All about Arriate

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September 2011

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An island of fun





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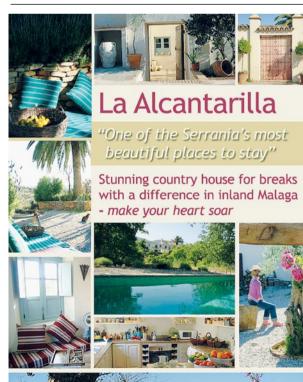




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Arriate special

A worldly village

"And as long as the locals keep supporting our local shops and demanding good quality produce then I will continue sourcing them," he

Pedro is typical of the Arriate stock. A staunch supporter of old fashioned village life, he spends most weekends with his wife Ani enjoying the local countryside, when not looking after his ageing parents. A keen hiker, he is forever in training for this or that, the highlight of his year usually being the annual 101km walk organised by nearby Ronda's amous Foreign Legion.

"It is the best thing about living in a country village like this," he explains. "And Arriate really is one of the best." It is little surprise that Arriate - after Ronda – is one of the only inland Malaga towns to continue to grow dramatically over the last decade.

A buzzing place of nearly 5,000 people, the 'island' in the heart of the Serrania de Ronda, offers a great quality of life, well away from the usual tourist drag.

It is not an island in the classic sense of the word, but comes thanks to its independently spirited locals having wrestled control from near neighbour Ronda over four centuries ago.

Fiercely independent of its pico, or 'snobbish', neighbours (who many Arriatenos say, lord it over the whole half kilometre square district which is the smallest in death of dictator Franco in

TRADITION: The highly anticipated processions during Semana Santa are a highlight plains local businesswoman Carmeli Gamarro, whose family firm Melgar has been cur-

ing meat for centuries. the globe in

order to work. she continues This was certainly the case them had to emigrate Switzerland, France and Germany

work in the tough impoverished years of the 1960s and 1970s.

Serrania) the eight-and-a- These days, many of them are back and you can't help but notice the number of happy-Malaga province - has been staunchly left wing since the looking pensioners hanging around watching the day go One place. Bar La Albarra, is

so famous for these old boys and friendly than Ronda," ex- that one Dutch photographer



QUALITY: Greengrocer Pedro in his busy shop

put together an exhibition based entirely around its cli-Either standing on the small

The Arriatenos are worldly people, who have travelled

> The brotherhoods hold lotteries for the right to carry the floats of Jesus to Arriate's and Mary

Despite being ruled by the IU (or Communist party) for well over a decade (the socialist PSOE party finally took over in May), there is more interest in having fun than the teachings

of Chairman Mao. This might perhaps explain, why - despite its apparent hard left leanings - the town has some of the best known Faster parades in the whole of the province.

terrace watching the world

go by, or sitting down to play

cards or domi-

noes over an

80-centime

brandy, they

certainly look

Much of this

must be down

reputation for

being a party

Indeed, such is the clamour to be involved, the brotherhoods even hold lotteries for the right to carry the floats (or tronos) of Jesus and Marv. 'It has always seemed a real

contradiction to me " says. Jose Antonio Coca, a local fitness instructor and masseur, who grew up in the town. "The processions are taken very seriously and they are very moving, but it is a simple fact that most of those involved hardly ever go to church and

sands of visitors to see the Hermandad del Santisimo to Entierro de Cristo at Easter there are other festivals such as the Romeria, the Dia de la Vieia, and the Fiesta er el Aire, which happens next

In particular, the Dia de la Vie ja is unique to Arriate. A sort of two-day picnic designed originally for the town to take its pensioners for an outing, it is now a firm event in the village calendar.

"It is this sort of thing that re ally makes us stand out," explains the new mayor Melchor Conde. "They are above all very generous; and always have an open door and are happy to give you what they have.

Another curious trait about Arriate is its wealth of musical talent. There are two town bands, a drumming group and 'everyone plays one in strument or another,' it is

It is a tradition that can be traced back even before the origins of the town, when a mythical group of country musicians roamed the area playing music in the dead of Known as La Aurora de Arri-

ate, the group of musicians still keep up the tradition playing in the dead of night on Sunday morning between the hours of 4am and 6am. With origins in Arabic times

in the 13th century, the copso it is really just down to the las, or local songs, have beer passed down from generation Aside from the 400 years of to generation and became fatradition that brings thou- mous when in 1973 the Brit

Arriate special

Geographic Society corded for an album on Spanish A capacity for music is all too obvious with a visit to the incredible Los Caireles on the high street.

There are few surnrises in the Serrania de Ronda as pleasant as walking through

the anonymous colourful frosted glass doors on a concert night in winter, when it will be full of hundreds of music fans of all ages.

Much to do with the brothers Roberto and Monolo Rivera. who have a popular drumda, the surprise is more the better, if you can persuade Caireles bar and (inset) a photo of his father in the same bar, then a cinema in the 1950s. (Far right) poster for this year's Fiesta en el Aire fanatic," says Monolo. "This survive as well as 350 origi-If so, you will soon realise that nal wood and leather seats bought from Malaga in the the har you are standing in is

was once – since the 1940s -Arriate's Cine Ideal, And what loured hydraulic tiles that line a gem it is. the entrance. Its main screen and stage still

them to take you out back.

just one small corner of what

was one of the most popular cinemas in the Serrania. 1950s. Best of all though, "People came from miles are the stunning brightly-coaround despite the movies

"Our father was a real film

manding cuts. Running until 1988, when due to dwindling audiences

part of it had to be converted into a flamenco venue, the being heavily censored by the brothers have kept it intact despite numerous offers from local priest and mayor, who developers to turn it into a would watch the films first de-

market or

"This is our legacy and part of our town's key history," says Roberto. "I grew up watching Cinema Paradiso and always dreamt of one day opening the cinema up again. One day we hope to be able to find the funding to do that."

BACK TO MOORISH TIMES

BEATING HEART: View of Arriate (above) while (right) Monolo in his Los

HE town got its name from the Arabic word Ar-riadh, which means gardens or orchards. It was during the Moorish control of Andalucia from the 7th to 15th century that the area became a supply zone for the key Arabic town of Ronda, then known as Arunda.

Once celebrated for its fruits in particular apples and pears, in the area known as the 'Huerta de abajo,' 57 neighbours still use the same ancient Arabic water course, or acequia, to take water to their

The settlement of Arriadh was first mentioned in documents from 1407 during the Arabic Kingdom of Granada, when a key skirmish took place in the valley below between Arabic and Christian forces, who were coming in on a reccy visit from nearby

After the expulsion of the Arabs from Spain, it came under the administration of Ronda, until in 1661 on February 14 the town achieved its total independence, hence the patron saint of the village being

It was around this time that most of the land in the whole valley and the town was owned by the Moct-

lies. Awarded land by the Reyes Catolicos for their bravery in fighting the Aztecs in Mexico, they lived in Ronda, but had a big hunting estate around Arriate. Hunting everything from boar to lynxes they needed a big staff to run the estate. It is for this reason that a lot of families are said to have been brought in from the north of Spain to work hence the founda-

tions of the town being laid.
"How else can you explain how so many of the names are alien to this region and so many people here have blue eyes and blonde hair," asks one lo-cal. "Bercerra, Conde, Marin, these are names from Galicia and the Basque country. And it is this that to this day makes for a better, healthier mix than those pure breed stiffs up in Ronda."

The town has a variety of interesting shops and small businesses such as Muebles Serrano, a tra-ditional carpentry workshop that makes and sells handmade furniture. It has been in the same family for 230 years and counts clients from all over Spain We also supplied the furniture to Prince Alfonso Hohenlohe and Ordonez, the famous bullfighter, explains owner Francisco Serrano, "It is a pleasure



ARRIADH: First mentioned in 1407

People came from miles despite the movies being heavily censored by the local priest

For the time being, they are busy organising a festival called the Fiesta en el Aire, which was modelled on an idea that came from their father in the 1950s.

Taking place each October the festival is an 'open air celebration of the town's art ists, musicians 'and creativity in general,' explains Roberto who is himself a photogra

The three day bash on October 14-16 will see the whole town coming out onto the streets for a range of concerts, food and general fun. It is, after all, what Arriate is

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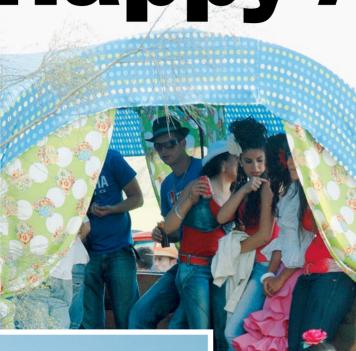
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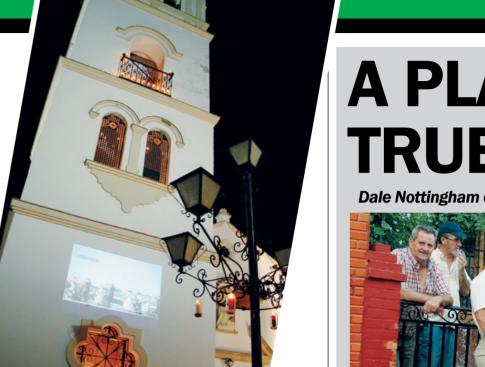
Snails and tripe

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They call it the 'Island of fun, and there are certainly as many festivals and fun things to do in Arriate as its near neighbour Ronda. (Clockwise from far left) One of the famous Semana Santa Easter parades through the streets, dressed up for an outing with the Romeria, the village church St Juan de Letran, a game of cards in Bar Albarra and the former Glorieta de San Jose convent, now converted into an old





A PLACE WITH TRUE SOUL

Dale Nottingham on the village where he made his home



LIFE OF LEISURE: A few old boys (and a couple of youngsters) watch the world go by

AM holed up in Arriate, a weathered, crusty town as old as the rolling hills in which it nestles, and dwarfed by the nposing shadow of its more glamorous and bejeweled sister, Ronda.
Ronda's polished attractions and pedes-

trianised walkways lure shoppers and sightseers from far and wide, while, unnoticed and undisturbed, Arriate carries on its sleepy existence to the cadence of church bells and the passing of the sea-

As Ronda sports the shiny patent leather shoes of gentility, so gritty little Arriate wears the mud-encrusted boots of a farmer walking in from the fields or a soldier returning home from battle.

The town itself is arranged like a stack of dominoes scooped up and piled in the middle of a table. Narrow, serpentine streets twist chaotically between clumps of odd-shaped houses and family-run shops. It is as if God had cupped Arriate in his giant palms and gently squeezed it together like pieces of old soap, before

laying it onto an Andalucian hillside. But beneath its wizened, weather-beaten facade beats the true heart of Andalucia, pulsing with homespun warmth and unquestioning hospitality.

By chance – or perhaps by design – Arriate is neither on the way to anywhere nor is it the kind of place you would happen upon. It boasts no celebrated tourist attractions or architectural gems with which to bedazzle camera-toting day-trippers. As the locals appreciate only too well, Arriate offers up precious little to the tourist but harbours rich bounty for the traveler.

For Arriate has soul: as real and solid and warming as the oak logs that spark and crackle in the hearths of the town's shuttered houses. To find yourself in Arriate is to have chosen Arriate

And so it was that this first test in my quest for acceptance in this most Spanish of Spanish places had been unwittingly nego-tiated and I was welcomed into this closeted community, deep in the heartland of





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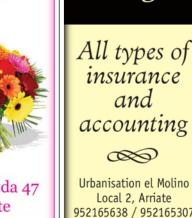
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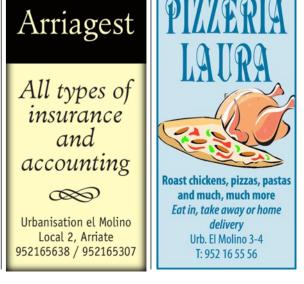
















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T is certainly fitting that the new mayor of Arriate has a degree in agricultural engineering. For the village's name comes from the Arabic word Arriadh, meaning vegetable garden. Now, Melchor Conde Marin, 33, who was voted into power in May, is planning to launch an exciting new cooperative of local farmers. with an emphasis on organic

farming. He hopes the new association will bring together farmers from all around the Serrania de Ronda and Setenil and form part of a wider campaign to transform Arriate into a green village.

"We are in difficult times, but there is a great variety of produce in the area including olive oil, cheese, goats, lamb, and vegetables." explains Conde, a keen cyclist, who

Back to its roots



"This cooperative will help the local produce become hetter known further afield "It is also really important to

Conde Marin (pictured left) is taking Arriate back to its origins as a vegetable garden serving Arabic Ronda

By Wendy Williams

respect the environment, not so much for our generation, but for later generations," he



TRADITION: Shepherds head into the nearby hills

Much of this conveniently links back to the village's origins, when it formed to supply food to the key Arabic settlement of Ronda.

There is certainly no shortage of good farmland still being used in the area and one concrete link back to the village's ancient past is a working acequia (or water

course) from Moorish times, which still serves 57 different neighbours. On top of this, the village also boasts a 'green garden' or allotment, which is exclu-

The land is tended by volunteers, particularly among the elderly and the unemployed,

sively given over to organic

In fact Francisco Fernandez the Minister of the Environ-

he dinosaurs," he says.

ARRIATE is ringed by fine rural retreats, including stylish Dutch wned Fuente de la Higuera, one of Andalucia's most popula hideouts, where the likes of bullfighters, actors and recently British Prime Minister David Cameron have all stayed.

Closer, and easier on the pocket, you will find the equally well-sited Hotel El Arriadh, which has some of the most amazing views in Spain. The hotel, run by friendly Peruvian

to stay around. The well appointed villa and cottage are extremely good value and can be rented for a minimum of

Finally in the village, you must consider the authentic Huentecillo Hotel, which sits in its own green valley. The stone louses are beautifully carved out of the rock with entirely organic, inert materials

The cheapest option is El Chozo, where you can get a room adds Conde.

time and promoting health But this is just a starting

point for Conde's eco-friend lv vision

In addition to a new cooperative, the mayor has made it a priority to clean up the local river the Guadalcohacín and in particular is pushing for a sewage plant.

"One of the main environ mental issues is still water treatment and we are cur rently in discussions with the Junta to resolve this," Conde

ment paid a visit to Arriate just last month to discuss the issue. "We showed him the deplorable state of the Guadalcobacín River which is having damaging conseguences on the fauna, flora and locals who must live with the smell," explains Conde He is also particularly keep to promote the area for hiking. There are beautiful walks around here with fantastic fauna that includes ancient plants such as ferns which ave been in the area since

The village may be small but it is great for nature lovers and offers fantastic views

o showcase the beauty o the area and attract tourists the town hall is launching a green route' that takes walk ers on a two hour stroll from he village along the river

He continues: "The village nay be small but it is great or nature lovers and of fers fantastic views towards Grazelema and the Sierra de as Nieves.

"We want more people to come here and enjoy it,"

Where to stay and eat

Fresh, tasty and local

and is always busy.

PERFECTLY suited for a tapas crawl, there are nearly a dozen great places to have a bite to eat within a two minute stroll of each other.

Taberna Monolo is great for the friendly service and charming back room, which is only open during feria time, as well as La Laguna just down the road, which always has some incredibly fresh tapas. Up on Calle Jose Montes, another great spot is Bar El Apero, which proudly serves up a great range of typical dishes such as snails and pigs trotters. On the main square

don't miss Bar open seven davs out for lunch or supper.

Floresteri

EL MUELLE: Delightful

place for a great and to watch the world go by is El Chozo, which has a big terrace

nother

on Calle Ronda

week, and a

For more formal dining, one of the most excit ing additions to the town is the recent arrival of German/Basque couple Raynold and Teresa, who recently moved from New York to open E Muelle de Arriate. With a superb track record in the States, where they were said to run the 'best Spanish restaurants outside of Spain', it is clear they are very much at home in Arriate Delightfully fresh and simple cuisine, they offer the perfect lesson to the vast majority of ventas and restaurants around Andalucia who have forgotten how to cook its best local favourites. Hence the croquettes are light and fluffy and the grilled squid was lightly seared with fresh garlic vinagrette. The fabulous 'Patatas Bravas' come from Teresa's Basque repertoire.
"We are the opposite of Nouvelle Cuisine and

sometimes you can test the quality of a restaurant by trying the simplest thing," explains former banker Raynold, who comes from Hamburg. "We are trying to mix dishes from the Basque country and Andalucia, but above all keep prices down.

In the words of one local hotelier, it 'completes the picture for Arriate'.



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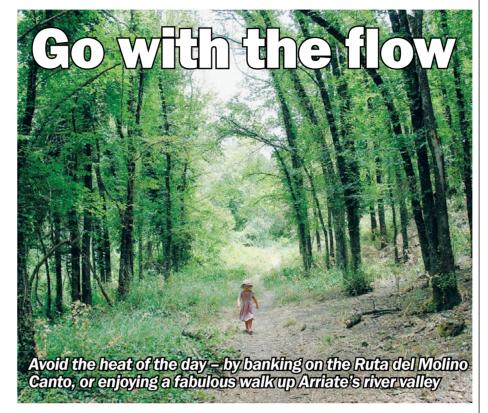
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Arriate special

Go take a hike!

The militiaman's escape

n DISTANCE: 2 to 10 kms n TIME REQUIRED: 1 to 3 hours in RATING: Easy



SHADY: The route follows the river and is largely in dense woods

OST walkers curse when they find themselves walking under

Well, help is at hand with what must be one of Andalucia's most beautiful river

Park your car in the heart of Arriate and take a five minute hike uphill until you find the entrance to this shady oasis of cool, which is the Ventilla gorge, now a protected space. You can walk as far as you like (up to an hour each way if you fancy it) or simply flop down beside the river with a book in the shade of a poplar

The Route

wooden table and chairs.

back when you are ready.

from June to October there are numerous good snots to take a dip, with plunge pools created by local residents damning the river.

Even better, in the hot months

So make sure you bring a towel and your swimmers.

Sometimes known as the 'militiaman's escape', it was during the civil war when this wooded walk served as the perfect escape from the rap idly advancing armies of General Franco.

Heading straight out of the still staunchly 'roio' village of Arriate, the Guadalcobacin river cuts a deep gully from its source on the edge of the Sierra de las Nieves national park.

IT is a little tricky to find the beginning of the walk. Head into Arriate from Ronda and take the first right off the

small square up Calle Marbella. At the top take a left

up a narrow street and then a right and you are in Calle Malaga.

When the road opens out into the feria ground, park your

car and carry on walking uphill along Calle Malaga. After about 400 metres, after going past a smelly chicken

factory you will find a sign that reads 'Coto deportivo de

gorge where it then drops dramatically down towards the river. You are soon in the trees and the temperature

drops dramatically. You will pass a little spring on your

right and eventually come down to a picnic spot with a

From here you can head up the river keeping an eye out for

the white and yellow signs as far as you fancy, and then walk

Caza' and a yellow sign painted on a wall.

Go left here and follow the path up to the edge of the

This wooded walk served as the perfect escape from the armies of **General Franco**

Through it the brave militia-

men could escape towards

FI Rurgo in the heart of the

mountains and eventuall

Malaga, where the Republi

cans held out for a few extra

A shady paradise full of wildlife and nature, the river rush es down from the mountains creating an impressive steepsided gorge. Walking gently uphill, cross-

ing the river on a couple of occasions, the walk eventu ally arrives at the source of the river beside the Puente del Ventilla, a popular picnio spot for people from Ronda and Arriate.

The banks are lined with ash. eucalyptus, olive and oak trees and there is no sign of human life, apart from a couple of ancient ruined mills, one known as the Molino del Canto.

Bring a picnic, but best of all, if you fancy something to do to while away the midday hours, 'borrow' the pack of cards, which someone has kindly left beside a natural wooden table and chairs knocked together by some villagers earlier this sum

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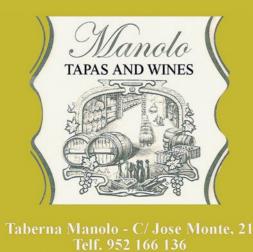


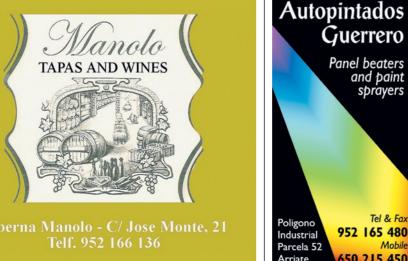
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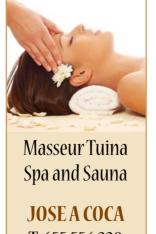












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