A KIND OF MAGIC

A woman holding the world in her hands above the blue Mediterranean sea. This is a fitting image for Estepona and is the subject of the town’s latest mural. Called Atlantis, it is the 49th work in the town’s series of street art, located up the steep hill of Avenida de los Reales, which offers unparalleled views down to the sea (see page 20).

But this new painting by Jose Fernandez Rios, unveiled on International Women’s Day, reveals more than just a celebration of female contributions to society. It captures the constantly evolving nature of Estepona and its impressive global credentials, despite being a medium-sized town. Within Estepona’s mural series alone, you have the largest vertical mural in Europe, and even the first braille mural in Spain, using ceramic pieces, to assist the learning of the visually impaired.

Perhaps one of the most unusual examples of Estepona’s worldwide appeal is Disney’s discovery of the area in the ear-
OLD TOWN: Paved streets with colourful flowerpots in Estepona

By 1990s – although the town was the original choice for Eurodisney but it was pipped to the post by Paris. But away from the would-be theme park dreams of decades gone by is the real beating heart of this charming town.

A short walk along the marble pavements of Estepona’s Calle Terraza brings you to the charming and aptly named Plaza de las Flores (square of the flowers). In this hidden hive of activity you will find the tourism office, with maps for all kinds of excursions, including the murals tour and a host of reasonably-priced restaurants and cafeterias.

Also nestled among the flowers, and spilling out onto Calle Terraza, are a handful of stylish clothes shops, mixing independent and quirky stores with more famous brands such as Mango.

Further into the historic centre and you will notice that the town has ramped up its appeal with a ‘hanging garden’ of geraniums sprouting from multi-coloured pots on every wall of every street.

And it went one better than the plant pots a few years ago with its exotic glass-domed orchidarium at the other end of Calle Terraza.

The futuristic greenhouse (above) with more than 8,000 species of orchids and three waterfalls welcomes more than 250,000 people each year and they continue to arrive by the coach load.

Lorena Cano Bedoya, 38, who moved to Estepona in 2008 from Colombia, lives just around the corner from the magnificent orchid house with her seven-year-old son Diego, and treasures the greenery on her doorstep.

FLOWER POWER
“Estepona is a town with a very special magic,” she tells me, “starting with its climate, its sea, its small rivers of Bermeja. Estepona does surf and turf in style.”

“It is a town that gives you the most beautiful and quiet places to discover,” she adds, from her house that is just a few minutes walk from La Plaza de las Flores.

Most of all Lorena treasures the life here for her active young son. “Diego is a child who likes sports and reading classical music,” she says. “We dedicate days for those activities and I try to educate him without screens, we prefer to spend time enjoying doing things together outside.”

And its idyllic outdoor spaces and winding streets are perhaps why Estepona is often described as one of the last ‘authentically’ Spanish resorts on the Costa del Sol. It has somehow managed to stave off the whirlwash of celebrity yachts and chaufres of Bermeja, Estepona does surf and turf in style of flamenco on Friday nights for €20.

And although the centre of town has seen a recent nightlife boom, Estepona’s bright young things still flock to the bars and clubs in the port on weekends. Bartenders freehand-pour drinks according to ye old Spanish ‘say when’ system (hic) and will only turf revellers out towards 4am. After that you can freshen up with a quick swim before breakfast, then face up to a long hot day of paying for the night before - face down on a beach towel.

Alternatively, if you went to bed on time, there are four excellent markets to get up for. Three are held on Sunday mornings: one at the port (9am-2pm) and a rastro in the bullring (10am-2pm). On Wednesday mornings (9am-2pm) Avenida Puerta del Mar market is the place to be. Or, why not head into the old town’s twisting uphill streets, which offer a glimpse of life as it used to be in Estepona. While the paseo brings you right back to the present with its lyra-clad joggers, giant chess sets and intricate sand sculptures, beneath the cosmopolitan surface you’ll find a lady with a past.

Her story is told through a scattering of watchtowers built to ward off the Moorish invaders, the Arab-built clock tower and 16th century castle ruins. Estepona was founded during the golden age of the Caliphate of Cordoba.

**Heritage:**

Festivals (left) and architecture reflects its history

**Estepona was founded during the golden age of the Caliphate of Cordoba**

A Spanish restaurant with a twist, located on the edge of historic old Estepona Town in a converted farm house dating back to the 1890 with many features retained.

Restaurante La Pampa is open from Wednesday to Sunday for lunch and dinner.

Calle Sevilla 70, 29680, Estepona
Phone: 952 795 545   email: reservas@lapampaestepona.es

PORT PERFECT: Estepona’s working port is a hive of bars and restaurants

**PORT PERFECT: Estepona’s working port is a hive of bars and restaurants**

A working port is a hive of bars and restaurants...
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. Local resident Manuela Reinoso, 50, tells me it’s for the May Day celebrations.

Let curiosity be your guide to discovering 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.

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 49 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 Atlantis by Jose Fernandez Rios, located on Avenida de los Reales, which was unveiled on International Women’s Day. Another example of Rios’ work is the gardener cutting bougainvillea on the side of Victor de la Serna school. Likewise, the impressive Fishing Day mural occupies 1,000m² 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 Pedro’s Basilica in Vatican City, is another of the famous contributors to the offbeat outdoor expo.

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.

Included here is the Floral tribute

RECORD: Fishing Day (above) holds the record in Spain, while (left) Jose Rios is inspired and Estepona’s newest mural Atlantis (right)
Pirates and Plants

Find out how this booming seaside town is so much more than sun, sea and sand, writes Pablo Balbontín

Did you know pirates regularly attacked the coast of Estepona in the 1700s? Or that its bullring is the only asymmetrical structure of its kind in the world? This gem of the Costa del Sol is packed full of history and amazing facts and those two are just for starters. Here are 11 stupendous Estepona assets that easily make it one of the coolest resorts on the coast.

A pirate legacy
Back in the 18th century pirates were no strangers to Estepona’s shores and King Felipe II had seven watch towers built along the coast to protect it from attack by sea, known as almenaras, which still stand today.

A Disney connection
If things had been different, Eurodisney Estepona would have been coined in 1970s, when actor Paul Naschy for his contribution to Spanish horror films of the 70s, he was cast in his most famous role as a werewolf.

A TREND-BUCKING BULL RING
Estepona’s plaza de toros isn’t the oldest, biggest or best in Spain but it’s one of a kind - the only asymmetrical bullring in the world. Its clever shape was designed by Juan Moro Urbez to offer spectators more seating in the shade than under the hot Spanish sun, and it has hosted numerous sport and cultural events since it opened in 1912.

A GHOSTLY PAST
Estepona was once a ghost town like many of the depopulated pueblos in inland Andalucia today. After years of war, it was conquered and then abandoned by King Enrique IV of Castile in 1461, when it became a wild and dangerous place to be. It was rescued from near extinction in 1502 when 30 families were encouraged back to reseed the town we know today.

Independence
One of the most valuable documents kept in the Historical Archive of Estepona is the Villagomez letter, written and signed by Felipe V in 1722, it grants the title of independence to Estepona, which had been under the control of the Moors and Muslims - who all called it ALEXANDRIA - in 1461, when it became a wild and dangerous place to be. It was rescued from near extinction in 1502 when 30 families were encouraged back to reseed the town we know today.

Tombs intact
The first traces of human existence in Estepona can be found in the mountains in the shape of the Corominas Necropolis, whose dolmen cave tombs and graves remain almost exactly the same as they were 5,000 years ago.

A remarkable tower
The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 was the most devastating earthquake known in the history of southwest Europe, triggering a tsunami that spread to the Med. Estepona’s church didn’t make it, but the tower did and it’s still standing today, although it had to wait until the 20th century to get its famous clock.

Europe’s Biggest Orchidarium
Not only does it hold the size record at 15,000 cubic metres, this monster glass house houses an incredible 8,000 different species of exotic orchids.

Rare species
The Sierra Blanca mountains backing Estepona and the rest of the Costa del Sol are the only place in the world to find forests entirely composed of rare Abies pinsapo Spanish fir trees.

Hurrah for Jaula
It is the hippest new clothes shop in Estepona old town. And womenswear store, La Jaula, has its roots firmly based in Estepona. The trendy shop is the latest launch from the Reinaldos stable of businesses, which includes restaurant Casa del Rey and upmarket Reinaldos in Estepona port. Run by hard-working half Dutch, half Spanish owner Lianna (pictured left with staff), it sits conveniently behind the Casa del Rey. Located just off the stylish Plaza de las Flores, the fashion specialist also stocks a range of interior design pieces and homeware. But it is doing best for its collection of reasonably-priced dresses, business wear and jewelry, providing the backbone to their new range.

La Jaula concept store

Galeria 151
Professional picture and memorabilia framing... hundreds of mouldings to choose from.

Showroom and gallery at Arena Beach, KM151 on the A7, Estepona.
Call mobile or WhatsApp 655 459 576
Estepona’s seafaring tradition is the salt adding seasoning to its tourist offer

“Life on the seas”

STILL 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 off 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.

On a trip to the port Miguel Ferrer Gonzalez explains his boat trips.

“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 offshore.

“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 brave the elements to this day to put fresh fish on local dining tables.
We would like to invite you to know our new concept store. A new space in the center of Estepona, where you will find different products to find what you need: fashion, accessories, jewellery, footwear and why not... a variety of wares to make a variety of different gifts.

CALLE REAL nº93
29680 Estepona - Costa del Sol

La Jaula
concept store

Located in the old town of Estepona you can find our historical house with a great variety of cold and hot pinchos, main courses, plates to share and much more... And for wine lovers, you can find more than 75 different wines from different places and types of grapes. We offer a trio of dining areas: outside terrace, large dining area and our lovely interior patio.

CALLE RAPHAEL nº7
29680 Estepona - Costa del Sol

www.lacasadelreyestepona.com
info@lacasadelreyestepona.com

#lajaula.cs
How the Holy Trinity of Brucie, Tarby and Lionel Blair helped Estepona’s longest-running expat company, the Experience Group, make it to 50 years, writes Jon Clarke

Standing on the runway of Malaga airport, Alan James needed to do a double take. Parked up around him was a phalanx of planes - 20 in total - and most of them looked familiar. “It turned out they were all our planes, all of them chartered to bring tourists from all around Europe,” recalls the boss of Estepona’s Experience Group, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. That was 1988 and a time when the company had over 300 staff (three permanently at the airport) and thousands of tourists and property buyers coming to the Costa del Sol every month.

Very much the heyday of the coast, Alan would rub shoulders with global captains of industry on the local golf courses and socialise at night with the likes of Jimmy Tarbuck, Bruce Forsyth and Lionel Blair. “It was an amazing time and I was literally flying all the time and everywhere,” explains the persona-ble businessman, who at 81-years-old still works most days at the company HQ, in Benavista. “We had offices all over the UK and one in Brussels and brought in 20 charter flights a week from every UK airport,” he continues.

Something of a military operation, the Experience Group set up 37 different companies to take care of every aspect of its clients’ visits to Spain. Each had its own distinct purpose, one dealing with travel, another with property sales, while others dealt with furniture and entertainment and the setting up of golf clubs and restaurants. One of Alan’s favourites handled tours, was only a half of the company’s business, which grew to be one of the key construction companies along the coast. “We built 5,000 homes from Torrox to Sotogrande between 1970 and 1990,” he tells me proudly, as we walk around the leafy, low-density urbanisation of Benamara, one of his earliest and favourite developments.

The Experience Group built everything from great value two-bedroom apartments to stunning front-line golf course villas. These include many around El Paraiso golf, as well as others built for his many golfing friends, including Gary Player and Nick Faldo, as well as Fred Trueman and showbiz pals including Lionel Blair and Jimmy Tarbuck.

At Benavista alone he built the shoes and helped to launch one of the first cruises in the Med; a four-country trip, which went from Malaga to Gibraltar, then on to the Algarve and finally Morocco, “It had 85 suites and made its way right up the Guadalquivir river to Sevilla, before returning to Malaga via Tangier,” recalls Alan. “Tourists loved it and we would normally tag on a week on the Costa del Sol before or after the cruise.”

But tourism, of course, was only a half of the company’s business, which grew to become one of the key construction companies along the coast. “We built 5,000 homes from Torrox to Sotogrande between 1970 and 1990,” he tells me proudly, as we walk around the leafy, low-density urbanisation of Benamara, one of his earliest and favourite developments.

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At Benavista alone he built the shoe-

Top 10 Experience Group projects

1. Centro Comercial Bena Vista – 50 Shops and offices and the footbridge over the main road. Developed, designed and constructed in 1983.
3. Las Palmeras de Bena Vista, 400 Apartments and Townhouses. Developed, designed and constructed - opened 1983.
6. Dos Hermosas, 300 Apartments. Townhouses and villas and Commercial Zone Marketed and designed - opened in 1983.
ppling centre, the bowls club, the football and most of the houses nearby. “By 1973 we had built 400 homes and in the 1980s built and sold over 4,000 homes,” he explains. “So much of it was knowing what the clients wanted. And we used a good team of architects and worked over 4,000 homes,” he explains. “By 1973 we had built 400 homes and in the 1980s built and sold over 2,000 movements a month so it’s important.”

The Experience Group helped to turn the Costa del Sol into a 12-month resort. “I didn’t want empty planes and decided the best way forward was to attack the golf market. “Headlining the team was Nick Faldo and with some clever marketing we were soon bringing in tens of thousands of tourists every winter. “Prices were cheaper in the winter which was a big draw. And punters could have an all-inclusive holiday with flights, golf and buggies for about £100 all in.”

“We also started the Tarbuck Classic golf tournament to boost the image of the Costa del Sol and brought in 25 teams each year, captained by various England stars and managers such as Matt Busby and actors such as Robert Powell. “We took over four courses, including the famous Valderrama and did around four tournaments a year. It was a must-attend for so many celebrities and really helped to raise the profile of the coast.”

**Fields of Green**

Experience organised many tournaments at El Paraiso

Golfing paradise

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**A Tribute to My Dad!**

Dad became an entrepreneur while still at school, so he always expected us to work too. Both myself and my sister Allyson started at 10/11 years old in his office, filling mailshot envelopes after school, then answering phones and booking holidays for clients of Bena Travel and using one of the many terminals linked to the huge mainframe computer in the mid 70’s it was one of the first of its kind.

Holidays were spent helping couriers shepherd clients in and out of their accommodation along the coast and handling the manual check-in at Malaga airport, a much less security-conscious affair in those days. The Celebrity-Am golf weeks and other tournaments we organised, including the Jimmy Tarbuck Classic and the Les Dawson Trophy, made for a colourful childhood. My Dad and Carol became firm friends with many celebrities such as Frank Carson and Fred Trueman. Having the opportunity to work backstage on celebrity galas over the years, it was a logical step for me to go on to work backstage at concerts, Stage Managing in theatre and then in Production and Art Directing in TV and film. Our father taught us to be fearless and resilient. His drive and optimism in business gave us courage and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

**Building Roots**

Born in 1938, at the age of 15 Alan left school to work in the timber industry in London’s East End. Working for the UK’s biggest importer of timber into Portsmouth and Can- ning Town he got to spend a lot of time thinking and talking about construction. This naturally led to working in quarries and he eventually headed up one of the biggest concrete companies in the Mid- lands, “I ended up with six quarries, most of them lines tone,” he says. At the same time he trained as an accountant and even built his own accountancy system, which he still uses today.

“You always need to know what’s happening in your company and we have over 2,000 movements a month so it’s important that the system works,” he explains.

**Charity Work**

A strong believer in charity, Alan has raised thousands of euros for various organisations including the Aspandem handicapped children’s charity in Marbella. As well as running golf tournaments to raise money, he brought in famous singer Petula Clark (left) for a big concert at the Don Carlos Hotel, as well as co- median Ronnie Corbett the following year.
LIFE is a confluence of time and place, and right now Estepona is the place to be on the Costa del Sol. For years it stood in the shadow of its larger, glamorous neighbour Marbella and was known for its rustic charm and good value for money, but increasingly Estepona is becoming a star in its own right. This process is the product of a variety of factors coming together at a particular point in time, and it started with the election of Mayor José María García Urbano, a local notary who took office a few years ago at a time when Estepona’s fortunes were at their lowest. The financial crisis had exposed years of waste and mismanagement, and the town’s finances were in a mess. The mayor rejected his salary, taking an official token sum of €1 per year, and set about reorganising the town’s finances, slashing costs amid a war on waste and the town’s fortunes were at their lowest.

The financial crisis had exposed years of waste and mismanagement, and the mayor rejected his salary, taking an official token sum of €1 per year, and set about reorganising the town’s finances, slashing costs amid a war on waste and ensuring that all municipal staff and resources were productive.

TOWN ON THE UP

Estepona has bounced back from financial ruin and neglect to become a flourishing cultural and business hub, with the community spirit to match.

A lot has changed in ten years. What followed was an intensive beautification of the town centre that had become a little rundown. You might think this an odd thing to do for a cash-strapped town, but the mayor and his team knew that this was an investment in future development, and set about getting as much done with as much creativity and as little financial investment as possible. Instead of big glory projects, streets were fixed and cleaned, homes and façades painted, and the now famous flowerpots arranged in all the pedestrian streets of the historic centre. The fact that each street has its own colour and pattern makes them all the more distinct, and the floral beautification is a fine example of a simple, cost-effective measure that has had a great impact.

The impact has been visual as well as on morale, as the town hall also involved the local community in the beautification of parks and squares, the addition of artwork by local artists – who also contributed to attractive murals that now form the basis of a growing art route within the town – and even the placing of cryptic clues in spots throughout Estepona. It has all enhanced this charming Andalusian resort, which is more popular than ever. A new hospital, as well as a community, conference and theatre centre and one of Europe’s finest orchidariums, are reflections of the town’s upbeat feel, Estepona is clearly a town on the up.

A new real estate destination

Though it has always enjoyed a certain popularity among property buyers from abroad, Estepona is now becoming a new destination for second and permanent home seekers from across Europe and beyond. This is partly aided, of course, by the fact that unlike Marbella the town does not suffer from any planning issues, so the processing of building licences is an efficient process. This has led to a lot of investment in increasingly exclusive property development now and in the future.

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

Around the town, which ranges from seaside, city and hillside apartments to luxurious townhouses and villas, Estepona’s coastal extension, named the New Golden Mile, is fast catching up with Marbella and together with areas such as El Paraíso, Costalita, Atalaya, Cancelada and Estepona Golf creating a true alternative to buying in Marbella. All this is reflected in property sales within the Estepona municipal boundaries, which in 2017 and 2018 surpassed 2,500 transactions per year – almost double the level of 2012.

With a good and growing choice of modern properties, plenty of opportunities to upgrade existing homes and an expanding range of quality services available, it is fair to say that the feel-good factor that Estepona currently enjoys provides an excellent platform for strong, sensible development in and around the town, which ranges from beacheside, city and hillside apartments to luxurious townhouses and villas.

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WHERE TO EAT

Location, location

Estepona has a great collection of top places to eat if you can only locate them, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke

PQUITO a poco Estepona is developing a food culture to go with its rapid growth as an upmarket resort. While still lagging behind Marbella, there are now plenty of reasons to head into town to check out its fast burgeoning restaurant scene.

Little by little, more exciting places are opening up than the usual fried fish and tapas joints. Indeed, you can find most types of cuisine now, 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, the town’s chefs have had to up their game.

Between the two squares of Plaza Ortiz and Plaza de las Flores and the two streets of Calle Real and Calle Caridad you will now find, perhaps, a dozen good places to eat. One of the nicest is the excellent Argentinean Sur, in Plaza Ortiz, where well-traveled 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 mention son-in-law serving up juicy empanadas, lamb tagines and, of course, the best steaks imaginable.

On Calle Caridad don’t miss the just-opened Galpon, an atmospheric place run by a group of Argentinean friends who have been storming it on the Costa del Sol for years. Cooks Natalia and Nadia do a splendid job from their open-plan kitchen, particularly with an excellent sea bass ceviche, a fabulous mushroom risotto and extremely tender noisette of lamb, which cooks for 24 hours.

Maitre Martin is friendly and has a good knowledge of wines, particularly the bespoke section from Argentina, ranging in price from 15 euros to 1,000.

Splendid: Casa del Rey

Up on Calle Caridad don’t miss the just-opened Galpon, an atmospherically equipped place run by a group of Argentinean friends who have been storming it on the Costa del Sol for years.

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Maitre Martin is friendly and has a good knowledge of wines, particularly the bespoke section from Argentina, ranging in price from 15 euros to 1,000.
La Alcaria de Ramos is an Andalusian countryside stately mansion located high above the Mediterranean, with wonderful views.

Traditional Mediterranean cuisine and creative cuisine merge to create a new concept and exquisite sensory experience.

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Brilliant Benavista
Home to a thriving bowling club,
Benavista is so much more than just
fantastic views

If full, another place to check is Benavista Bowls Club and its Green Bar. “We are so spoilt for choice,” says Hughie Holgate, 71, who runs the popular Benavista Bowls Club and its Green Bar.

The beauty area between Estepona and San Pedro is home to a thriving community of foreign residents that has shaped it into what it is today, and there is always something going on. “We are so spoilt for choice,” says Hughie Holgate, 71, who runs the popular Benavista Bowls Club and its Green Bar. “We have many members who play in leagues up and down the Costa del Sol.”

With the club membership going from 50 members to over 150, the Green Bar is a thriving bar which serves tapas, daily specials and an extensive lunch menu.

The club also has free WiFi connection. Large sunny terraces at the club are ideal for enjoying the Green Bar’s renowned Full English at €3.95.

Happy hour is from 5pm.

Benavista Bowls Club is the only bowls club on the coast to offer tuition for beginners.

It is fully open to public and instructors are on hand to provide tuition for beginners. For those after even more fun there are quiz nights, and plenty of more laid back events throughout the year, where people don’t have to wear bowling whites.

Please call the club to enquire about the different events on 0034 952 88 51 48 or visit www.benavista-bowlsclublive.com.

PORT OF CALL
For holiday rentals near the bustling Puerto Deportivo, look no further than Marina Harbour Holiday Apartments

Estepona now has a whole range of holiday rentals available for the summer season, right by the port.

Estepona Apartments, the successful rental firm behind some of the town’s most sought after dwellings, has now expanded to include ‘Marina Harbour Holiday Apartments’. A stone’s throw from the beach, the company’s new portside properties are located among the hustle and bustle of Estepona’s nightlife scene, whilst offering unparalleled ocean views.

And with the Mediterranean on your doorstep you would be forgiven for thinking these holiday homes come with a hefty price tag, but not at Estepona Apartments.

Prices start from as little as €33 a night for a one-bedroom apartment, while a two-bedroom stay can be found for €35, and three bedrooms for €45.

These homes make the perfect getaway for families, golfers, or those who just want to enjoy one of the Costa del Sol’s most beautiful beaches. All apartments have an outdoor terrace area, heating, air-conditioning, fresh towels, WiFi and are fully equipped modern kitchen for self-catering.

Get in touch with them at www.estepona-apartments.com or ring 34 628 133 548.

Gourmet Tour

PARADISE: Sea bass in salt and monster
dessert from Alfonso
(right) at El Pescador

An international
restaurant, It
has a charming
courtyard with a
fountain

GROO-V TIMES

POPULAR Costa del Sol club, Groo-V is going through some exciting times, after launching its first ever live jam session.

Run every Wednesday from 10:30pm-late, the nights encourage local musicians to come together through the power of music.

“It was a great night,” says Vincent Neale, owner of the live entertainment venue in El Paraíso.

“We play everything from Clapton to Spanish stuff and from opera to reggae,” Groo-V are also launching an X-Factor competition for the Costa del Sol, with auditions beginning mid-May.

“First prize gets €2,000, second €1,000 and third €500, with all of the top three getting a gig contract with us,” Vincent explains.

Despite opening less than eight months ago, Groo-V has even made it onto TV, appearing on Channel 5’s Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun.

Vincent is excited for the future and encourages the public to visit Groo-V for karaoke nights on Friday and Sunday, and live gigs every Saturday.

Visit Groo-V’s Facebook page at @groovbenavista

HISTORIC: La Pampa dates back to 1890

HiSTORiC: la Pampa dates back to 1890

Another excellent chiringuito right on Es- tepona’s main beach is Africa Beach, run for four years by the talented team from well established inland restaurant La Alcaria de Ramos.

An excellent place to spend the day, you can lay back and enjoy a superb fish lunch enjoying prawns and sardines cooked on espeto skewers, then hang out on a sunbed for the rest of the day, enjoying cocktails at night.

Just up the road you will find the chiringuito Palm Beach, one of the best on the coast for quality, and due to reopen again shortly.

Set up by talented former Dutch broker Erwin Vanderdonck, it has a range of tasty dishes including prawn pil pil samosas and crab spring rolls, which are melt-in-

ce and attractive tables outside, always full on warm evenings. The waiters know a lot about wine and the Reinaldo group (which also runs Reinaldo in the port as well as Bar Don Ronaldo nearby) also runs the Wine Room next door.

Friendly owner Liliana (who is half-Dutch and half-Spanish) is often around and happy to chat, when not busy keeping the group of six businesses ticking along.

The club also has free WiFi connection. Large sunny terraces at the club are ideal for enjoying the Green Bar’s renowned Full English at €3.95.

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TALENTED: Jose Antonio Ramos (left) runs Africa Beach and La Alcaria de Ramos

the-mouth amazing. 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. A bit further afield a must visit for anyone wanting to find one of those true dining secrets of the Costa del Sol is La Alcaria de Ramos. Run by Jose Antonio Ramos for over three decades, it sits beside an inland crossroads, between the two famous golf courses of El Paraiso and Atalaya. An ancient coaching inn, it is charm personified and has wonderful views of the coasts sitting up in an enviable position. For many years in the Spanish Michelin guide, it mixes up traditional Mediterranean cuisine with international fare and has a superb wine list.

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 as some superb tapas.
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