

All about the Sherry triangle



POINTED: Sherry hotspots are now attracting the celebrity chefs, such as Jamie Oliver and Heston Blumenthal (right)

My sherry amor

THERE were three glasses on the worn, wooden bar, each containing a different coloured liquid. "Try them," said the barman, "But start with this one." I was standing in Bar El Pasaje, deep in the heart of Jerez de la Frontera, taking an impromptu lesson in sherry lore – and tasting – from my new friend, Javier Gutierrez. He was pointing to the glass in the middle, three-quarters full with a deep nutty-brown, very obviously alcoholic substance. "This one is oloroso viejo (old fra-

Tony Jefferies takes a tour around the sherry-steeped history of Jerez, where he has lived for the last five years

grant). A glass of this in the morning sets you up for the day." I took the plunge and had a large sip. It wasn't as strong as it looked: not at all sweet and with a nutty flavour to match its colour. I could see what he meant. Next was the thin looking, straw coloured liquid. I knew this one. It was fino, the driest of sheries and just right

for my late morning visit to this strange little bar. It seemed locked in a time capsule with its scruffy green wallpaper and huge barrels for dispensing the drink which made the city's fortune. I was savouring the tangy taste of my fino because Javier told me what was coming next: the thick, brown-black sherry on the left was

the local after-dinner tippie of choice, a sweet, treachy Pedro Ximenez. It was beautiful, but it wasn't right for a pre-lunch sharpener. Well, not if you had anything else to do before the next morning. Tucked away on Calle Santa Maria, El Pasaje doesn't attract many of those who visit this southern Spanish city. More's the pity because you can mingle with the locals while sampling

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The best is yet to come

Jerez mayoress reveals things can only get better

The mayor of Jerez has told *the Olive Press* what a great city Jerez is – but revealed that it will soon get a lot better. Pilar Sanchez announced that Jerez's latest tourism blueprint will soon make the sherry stronghold one of Spain's must-see destinations.

Sanchez explained: "Jerez is already a world-famous city, known for its wine, horses and flamenco."

"But this place has so much potential and we will continue to invest in tourism."

"We want to make this city not only one of the most popular destinations in Andalucía, but also Spain."

Sanchez also confirmed that tourism is a crucial motor for Jerez's continuing economic prosperity.

"Tourism is a key industry that drives the economy forward. It creates a huge number of jobs in the area," said Sanchez.

"Therefore we have created an ambitious Action and Tourist Promotion Plan for the next two years that we will implement shortly."

"We aim to not only improve the quality of the tourism experience, but to also involve as many private and public bodies so they all contribute to its continuing prosperity."

No doubt about it, the future certainly looks bright for Jerez.



A message from Jerez tourism chief Juan Manuel Bermudez to the Olive Press readers:

"The town hall and the Junta have been working hard on a Tourist Plan that aims to boost tourism within the area."

The plan – costing five million euros – will be financed by the Ministry for Tourism, Business and Sport, while 35 per cent will be provided by the town hall.

In short, we aim to reinforce Jerez's status as a top destination for tourists."

There is no doubt about it, 2010 is a crucial year for the recuperation and revitalisation of Jerez's tourism sector and its economy.

The plan will be launched in fine style with a concert in one of the city's most emblematic monuments, the Alcázar.

It will be the curtain-raiser for the public openings of a number of important tourist areas such as the Pabellón Real, the Torre Octogonal, la Alberca, el Huerto and the Aljibe.

Furthermore, we are also planning to markedly improve the zoo.

Above all, we aim to improve its infrastructure, paying particular attention to visitor access to the zoo.

Arguably most important of all is to provide a Tour-



ist Information Centre that shows visitors the best attractions that Jerez and its surroundings have to offer."

Meanwhile, Bermudez also highlighted a number of aspects that will be addressed in the plan.

"We are preparing a cultural walk through the city that will take people past some of the most important religious and civic buildings."

We also want to improve the tourist website as well as the Integrated Tourist Information System that will promote city concerts as part of the (Look at Jerez) campaign."

Furthermore, we want to improve our tourism (not tourist) website together with our Integrated Tourist Information System. Our purpose is to promote the use of new technology and to promote our (Look at Jerez) campaign.

Indeed, we believe we have created a powerful action plan that will help secure our objectives over the next two years."

It is a plan that counts on the backing of institutional, economic and government agents as well as the support of the whole sector."



TRADITIONAL TIPPLE: A glass of fino

From Page 1

the wine which took its name from Jerez.

If a class system exists in the city, it stops at the swing doors leading to the bar. My fellow drinker included retired grandees and professionals – briefcases cast carelessly aside – who stood happily alongside shop workers and builders discussing football, crop prices, local politics and more football.

There was plenty of laughter and gesturing and animated voices – as you find whenever a couple of Spaniards get together, particularly when a glass or two of fino helps the discussion along.

Javier topped up the glasses and marked his clients' account in chalk on the bar all the while, as the smell of strong tobacco cut across the aroma of sherry. The one thing you can't bottle is the atmosphere – though they've probably tried in a city where there's a variety of the local specialty for almost every hour of the day.

I said my goodbyes and stepped a little uncertainly onto the street, then stepped back to avoid being run over by a delivery truck. Carrying sherry, of course.

Suitably chastened, I followed the sherry trail to the edge of the city centre. Jerez is ringed by bodegas, those vast, gloomy storage houses known as 'cathedrals of wine'.

You couldn't describe it as a spiritual experience, but wandering between the long rows of huge barrels, three or four high, does invite a sense of awe. The low light, the peeling paint and the heady atmosphere of must and alcohol are enough to leave you in need of a drink.

All the leading sherry houses host bodega visits and the most popular is probably the best-known of all, Gonzalez Byass. It might not sound like a barrel of laughs but a guided tour of the vast complex is worth the effort.

This is where Tio Pepe – the world's best-selling sherry – is produced. There are acres and acres of bodega, and you can view barrels signed by the famous (personalities as diverse as Picasso, Bobby Charlton and a number of Europe's royalty). It was here that I caught

Sherry triangle special ³

Sherry nice



GRAND: A statue in front of the Domecq Palace, while (right) Jerez's horses

up with the world's most drunken mice: workers leave a couple of glasses out each day and the tipsy rodents scuttle from their nests to the sherry and up the minuscule ladder left for their convenience. They don't seem to scuttle back quite so quickly.

Another excellent place worth a visit is Emilio Lustau, which has been producing award-winning sherries since 1896.

Its 19th century 'cathedrals, situated a short walk from the centre on Calle Arcos, hold a staggering seven million litres of wine and seeing them is certainly nothing short of amazing.

The city's two great loves are combined during the May feria

Charming host Almudena de la Maza explained that the company has worked hard to market its 40 brands in the UK and America.

And it seems to be working with both the Washington Post and New York Times recently singing the company's praises.

In particular, the Post insisting that Lustau's finos, amontillados and manzanillas are the perfect com-

ination for Asian cuisine, adding: "everyone should try it at least once."

Almudena explained: "It is getting rid of its staid image in the US. They are re-discovering the experiences of sherry again."

Once I had sampled the product at the end of the tour, I decided to clear my head with a stroll around the nearby Moorish castle, the alcázar. The grounds are full of orange trees and water gardens, but it's the peaceful Arab baths and the beautiful mosque which capture the imagination.

The alcázar complex boasts a camera obscura, housed in the 17th century governor's palace. As the lenses in the cupola are opened the city unfurls in the round and, with deft hands, the operator moves the levers to transport you from one church to the next, from sherry vineyards to bodegas, from alleyways to broad avenues.

The awesome cathedral lies in the shade of the castle complex, and nearby is San Miguel, which lends its name to one of the city's two gypsy quarters. The other, Santiago, is west of the city centre.

Here you find a distinct style of flamenco, quite different from the more familiar Sevillano interpretation. Here, too, dozens of tiny tascas, or tapas bars, where the locals will fling a chair aside and dance to a guitarist's passionate playing without a moment's notice.

Back in the centre, Calle Larga, the hub of Jerez's elegant shopping district, is a great place to stroll. High street fashion stores and quirky specialist shops occupy converted urban palaces here: and the patios and wrought iron railings open on to a broad, café-lined pedestrianised street.

North east of Calle Larga is the world-renowned Royal Andalucian School of Equestrian Excellence. It started as a private passion for the scion of one of the city's great sherry houses, but despite being a public institution for less than 30 years, the school is a mecca for horse lovers.

Monks at the Carthusian monastery on the edge

of the city began breeding pure Spanish bloodlines six hundred years ago, and the amazing Andalusian horses are the result.

Little wonder they can walk on their hind legs, turn on a one euro coin and leap to order. They could probably serve you a glass of fino and some tapas with a little extra training.

The city's two great loves, sherry and horses, are combined during the May feria. Ostensibly a horse fair, the feria has turned into the

city's biggest party of the year, when you can sit at one of the stalls or bars knocking back the sherry and admiring the parade of riders in traditional costume showing off their elegant charges.

But Jerez doesn't wait until spring to live life outdoors. The mild winter weather – well most years, at least – means you can bask at a street café even in March.

And besides, with the latest batch of sherry recently released, why wait months to try it?



LUSCIOUS: Lustau's charming bodega in Jerez

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4 Sherry triangle

Vat will do nicely

IT is a tradition that dates back to the 17th century. And Carol Ann Duffy was not to be outdone. Indeed, the new UK Poet Laureate was quite clear – and perhaps extremely diplomatic – about the type of sherry she wanted as part of the honour of taking the post last year. Unlike her predecessors, Andrew Motion and Ted Hughes – who both plumped for oloroso – Duffy, the first female laureate, wanted ten different types of sherry. One for each year in the job. Starting with a fino manzanilla from Sanlúcar de Barameda, she will get 72 bottles of different sherry at the beginning of each year. Receiving the 'butt of sack' (around 720 bottles) is a tradition going back to 1619 when poet Ben Jonson received a cask of sherry during James I's reign. Given as a token of thanks for his services to the crown, it confirmed a British obsession with sherry, which continues to the present day. It all began when Sir Francis Drake ransacked the nearby port of Cadiz, in 1587. "Among other things, he looted 2,900 barrels of sherry," explains César Saldaña, the boss of Jerez's consejo regulador wine authority. It had soon become so highly prized and fashionable that William Shakespeare wrote about it in *Henry IV Part II*. His character Falstaff regales that sherry 'ascends into the brain; makes it quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery . . . and becomes excellent wit'. They certainly seemed prophetic words, as I sipped a glass of bone dry manzanilla at the historic Barbadillo bodega in the heart of Sanlúcar. The detritus of a day of downpours soon melted away amid the marble col-

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onnades and ancient wood-panelled corridors. Creaking conservatism at its best, there are few better glimpses into a bygone era. Sanlúcar is very much the 'Slowhand' of Spain, the Eric Clapton of Andalucía. An area, where time stands still and good old fashioned English manners are *de rigour*. No one seems to be in a hurry and there is a pervading sense of calm. This is personified by a peek inside the famous old palatial home of the late Duquesa de Medina Sidonia. The grand palace of the aristocrat, once dubbed the 'Red Duchess' for her uncharacteristic left-wing views, has a guest house of nine rooms and wonderful tea rooms. Interestingly, the dry finos of Sanlúcar, known as manzanillas, have recently taken over as Spain's most popular sherries. "They keep growing and growing in popularity," explains Carmen Aumesquet, marketing boss of the consejo regulador. "They are a new discovery and because they are paler they are seen as fresher, more fragile perhaps."

The fashion for the drink, which has helped to see a continuing growth in the domestic market, is one of the success stories for an industry that has seen the world market drop yet again. "We are working hard to change the image of sherry," explains Aumesquet. "In Germany and Holland we are trying to move people away from the white brands, and in England, away from the image as being a drink for grandmothers."

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POETIC: Sherry has inspired poets like Carol Ann Duffy, and (top) chefs like Blumenthal

TIMELESS: Barbadillo in Sanlúcar and (inset) Aumesquet

The three Michelin-starred chef from the Fat Duck, in Berkshire, has gone sherry crazy over the last few years, now serving 30 different brands in his restaurant, as well as starting a research programme into its qualities. In conjunction with the University of Leeds he has been looking into the so called 'marriage' between sherry and a variety of foods. "He is in love with the place and its sherries, but all he wanted us to send him was the veil of yeast that protects dry sherries," says Aumesquet. "He has been experimenting on them in the lab."

Alongside Heston, a new book, *The Perfect Marriage*, takes the best recipes using sherry from a series of UK chefs, including Marcus Wareing, Skye Gyngell and Richard Corrigan. Meanwhile Jamie Oliver has also been a recent visitor to the city, after making a documentary on food in Ronda, while other famous UK visitors and connoisseurs include Winston Churchill, Roger Moore and Sean Connery.

The obsession with sherry in the UK was so strong that by the 17th century around 70 per cent of the area's wines were being exported there. Inevitably this led to an influx of British traders, and by the late 18th century, dozens of British merchants had opened businesses in Jerez. Alongside the wealthy Spanish families they were soon building beautiful homes in the centre, not to mention enormous bodegas. Their legacy is obvious today with names such as Harvey's and Williams & Humbert still adorning numerous outbuildings. While there are only a fraction of the once 10,000 bodegas in the city, the ones that stand are a delight to poke around. Sturdy constructions usually painted in the trademark yellow, white and green, some are now Government departments, while others are supermarkets. But fortunately though, many of them are still bodegas and producing wine. And best of all, there has been a radical change over the last few years in terms of the industry opening out and welcoming visitors. While five years ago you might, at a push, get yourself a tour of the huge commercial operation that is Gonzales Byass, you'd be hard pressed to visit much else. Today, in part thanks to the city promoting and financing an effort to encourage wine tourism, suddenly there are a dozen or more bodegas possible to visit. And there is a huge variety from small, traditional family-run bodegas, such as Hidalgo, to the slick, modern operations, like Lustau or Estevez. At Hidalgo little has changed in 50 years, the office still sports wooden sideboards and old photos that are in need of a dust. The company van looks like something out of a silent movie. On the ring road one of the most interesting visits can combine sherry with horses, as well as one of the best private art collections in Andalucía. Bodegas Estevez, the producer of famous brands including La Guita and Valdespino, not only has one warehouse bigger than a football field with a staggering 25,000 casks! but it also has a stables of 60 delightful pure-bred Spanish horses. And in an adjacent warehouse – also the size of a football field – is a great collection of labels going back to the 18th century, as well as an art collection, which has over 100 Picasso prints, a Miro and numerous delightful paintings by current Jerez stalwart Carlos Ayala, most with a sherry theme. Another collection at Bodegas Tradicion has paintings by Goya, Velazquez, and painter of the moment, Joaquín Sorolla. It is an impressive collection and when coupled with the fabulous wine – not to mention horses and flamenco, which is also one of the city's traits – it is enough to inspire poetry. It is appropriate then, that after receiving her 'butt of sack' in November, Carol Ann Duffy promised to pen an ode to the city. "I will definitely be writing a poem about sherry. Partly because I now know that Shakespeare wrote about it and partly because of feeling inspired by the story of sherry. The history of it all is wonderful and the gift of the sherry is this great continuation of friendship between Spain and Britain."

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THE sherry triangle is a true golden triangle full of interesting places to visit. The landscape is littered with famous vineyards, left, while a visit to Bodegas Real Tesoro (above and inset top) in the heart of Jerez is particularly worthwhile. And don't forget to visit Sanlucar for its famous horse race on the beach in the summer



A marriage made in Jerez

What to eat with sherry

THERE are two broad methods for ageing sherry: Either open to the air or under a layer of yeast (or 'flor'), which floats on the surface of the wine.

The 'flor' wines are known as finos (and the nearby town of Sanlucar has its own version of fino called manzanilla).

The open-to-the-air wines are called olorosos. While amontillados start under "flor" they end up developing open to the air.

But one thing all sheries go through is a solera system. This system, which blends older and younger wines, helps to iron out differences between harvests and improve quality.

The finos (and manzanillas) are bone-dry and should be drunk ice-cold. They go beautifully with all kinds of seafood. Fino is also perfectly suited to tapas as it copes very well with the chopping and changing from meat, to fish to vegetable nibbles.

Not many wines can do this. Don't be afraid to order fino by the half-bottle or bottle (along with an ice-bucket) to go with your tapas.

The amontillados are more suited to lighter meats, like roast chicken or pate and the olorosos go well with fuller flavoured dishes such as chorizo or smoked bacon.

There are sweetened versions of the amontillado and oloroso wines usually known as 'medium' or cream sheries. These pair up very nicely with salty, blue cheeses.

Finally the very sweet pedro ximenez sheries go brilliantly with any dessert.

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Sherry triangle special

Don't miss a trip to El Puerto's grand Castle of San Marcos, writes Jon Clarke

WHILE most of the main sherry houses are steeped in history, few come as illustrious as the grand old gent, Caballero. Established in 1830, the firm that once supplied the wood for the old sherry vats, is nowadays one of the triangle's key producers.

As well as its winery in El Puerto de Santa Maria it also owns Lustau in Jerez, not to mention the feather in its cap the Castle of San Marcos. A former tenth century mosque, it was turned into a church and later castle after the Arabic village of Alcanate was conquered by Alfonso X in 1260. The town was soon to get its name after the figurine of Santa Maria del Puerto (now known as Virgen de los Milagros), which was installed in the church. The main core of the mosque has fortunately survived and is in magnificent condition. Its southern wall, or qibla, hosts the mihrab - discovered in 1934 - which indicates the direction to Mecca.

"It is a great place to visit particularly



A castle for a gentleman

in the summer when actors take history tours around the castle," says Almudena de la Maza, of Cabellero wineries.

The castle has served as the local town hall and even a prison

The refurbishment of the castle - which has served as the local town hall and even prison - has seen a number of cultural programmes for the town.

El Puerto is always an interesting place to visit, especially in August when the upmarket hordes descend for its stunning social and beach life.

Expanding from 80,000 to 250,000 in the summer months, it boasts Spain's third most important bull ring, not to mention numerous fine

churches and palatial homes.

A laid-back place, it came to prominence in the 18th century as a botanical garden where plants brought from the New World were cultivated for seed.

Today, one should certainly try to visit either Angel Leon's excellent Michelin-starred restaurant Aponiente, or the elegant, well-established stalwart El Faro, with its own sizeable vegetable garden and amazing wine list.

Castle visits, including a sherry tasting, are from 10.30am to 1.30pm Tues, Thurs and Sats. Price five euros per person, two euros for children.



More than just sherry

My Jerez, by English resident Wilma Crowther-Bellas

JEREZ has many things from sherry and horses to flamenco and the great architecture. There are great carnivals, football... and, soon, even Ikea.

Best of all, the city is brilliantly placed, with a great infrastructure including an airport just ten minutes from the city centre. The coast at Sanlucar and El Puerto de Santa Maria is just a short 15 minute drive away.

Take a stroll down Calle Larga and you'll see the street brimming with shoppers and businessmen, who on a glorious summer's day, sip their coffee in countless café's before starting their working day.

The Plaza Arenal plays host to the older generation who like to sit on its benches and watch the world go by. And there are queues in every bank as customers still prefer to pay for their bills the old fashioned way.

But re-visit these same places again after 2pm and everything comes to a standstill. That's what I love best about Jerez. The noise and commotion of an exuberant and vibrant city contrasted with the quietness of a sleepy town, more so than anywhere in Andalucía.

The midday shutdown, or siesta, takes some getting used to. But after four years of being here I truly believe that if you can't beat them, then join them...and if that doesn't work... there's always El Corte Inglés...now that stays open 'uninterruptedly' until 10pm!

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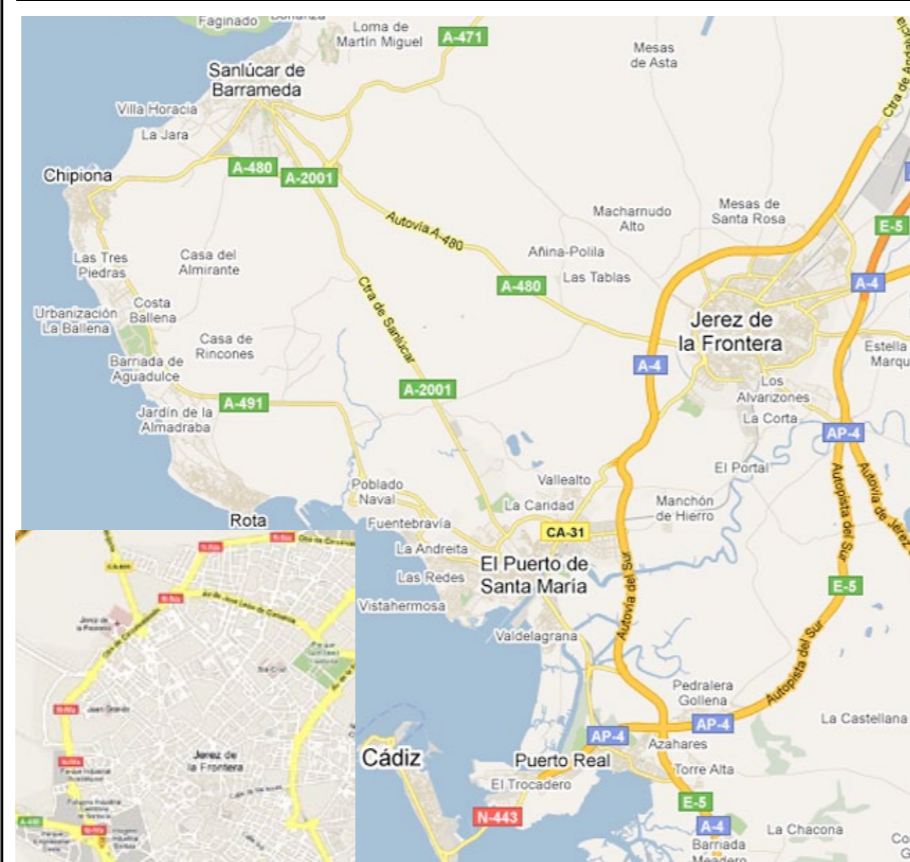
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10 Sherry triangle



SHERRY TRIANGLE MAP, WITH (LEFT) THE CENTRE OF JEREZ

Sherry triangle special

WHERE TO EAT

WHILE Jerez lacks the sophistication of Malaga or Sevilla in the food stakes, it has some fast improving avant garde restaurants. In the heart of the city, the pick of the bunch must be Sabores, inside Hotel Chancilleria. Here, English speaking maitre Miguel will marry the perfect sherry with your dish (by appointment only), a unique experience that you simply cannot miss. The chef, Juan, meanwhile boasts having won the 'Most promising young Chef of Spain' award and has taught in Jerez's Escuela de Hosteleria cookery school.

You can begin your unforgettable experience here with a complimentary glass of wine courtesy of Sabores. Also worth a visit in the centre is Calle San Francisco de Paula, where you will find the excellent Meson Alcazaba, which has a brilliant value menu del dia for 10 euros, including some superb signature dishes such as *carillada*, or bull's cheek, or lobster in rice. Nearby is the excellent tapas bar La Cruz Blanca, which serves up some of the most innovative tapas and raciones in Jerez. Unsur-



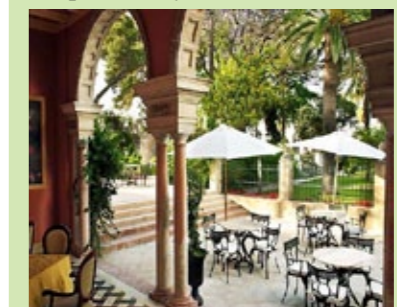
ORGANIC: Fernando Cordoba in his huerta at El Faro, while (left) Luis at Alcazaba

prisingly, it is always packed. Much more of a food pilgrimage is the port of El Puerto de Santa Maria where you will find Cadiz's only Michelin-star-tipped restaurant, the excellent Aponiente, run by innovative chef Angel Leon. Sadly it is currently closed for refurbishment, reopening this summer. Even more glamorous though is the wonderful restaurant El Faro, a well established place just outside the city centre, where chef Fernando Cordoba has mastered the art of mixing fine sherry with food. It is not cheap, but its elegance is easily matched by the food, the huge wine cellar (one of the biggest in Andalusia) and the big organic vegetable garden at the back. Finally, if you are looking for something completely different and love fish, try the hip joint in the so-called Puerto Sherry, Taberna del Marinero. A truly unique and secret location right underneath the lighthouse, this light and airy chiringuito-style restaurant is a surefire bet for a good fish lunch.

WHERE TO STAY

THE Sherry Triangle should be known as the Golden Triangle when it comes to great places to stay.

If you are looking for historical and authentic places to stay then you are really spoilt for choice. In the centre of Jerez, you can pick from a trio of charming old town-houses converted into luxury boutique hotels. Chancilleria is a charming spot, sustainably developed by Jo and her husband Anthony, while bright and stylish Casa Grande is run by witty German host Monika. Nearby you might also try La Fonda Barranco, a cool and urbane spot right next to the planned new flamenco museum, while on the way out of the centre you might be tempted to try the five star Hotel



GRAND: Los Jandalos Jerez and (below) Duques de Medinaceli

Jerez, which has one of the best collections of vintage sheries, not to mention whiskeys in town. Lastly, but anything but least is the grand four-star Los Jandalos Jerez, which is doing some impressive deals, including breakfast, a wine tour and tasting from just 40 euros per person. The same group, coincidentally, also has two other hotels in nearby Puerto de Santa Maria, Vistahermosa and Santa Maria, which are both offering the same deal. Also in Puerto Santa Maria you might want to check out the stunning historic hotels Monasterio and the Duques de Medinaceli, which are both in the heart of the old town. Another place worth checking out if you are keener on the countryside option, or perhaps need to be near to the airport is the Casa Vina de Alcantara, which is peaceful set in charming grounds.



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Buffet Breakfast
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Visit to a Wine Cellar
Admission to Casino Bahía de Cádiz

Hotel Duques de Medinaceli 5*: **280 Euros**
Hotel Monasterio San Miguel 4*: **225 Euros**
VAT Included/Price per person and package

Family Package

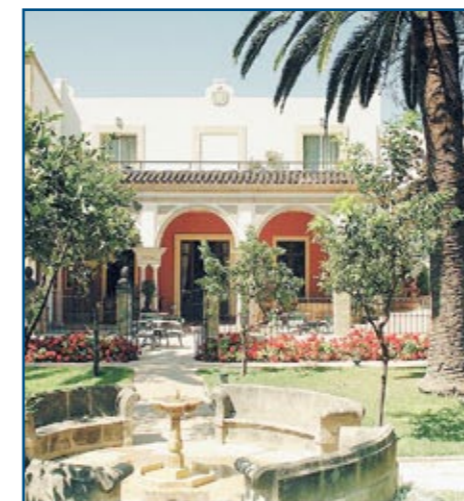
Accommodation sharing a Double Room
Buffet Breakfast
One meal in our Restaurant
VIP Treatment on arrival
(A bottle of Sherry and sweets for the kids)
Visit to Jerez Zoo
Children up to 10 years free, sharing room with two adults (maximum 2 children sharing same bed)

Hotel Duques de Medinaceli 5*: **300 Euros**
Hotel Monasterio San Miguel 4*: **236 Euros**
VAT Included/Price per person and package

Golf Package

Accommodation sharing a Double Room
Buffet Breakfast
One meal in our Restaurant
VIP Treatment on arrival
1 Green Fee to be chosen from Sherry Golf, Villanueva Golf or Golf El Puerto
Admission to Casino Bahía de Cádiz

Hotel Duques de Medinaceli 5*: **336 Euros**
Hotel Monasterio San Miguel 4*: **285 Euros**
VAT Included/Price per person and package



Hotel Duques de Medinaceli*****
El Puerto de Santa María - Cádiz
reservasduques@jale.com T. 956 86 07 77



Hotel Monasterio San Miguel****
El Puerto de Santa María - Cádiz
reservasmonasterio@jale.com T. 956 54 04 40

Jerez eventos 2010



Festival de Jerez,
26 de febrero
al 13 marzo

Semana Santa,
28 de marzo
al 4 de abril

**Mundial de
Motociclismo,**
30 de abril
al 2 de mayo

Feria del Caballo
2 al 9 de mayo

Vinoble
30 de mayo
al 2 de junio

**Fiestas de la
Vendimia**
4 al 19 de
septiembre

**Navidad
en Jerez**
27 de noviembre
al 6 de enero



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