

# All about Sotogrande, Guadiaro and San Roque

August 2011

A 16-page Olive Press insiders guide

## A pucker escape

**Jon Clarke takes a look around southern Spain's most exclusive resort, where the likes of the Cartier family and Prince Charles play polo and sail their yachts**

**W**HEN the phone rings at Ivo Roncadi's restaurant La Cancha II in August it is anyone's guess who the booking will be for.

In a stunning setting inside one of Europe's most exclusive private polo grounds, the stylish eatery is understandably full most nights of the summer. With a backdrop of oleander, pines and perfectly clipped lawns, it is the perfect escape for Europe's wealthiest and most famous families.

With recent diners including the Duchess of York and Spain's top bullfighter El Juli, it is perhaps no surprise then, when during an interview, a member of the Cartier family

Turn to Page 2



**PRIVILEGE** Prince Charles accepts a polo prize from a Domecq, a recent polo tournament, while (main picture) Torreguadiaro beach



Pictures by Jon Clarke

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## 2 Sotogrande *special*

From Page 1

# Regal retreat

MILLIONAIRES' ENCLAVE: Sotogrande port



**A world of privilege, where Russian oligarchs sip cocktails with British debutantes**

Prince Charles has been an occasional visitor to the resort over the last few decades, a fact verified by a number of evocative snapshots, one in particular showing the UK's future monarch accepting a polo prize from a grande dame of Spain's leading

Domecq sherry family (see page 13). It is a photo that well sums up the millionaires' enclave, which is one of the few places in Andalucia known to have had its own fox hunts. Spain's largest private estate (all 4,400 acres) is well used to seeing a phalanx of British royals (Prince Andrew, the Duchess of York, Prince

William and Harry and princesses Eugenie and Beatrice are regulars) blazing a trail through its security gates, manned 24 hours a day. 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. But you are just as likely to rub shoulders with celebrities, including Rod Stewart, Mariah Carey and Duffy, as well as Glenn Hoddle, Eddie Jordan and Mike Rutherford of Genesis who all have homes here. Unlike, its near neighbour of Puerto Banus, where ostentation knows no bounds, in

## Sotogrande



## Big 4-0 for polo club this year

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 an excellent place to see how the other half live, take a glass of champagne 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 and this year it is in its 40th year. Nearby, inland in San Enrique you will also find the Ayala Polo Club, a private club, which now counts three pitches – or *canchas* – of its own.

Sotogrande – the veritable Sandbanks of Andalucia – people actively dress down. This is an international scene, understated and mostly without a need to show off its wealth. You don't see Rolex watches and Ferraris by the minute, yet plenty of people have yachts, which slide in and out of its marinas at dawn and dusk.

"It is an incredibly privileged place, full of wealth, but it is not so showy," says Suzi Langley, who grew up in 'Soto' there and attended its celebrated Sotogrande private 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 Valeria Alfie agrees: "Sotogrande is a place for 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 aforementioned Cartier family, that a few 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 really was 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 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 40 per cent, according to some local agents), the average home in Sotogrande is still weighing in at around 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

**SERENE: A stroll among the yachts and (right) dinner at new restaurant Spinnakers**



English and Irish 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 former roving UK trade ambassador Prince Andrew as a regular visitor. A frequent summer tourist, along with his ex-wife Fergie, the Duchess of York, who normally spends a month in the resort with her two daughters Beatrice and Eugenie. 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.

Sandwiched between the Rock of Gibraltar and the Sierra de Almenara, it was a

real masterstroke to set this millionaire's playground here. S o t o - grande'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 nephew Enrique Zobel 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 distance. 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 Guerrandiain, 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.

The infrastructure certainly seems to have held up well. The almost unique development, now known as a EUC (Entidad Urbanística de Con-

servacion), has quite a few more homes, but it still feels low density and privileged.

"The concept of a private urbanisation, with private roads, run by the community is rare," says Ian Bateman, of Holmes estate agent. "But it has certainly worked well here."

There are those, of course, who argue that Sotogrande is a false paradise. Divorced from real Spain, with no real culture, it's a make-believe world for the idle rich and golfing bores. Novelist JG Ballard was any-

thing but flattering about the resort. In his book *Cocaine Nights*, which is said to be set inside Sotogrande, he describes it as 'a town without either centre or suburbs... little more than a dispersal ground for golf courses and swimming pools.'

And Yes, there certainly are plenty of pools and golf courses here. But 16-metre infinity pools and a round at Valderrama golf course sure beats hanging out with tattooed timeshare touts and pie-eating footie fans just half an hour up the coast.



# II







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## No more Cocaine Nights!

IT is hard to imagine that JG Ballard's cult novel *Cocaine Nights* is said to have been set inside the millionaire's playground. Telling the story of a gruesome murder taking place in a disgruntled upper middle class living in a gated community hell, known as Estrella del Mar, it couldn't seem further from the truth.

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## 4 Sotogrande *special*

# TALLY HO!

**I**n the 1930's most of the land from Alcaidesa to Sotogrande was owned by one large family, the Castillas. The land was used for farming and supplied drinking water to the whole San Roque area. But what really made it stand out as being particularly 'British' was its regular fox hunting.

Here is a picture of the Royal Calpe Hunt, in 1934, near the San Roque club, given to Juan Castilla Delgado from Colonel W. Barne, who frequently visited the area to hunt.

Shortly after this photo was taken the Spanish Civil War broke out and the peaceful area was turned into a battle field and military camp.

During the 1950s to 1970s the majority of the land was sold off to developers who quickly turned rural land into the famous urbanizations we see today.



Picture: Courtesy of LA FINCA RESTAURANTE

While now in her 80s, Berta Castilla Garcia, remembers riding her horse from San Roque Club (then known as Finca el Diente) to see her grandmother in Paniagua. The restaurant La Finca, beside the campsite, is located inside her original family house, which was built in the late 1800's. The charming eaterie is still owned by the family and currently run by Syrie, the great granddaughter of Juan Castilla Delgado.



## A tradition of privilege

**I**t 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 enclave 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 exclusive 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 the port's 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 class and style."

One of the few things that has changed is the loss of the weekly fox hunt that used to head off from an estate just outside Sotogrande, in Guadalcorde (see panel left).

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 here.

**WILD WEST: Stetsons have long been in style in Sotogrande, as has polo (top)**



## Sotogrande *special*

# Like grandfather like granddaughter

**H**ER grandfather Don Enrique (left) is credited with having helped to set up Sotogrande in the early 1960s, so it is fitting that Paola Zobel today runs a business here. The attractive 27-year-old is the brains behind the stunning La Cancha II restaurant in the grounds of the exclusive Ayala Polo Club, near San Enrique.



**GRAN-DADDY'S GIRL: Paola Zobel**

She told the *Olive Press* that there are few places in the world as wonderful as Sotogrande.

"It's a lot of fun here and a great playground particularly in summer, when it is the perfect place to relax," she said. Having grown up and studied in the US, she is now working to make her restaurant a success.

"It is a great location between Gibraltar and Marbella and business is thankfully going well."

Related to Spain's Duchess of Alba, the Zobel's are one of the top families in the Philippines where they have most of their business interests.



**ROYAL CONNECTION: Fergie (left), Prince William and Harry (above) and (below) Beatrice and Eugenie, with Dave Clark**



# Royals at play

**T**HERE 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 up to a month each summer staying within the high security confines of the resort.

Sometimes 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. In fact, Beatrice normally celebrates her birthday in Sotogrande and this year is said to be no exception.

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 regularly turned 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 willow Lady Domecq.

(see page 13)



## the olive press

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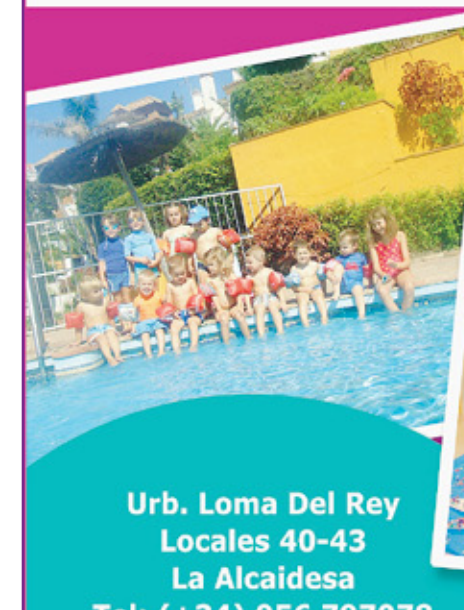
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# 6 Sotogrande special

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PROPERTY company Promaga has a great selection of homes available to buy or rent. In La Alcaidesa the company is offering spacious two and three bedroom apartments just a stone's throw from the beach. All have underground parking and large terraces, while the ground floor apartments have private gardens. Nearby in Santa Margarita, close to Gibraltar, there are new two or four bedroom townhouses. All can either be rented furnished or unfurnished from as little as 500 euros per calendar month. The complex has panoramic views and there is a regular bus service to the Gibraltar border. Alternatively, if you are interested in buying, the company can offer 100 per cent mortgages. Contact Promaga on 956584901



AS soon as I heard Tiger Woods had been a former guest I knew it was time to dust off the old clubs. I figured if I could spend a night in the suite he had stayed in while playing in the 1997 Ryder Cup, a bit of the Tiger magic might rub off on me. Lying back watching a re-run of the famous moment Colin Montgomerie halved with Scott Hoch at the last hole at nearby Valderrama, I really got myself psyched up.

The recently reformed San Roque Suites golf resort is the perfect place to head for someone looking to reacquaint themselves with the sport. Slap bang next to the emblematic same-name course, this spacious hotel is the ideal spot to relax and take your mind off the grind of everyday life. Set in mature grounds, with superb landscaping of cypresses, palms and orange trees, this is every golfer's dream. For this is where the whole Ryder Cup team stayed when

### Jon Clarke stays in Tiger Woods' San Roque suite in a bid to get his golf back on track

Europe just pipped the yanks to the title on the last hole at Valderrama. It was here that the European team (Clarke, Faldo, Woosnam and Westwood and all) had their HQ, and here – in

the sumptuous nearby clubhouse – that the tactics and gameplan was formulated. Aside from Tiger's soon-to-be-renovated room, there are 100 more suites nestling into the two hectare site. After a few years closed, it is finally going through a much needed renovation and spruce up with stylish and comfortable new Indonesian-style rooms. Another essential component is the fantastic newly built natural-turf football ground. With this new sports facility,



the resort aims to provide accommodation not just for golfers but also for top-level football teams for their training. After a great night's sleep – where I lay back and thought of Tiger Woods' conquests (both on and off the golf course!) – I was all set for my first round of golf for five years. But it was with some trepidation that I stepped up to the tee on the first hole of the new course at San Roque. It felt good to be back and as I dusted off my Big Bertha the memories came flooding back and after a slightly rocky start I played a blinder. Designed by David Thomas and Tony Jacklin – and more

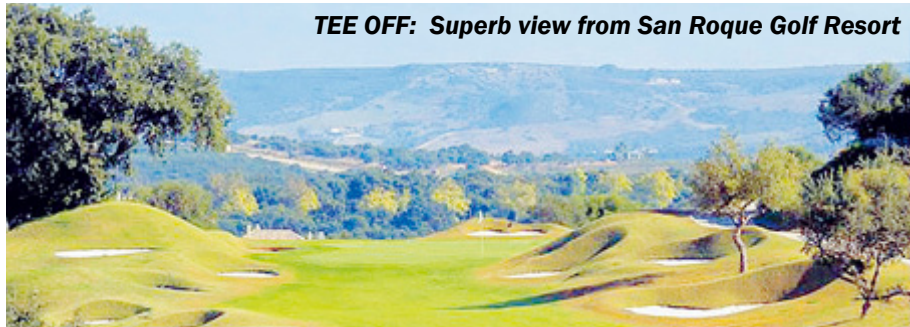


YOU'D better bring along your autograph book if you are coming to Tangos, inside San Roque Suites. Run by former footballer Greg Fellows, the Argentinian steak house is the current hip hangout of many of the coasts big sporting stars. As well as Sky pundit Andy Grey, expect to meet former England greats Derek Statham, Brian Little and even Glenn Hoddle who has a house nearby. "We get a lot of the local retired sportsmen," explains Fellows, a cheerful bear of a man. "They know

### Get Tangoed

they will get good quality Argentinian meats, but with a nice twist." Tangos is fast becoming one of the main haunts of the Sotogrande area. This is no surprise with its range of events from Flamenco nights to Jazz concerts on top of its decent menu. Forthcoming events at the Suites resort include music from Siempre Asi and DJ Mr Sink on August 19.

# 7 Sotogrande



TEE OFF: Superb view from San Roque Golf Resort

recently with tweaks from Seve Ballesteros – the 72 par championship course has

superb views, often across the sea, and best of all, has few developments to mar its

boundaries. Said to have cost one million dollars a hole to create, the area was once a countryside estate owned by Jerez's wealthy Domecq family.

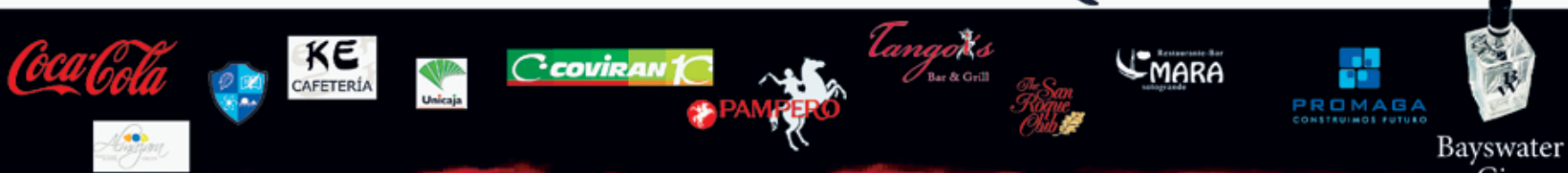
### A centre for commerce

IT is slowly becoming one of the better places to do your shopping in the Sotogrande area. And on top of that the San Roque Golf Resort commercial centre is a great place to have your hair cut or get a bite to eat. As well as a new nursery and a spa, there is a great café, as well as a good Japanese restaurant, an Italian and a bank and supermarket where you can buy newspapers and magazines. Best of all is the golf shop, which now has a new piece of kit, a FlightScope, a machine that uses data on swing velocity, ball flight, spin and angles to analyse which are the most suitable clubs for each customer. The workshop has also been revamped and is now equipped with technology to change the loft and lie of irons, woods and putters. The shop can also make made-to-measure clubs, working with top brands like Miura, Epon and KZG.

### We still often get the big names thanks to the European Tour coming here

"It was obviously an amazing time in 1997 when the Ryder Cup was here and we had all the stars wandering around and practicing here," explains marketing boss Leanne Delaney. "But we still often get the big names coming, including Lee Westwood, thanks to the European Tour coming here."

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## 8 Sotogrande *special*

# Nerve centre on the edge of paradise



**BUSY:** Florium provides dozens of bouquets for hotels every day, while (inset) Pueblonuevo



**CROSSING:** Iron bridge built in 1929, (left) a view of Guadaro and (right) a vista of San Martin from Cortijo Papudo

It is without a doubt the nerve centre of Sotogrande. Yet, Pueblo Nuevo de Guadaro is also on the edge of some of the best countryside in southern Spain. Indeed take a ride inland along the A-5300 up the Guadaro valley and you will certainly find a veritable slice of the Real Spain. Almost all the land en route to San Pablo de Buceite was once owned by the famous Larios family, one of Andalucia's wealthiest dynasties. The trio of distinctly Andalucian 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. The history of the Guadaro area is linked intrinsically to the ancient Roman sites of Barbesula and Boro. In 400 B.C. the River Chrysus (Guadaro) is quoted as being a 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.

Across the river, in Pueblo Nuevo you will find most of Sotogrande's best shops including excellent English butcher, Paul Dennis, 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 Rossi Luke, who prides herself on her green practices and Fair Trade suppliers. Another surprise is the private home of Linda Cockerell, 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.



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## Sotogrande *special*



# Lead a horse to water... and it will swim

*Jane Jewson spent a morning with polo horse trainer Federico*

In a dappled sunlit glade beside the Guadiaro river - a stone's throw from the famous polo fields - you may encounter a most unusual scene. Look closely, and you could see Federico, an extraordinarily muscular Argentinian, doing what he loves best; exercising polo ponies by swimming with them. Come rain or shine, he daily rides bareback, often with another horse in tow, fearlessly striding into the waters with his little terrier yapping dutifully at the heels of his charge. Going in deep Federico slackens the rope and with

a little splashing to coax it, the animal swims corraling around him in circles. After around 10 minutes

the hardy trainer grabs hold of the tail free-riding it for a distance, then pulling himself up onto the flanks,

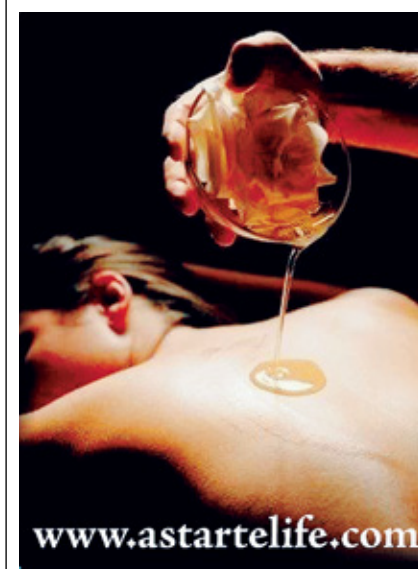
before both horse and man gracefully emerge from the depths, every muscle and sinew clearly defined. One after another the horses are led into the river. The dangers of this work are obvious, requiring an alert state of mind, great skill, physical strength and an intuitive connection with the animals.



**MAKING A SPLASH:** Federico swims with his horse

**The farriers are grateful for the calming effects on these agitated animals**

Apart from hydrotherapeutic benefits, 10-minutes of swimming for a horse is equivalent to a several mile canter, but without the impact. Federico has been known to restore the health and fitness of horses otherwise due for the knackers yard. His services are called upon throughout the year particularly when the polo teams arrive wanting fresh happy steeds. The horses love it. Federico loves it and the farriers, who shoe the horses on coming out of the water, are grateful for the calming effects on these often at times agitated animals.



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## 12 Sotogrande *special*

THERE 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 highest 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, it fares better"

# Sitting pretty

**There is little distress selling in Sotogrande, where the top homes weigh in at up to 20m euros**

This is due to the fact that the area has seen less distressed sales, as the generally wealthy vendors don't need to sell and are happy to sit it out.

As fellow agent James Stewart explains: "Sellers are not

really in distress and are sitting tight. "That said we are having a better time than last year and prices have probably come down by at least 40 per cent over recent years, which is quite an enticement to buy." These days, it is certainly



## Europe's true

ANYONE with an interest in sport will remember the fantastic last few holes of the Ryder Cup in 1997 when Colin Montgomery 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. There are five other golf courses around Sotogrande, the first being Real Club de

## Sotogrande

**STAR BUY: Mansion bought by Glen Johnson (inset)**



possible to find houses in Sotogrande for 600,000 euros. "And you might get the odd distress sale at 550,000 euros," adds Stewart, who has lived in the area for two decades, and is credited with helping to bring the 1997 Ry-

der Cup to Sotogrande after six years of work. The average cost of a property in the area is still around 1.5million euros though and a number of celebrities, including footballers Glen Johnson and Glenn Hoddle have

bought recently. The most expensive homes are officially around 10m euros... "But there are plenty that say 'POA', or price on application, which means quite a bit more," adds Bateman. Sotogrande is certainly well served for solid, well established agents, also including BM Sotogrande.

Boss of BM Bradley Falconer has been advising people where the best buys are for nine 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. One of the area's best legal firms Triay & Triay are also to be found here.

## home of golf

Golf de Sotogrande, also known as the Old Course, which was the first course built. Well maintained, it is said to be a dream to play after its trickier sister Valderrama.

The others include La Canada, La Reserve, San Roque, as well as Almenara, which is up in the hills and where celebrities Glenn Hoddle and Glen Johnson have homes.

"There are few places with such

a high concentration of golf courses," says Ian Bateman, of Holmes estate agents. The infrastructure for golfers is second to none and, apart from the fabulous facilities, there is a range of good golf shops scattered around the resort.

These include the excellent Golfino shop in the CC Sotogrande shopping centre, as well as the golf shop in San Roque commercial centre.

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### Pueblo Nuevo







## On the waterfront



SITTING on the water watching the yachts come in, Spinners has certainly got a nautical appeal.

But with a chef, Austrian Philip Hannig (above) - who spent a year training under Gordon Ramsey - it also scores high in the cooking stakes.

After a year at Ramsey's popular Boxwood café in London, Hannig spent a few months at Marbella's La Roche before heading to Sotogrande port. His food is light and simple and despite having a compact menu, he is able to delight with his blue fin tuna served with fennel, carrots and leeks, as well as an excellent starter of goats cheese with mushrooms.

There is even sushi and naturally - being Austrian - one of the best apple strudels I have tried.

Run by a friendly couple Monica and John from Budapest, a clearly popular touch is the offering of warm blankets to guests as the night draws in.

Spinners - 956615024

## WHERE TO EAT

HAVING trained at the two Michelin-starred Hotel Bristol in Paris, Jerome and his wife Haby - also a sous chef - know a thing or two about cooking.

But opening their stylish restaurant Boka in the depths of recession was a brave move to say the least.

The quality of the food however more than matches the beautiful decor and enticing wine list.

Carefully choosing a range of superb ingredients, there is plenty of inventiveness with a gazpacho of courgette, for example, served with almond pannacotta and rocket sorbet, while a Yakitori duck fillet comes with shitake mushrooms and pak choi, one of the only places I have eaten it in seven years in Spain.

Best of all, though is the mouthwatering wild sea bass, served in a celery and wild fennel bean and shellfish stew. "We cook it at a very low temperature and reduce the stock for hours," explains

# Don't pass the port

**Enclave has a string of fabulous restaurants, discovers Jon Clarke**

Haby, who is originally from Bukino Faso. The wine list deserves a special mention with some classic French chestnuts including a 2007 Crozes Hermitage... and best of all, one of the secrets of Sauternes, the joyous Chateau Ramond-Lafon.

All in all, there is an incredible selection of restaurants in Sotogrande, many of them new. In the port itself one of the most exciting additions is the excellent La Terrasse, which straddles one whole corner

with enticing frontline views of the action. Opened by talented Belgian couple Jessy and Anne Hoor-naert, they have enlisted the services of La Rioja chef Joaquin Aragon, who has worked in two Michelin starred restaurants in northern Spain, as well as celebrated vineyard Torre Muga.

He certainly knows how to cook, with an exciting mix of international and French-style cuisine. His carpaccio of beef with

rocket was superb, while his langoustines in a cream of maize and vanilla, with asparagus, tomatoes, spinach and baby carrots was perfect for a hot day.

Even better was his wonderful calamari, served up in an original 'rolled' style, with alioli and a foam of soya. Nearby you must also look out for the well-established stalwarts, including Midas, the Ke bar and the Hairly Lemon, which is fast becoming THE hangout in the port. Serving fresh food by the day, there is a good list of wines and there are always some amazing specials, including a



fresh calamari for just 8.50 euros and the Wi-Fi is the best around. If sea food is your bag, then it is well worth heading over to Pueblonuevo to try Sevilla-born chef Ivan Alvarez's stylish eatery Mara. Named after his mother, who works in the restaurant four days a week, you would be hard-pressed to find a better range of fresh fish anywhere in Andalusia.

**Acheingly hip with a big dining terrace, it is certainly proving to be busy**

It certainly helps that Alvarez's family own a fleet of fishing boats - not to mention a string of fish restaurants in Sevilla.

If it is an Indian you are after then Ivory nearby is a real treat. Now well established in the area, they can deliver around the resort and have an enticing menu.

Another recent opening is the place of the moment Molino del Conde in Pueblonuevo.

Acheingly hip with a big dining terrace and interesting range of starters and main courses, it is certainly proving to be busy for most of the summer.

Up near the NH hotel you should look out for the Terrace, which was previously Terra Sana. Still under the control of talented Londoner Louise Proto, this is a wonderful airy space to hang out in.

And then there is Lombardo's, a traditional Italian restaurant that was established in 1989 by Enzo and Sara Lombardo. For over 20 years they have offered excellent Italian cuisine and wines and the restaurant is well known for offering fresh food with most of its vegetables being grown in their garden. Equally charming, is the fabulous Cortijo Los Canos, an ancient

farmhouse, which is easily one of the most romantic places to dine on the coast. Its atmospheric courtyard is candlelit in the evening and the menu is an inspired international/Spanish mix and the wine list, while short, is perfectly adequate.

Also great for romance is La Finca, up in Alcaidesa, which sits in a 200-year-old finca that was once the nerve centre for one of the area's biggest estates.

Today, ancestor Syrie Blanco Walsh has turned it into an atmospheric escape, full of charm and creativity.

With the help of her erudite New Yorker husband Chris Cousins - a born entrepreneur - they have conjured up one of the best stop offs between Malaga and Gibraltar.

But it wouldn't be the same without their pal Benny, an amiable Thai/American, who has the magic touch in the kitchen.

His Thai fusion menu is adventurous with plenty of specials to add to the mix.

I particularly enjoyed his Summer roll, an incredibly fresh offering of shrimp, crab, egg and bean sprouts, as well as his spicy beef salad with classic 'sticky' rice.



**ROMANTIC:** Candlelit courtyard at Los Canos

## Pucker tucker



ASIDE from its beautiful location inside the exclusive Ayala polo club, La Chanca II prides itself on its top quality meat. Cooked with an Argentinian-style asador, using orange wood and a unique method, called a 'parilla'.

"We have the highest quality meat in southern Spain," insists Ivo Roncadi, 30, its manager, who previously ran a catering business in the Lake District, called Lucy4.

"It is vacuum packed and is shipped to Algeciras by a German logistical supplier. You can't get better," he adds.

Owned by local aristocrat Paula Zobel this is certainly one of the most stylish places to visit in Sotogrande, so make sure to dress up and book in plenty of time.

## WHERE TO STAY

# A garden of delight

UNLESS 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.

There are a couple of reasonably-priced hostels on the edge of the resort as well as the glitzy five star NH Almenara.

In the port, the pick has to be the stylish Maritimo designed by Madrid style-guru Pascua Ortega, while if it is something rustic you are looking for, you should head to the charming 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 the early 19th century.

A great choice if you are looking for somewhere to unwind, the thriving cortijo

**Cortijo Papudo could be Spain's only garden centre that doubles up as a place to stay**



- 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 owners Michael and Vivien Harvey, who are very much in demand as gardeners in Sotogrande.

Their garden is full of leafy corners, fountains and a beautiful pool area bedecked with jasmine, podraña, russelia, chorisia and jacaranda trees.

The Harveys have a farm back in East Anglia, and divide their time between the two.

Today, you will find the recent addition of 1500 avocado

trees, as well as an incredible garden centre Vivero Papudo, which is one of the true secrets of the area and has thousands of different palm trees for sale, as well as shrubs and flowers.

"When we first came here over two decades ago there was hardly a plant. Practically the only thing living here was rats," says Vivien. "It was a very poor farm and now it is thriving."

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