SHINE ON

Carrying its spectacular beauty and exclusive seclusion with a carefree air, this haunt of global A-listers holds much to be valued, discovers Tim McNulty and Maya Eashwaran.

ETCHED carefully into the crown of Spain’s southern coast, Sotogrande is a gem that shows no sign of losing its glimmer.

The country’s largest privately-owned residential ‘super-state’ has long been the first port of call for the cream of European high society. The radiance of this millionaire’s playground lies in its low-density living, stunning beaches and mountain backdrops, plus its amazing marina and golf courses.

Its privileged views of the Rock of Gibraltar and the Rif mountains of Africa have been enjoyed by the likes of ex-UK PM Tony Blair, the British royal family and countless European celebrities, who don’t want to be spotted, unlike those who venture to nearby Marbella.

But keep your eyes peeled and you might spot Irish motor racing guru Eddie Jordan, former Genesis keyboard player Mike Rutherford or the BBC’s Nick Knowles, who all have homes in the resort.

And then there are the footballers, including Glenn Hoddle and Glen Johnson, who have bought homes in Sotogrande.

Sotogrande is a very friendly place. You get all the different nationalities here and they all just blend in,” estate agent Brian Nelson tells us at his office in the port of Sotogrande. “It’s so cosmopolitan and with a low crime rate - if any at all.

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Opposite Island

A 132 KM
“Of course everyone wants Sotogrande to stay the way it is, development, however, is inevitable. “Everything from here is just a bonus.” Outside Sotogrande Raquet’s club we bumped into Wendy who has traded north London for a family holiday in Sotogrande every summer for the last decade. “This place is family-friendly and less hectic than further down the coast,” she explains still out of breath from her on court exploits. “It’s very open and we love it because you can cycle around and everywhere feels very safe.” And there is truly an abundant offering of outdoor pursuits. The profusion of yachts and kayaks spotted as we walk the immaculately tree lined streets down to the marina reminds us again of Sotogrande’s huge sporting offer, not to forget the golf. A championship round at Royal Sotogrande Golf Club is an unforgettable afternoon for any Shane Lowry - one of seven courses available. Elsewhere, those who take life more at a gallop have Santa Maria Polo Club, one of the most important clubs of its kind in Europe, where the equestrian sport can be enjoyed most of the year. It is also the only polo club in the world to hold two ranking events on the international circuit every year: the Silver Cup and the Gold Cup. Every July and August top polo players from around the world descend on Santa Maria for the International Tournament, now in its 47th year. During the off-season, many football teams rent the polo pitches to train. Much of Sotogrande’s fame stems from its sporting firsts. Valderrama golf course was the first to host The Ryder Cup on the continent of Europe in 1997. And it’s still a fairway to golfing heaven, according to golfer and former professional footballer Andy Gemmell, who has played some 40 courses in the area. If year-round residents have a complaint, it’s that the winter months can be very quiet, so they welcome the recent new investment in the area.
There has been a serious amount of spending in the extended port area, Ribera del Marlin, as well as in the hills up towards La Reserva golf. There is a very real sense that the place has upped a gear in the last three or four years and all of Sotogrande’s 2,500 hectares are being carefully planned and used.

This is best showcased by La Reserva’s man-made lagoon, which saw sand brought over from Morocco.

“It’s three or four times bigger than the blue lagoon in Estepona,” adds Brian Nelson with a distinct tinge of pride.

Sotogrande’s story goes back to the 1950s, when in 1952 an American Filipino family invested millions into Sotogrande to make it what it is today. Stanford University graduate Joseph McMicking and his family were looking to find a suitable place on the Mediterranean, when his cousin found a quayside restaurant to over-sea the place.

Joseph McMicking purchased the company Financiera Sotogrande del Guadiaro and submitted a plan to buy the 1,800 hectare estate, which was later approved by the Spanish authorities.

From there he commissioned Robert Trent Jones, as well as in the hills up towards La Reserva golf.

McMicking continued to live out his later years in Sotogrande until his death in 1990. One of longest-established residents is Theresa Cohen, 50, who moved to Sotogrande from Oxford a year ago.

“Among friends we jokingly call it the ‘new Marbella’. Not in a flashy way but Sotogrande is how Marbella used to be before it got too commercialised,” she tells us. “Here it is different, being a gated community. It’s a low key society, and everybody of family, of friends. It’s a low key society, and everybody here is low key.

“You can run into some extremely rich, extremely famous people and nobody will bat an eyelid. The place itself may have changed, and is modernising, but the philosophy remains the same.

“Sotogrande isn’t commercialised compared to other areas, which is a big draw but it’s getting there. Every year there is a new twist and turn.”

At the marina we stopped at the amazing El Molino del Conde’s waterfront restaurant for a drink we meet 49-year-old Theresa Cohen, 50, who moved to Sotogrande from Oxford a year ago.

“Among friends we jokingly call it the ‘new Marbella’. Not in a flashy way but Sotogrande is how Marbella used to be before it got too commercialised,” she tells us. “Here it is different, being a gated community I think helps that exclusivity.

“The restaurants in the area, I believe, are world-class: fine wines and the best seafood dishes around.”

The marina is yet another high light of Sotogrande where the welcome is warm, the hospitality outstanding and the sporting offer unequalled by anywhere else in the world that’s not a town or a village but merely a gated community.”

Sotogrande has undoubtedly become the benchmark resort for residential luxury living and quality sport tourism. It is easy to agree with Lucrecia Aldao when she said ‘I don’t think Sotogrande will ever lose its sparkle.’

**TIP TOP: The beach is as well kept as the marina (below)**

1978 the International School of Sotogrande was founded to accommodate the growing international population. In 1985, the polo fields of Rio Sotogrande I and II were built as well as adding new fields in 1992, 1995, 2003 and 2008. In 1997, just before the Ryder Cup, the construction of the 25 kilometre dual-carriage way upgrade was completed and in 2002 the construction of AP-7 motorway helped visitors reduce their drive time to the resort.


**FROM SMALL TIME POLO TO INTERNATIONAL GOLF**

In the early days after polo left the beach for the green grassy fields, it was a common sight to see families with their picnics spread out next to the ‘cancha’, the local gaffers sitting with their families next to members of the Soto Royal Family.

Now it is an extremely well organised 5-star event, and amazingly still free to the public apart from The Gold Cup Final on the very last day of the summer season.

And Golf. After the huge success of the Ryder Cup, Volvo Masters and Atenis World Championship at Valderrama we now have Spain’s first municipal course at La Cañada, as well as the amazing Real Club de Sotogrande course and new courses at San Roque, Almanara and La Reserva, rapidly climbing up the Top Ten chart in Spain.

Every year the quality of the regattas from Puerto Sotogrande are becoming more and more important.

On top of this, Sotogrande could soon become the Equestrian Show Jumping Centre for Europe as the San Roque peope are going ahead to introducetop class competitions throughout the winter, when it is too cold and wet to celebrate events in Northern Europe. And most amazing of all, is the incredible new inland beach and mini ocean complex at La Reserva. Spain’s most exclusive inland beach resort.

**DINING CENTRAL: The port comes alive at night**

Gatecrashing El Molino del Conde’s waterfront restaurant for a drink we meet 49-year-old Theresa Cohen, who moved to Sotogrande from Oxford a year ago.

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**How we see it**

The Olive Press talks to a handful of locals to see what they think about life in Sotogrande

**Valeria Affo, Sotogrande**

“It's a great place for families and is very safe, so it's perfect for children. Sotogrande isn't commercialised compared to other areas, which is a big draw.

**Wyze Abels Velema, 75, Holland**

“Sotogrande is a small community which has what everybody wants. To live here is unbelievable. It's extremely safe, there is no crime here.

**Gerry Fagan, 61, Liverpool**

I live in Gibraltar but come here because I like the ambience, it’s an escape or, as the Spanish would say, muy tranquilo. It’s a different pace from Gibraltar, and compared to the hustle and bustle of the UK it’s a completely different lifestyle.

**Paul Martin, 74, Bristol**

It’s a wonderful place for golfers, polo players, and people with boats and I have seen plenty of royals such as the Duchess of York, who has holidayed here several years in a row.

**Miguel & Mariapi Equestrian Team**

**HIPCIA at SAN ROQUE CLUB**

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Jumping and dressage clinics with professional riders

Miguel Torres: 651 929 231

Mariapi Rico: 607 618 081

Urb San Roque Club, N-340, km 127, salida 127
Up Soto creek with a paddle

Arriving in Sotogrande style, Jon Clarke takes a trip down the Rio Guadiaro

It is by far the most exciting way to arrive in Sotogrande. But you are likely to get wet so don’t bring your gladrags. Like ordinary folk, even though many of them are quite the opposite. You don’t hear too much about the resort’s celebrity scene and that’s the way they like it so you may be surprised at some of the names on our list of well-known public figures who either holiday or have a base in Sotogrande.

They include former British prime minister Tony Blair (right), who is said to own property in the enclave and has been spotted on various holidays there, as well as current Gibraltar leader Fabian Picardo and former leader Peter Caruana, who reportedly invested in Sotogrande to indulge his passion for golf.

The Botín family, who own Santander, are said to own property in Sotogrande, as well as the wealthy Ayala family, who own their own private polo field.

It is here that you might well spot the Duchess of York (below) or one of the young British royals, enjoying dinner at super-exclusive Cancha Dos restaurant, while British princesses Harry and William have played polo in the annual summer tournaments at Santa María Polo Club. Their father Charles did too.

On the subject of royals, keep your eyes peeled for French aristocrat Louis Alphonse de Bourbon, Duke of Anjou, who brings his wife Maria Manzanares Sande and three children to Sotogrande to enjoy the opulent paradise racing style. The polar opposite of Puerto Banus, it is the perfect destination for captains of industry, royals and refined celebrities in the know, of all nationalities.

Inside its exclusive gates and hedgerows, everyone from golf pros to royal princes and A-list models to footballers can come and go without being pursued by cameras and autograph hunters.

This is a family-friendly resort for the sporty set, with sailing, fishing and horse riding trumping bar crawling and clubbing.

If Porches and handbag pooches are more to the wealthy Ayala family’s taste and labradors are more to the Botín family’s, then Sotogrande’s other major draw is the world of high-level polo. The polo events in the resort as well as the International clásico and has been played at the polo club. Their father Charles did too.

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“We have a built-in bakery so all our bread is homemade and we have a very professional kitchen with six cooks rotating,” he adds. “We source almost everything locally and our ingredients are organic, we pride ourselves on our quality.”

The menu – Mediterranean with an Asian twist (including brand new sushi options) – is also reasonably priced.

It is perfectly tailored for the entire family as well as more demanding foodies and wine lovers and comes garnished with stunning marina views.

DRESSING DOWN

A playground for royals, footballers and politicians, Diana Tang gives her roundup of the high-class resort

SOTOGRADELETE is about understated elegance and quiet, unshowy glamour.

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Exciting Times in Early Childhood at Sotogrande International School

(4 months - 3 years Early Years)
(3 years - 6 years Early Childhood)

The Reggio Emilia approach to learning has, after a period of review and observation, been selected as the framework to be used in Early Childhood at Sotogrande International School.

Over the years the Early Childhood team, who focus on the youngest members of the school community, have explored and incorporated best practices from Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Forest Schools and National Curricula into the curriculum. As a result of this investigation, the team strongly favoured and recommended the Reggio Emilia approach.

The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education views young children as individuals who are curious about their world and have the powerful potential to learn from all that surrounds them. It is a pedagogy described as student-centred and constructivist that uses self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments.

Over the summer months, the Early Childhood area will be transformed, improving both indoor and outdoor learning spaces. The redesigned classrooms will be full of natural light and materials that encourage collaboration, communication and exploration.

For more information about our approach to education, or to arrange a visit contact admissions@sis.gl
Bucking the trend

S otogrande is the home of one of Andalucía’s best jazz bands, the New Orleans Jumpband. The group of expats have been playing for the King of Spain, the opening of Real Madrid’s training facility and festivals in France, Spain and the UK. On top of this Seve Ballesteros and Darren Clark have sung with them and they have played with Lorie Donaghe and Jools Holland, as well as backed Kenny Ball on a Spanish Tour. Its story began in 1987 when music teacher Dave Gorodi, a graduate from the Royal Academy of Music, decided to set up a group. Sadly the only two people he knew who had an interest about music were Nick Lee, a very talented flute player, who played a bit of guitar, and Mike Izzat, a singer and harmonica player who had just left his well known Heavy Rock band in Barcelonais Mike also played a bit of guitar. Nick agreed to play bass and Mike agreed to play guitar. David played piano with his left hand, trumpet with his right as well as operating the Yamaha drum machine which sat on top of the piano. They all sang!

The audience however, seemed to prefer the Jazz and they had soon become the New Orleans Jumpband, and found a drummer, and a pianist, and a saxophonist. As a five piece, (Trumpet, Trombone, Clarinet, Saxophone and Banjo), their fame spread and they have had countless musicians and celebrities sing with the band over the last few decades. Their most recent gig was at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival this year, where they were doing a very special farewell performance after 30 years at the sharp end.

READY FOR TAKEOFF

Sports buff James Stewart has golfed with US presidents and cricket for the MCC as well as being the local Savills kingpin for decades, writes Jon Clarke

MUCH of James Stewart's life has hinged around sports. After batting for the MCC, the Costa del Sol and East Malaya, he turned his hand to organizing golf tournaments. And not just any competition, mind... the Ryder Cup being one of his scalp, don’t you know.

Indeed, it was Stewart - the boss of Savills in Sotogrande - who helped to ensure that everything went to plan when the globe’s top golfers played at the world’s leading tournament at Valderrama in 1997.

A number of Spain’s most prestigious clubs for 30 years, he was asked by the then-owner Jaime Ortiz-Patino to help him bring the Ryder Cup to Spain. Being a long-time member of London’s MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club, Ryder Cup, whom everyone knows) certainly helped, as did his international sporting contacts.

"It was a great honour for me and I got to meet some top players," he says. "Seve was by far my favourite, a true gentleman and ambassador to the sport."

Fortunately for him, it all went to plan and he has since teed up with numerous famous sportsmen, including US President George Bush Snr, Prince Andrew, as well as three former England cricket captains.

And when not on the course he occasionally dabbles in selling the odd property here and there. Joking aside, there is actually nothing that Stewart doesn’t know about property in the area. “I’ve been in this same office for 20 years,” he jokes. “And while trends and said to be an easy transaction and the continuing uncertainty, but things have recovered relatively quickly. The British market is growing stronger as the economy grows and people have more money to spend.”

JUMP START

They've played alongside Mel B, Jools Holland and even performed for the Spanish King

S otogrande European and the ranked third in the world.

Though the tournament is unsurprisingly posh, with such high-end sponsors as Maserati and Cartier, it does have one bit of democratic flair. For every match except the final, attendance is free and open to the public, while crowds usually growing above 50,000, and this year is promising to be the biggest yet.

EX-PRESIDENT: Bush Senior

For more information, please visit www.js-sotogrande.com or call 956 795 300

Go glorious golf

Sotogrande is home to more top-notch golf courses than you can shake a nine-iron at

I would not be unfair to call Sotogrande the home of Spanish golf. After all, it has some of the oldest courses in the country and has even hosted the Ryder Cup. Indeed, anyone with half an interest in sport will remember the fantastic last few holes of the 1997 Ryder Cup, when Colin Montgomerie played the best round of his life.

That was at Valderrama, now viewed as one of the must-play golf courses in Europe, beautifully maintained, pricey and, some say, a touch too challenging. Golfers up for a change should try Alcaidesa, claimed to be the only Links golf course in southern Europe.

Seaside courses require a different style of play from your standard 18th, and if the ball lands in the water, forget it!

As an added touch, Alcaidesa may be the most scenic of all the Sotogrande courses, with breathtaking coastal views to Gibraltar and North Africa.

It might explain why the course entices a serious number of high-quality events to its doors each year, from parties to society weddings. There are, of course, half a dozen more courses on the Sotogrande circuit. Real Club De Golf de Sotogrande, a.k.a. the ‘Old Course’, was the first to be built in the area and is said to be a dream to play after tricky sister course, Valderrama. It was here that so-called Bernandino grass was first introduced into Spain. Almenara Golf, designed by Ryder Cup champion turned respected course architect David Thomas, is up the road, as are the ravishingly Glenn Hoddle and Glen Johnson have homes.

La Canada, La Reserva and San Roque complete the ‘famous five’. “There are few places with such a high concentration of great golf courses,” says Ian Bateman, of Holmes estate agents.

“While you add the fabulous tennis facilities and polo club, with its 11 full size courses, the facilities in Sotogrande are second to none.”

Jump start

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Apartment, Marina de Sotogrande
5 bedrooms / 5 bathrooms • 272m² built, 90m² terrace
Underfloor heating • Storage room • Marina views • Gated community
Covered terrace • 24hr service • Excellent condition • Sea view
Price: €1,400,000
ref: L171-01335P

House, Sotogrande Bajo, Sotogrande
4 bedrooms / 4 bathrooms • South facing
360m² built, 1350m² plot
Price: €1,200,000
ref: L171-01358P

Apartment, Marina de Sotogrande,
4 bedrooms / 3 bathrooms
198m² built, 93m² terrace • Marina view •
Fireplace • Storage room • Amenities near
Air conditioning • Unfurnished • Close to sea
Price: €875,000
ref: L171-01342P

Villa, La Reserva Sotogrande
5 bedrooms / 5 bathrooms • 1139m² built, 5694m² plot
Front line golf • Panoramic view • 24hr security service • Fully furnished
Camera room • Gym • Excellent condition • Gym • Video entrance
Price: €2,000,000
ref: L171-01359P

Villa, Los Altos de Valderrama
5 bedrooms / 5 bathrooms
763m² built, 2000m² plot • Storage room
24hr security service • Air conditioning
Brand new • Central heating
Price: €2,495,000
ref: R171-01193

Apartment, P.N. de Guadiaro
2 bedrooms / 2 bathrooms • Close to shops
115m² built, 109m² terrace • Storage room
Transport near • Gated community
Air conditioning • Excellent condition
Price: €275,000
ref: L171-01354P

Villa, Sotogrande Alto, Sotogrande
7 bedrooms / 7 bathrooms • Front line golf
960m², 4386m² plot, 171m² terraces
Camera room • Gym • Excellent condition
Central heating • Home automation service
Price: €3,450,000
ref: R171-02045

Pueblo Nuevo De Guadiaro
Calle Sierra Bermeja
Tel. 956 795 300 / 628 574 953
WWW.JS-SOTOGRANDE.COM
...But the turbulent last nine months has been as much about the weather as Brexit, explains Ben Bateman of Holmes Sotogrande, now in its 40th year in Sotogrande.

Who would have thought the weather would have been one of the main reasons the property market has been a bit up and down over the last nine months. But that is exactly how boss of Holmes Sotogrande, Ben Bateman, explains the peaks and troughs he has seen in the up-market enclave of Sotogrande since last summer.

While 2018 was the company’s best year since the beginning of the recession in 2008 it was very much a year of two halves, with half the year being very strong and half being very weak.

“It’s been a fairly tough nine months,” he explains. “April to June last year was quiet largely due to the excellent weather in northern Europe and relatively poor weather here. It meant few people came over for those long bank holiday weekends to look at golf and property-hunting trips.”

This then led into a summer of plenty of leads and buyers, as is often the case, which thankfully led into a record autumn, but again the same weather scenario in Autumn meant that the last quarter of 2018 was also disappointing.

It meant, once again, the weather visitors had no reason to. As a result we had very little overflow from the end of 2018 into 2019, which led to a very slow start to 2019,” continues Ben, whose father Ian set up the agency in 1979. “Luckily a record Spring with loads of people over house hunting. We have almost nothing for sale,” he adds.

But that is exactly how boss of Holmes Sotogrande, Ben Bateman, explains the peaks and troughs he has seen in the up-market enclave of Sotogrande since last summer. Much of this is due to the distinct lack of new developments in Sotogrande, with the exception of Taylor Wimpey, Senda Chica and La Reserva.

“We have almost nothing for sale in the really established Kings & Queens area, although a few may come on the market soon at the €3.5m mark,” she says. “It’s so well sought after anyone interested would have to move fast.”

She is also a big fan of the La Reserva development, where her daughter has been working in a landscaping capacity.

“It’s one of the last bits of available land so it is lucky it is being developed really well, of a really high quality,” she says, adding that the Beach has added a new dimension to the enclave.

PROPERTY EXPERT: Ben Bateman

He continues: “This is a fabulous place for families and there are loads of good healthy buyers... and the decision making is shall we buy a £250,000 apartment or buy a £1m villa.

The average sale for this year has been £750,000, up from £695,000 in 2018 and Ben thinks it may end up being an excellent year. He continues: “If we get good autumn weather it could be a record year.”

He is also keen to stress that Sotogrande continues to go up market in terms of its high end quality lifestyle and is increasingly competing with the top resorts, such as Zagaleta, near Marbella.

“It’s much nicer here and there are plenty of £3m homes now being sold. Basically it is a completely different scene to Marbella. Sotogrande is a family orientated destination it is not a place where people come ‘Trophy’ hunting (€2, unless they are polo ones, surely Ben?)”

He continues: “This is a fabulous place for families and there are now over 1000 pupils at the excellent private school, our rugby Club is growing with over 300 kids signed up and the under 16s winning the Andalucian championships this year.

“Our star is rising and I expect it to continue doing so for the next few decades,” he adds. To contact Ben and the team, visit www.holmesotogrande.com or call 956 795 340.
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Puerto of Plenty

STRIKING GOLD AGAIN

Brian Nelson once ran Golden Coast, one of Marbella’s ‘top four’ big agencies. Now he’s running a more sophisticated operation, writes Tim McNulty

E once ran one of Marbella’s top four property companies. With 150 staff, the agency Golden Coast sold at its peak up to 100 properties a month. Based on the Golden Mile, it rivalled giants such as实施细则 and Viva, with customers snapping up properties on the Costa del Sol, like most people buy cars. Now two decades later Brian Nelson has returned to the Costa del Sol, this time to the very different resort of Sotogrande.

“I always had a vision for Sotogrande, at one time in 2006 I personally invested in the area until the unforeseen happened in mid 2007 and eventually the market came crashing to a halt in 2008,” he explains from his office in Sotogrande port.

“I believe that Sotogrande now is the jewel of the Costa del Sol. The exclusivity of the area attracts a more discerning and selective clientele,” he adds. The Northern Irishman has fond memories of watching his four children growing up in Marbella’s Los Monteros area. Though Marbella’s “beauty will never fade,” the resort can no longer draw the cosmopolitan jet setters who are now moving to Sotogrande in increasing numbers, he believes.

“The exquisitely of the area attracts a more discerning and selective clientele,” he adds. The Northern Irishman has fond memories of watching his four children growing up in Marbella’s Los Monteros area. Though Marbella’s “beauty will never fade,” the resort can no longer draw the cosmopolitan jet setters who are now moving to Sotogrande in increasing numbers, he believes.

“Over the last few years there has been a shift in the market seeing a lot of the older clients moving away from Marbella and taking up residence in Sotogrande due to the peaceful surroundings and tranquility,” said Brian.

Building on his experience Brian has built a strong local network of agents, and puts value in trust, having had the same law firm for the past 20 years.

“I believe having a shop front presence and a fixed phone line is just as important as the ability to value a property at the correct market price,” he concludes.

PROPERTY GURU: Brian Nelson

PRINCELY PAIR: Sotogrande polo players, William and Harry

SPEEDING THROUGH: Top Gear co-host Eddie Jordan has docked his superyacht in Sotogrande

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Only the sun covers the coast better than us!
Don’t pass the port!

Sotogrande has developed a distinct food scene over the last few years, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke.

A DECADE ago you wouldn’t have dreamed of heading to Sotogrande to eat, unless you had a house there or had just embarked from a yacht. Today, there are dozens of trendy places to dine with a vibrant and competitive scene to rival anything the top tables in nearby Estepona or Tarifa can serve up.

But considering the wealthy clientele who frequent this privileged enclave, don’t pass the port! Sotogrande has developed a distinct food scene over the last few years, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke.

One of the most exciting changes over the last two years has been the development of the port area, in particular South American cuisine.

Run by friendly restaurateur Juan Moncayo, who also owns the family joint Moncayo in Pueblo Nuevo, there’s an eclectic choice - for example three ceviches, five soups and half a dozen salads.

Much of the quality is due to his raft of international cooks working in the kitchen under the watchful eye of Filipino head chef Nards Jet Eblaine.

Take his spring rolls or fish cakes as a starter, but leave room for his splendid fish curry or amazing Thai burger, made of succulent local retinto beef.

The wine list offers a fabulous international range from countries like Morocco and South Africa. I liked the price of the Chateau la Gard, from Pessac-Leognan, a reasonable €50 a bottle, or the great value Pitacum at €26.

Another excellent place to eat is Molino del Conde, also in Ribera del Marlin.

Run by the well established local restaurateur Victor Hornillos, who managed the place so well, he ended up buying it, it has consistently got better and better.

It has the nicest terrace and 30 different types of rice overseen by Jaime, a

Continues on page 34
FUSIÓN NIKKEI
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This included a delicious cold cucumber soup, which is not exactly typical of southern Spain, and it was as creamy and cooling as it was original.

I then tried a delicious wakame salad (above) with caviar and smoked salmon, which was light and spicy and looked delightful, with its flower petal garnish.

There is a lot here, and everything has a ‘twist’ on traditional Andalucian cuisine.

Finally, the true godfather of the port Midas is still going strong after over 30 years. Well established in the extreme, this is THE place for a business lunch or a dinner to impress, sitting right by the main port area.

Staff are smart and formal and the institution is bossed by the talented businessman Luis, who keeps a close watch at most times. In particular, you should head here for a great value menu del día, while at night the ambience is charming in the extreme.

Interested in Asiatic food, you might also want to try the emblematic La Finca, which sits next to La Casita campsite in San Roque and is another great find. In summer you sit around a leafy courtyard, a riot of colours and candles, while in winter you dine inside the authentic farmhouse with stone floors and fireplaces.

In the opposite direction, restaurant Mar Sana at the Milla de Plata hotel is a charming spot for an evening meal, heavy on fresh fish with its own speciality tuna menu. Just outside Torreguadaira, it sits on a headland overlooking a rocky cove with views to die for.

Also try Il Sono on Cala Sardina, which has been voted Spain’s greenest restaurant and has a genuine focus on the environment. For more casual chiringuito fare a little closer to the resort, head for wonderful Gigi’s Beach, ensconced on the edge of the marina by the sailing club.

The creation of Georgina ‘Gigi’ Taylor, her youthful, hard-working approach to style and taste makes this a surefire winner for local foodies and the international jetset alike.
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