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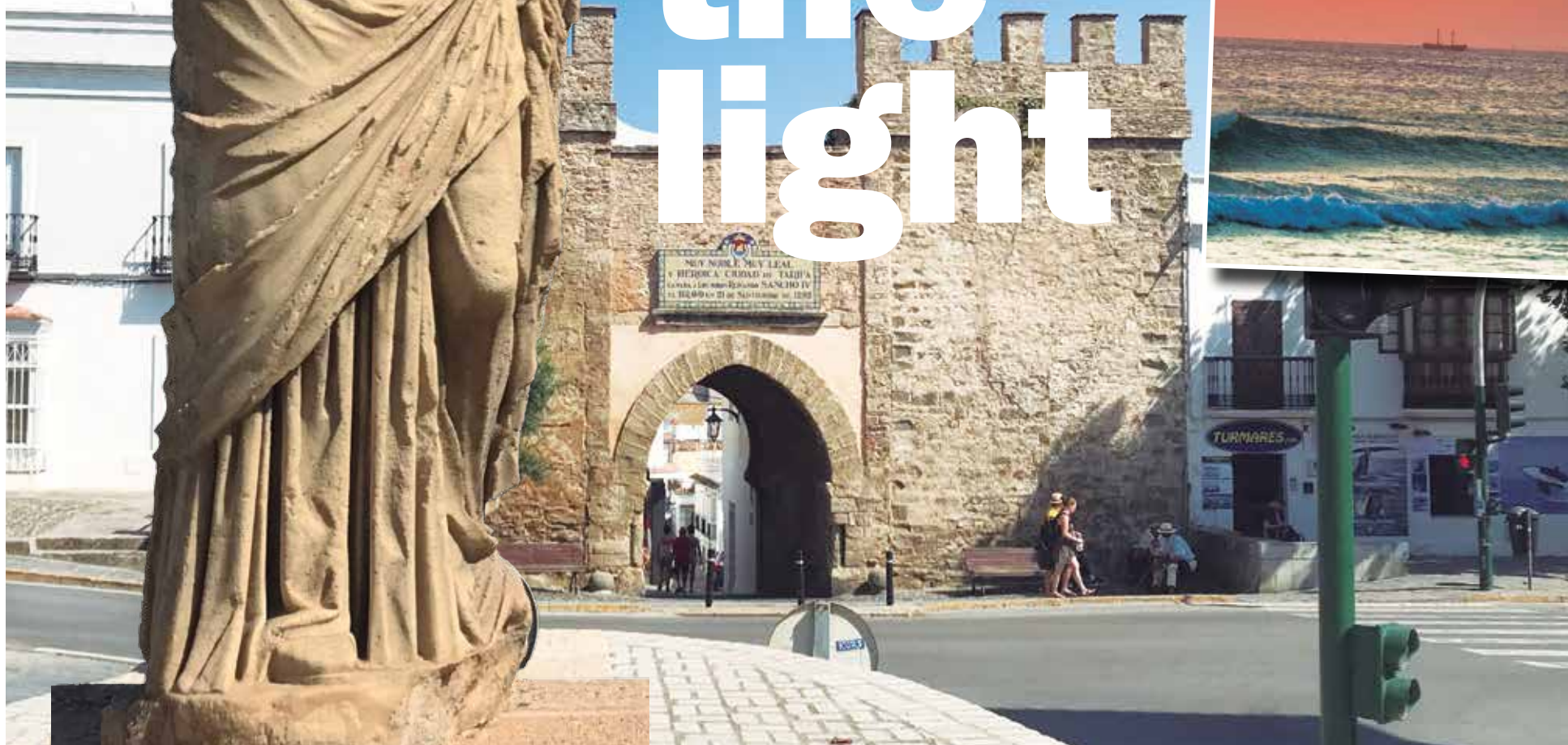
Costa de la Luz

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July 4th - July 17th 2018

GUIDE:
Roman
statue stands
guard at the
entrance to
Tarifa

See the light



Photos by: Jon Clarke and Atlas Beach

For relief from the hot and busy summer, switch to the Costa de la Luz (or Coast of Light). It's a complete breath of fresh air, writes Laurence Dollimore

FLUORESCENT kites accentuate its bright blue skies, Caribbean-style beaches bring the wow factor, while the stiff Atlantic breezes will hopefully not sweep you off your feet. Welcome to Tarifa, the wind and kite surfers' paradise that is unique in Andalucía (and pretty much Spain) for its hip, international vibe and deep layers of history. The star of the Costa de la Luz - or Coast of Light - that stretches from here to Cadiz (and technically all the way through Huelva to Portugal), Tarifa is unrivalled for its kilometres of

sweeping white sandy beaches, which seem a million miles away from its easterly Costa del Sol neighbour.

It's no surprise that those-in-the-know from around Spain flock to the hotspot as soon as the summer season begins.

But there's more to this ancient Moorish town than surfing and beaches and its old quarter is truly a treat.

Entering via a medieval archway, its cobbled streets and whitewashed buildings are overlaid with a tangible north-African vibe that

could easily pass for Chefchaouen or Essaouira.

Handbags and hippy scarves hang in the doorways of fashion boutiques while the trendy bars and quality restaurants will engage you for hours.

Having everything a town could want paired with glorious beaches, it's no wonder Tarifa has been constantly fought over.

Romans first settled near the town (you can

Continues on Page 20



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**WIND CAPITAL:** Kitesurf is big business in Tarifa**IDYLLIC:** Stunning El Palmar beach overlooked by a watch tower

From Page 19

FULL OF SURPRISES

still visit the Roman ruins in nearby Bolonia) before it was taken over in an attack by the Moors, led by Berber military commander Tarif ibn Malik in 710.

After the Islamic conquest of Spain, the city became increasingly more fortified before becoming part of the Kingdom of Granada. In 1292 it was conquered back by the Christians in the shape and form of Sancho IV of Castile before resisting several sieges and invasion attempts over the centuries. The Peninsular War saw Tar-

ifa besieged again, this time by French troops in 1810, and again in December 1811 when General Laval demanded surrender after bombarding it over Christmas. Both the British and Spanish commanders refused and their defiance was rewarded by torrential rain the next day. By

A wonderfully atmospheric location which comes into its own after dark

Three Kings night (January 5) the French realised their powder was wet and their guns were bogged down in mud, and retreated. Since then, the town has managed to hold onto its Arabic and Spanish origins to create a wonderfully atmospheric location which really comes

into its own after dark.

We were there for this year's San Juan celebrations and Tarifa's can rival any on Spain's southern coast, not to mention somewhere like Ibiza.

In the black of night, dancers celebrated around huge beach bonfires and ferocious fireworks lit up the sky.

The cobbled old town was heaving with revellers making the most of drink prices that wouldn't have been out of place in Magaluf or Benidorm, although here, every-

**HISTORIC:** Tarifa church

one was a lot better behaved, as two German tourists observed.

"It's my favourite place in Spain," marketing expert Dominic told me. "It's super-chilled and everyone is really friendly, it's a genuine place where you can relax and you don't feel overrun by tourists."

'Chilled' is probably the word that perfectly sums up the Costa de la Luz, which takes in some of Andalucía's most beautiful towns.

Take Vejer de la Frontera, a traditional white hilltop village a half an hour drive from Tarifa.

Don't let the sleepy exterior

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fool you, it's packed full of surprises.

Not only does it ooze history and views to die for, it also has an amazing mix of stylish boutique hotels and, probably, the highest concentration of top restaurants per capita of anywhere in Andalusia.

It is a true foodie capital with hip restaurants like the Hotel Califa's Moorish walled garden gem to the amazing bistros lining Calle de la Corredera, a balcony jutting out over the countryside with jaw-dropping views to the coast and inland.

Its hilltop location made it a popular enclave for Europe's oldest civilisations, with the Romans founding the town of Besipo here, with evidence today seen in the columns of the parish church, the nearby Santa Lucia aqueduct and other archaeological remains scattered about.

In later centuries, it became an observation point crucial to the defence of the fishing fleets in nearby El Palmar and Conil.

Until almost the middle of the 19th century, all land near the



BEACH LIFE: Canos de Meca

coast was at the mercy of pillaging raids by Berber pirates who constantly attacked the town.

Its shores also witnessed the famous Battle of Trafalgar, where the Franco-Spanish fleet was defeated by the British.

Nowadays it plenty of ac-military but Vejer's set-within

still sees tion - not culinary. ting -

the orchard of Andalusia, near the Jerez sherry triangle and the four big almadraba tuna towns who fish for these ocean giants the old ecological way - has inspired an explosion of gastronomic creativity that's attracting a world-wide audience.

Barbate exports its unrivalled tuna as far-wide as Japan, with the choicest cuts selling for up to €90 per kilo (SEE PAGE 28).

From Vejer you can follow the sherry trail to its capital, Jerez, via the manzanilla seaside pueblos of Puerto de Santa Maria and Sanlucar; an entrance point to the famous Donana National Park, Andalusia's green lung; or head down the coast to Cadiz to experience the sophistications of the provincial capital. In between, closer by, are a series of stunning white 'cubist' towns bequeathed by the Moors who ruled this land for nearly 800 years, from



DREAMY: Stunning light in the backstreets of Vejer

the historic fishing village of Sancti Petri, near Chiclana, to bustling Conil de la Frontera and to quirky Caños de Meca, named for its freshwater springs and Islam's holy city.

On top of that you have El Palmar, famous for its surf breaks and party atmosphere, Zahara de los Atunes, easily one of Spain's most exclusive resorts, full of superb restaurants and amazing beaches and Bolonia, known for its sand dunes and amazing Roman ruins.

If you need to escape the hustle and heat of a sticky Spanish summer, do yourself a favour and switch to the breezy Coast of Light. It's a breath of chilled fresh air!



LOOKOUT: Trafalgar lighthouse from Canos de Meca



STURDY: Tarifa's famous fortress



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out **Costa de la Luz**



PRESERVED: A Roman statue stands proud by dozens of pillars at Bolonia, while (right) Tarifa statue

THE pungent scent of tuna is wafting down the street from the salting factory, while toga-clad townsfolk make their way to the forum to shop and socialise. It's mid morning, and maybe later - in the heat of the day - they will duck for cover and chill out at the town's spa, punish a few slaves and then treat the wife to a show at the theatre. Picture the scene at Baelo Claudia 1,800 years ago, at that time one of Spain's most important Roman settlements. The ruined Roman city on the beachfront at Bolonia,

Romans and moor!

Roman ruins and pristine beaches ... Tom Powell is blown away by historic Bolonia

a ten minute drive west of Tarifa, had a booming economy back in 2AD, based on its fish salting industry.

Today, at this reconstructed living museum, you can walk the cobbled streets, explore old Roman villas or declaim a few stanzas by Seneca from the stage of the ancient amphitheatre. Shut your eyes and you can almost believe you've been beamed back a couple of centuries.

Stepping through the town gate and exploring this once magnificent Roman city is more than enough to set the imagination racing. The Iberian Peninsula's biggest Roman city - complete with walls, aqueducts, baths, temples, forums, villas and more - is a rather special place. It is designed to be taken slowly, at a stroll, while breathing in the fresh Atlantic air as the wind wafts you gently through the ruins.

Baelo's main road - decumanus maximus - runs



MUD BATH: At Bolonia's Cala del Picacho

from east to west, connecting two large town gates. From here a well-signposted route leads you around the Roman settlement, with plenty of information in English to accompany the strikingly well-preserved ruins.

The town had really started growing in 2AD, after a product, known as garum,

made in Baelo, took off among the chattering classes of Rome.

Made out of fish guts it was a pungent, but allegedly tasty addition to any meal and the whole area became dedicated to its production, with Roman ships arriving and departing on a daily basis for Italy, loaded up with the magic product.



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BIGGEST DUNE IN EUROPE



Bolonia's iconic, giant sand dune is the texture of icing sugar, its waters Caribbean blue.

The largest on the Continent it dares to be climbed, just to see what lies beyond.

While there is no secret cove or crock of gold at the end it is a lovely slow transition into a cool, scented pine forest. And the stunning views from the top are a reminder of how all coastal Andalucía once was.

Nearby look for Cala del Picacho, for some therapeutic mud-baking.

The mud treatments are popular and you smash up some wet slate stone to create your own mudpack, before letting it dry off.

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NO trip to the Costa de la Luz would be complete without a night or two in the majestic, coastal city of Cadiz.

Considered the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in Europe, founded by the Phoenicians in around 1100 BC, the ancient city is an enchanting place to get lost, whether it be down the winding alleys of the Old Town or admiring the eroding walls of the many historic plazas.

Boasting a number of beautiful beaches, Cadiz is a true sun-worshipper's paradise.

Its La Playa de la Caleta and the promenade were even used as a set for Cuban scenes in the *James Bond Die Another Day* movie, as the area resembles Havana's famous Malecon.

For over 200 years, the city has been known as La Tacita de Plata (The Silver Teacup),



HISTORIC: Cadiz cathedral

Capital of light

WATERFRONT: Cadiz city

as it was once the third most wealthy city in Spain, following Madrid and Barcelona. Meanwhile others say Cadiz's beauty is enhanced by the glistening sun's beams bouncing off the water, casting a 'silver' reflection on its ancient walls.

Artisan

Cadiz's yellow-domed baroque-neoclassical cathedral is a sight to behold and a walk down the promenade with an artisan ice cream in hand is one of the best ways to admire it.

With the smell of fresh fish in the air, the city is famous for its fresh seafood and there are plenty of places to try it in the Barrio de la Vina.



GRANDEUR: Fountains and statues

Another way to experience Cadiz's history is with a free trip to the remains of a Roman am-

phitheatre, followed by an intimate flamenco show in the city which helped invent flamenco.

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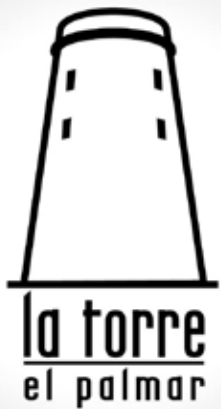
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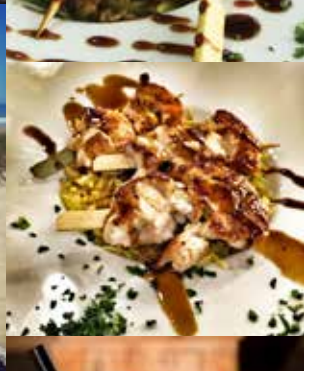
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All about **C**osta de la Luz

Underwater world

UNDER the sun-kissed sea there lies an alien world, teeming with colourful life that makes the coast's crowded beaches and bars seem a million miles away.



Scuba diving, a thrilling yet serene sport, abounds all around the Straits, and in particular near Tarifa. Whether you are an experienced diver or a novice, you will be struck by two underwater wow factors: the clarity of the water and the infinite variety of fish.

A number of companies operate out of Tarifa harbour taking punters of all experience levels on dives and offer official PADI courses.

After a thorough land-based briefing on safety, science and equipment from my dive manager, at Yellow Sub, one of the longest running firms in business, we kitted up and made our way to the boat.

Given that my previous introduction to scuba div-



BIG JUMP: A dolphin

Whale

Flying fish, dolphins and giant turtles pay a visit on a trip into the Straits, writes Jon Clarke

WE are about equidistance between Spain and Morocco in the deepest part

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respectful whale watching

July 4th - July 17th 2018



ing was a university swimming pool, I was blown away by the vivid underwater landscape and clear visibility. The sheer number of aquatic species of all sizes and colours of the spectrum is astounding. We chugged around Tarifa's mini island, Isla de la Palomas, investigating every nook and cranny,

marvelling at the magnificent orange anemones clinging to the rocks.

Sassy sea cucumbers, evil-looking moray eels with their malevolent mouths agape, fish that camouflage themselves in the sand... even Sir David Attenborough would wax lyrical!

At one point we came upon a pair of octopuses entwined in a passionate embrace, and, feeling like a third wheel, I edged away, but soon realised they were fighting over the best hiding place under the rocks. It was fascinating to watch and, as the victor took up residence, the loser powered off to regroup.

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of a time

ing in this food-rich marine paradise, some 15 minutes off-shore from Tarifa.

And that's not to mention the dolphins, including a pair of Bottlenose, who are shepherding their calf, that is apparently no more than a week old.

Soon we have found a school of dolphins swimming around the boat and, being so calm, we can see them clearly under the water.

It's an almost religious experience for the boat-load of tourists, as the stunning mammals clearly swim over to take a closer look at us.

"These two are particularly inquisitive," pipes up a voice from the cockpit above, as one particular pair come sniffing up to the boat, then swim underneath at an amazing speed.

The words come from Dr Katharina Heyer, a remarkable woman of 75 years of age, who has become, without a doubt, one of the world's authorities on sea life off the tip of southern Spain.

It's her 20th year working with her foundation Firmm, which was set up after she was guid-



PLAYING: A dolphin comes up for air

ed to Tarifa to see whales and dolphins by a 'spiritual man' in 1998.

Then running her own fashion company in Switzerland, she visited the area to find no-

body organising trips to see the mammals and almost no research on them.

"I arrived on a really rainy, awful day to find no whale boats, just fishermen, and had to rent a diving boat to take me out," she explains.

It may not have been perfect weather conditions, but what she saw completely changed her for good.

While she had long enjoyed diving holidays with her teen-

age sons in the Caribbean and the Maldives, seeing a group of Pilot whales and Bottlenose dolphins had a strong and immediate impact on her.

So moved was she by these large and graceful mammals that she quickly moved out to set up her 'respectful whale watching' foundation in Tarifa and has never looked back.

Indeed, so respected has been her research into the mammals over the last two decades - in particular her sensitization work for them - that last year she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Basel.

There are now a handful of companies taking visitors out to see the mammals from Tarifa, and on most days they can expect to see Sperm whales, Pilot whales and even Orcas, not to mention various types of dolphins and many other fish. It is one of the best places in the world to see them, with the currents bringing a lot of food from both directions, explains Katharina.

However, this brings in itself severe risks, as they are entering one of the busiest waterways in the world with more than 300 freighters and other sea traffic passing every day.

Indeed, as you look out into the Straits you are witnessing a battle for survival.

"The lives of dolphins and whales are at risk from ferries getting faster and faster, the noise from shipping traffic and more," she explains.

"We are trying our best to monitor their numbers and do our best to minimise the issues they face."



CLOSE UP: With a pair of orcas



A shore thing

Manuel Caminero was a high-flying art director in Australia before he quit his day job to become a fine art photographer of the seas.

Now he spends his mornings chasing sunrises on Tarifa's famed coast. "One day I went to Tarifa and I fell in love. Since then, I have shot Tarifa from every angle - by helicopter, while swimming in rough waves and battling the strongest wind storms," he said.

His gallery, Atlas Beach, is the only one in Europe which concentrates 100% on photography of the sea and beaches, and not just in Tarifa, but of far reaching coastlines in remote coasts across the globe with photos taken during his intrepid travels every year.



Photos by: Jon Clarke and Atlas Beach

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All about **C**osta de la Luz

HOOKED



**Elisa Menendez has a
fin-tastic time learning why
Barbate is the world's tuna capital**

BARBATE

As dawn breaks over a horizon of crashing waves, distant twinkling lights and gigantic fishing nets strewn across the docks, fishermen huddle in groups anxiously awaiting their captain.

These are not your ordinary fishermen. They are divers who plunge into the ocean to spear eight-foot tuna head-on in a 3,000-year-old Phoenician trap-fishing technique called *La Almadraba*.

Welcome to Barbate, the gritty Andalusian town which has put the delicacy of wild bluefin tuna on the global culinary map.

While surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in Spain, this old fishing port won't win many awards for its appearance.

That said, you can't help but fall for the charm of the locals and the tastiest fish you will ever tuck into.

The town isn't only famous for its tuna. Until the late 90s it was called 'Barbate de Franco' after the dictator, who spent many summer holidays there, adding his name in the 1950s in a bid to industrialise the town and create industry and jobs for the area.

It only lost its controversial suffix in 1998 after a decree was passed by the Junta. But back to fish. The meat of the bluefin is known as *atun rojo* (red tuna) due to the deep crimson-coloured flesh which is tender and sweet, but dense like steak and melts in your mouth.

Locals usually eat it raw, prepared as a tartare, as its unique texture and full flavour is best appreciated without heat.

The Japanese, the world's largest buyers of tuna, also go nuts for it. Up to 90% is exported to the land of the rising sun - filleted, frozen and air-dried within hours of being caught, ready to turn into sushi and sashimi.

The most expensive part (the barriga or belly), will sell for at least €40 per kilo. Other cuts, once manufactured, can go for up to €90.



FISHERMEN: Jose and (right) Gonzalo

Morillo, the top of the head, is almost impossible to get in Spain, as almost all of it gets hoovered up by the Japanese.

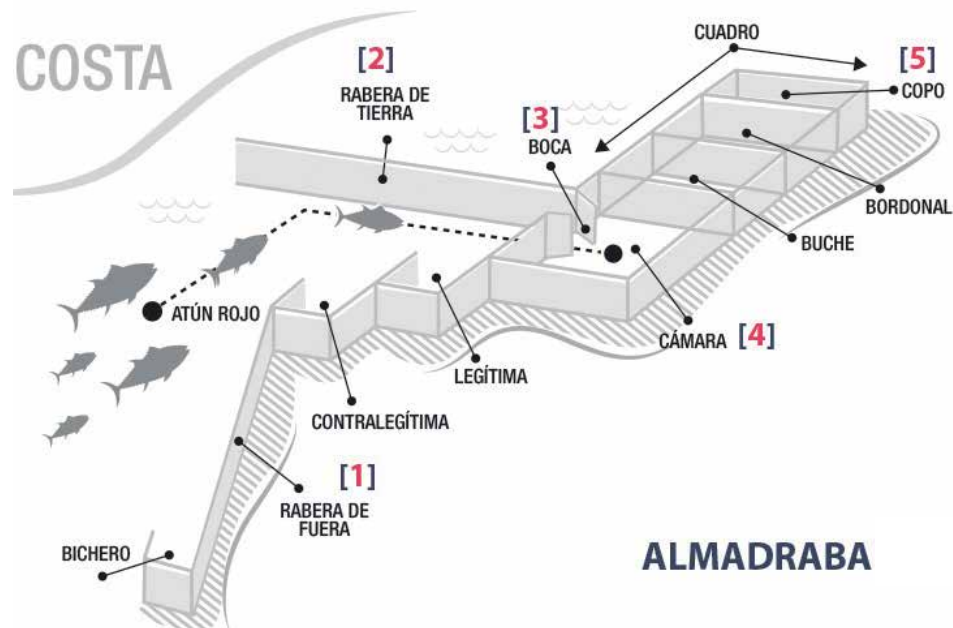
That said, if you want to try it and just about every cut of the world's best tuna, head for El Campero restaurant, in the town, which is possibly Spain's best fish restaurant.

Barbate truly comes alive in May as the almadraba season begins, when the locals spend the full month paying homage to their blue-finned fish with Barbate Tuna Gastronomy Week one of the highlights.

Its three sister towns which also operate Almadraba trap nets - Tarifa, Zahara de los Atunes and Conil - do likewise.

After the first full moon in May, the fishermen set up a complicated labyrinth of nets which catch the tuna as they migrate from the Atlantic to warmer Mediterranean waters to spawn. Their fat reserves keeping them warm through the winter mean the fish are succulent and full-flavoured.

The Almadraba system - meaning to strike in Arabic - is praised for its sustainability



ANCIENT METHOD: But the Almadraba system of nets has been effective since Phoenician times

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ANCIENT: Technique from the Phoenicians

The fish swim through different compartments of the nets until they reach the final area, locked in by the fisherman's boats which form a ring around the net.

Next comes the most dramatic and breathtaking part of the process, 'la levanta', in which the burly fishermen hoist up the net and select the biggest fish, with some weighing more than 500 kilos.

The almadraba system - meaning 'to strike' in Arabic - has been praised for its sustainability as there is no overfishing with a strict quota that the fishermen cannot exceed.

"There are boats which trap them and fatten them up and don't care for the fish as much. We fish for a month and whatever we don't catch is allowed to carry on the migration," says Jose Maria, a Barbate-born diver and fisherman.

The 33-year-old explains it is a more humane way of killing the tuna.

"They die quickly from the spear so the fish are not tense or stressed, they don't swallow water or choke."

"They say this is what makes it such a high-quality product. It's regarded as the jamon iberico pata negra of the sea," he tells me as we stand shivering by the port in the cold and clammy 6am darkness.

Jose knows a thing or two about the tuna business, as his parents own one of the most well-known fishing companies in the town, Almadraba Cabo Plata.

It's all hands on deck from a young age for the almadraba fishermen as the skills of the ancient tradition are handed down from generation to generation of families, with the boys beginning their training at the age of 14 and starting work at 17.

"The majority of the men here have been trained by their fathers and their fathers before them. They have spent all their life at sea, explains Jose.

"It's beautiful work and above all it's a very respectful type of fishing. It's a way of life more than a job," he adds.



However, the job comes with a dangerous price, we learn, as Jose explains how he was once left struggling to swim to the surface after a swing from a tuna tale left him with broken ribs.

Later, as we tuck into a lunch of grilled tuna and manteca (melted pig fat) sandwiches - a typical dish in Barbate - Jose's cousin Gonzalo regales us with the tale of his first tuna dive, aged 17.

"I was just thrown into the water and left to find my own way," he laughs.

"I was terrified because you have so many gigantic fish coming towards you and you don't know which way is up, down, left or right."

"But if you show passion and courage the fishermen will give you a chance and give you the job," he adds.

The job is certainly considered an honour in Barbate and it is clear as the fishermen walk through the bustling town that they have earned the respect of every local who comes to chat to them.

Their faces beam as we make our way to the tuna festival, where a huge outdoor screen shows videos of their cousins fishing, as locals dance around it to upbeat reggaeton and salsa music.

If you don't want to fork out a few hundred to get on the tuna boat and watch the fishing in action, it's worth going to Barbate just for the gastronomy fair to follow the 'tuna route', in which each food tent offers a unique tuna tapa and a drink for just €3.50.

I never thought I would say this about a tuna festival, but with welcoming locals, a vibrant energy and some of the best food you will ever taste, it is truly an event not to be missed.



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Hurricane Hipica-hotel Hurricane Camping Tarifa



HOT SEAT: At Valdevaqueros with staff pictured (below right)

The coolest hotel group on the Costa de la Luz never sits still. Jon Clarke finds out about the latest changes at the Hurricane group

TAKE a slice of Ibiza cool, a dash of London savvy and a gust of Europe's most wonderful wind and you find the hippest beach club on the Costa de la Luz. Welcome to Valdevaqueros, where the world's best kitesurfers and windsurfers mix with some of Andalucia's coolest kids. From the friendly staff to the athletic punters, this is a place to spend the day and best understand what comprises the unique Tarifa vibe. Sit on a beanbag with a cocktail in hand and watch the scene unfold as the kitesurfers kit up and a cornucopia of characters pass on through. In one of the most picturesque

settings imaginable, you will be mesmerised as the dozens of colourful kites bob up and down with a backdrop of green mountains and the massive Punta Paloma sand dune in the distance. Take a stroll down to the white sandy beach and you'll find everything from trinket salesmen to a rail of bikinis, while the sea is a wonderful clear blue and perfect for a dip. Back up in the protected leafy compound, you can grab a healthy buffet lunch, or a delicious burger, and also shop in the hip clothes shop Graffiti next door.

If you feel active you can rent a windsurf board or book a kitesurf lesson, while the vast majority of visitors simply grab a beer or cocktail from the Tumbao bar, whose star boss David Alvarez, a butcher by trade, works hard to run a happy ship, by bringing in a mix of good DJs and flamenco groups. Valdevaqueros, which sits a ten minute drive west of Tarifa, is part of the successful Hurricane group, owned by three British brothers, Peter, James and Michael Whaley. Apart from their main Hurricane Hotel, now an institution in Tarifa, the trio own the laid back Punta Sur hotel nearby, as well as a hotel, Hurricane Jeri, in Brazil. "We are always looking for new ideas and improving quality, while not putting prices up for four years," explains James, who is very much the life and soul of the Hurricane.



A writer and film director/producer - who once managed massive 80s band Adam and the Ants - he has recently overseen the expansion of the gym, introducing mountain and e-bikes to rent, as well as bringing in a new chef, Ivan, a local lad from Tarifa. "He is changing the menu daily to ensure guests can stay in as much as possible," adds James. "He is upgrading traditional Spanish cuisine with modern touches, which is going well." The hotel has also recently started to develop a Wellness program and contracted the services of a leading psychotherapist, Dr Alejandra Hallin, who has clinics in Marbella, Sotogrande and Gibraltar. Her team of 16 fully-trained

therapists deal with a range of issues, ranging from anxiety to depression and eating disorders to drug and alcohol addiction. They also specialise in family issues, such as school bullying, insecurity and phobias. "She has been really good for me and helped me get over an anxiety problem," explains James. "I thoroughly recommend her."

Story so far

The story behind the Hurricane group began over three decades ago when oldest brother Peter made an unscheduled stop off in Tarifa, en route from his home in Ibiza to a holiday in Morocco. A keen windsurfer he unwittingly found himself on the windiest beach in Europe and had the vision to launch a business there. It was 1984 and he had soon found a partner (an Australian boardmaker Barry Pussell) to help him open the coast's first rental business. Named 100% Fun (now a successful nearby hotel) - the shack rented out windsurfs and sold clothes from his wife



BOSSES Peter



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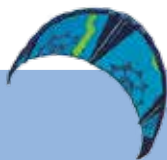
Nacional 340 sn playa Valdevaqueros, Tarifa, Spain



Ride free

HORSE RIDING along the bright, windswept Costa de la Luz is a wonderful adventure. Hurricane Hipica, in Tarifa, has established itself as an equine epicentre, offering rides that take you over breathtaking beaches and forested mountains. Run by world-class Dutch equestrian Klaartje Muijser, the horses are incredibly well looked after, living shoe-free in open fields.

For more information, check out www.tarifahip.com



July 4th - July 17th 2018

ane Force



Photos by: Jon Clarke and Atlas Beach

Terese's successful fashion label Graffiti Ibiza.

"It was a low key launch and we had no idea how well it was going to go," Peter explains

"What we did have was a great board maker and fantastic, totally Spanish-made clothes."

It was the spark to launch the wind revolution on the Costa de la Luz, an industry that now brings in tens of millions of euros every year.

But, Peter quickly realised that in order to keep the growing number of surfers happy they needed to offer accommodation, so the following year he and his brother Michael, a builder, bought an old ruined 12-room hostel just up the road. His well connected third brother James, who speaks an incredible seven languages, also got involved, helping to make it one

of Andalusia's hippest places to stay.

"It just grew and grew organically," explains Peter, who still spends half the year in Ibiza, where he has a farmhouse. "But now we think we have just the right ingredients to continue to be successful for years to come."

Their hotel in Jericoacoara, Brazil, meanwhile, continues to go from strength to strength, having opened a new wing last year and a second restaurant this year.

"It is coming along really well," explains James. "It has become a very popular place to stay and is nearly 90% occupancy all year round."

On the up

The Hurricane story would not be complete however, without a mention of Peter's son Liam Whaley, who is one of the world's top kitesurfers, winning the world championships a few years ago. Having taken up the fun, high-adrenaline sport from the age of nine, he now travels the world competing, but can often be found hanging out and training at Valdevaqueros, where it is not uncommon to have 40-knot winds.

"There is never a shortage of wind here," he tells the Olive Press. "And it is one of the most fun places to live."



James and (below)



DREAM LOCATION: Dinner at The Hurricane



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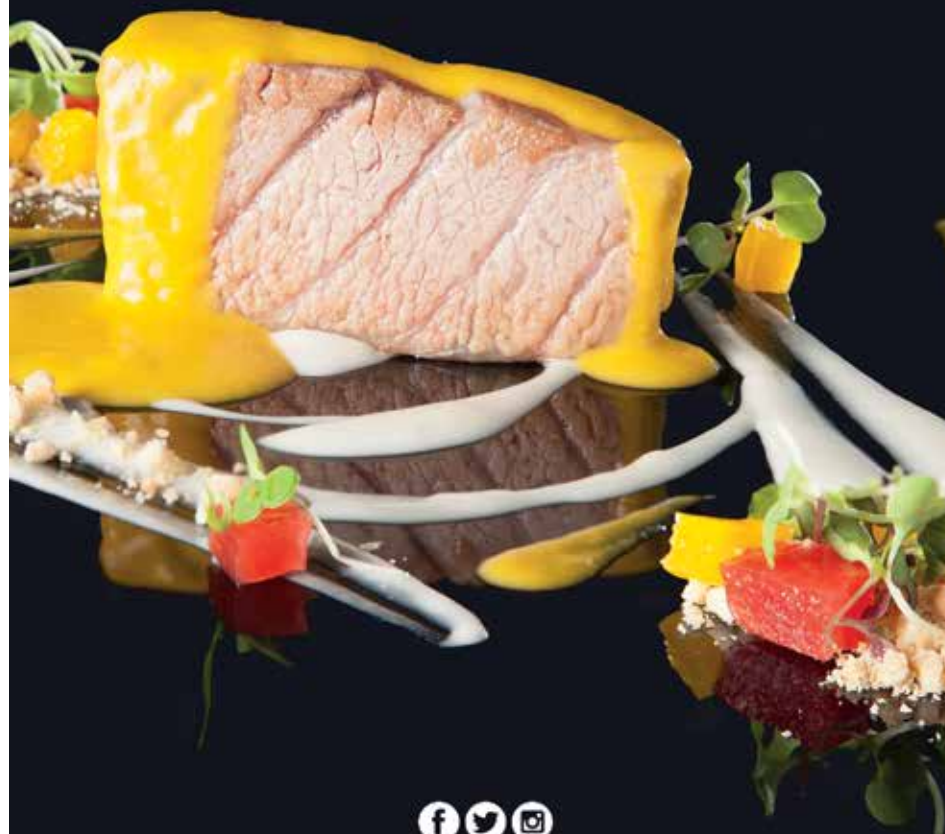
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On your bike

It's a buoyant market in Vejer, explains agent Duncan Hill from De La Luz properties

IT'S been 14 years since Duncan Hill first set up his agency on the Costa de la Luz.

Aiming to help British buyers locate the perfect holiday homes from Ayamonte to Tarifa, the company took a 'finders fee' meaning they could negotiate and work with all the top agents on the coast.

Having run a busy agency in London he liked the idea of finding the right home for buyers and things went well. "We had, after all, been through the process of buying a second home here so we were fully aware of the challenges potential buyers faced," he explains.

They mostly met the clients in the UK and after analysing their exact requirements searched for the best properties and then met them to show them the shortlisted ones.

"It normally took three days and while time consuming it was very successful," he continues.

Eventually he and his partner Kaly decided to open a permanent office on the coast and chose the wonderful white town of Vejer de la Frontera.

While a little slow at first, since 2013 the market in Vejer has recovered from the lean sales market of 2008 to 2012.

From 2013 to 2018 there have been small price increases and the market

On the up... at last



has stabilized and the town has become increasingly popular.

"Prices are now around €2,000 per square metre for a house or apartment in good condition. While in 2007 prices peaked at just under €3,000 per square metre, so there are some great deals out there," he adds. A 3-bedroom town house of 100 sqm with a garage and garden that was selling at around €200,000, was being sold for €100,000 in 2013.

"This year we have sold three of these houses for €135,000 to €138,000. All sold by UK vendors to local young Spanish couples whom local banks are now lending to."

Much of this change has come after a colossal improvement of the infrastructure in the area, particularly in the old town of Vejer, facilitated by the efforts of the town hall and local businesses.

"There are now a multitude of very good restaurants and bars and many organized events and being one of the most attractive villages in Spain has also helped and the holiday season now stretches from April to October.

"We have also had more visitors from many different countries over the past years," he adds, explaining that buyers have come from as far and wide

as Denmark to the USA and from Poland to Sweden to buy in the town.

Last year the agency helped a couple buy and relocate in Vejer after selling up in Mallorca where they had a second home for many years.

In general, the Costa de la Luz remains popular with huge numbers of Spanish tourists visiting each year. We often help buyers from Barcelona, Madrid and Seville for example buy a bolt hole here where they can enjoy their summers.

Local Spanish buyers tend to look to the new town, where the houses are newer and at least 30% cheaper.

"One of our main challenges is to help potential buyers ensure that properties have the correct legal title. This saves time wasting and there is no point in going through the offer and negotiation process only to be told by a lawyer that he or she does not recommend you buy."

"These are the quirks associated with traditional properties in Vejer but working with a good bilingual and local lawyer helps."

On top of this, in the surrounding countryside areas there are also many issues with the correct legal title.

Contact Duncan Hill on 956450889 or visit the office at Plaza de Espana, Vejer - www.vejerproperties.com



Weird and wonderful

A SCULPTURE of dictator Franco and his horse half buried in the ground, and a never-ending roller-coaster of wheelbarrows represents the monotony of life, are part of one of Spain's most unusual outdoor art exhibitions, at NMAC, near Vejer.

At the charity space, exhibits suddenly appear along a forest pathway, while in huts there are a further series of sculptures and photography.

TARIFA is a mountain biker's dream. Great views, a feeling of adventure, varied trails and great descents. It has it all.

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Rides take from two to seven hours, and most start from the heart of the town.

"You can expect to hear the screech of an eagle, see thousands of buzzards crossing the straits and fields of wild flowers," explains keen cyclist Tony Cassidy.

"There are also plenty of Roman ruins and even remains of Prehistoric Man," he adds.

"It's an outdoor enthusiast's wonderland."

Bikes can be rented for around €20 a day from a number of places.



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Casa Arran, Vejer de la Frontera €375.000
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TRADITIONAL PATIO HOUSE, OLD TOWN

- Fantastic Traditional Patio House
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- Open-plan kitchen-living-dining area
- Internal Patio with electric sliding roof



FOR SALE

Casa Fina, Santa Lucia, near Vejer €535.000
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- Approx. 300 m2 including porches & terraces
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- 1.500 m2 manicured gardens
- Pool 10x5 metres, pagoda, vegetable garden

July 4th - July 17th 2018

The sole is shining



**Dining Secrets of
Andalucia editor
Jon Clarke reviews
stunning Tarifa
restaurant Osteria del
Sole**

I AM sucking the brains from half a dozen crimson red 'carabinero' king prawns, while sipping on a splendid Rosso di Montalcino. In front of me 100 kites bob up and down, almost in time to the strains of cool Brazilian music, while all around hipsters and hotties chow down and sip on cocktails. Backed by umbrella pines and overlooking miles of stunning sand dunes - not to mention a backdrop to one half of the legendary Pillars of Hercules in Morocco - could anywhere beat Osteria del Sole for lunch? With a splendid list of fresh pasta made every morning, an amazing selection of fish dishes and an Italian wine list to put three quarters of Tuscany's eateries in the shade, I was in foodie heaven.

I would happily have eaten lunch and dinner here, after a tour of the kitchens, where a team of female chefs were beavering away in preparation for lunch service.

Everything is made from fresh and the team of trendy waiters, all bearded up in jet black uniforms, were enthusiastic as me.

I had been tipped off from my pal James Whaley, owner of the nearby



TEAMWORK: The staff at Osteria are knowledgeable about the dishes, including a king prawn tartare (Above)



AS EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE: Fresh pasta is hand-made each morning at Osteria del Sole, ready for the plate come lunchtime

Hurricane hotel, that this was the best new spot to eat and he rarely gets it wrong.

Nor did manager Stefano, from Bologna (the Italian one, not the nearby village of Bologna), who is extremely knowledgeable on the local food scene, and more or less chose my lunch. He guided me first to the wonderful

'ahumados de Barbate' starter, which at first didn't appeal, but on arrival sent shivers of joy up my spine.

Beautifully served with crusty bread and three delicious home-made butters of lemon, black garlic and onion, this black-board-and-slate combo included smoked tuna, cod and sardines. Another starter Crescentine, a fried flat bread, was tasty, while the tartare of carabineros from Galicia,

served with capers and a small salad can only be described as 'de puta madre', or 'the bollox' in English, to coin an appropriate term given the owners (see Hey Papa! below). Each dish is carefully explained and the pasta menu was broken down into sections of spaghetti, passatelli, ravioli and mezze maniche.

Again I was led to the Tagliatella del Corsaro which came with Italian speck,

cream and a tabasco sauce, all flambeed with vodka. And again plaudits to Stefano, who got it spot on.

There was a decent mix of fresh fish and meat dishes, but I was mostly blown away, being the operative word here in Tarifa, by the amazing wine list, easily one of the most complete in the Tarifa area.

In total, there were over 100 wines from Italy alone, including a number from the legendary Antinori stable, coming in at a small fortune, but equally there are some good value chestnuts among the list, as well as a fair few Spanish bottles.

I had a splendid Rosso di Montalcino Pian delle Vigne and a Pazo Senorans Albarino, from Galicia, for under 20 euros. Recently set up by the capable Italian/Chilean partners behind Papagayo in central Tarifa, it's a stylish spot, all wood and clean lines, with plenty of



HELP: Explaining the dishes

glass to keep the invasive wind out. With the right music, wine and food, it is bound to succeed. In fact, it's a no brainer really.



DREAM LOCATION: Right on the beach

Osteria del Sole, KM 80 (51,31 km) 11380 Tarifa - CONTACT US ON email: osteriadelsoletarifa@gmail.com or call: 687 82 88 69

There's bravely no tuna on the menu at 21, but Dining Secrets of Andalusia editor Jon Clarke, couldn't care less

“TUNA? No way... it's the last thing I'm going to serve in a town with 120 restaurants serving it,” barks Ali Palmiero. “I only ever put it on the menu if my girlfriend Marina really insists on it.”

It's a brave statement for a restaurateur in Zahara de los Atunes that sets up its stall on having not only the best tuna in the world... but is even named after it. But Ali is anything but your normal chef on the Costa de la Luz.

For starters he's an Aussie, and secondly he produces a menu that would be much more at home in San Sebastian or, indeed, Barcelona, where he worked for many years. One of the genuine up-and-coming stars of the coast, Ali and his girlfriend Marina, a photographer/designer from Madrid, set up their restaurant three years ago, after meeting and falling in

TUNE OUT!



COSY: Inside cool 21



love in London. Combining Marina's exquisite eye for style with Ali's skills in the kitchen has created one of the hippest restaurants around.

There are few places in Andalusia that have so much panache, combined with delicious and creative food. Full of antique Andalusian furniture, much donated by their families, alongside some bold Jackson Pollock-style paintings, the sense of place is challenged by

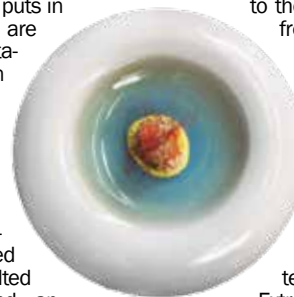


creativity. It is perhaps a metaphor for Ali's cooking skills that were picked up around the world in Australia, London, Spain and Italy, where he studied for four years at cookery school in Modena (he is actually half Italian and his family own a mortadella company there).

“I started baking bread at the age of 12 to make some pocket money and my first real job was shucking oysters at the Sydney Opera House,” he tells me, before profering a long list of



places he has worked. But forget the CV, I was literally blown away by the quality of ingredients that Ali puts in his dishes, that are heavy on vegetables and light on calories. The menu gave little away being incredibly simple and short, but soon came out some delicious home-baked bread with salted garlic butter and an amuse bouche of 'sausage roll on carrot earth' served on a beach pebble. Now, I was excited. There was little that disappointed over the next hour, from the



chargrilled scallop, served with a wakame salad and trout caviar with diced apple and chilli strips to the signature dish of fresh foie served on a brioche with violet potatoes. And NOTE WELL, this was not your ordinary foie gras, but carefully selected cruelty-free foie from world famous Pateria de Sousa, in Extremadura, where former President Barack Obama and UK cooking wizard Gordon Ramsay source it. (Want to know more? Visit the Olive Press website, where you will find a feature from four years ago).

DELICIOUS: (Left) cod dish and (right) Ali and Marina

I also loved his fish dishes including a smoked sardine creation that was as off the wall as it was delicious, basically slices of the fish, with cherry tomatoes, 'smoked' yogurt and radish, all installed into a poppadom, no less. Seeing was believing. And then came out his surf-and-turf-style French cod dish, which was like no other fish dish I have ever eaten in Andalusia, served with pork neck on a bed of spinach, artichokes and quinoa. Think north Spain and you get the idea. By the time the panna cotta pudding came out I was in heaven. As happy, in fact, as on my 21st birthday!



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July 4th - July 17th 2018

WHERE TO EAT



LOCATION: Stunning Antonio and (inset) a tuna dish

Surf and turf



MEET: Clarke with Melero

The Costa de la Luz has the most exciting mix of restaurants in Andalucía, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucía editor Jon Clarke

THERE is something about the province of Cadiz that brings out the best in restaurants.

A combination of style, creativity and, above all, positive vibes has created some of my favourite places to eat in Spain.

Much of it to do with the ingredients, there are so many delicacies that can be sourced around the definitive coast with the most.

Be it bluefin tuna, *retinto* steak or incredible seafood, foodies are spoilt for choice in the restaurants dotted along the Costa de la Luz.

The one thing you have to try is the tuna, which is caught twice a year via the ancient Almadra method at half a dozen specific spots, with very strict quotas and, of which, 80-90% is exported.

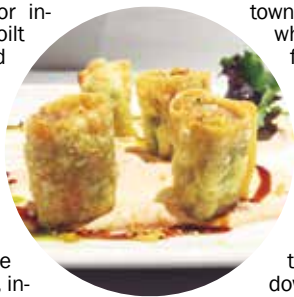
It is like no other tuna you will ever have eaten and what is left can be eaten at a handful of fabulous joints, including **Antonio**, in Zahara and **El Campero**, in Barbate.

This pair have been consistently competing to become the best places to eat Cadiz's most famous export for the last few decades and both have recently undertaken remarkable transformations in terms of decor and style.

Antonio (www.restauranteantoniozahara.com)

has one of the most amazing beach locations in Spain to go alongside its fabulous self-contained tuna menu, which is a stunning trawl of the very best of this wonderful local fish.

It also has some great value tapas dishes, such as the amazing tuna tartare on toast at just five euros, or the 'mollete' bun of squid with mayonnaise.



Up the road in the genuine fishing port town of Barbate you must not miss what is probably Andalucía's best fish restaurant, **El Campero** (www.restauranteelcampero.es).

Run by the stalwart chef Jose Melero, he stands at the pass with a dozen chefs on one side and a dozen waiters on the other.

Directing his team with Zen-like calm, it is perhaps not surprising that this seasoned chef turned down a career in the air force to run his restaurant.

And military precision is what he needs with his team serving up to 400 people in a busy summer sitting... and over the three months of summer up to 20,000 meals.

In terms of tuna dishes there are around 30 different guises, including tuna lasagna and cuts almost unheard of, such as *Facera*, *Galera* and *Parpatana*.

There is also a tapas menu, with such delights as tuna tartare with shavings of truffle on toast and an unusual looking 'monton crocante' (above), or mini towers of crunchy maize with spicy tuna inside.

In terms of up-and-coming culinary hotspots, Tarifa currently takes the biscuit with around half a dozen new places opening this year alone.

Quickly catching up on long-standing leader Vejer, there is a distinct buzz about the style and quality of places to eat here.

Much of this is thanks to a group of hip young couples, who have opened their own joints, including chef Hernan at **Mic Moc**, Patricia and Inaki at **Raizes** and Inga and Heber, with their trio of eateries.

I was particularly taken this year with the food



WOW: Campero and (inset) a new tuna tapa

Continues on Page 34

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to Sunday:
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18.30pm-01.00am



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Cadiz



Geko is in the historic centre of Tarifa to the side of the San Matteo church, it's a small and homely restaurant with a terrace protected from the wind.

Open from 10am for breakfast, till 1am at night for dinner and drinks. Patty and Angi, with their kindness and friendliness offer you a variety of simple, tasty dishes of Andalusian and Italian characteristic cuisine, with daily changes to the menu. The kitchen is always open and you will find a variety of cocktails on the night.



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34

All about

de

New kids on block

From Page 33

at **Raizes**, which was a tour of fresh, creative dishes and an obvious labour of love by the owners, who are uniquely both chefs.

And proper chefs they are too, both classically taught, with Patricia Cordon having trained for over a year at one of Spain's top restaurants Azurmendi and Inaki Garcia, having done his time with famous chefs Martin Berasategui and Sergi Arola in Madrid.

Feeling a bit like a pop up, the decor is quirky, while the music is original and leftfield, while the food is distinctly fusion in feel and, best of all, often comes in various half rations.

I love the crujiente de carrillera, which won the second prize in this year's tapas competition, while the smoked squid in tempura and a crust of its ink is not only wonderful-looking but perfectly cooked with a Mexican chipotle sauce.

Another really carefully considered dish is the sea anemones with algas and citrus fruit, while a pudding 'te moruno' has excellent textures to balance its taste.

Another exciting new opening in the town is from the Delgado brothers, behind the Morillo restaurant and hotel La Torre for years.

Called **Siglo 19**, it sits in the heart of the old town in a charming old building, divided into various sections and with a hostel upstairs.

Employing the services of talented Sanlúcar chef Miguel Mesa Blanco, under the watchful eye of owner Jesus and son Miguel, this is a place to watch over the next year.

I was especially taken by the excellent trio of tuna tapas dishes, particularly the ventresca, served in a sesame crust and with a Pedro Ximenez sauce.

It also serves fabulous retinto beef steak from the nearby area, while the fresh urta fish in a lobster sauce is richness personified.

Another great spot run by expats is **El Gecko**, where Italians Angi, from Bolonia and Patti, from Milan, knock out some marvellously fresh mediterranean dishes every day.

While a simple menu there are six specials of the day, including wonderful dishes like gnocchi, beef tataki, red tuna with quinoa, and langoustines in



CLASSICALLY TRAINED: Inaki and Patricia at Raizes



NICE MENU: At Gecko, while (right) cocktail at Pacha Mama

'panko'.

It is also open for an excellent breakfast.

Also still doing great guns nearby on Calle Alameda are **Lola Mora** and **la Ternerera Mimosa**, run by father and son team of Daniel and Xavier Lasagabaster, a former professional snowboarder.

Both have excellent outdoor dining terraces, with **Lola Mora** (www.lolamoratartarifa.com) tipping more towards classical food, while **La Ternerera Mimosa** specialises in steaks, with a big bbq section. I particularly liked his amazing tuna burger, while there is also a good choice of salads and starters, including some superb fresh tomatoes.

Other well known favourites include **Trattoria** (www.latrattoriatarifa.com), run by ambitious Italian magnate Luciano Fabricio, 46, from Naples, also on Calle Alameda.

With a fondness for his country's top ingredients - not to mention the excellent Slow Food Movement - his restaurant just gets better and better.

After undertaking a course with Spanish masterchef Joan Roca, he has just introduced a 'bano thermostat', where he is able to slow cook a leg of lamb or duck

breast for up to 24 hours at a low temperature.

He has another excellent, simpler spot **Pizzeria con Cucina** nearby, as well as recently taking over the famous **Pacha Mama** restaurant and beach club (www.pachamamatarifa.com) on the road out of Tarifa towards Vejer. In a wonderful sheltered garden, with plenty of shade and

an excellent pool for the kids to play in, you will be spoilt for choice, with excellent wood-fired bbq treats and a wood oven pizzas, not to mention the amazing homemade Italian ice creams.

Nearby, right on the beach, you will find the wonderful Italian, **Osteria del Sole**, which is a beautiful place and has some incredible fresh pasta, not to mention an amazing Italian wine list (see review on page 31).

Also along this stretch of coast look out for the famous **Hurricane Hotel** and its superb lunch buffet, as well as the recently opened **El Jardin** restaurant at the **Punta Sur hotel** (Hurricane Force, p28), which is an amazing place to chill out and eat incredibly well.

Heading towards Bolonia, overlooking rows of vines and a sea of undulating umbrella pines, **Tesoro** - or Treasure - is one pot of gold that really is worth seeking out.

Aside from the fabulous food - including fresh langoustines and a classic 'retinto' steak typical of the region - the views over the Gibraltar Straits to Africa are impossible to improve. But the highlight of any culinary journey to the Costa de la Luz, must be Vejer, which is a true foodie Mecca and one of the best in Andalucia.

Over the last two decades the place has become more and more famous in Spain and abroad as a place to eat well.

Its history goes back to the late 1990s when two Madrilenos Pedro and Javier took the plunge to open the elegant restaurant **Trafalgar** on the main square in town.

It was the perfect foil to the other two key restaurants of reference in the area, **El Campero** in Barbate and Cadiz's most famous meat restaurant **Castilleria**, in nearby Santa Lucia, which both opened in 1994.

"Trafalgar really started the food revolution here," explains local hotelier James Stuart, who opened his own restaurant **La Califa** a few years later in 2002.



TEAM: The Lola Mora gang

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Foodie Mecca

"Pretty soon we were all starting to raise the bar in quality making the town quite a few levels above anywhere else around," he adds.

So it is no surprise that into this melting pot of talent should march female *tour de force* Ellie Cormie, a few years ago.

Having run a series of restaurants in Scotland - some with Michelin stars - she is now at the helm of the fabulous **Corredera 55** (www.califavejer.com), where she has brought a unique sprinkling of magic, much of it learnt via four years in Asturias en route.

Alongside owner James Stuart, the fabulous, good value menu, heavy on vegetables and fish, keeps getting better and better.

The menu changes regularly and is always fresh and healthy with wonderful dishes such as the cauliflower fritters, with turmeric and coriander, as well as an amazing mint and pea gazpacho, with wild basil.

A tuna sashimi with wakame salad and prawns was superb, while for theatre go for a 'salad jar' shaken on the spot. The fruits of the forest summer crumble with whisky mascarpone, cream and toasted oats, says it all. Amazing.

Also consistently good - and essential to book - is **El Jardin del Califa** (www.califavejer.com) reached through the labyrinthine corridors of the 16th century Califa hotel.

Its exquisite palm courtyard is enclosed by ancient walls and is lit with Moroccan lamps after dark.

If you aren't hypnotised by the scent of frangipani, jas-

Continues on Page 36



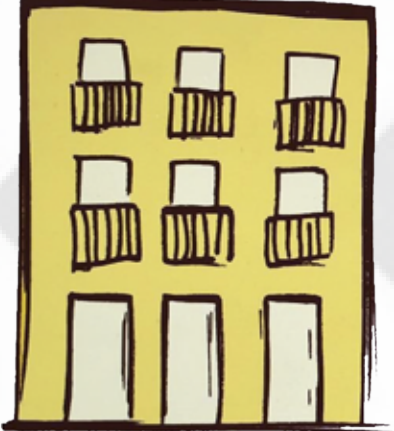
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EVOCATIVE: Amazing Corredera 55 and La Califa

From Page 35

Vibrant Vejer

mine and incense, wait until you try the menu, a heavenly harem of authentic flavours from north Africa and the Middle East: delights such as baba ganoush, shish taouk, pastela filled with chicken, almonds and cinnamon and tempting tagines.

Meanwhile, their new spot **Califa Tapas**, just up the road on Calle Corredera, is getting more and more popular, with its special mix of dishes and amazing views to match.

Restaurant **Trafalgar** itself goes from strength to strength. Now run by a new chef Karlos (pictured right), it has a traditional Spanish menu with plenty of modern touches.

Well installed in the Michelin guide for the last decade, you eat either in the charming square below or in the elegant restaurant above, which has some fantastic paintings on the wall, linking to the famous Trafalgar battle, which was fought nearby.

If it's views you are after, **La Torre 2.0**, is impossible to beat, sitting as it does overlooking one of the best views in Christendom, overlooking the beautiful Janda landscape.

The recently opened sister restaurant of the **La Torre**, in El Palmar, is one of the most excit-

ing new places in Vejer.

I particularly liked the fresh plate of thinly sliced courgette carpaccio with salted sardines and with shavings of payoya goats cheese on a bed of local sliced tomatoes and onions.

Meanwhile a ceviche of corvina with fresh avocado and creamy seafood sauce was a fresh and a delicious squid tail cooked in three cycles with mash was a surefire winner.

Around the corner, with easily the best wines on offer, is **Vina y Mar**, run by Ramon for the last decade. It's a great spot to hang out at and the tapas get better by the year, while there are loads of wines by the glass, including dozens of sherries.

Outside of the town you are also spoilt for choice with some genuine dining secrets, including **Castilleria** (www.restaurantecastilleria.com), sitting in the idyllic hamlet of Santa Lucia.

A charming spot in the extreme, you sit in a leafy garden and eat the best steaks available in Spain. Broken down into the different types of meat, the steak menu is broken into eight to 12 months, four to six years and even nine to 11 years.

The place just gets better and

better and is definitively where the wealthy and privileged go for lunch and dinner. You will need to book. It is very popular. If you cannot get a table then you may just be in luck by visiting **Venta el Toro**, just down the street, which has been picked by the *Guardian* newspaper as one of the most charming restaurants in Spain. And if it is charm you are looking for, few places beat Restaurant **Patria** (www.restaurantepatria.com), in the hills near Vejer, where Danes Thomas and wife Ase consistently serve up some of the tastiest dishes on the coast.

This incredibly creative couple, who have recently launched their own juice business **Patria Pura**, run this stunning dining secret, surrounded by vines, oleander and olive trees. The stone terrace is always



WHERE TO STAY

THE Costa de la Luz has loads of cool places to stay from beachside gems to village properties.

In Vejer the seminal **Casa de Califa** (www.califavejer.com), in the town's loveliest square, is a fabulous Moorish building sitting around a charming central patio, where guests take breakfast and dine under candlelight each evening.

Next door, its sister **Las Palmeras de Califa**, also oozes history, but has a fabulous pool (below) to cool off in after a day of sightseeing. Also in Vejer, consider the fantastic house to rent **Casa Colina Blanca** (www.casacolinablanca.co.uk), which has an amazing roof terrace with stunning views. In Canos de Meca look out for laid back **Madreselva**, set around a central court-



DREAM RETREATS

yard and with a decent pool for the kids to splash in.

Nearby, just a short walk from the Trafalgar lighthouse is evocative **Casas Karen** (www.casaskaren.com), a super chilled retreat (above), sitting in a wild spot between pinewoods and beach. Its collection of chozas (straw huts) and traditional farmhouses, blends perfectly into the landscape. Massages and yoga can be arranged, or guests can simply relax in a Mexican hammock.

In Tarifa you have an equally good group of stylish hotels, one of the best

being the **Hurricane Hotel** (www.hotelhurricane.com), right on the beach, as well as the more luxurious **Punta Sur** across the road, with its fabulous grounds, massive pool and tennis court.

Another great option in the centre of the town itself is **La Joyita** (www.lajoyitadetarifa.es), a charming little place, well sited for everything and with an excellent roof terrace with a superb jacuzzi.

In Zahara you have the excellent **Hotel Antonio** (www.antoniohoteles.com), sitting on one of Andalusia's top beaches.



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IDYLLIC: Terrace at Castille-ria, view from

beautifully candlelit at night and your hosts do not disappoint when it comes to the food, which is almost all locally sourced.

As Thomas explains: "The joy of cooking is about what's in peak season. There is no need to import anything from far away." He raves, quite rightfully about the quality of the local produce, and adds: "We work around what our suppliers can provide us locally be it wild asparagus, rabbit or bulls' heart tomatoes."

"It is all about being able to adjust, change and create."

Also worth looking out for in El Palmar is **La Torre** restaurant, which is the only one that sits right on the beach, with amazing views



in both directions.

Set up by a local vegetable growing family, that sells its produce around Spain, it is based in the old Guardia Civil barracks.

Son Rafa is in charge of the restaurant and has done a good job with the menu, making it increasingly fresh and vibrant.

Try the plate of local tomatoes in salsa Mery, made from their own parsley, garlic and olive

oil, or the fresh tuna tataki salad with mesclun and alfalfa. In Zahara de los Atunes, you must look out for the hippest new restaurant on the coast, **Restaurante 21** (www.21restaurante.com), run by Australian Ali and Madrilena girlfriend Marina. A true slice of London cool, this is some of the most original and best created food on the coast. The menu changes regularly and you will be eating everything from cod to scallops and smoked sardines to fresh organic foie (see review on page 32). Last, but very much not least, you finally have an excellent place to eat in Canos de Meca.

Sitting in a charming garden close to the famous beach, **La Laja** (www.la-laja.es), is a joy to visit. Set up by long time cookery teacher Yolanda Roman (left) - who has taught many of Spain's best chefs, including twice Bocuse d'or winning Juanma Salgado - it specialises in traditional Spanish cuisine with various modern touches, but particularly featuring fresh, local produce.



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