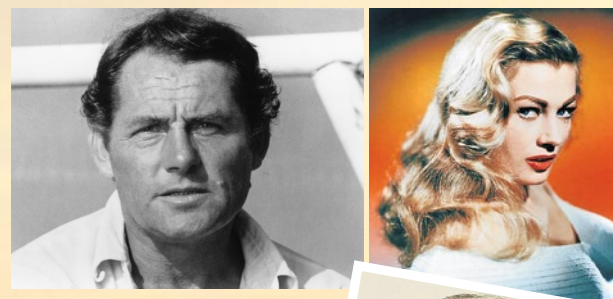


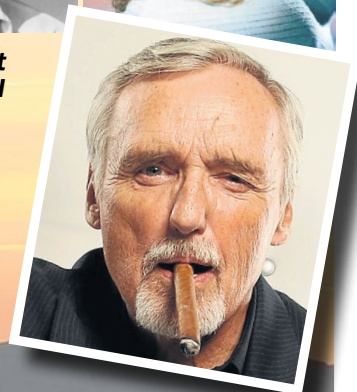
The Corner of Enchantment



Long-time resident Lenox Napier (left) recalls the good old days of Mojacar when his dad played checkers with Orson Welles and kicked a young Dennis Hopper up the backside



FAMOUS FACES: Robert Shaw, Anita Ekberg and Dennis Hopper have hung out in Mojacar, while filming movies



In the early 1960s, a local politician hit on the idea of attracting new residents - wealthy ones would be nice - to boost the economy of the then dirt pool village of Mojacar.

No doubt spurred on by events to the west in Torremolinos and Marbella, the offer was simple enough: we'll give you a ruined house or a chunk of land if you are prepared to invest locally.

Several people took the bait and the sleepy spot found itself with some new, and much needed, blood. The first arrivals were mostly artists, who founded an art movement named after the local totem the Indalo, calling themselves the 'Indalianos'.

But by the end of this project, around 1965, many well known characters had joined the fray; including famous bullfighter Antonio Bienvenida, diplomat Sir Michael Ad-eane, actor Charles Baxter and concert pianist Enrique Arias.

It was into this exciting mix that my parents arrived in the town in 1966, when they bought themselves a two-storey house for the equivalent of just €540.

Then, a callow 13-year-old, bobbing backwards and forwards from my boarding school in the UK, I soon began to realise where my future lay.

Weighed down with the tradition and rigidity of public school life or enjoying the excitement in the refreshing re-

Turn to Page 2

SUNSET: Watching the sundown from a restaurant terrace in Mojacar village

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From Page 25

gion of Almeria? Of course, I chose the latter, fleeing school with just a handful of O-levels and joining my mother and father, who - worried by the lack of late evening activities - had built a bar (La Sarten: which is still with us today). Other oddballs had soon set up shop; mainly a succession of serial drinkers thanks to the three-cent-a-glass brandy available in those days. But there was also glamour - and a small, but internationally renowned bohemian colony sprung up - much helped by the decision of the tourist board to build a state-run Parador in the town. I remember clamouring to watch film stars hang out on the beach - such as Robert



PICTURE PERFECT: View of Mojacar pueblo from the beach at sunset

Shaw, Anita Ekberg and director Mike Lester and his film-star son Mark, the young

Oliver in the famous musical. There was also what turned out to be the appropriately

named Dennis Hopper, who was kicked up the backside by my father in a rare bar-room brawl somewhere in the village. Then there was the other time that my father played 'checkers' with Orson Welles. The story goes that the famous actor/director enjoyed a game of draughts. His version, honed on the nearby beaches between takes of his film *Treasure Island*, involved playing with 12 small glasses of liquor each, one player choosing brandy while the other went with anis. You 'took' a piece, you drank it.

The player who could still see the board at the end of a game being declared the winner. My dad reckoned he had won hands down. It was just as the region became famous for its film industry. Indeed, Spaghetti Westerns came from the area and were at their zenith then, when various purpose-built cowboy

It all makes perfect sense then that Mojacar is known for its magic

it's never too hot or too cold. Either way, the town and its 17 kilometres of fabulous

towns sprung up, several of which are still standing. Clint Eastwood, Charles Bronson, Lee van Cleef and director Sergio Leone frequently spent time in Mojacar, when staying at the nearby Gran Hotel in Almeria, or out on set in Tabernas.

Us expats were often cast as extras to help water down the number of gypsy 'bandidos' in these cheap and cheerful productions.

It all makes perfect sense then, that Mojacar these days is known for its magic; but whether it comes from the witches that used to plague the town with their love philtres or the heavy scent of jasmine in the narrow white-washed streets is up for debate.

The expat miners

AFTER the Romans had found some gold and silver in the hills of Almeria, it fell to British concerns in the 1880s in the hills around Bedar - mainly iron and copper - with some heavy strip mining further along in Cuevas.

It led to a small community of Europeans to settle locally, and Garrucha - essentially the only way in or out, as there were no roads into the area - became the foreigners' capital, port city and a rail head into the interior.

By 1930, there were even Dutch, German and British consuls in the town. Mojacar passed much of this by, although in 1915, a local Briton, connected to the mines, bought and piped much of Mojacar's fresh water over to Garrucha, where he sold it to the townsfolk on a twenty year licence. He apparently also makes the history books for owning the first operative vehicle in the province, a lorry with AL-1 as its number-plate.

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HEYDAY: Orson Welles in Treasure Island and (below) scenes from Mojacar

beaches are the final steps in a tumble of hills that began their descent in the high Sierra Nevada mountains in Granada. Cubist in appearance, the town sits perched on an uncomfortable-looking hill, almost tumbling down to pray to the east. It is by far the best known town in what is known as the 'Almerian Levante', which includes the market town of Vera, the mountain eyrie that is Bedar, Turre with its restaurants, the port of Garrucha and Cuevas del Almanzora and its gypsy caves. By Mediterranean standards, the area is quiet, relatively unspoilt and generally offers lower prices in everything from property to accommodation and leisure activities. Compared to resorts like Bena-Imadena and Marbella it is certainly a minnow. It counts just 8,000 full time

inhabitants, with perhaps another 15,000 visitors arriving in the summer. This small population has meant the village largely remains attractive and unspoilt by mass development, with narrow Moorish streets and charming buildings. Down on the coast, Mojacar Playa, as it is known, is where the buzz can be found. Broadly it's a long stretch of hotels, restaurants and bars stretching from Garrucha to the east and as far along as the Hotel Best Indalo to the west. Thankfully a long-observed rule to keep buildings down to just two storeys has helped to keep the area special. The beaches, including three Blue Flag beach-

es, have full service, including a number of colourful beach-bars. It gets even nicer: beyond the built-up area there's an extension of pristine, empty coves and playas, leading towards Cabo de Gata. While Mojácar is the lodestone for the Levante de Almeria, other nearby towns and villages are attractive, with Bedar and the communities of Cortijo Grande and Cortijo Cabrera (both in Turre) standing out as the best of them. My advice: Come and see it for yourself...I've been here for 47 years and there is no way I'm moving anywhere else.

Lenox Napier set up the *Entertainer* newspaper which later became the *Euro Weekly News*. He now runs the website www.theentertaineronline.com.



The little man keeping evil at bay

WALKING around Mojacar, it is virtually impossible not to notice the town's symbol, a matchstick figure with outstretched arms and arc over its head. While the origin of the indalo is unknown, fascinatingly it appeared in 6,000-year old cave paintings in nearby Velez Blanco. It was traditionally painted above doorways to ward off evil and named by artists in Mojacar in 1955. Experts believe it is the only case of a pre-historic symbol being passed down the millennia in a sole location.

Mystic mount

MOJACAR comes from the Arab name 'Muxacra', which comes from the Roman name 'Mons Sacra'. This 'sacred mountain' refers to a pyramid shaped hill (pictured) just below the town. The hill, now known as Old Mojacar, has an Arab water deposit on its summit, innumerable ruins at its base and the dry river Aguas to its rear. The current location of Mojacar however - at the foot of the Sierra Filabres - is a more defensible site with available water and retreat routes. Sitting at 400 metres above sea level and a kilometre inland, it has always been a safe haven from the Barbary pirates and corsairs. Settlements here can be traced back to the beginning of history, and include Phoenicians, Greeks, Trojans and the Icini (the original 'Beaker People'). Mojacar was a fortified town in the Moorish era, and fell to the Christian Kings - Isabel and Ferdinand - in 1488. Everyone was promptly slaughtered. Or left in peace, if you believe the plaque located at the Moorish fountain. The town regained its strength during the following centuries, after being re-populated with Christians from nearby Lorca, and became the local capital during the following centuries. While the population in 1910 sat at 6,000 souls - not far off today's numbers - by 1960, the population had dwindled to just 600. The Civil War had taken its toll, Mojacar being enthusiastically 'Red', leading to most of the locals being obliged to take off for foreign climes after the Nationalist victory. Indeed by 1960 the only real farming was some tomato plantations on the beach, and little else. Land then was a peseta for 10 metres square. We stayed firm. It would never go up in value...

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ONE of Spain's better known pop groups, stretching back to the days of vinyl plugged into jukeboxes, must be Los Teddy Boys. The Almeria band has been playing its own kind of music for a heady 50 years. Despite a list of songs and minor hits, the band was always best known by its followers for its concerts. 'We play covers of things from Los Beatles, Pink Floyd and Spanish acts like Los Brincos', says Chipó Martínez, one of the original group, which is about to tour Almeria later this month. Dress: optional, but blue suede shoes a must.

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Mojacar special ⁵

Living it up on the Levante

Wendy Williams takes a ride up Almeria's Levante coast

THE Costa Levante of Almeria is a popular destination for holidaymakers and expats alike. It offers superb sandy beaches with clear waters ideal for diving and snorkelling and boasts excellent all-year weather conditions. "We rarely get much more than around 150 litres of rainfall a year most of it spread over around 12 to 20 days," explains architect Almodena Mateo-Sagasta, who lives in Cabo de Gata with her Italian husband Umberto. Much more than sun, sea and sand, the area

also offers excellent hiking, cycling, climbing and caving and it is well-known for its golf resorts. "You can have a really good holiday here," remarks Bill White, 70, who has lived in Los Gallardos, near Mojacar, with his wife Jean for the last five years. "There are wonderful beaches, Mojacar is steeped in history, and just down the road is Almeria city, which has lots of museums and a castle." Here the Olive Press shines a light on some of the other places of interest in the area...



Arrow that created modern Vera

Bigger than some of the surrounding villages, Vera offers six miles of stunning sandy beaches. The town, which was originally called *Baria*, is also steeped in history having been inhabited for thousands of years from Neolithic times right through to the Romans and Moors. Interestingly, the Arabs moved the town to the hill of Espiritu Santo but an earthquake destroyed it in 1518. Legend has it that after this, Queen Isabel climbed to the top of the hill, fired an arrow and ordered that Vera be built wherever it landed. The town as it stands today was built in the 16th century and enlarged in the 18th century. It is one of the most important commercial centres in the region and is a prosperous town with a variety of shops. There is also a keen artisan tradition with handicrafts including embroidery, esparto grass weaving and marble carving. A big street market is worth a visit on Saturdays.

The towers that created Turre

This small inland village is situated a few miles inland from Mojacar next to the river Aguas and the soaring Sierra Cabrera. Its Muslim origins are apparent from the whitewashed houses and flat roofs, and while it is not the most visually appealing town it has a lot of character, and a large gypsy influence. The main sights include the 16th century Hermitage of San Francisco and the Parish Church de la Purisima Concepcion. There is also a market on a Friday but the real draw is the history. The town sprung up around 1488 after the Catholic Monarchs forced the inhabitants of Mojacar who did not want to flee to Africa to settle inland. Turre - which originates from the Latin word 'turris' meaning tower - was named after a watchtower built by the Moors during Nazari times to protect the people from continuous attacks by the Christians. The Moors of Turre were eventually taken to Cordoba during the War of the Alpujarras between 1568 and 1570 and the town was left deserted for several years until 43 families from Murcia moved in to repopulate it. In recent years the town has benefitted from an influx of tourists visiting the region.

Take a visit to buzzing Garrucha

Last, but not least, it is worth popping in to visit the lively seaside town of Garrucha. While winning no prizes for beauty, it is a buzzing place, particularly when the fishing fleet comes back to the port mid-afternoon. There is a lively fish auction and some of the best fish can always be found in the popular port-side restaurant El Almejero. A great place to stay is Hotel Tikar, where American Sean has recently added a wine shop to compliment his excellent restaurant.



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Mojacar special

The perfect Place in the Sun



Wendy Williams discovers why the popular British TV programme has recently been filming in the Mojacar area

TIM Desmond was extremely surprised when his small inland estate agent got a call out of the blue from popular property pro-

gramme *A Place in the Sun* last month. "We thought they usually went for the more mainstream places and the bigger agents," explains

the British agent, who moved to the small inland village of Bedar, near Mojacar, with his wife Joanne, after leaving the navy seven years ago.

"But I guess our agency is doing a good job promoting quality places and it is certainly a unique spot with wonderful views to the sea and the Sierra Cabrera mountains."

After he and Joanne spent a few days rushing around entertaining the film crew and meeting the 'househunters', he is not convinced they are going to buy.

"The pair are like chalk and cheese and while the wife loved the property we showed them, her husband was not as sure."

"But just the fact the programme is focussing on Bedar is great," adds Tim whose company Olive Properties has a range of excellent properties with an average price of just under €200,000 and starting from €80,000.

The only agency in Bedar, his portfolio of over 200 properties currently stretches from here to Antas, Sorbas and Lubrin, where he is opening a second branch.

"In recent years Bedar has become an attraction for both artists and painters," he continues. "It is just a short drive from the coastal town of Mojacar and owes its presence to the mining of iron ore in the 18th century."

"It boasts all the charm of a traditional Spanish white washed village with small squares and winding streets, and the locals are friendly and welcoming."

Over the years Mojacar and the surrounding area has attracted a lot of expats also looking for their place in the sun.

And no matter what you are searching for - whether it be a secluded

villa, a charming town house or a modern duplex - there seems to be something that fits the bill.

Moreover, according to the experts, prices are now at the lowest they have ever been and 'there has never been a better time to buy'.

So why do people come to Mojacar?

"Apart from the excellent weather, Mojacar is different. Its village is historical and has a very colourful and eventful past," explains Daphne Price, from Price Brown, the first British professionally qualified agent to establish offices in the area.

"There is no high-rise building allowed, so when one is walking or driving along the sea front, the sea views are not restricted."

"It has an excellent beach line, a magnificent backdrop of mountains and is a very friendly place."

"Overall it has a beckoning finger, it is beautiful, and its heart is Spanish," she adds.

Meanwhile fellow German expat Karen Schroter, from Mojacar Estates, which has been serving the area for 30 years,

believes it is one of the last villages in the area that has not been 'spoiled by the boom'.

She explains: "Mojacar started in the 1970s as a place where you could find artists, musicians and writers," she explains.

"It was really a little hippy village. Little by little it has grown but it has remained rustic and quiet and kept its charms. "Initially there were a lot of Americans here as the US ambassador fell in love with the place, but today there are 75 nationalities living here which is a nice mix." She continues: "It has always been much cheaper than the Costa del Sol and far less developed."

On top of this, she believes now is perhaps the best time to buy with prices having dropped by half over the last few years. "It is difficult to give a general figure but I would guess it is around 45 to 55 per cent.... and people who want to sell are quite flexible."



CHARACTER: An old property in Mojacar while (inset) agents Daphne (top) and Karen and (left) view of Bedar



We're here for the long term

Patrick Bennett on how he and his wife spotted a gap in the market running a long term rentals business in Mojacar

AFTER falling in love and moving to Mojacar a decade ago, we began to look for a challenge.

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BEAUTIFUL BEDAR

NO trip to the Mojacar area would be complete without taking the 20 minute ride up to the stunning mountain town of Bedar. The stunning white town is full of pretty nooks and crannies and understandably popular as a place for expats to buy properties.



8 Mojacar special 9



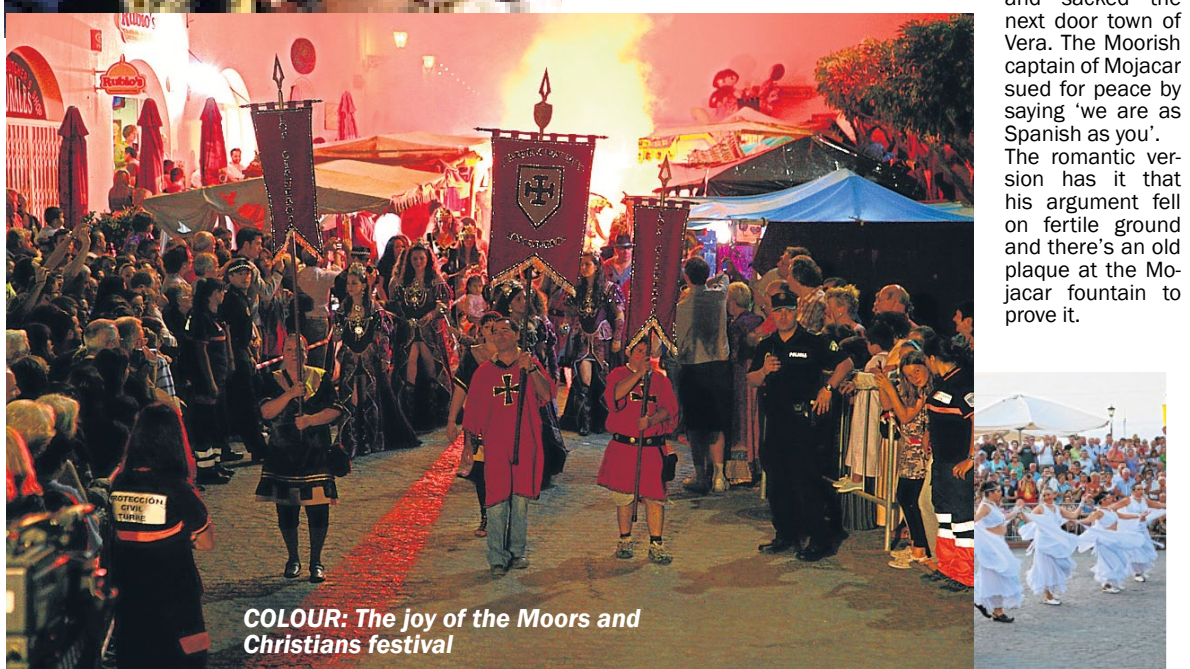
Moors and Christians

It has become perhaps Mojacar's flagship event. Involving much pomp, colour and noise the annual Moors and Christians festival in June is one not to be missed. Taking place this year from June 15 to 17, the celebrations will see seven different armies marching through the town. The armies, known as *kabilas*, will man their fortresses in the village; with music, bars, food and costumes. It's loud, colourful and fun. There are some exhibitions and activities on the playsa, but the main bash, including a medieval market in the main square, is in the village where the bedlam continues with fresh explosions, bangs, firecrackers, music, live bands, thunder-flashes and musketry. The slightly deafened soldiers and courtesans will finally be participating in the most extraordinary parade on Sunday evening with gorgeous costumes, interspersed with large brass bands and horse riders. The Moors and Christians event celebrates the story of Mojacar's defeat in 1488 and how the two sides managed to turn the battle into a companionable 'draw'. The Christian Kings, as they are known in Spain, were camped on the doorstep of the fortified town. They had broken through the Moorish lines and sacked the next door town of Vera. The Moorish captain of Mojacar sued for peace by saying 'we are as Spanish as you'. The romantic version has it that his argument fell on fertile ground and there's an old plaque at the Mojacar fountain to prove it.



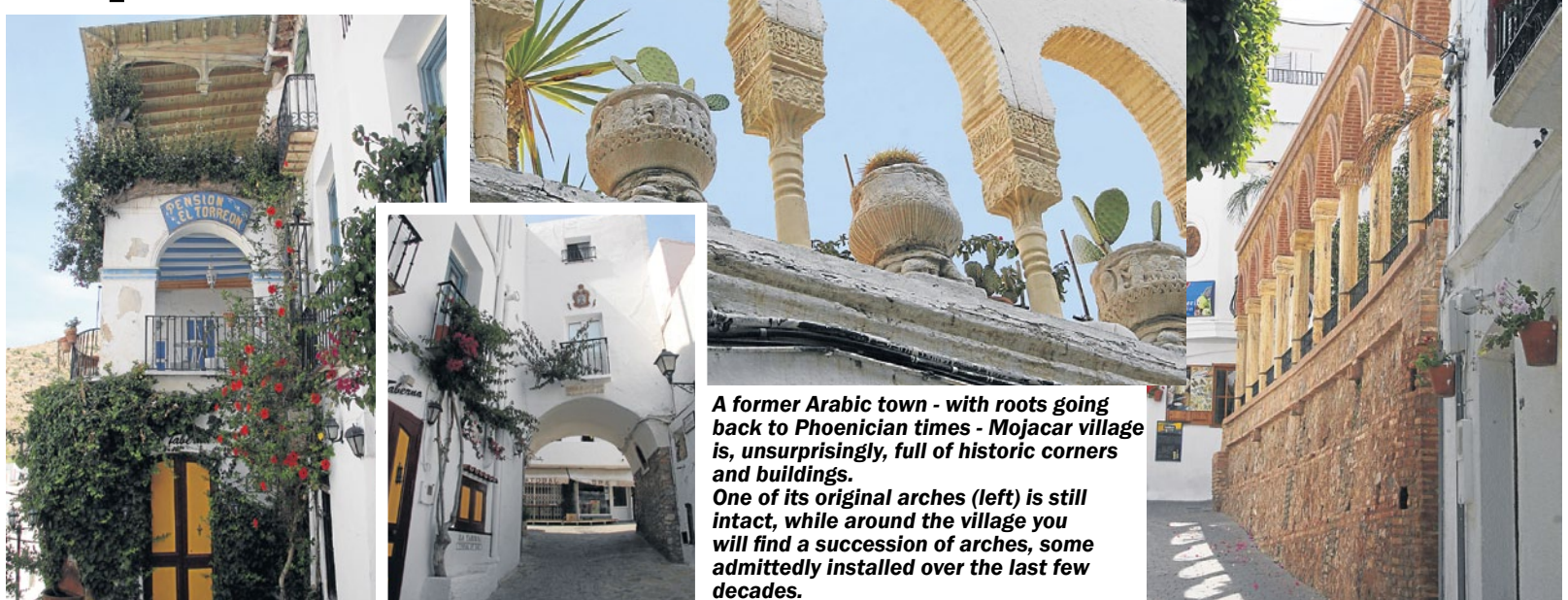
Expat with an amazing eye

For the second time the poster for the Moors and Christians event has been designed by British artist Jill Bennett, who has lived in the town for nine years. Having studied and taught art in the UK, she moved to Almeria, where she is inspired by the scenery and colourful characters. A former illustrator and interior designer, her art shows great movement and colour.



COLOUR: The joy of the Moors and Christians festival

Archways to paradise



A former Arabic town - with roots going back to Phoenician times - Mojacar village is, unsurprisingly, full of historic corners and buildings. One of its original arches (left) is still intact, while around the village you will find a succession of arches, some admittedly installed over the last few decades.

Signs of the times

A popular haunt for artists since the 1960s, Mojacar village certainly maintains a connection to its creative roots through its street signs. Colourfully painted - mostly by hand - they offer a distinct flavour of days gone by. Take a stroll around the narrow, shady streets and you will find a number of artists studios and shops selling a large range of artisanal products.



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OLV083 BEDAR 399,000 euros
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OLV272 LOS GALLARDOS 390,000 euros
This amazing 8 bed property is situated between the villages of Bedar and Los Gallardos. Full of character and original features and is in an excellent location with good access to the motorway and 10 minutes from the beaches of Mojacar.



OLV335 LUBRIN 49,500 EUROS
This interesting village house is situated in the pretty village of Lubrin and has been lovingly restored with new electrics throughout as well as new AC units. This unusual property has interesting features and has been priced to sell.



OLV482 BEDAR 475,000 euros
This wonderful property commands one of the best locations outside Bedar village. It is walking distance to the village and has amazing village views. The property has 2 large reception rooms, 3/4 bedrooms and a private pool within a lovely courtyard setting.

Bedar is a picturesque mining village nestled in the foothills of the Sierra de los Filabres with panoramic views toward the coast, less than 20 minutes away.
The unspoilt white washed village boasts peace and tranquility with narrow, twisting streets, good eateries and characterful houses.



OLV448 TURRE (La Huelga) 1.2m euros
This fabulous, luxury property with private pool and olive farm is located less than 30 minutes to the coast in a tranquil setting. The stunning stone built property has been architect designed with some truly unique features and attention to detail.

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0034 950469624
0034 607705085
0034 687938466
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Lubrin, Almeria
0034 678587007
info@olivehouse-es.com



OLV503 BEDAR 225,000 euros
A unique and rare opportunity to acquire one of the oldest and largest village houses in the village of Bedar. The property boasts 4 beds, 3 baths, many unusual features, garden and breathtaking views over the village towards the coast.



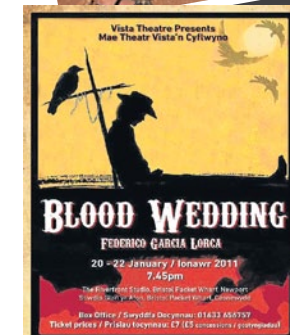
OLV497 LUBRIN 199,000 euros
This beautiful Cortijo is situated outside the pretty town of Lubrin with great views. There are 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms and plenty of Moroccan style courtyard areas perfect for relaxing in. A very well presented property.



OLV509 BEDAR 139,000 euros
A fantastic opportunity to purchase an immaculate 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom village house within walking distance to all amenities in the picturesque village of Bedar. This property also has a separate garage and storeroom.

Mojacar special

Blood Wedding, nudist beaches and Mojito Joe!



HAUNTING: Blood Wedding 'setting' at Cortijo Fraile and poster for the film

GROWING up, there was one place in Europe that I knew I could always get away from it all and enjoy pretty-much guaranteed sun. Cabo de Gata is one of Spain's last remaining coastal regions not yet sacrificed to developers and consumerism. Coupling hauntingly beautiful landscape with stunning unspoilt beaches, the natural park region has the most amazing relaxed vibe. Conjuring up a true sense of wilderness, it is no surprise that many a Western film was shot here, nor that Garcia Lorca's tragedy *Blood Wedding*, was based on a true story set at the now-ruined atmospheric Cortijo de los Frailes. Rolling hills of elephant grass, pock-marked with lines of agave and low-rise, flat roofed white farmhouses, this is a photographer or filmmaker's dream. The walks are wonderful, either inland, or along the un-



Cabo de Gata is Andalusia's best place to chill out and relax, reckons Olive Press editor Jon Clarke

dulating coastline, and the mix of restaurants and hotels excellent. But most of you are probably interested in the beaches and there are few places in the world that can compete with Playa de los Genoveses, Playa de los Muertos, or La Cala de San Pedro, which until recently could only be reached via a stiff hour-long stroll from Las Negras. While Genoveses is part naturist on one side, it is the perfect family beach, as long as the kids don't mind a short walk across the dunes. For those looking for some-

thing more convenient, hole up in Agua Amarga, often thought to be one of Spain's most exclusive resorts, albeit in the most low-key sort of way. It was here where the film *Sexy Beast* was shot and where Spain's leading captains of industry come to unwind. We spent five days at Christmas here and literally had the beach to ourselves. But what nailed the area for me was when I interviewed former Clash lead singer Joe Strummer, who told me he had a home in San Jose and visited frequently. As the owner of local restaurant La Gallineta explained: "Joe tipped the kind of visitors we get to the region. He was fun, thoughtful and intelligent. "He spoke Spanish and would always turn up at my restaurant shouting for a Mojito with a big smile on his face. "We gave him the nickname 'Mojito Joe' and were all devastated when he passed away so young." There is no way Joe went *Straight to Hell*, to coin the name of a film he starred in and shot in Cabo de Gata in the 1980s.

MEET THE LOCALS: Cabo de Gata is a long way from the Costa del Sol and (top) Joe Strummer in film *Straight to Hell*, which was shot there



TRANQUIL: Agua Amarga beach



Top Tip: Looking for somewhere different to stay, head to stunning Cortijo la Tenada, a stylish carbon neutral retreat a few minutes inland in a breathtaking valley

Top Tucker: Keep your eyes peeled for La Gallineta in El Pozo de los Frailes, which is romantically-lit and has a fabulously fresh, original menu

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Mojacar special

13

Where to eat

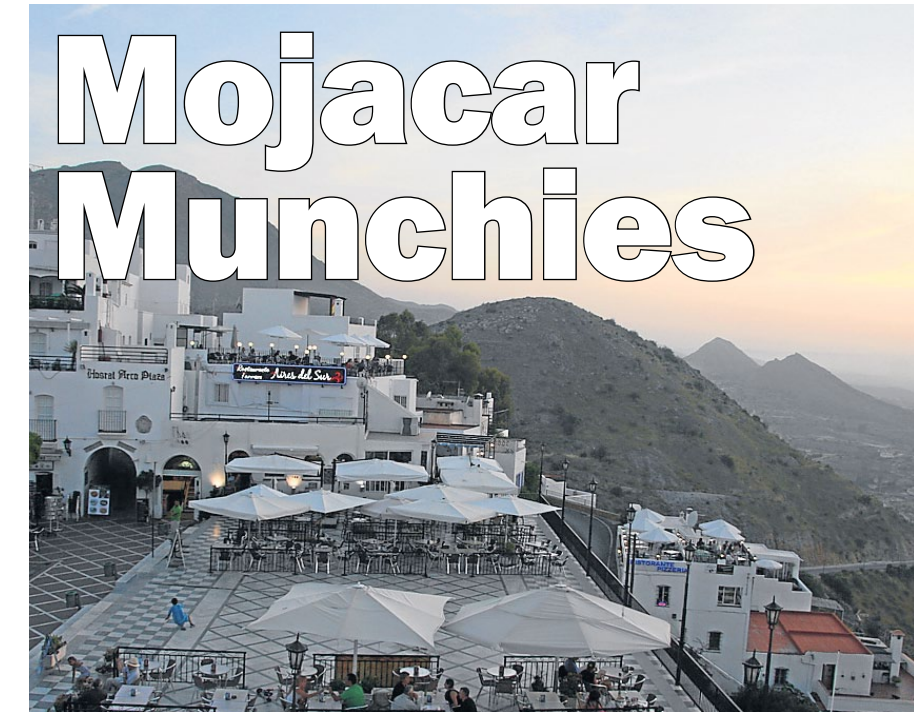
It is sometimes suggested in gentle criticism that there is more to eat in Mojácar than *ajo colorado*, *gachas*, *pelotas* and *migas*. But now the town has its own 'Tapas Guide' and a promotional event 'Eat Mojácar: Gastronomic Events' taking place between June 28 and July 8.

The area, including Cabo de Gata, Garrucha and Vera, actually has a lot of good places to eat. As the sun slips behind the hills, where better to sit than on the roof terrace of the Aires del Sur, in Mojácar pueblo, ordering cous cous and a fabulous bottle of chilled rose.

Formerly known as Elizabeth's this friendly joint, owned by Miguel from Melilla, is a true family affair with his wife and daughter all helping out.

Also in his family is the equally stunning Pulcinella, just across the square, where Abel's pizzas featured recently in the European Pizza Championships for two years running.

On the beach, there are vari-



VIEWS: Aires terrace and next door Hostel Arco plaza while (right) stunning Gallineta

ous restaurants, including, in particular, the simple and honest food at the Beach-

comber. The owner, John, a personable chap, has been serving good food in Spain

at a great price for 25 years, formerly in Ibiza, and he is the perfect person to ask about

ishing trips. The most famous beach-style *chiringuito* is Tito's beach bar, which is located down towards the southern end of the *playa*. It's a fun place, famous for its Sunday lunch, which also puts on Thai food evenings and plenty of live music.

Over in the fishing port of Garrucha, famous for its fresh red *gambas*, you should head to Sean's fantastic Hotel Tikar for one of the coast's best restaurants. Long recommended in the *Michelin guide*, the food is extremely good value and changes by the season. Afterwards, (or during the meal for a small corkage fee) make sure to buy a bottle of wine from his new wine store... and

if you have got any sense stay in a room upstairs.

Over in Cabo de Gata there are plenty of good places to eat but – without a doubt the best place must be La Gallineta, in El Pozo de los Frailes, a stylish place, with an enticing, original menu.

A long time haunt for celebrities and film stars, it was Clash lead singer Joe Strummer's favourite restaurant before his untimely death.

Last, but certainly not least, the fabulous inland restaurant of Venta el Museo, in Lucainena de las Torres, has one of Almería's top chefs Stephan Streifinger at the helm.



Where to stay

THE Mojácar region has a wealth of decent places to stay from the top end Parador to the charming hostel Arco Plaza in the heart of the old town.

This brilliant, good value spot, can be as cheap as €35, and you are literally right in the heart of town in pole position for exploring.

Up the coast in Garrucha, you will be treated like a King at Spain's 'smallest hotel' Hotel Tikar, which has just six suites, and one of the best restaurants in the region (see Where to eat).

Inland you must certainly look out for the fantastic Cortijo el Saltador in Lucainena de las Torres. This beautiful hideout sits in the most stunning valley with amazing views and space.

Perfect for a slow holiday, you will love the sound of silence, apart from when on various weekends the place comes alive with flamenco shows.

There are also a string of different courses taking place throughout the year, including yoga, cookery and art.

And for the next few months the main part of the *cortijo* is full of original art from a string of celebrated artists from around the region.

Nearby you can also stay at Venta el Museo, which boasts perfectly comfortable rooms and the added

Sweet Dreams



attraction of having a great restaurant.

Over in Cabo de Gata you should definitely consider the stunning, carbon neutral retreat Cortijo la Tenada.

Run by a charming architect/designer couple from Italy and Spain, they have worked hard to make this eco-retreat both stylish and with a low impact on sustainability terms.



Using hemp bricks, solar panels and a clever system of rainwater run-off, the place is worth a poke about even if you are not staying.

Finally for campers, you should pitch your tent or bring your caravan to Los Gallardos campsite, which has been open for more than 20 years and now counts a fully-functioning restaurant and shop, seven days a week, as well as its very own bowling club.

ARTY: Saltador, Tenada and Hotel Tikar

The talented German has travelled around the province and knows about food

This talented German has travelled around the province for a decade and knows a lot about food. Make sure to come and spend a night at the attached hotel and get blown away by his fresh and exciting tapas dishes.

Finally, just up the road is an excellent olive oil factory Oro del Desierto, where you can try some of southern Spain's best award-winning olive oil and also conveniently sit down for lunch.



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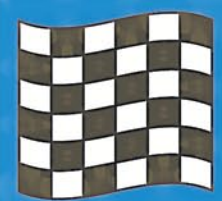
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Mojacar special

By Jon Clarke

It is slowly becoming one of inland Andalucía's most exciting places to visit.

And the best way to get to Lucainena de las Torres is by bike, enjoying the fabulous *via verde* that takes cyclists up to the mountain town from the coast.

Actually, you will probably have to take your car, winding up to the village on one of the charming lanes from the main motorway, via Nijar or Polopos.

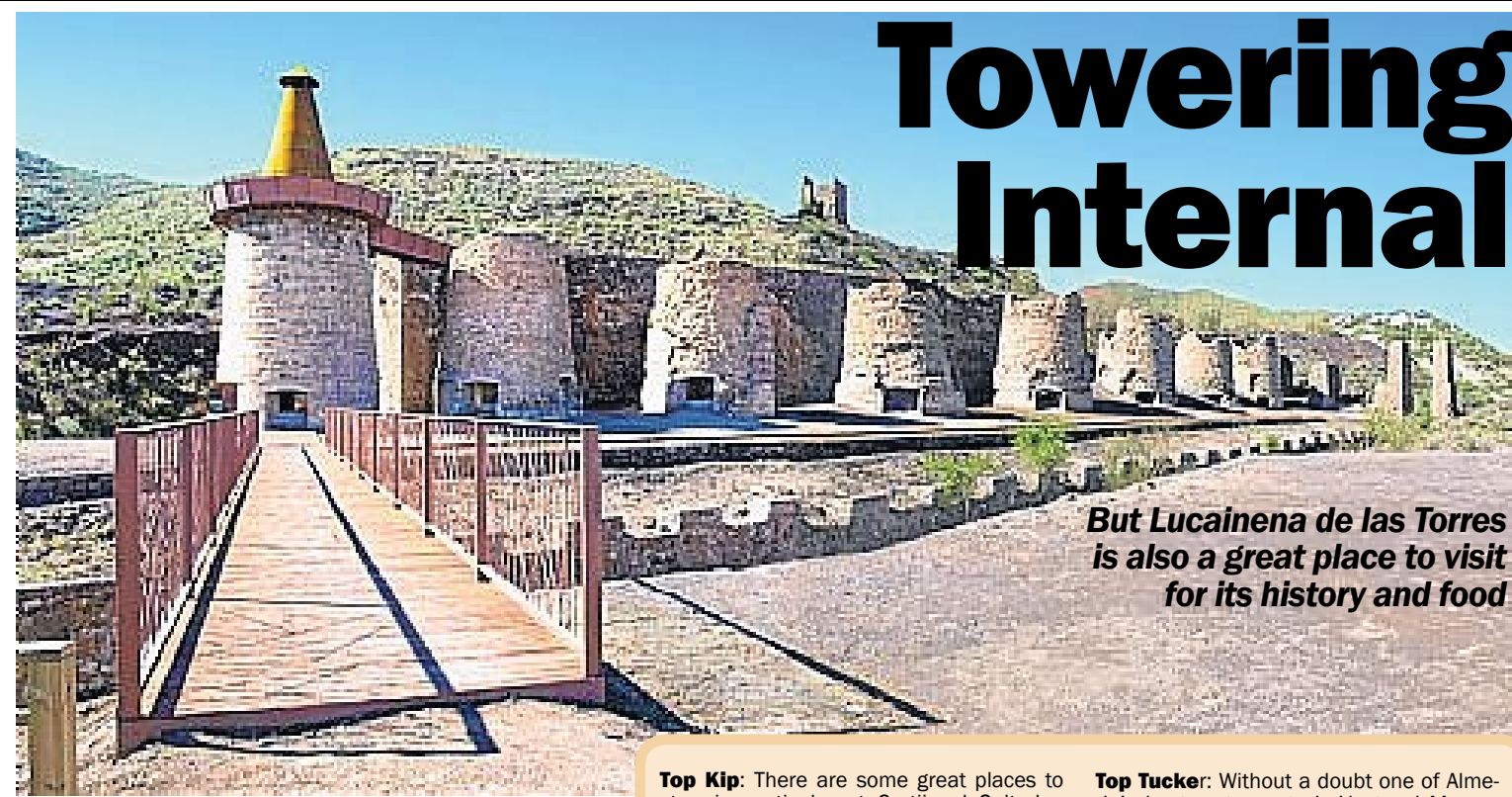
You will soon find yourself lost in a stunning area of rolling hills and nature.

Sitting at just over 500 metres at the foot of the Sierra Alhamilla, Lucainena is great for hiking and watching birds. The town was founded in the 19th century after a string of iron ore mines were opened.

Taking the ore via a railway line to Agua Amarga in Cabo de Gata, some of it now the *via verde*, the mines brought considerable wealth to the area and saw the town expand to 7,000 residents in its heyday.

Today just 700 souls live in the town, an attractive, well looked after place, with a pretty church and fantastic scenery.

It gets its name after the string of towers which sit at



Towering Internal

But Lucainena de las Torres is also a great place to visit for its history and food

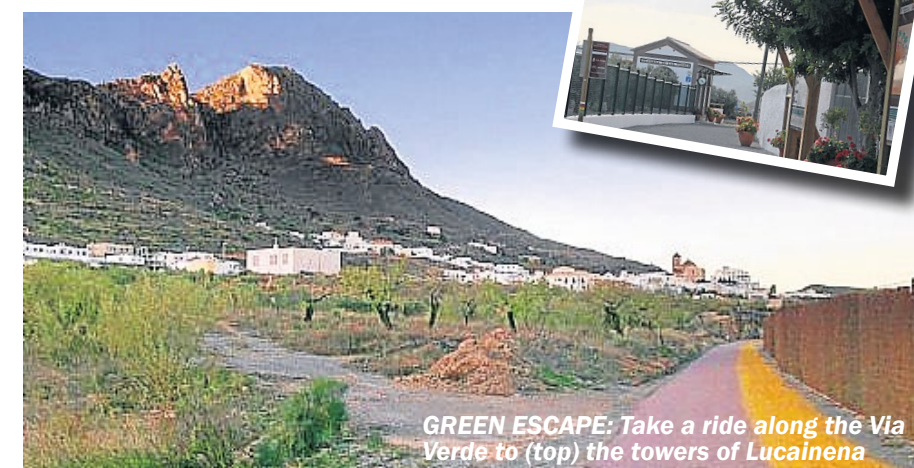
the edge of the old mines. You are guaranteed to have a lovely time spending a day or two in the area, as part of a trip to the region.

And don't forget if you want to get hold of some of the best olive

oil in Spain, take a short ride from here to the amazing olive oil factory Oro del Desierto, near Tabernas.

Top Tip: There are some great places to stay, in particular at Cortijo el Saltador, a well established country retreat, a few miles outside town. Known for its art and yoga courses, it is 'chill out' guaranteed with your German host Claudia Scholler.

Top Tucker: Without a doubt one of Almería's best restaurants is Venta el Museo, run by German chef Stephan Streifinger and his trusty sous chef Pedro Enrique Morales. A great selection of Almería wines and some inventive tapas.



GREEN ESCAPE: Take a ride along the Via Verde to (top) the towers of Lucainena

el saltador www.elsaltador.com



Lucainena de las Torres, Almería | T: 00 34 676437128 | claudiascholler@yahoo.com

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