

# All about Sotogrande

## Guadiaro and San Roque

October 2010

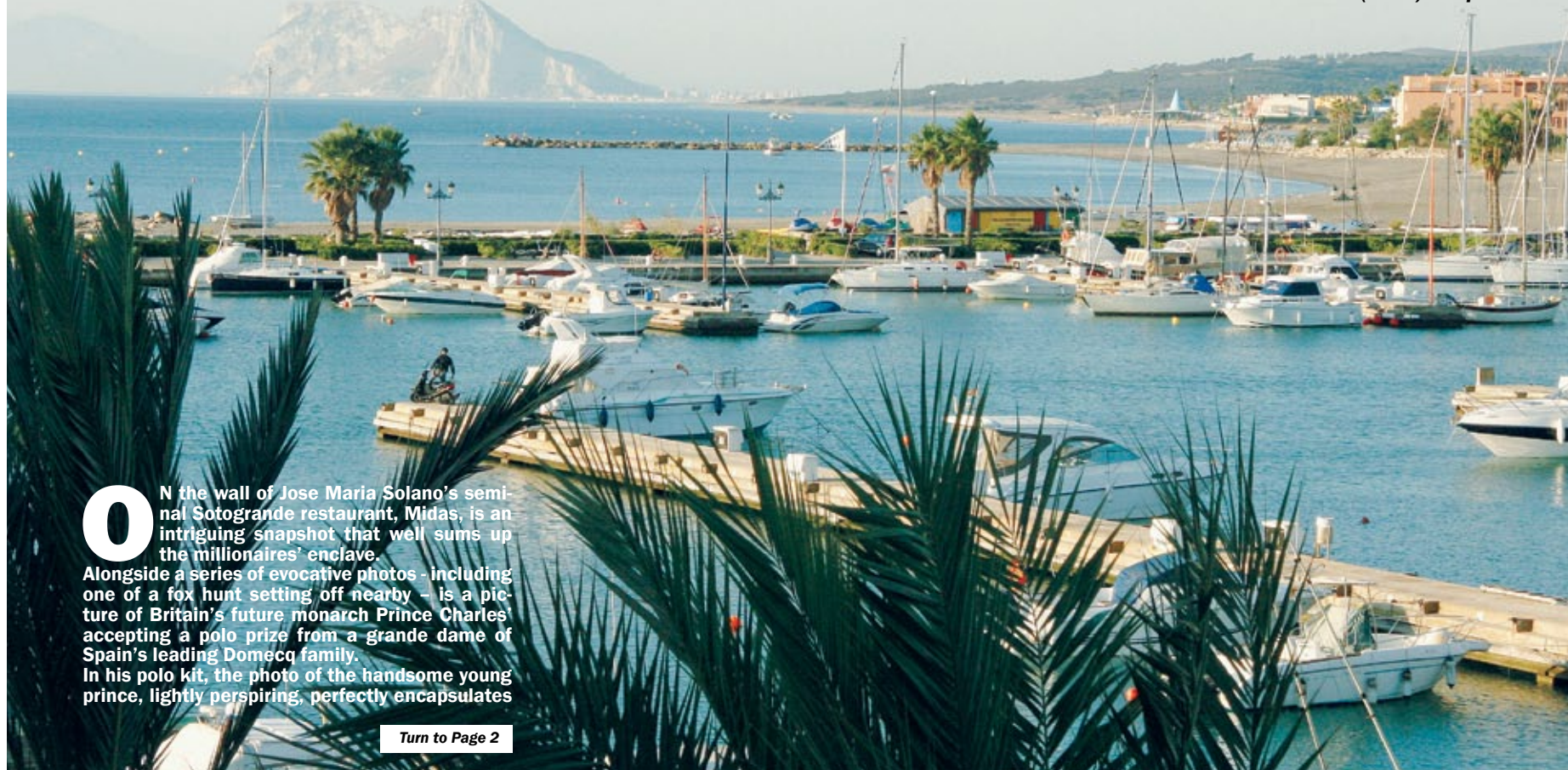
A 16-page Olive Press insiders guide

## It's grand in Sotogrande

*It's where the British royals take their hols and Eddie Jordan, Glenn Hoddle and Genesis's Mike Rutherford have homes. Is it any wonder that the millionaires' enclave of Sotogrande is weathering the recession well. Jon Clarke discovers why*



**EXCLUSIVE HIDEOUT:** At the Marina and (inset) the polo



**O**N the wall of Jose Maria Solano's semi-nal Sotogrande restaurant, Midas, is an intriguing snapshot that well sums up the millionaires' enclave.

Alongside a series of evocative photos - including one of a fox hunt setting off nearby - is a picture of Britain's future monarch Prince Charles' accepting a polo prize from a grande dame of Spain's leading Domecq family. In his polo kit, the photo of the handsome young prince, lightly perspiring, perfectly encapsulates

Turn to Page 2

Pictures by: JON CLARKE

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## <sup>2</sup> Sotogrande special

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why this 4,400 acre private estate – Spain's largest – is one of Europe's most exclusive hideouts. Long an escape for the British royal family at summer time (Prince Andrew, the Duchess of York, Prince William and Harry and princesses Eugenie and Beatrice are regulars) the majority of villas cost over a million and the security gates are manned 24-hours a day. It is hard to imagine then, that JG Ballard's cult novel *Cocaine Nights* is said to have been set inside the millionaires' playground.

**This is a world of privilege, where Russian oligarchs sip cocktails with British debutantes**

Telling the story of a gruesome murder taking place in a disgruntled upper middle class community living in a gated community hell, known as *Estrella del Mar*, it couldn't seem further from the truth.

There is certainly nothing downbeat or depressing about the place.

The clean, leafy streets, the beautifully kept mansions, the almost exotic private gardens. This is a world of privilege, where Russian oligarchs sip cocktails with British debutantes, Argentinian polo players hang out with German ad men and London account managers take lunch with American media moguls.

Throw in a colourful mix of celebrities, including Rod Stewart, Mariah Carey, Mike

# Cocaine nights and a lot more



**PRIVILEGE: But there is a lot less ostentatwion than at nearby Puerto Banus**

Rutherford of Genesis, Antonio Banderas, Glenn Hoddle and Eddie Jordan, who either have homes here, or have been spotted on holiday, and you have quite a power base. Unlike, its near neighbour of Puerto Banus, where ostentation knows no bounds, in Sotogrande – the *Bishop's Avenue of Andalucia* – peo-

ple actively dress down.

This is an international scene, understated and mostly without a need to show off its wealth.

"It is an incredibly privileged place, full of wealth," says Suzi Langley, of Sotogrande-based media company PLC, who grew up amid its leafy confines and attended its celebrated Sotogrande pri-

ivate school.

"It is a great place to bring up a family, as it is extremely safe and there are loads of sports on offer, such as polo, tennis, golf and football."

Argentinian expat Valeria Alfie agrees: "Sotogrande is a place for international, world travellers, who mostly have the best of everything. People don't come here to show off their money. These are low profile, understated people, who don't wear Prada or gold Rolex's."

But, that is not to say they can't afford it.

This is, after all, where, according to the *Sunday Times*, Spain's most expensive real estate can be found.

In particular is one house, La Manzana, owned by the former boss of French brand Cartier, that three years ago went on the market for a whopping 24 million euros. More of a small palace than a villa, it was described by local agents as "Andalucian neo-Palladian with a hint of Mudejar", but was really just, well, basically large.

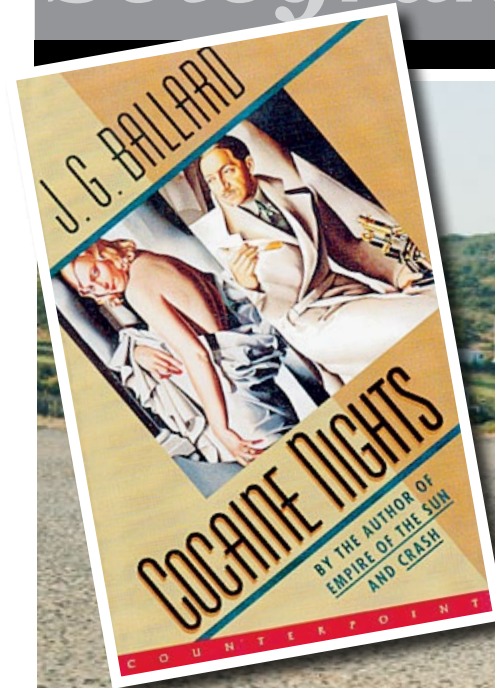
Set in five acres and taking up seven plots of the estate, the house counted ten bedrooms, a gym, walk in safe, not to mention a sauna, staff quarters and a 16m-long infinity swimming pool. The sort of place the Great



**CHARMS: The church in Pueblo Nuevo de Guadiaro**

## Sotogrande special

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**EXPANSE: Lovely beach with Torrequeleja in the background, (inset) book Cocaine Nights, which is said to be set in Sotogrande and (right) homeowners Glen Johnson, Glenn Hoddle and Katie Price aka Jordan with husband**

Gatsby would have bought and holed up in, it looks more like a hotel than a private property. The childrens' Wendy house in the garden looks more expensive than the average Fuengirola apartment.

While things have generally now dropped in price a little (perhaps as much as 30 per cent, according to some local agents), the average home in Sotogrande is still weighing in at 1.5million euros.

It is for this reason that you get a lot of high-powered businessmen, celebrities and sportsmen buying in the area.

There are certainly plenty of English footballers buying in the area, including Shay Given, Glen Johnson and former England manager Glenn Hoddle.

Unsurprisingly, with its connections to golf and polo, the place counts roving UK trade ambassador Prince Andrew as a regular visitor.

A frequent summer tourist, along with his ex-wife Fergie, the Duchess of York, this year he acquired a large house in nearby San Enrique, reportedly rent free.

Normally spending a month in the resort with her two daughters Beatrice and Eugenie, this summer her ex-husband Prince Andrew flew in specially to attend daughter Beatrice's 22nd birthday. And, of course, one must not forget the princes Wills and Harry,

who have often taken a turn on the green baize of the Santa Maria polo club, now said to be one of the best polo clubs in Europe, with around a dozen pitches.

With games taking place throughout the summer, it is an excellent place to see how the other half live, take a glass of champagne and step in the divots after each chukka.

Sandwiched between the Rock of Gibraltar and the Sierra de Almenara, it was a real masterstroke to set this millionaires' playground here.

Sotogrande's origins started with the dream of a millionaire businessman Colonel Joseph McMicking, who "wanted to build Paradise".

The Philippines-based entrepreneur had already created Makati, an exclusive satellite city for the affluent elite of Filipino society, and in 1962 he decided to try the same in Spain.

He sent his Spanish cousin to track down the perfect location and eventually managed to secure five adjoining estates fronting the Mediterranean which, rapidly amalgamated, became the basis of Sotogrande.

Back then there was practically nothing there apart from the odd cortijo and a few flocks of sheep and goats. Its strongest selling point was its location near to Gibraltar and the views towards the landmass of Morocco in the dis-

tance. It was before the advent of mass tourism and land along the Costa del Sol was seen as cheap, unproductive land that could generally be acquired for next to nothing. At the mouth of the River Guadiaro that originates in the hills above Ronda, the beaches were perfect as was the rolling, but not too steep terrain.

This was the ideal spot to build a golf course, which was to be the main foundation of the resort.

They drafted in one of the world's best known course designers and designed what is now known as the 'Sotogrande old course'.

It was the first course in Europe to have automatic sprinklers - 472 of them, discreetly serviced by 100 miles of underground cable.

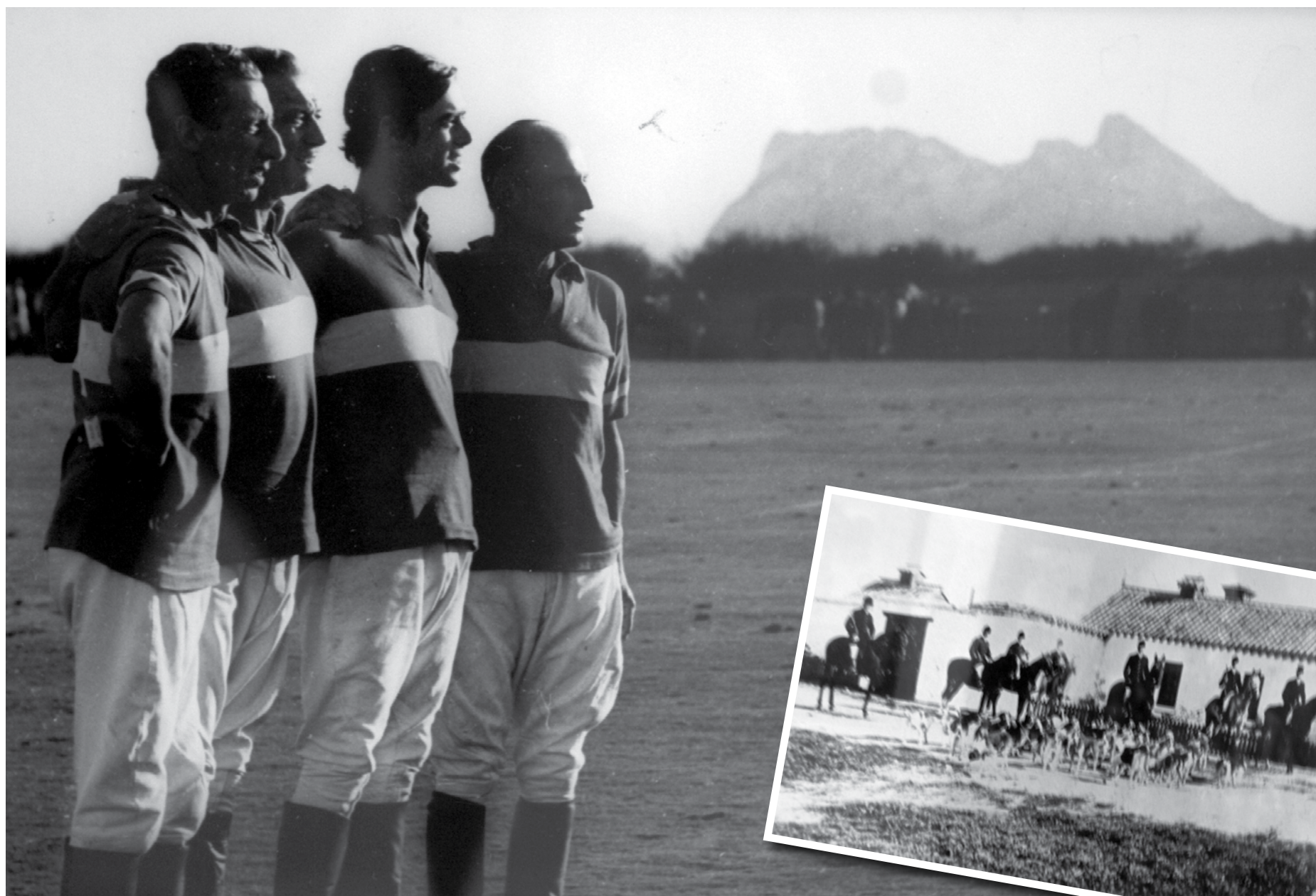
Following the Makati model, McMicking began selling plots as high class, low-density residential developments. Employing the services of the well connected society lady Carmen Guerendiain, formerly of Madrid's Ritz hotel, it had soon become one of Europe's hippest places to invest in.

Alongside Marbella a few miles east, suddenly the world's movers and shakers, celebrities and sportsmen started to have an alternative to San Tropez, Positano and Deauville.

Further golf courses followed fast – there are now five – and by 1985 the resort also counted a tennis club, croquet club, not to mention polo, sailing, wind-surfing and beach clubs, as well as stables for 200 horses. McMicking's paradise was coming into effect.







## A tradition of privilege

### A history of good service

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IT is the epitome of Spanish breeding. The photo of the four Domecq brothers standing proudly on the clipped lawns of Santa Maria polo club (above), sums up the type of clientele the exclusive area of Sotogrande has long attracted. Posing in their polo shirts, with Gibraltar clearly in the background, the privileged brothers have long had connections with the wealthy enclave. As well as frequently putting out a polo team in the annual Gold Cup tournament, they also own property in the area and are regular visitors. "Sotogrande has always attracted these sorts of people. And it has changed very little," says owner of Midas restaurant Jose Maria Solano, who went to school with one of the Domecq brothers. "There are a few more businesses and houses now, but it has maintained its cache." One of the few things that has changed is the loss of the weekly fox hunt (photo above) that used to head off from an estate just outside Sotogrande, in Guadalquivir. But, as modern photos still attest, many of the wealthy visitors at the annual summer polo tournaments still wear stetson style hats, like the forerunners of the Sotogrande scene pictured left.



MEMORIES: Lady Domecq presents a young Prince Charles with award



## A right royal retreat

A REGAL HOLIDAY: Fergie, daughters Eugenie and Beatrice and princes Wills and Harry (inset)

THERE are few places in Europe that have such a close connection with the British Royal Family. Hardly a summer goes by when a phalanx of princesses and princes don't arrive to grace the perfectly clipped green baize surfaces of the Santa Maria polo club. The most regular visitor is Fergie, the Duchess of York, who spends at least a month each summer staying within the high security confines of the resort. Normally residing at the multi-million euro residence of former boyfriend Paddy McNally - a former journalist, who part-controlled the advertising rights to Formula One - she usually brings out her daughters Eugenie and Beatrice. Beatrice normally celebrates her birthday in Sotogrande.

And this year for her 22nd, her father Prince Andrew flew in specially for the big day after a much publicised dalliance with Spanish model Alexandra Escat aboard a yacht in Sardinia. The roving UK trade ambassador has often taken holidays in the resort, sometimes, even alone with his ex-wife. Other frequent royal visitors are future king William and his brother Harry, who have occasionally played in the annual summer polo tournament. They are following in the footsteps of their father, who used to regularly turn up to play in the summer tournament, occasionally winning a prize. Indeed, he can be seen in a charming photograph on the wall of the ancient restaurant Midas, in the port, accepting an award from a willowy Lady Domecq.



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### SOTOGRANDE COSTA 850.000 €



Plot: 4 Plot: 13 Constr: 167m<sup>2</sup> Terr: 39m<sup>2</sup> Ref: EMP 1286  
This waterfront townhouse is located in the heart of Puerto Sotogrande with its amenities of beach and tennis clubs, shops and close to the beach. Central heating and individual A/C units.

*Casa adosada situada en el corazón del Puerto de Sotogrande con los clubes de playa y tenis, tiendas y cerca de la playa. Calefacción central y unidades individuales de aire acondicionado.*

### SOTOGRANDE ALTO 450.000 €



Plot: 2 Plot: 2 Plot: 1094m<sup>2</sup> Constr: 186m<sup>2</sup> Ref: HSN1 1066  
A delightful single storey villa located in the desirable lower part of Sotogrande Alto. Ample covered and open terraces with BBQ, jacuzzi, central heating by radiators.

*Villa de una planta con un precioso jardín situado en la deseada zona baja de Sotogrande Alto. Amplias terrazas cubiertas y descubiertas con BBQ, jacuzzi, calefacción central por radiadores.*

### SOTOGRANDE ALTO 585.000 €



Plot: 3 Plot: 3 Constr: 221m<sup>2</sup> Terr: 78m<sup>2</sup> Ref: VAL 1059  
A ground floor apartment in Valgrande which offers communal pool, spa with lapping pool, jacuzzi and other facilities. Hot/cold A/C, aged marble floors, underfloor heating, 2 parking spaces and storeroom.

*Apartamento en planta baja en Valgrande con piscinas exterior e interior climatizada, jacuzzi y otras instalaciones. A/C frío/calor, suelo radiante, sacos de mármol, 2 plazas de garaje y trastero.*

### SOTOGRANDE COSTA 1.750.000 €



VILLA Plot: 7 Plot: 6 Plot: 2.513m<sup>2</sup> Constr: 273m<sup>2</sup> Ref: HSS7 1068  
A traditional single floor "summer home" situated in the heart of the most desired area of Sotogrande. The seven bedrooms and spacious south and southwest orientated garden and pool all go to make this an ideal summer vacation home.

*Villa de una sola planta y estilo tradicional situada en el corazón de la zona más deseada de Sotogrande. Sus 7 habitaciones y el gran jardín con piscina orientado al suroeste hacen de ésta la casa ideal para pasar las vacaciones de verano.*

### SOTOGRANDE ALTO 750.000 €



Plot: 5 Plot: 3 Plot: 1248m<sup>2</sup> Constr: 390m<sup>2</sup> Ref: HSN5 758  
Fabulous southerly views to both of the San Roque golf courses from this unique villa, with the plot being laid mainly to paving and shingle. Individual air conditioning units in some rooms.

*Fabulosas vistas al sur a los campos de golf de San Roque desde esta villa única, con la mayoría de la parcela pavimentada. Dispone de aire acondicionado en algunas habitaciones.*

### SOTOGRANDE COSTA 371.945 €



Plot: 3 Plot: 2 Constr: 133m<sup>2</sup> Terr: 35m<sup>2</sup> Ref: COR 1267  
A penthouse apartment with a very sunny southerly aspect and pleasant views. Hot/cold A/C, marble floors, double glazing, storeroom and parking space in the communal garage.

*Ático en la marina de Sotogrande muy soleado, orientado al sur y con bonitas vistas. Doble acristalamiento, aire acondicionado frío/calor, trastero y plaza de parking.*

### SOTOGRANDE ALTO 2.550.000 €

VILLA Plot: 6 Plot: 4 Plot: 4.256m<sup>2</sup> Constr: 690m<sup>2</sup> Terr: 40 m<sup>2</sup> Ref: HSN5 1074

A beautiful house in a most tranquil setting bordering Valdeherra Golf Course with lovely southfacing mature and very private gardens. Built on one level apart from an independent first floor office. It is maintained in immaculate order.

*Preciosa casa situada en un lugar muy tranquilo y colindando con el campo de golf de Valdeherra con precioso jardín maduro, muy privado y orientado al sur. Construida en una planta a excepción de una oficina que está en la primera. La propiedad está mantenida en perfecto estado.*



# Sotogrande special

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## Real Spain is within easy reach

A group of close-by towns, San Martin, San Enrique, San Pablo and Guadiaro, offer a great escape from the ordered confines of Sotogrande



TAKE a ride just ten minutes inland from Sotogrande and you will start to find what is known as 'real Spain'.

Away from the clipped lawns and high security fences of Sotogrande, the trio of San Martin de Tesorillo, San Enrique and Guadiaro have a distinct Andalusian charm. Taking the A-5300 you are heading up the Guadiaro valley in a northerly direction towards Gaucin and the Serania de Ronda.

Almost all the land all the way to San Pablo de Buceite was once owned by the famous Larios family, one of Andalusia's wealthiest dynasty.

The trio of towns San Pablo (wheat), San Martin (olive oil and oranges) and San Luis de Sabinillas (sugar) were set up as productive farms and thrived, while offering their workers normally a pittance as wages.

In 1928 the Larios family sold off the three colonies to the March family for a sum of eight million pesetas. Then in 1944 March allowed



the land to be turned into smaller plots, giving rise to the present-day village. "They are all so different to Sotogrande," explains marketing expert Suzi Langley, who lives on a finca, just outside San Martin. "No one speaks English there and they feel very Spanish."

### A ferry plied its trade across the river until in 1929 an iron bridge was constructed.

"Everyone lives for the oranges. They completely surround the village and are some of

the best in Spain."

The history of the Guadiaro area is linked intrinsically to the ancient Roman sites of Barbesula and Borondo.

The present-day Guadiaro river would have been the mythical river Chrysus, which the Moors would later call Guadiaro.

In 400 B.C. the River Chrysus is quoted as a provisions and trading point for the eastern part of the Straits of Gibraltar, near the edge of a world that people in ancient times believed to be flat.

During the Christian reconquest the river was the frontier in this area, with the Arabs and Christians fighting fiercely over the nearby towns of Castellar, Jimena and Cortes.

It is for this reason that each has the full correct extended name 'de la frontera' added as a suffix.

A ferry plied its trade across the river until in 1929 an iron bridge was constructed.

The Roman city of Barbesula was situated between the present-day villages of Pueblo Nuevo and Guadiaro.

Today the area, particularly in Pueblo Nuevo, is the nerve centre of Sotogrande. It is here that local residents do much of their shopping, get their dry cleaning done, buy their flowers and pick up the best cuts of beef, from Paul Dennis's butcher.

"It is where everyone works," explains Langley. "And best of all it keeps them out of the estate of Sotogrande."

PEACEFUL: River Guadiaro, while left San Pablo and (right) San Martin



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# 8 Sotogrande special 9



## Aye up Chukka

It is no surprise that the world's best polo players descend en-masse to Sotogrande in the summer.

The Santa Maria polo club is not only THE place to be seen in southern Spain in August, but it is often said to have Europe's best facilities. Indeed, the well established club, now run by Luis Estrada, counts no less than a dozen pitches, all of a superb quality.

With games taking place throughout the summer, it is a great place to see how the other half live, enjoy a glass of bubbly and step in the divots after each chukka.

The Gold Cup, which takes place each August, is often said to be the most important tournament in the

world. For the event, up to 120 players (in 28 teams) use over a 1000 horses to compete against each other.

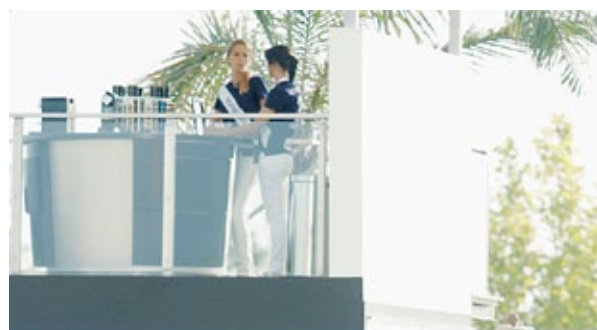
As Director Estrada recently explained: "Now in the polo world there are four main destinations: Argentina, USA, England and Sotogrande."

"But we want to turn the Santa Maria Polo Club into the best polo club in the world."

Initially called the Ayala Polo Club, its origins date back to 1964, when the first polo field, called the Beach, was opened.

Three years later in 1967, competitive polo started with the first tournament involving four teams.

Today, it is a top class club, with restaurants, bars and a variety of other sports facilities attached.



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## Sotogrande

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### A golfer's paradise

*Sotogrande is Spain's home of golf, with a handful of the most celebrated courses in Europe*

ANYONE with half an interest in sport will remember the fantastic last few holes of the Ryder Cup in 1997 when Colin Montgomerie played the best round of his life. That was at Valderrama, which is now viewed as one of the 'must-play' golf courses in Europe, beautifully maintained, but sometimes thought to be a touch too hard at times. So popular is the stunning course that the so-called 'Great White Shark' Greg Norman was last week reported to have acquired the title to the course for a record 35 million euros. It is essential to book ahead and forget trying to play in August when only members are allowed to play. There are four other golf courses around Sotogrande, the first being Real Club de Golf de Sotogrande, also known as the Old Course, which was the first course



**FACILITIES:** The number of courses is second to none. Here driving range at La Reserva

built. Well maintained, it is said to be a dream to play after its trickier sister Valderrama. It was here that the so-called Bermuda grass was first introduced into Spain. The sustainable blend of grass uses less water and leaves an incredible springy feel to the greens and fairways. The others include La Canada and La Reserva, as well as Almenara, which is up in the

hills and where celebrities Glenn Hoddle and Glen Johnson have homes. La Reserva, in particular, is a stunning spot with breathtaking views of both the Med and inland towards the Sierras de Grazalema and Bermeja. Still very low density in terms of construction, it is unsurprisingly not cheap to join at 33,000 euros and members must pay an annual fee of 3000 euros to keep up their membership.

"But what you are getting for your money is unlimited golf, whenever you want, plus use of our exclusive beach club through the summer," explains director Lucas de la Puente.

**Soto has a fabulous tennis and polo club and no less than 11 golf courses**

"And on top of that we are even giving members the first 500 euros off their annual drinks bill."

"There are few places with such a high concentration of 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 here are second to none."

Apart from the fabulous facilities, there is a range of good golf shops scattered around the resort.

By far the best of these is the excellent Golfino shop next to the new Terra Sana in the CC Sotogrande.

The German company has a huge selection of own-brand knits and shirts, and for this winter's season there is a range of stylish fluffy fleece jackets with elegant velvet details.

Even better are the shirts which have high funnel collars that even have UV protection integrated into them.

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12

Sotogrande special

WHERE TO SHOP

How to spend it

**B**EING, without a doubt, Andalusia's real millionaires' playground, it is understandable that Sotogrande would have its fair share of upmarket shops. The only problem is you need the inside knowledge to know where to find them. Scattered around in a series of different locations - many on the outskirts in Guadiaro, or further afield - you have to explore by car. That said, the port itself has a surprisingly good number of small trendy boutiques and is a great place to splash the cash on an early evening visit to the port. In one of the squares just behind the ubiquitous Ke bar, apart from a great hat shop, is the wonderfully decadent Petruska, run by a German woman, who has lived on the coast for many years. Full of "beautiful things", she explains, that include a huge wooden tiger from India and some of the best quality fabrics to be found in southern Spain. Over in Guadiaro, across the motorway is where most of Sotogrande's shops are. It is here that you will find the excellent English butcher, Paul Dennis, selling a superb range of cuts, as well as a fantastic wine shop Anglo Wines. Up the main drag you will also find a good newspaper shop, various interior design shops, as well as an English-run tyre fitter Peter, who has repaired the cars of "just about everyone" over the last nine years. There are a handful of excellent flower shops including Areka and Florium, run by a charming woman an Rossi Luke, who prides herself on her green practices and Fair Trade suppliers. Most exciting of all though, is the private home of long time expatriate Briton Linda Cockerell (pictured above), a little further away in San Enrique, who has the most incredible range of exciting fabrics, alongside an eclectic range of furniture items and accessories from around the world. As well as sourcing practically anything for the home, Linda acts as an agent for hundreds of different companies around the world, and is regularly employed for the interior design of the rich and famous. The best part is visiting her beautifully renovated home and gardens, full of evocative corners and tasteful furniture. Its authenticity is a welcome change from the artificial pleasure palaces of nearby Sotogrande. You might combine the journey with a trip to the fantastic garden centre at Cortijo Papudo, is five minutes further along the same road.

**TALENT:** Linda Cockerell has a special eye for detail

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Sotogrande special

WHERE TO EAT

Romance and a lot, lot more

**ROMANCE:** At Cortijo los Canos, while (inset) chef Ivan at Mara

the floor and hip overhead lighting. Nearby, look out for the fabulous Terra Sana, set up by talented businesswoman Louise Proto from London. The most recent addition to the excellent Marbella chain, it is cleverly designed and has an equally mouth-watering selection of salads, wraps and tapas. Taking over the whole ground floor of the centre, there is a children's playground and the team are arranging a series of special events in the run up to Christmas, including a Santa's grotto and special festive menus. Completely different, but equally charming, is the fabulous Cortijo Los Canos, an ancient old farmhouse, which sits down by the Guadiaro river in Pueblo Nuevo. Converted into a modern restaurant, this is easily one of the most romantic places to dine on the coast. Candlelit in the evening, the menu is an inspired international/Spanish mix and the wine list, while short, is perfectly adequate. In the heart of the port, look out for the well established Midas, which has been open since the marina was finished in 1988. It is a regular grazing point for the likes of Fergie and her daughters when they are in town, and the walls are filled with evocative photos from the resort's history, including one of Prince Charles. You eat at tables overlooking the

WHERE TO STAY

A garden of delight

**EVOCATIVE:** Breakfast terrace at Hotel Marítimo and (inset) garden at Cortijo el Papudo

**Take your pick from a hip marina hotel to a garden centre, with rooms!**

**U**NLESS you happen to have a spare million it is hardly likely that you will be buying a home in Sotogrande anytime soon. So you will have to make do with staying at one of the few hotels and hostels scattered around the resort. While there are a couple of reasonably-priced hostels on the edge of Sotogrande - one of the best being one star Hotel Patricia - the five star NH Almenara hotel is the glitziest, while the Hotel Marítimo is the most stylish. Based literally right next to the boats in the heart of the marina, the Marítimo was designed by Madrid style-guru Pascua Ortega and has some of the hippest rooms in Andalusia. Full of stylish touches, with huge roll top baths and decent sitting areas, the best have views towards Gibraltar and Africa in the distance. Its glamorous hotel manager waxes around with model-like aplomb, while many of the well-heeled guests have clearly recently alighted from yachts. Completely different, but just as evocative, is the authentic country estate Cortijo el Papudo. Set in a beautiful 21 hectare estate, surrounded by avocado, palm and orange trees, this historic country home dates back to at least the early 19th century. A great choice if you are looking for somewhere to unwind, the thriving cortijo - over 1800 metres in size - has little changed for centuries and counts many of its old features. But, best of all, is its incredibly mature garden, created thanks to the horticultural vision of its owner Michael, who is very much in demand as a gardener in Sotogrande. Here, his garden is full of leafy corners, fountains and a beautiful pool area bedecked with jasmine, podanea, russellia, chorisia and jacaranda trees.

TERRA SANA

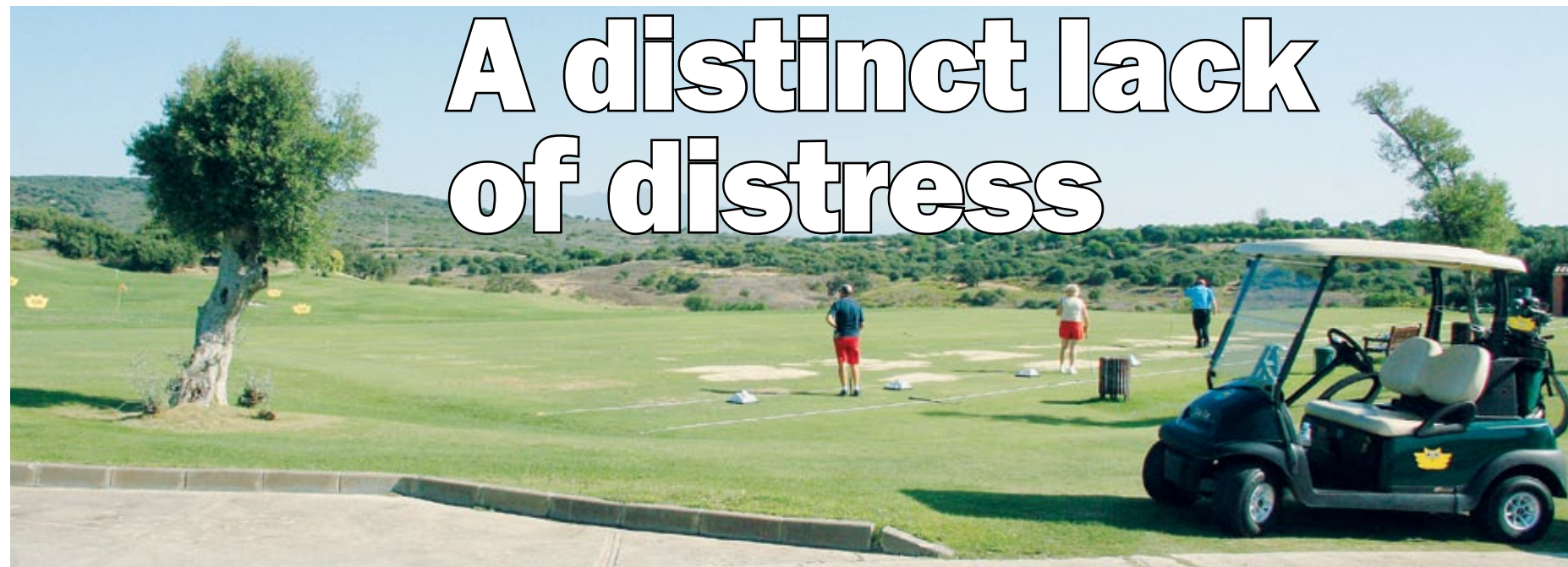
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# A distinct lack of distress

**Residents of Sotogrande – where the average home price is 1.5m euros – are generally not pressurised into panic-selling**

## PROPERTY

**T**HERE are few developments in Europe like Sotogrande. A so-called EUC (Entidad Urbanística de Conservación), it is a privately-run gated estate – over 4,400 acres in size – that pays for all its own infrastructure and roads. With high security and some of the best quality leisure facilities in Spain, it is little surprise that the development has managed to weather the storm of the recession better than most of its neighbours. “It is a slow market here right now, but it is strong and steady,” explains Ian Bateman, of Holmes estate agents. “Traditionally when a recession comes it always hits Marbella first and Sotogrande second. And Sotogrande, while it takes a bit longer to pull out, generally fares better.” This is due to the fact that the area has seen less distressed sales, as the wealthy vendors don’t need to sell and are “happy to simply sit it out”. “People in Sotogrande are usually not pressurised by the general flow of the economic crisis,” continues Bateman. This explains why the higher end of

the market has held up better than the lower end, where prices have dropped by as much as 30 per cent over the last few years. These days it is possible to find a four-bedroom townhouse with a communal pool for under 400,000 euros in the estate, while a two-bed villa on a 1000m plot could be as cheap as 450,000 euros. “We even managed to sell a two-bedroom apartment for just 130,000 euros inside the estate,” says Bateman. “It is an older one, but that is great value.” The average cost of a property in the area is still around 1.5million euros though.

### No footballers

“Our most expensive home is officially 9.5million euros,” says Bateman. “But there are plenty that say ‘POA’, or price on application, which means quite a bit more.” Take the exclusive new enclave of La Gran Reserva, by La Reserva golf course, plots alone are going for between 1.5m and five million euros. “And they are selling rather well,”



**STUNNING: This holiday mansion sold to a footballer for 3.5 m euros**

says director Lucas de la Puente. “In fact we are selling more at that price range than at the 300,000 euro level.” This is perhaps no surprise with the “private estate within a private estate” claiming to have the lowest density in Europe and an incredibly high level of security. But the owners – who number over half a dozen so far – will have to pay for it with an annual 50,000 euro a year community fee on top. It is certainly an amazing location high on the hills above the estate, with incredible views of the Sierras de Grazalema, Ronda and Bermeja. “Even the footballers can’t generally afford it,” laughs de la Puente. “It is more exclusive than that.”

over the last few years have seen the Sotogrande property market seriously reassess itself and I now feel the property valuations under the current market are generally a far more realistic reflection of real value.” Sotogrande has a range of excellent, well established agents, also including BM Sotogrande. Boss of BM Bradley Falconer has been advising people where the best buys are for eight years. Being a trained architect he can guide and advise his local and international clients on design and construction, while finding buyers for prestigious luxury homes, land and apartments. Additional services include project management, landscaping and interior design.

## Socialise to get on

**BEING a famously sociable hub, it was only a matter of time before someone started providing hands on training in the art of social networking in Sotogrande. But company WorkIT-spain is organising seminars on how to navigate your way around Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to help improve your business. “Social media is an exciting way of creating relationships and reaching out to a wider world especially when used as a device for marketing and public relations for businesses or charities,” explained a spokesman. For more information visit [www.workITSpain.com](http://www.workITSpain.com) on email [wendy@workITSpain.com](mailto:wendy@workITSpain.com).**

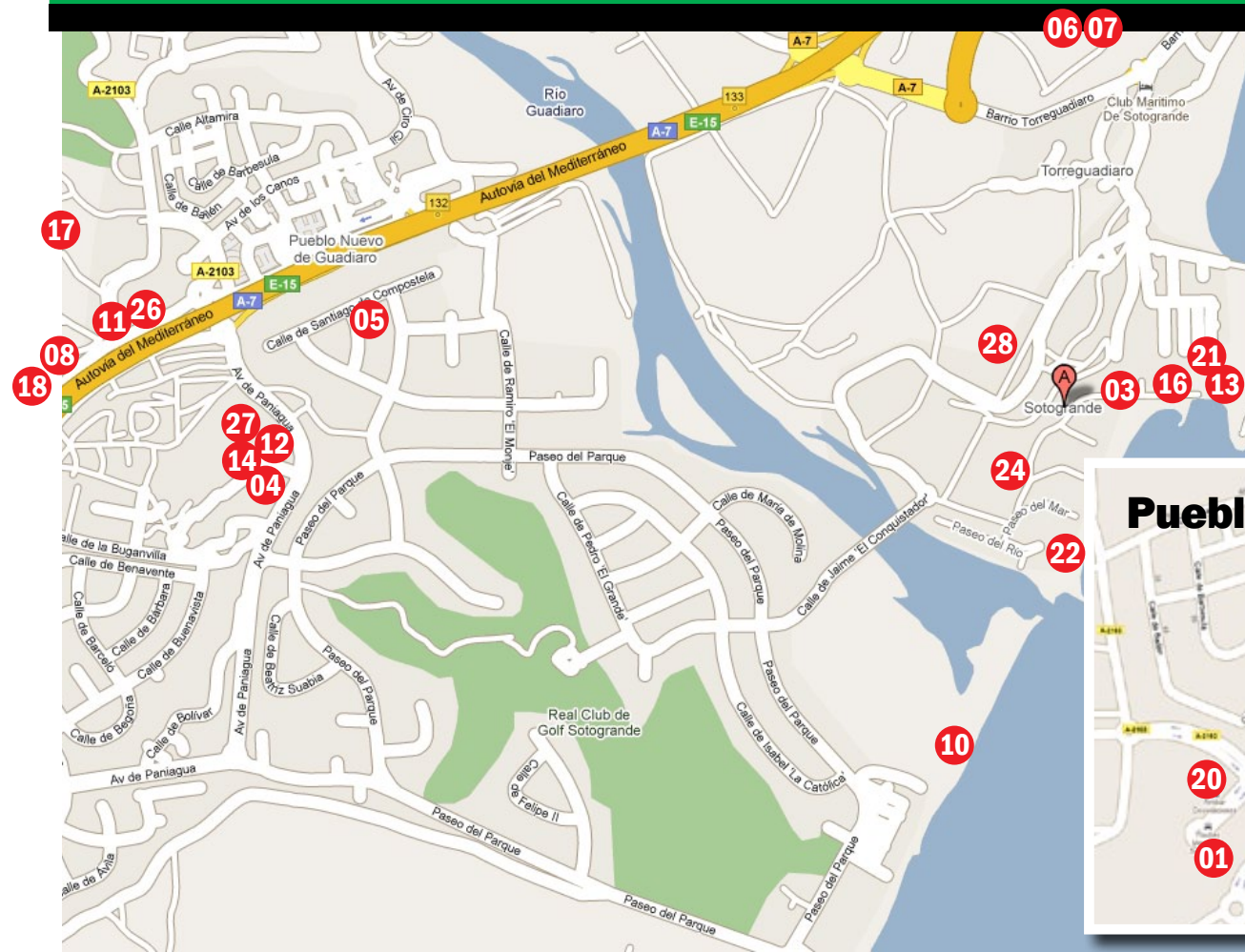
## Jumping for joy two decades on

**I**T is over two decades since they formed on the Costa del Sol. And the New Orleans Jump Band are still going strong. Now based in Sotogrande, the group of former professional musicians from the UK, Holland, and Sweden are in demand. As well as regulars at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival, they have toured in Budapest, Paris and Brussels.

They have even been on tour in North Africa and have played at numerous society weddings around Spain. The band is made up of Stu on clarinet and vocals, Mitch on trumpet and vocals, Andy on trombone, Mike on banjo and Jonas on sousaphone. They are famous not only for their original New Orleans / Dixieland style but also for creating a fun and great rapport with their audience.



**SNIP: But a two-bed apartment just sold for 130,000 euros**



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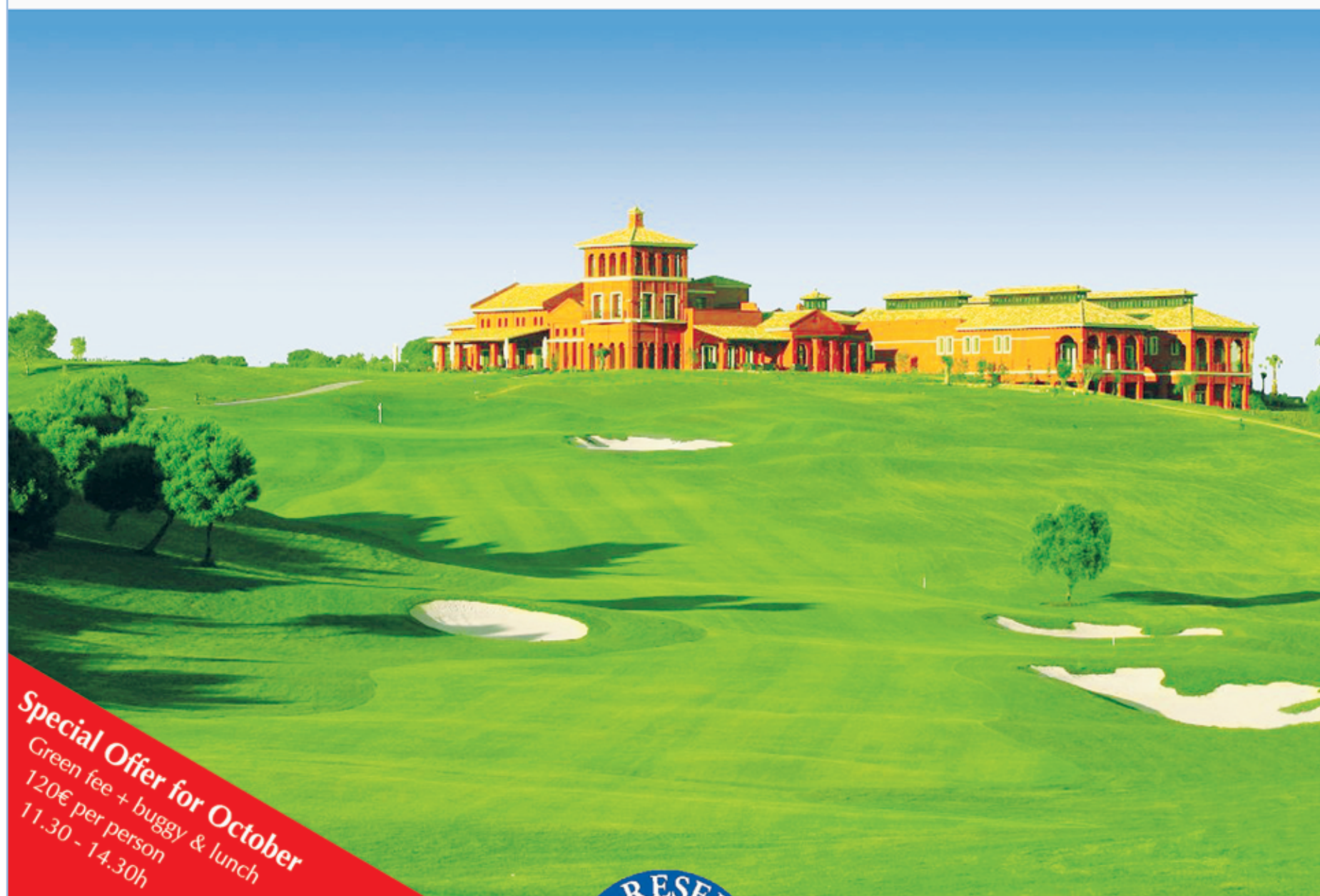
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