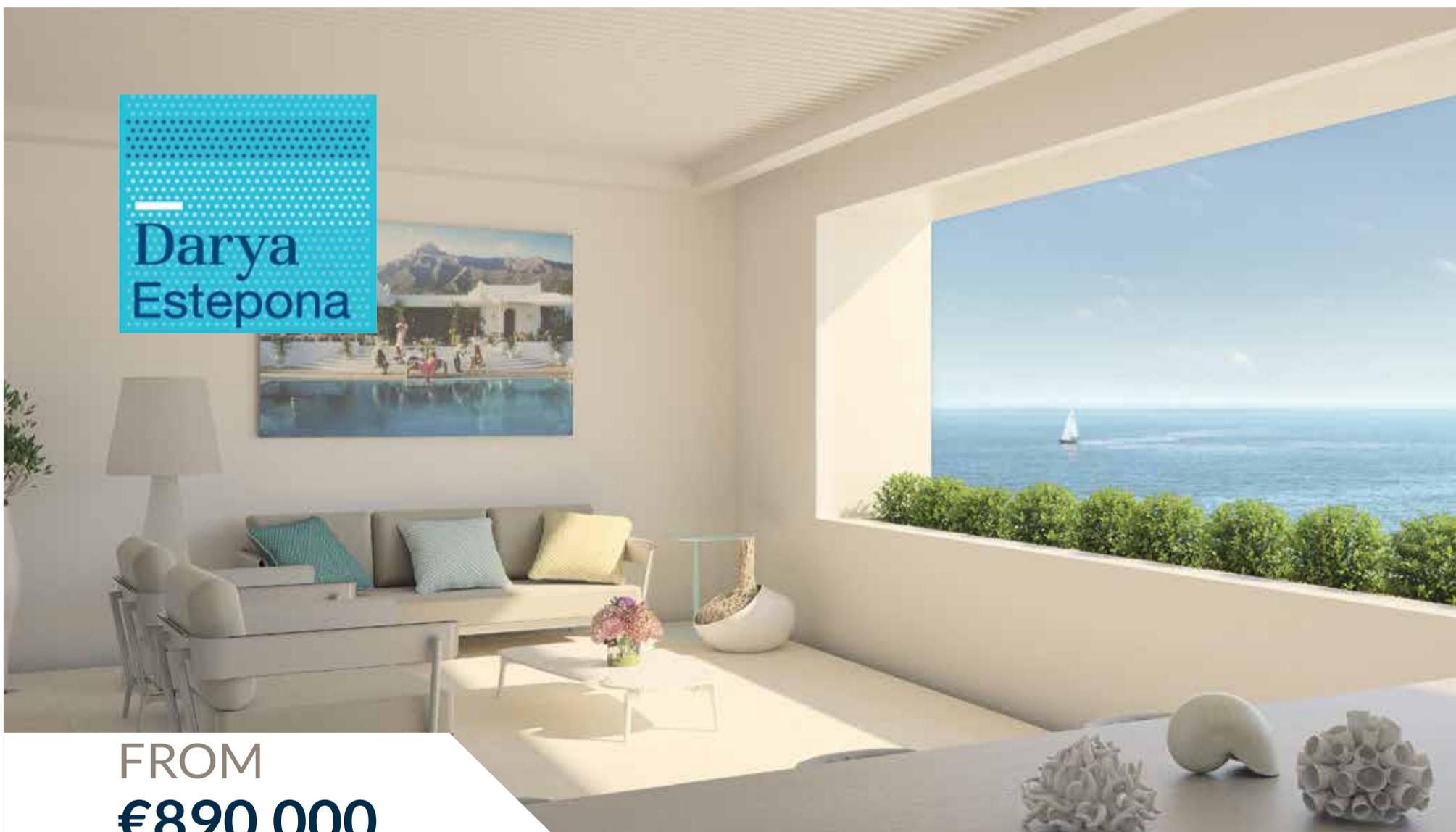
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# Bowling for Benavista



Expats are very much at home in Estepona's 'East end'

**B**ENAVISTA is one of the most popular places for British expats to put down roots on the Costa del Sol.

Less developed and lower rise than many of its neighbours, Estepona's 'east end' is aptly named - you get a better vista in Benavista!

A family favourite resort that has grown up around the beautiful (and arguably best) beaches between Estepona and San Pedro, the thriving community of foreign residents has shaped it into what it is today, and there's always something going on.

"We are so spoilt for choice," says Hughie Holgate, 67, who runs the popular Benavista Bowls Club and its Green Bar.

Taking the club from 50 members to hundreds, Hughie has transformed the run-down kitchen facilities he inherited into a thriving bar which



serves tapas and daily specials. "There are at least half a dozen golf courses within a mile of here and the facilities for fami-

lies are great.

"On top of that, you are only a short drive from the hills via the Ubrique or San Pedro roads."

The bowls club is a real magnet for the area, added entrepreneur father-of-four.

"We have many members who play in leagues up and down the Costa del Sol," he says. "And non-members have their own green."

Next door, restaurant Los Arcos has been given a makeover that the whole family can enjoy.

A giant play area, cinema room, bar and restaurant - not to mention five big screens to watch the football and a five-a-side pitch to play - are just some of the new attractions at the bar-cum-restaurant

Down from here a necklace of well set-up urbanisations - Diana Park, Benavista and El Pilar - offer every variety of shop and service, all with an expat twist.

**They include a range of excellent butchers, cake shops and English supermarkets**

They include a range of excellent butchers and cake shops, as well as English supermarkets, curry houses and British bars.

It is also the Spanish headquarters of British construction company Roger Bullivant.

One of the best shops is Cath's Cards, which stocks a fabulous range of greetings cards, balloons and party accessories.

And don't forget, cross the footbridge and you are in Benamara, which is just two minutes' walk to the beach!

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## MAN UP!

IT is one of Estepona's distinctly different eastern districts. But how many people know how Man Friday got its name? The area of shops between Estepona and San Pedro was actually named after a Spaniard Jose Maria, who moved and married a Scottish woman in the 1970s. The all round handyman and engineer returned to the Benamara area of the coast with his new wife Maria Weldon 30 years ago. "He was a real handyman and we called him Robinson Crusoe, Man Friday and the name just stuck," explains friendly Maria, who runs the Aliprox supermarket, which is now for sale. Her son Stefan is also running the popular Amara bar and restaurant, which is usually packed at lunch time, particularly if the sun is out. "It's a great mix of Spanish and English businesses and clients," he explains. "There has always been a nice atmosphere here and we even have a couple of upmarket French clients." It is not hard to see why this small parade of shops is a popular stopping off place. Not only can you always park your car, but you have a good range of shops and even a hairdresser David, a keen Spurs fan.

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# CLASSIC ACT



## There's no place else on the Costa for vintage cars and repairs

CLASSIC cars have been a long time passion of Andreas Ullstein, owner of Coast Classics in Estepona.

His love affair started when he was 19 and bought his first - a quintessential Ford Mustang.

Fast forward a few years and with many a race behind him, including the Paris to Dakar rally, his friends questioned why Andreas hadn't used his knowledge and expertise further. So eight years ago, the award-winning Coast Classic cars was born.

Walking into the showroom in the Estepona poligono, customers are greeted with a salon in the style of a 1950s american diner before being shown the array of collectible motors.

None of the cars on show are younger than 25 - 30 years.

Andreas and his team are so good that a 1969 Ford Mustang Mach 1 won the Gold Award

from the Mustang Club of America in 2013. "It's the stories behind the cars that drive the projects," says German Andreas, who has been living in Spain for 26 years.

"Whether that be that the car is one of only five made in the world, or a grandparents that needs restoring to its original glory."

**'Most importantly we are extremely passionate about what we do'**

The team can fix up any classic car and provide any service imaginable, including maintenance, repair, restoring, consignments and sales. Using the latest computer technology, the workshop has made a name for itself in being among the best mechanics in the country.

"Most importantly we are extremely passionate in what we do," adds Andreas, "We love the work and take pride in every job, and that shines through."

**Contact Coast Classics on 619 270 000 or email [classics@coast-classics.com](mailto:classics@coast-classics.com)**

## Up a gear

**WHEN** it comes to gearboxes, nobody is boxing Robert and James Sutcliffe into a corner.

And now the gearbox specialists at Transmatic are celebrating their quarter century in Estepona with some brand new signs and logos. Former in 1991, the company is the Costa del Sol's leading specialist in the repair and service of gearboxes for all makes of car.

Says Robert: "While most drivers understand they need to regularly service their car to keep it on the road few realise the gearbox can suffer from high amounts of wear and tear."

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**RECORD:** Fishing Day (below) holds the record in Spain, while (above) Jose Rios is inspired



IT'S quite literally the most off-the-wall collection of urban art on the Costa del Sol.

Everyone from top international artists to creative prison inmates have contributed to Estepona's amazing al fresco art gallery of 51 murals glamping up bleak concrete buildings around town.

Every other high rise is bursting with colour and imaginative designs - from dancers and divers to optical illusions which deceive the eye from a distance.

One of the latest additions to the 'Artistic Murals Route' is a gardener cutting bougainvillea on the side of Victor de la Serna school by Jaen painter Jose Fernandez Rios.

The impressive Fishing Day mural, also by Jose Fernandez, occupies 1,000m<sup>2</sup> across six separate buildings - and holds the record for the largest vertical mural in Spain.

Artistic inmates of Alhaurin prison meanwhile created six-metre-long metal sculptures for one mural which recreates the sea floor as part of the Moraga Collective initiative.

Erin Aman whose work is featured in San Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, is another of the famous contributors to the offbeat outdoor expo.



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# Melting pot!

**T**HE look of concentration on his face is only matched by the cut of his jib.

Dressed smartly in his civvies, he takes pride of place in the heart of the kitchen, carefully filleting a large chunk of Cadiz' finest bluefin tuna. "It's a job he always insists on doing," explains a waiter outside. "He really enjoys doing it and no-one is going to argue with the boss."

This is Manuel Marquez Caravaca (far right), better known as 'Manolo' at **La Rada**, a restaurant that has been serving up Estepona's finest seafood for three decades.

## Estepona has a great mix of places to eat, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke

It's certainly been something of a success story for Caravaca, who started working at **La Rada** with his father, when it was just a tiny cafe beside the main coast road, well before the motorway arrived.

Today it serves up to 500 people on a busy day in summer, which is no surprise, going on the knowledge of Manolo, who buys as much as possible from Andalusia's

own waters and insists - adamantly - on wild, organic fish.

"While difficult, it's entirely possible still, you just have to work a bit harder and buy what's good on each given day," he explains.

Another man who's as passionate about fish - and just as insistent on cooking it in his own kitchen - is Alfonso (left) at Estepona's other seafood stalwart, **El Pescador**.

Sitting slap bang on the main beach, few places have developed as quickly and as stylishly in the town over the last decade.

Through sheer hard work and a clever eye for quality and panache, he has turned his place into the other key fish restaurant in town... and it is perhaps no surprise that he used to work at La Rada just over a decade ago.



**PROUD:** La Rada's Manolo shows off his wares and skills



**BEACH-SIDE:** The throng at El Pescador at the weekends, much thanks to Alfonso (right)



Continues on Page 36

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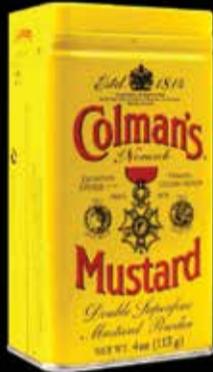


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From Page 35

You sit by the promenade overlooking the sea and eat only the best fresh fish from the nearby port. My tip is the sea bass in salt, an absolute joy.

It is certainly a hard act to follow but Estepona is slowly developing a food culture to rival that of nearby Marbella.

Little by little, more exciting and varied places are opening up around the town and along its coastline, dishing up every kind of cuisine, from Japanese to Venezuelan and Goan to Peruvian.

Driven by an influx of wealthy and more demanding expats, particularly Scandinavians over the last few years,

**Tasty dishes including prawn pil pil samosas and crab spring rolls**

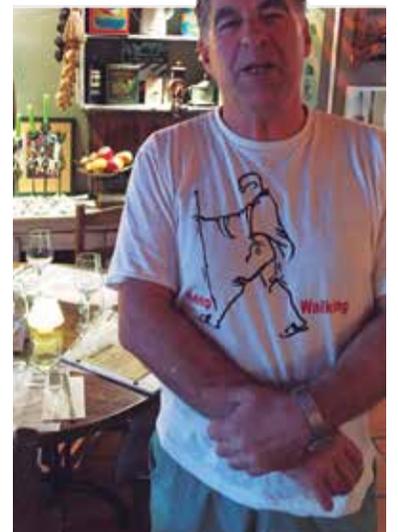
the town's chefs have had to up their game.

Take **Erik's Jazz Bar** right on the front; this friendly Swede has spent a fortune setting up this charming spot in honour of his new Venezuelan wife. Bringing a new style of cooking to the front, the menu varies by the day and depending on what the cooks can get hold of at the local markets.

Best of all, the place does what it says on the tin...offers some of the best jazz to be had in the town, in particular at weekends, starting on Friday



CAPABLE: Simon at Kokomo and Juan at Sur



## THE LOCAL TALENTS

nights.

And jazz buffs will love the array of original posters and album covers, including Miles Davis' seminal *Bitches Brew*.

Just up the road you will find the excellent chiringuito **Palm Beach**, one of the best on the coast for quality. Set up by talented former Dutch bro-

ker Erwin Vanderdonck, it has a range of tasty dishes including prawn pil pil samosas and crab spring rolls, which are melt-in-the-mouth amazing.

The perfect place for families (with some great dishes catering for kids) you sit on the sand watching the day go by while your children can dive in and out of the sea.

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GALLIC FLAIR: The team at Lolás



TOP TUCKER: Palm Beach terrace and food



PLACE TO BE: Erik's Jazz Bar

Another superb chiringuito, just outside the port, up on the 'secret' Playa del Cristo you will find chiringuito **Lolailo**, where a

friendly team serves up the freshest fish that one would expect from a good beach restaurant.

Another long term favourite is **Kokomo**, where former Savoy chef Simon Taylor-Lane, gets busier as the years go on at the newer, bigger venue, up in Nueva Atalaya.

Having also trained with Marco Pierre White, he has the classic knack of creating culinary classics and, best of all, at amazing value set lunch.

He and wife Sally run a tight ship and it is incredible how busy their place gets. Up in the heart of Estepona meanwhile, there has been a quiet revolution going on with a string of new and stylish terrace restaurants opening of late.

There are dozens of good places to graze, starting from Plaza Ortiz heading west up Calle Real or Calle Caridad towards Casa de las Flores and above.

One of the nicest is easily the excellent Argentinian **Sur**, where well travelled owner Juan is never standing still, always trying new things in terms of decor, wines and dishes.

A classic family affair, you often find father, wife, son and daughter, not to men-



Continues on Page 38

## Chiringuito - Beach Bar



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From Page 37

tion son-in-law serving up juicy empanadas, lamb tagines and, of course, the best steaks imaginable.

If it is a good Italian you are after few places come as good as **Rincon Toscana**, run by Uri, who previously ran a B&B near Siena. As well as great Italian wines, you will eat the freshest pasta and the best pizzas around.

Up on Calle Caridad don't miss recently opened **La Para**, run by a fabulous gourmet Juan Trapero, from Algeciras, who has a great eye for interior decor AND tapas.

This is a superb place to chill out and watch the world and his dog go by... you might even catch the entertaining *Olive Press* columnist Adam Neale, who works at Terra Meridiana opposite.



POLE POSITION: Tables at Casa Dona Jeronima and (left) Juan at La Para

A little further up in Plaza de los Flores you will love the style of **Casa**

**Dona Jeronima**, which is beautifully designed with a living plant wall and stunning natural lighting inside and a great terrace right in the heart of Estepona's best square.

Nearby, **Casa del Rey** has around 70 wines by the glass and some excellent pairing tips for its excellent tapas.

Nearby, you must look out for **Lola's**,

run by a French couple from Avignon, who have classic gallic flair and a nice mix of tapas and wines.

Meanwhile up in the port you will find some superb places including **De la Mar**, where Dutch owners Helene and Pim have moved into the world of dining, having previously run a pub. With a distinct international feel, there is some excellent fresh fish and grilled meats and some tasty tapas.

Last, but not least if you find yourself up in Benavista, check out the excellent **Green Bar**, which is always busy and has a great menu del dia as well

**There are some excellent fresh fish and grilled meats and tasty tapas**

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## P.S. GOURMET MARKET

THE icing on the cake is about to turn Estepona's ancient market into the most exciting gourmet innovation in decades.

The final touches are now being made before the Mercado San Luis gourmet market opens this Spring.

The market has nearly been completely renovated and when open will create up to 100 jobs across 28 stalls, each serving up a different type of food.



Calle Caridad, 64 - ESTEPONA (Málaga)

**Jon Clarke reviews Claro Beach Club, one of the coolest spots to head for on Estepona's coast**



# Clear as daylight

**Y**OU are sitting right by the sea under palm trees in one of the most alluring sleepy corners of Costa Estepona.

This is Claro Beach Club, where you can combine the breaking of the waves, with shady palm trees and gourmet food to boot.

The brainchild of a Belgium publisher Axel and his wife Christine, it is the



**VIEW: Up the new walkway**

very epitome of chill and a place you start to unwind the minute you walk through the door.

While benefiting from the easy parking and branding of Laguna Village, it has a rather different feel.

"It's less St Tropez and bling bling and more hippy chic," explains Christine. "We wanted to create a place for families and children, with good food and



**SERVICE WITH A SMILE: An ox burger and crujientes**

we fell in love with the place the minute we saw it." Describing herself and her husband



as gourmets she wants their clients to expect in their place, what they expect in other restaurants.



**RELAX: After a gourmet lunch**

"As Estepona comes up in terms of quality real estate and wealthier buyers, we wanted to bring the quality of food up, but also with good service," she continues.

As well as a varied menu, with a good mix of local and international dishes, they have a late music licence, meaning some events, such as salsa nights and other live events, can go on until 3am.

I sat and watched a pair of fishermen by the shore, before tucking into the first 'espeto' sardines of the season, cooked absolutely perfectly to a tee in the special bbq boat house.

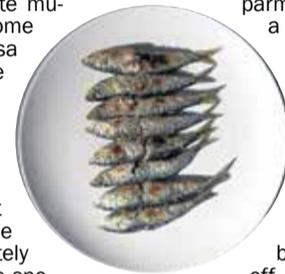
Next up I tried some beautifully presented goats cheese 'crujientes', a sort of cross between croquettes, with

almonds. There was also fried squid in a kimchee sauce, as well as a ceviche of sea bass and cigalas with tiger milk and mango.

Sadly the carpaccio of beef, with spices and a truffle vinaigrette with parmesan had run out, but a delicious ox burger with bacon that followed more than made up for it.

All in all there is a good price to quality ratio and I expect this place to become increasingly busy come summer time.

And best of all, after a big splurge you can burn off the calories taking the pleasant walk west towards Estepona town centre, along the recently finished wooden coast walkway. Or take a dip right there.



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