



Wendy Williams (above) is blown away by the magic of Tarifa, Europe's southernmost point

Where the wind blows

TOUCHING DISTANCE: On Tarifa island, a statue of Jesus looks across to Morocco's fabled Pillar of Hercules



It is the southernmost point of Europe. Where the Atlantic Ocean crashes into the Mediterranean, where the Levante meets the Poniente, and where the narrow Straits of Gibraltar are all that separates Europe from Africa. For those who have read *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, Tarifa, at the top of Andalusia's stunning Costa de la Luz, is protagonist Santiago's final destination

before he embarks on his journey to discover his 'personal legend'. It is certainly fitting that this magical town, at the gateway between two continents, and a world away from the built-up Costa del Sol, is a fitting setting for the start of the book when Santiago faces a crossroads in his life. Here, inside the walls of the Moorish castle of Guzman el Bueno - first built in

the 10th century on the ruins of a Roman fort - Santiago contemplates his meeting with the King of Salem. "At the highest point in Tarifa there is an old fort, built by the Moors. From atop its walls, one can catch a glimpse of Africa," we are told by Melchizek. From this vantage point the old man urges Santiago to follow his dreams when he was about to give them up.

Standing here looking over to Morocco - so close you can actually see the houses on a clear day - it is an inspirational view. And with the wind in your hair you get a real sense of what Tarifa is about. "It is the closest point to Africa," explains Argentinean Victor, who runs the town's best fish restaurant La Pescaderia. "It is just 14km and a lot of people come just to see the southernmost point of Eu-

Turn to Page 2

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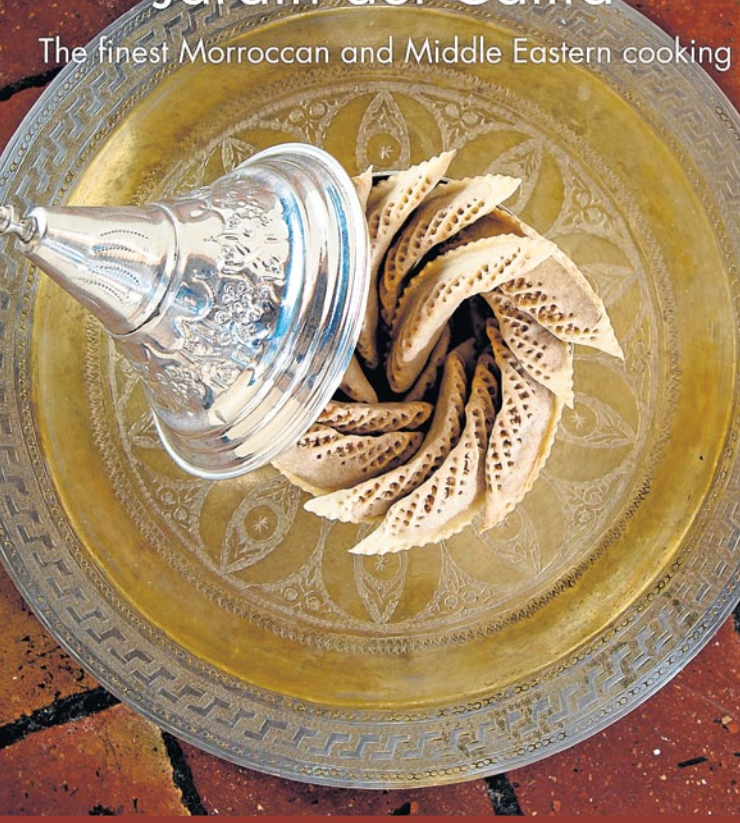
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From Page 1

rope.
“People come from all over the world,” adds the former architect who has lived in Tarifa for 13 years.
The name Tarifa is actually taken from the Berber warrior, Tarif ibn Malik, the first of the Moors, who created a bridgehead here in 710, before going on to conquer most of Spain.
Interestingly Tarifa is also sometimes credited with being the origin of the word tariff, since it was the first port in history to charge merchants for the use of its docks.
What is certainly known is the area remained under Muslim control until 1292 when the Christian king Sancho IV finally conquered the city.
The eye-catching main gate into the town was built following the Christian reconquest, and was more recently re-

Timeless town



VISTA: Moon rising over Africa, while (inset) typical Tarifa street scenes

stored in 2000 to include a shield showing the legend of storming of city by Sancho the brave.
Two years later in 1294 a Muslim army besieged the fortress of Tarifa which was successfully defended by Alonzo Perez de Guzman – known as *Guzman El Bueno* – who preferred to sacrifice his son rather than give up the castle, even throwing his own knife down to the besiegers to fulfill their threat.
But while the Christians may have won control of the town, the Moorish heritage is still very much a part of the fabric of Tarifa.
This is, of course, helped by its close proximity to Morocco and the fact that this is one of the main crossing points

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Perfect Petri

ALLURE: Sancti Petri island, the abandoned village (inset) and (below) marina

Wendy Andersen on the hidden delights of her hometown of Chiclana




ILL be honest, Chiclana de la Frontera always seemed a bit of a car-buncle to be avoided en route to the laid back beaches of Conil and El Palmar or the elegance of Vejer. But since moving to the town, I have started to discover those hidden gems that only the locals know about. You know, the ones that rarely make it into the guide books.

One of the best, is the old abandoned fishing village of Sancti Petri, which sits on a spit between the estuary and the ocean and is slowly being rehabilitated. If you head out early - or on a cool day - you can walk through the protected marshland that separates Sancti Petri from the town.

It is a haven for migrating birds, with a distinct sense of peace as you make your way along the paths between the labyrinth of pools. As you leave the marshes behind, you find yourself strolling along the river, with dinghies bob in the estuary and seagulls lazily glide by. The fishing village itself was abandoned when the tuna

factory closed down years ago, and is only now being restored. There is only limited access at present, but you do get to see it in its authentic glory. At the end of the spit, a Coca-Cola sign heralds the entry way to the fisherman's association, where you are guaranteed the best of the day's catch and at the best prices. Coming round the end of the spit, you arrive at the marina, where cabin cruisers and sail boats nestle together in their moorings.

If you're feeling energetic you can rent a boat from the

kiosk or attend classes for kayaking, surfing, kite surfing, basically anything on the water.

You can also take one of the cruises out to Sancti Petri Island, which is dominated by the foreboding castle which dates back to 1610. (See box below for prices and contact information)

Keep walking past the fishing village and you will reach the golden sandy beaches that this part of the coast is famous for. If the waves are very high and you have young children the river side of the beach offers calmer waters, and there is a lifeguard service.

A bit further along as you join the ocean proper, you have the full waves for surfing and general frolicking. The breakwater that separates the two, a long stretch of rocks that nearly reaches the island of Sancti Petri, offers hours of fun to children obsessed with collecting crabs from rock pools.

Days out:
Tour of Sancti Petri Island, from €22, includes train around park and boat trip to island (tel 661 858 203)
For just a boat trip and tour of island, from €10pp (Cruceros Sancti Petri. Tel. 956 100 324 / 617 378 894).
For kayak tours: €10. 676 363 718

Coast with the most



VIRGIN: Beach at Barbate and (bottom) Vejer church

THE Costa de la Luz, or Coast of Light, stretches for 200 kilometres from Tarifa to the Portuguese border, near Huelva.

Taking in Spain's most important national park Donana, it includes the famous sherry towns of Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María, as well as the famous city Cadiz.

But, what most people, think of, when you mention the Coast of Light is the stretch from Tarifa to Chiclana. A windswept flood plain, fringed by long dune beaches and crowned by a series of austere 'cubist' towns, which were built by the Moors.

There are literally miles of mesmerizing and largely unspoilt sandy beaches, ideal for a bucket-and-spoon break away from the over-built towns of the Costa del Sol.

Sightseers will be spoilt by the numerous sites from the famous Trafalgar lighthouse – off which the crucial naval battle once took place – to the historic fishing village of Sancti Petri and the white-washed streets of Conil.

The two main towns are Tarifa – a Mecca for kitesurfers – and Vejer, a hip and alluring escape, where cabinet ministers and celebrities occasionally rub shoulders.

And then there are the hidden gems, like exclusive Roche, where Madrid's captains of industry take their holidays, and Zahara de los Atunes, the sleepy fishing village, which is fast garnering a reputation for its food.

And still there is more, with El Palmar claiming to have the best surfing waves in Andalucía and Europe's largest sand dune, at over 30-metres in height in Bolonia.

And don't forget Canos de Meca – the fun capital of the region – or gritty Barbate, whose fish restaurant El Campero is among the best in Spain.



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Costa de la Luz *special*

DINING CAPITAL

LITTLE by little Vejer de la Frontera has become one of Andalusia's culinary points of reference. Like a slow-cooked pork belly, the beautiful white town has slowly fused the ingredients together to rival anywhere else in the region. I have never eaten badly in this gastronomic paradise and both in the town and in the nearby villages of Patria, La Muela, Santa Lucia and Canos de Meca there are at least a dozen eateries that would do well anywhere in the world. And the bottom line is; if the food's not good enough, the restaurant won't survive. "We set the bar high," explains James Stuart, boss of celebrated hotel and restaurant La Califa. "There is plenty of competition between restaurants and all of us keep taking the level higher in order to get ahead." So what has made this small Cadiz town into such a foodie

Mecca? Much of it is due to its nearby surroundings, which produce some of the best quality ingredients in the world. The obvious examples are sherry, fish and the wonderful pork and beef from the classic brown 'retinto' cows, which you often see wandering around the nearby hills. Of course the amazing blue fin tuna, caught nearby in Barbate, Zahara and Conil, is spectacularly good and the vegetables available from the huertas near Conil are also of a high quality. Another reason for its culinary success is down to the types of tourists who visit the town, which has seen a distinctly better heeled crowd than its nearby rivals on the Costa del Sol. "And best of all, they come all the year round," explains Pablo Brea, who swapped his advertising job in Madrid a year ago to open the restaurant Vera Cruz in the town. "We don't just rely on beach-



CHARM: Califa's patio, while (left) Javier from Garimba and (right) Damian and Pepi at La Brasa

es," he explains. "And many of the people who visit are keen food lovers, who come here specifically to eat."

This is certainly the case and the huge mix of restaurateurs, who herald from France, Denmark, Britain

and the north of Spain have helped to put together a rich and varied offering for them. Frenchman Damian Giroud at long-running La Brasa de Sancho typifies the mix. He and his wife Pepi have turned their elegant, historic home into a delightful dining experience, highly rated on Trip Advisor. "We hope we know what it is that makes people's holidays great, good service and, above all, good food," he explains. His near neighbour Javier Duenas, at newly-opened Garimba Sur, which takes up a quarter of the emblematic

Adjust, change and create



A new book will chart how a Danish couple created Vejer's most exciting restaurant

WHEN they set up their restaurant Patria high in the hills above Vejer six years ago, Thomas and Ase Donso knew it should be based on the different seasons. "Every time we visited a local market we were so thrilled and inspired at the sheer quality of ingredients," explains chef Tomas. "The joy of cooking is all about what's in peak season," he continues. "There is no need to import anything from far away." It is why the Danish couple only have a small menu *a la carte*. "It is all about being able to adjust, change and create, according to what our suppliers can provide locally. Be it wild asparagus or rabbit, or bulls' heart tomatoes or artichokes." Now a wonderful cookbook is set to tell their story – how they went from obscurity to number one on Trip Advisor for the area - through a series of stunning photos and with 50 of their favourite recipes. "It will chart what it has been like moving to a foreign country and raising children and working here," explains Ase.



Costa de la Luz *speci*

5



Plaza de Espana is also understandably doing well, with a fine mix of ingredients and style. Having studied hosteleria in Madrid he is one of the key reasons the town took off as a culinary destination. "It all began in the late 1990s when Javier and his partner opened their famous restaurant Trafalgar," explains Stuart, whose stylish hotel Califa conveniently put up the new influx of foodies across the square. "It was the start of the food revolution and we opened our restaurant in 2002 to give them some competition.

For me the three key points of reference for Vejer's culinary success are Trafalgar, Califa and Castilleria, run by Juan Valdes, who is a very good chef." But it is on the outside of town in the most obscure of locations that the bar is really being pushed higher and higher. Take a ten minute drive up to Patria to find out why Tomas and his lovely wife Ase are currently topping all dining polls. A stylish spot, overlooking fields down to the sea near Cadiz, the ambience is second to none. While the menu is compact, the regularly-changing specials are becoming increasingly experimental and always look delightful. "A lot of our success is the fact that we use so many vegetables," explains Dane Tomas, who lives next door with his family. A laid back chap, who spends his spare time surfing, he sums it up perfectly: "We know we have to constantly evolve and create new things if we are to keep up with the excellent quality in town." Later this year they will have their first book published on their success (see panel left).



TREAT: Vejer has the freshest ingredients such as these retiro cows and (top) Juan Valdes from Castilleria

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A whale we go

Tarifa is a fantastic place to go whale and dolphin watching, writes Rund Abdelfatah

HERE the Mediterranean hugs the Atlantic Ocean, man meets the world's biggest mammals – an encounter vital to their survival. The geographical enclave is prime real estate and orca whales, sperm whales, fin whales and dolphins, just to name a few. Best of all, these majestic creatures need not be admired only from afar. Turmares Tarifa is dedicated to the art of whale watching and the mission of conservation.

Seeing a sperm whale wave hello with its tail is always a fantastic experience

It offers tours that unveil the intimate lives of the inhabitants of the sea. Watch a mother orca with her young calves, or a massive fin whale – the second largest animal in the world – break the surface with a resounding blow. And seeing a sperm whale wave hello with its giant tail is always fun. The company boasts a 95 per cent sighting success rate and, in the rare case that whales are not sighted, a second trip is guaranteed free-of-charge. The two-hour tours leave from Tarifa and run twice a day, all year. For more information, visit <http://www.turmares.com/>



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Surf & turf

Walking guide
Guy Hunter-Watts suggests a great shady summer walk around Caños de Meca

FOR the heart of summer I am always looking for good places to walk and La Brena forest is a great place for a cool stroll. This circular walk gives you the chance to sample the Parque Natural de la Brena and then along the spectacular cliffs which rise 100m above one of the best beaches in Andalucía. You start by following shady sandy paths towards San Ambrosio, before heading on towards Barbate via a broad forestry track through the stone pines to the cliff path that leads back to Caños past the Torre del Tajo.

The Walk

The walk begins outside Hotel Madreselva which you pass as you head east through the village on the A2233. From here head east past a row of palm trees. Reaching a 3.5T sign turn left. The road soon arcs left. Just past the 14km sign, cut left along a sandy track following a sign Sendero Canos-Torre de la Meca. After running west the road contours right as it passes beneath the Torre de Meca. Reaching a three-way junction bear right past a chain that blocks vehicle access. The track climbs gently as it runs eastwards: views



STUNNING: A view of Trafalgar Lighthouse

Caños de Meca Circuit

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Total height gain: 225m
Map(s): IGN 1:50000 Barbate 1073 (12-47)
Water: No springs so take plenty

open out above the treetops. Shortly beyond the top of the rise you pass a sign marking the path up to the Torre de la Meca. **(35 mins)**

The track runs on due east. Just before reaching a metal gate and the Majadales del Sol picnic area, cut hard left along a sandy track. Marker posts lead you on through the forest. Reaching twin posts, one marked 31 angle right and continue in an easterly direction. Passing a firebreak the path runs downhill, adopting a northeasterly course, and eventually leads through a green gate **(1 hr 10 mins)** beyond which you reach a picnic area.

Angling slightly left you pass a sign Sendero Torre de Meca then, passing stone tables and benches, you reach a tarmac road. Cutting left along to the road you cross a cattle

grid then after some 650m reach a junction where a sign points left for San Ambrosio. Ignoring the sign carry on along the track which arcs right, passes a sign prohibiting access to lorries, then reaches a fork. **(1 hr 25 mins)**

Keep right along the main track (ignoring a sign left for Palomar de la Brena) which you'll now follow without bifurcating for a little over 2kms. At first you follow a pylons but these soon angle away to the left. Reaching a junction by an information board about El Pinar de Pinos Pineros **(1 hr 45 mins)** turn right away from the main track.

Passing a line of animal pens the track runs on through the pines before crossing a cattle grid then reaching the A2233. Angle right across the road, cross a stile then cut left along a broad sandy track parallel to the road. After 300m the track angles right. After 50m you reach a junction. Angle left and continue on parallel to the A2233.

Just as the track angles back toward the road you reach a cattle grid. Here angle 45 degrees to the right then after 75m cut right through the scrub and drop down to the sandy bed of a gully. Here cut left and follow a narrow, sandy path down towards the sea. The gully widens: head on down the easiest path to reach the Barbate-Caños cliff path. **(2 hrs 20 mins)**



GREAT HEIGHTS: Walking on the edge

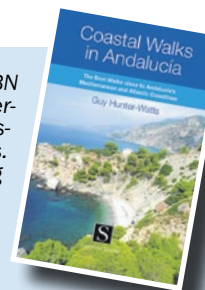
forest: it was planted between 1895-1926 to stabilise the dune system. 200m past the sign you reach the Torre del Tajo. **(2 hrs 50 mins)** Be sure to visit the two miradores to its left and right for the finest cliff views of the walk.

Continuing towards Caños you reach a junction where the pole fence that has been to your left comes to an end. Head straight on. The sandy path now runs slightly further from the sea. As Cape Trafalgar and its lighthouse come into view the path divides.

Take the higher option which leads past a second sign about Pinares Costeros. Here angle down left then once more right towards Canos and Hotel Mar de Frente.

Passing behind the hotel you reach a signboard describing the path to the Torre del Tajo. Here cut right up a stony track which bears left along the northern edge of the village before descending to the A2233. Turn left then right to return to the start point of the walk. **(3 hrs 45 mins)**

Coastal Walks in Andalucía (ISBN 9-788489-954939) by Guy Hunter-Watts, is available at www.books-4spain.com and most local bookshops. It contains a selection of 50 stunning walks close to southern Spain's Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines. For more details visit www.guyhunter-watts.com



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IN BOCA
The dining secrets of Andalucía

STANDING at the pass, with orders flying out by the minute and waiters baying for dishes, Jose Melero exudes an impressive Zen-like calm. It is not surprising this seasoned chef turned down a career in the air force to run his famous fish restaurant. For on a busy summer day he can be serving more than 350 people... and over the three months of summer around 18,000 meals. A haunt for celebrities, politicians and chefs from all over Spain, El Campero is best known for its amazing blue fin tuna. Cooked in almost 30 different guises, that include tuna lasagna and three types of tuna salad, you can even eat the heart and eggs, a delicacy, which come in at around 300 euros per kilo. There's mormo, medallones, contramormo and tarantelo, but the best cuts are morillo and ventresco, which cost around 50 euros per kilo. And Melero – often dubbed ‘the master of tuna’ - is scrupulous about where he gets the endangered fish from. “We never buy tuna less than

8 Costa de la Luz *special* 9



THE MASTER: Balding Jose Melero runs a tight ship while (top) a tuna haul and (right) a ‘degustacion’

30 kilos in weight and mostly around 10 years old,” explains Jose. “We are extremely careful who we buy it from and we freeze it at minus 60 degrees - or ‘calidad sashimi’

– so we can use it all year round.” He adds: “I think the rules on catching blue fin tuna need to be strict and I think they are finally starting to bear fruit with numbers picking up again.”

He has spent over two decades perfecting his art, having first set up a restaurant in Barbate's port with his father. Now in a modern place in a rather nondescript square, El Campero is a four-speed operation, with everything from formal dining room to bar tapas.

And on a Tuesday lunchtime in July the place was packed to the gills. Top tips... the traditional tuna *encebellado*, or stew, was delicious served up with oregano, onion and pepper, while the carpaccio of tarantelo with wasabi was superb. Best of all though was the tartare, which comes from the tuna's tails. It literally melted in the mouth, like good tuna is meant to. Oh, to eat lunch here everyday.



El Campero Restaurante, Avda. de la Constitución, local 5C, Barbate
956 432 300
www.restauranteelcampero.es



ART GARDEN

HIDDEN amid a sea of Mediterranean pines on the site of a former army barracks is one of Andalucía's best art installations. The Montanmedio Foundation for Contemporary Art (NMAC) near Vejer is one of Andalucía's prime showcases of work by established and emerging global artists. Mostly made for the park, the pieces are either dotted around the forest or, in the case of film, video or photographic works, found in the converted barracks buildings. Art parks can be found all over the world, but the foundation's shrewd selection of artists makes it one of the best of its kind. If you are looking for an introduction to contemporary art outside the sometimes intimidating, hallowed space of the art gallery, NMAC is a great place to start. And in July and August this year there are special guided tours.



www.fundacionnmac.org



True cottage industry



THERE is a distinct whirring of machinery in the heart of Vejer. Aside from textile weaving and jewellery workshops, there is a fantastic t-shirt shop La Pajarra (right) with all its own original designs. Run by a worldly local couple, the place is colourful to the extreme and great value. Best of all, though is the local printer Graficas Leon, where Manolo Garcia has been working since the age of 16. Still using 1950s German machinery, local lad Manolo was even working (left) a day before his wedding. Congratulations.



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Costa de la Luz *special*

Riding the wind

The Costa de la Luz is one of Spain's top spots for kitesurfing – and good for diving too, writes Jon Clarke

DRIVE along the main road west of Tarifa – or up by the Trafalgar lighthouse, near Vejer – and on a windy day, you will be for a real treat. Like a day out in rural China, you will see dozens – sometimes hundreds – of large colourful kites bobbing up and down and weaving around in the prevailing winds. Zoom in and you will soon realise that practically the whole of the stunning dune-backed Valdevaqueros beach is dominated by the high adrenalin sport of kitesurfing. It has literally taken the area by storm and over the last decade the traditional sport of windsurfing has been massively blown out by this fashionable sport. To keep up with the craze over 50 schools cater for tourists who want to buy or rent equipment. The best include Hot Stick, run by friendly Tilo, and Etik kiteschool, run out of the famous O'Neill shop in the heart of Tarifa. "It has certainly become one of the key economic dynamos of the town and brings in a lot of money," explains Julian, from Etik. "It brings in a lot of income and helps to make the town an all-year round holiday destination."

The progression in the sport is fast, but it is important to take lessons and get the right introduction into safety systems. Otherwise it can be dangerous.

A standard kite course is about three to four days, after that you will be able to practice on your own.

Famed as 'the Wind Capital' of Europe, it is unsurprising that Tarifa's Valdevaqueros Beach occasionally hosts the World Championships. Alongside Diamond Head in Hawaii and Fuerteventura in the

Canaries, there are no other places that rival it for constant winds, either the Poniente from the west or the Levante from the east. The best wind for kitesurfing is the Poniente, which comes in from Portugal. It measures

between two and five on the Beaufort scale and brings in a cooler breeze from the sea. It also happens to be the dominating wind in Tarifa. The best wind for windsurfers is the Levante, which comes from the south-east from Africa. It normally builds up for a few days and at its peak – when everyone gets sent mad – it can reach up to eight or nine on the Beaufort scale.

Visit www.divingtarifa.com, www.hotsticktarifa.com and www.etik.es

Costa de la Luz *special*

Flying high with kiteyoga

It is not the most obvious combination. But Flavia Vieira has come up with an ingenious course mixing kitesurfing and yoga. After 10 years teaching yoga and five teaching kitesurfing, the energetic Brazilian has united the two disciplines to maximize kitesurfing performance, enjoyment and to help avoid injuries.

"The lesson starts on the mat, flows to the beach and ends on the mat," she explains. "It is not yoga plus kitesurfing, it is kiteyoga." She believes the yoga helps both 'flexibility and calmness of the mind', which helps students to progress in the kiting. "I aim to prepare not only the body, but the mind for the practice of kitesurfing. It offers tools to practice the sport more safely and consciously." She also stresses that, above all, students need no experience of yoga or kitesurfing to take the course.

Call Flavia on 620 891 399 or visit www.etik.es/en/cursos-de-kitesurf-tarifa/curso-de-kitesurf-con-yoga

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¹² Costa de la Luz

Where to eat

TUCKED into the ancient walls of Tarifa are a string of the region's best restaurants. Highlighting the melting pot of the town, here you will find Argentinian, French and Italian restaurants all jostling for attention. Two of the best - La Trattoria and La Pescaderia - are curiously run by former architects, both drawn from their native countries by the allure of Tarifa.

There was something very special to be near the mythical pillars of Hercules," explains Paolo, whose Italian trattoria serves up classics including Ossobuco and sauteed provolone cheese with honey. But the keen foodie also knows how to serve up a fresh sea bass. "I do it in a light white wine sauce with oregano and fresh tomatoes," he insists. On this showing I was not going to argue.

Next door, La Pescaderia – the town's best fish restaurant – is certainly able to compete, in particular with his fabulous blue fin tuna menu.


A massive tuna fan, boss Vico gets out of his way to prize

the very best specimens out of the clutches of the Japanese. "It is vital as our clients absolutely love it," explains the friendly Argentinian. At the other end of the *paseo*, next to the theatre you should look out for the excellent duo of Entre dos Aguas and Lola Mora, run by a friendly father and son. Both have a Mediterranean flavour, while Entre dos Aguas now has its own charcoal grill and a great range of pizzas. The same family also own a brilliant Argentinian Patagonian, just around the corner

in the heart of the old town. This fine spot run by brothers Rodrigo and wife Patricia is atmospheric and charming in equal measures and naturally has the best steaks in the town, not to mention great *empanadas*. Nearby you will also enjoy Bamboo if you are looking for fresh salads, snacks and fruit juices and a fabulous chiringuito to recommend is Buen Estar, which is just about to open on the beach near the

TOP TAPAS TIP

Tarifa is slowly developing a great area to 'tapear' in the street Guzman el Bueno. In particular look out for Bar El Feo, being run by an enterprising trio of local friends. Tapas are surprisingly adventurous and brilliant value. Created by Jesus (right), who has worked at some of Sevilla's top restaurants', the best include mini langoustine burgers and 'milhojas' of courgette with goats cheese. Across the road Tapa Boca is also a great place to try.



Stylemeisters' dream

Costa de la Luz has a wealth of hip places to stay

FOR stylemeisters, the Costa de la Luz is a dream. The entire coastline is full of cool, hip places to hang out and relax. Over in Vejer, it is hard to beat Hotel la Casa de Califá, which is easily one of Cadiz's most striking buildings, its main doorway adorned with a shell. The Moorish building sits around a charming central patio, where guests take breakfast and dine under candlelight each evening. Equally inspiring is the wonderful Hotel Sindhura, which overlooks rolling hills and fields, right down to the coast, near Conil. Owner Nara - a Buddhist - has created a genuinely Zen-like retreat, which now has a superb restaurant to match. There is certainly an underlying ambience to the place and it is extremely good value. Nearby, right on the beach, in Canos de Meca, you might also want to consider Madreselva, which is set around a central courtyard and has a nice pool for the kids to splash in. A short drive inland and you will find the charming hotel La Vista in the fascinating white town of Medina Sidonia. Well sited for visits to all the main towns, including Jerez, Cadiz and Sanlúcar, La Vista is run by friendly couple Gary and Kirsty Biston, and counts its own excellent restaurant and superb comfortable rooms. Best of all though is its amazing pool, easily one of Andalucía's finest.

In Chiclana there are also plenty of big b&bs options, but few beat the earthy Casa de la Dehesa, hidden in a charming hamlet 15kms inland.

Over in Tarifa there has also been a huge explosion of good places to stay over the last few years.

In the centre of the town there are a couple of superb options including the super cool Posada la Sacristia, as well as the good value Posada Vagamundos, which sits in a tiny alley, with calm, comfortable rooms (assuming you stay at the back).

Another brilliant option is Escondite del Viento (hideout from the wind), which is a stylish little place also in the heart of town.

Whilst the hotel is modern it has retained the original charm of the building and boasts little extras like DVDs in the room, a great film library, and sweets in a little bag placed on the bed at night with a 'sweet dreams' note and details of temperature and wind speeds the next day.

And last but not least if you are looking for somewhere good to stay en route to or from the Costa de la Luz, you should try Meson de Sancho on the main road to Algeciras.

While right on the main road you will find the hotel surprisingly calm and quiet, and there are a great selection of bungalow suites, not to mention stunning views towards Africa.

Costa de la Luz ¹³

for cuisine



TALENT: Steak masters Rodrigo and Patricia at Patagonia and (right) chef at Bamboo

Straits and incredible *retintos* steaks and tuna. On the subject of blue fin tuna, Andalucía's best place to eat it must surely be El Campero in the workaday fishing town of Barbate. Here, Jose Melero has catered for celebrities, politicians and fellow chefs for two decades and runs the restaurant with military precision (see centre spread).

In Vejer you have one of Andalucía's top culinary towns



de Sancho, is run by friendly Pepi and French chef Daniel, who trained with Michel Roux, no less. Their charming terrace overlooking emblematic Plaza de Espana is fabulous at night.

A new addition is the amazing Garimba, with its charming tables out on the same square and serving up a delicious range of dishes and tapas.

These include a perfect '*hojaldre*' with two types of tomatoes, smoked sardine, onion and balsamic, which explodes in the mouth.

Having poached chef Juan Tabares, from El Campero in Barbate, it has just got better and better and continues to impress.

Near Vejer in Santa Lucia you must be sure to visit Castillera, whose terrace is one of the most romantic in Spain, and where dynamo Juan Valdes serves up the best meat dishes in Cadiz province.

Practically next door is authentic Venta el Toro, where you eat whatever the owner's aunt is cooking that day. Nearby, in Patria try to visit Restaurant Patria, where Thomas and wife Ase are fast garnering a reputation as having some of the best food in the area. Another much improved place to eat nearby is the attractive Sindhura hotel, which has a fabulous dining room looking down to the coast near Conil. It is a wonderful spot to eat and the menu is varied and tasty. Another continually reliable place to eat is Meson de Sancho on the main road from Tarifa to Algeciras. A historic spot, owner Rafael runs a tight ship and maintains standards in the height of recession.

Finally Oasis bar in Barrosa, Chiclana is a friendly spot for the local English population and always has plenty of special events.






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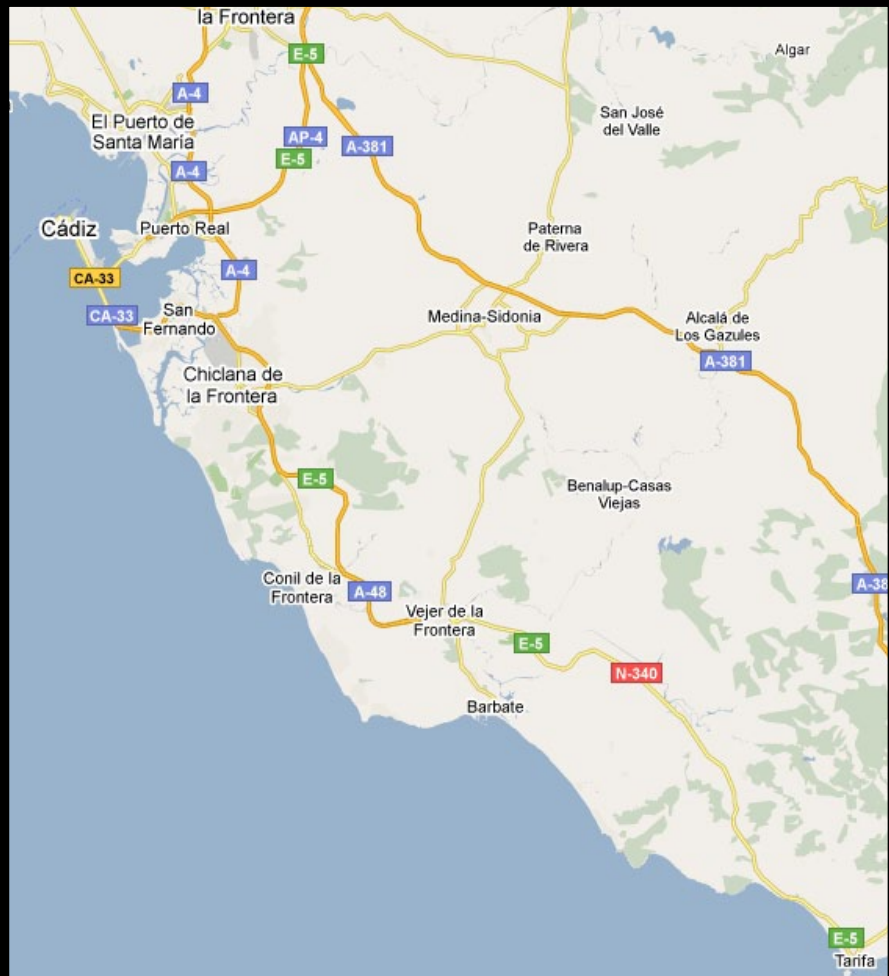


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Costa de la Luz



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