

All about Sotogrande

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Summer 2019

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SHINE ON



FAMOUS FACES: Hoddle, Rutherford, Fergie, Jordan and Knowles

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

GREEN ENCLAVE: Sotogrande is surrounded by verdant hills, a string of golf courses and quiet beaches, while the port area (below) is full of upscale restaurants and sailing yachts



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. Internationally renowned for its polo, golf and sailing, as well as a burgeoning gastronomic scene, this 'mini Monaco' of high net worth residents has all the hallmarks of what is often considered the top private resort in Europe. Different from other 'celebrity' resorts where talk of wealth and fame is *de rigueur*, in Sotogrande they like to keep such talk, appropriately, 'sotto voce.' Mention the palpable sense of community, however, and you'll discover how that is the privileged enclave's true treasure. "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."

Continues on page 22



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Photo by Great Golf Magazine



UNSPOILT: Much of the nearby coastline is largely undeveloped, while the port (above) is buzzing and fun



From page 21

Safe and sound

"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.

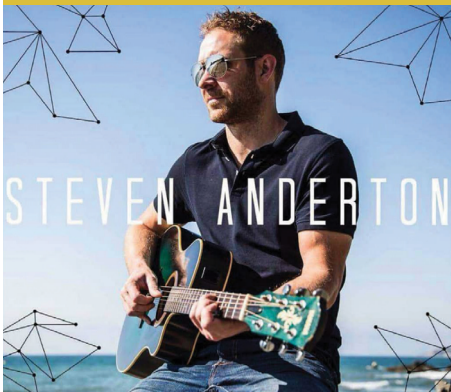
Every July and August top polo players from around the world descend on Santa Maria for the International Tournament, now in its 47th year. During the off-season, many football

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.

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COCKTAILS





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 1960s, when in 1962 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 Sotogrande.

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, a famous golf architect, to design the Royal Golf Club of Sotogrande. Building on the success, in

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, Guadiaro to Algeciras coastal highway dual-carriageway upgrade was completed and in 2002 the construction of AP-7 motorway helped visitors reduce their drive time to the resort.

McMicking continued to live out his later years in Sotogrande until his death in 1990.

One of longest-established residents Lucrecia Aldao, 61, from the Philippines, has seen nearly five decades of its trans-



DINING CENTRAL: The port comes alive at night

formation. "I arrived here in 1968 and grew up in Sotogrande. Since then it's changed in so much as its grown. Sotogrande is a philosophy...it's a philosophy 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 long established Hairy Lemon, where owner Lorenc has allowed the 'Soto' school of thinking to heavily influence his international menu.

You only need to sit down at a quayside restaurant to overhear how multicultural this place has become. Conversations are conducted in Spanish, German, French, Italian, Scandinavian - it's a veritable tower of Babel.

Gatecrashing 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 highlight 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.'

How we see it

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



Andy Gemmell, 72, Glasgow

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.

Valeria Alfie, Sotogrande

It used to be a more seasonal place, whereas recently people are opting to be here all year round. This is very good for small business people such as myself.



Wytze 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.



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 gardeners sitting with their families next to members of the British 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 Amex 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 plans are going ahead to introduce top 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.



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Equestrian Team

HIPICA at SAN ROQUE CLUB

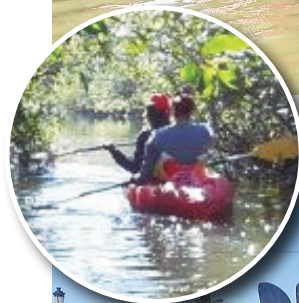
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ROW YOUR BOAT: Life afloat Jon Clarke taking a trip down the Rio Guadiaro (above)



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.

One of the best family adventures on the Costa del Sol, you can rent a kayak and paddle the whole way down the Guadiaro river from El Secadero, which is actually in

Casares, to the mouth of the river at Sotogrande port.

Taking a couple of hours, you will see a huge range of birds and feel like you are in total wilderness for much of it.

There are even a few rapids to get the heart racing.

Organised by Andalucia Activities, kayaks come in three sizes and can comfortably take three people in the larger ones.

I joined a group descent, with around 100 people in dozens of canoes, arriving early and getting kitted out properly, with a full safety drill before heading off.

But you can also get a special day out for groups or individuals organised by Andalucia Activities.

And as well as kayaking, the company also offers walking expeditions as well as paddle board lessons and wakeboarding.



OARS OF FUN: Kayaking, paddle boarding and wakeboarding on offer

DRESSING DOWN

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

SOTOGRADE is about understated elegance and quiet, unshowy glamour.

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 hedges, 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 status symbols in Marbella, Landrovers and labradors are more to the taste of the unshowy Sotogrande set. If it rained a bit more it would be green wellie country.

But while the community oozes influence and affluence, it is anything but snobby. People come here to leave their high powered life behind and live

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 des res 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 Botin family, who own Santander bank, 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 princes Harry and William have played polo in the annual summer tournaments at Santa Maria 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 María Margarita Vargas Santaella and three children to Sotogrande to enjoy the opulent paradise.



MANSION: Hoddle's five-bed home

They are big fans of polo and spend a lot of time at Santa Maria Polo Club, especially in August when you could find them clapping from the VIP sidelines during the International Tournament.

Spanish TV celebrities, such as Ana Rosa Quintana, are regularly seen at the polo events in the resort as well as the many restaurants.

British actors, meanwhile, such as Mike Gwilym, formerly of the Royal Shakespeare Company, is often seen in the resort, while DIY SOS presenter Nick Knowles bought a property in the marina a few years ago.

Footballers have long been well represented in Sotogrande, and have included Glenn Hoddle (above), the former England manager and former Liverpool star Glen Johnson (left), while Irish motorsport legend Eddie Jordan has a villa there.

A long time visitor, he fittingly described the place as the 'nicest urbanisation in Europe' with some of the 'best weather'.

Golfer Tony Jacklin owned the land on the river estuary where Jordan now lives, having bought here in 1983.



TECH THIS OUT!

How a computer geek created the coolest restaurant in Sotogrande

WHAT does an American tech developer do once he has sold his successful company?

Ask Laurence Forcione, who is celebrating his restaurant's first anniversary in swanky Sotogrande this month.

Switching coding for cooking, Laurence has managed to make Foodisiac the most exciting dining spot in this exclusive enclave.

The extremely chic restaurant in the marina which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner has an interior design to turn competitors green with envy - but that's not strictly why this eatery has 'made it'. Laurence and his wife-cum-business partner know a thing or two about food, having trained at the famous Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris.

"We have such a passion for cooking and love Sotogrande so it was a no brainer to open a restaurant

FOODISIAC
BEAUTIFUL FOOD

here," Laurence explains. And having grown up in the French capital with an Italian mother, he is no stranger to haute cuisine.

"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.

Visit www.foodisiac.es for more information or call 856 399 163



PRIVATE: Fergie's Sotogrande pad

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.



Sotogrande
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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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



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Bucking the trend

SOME 80,000 people are descending upon Sotogrande for the annual World Polo Tour circuit event at Santa Maria Polo Club.

For a month, the 'Wimbledon of polo pitches' is hosting ten teams of 50 horses and 200 staff, along with spectators, who include the Brunei and British royals.

Four of the tournament's championship cups are classified as World Tour cups, signifying the event's prestige.

And equally prestigious is the host club.

The club's PR manager Pilar de la Puente told the *Olive Press*: "So is the known as 'the cathedral of polo.' It's the best club in Europe 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 flare.

For every match except the final, attendance is open and free to the public, with crowds usually growing above 50,000, and this year is promising to be the biggest yet.

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 battling for the MCC, the Costa del Sol and East Malaysia, he turned his hand to organizing golf tournaments. And not just any competition, mind... the Ryder Cup being



EX-PRESIDENT: Bush Senior

one of his scalps, 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 member of Spain's most prestigious club for 30 years, he was asked by the then-owner Jaime Ortiz-Patiño to help him bring the Ryder Cup to Spain.

Being a long-time member of London's MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club, for anyone who doesn't know) 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."

Luckily 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 there is no easy transaction and so many issues always popping up, not to mention too many agencies, I still enjoy it."

While this year is proving to be a year of ups and downs, he remains incredibly optimistic for the next decade.

"I am very optimistic about Sotogrande. The last few years have been difficult with the shock Brexit result and the continuing uncertainty, but things have recovered relatively quickly.

"The British will definitely be coming back, additionally, the



TEE TIME: Prince Andrew

Spanish market is growing stronger as the economy grows and people have more money to spend."

He believes the renovation of the Almenara hotel this Autumn (and that it will be taken over by a big international brand) will be a great boon for the resort.

He also believes that Sotogrande is slowly moving upmarket towards the glamour and glitz of Marbella with restaurants like Trocadero and the Beach.

"The Ribera del Marlin port area has also really changed things in the port and is buzzing most nights in summer," he adds.

"There is definitely a change in the air."

JUMP START

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

SOTOGRADE is the home of one of Andalusia's best jazz bands the New Orleans Jumpband.

The group of expats have played for the King of Spain, the opening of Real Madrid's training facility and played 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 Lonnie Donegan 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 inkling about music were Nick Lee, a very talented flute player who played a bit of guitar, and Mike Izatt, a singer and harmonica player who had just left his well known Heavy Rock band in Barcelona. 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.

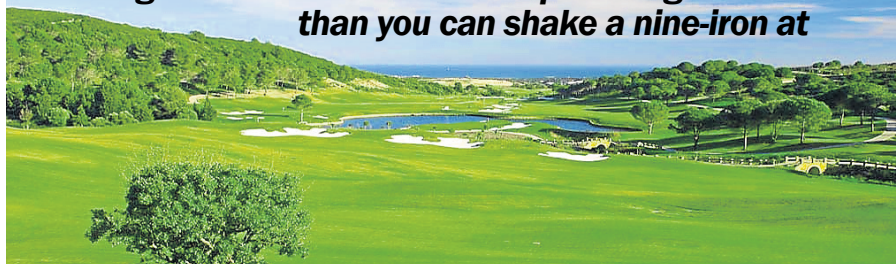
As a five piece, (Trumpet, Trombone, Clarinet, Sousaphone and Banjo), their fame spread and they have had countless musicians and celebrities sing with the band over the last few decades.

Their most recent gig was at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival this year, where they were doing a very special farewell performances after 30 years at the sharp end.



Golf glorious golf

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



It 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 Montgomery 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 18 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 said to be a dream to play after tricky sister course, Valderrama. It was here that so-called Bermuda grass was first introduced into Spain.

Almenara Golf, designed by Ryder Cup champion turned respected course architect David Thomas, is up in the hills where celebrities Glenn Hoddle and Glen Johnson have homes. La Canada, La Reserve 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.

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

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



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



Villa, La Reserva Sotogrande

5 bedrooms / 5 bathrooms • 1139m2 built, 5694m2 plot
Front line golf • Panoramic view • 24hr security service • Fully furnished
Cinema room • Gym • Excellent condition • Gym • Video entrance

Price: €2,000,000

ref: L171-01359P



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, 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



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Villa, Sotogrande Alto, Sotogrande

7 bedrooms / 7 bathrooms • Front line golf
960m2, 4386m2 plot, 171m2 terraces
Cinema room • Gym • Excellent condition
Central heating • Home automation service

Price: €3,450,000

ref: R171-02045

FEW people know Sotogrande better. Consuelo Silva has been helping people find the right properties in Sotogrande for 20 years.

And she still thinks it is one of the best value places to buy in southern Spain.

"You can buy an amazing apartment right on the beach here, with gardens and pool, for €1.25 to 1.3m, which at the Puente Romano in Marbella will cost you over €3m.

"I know which I would prefer," she adds.

Meanwhile a four-bed villa a little bit inland costing around €700,000 would set you back over €1m in San Pedro.

"Yet Sotogrande is more exclusive, has more space and less people," she adds.

STEADY HANDS

Who wouldn't want to buy in Sotogrande when it's half the price of Marbella, estimates Consuelo Silva

And she should know, having first moved to the Costa del Sol in 1986 from her native Peru. After living in various places on the coast she ended up in Sotogrande, where she started working for the resort's administrator in the 1990s.

"Sotogrande is not a cheap resort and you rarely find anything under €300,000 for sale," explains the mother-of-two, whose son and daughter both work in the resort.

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.



FAMILY AFFAIR: Consuelo and son

Contact Consuelo at www.sotograndeonline.com or 956 785 035

PEAKS AND TROUGHS...

...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 double as 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, fair weather visitors had no reason to take a short trip south for a spot of sunshine and house hunting. "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 has improved our outlook for the year and we feel confident of a strong showing through the summer and later half of the year."

His take is that people were holding back and waiting to

see what happened with Brexit, which was set for March 29.

"But when it became clear there was not going to be a deal and there was another extension and the press stopped going on about Brexit, the mood completely changed," he says.

"Potential buyers were finally of the thinking, 'sod Brexit we need to get on with our lives, whether it is Soft Brexit, hard Brexit or no Brexit'."

"Since then it has been fantastic and there are loads of good healthy buyers... and the decision making is shall we buy a €500,000 apartment or buy a €1m villa."

The average sale so far 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 (ED: 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 Andalusian 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



PROPERTY EXPERT: Ben Bateman

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ROYAL APPROVAL: Prince Louis

Sotogrande is a magnet for big spenders and a seasonal fleet of pleasure boats - though its popularity does nothing to dent its sophisticated aire, discovers Tim McNulty

KOWN as the 'little Venice of the Mediterranean,' Sotogrande's famous marina is home to an armada of mega yachts. Bluer than blue and complete with tree-lined canals and bridges, it is a port of call for many members of



BIG SPENDER: Santander boss Emilio Botin among seagoers

European high society. "Around two years ago, residents started to see more

and more superyachts getting parked by the port," explains estate agent Brian Nelson

"The beauty is you can sail in and berth the yacht outside right outside your house, the port is becoming full there and are people coming from everywhere now," he continued. Despite not forming part of the resort's original development the marina now boasts a total of 1,382 berths and some of the steepest mooring costs in Europe. Elegant apartments and



BILLIONAIRE: Inditex boss Amancio Ortega and his big boat

multicoloured townhouses cluster around the marina while the quayside promenade features high end gastronomic dining and fashionable boutique shopping. The floating palaces parked up here have included ones owned by Top Gear co-host Eddie Jordan, the late former Santander Bank president Emilio Botin and Bourbon prince Louis Alphonse. Come summer time, and everyone from princes William and Harry to Mariah

Carey can be spotted as A-listers seek to avoid the crowds further down the coast.

As much as the locations it is seclusion and lack of gawkers that sees celebrities have their skippers set a course for Sotogrande. Located at the eastern entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar, this 'millionaire's playground' has become a mandatory stop for any vessel starting its stay in the Mediterranean.

Included in this number is know soto fan Rod Stewart, the singer was recently snapped in St Tropez on the luxury yacht Emotion 2 which costs a sweet €139,000 to charter. But those without the wallet to match, there are other ways to enjoy the tranquil paradise with water taxis available for a quick trip around the puerto. Just don't going embarking on any a European city cruise in one'.

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

HE 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 Interreality 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



PROPERTY GURU: Brian Nelson

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.



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PRINCELY PAIR: Sotogrande polo players, William and Harry



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

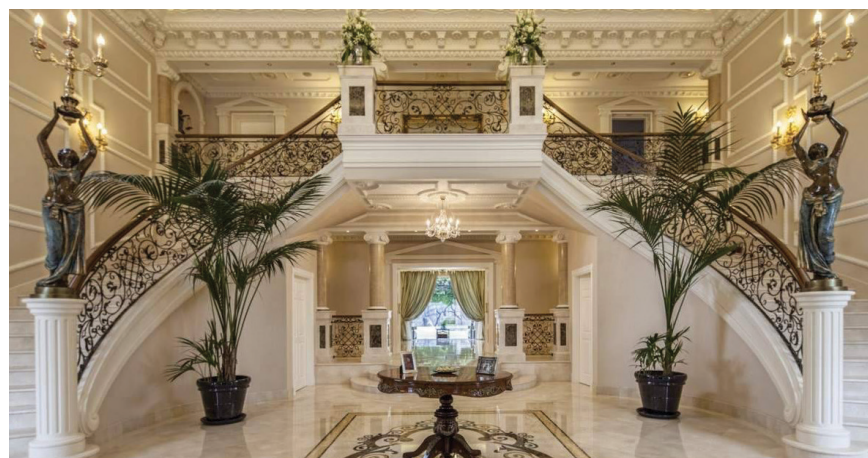


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VILLA SOTOGRANDE COSTA

4 bedrooms • 4 bathrooms • 540m² built • ref: 335894

Immaculate Villa built over three floors centrally located in Sotogrande Costa, near shopping facilities, the Church, Sotogrande International School, the marina and the golf courses. The property comprises of an entrance hall, living / dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms and a family bathroom on the ground floor. In addition there is a bathroom used as a guest toilet. Master suite with it's large bedroom, bathroom, dressing area, and an open terrace is located on the second floor.



APARTMENT SOTOGRANDE MARINA

3 bedrooms • 4 bathrooms • 162m² built • ref: 341740

This spectacular south facing apartment consists of 3 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, large living room, fully fitted kitchen, air conditioning hot/cold, utility room, telephone entry, large terrace plus garden, communal swimming pool. Fully furnished to a very high standard by a well known designer, and SOLD fully furnished. This property is located in the prestigious development of Ribera del Marlin overlooking Sotogrande Marina, 5 minute walk to Sotogrande Port and local restaurants. and beyond.



Number one

NO visit to Sotogrande is complete with a pit stop at the emblematic Polo One.

Its inspiration came from the beautiful and opulent surroundings of the celebrated enclave.

"We are blessed with a rich and varied tradition of polo along with other sporting activities such as golf, yachting, and tennis, among other sports," explains owner Nicu Muntean.

"We hope you enjoy the experience we provide, which includes the careful selection of fresh fine quality foods prepared to your liking by our very talented team of chefs and kitchen staff."

Whether dining, socialising, or just relaxing on the terrace, you will enjoy the specially chosen wines and ambience.



WHERE TO EAT

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,

perhaps that's no surprise.

While the resort definitively comes alive in the summer months, these days most of the best restaurants keep going through the winter.

As well as great tapas restaurants and some exciting new eateries, the more established joints are going from strength to strength.

One of the most exciting changes over the last two years has been the development of the port area, in particular in Ribera del Marlin.

It's a buzzing hive of activity on summer evenings with hundreds of punters fighting for the best waterside tables. However, in the winter months many of the restaurants there stay open and continue to put on events and provide diners with decent menus.

Don Diego is one of those - an intriguing mix of Mediterranean dishes fused with Asian and



TOP TUCKER: Molino del Conde

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 Ebilane.

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 Mo-

rocco and South Africa.

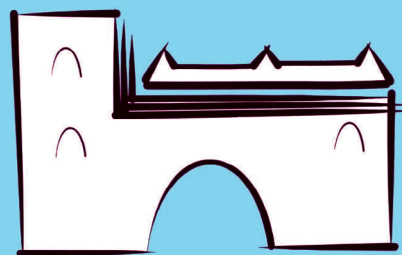
I liked the price of the Chateau la Gard, from Pessac-Leognan, a reasonable €50 a bottle, or the great value Pitacum at €26.

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



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All about SOTOGRAÑDE



STYLISH: Foodisiac oozes charm

SOTO STYLE

From page 32

local Brazilian talent. It also has a range of meat, pasta, good fish and, above all, a big wine list with dozens of references. Also in the same run of restaurants is the superb **Foodisiac**, run by a talented American couple, who opened it last summer. It has been a successful first year and the place has a distinct swagger about it. Open from 9am and busy for much of the day, it manages to be both stylish and cool in equal measures. It has its own bakery and a large number of different coffees on offer, not to mention some delicious looking cakes and desserts. I was particularly impressed with the original mix of starters, perfect for a hot summer's day.

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 Andalusian 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 Torreguadiaro, 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.



GRANDE DAME: Midas is well positioned and well established

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1st floor / PUERTO DEPORTIVO



🏠: 2 🛏: 2

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📏 18m²

Ref.: PSM-1723

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Penthouse / PUERTO DEPORTIVO



🏠: 4 🛏: 3

📏 284m²

📏 62m²

Ref.: PSM-1677

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🏠: 3 🛏: 2

📏 131m²

📏 16m²

Ref.: PSB-1643

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📏 175m²

📏 36m²

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