

All about Ronda



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At home in the City of Dreams

Eloise Horsfield makes an emotional return to Ronda, where she lived for over a year



CONTRAST: Walking past a statue outside the bullring

OUR car wound up from the coast, the angular peaks of the Serrania de Ronda dominating for miles around.

A somewhat daunting drive, the curves seemed to get tighter and tighter until the cloud line finally gave way to a mountainscape like no other I have ever seen.

And suddenly, the 'City of Dreams' appeared below us, a flash of white nestling in a secret valley encircled by mountains.

The journey up from the Costa del Sol once took four hours and must have felt like the pot at the end of the rainbow. Thankfully the city - raved about by politicians and writers, including Ernest Hemingway and filmmaker Orson Welles - is now just 45 minutes away by car.

It is a town to which many return, including chef Jamie Oliver and British Prime Minister David Cameron, who was back again this summer, taking lunch in the old town.

It was also an important pilgrimage for Bill Gates, who came last year to try its wines, and America's First Lady Michelle Obama, who arrived while researching her family's Arabic roots. It is certainly one of the finest places in Spain to

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Ronda special

From Page 25

appreciate the legacy the Moors left on the peninsula. The old town is full of reminders of their culture, its well preserved buildings, sitting proudly beside cobbled streets.

It is also amazing to visit Ronda's dramatically deep Tajo gorge, its three fascinating old bridges, and enjoy its uncanny ability to provide spectacular vistas whichever way you turn.

For me, you might call it a kind of homecoming.

Having relocated to the coast with *the Olive Press* just a month ago, I was now taking some friends around Andalusia, with Ronda set to be the climax of our trip. It certainly did not let us down.

Built in 9BC, Ronda was a key military bastion during the Roman Empire.

It was later transformed by the Moors – who were responsible for many of the factors that make it so special

A history lesson



TOWN WITH A VIEW: Ronda's Alameda del Tajo gardens offer fantastic views of the Serrania

today.

The oldest quarter is *La Ciudad* – preferred hangout

of Orson Welles' – which retains its Moorish street plan and boasts a number of fine Renaissance mansions.

With its ruined Alcazar and crumbling city walls, it is not hard to imagine what life was like throughout centuries of Moorish rule, which ended in 1485.

There are many clues including the beautifully preserved arches of the 13th century Banos Arabes (Arabic baths) on the south-east bank of the River Guadalvin, and the minaret, the surviving tower of a 14th century mosque which

was later knocked down to make space for a Christian church.

The *Puerta de Almorcaba*, leading into the Barrio de San Francisco which houses many traditional-style bars and restaurants, was

the main Moorish gate and can still be admired in its entirety.

One place not to miss is the *Casa del Rey Moro*, where America's First Lady brought her daughter Sacha in August 2010. She surprised onlookers by descending the 300 or so uneven steps to the bottom of the Tajo, wanting to discover more about this 14th century house whose secret staircases allowed Moorish defenders to fetch water from the River Guadal-

vin in times of siege.

Czech poet Rilke dubbed the city rightly as the 'City of Dreams', while Irish writer James Joyce wrote: "with the old windows of the houses, the eyes which spy out hidden behind the latticework so that their lover might kiss the iron bars, and the taverns with half-closed doors in the night and the castanets and

the night."

No fewer than three bridges span the gorge, with the 14th century San Miguel bridge, the 17th century *Puente Viejo* and the spectacular main bridge – or *Puente Nuevo* – which was built in the late 18th century and connects the old town with the new.

It is this bridge, which was made so famous by Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, when describing how prisoners were slung off it during the Spanish Civil War. Heading into the new town brings just as many interesting places to visit, starting



HISTORIC: Ronda is home to some stunning architecture

Did you know?

Ronda got its name from the Roman word *Arunda*, which means 'surrounded by mountains' in Roman.

Ronda City of dreams

www.turismoderonda.es

Ronda SUERTE NATURAL

Ronda special



Do it the Obama way

YOU can follow in Michelle Obama's footsteps – literally – in discovering how the Moors guaranteed their water supply in times of siege.

For at the *Casa del Rey Moro*, in Ronda's old town, the US First Lady was anything but deterred by the 300 steps that lead all the way down to the river at the bottom of the gorge when she visited in 2010.

The name, which translates as 'House of the Moorish King', is somewhat misleading as it is unlikely a king ever lived there. It is actually an early 18th century mansion built on Moorish foundations.

Incredibly the building, although protected, is only just being restored because a German entrepreneur spent 14 years campaigning for the right to save it from ruin and turn it into a hotel.

On the way down the *Mina* – which can be pretty dark and damp underfoot – try out the 'room of secrets' where whispered voices can be heard on the opposite side of the room, but not in the middle.



FAMOUS VISITORS: Orson Welles (top) and Ernest Hemingway

with the bullring – Spain's oldest – which today hosts the biggest single event in the country's bullfighting calendar, the *Goyesca*. Weaving round the outside of the ring – where you can pick up a fun horse and carriage tour of the town – brings you to the *Alameda del Tajo* botanical gardens, whose shady avenues provide much-needed shade on a summer's day.



ties for visitors. Also in the new town is the bustling main shopping street, *Carrera Espinel* (although locals call it 'La Bola') which offers local seasonal produce and knick-knacks aplenty and should be included in any visit to Ronda.

It is here where the town comes out at dusk en masse to take its so-called 'paseo', before nightfall. Because Ronda is set high within a mountain range, and at the mouth of the Genal Valley, the surrounding areas are also waiting to be explored. A good daytrip could combine a visit to the Roman town of Acinipo just 12km away – with its stunning Ro-



man amphitheatre – followed by a short drive to the cavernous Setenil de las Bodegas, where the Romans used to keep their wine.

Or you may fancy a stroll to the stunning *Cueva del Gato* ('Cat's Cave'), or wish to discover why the looming dam built in nearby Montejaque was never once used. Whatever you decide to do, there is enough to keep you busy for weeks.

I later caught up with my friends for a beer in Plaza del Socorro, Ronda's main square, to see what they thought of the town.

"Stunning," said Caroline Herran, 30, a teacher back home in the UK. "Its location could not be better – completely surrounded by mountains – and the type of people, and tourists you meet here, are different, more



STUNNING SPOT: Ronda's spectacular Puente Nuevo bridge lit up at night

cultured somehow." Later that evening I sat sipping a glass of Chinchilla, a Ronda red wine, at my favourite bar La Lechugita – where, unlike many places on the Costa del Sol, tapas are just 80 cents each. And I knew that, like Orson Welles – who insisted his ashes were scattered in Ronda in 1985 – it will forever hold a place deep in my heart.

The gardens have arguably the best view in Andalucia

The gardens are an ideal place to while away a few hours with a newspaper or book, glancing up every so often at the view of the surrounding *Serrania* – arguably the best view in Andalucia. From here, you can take a stroll along the adjoining *Paseo de los Ingleses* or 'English walkway', which was built to maximise viewing opportuni-



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Ronda special

A wine

THERE are nearly 30 different vineyards dotted around the Serrania de Ronda. Some even sit in the famous Tajo gorge below the town.

They include award-winning organic wines, such as those of Los Frutales and Federico Schatz, and vineyards owned by Austrians, Germans and even Argentinians.

There are wines, such as Vetas, Ramos Paul and Morosanto, already for sale in Japan and New York and others that merely serve the tables of the local restaurants in Ronda.

Either way, it is not difficult to see that this is a region that is very much on the up.

Celebrated wine writer John Radford wrote in *the Olive Press* that the 'dream has taken hold' and the Ronda wine industry has huge potential.

At a wine conference a few years ago Jancis Robinson, sat alongside some of the world's best winemakers, such as American Paul Draper and Spain's *enfant terrible* Alvaro Palacios, to spread the message.

So well has the industry progressed that in 2000 the area got its own particular subzone as part of the Sierras de Malaga appellation.

This was in recognition that there was potential for non-fortified wines in highland

With up to 30 vineyards now planted in Ronda, 'the dream has really taken hold' writes Jon Clarke

areas where the daytime temperatures during the ripening season are consistently high, while at night it can be very cold.

This is perfect as it gives a 'rest' to the vine and allows acidity and complexity to develop within the grape.

It has been something of a comeback since the wine industry was wiped out by phylloxera in the 19th century.

It began in 1982 when German flower seller Federico Schatz started planting various strains as an experiment. He was soon joined by Prince Alfonso Hohenlohe (the man who discovered Marbella) at Cortijo las Monjas near Arriate. These days the grape variety regulations are generous in scope, but expect to find mostly Shiraz/Syrah, Petit-Verdot, Tempranillo and Cabernet-Sauvignon and also the local Romé thriving in vineyards at between 750 and 1,000 metres altitude.

While initially the wines were



CLASSICAL: Ronda bullring is the oldest in Spain, while (right) its owner Fran Rivera arrives for the Goyesca

Get into the ring

WHATEVER your take on Spain's most controversial pastime, a visit to Spain's oldest bullring is a fascinating and entertaining experience.

Having opened in 1785, the architecture of the ring is breathtaking and its accompanying museum takes visitors on a chronological journey taking in all the pomp and glory of bullfighting on the way.

Visit the pens where the beasts await their fate and marvel at artefacts, posters, photos and even original costumes – some frankly exquisite – donned by all the greatest matadors.

Horse-riding fans will love the spectacular saddles and livery worn by 19th-century French King Louis Philippe, and in the firearms room there are hundreds of pistols and rifles dating from the

16th century. These days Ronda hosts one fight a year, the Goyesca, a fully traditional affair which attracts punters from all over Spain as well as politicians and celebrities.

Organised by the bullring's owner Fran Rivera, a matador who normally also fights, it is one of the big photographic opportunities.

The Goyesca was launched in 1954 to commemorate

200 years of the birth of Pedro Romero, a child of one of Ronda's biggest bullfighting dynasties who despite killing over 5,000 bulls in his lifetime was never injured.

Regular visitors to the ring over the years have included American actor Orson Welles – who loved Ronda so much he chose to have his ashes taken there – and writer Ernest Hemingway.



HARVEST TIME: In Ronda la Vieja



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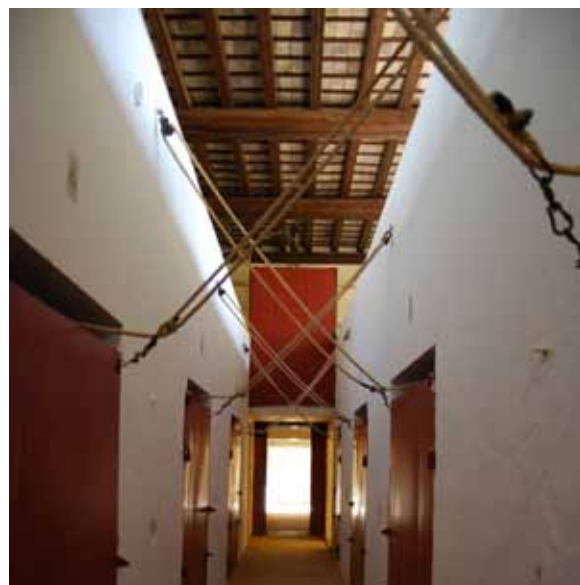
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FELINE FRIENDLY:
Federico Schatz (left)
discusses his grapes

expensive at up to € 40 a bottle the prices have now come down a fair bit and it is possible to buy various Ronda wines for less than €10 a bottle.

One of the most exciting vineyards to visit is Morosanto which is sited on the site of a former Roman villa, near Arriate, and where archaeologists have discovered proof that wine was made in Roman times.

Aside from a treading floor, they have discovered where the vats were held and how

the wine juice flowed to them. A total of 12 hectares are planted, including the grapes Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and even Viognier.

The owner Miguel Angel Cespedes has a great art collection and is often on hand to charm visitors and explain the wines.

Other vineyards that can be visited include trailblazer Federico Schatz by appointment only.

www.bodegasmorosanto.com
www.f-schatz.com

Big Al's buying

It was certainly a golden opportunity to get their wine known across the pond.

But when Jose and Pilar Ramos Paul were asked to provide the *tinto* for the gala dinner of green activist Al Gore's recent visit to Gibraltar, they couldn't have expected it to have gone so well.

So enamoured was the former vice president with their 2005 vintage that he insisted they sold him two cases of

the stuff on the spot.

"He was really interested in the wine and the logo," explained Jose, a former banker from Sevilla.

"But I was obviously very pleased when he ordered the cases."

The vineyard, which was set up a decade ago in Ronda la Vieja, is doing extremely well both domestically and abroad.

Aside from just brokering a deal to sell their wine in various branches of *El Corte Ingles*, they have just taken a huge order from China.

It is one of nearly 30 countries that have now imported the wine, that spends up to three years in cask before being bottled.

America's top wine writer Robert Parker gave the wine a record 92 points, the highest for a red wine in Andalusia. It is made from a blend of grapes with around 55% Tempranillo, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and the remaining flavours Syrah and Merlot.

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PITCH: Jose and Pilar Ramos Paul get to discuss their Ronda wine with Al Gore

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... and the wines that make history

Ronda special

To the heart of the

The Walk of the Hidden Valley: Montejaque Circuit

THIS spectacularly beautiful full day walk leads you to the heart of a wildly beautiful swathe of the Grazalema Park.

Departing from the charming white village of Montejaque, just 20 minutes from Ronda, you first face the most challenging part of the walk, an hour of climbing via a broad track to the top of the rocky Libar valley.

Here the terrain changes in nature as you cross a broad, flat-bottomed valley before cutting down through some of the most beautiful limestone formations in the park.

These huge, weathered blocks of karst have a sculptural beauty that is the rival of Henry Moore's most monumental creations.

You continue on through two more flat-bottomed valleys, known locally as *navas*, through stands of ancient oak forest before descending back towards the village. Allow a full day to get the most out of this stunning itinerary.

The Nitty Gritty

Distance: 16.5kms

Time Required: 6/6.5 hours

Rating: Medium/Difficult

Map: IGN 1:50000 Ubrique (1050/14-44)

Water: none along the way so take at least 1,5 litres in your pack

The Walk

The walk begins in the main square in Montejaque. Cross the square, head along the left side of the church under a row of palms then go right into Calle Nueva. After 20m cut left into Calle Santa Cruz. Follow this street up through the village. Leaving the last houses behind you pass several ramshackle kennels built among the rocks. The road meets with a track by a G.R. marker post (15 mins).

Follow this track straight up the valley between the Sierra de Juan Diego and the Sierra de Benaolan. Nearing the top of the pass you cross a cattle

grid. Continue for 300m then cut right, off the track, and go through a green gate in a stone wall (55 mins).

Bear left up a narrow cobbled path. Pass right of a stone ruin then an old corral. You come to a wall and a black gate which is often left open. The path, marked by cairns, leads beneath a clump of low oaks then crosses open ground before merging with a track. Bear right along the track. When you reach a rectangular sign on an oak cut left on a stony footpath. After about 60m the path arcs left. Look for cairns which guide you through a stand of low oaks. After angling back

Walking guru Guy Hunter-Watts describes a favourite walk close to his home and heart near Ronda



STUNNING: Countryside in one of 'Navas' valleys (above and below)

to the right the path leads down to a stone wall. Passing through the gap the path merges with a track which you follow across a vast, walled field. Having passed two bulldozed watering holes the track reaches a gap in a stone wall. Bear right just before the opening and, just beyond a large oak, go through a metal gate (1 hr 25 mins).

Bear left on a narrow path, following the right side of the stone wall. The path climbs, bears left then reaches a flat area. Here bear sharp right on a narrow path which threads between the rocks and descends. After dropping down for about 15 min-

utes you pass left of a ruined stone hut then go through a gate whose opening is sometimes closed with brush. Following cairns, and making sure not to climb at any point, you reach a second vast field, similar in size to the one you traversed earlier. It's the eponymous Hidden Valley of my title (1 hr 55 mins).

Careful! Look for a large stone arrow on the ground at the field's edge. This indicates your course across the field; you need to angle about 45° right in a NNW direction. Crossing the field you pass a group of three huge oaks whose trunks meet at the base. On the far side a wall drops down to meet with

the field by another stone arrow, beyond which you leave the field via an indistinct path which climbs up across the rocks. It soon becomes better defined: you'll see a fence up to your left. Soon you reach a hollow with a stone-walled corral built against a cliff face (2 hrs 25 mins).

Keep left, contouring high above the hollow. The path leads over a ridge as the countryside opens out. At this point look for a small farm ahead of you: you'll later be passing it by. The path descends, goes through a gate, then angles down across the hillside to a low stone wall and a fence. Follow the stone wall along to the left to reach a wire-and-post gate.

Beyond the gate cross a (dry) stream. Continue straight ahead (there's no path) for 125m. Crossing a low ridge you reach a track which you follow to the right, up towards the farm you could see earlier. Pass across the farm's beautiful cobbled era (threshing circle) then angle left and pass left of the farm and its stone corrals (2 hrs 50 mins) to reach another track which leads to a metal gate in a stone wall.

Pass through the gate and after just 10m bear left on the track passing a sign for 'Montejaque'. You pass a chain which cuts the track then reach an open patch of ground. Bear right along its lower edge then enter a wooded area. The path is indistinct: look for cairns and don't climb too high. The path twists through the forest, crosses a stream then climbs an eroded bank to another gate. Beyond the gate the path climbs, angles right then crosses a (dry) stream. The landscape again opens out and you reach a low stone wall. Ahead is another vast field. Bearing left, stick to the northern edge side of the field. Continue to its far end to reach its boundary wall where you go through a metal gate (3 hrs 20 mins).

Bearing slightly right, cross a (dry) stream then bear left again and cross back to the other side. Continuing up the middle of the enclosure you

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STANDING PROUD:
Montejaque Town
Hall is the start of
the walk



250m past the monument the track bears right and climbs to the top of a rise, passing a cattle grid: brace yourself for the steepest part of the walk. Just beyond it go through a gap in a wall where your track merges with a second one (**3 hrs 50 mins**).

Here bear right and descend steeply. Soon the track loops hard right, then left. Still descending steeply be ready to cut right off the track on another track which angles steeply up to your right: look for cairns. (but see * below). Where this track loops hard right cut left at a cairn and follow an indistinct path down to a black metal gate (**4 hrs**).

Beyond the gate the path becomes clearer as it runs between olive groves, then becomes more overgrown. Twice you're forced to cut right and continue parallel to the path through the olives. You rejoin the path and soon it loops across a (dry) stream. Beyond the stream (careful not to lose height) continue just right of a line of olives. Look for cairns! The line of the path, which has been ploughed into the grove in parts, is soon visible once

pass a metal drinking trough. Soon the path runs just to the left of a wall and leads to the far end of the field. Here, go through a metal gate. After just 10m the path merges

with a track which you follow downwards. Soon you pass a monument, tucked in to the left of the track, which marks the spot where a landowner was shot during the Civil War.



Walking in Andalucia, Edition 7 by Guy Hunter-Watts is available at most good bookshops. It has 36 walks.

again, running up to a brown metal sign which you pass to its right. The path improves then merges with a track. Continuing along this track you reach a wire-and-post gate (**4 hrs 25 mins**).

Go through the gate. The track arcs right, levels, then loops down into the valley that you circle) to the left of the track then come to a junction. Here cut right, then first left, then retrace your footsteps back to the square in Montejaque (**4 hrs 55 mins**).



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Scaling the heights

ADRENALIN junkies listen up, Gaucin is boasting a brand new 'via ferrata' route boasting spectacular views and even a fifth-century castle. The new route, which means 'iron path' in Italian, is a protected climbing route

equipped with steel cables allowing users to clip on and secure themselves as they go. Sound scary? It is! This new route stretches from one side of the village across to Castillo del Aguila. It is 200m long and includes climbs of 80m, also including a 40m zip-line and Tibetan bridge.

Thanks to its limestone rocks, caves and sheer drops, the Serrania de Ronda already boasts a whole range of sports such as hiking, rock climbing, canoeing and caving. The new path brings the via ferrata spots in the Serrania de Ronda to nine, adding to those in Atajate and Benaolan and one in the Tajo gorge itself.



SHEER: Via Ferrata is not for the faint-hearted

Monday walking club



LOCAL restaurant owners Paul and Synnove Darwent are organising a series of Monday hikes around the best of Ronda's countryside. The couple, who run Bar Alliolli, in Jimera de Libar, have spent years plotting the walks, which are all between two and three hours long. Each of the walks will start at a local restaurant, the first on November 5, leaving from Bar Alliolli, with the second on November 12 leaving from Bar Cantina in Benaolan Estacion. "A beer is not compulsory at the end but will always be a good way to finish," explains Paul. Cost is €5 per person. Call 671 50 054 or email kontakt@andaluciawalking.com for more details.

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Ronda Festival



TIMES GONE BY

WHEREVER you are in Ronda you are surrounded by history and remarkably little has changed over the last few centuries. But just so that you can see what the town was like a 100 years ago, here are a few evocative pictures of Days Gone By. Clockwise from left, the old minaret, Almocobar gate, Plaza Socorro (two pics), ladies take the air beside the old Arabic Baths, a typical courtyard scene with lady sewing and three pictures taken on Calle Real by the fountain of Ocho Canos



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Keeping prehistory alive



At Algaba you can find out what Andalusia was like 5000 years ago, discovers Eloise Horsfield




WANT to get an idea what life was like in Andalusia 5,000 years ago? Well, at the Algaba education centre just outside Ronda, you have the perfect opportunity. Through its hauntingly realistic prehistoric village you learn about how our forefathers created fire, ground their bread, as well as decorated their homes. You can even find out what they did with their dead. "We teach people about ancient Mediterranean ecosystems because this land has been occupied from prehistoric times to the present day," explains director Maria Sanchez Helena. Algaba's work also includes research and teachings on the geology and ornithology of the area, as well as acting as a rare breeds centre for endangered cows. These include the Spanish Pajuna - of which there are just 500 left (pictured above) - as well as the Andalusian Cardena, which in the early 1990s had been reduced to just seven individuals.

Thanks to the work of organisations like Algaba, there are now around 200 Cardenas. Guests and groups can now come and stay at the centre's

restored 250-year-old finca. "It is certainly a place where people can come and get away from it all." www.algabaderonda.com




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Valentino Rossi



HOSTESS WITH THE MOST: At Carmen la de Ronda, with (inset) Omar from Buenos Aires while (right) Porton and its two owners and (far right) Frank at El Muelle in Arriate

Ronda special

Where to eat

Dining Secrets of Andalucía editor Jon Clarke on why the Serranía de Ronda area counts on a dozen of the best restaurants in Andalucía

Dozen best



RONDA is, without a doubt, one of the food capitals of Andalucía.

The town offers an incredible range in both creativity and value and it is no surprise that a dozen of the restaurants listed on the *Olive Press'* fast-growing website *Dining Secrets of Andalucía* are in the Serranía de Ronda. From the creativity of Tragatapas and Casa Santa Pola to the beautiful rural idylls Molino del Santo and Al Lago, there is so much on offer.

Add in the soulful, unpretentious Almocabar, historic Pedro Romero and the amazing views from Predicadorio and you will never be short of good places to eat.

One of the most atmospheric must be El Picadero, set in a 400-year-old townhouse with an amazing collection of bullfighting memorabilia, including a set of 'banderillas' used by bullfighter Pedro Romero some 200 years ago.

Practically next door is the equally charming Casa Quino, a family-run joint, where its big boss Joaquin does a great job in the kitchen, producing a range of classic local dishes.

A keen photographer, he also has the best collection of old photos of Ronda.

Next door, Joaquin and his wife have recently opened a new place Nueva 13 more geared towards tapas and wines and with a very different style.

If you are looking for a great value Italian La Vita e Bella in the same street is a good bet, as is the evocative Tragatapas, run by Michelin-starred chef Benito Gomez. Having trained at El Bulli, among other notable places, it is probably the best place to eat something creative, in particular his fantastic sushi of tuna, with soya and wasabi.

That said, chef Ignacio at Casa Santa Pola

also knows what he is doing. The Catalan has worked around the country and is always up for a bit of experimenting and his gorge-side restaurant is probably the most beautiful in Ronda.

For atmosphere it is hard to

beat Pedro Romero, opposite the bullring, where Ignacio's brothers-in-law have carved a solid formula producing a string of traditional but delicious dishes, in particular the Rabo de Toro.

Then there is charming El



TEAM: The owners of Casa Quino and Nueva 13

Ronda special



ABCIENT AND MODERN: From traditional at Pedro Romero to experimental tuna tapa with Benito at Tragatapas. (Below) Casa Ortega

Porton – run by the same two friends for the last 40 years – steeped in bullfighting history and the best place to *tapear*, in particular the quails eggs with ham.

Also good for tapas is Casa Ortega, on Plaza Socorro,

which is fast becoming THE place for Ronda's establishment. With a more formal restaurant upstairs, it is well run by the Ortega family and rarely less than half full. Over in the old town is an exciting new place to try Meson

El Sacristan, which counts on Roman ruins in the basement and a friendly owner Antonio. This charming spot has easily some of the best steaks in the town, cooked to a tee in the only wood-oven around. Literally next door, you might want to visit the equally-rated Carmen la de Ronda, where the attractive hostess claims to be the great granddaughter of the original Carmen, who inspired the famous opera by Bizet. Steeped in history, it is a charming restaurant in a great location and staff are friendly and keen to do a good job.

Two to watch over the next year are Meson La Pozuela In Jubrique and El Muelle in Arriate

For international food, Ronda has an excellent range of restaurants from the excellent sushi at Osaka, to the Mexican Guadalupe and to the friendly Argentinian Buenos Aires, run by characteristic Omar, an excellent spot for tapas, breakfast or just a pint to watch the footie.

If you are looking for something more rural, why not visit the award-winning Molino del Santo, in Benaolan. Not just Andalusia's second highest-rated hotel, according to Trip Advisor, but in Gordon Brown, one of the best chefs in Andalusia.

Equally good are creative Stefan Crites of Al Lago, overlooking the lake in Zahara, and Ian Love, at Molino del Puente, who has a large fan base having spent many years cooking on the coast before moving to Ronda.

Finally two to watch over the coming year are Meson La Pozuela in Jubrique, where experienced Dutch chef Barry is garnering a good reputation for his adventurous, and organic dishes, and El

Muelle, in Arriate, where another Dutchman Frank has opened an exciting tapas-style restaurant.

Last, but not least, if it is authenticity you are after, you must head for the converted olive mill that is Molienda in Benalauria. One of Malaga's pretty small villages, this is a true dining secret!


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Ronda special

Where to stay

City of Dreaming



APPROPRIATELY dubbed the 'City of Dreams' by Dutch poet Rilke there are plenty of excellent places to stay in the Ronda area. In the heart of the city few

You are spoilt for choice with romantic and hip places to stay around Ronda

can beat trendy En Frente Arte or Hotel San Gabriel, a charming townhouse, with

its own cinema and where Bob Hoskins, Robert Plant and Isabella Rossellini have all stayed.

Here, you can really feel the weight of history and the family-run hotel has been carefully preserved and counts its own bodega.

Then there is Hotel Don Miguel sitting right on the gorge with fantastic views to match and an excellent breakfast.

Another good choice in the fascinating quarter near the Arabic Baths is the charming boutique hotel Hotel Aire



CHARM:
Don Miguel (top)
Alcantarilla farmhouse (left),
Molino del Puente and Hotel San Gabriel



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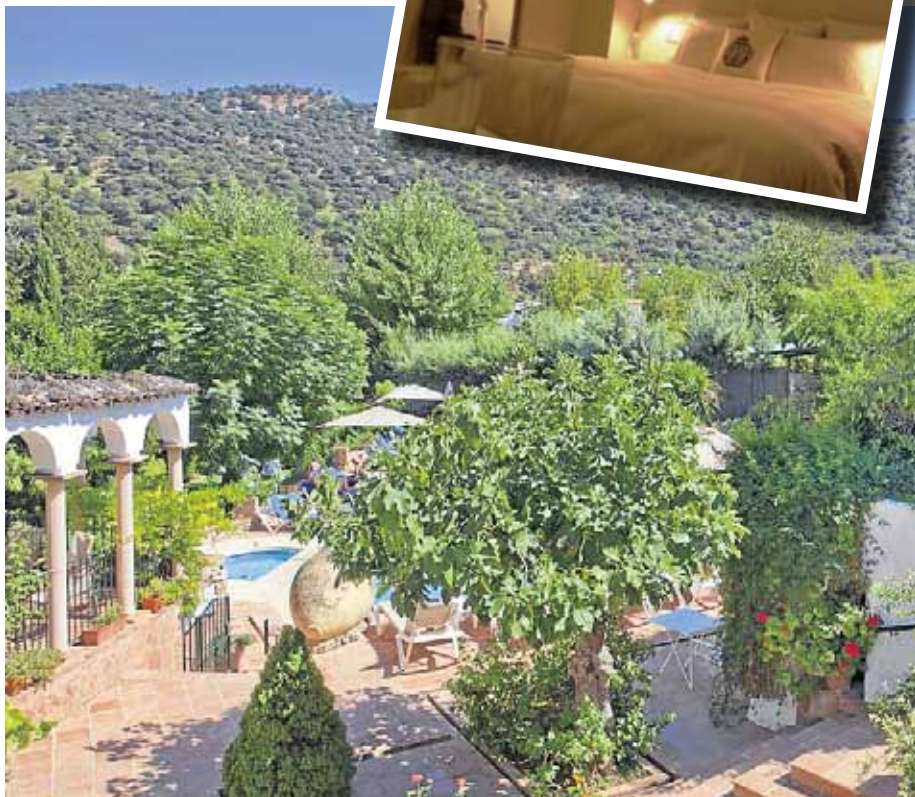
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We are just a 5 minute drive from the centre of Ronda on the A374 Ronda/Sevilla road

NB: We are open Fridays and Saturdays only throughout November



Ronda



LEAFY: Gardens and pool at Molino del Santo and (inset) a room at Hotel Aire

in Calle Real. Meanwhile, in the countryside nearby are some of Andalucía's most stylish hotels. These include Fuente de

la Higuera and Molino del Arco, which is a joy to visit, even if just for its amazing landscaped gardens. The family home of local

landowner Juan Clavero, who has a splendid eye for detail, it sits in a privileged position in the nearby Llano de la Cruz valley.

You might also want to consider Molino del Puente, run by friendly English couple Ian and Elaine Love, whose hotel is a converted mill beside a rushing river. They also have one of the area's best restaurants.

A bit further away in Benaocan you must certainly consider Molino del Santo, a classic rural retreat, and one of the first of its kind in Andalucía.

Alcantarilla is an authentic farmhouse in two hectares of lovely grounds

Run by English couple Pauline and Andy, the hotel - number two in Andalucía, according to TripAdvisor - has the knack of keeping guests happy with just the right mix of comfort, good food and character.

Another off-beat idea is the Hoopoe Yurt hotel, in nearby Cortes de la Frontera. A classic example of 'glamping', it's beautiful Mongolian yurts are a joy to stay in. Last but not least, why not rent a historic cortijo for a long weekend in winter? Sitting in lovely countryside between Ronda and Arriate, Alcantarilla is an authentic farmhouse split into two parts and surrounded by two hectares of wonderful grounds.

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we are open every day until Sunday 11th November 2012



And there are a few spaces left to join us for special events in our last week...

- ❖ Illustrated talk with local expert - 04/11 - 18:30h
- ❖ Visit Bull and horse ranch near Ronda - 05/11 - 11:30h
- ❖ Wine-tasting - 05/11 - 18:30h
- ❖ Guided visit to Tarifa by train - 06/11 - 09:30h
- ❖ Cookery demonstration - 06/11 - 18:30h
- ❖ Guided walks - two levels - 07/11 - 10:30h
- ❖ Special Menu - 07/11 - 20:00h

Thank you so much to our customers, suppliers and staff - 2012 has been a great success thanks to you all. We're back on 28th February 2013

¡HASTA PRONTO!

Andy Chapell & Pauline Elkin



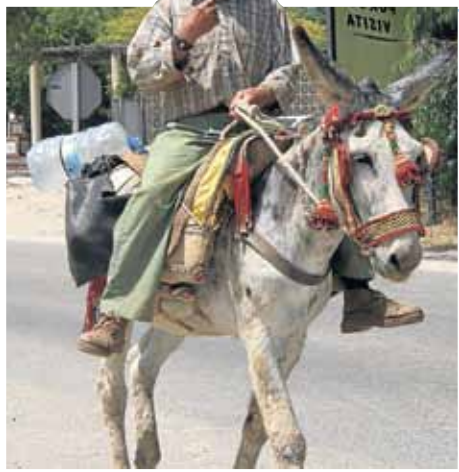
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"One of Andalucía's best-kept secrets..."

Andrew Forbes,
 Travel Writer
 19/10/12

Ronda special



VISTA: White villages pepper the valley, with Parauta in the foreground and Cartajima to the right. (left) local transport

Journey back

in time

Taking a ride around the Genal Valley is a wonderful way to see how ancient Andalusia must have looked, writes Eloise Horsfield

It is an area little changed in a century. The charming Genal Valley, which sits between Ronda and the Costa del Sol, is a huge green valley full of chestnut forests and timeless white villages... oh, and one blue one (see box below) too. A paradise for hikers and wildlife lovers, it boasts one of Europe's cleanest rivers and has a terrific range of charming local ventas.

Well off the usual tourist trail, the Genal Valley gives visitors a chance to experience what Spain was like in

days gone by. And at the mouth of the valley, at the Algaba centre, you can even discover what

life was like in prehistoric times, with its fascinating replica village. Carry on and after 10 min-

utes you will arrive in Alpan-deire, a stunning white village, with one of the most spectacular churches - ac-

tually a cathedral - in Malaga province. Here visitors can literally follow in the footsteps of a

saint, Fray Leopoldo, a capuchin monk who devoted himself to religion from the age of 35, after being born in the village in 1894..

Steps began in 1961 to beatify him - with believers hoping this will lead to him eventually becoming a saint.

His tomb now attracts believers looking for spiritual guidance and an attractive route devoted to him joins Alpan-deire with surrounding villages Pujerra, Igualeja, Juzcar, Farajan

and Cartajima.

It is a charming loop, with excellent, well-signposted walks, from each of the villages.

Farajan was once named 'a white swan on a pool of hope' by Ernest Hemingway, and Cartajima boasts perhaps the best view of the Genal Valley and maybe its finest lodgings in Hotel Los Castanos.

Without a doubt, the best time to visit is November and December when the chestnut trees turn the slopes into a glorious display of golden brown and the nearby tracks are strewn with chestnuts to pick up.

Another way of discovering the Genal Valley is by tak-



FEELING BLUE? JUZCAR WILL CHEER YOU UP



FICTIONAL HOME: Smurf village

LOOKING for something completely different? Well Juzcar certainly offers an alternative look to the ubiquitous *pueblo blanco*.

For this tiny village is painted entirely blue... and in, what is bound to be a hit with anyone under the age of 10, the village was chosen by Sony Pictures to promote their *Smurfs in 3D* film in June 2011.

Juzcar beat competition from 200 other villages because it looked most like the fictional village where the Smurfs live.

A year on and it has received over 130,000 visitors - that is more than 350 a day. Not bad for a village of just 250 residents - and no surprise then that locals voted to keep it blue.

Guided tours (Smurf-themed, naturally) are available all year round.

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Ronda special

ing a leisurely drive down the A369 between Gaucin and Ronda, a stunning road which weaves its way through the valley, offering breathtaking mountain views along the way.

Gaucin has amazing views down to Gibraltar and Africa

There are some lovely villages off it, the best of these being Benalauria, with its fabulous restaurant Molienda, a former mill, which has been perfectly preserved and serves the region's best local - and mostly organic - fare. An excellent loop back to

the coast takes you off a turning to the left, sign-posted for Estepona, from the village of Algatocin.

From here you can visit the two charming villages of Genalguacil - which is famed for its artists and, in particular, its bi-annual art festival, which is a must visit - as well as Jubrique, a more industrious place, just 45 minutes from Estepona.

In particular, make sure to stop at the wonderful recently opened restaurant of Meson Pozuela, run by a Dutch couple and not just authentic in look, but serving up some terrific local fare.

Not exactly known as part of the Genal Valley, Gaucin sits at one end of the



SAINTLY: A statue of Fray Leopoldo

It's a great time to buy, with properties standing at a record low in Ronda

BAG A BARGAIN

It is little surprise that the Ronda area has become one of Andalucia's most popular places to visit by those-in-the-know.

And equally no surprise that a large number of foreigners have ended up buying in the area, many working in tourism, while others have simply retired to enjoy the good mix of countryside and attractive local towns and villages.

"If you enjoy a quieter life away from the rat-race, you like spectacular scenery and unspoilt mountain towns then it could be for you," says local agent Irene Ortiz, from Serrania Services. "It is cheaper than on the coast and there is a huge variety of activities available, including bird-watching and horse-riding."

She continues: "It also counts most of the modern amenities and it is a real bonus having a proper hospital."

"There are currently some amazing bargains to be had, with country houses and fincas having seen some huge reductions in price over the last couple of years."

There are certainly many attractive properties both in the town and in the nearby villages.

One of the best bargains, includes the amazing three-bedroom Poet's Cottage in the buzzing village Arriate, just 10 minutes from Ronda. A superb village, which has a distinct alternative feel to Ronda and an excellent school and medical centre, this stunningly converted home has dropped in price by 40% to 145,000 euros for an immediate sale. Renovated to the highest standards with sustainability in mind, the stone built property counts its own leafy garden with a splash pool, as well as a massive vine-covered roof terrace with views for miles around.

Contact Gabs on 665787191 for more info.

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What to buy - esparto bags

ONE thing to look out for in the Genal Valley are baskets woven out of *esparto* grass that grows in the area. Once the main source of income for many families in the Sierra de las Nieves, sadly *esparto* products are now a dying trade. In Igualeja however you can visit a womens' co-operative that aims to keep the tradition alive as well as forming jobs for locals.



area. An equally fascinating place, here, you will not only find plenty of decent restaurants, but also good places to stay.

Known as the Balcon de la Serrania (the Balcony of the Serrania) it has amazing views down to Gibraltar and Africa and a well-established expatriate community, known for its artistic talents. Every year the town holds an studio open day and art market.

Serrania Services Inmobiliaria - Real Estate



Ref: 100342 - 195,000 € - 2 bed, 2 bath, 100m2 built Country House, Mature Gardens, Panoramic Views

Excellent opportunity to acquire a lovely, pristine country home situated in a peaceful but not isolated location with easy access into the village of Jimera de Libar for all the amenities. First-class carpentry throughout, wooden beamed ceilings and is fully insulated and damp proofed. The property enjoys magnificent panoramic views to rugged mountain peaks and is set in a plot of 6000m2 with large, beautifully maintained mature gardens with automatic watering.



Ref: 100214 - 130,000 € - 2 bed, 1 bath, 140m2 built White Village House with Patio Garden & Views

Exceptional renovated white village house with large patio garden 150m2 approx and located in the delightful white village of Montejaque. This super house has been renovated to a very high standard retaining character and charm with much attention to detail. The house is beautifully presented and decorated throughout and has wooden beams and antique doors. Montejaque is in the heart of the Grazalema Natural Park, an area of outstanding beauty.



Ref: 100096 - 130,000 € - 6 bed, 200m2 built Spanish Finca/Farmhouse, Spectacular Views

Reduced from 395,000€! Stunning country setting but only 7 minutes from the centre of Ronda - wonderful old Spanish finca/farmhouse 200m2 for renovation with outbuildings and 41.770m2 of mainly flat land with olives and suitable for cultivation. Water from own well and electricity connected. Excellent access. Ideal location for horses with good riding and no road work. Centre of Ronda close by all amenities, shops, restaurants, schools and medical services.

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Poet's Cottage



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or email gabschidgey@gmail.com

Ronda special



SWIRLING the cape like a whirling dervish, you could tell local hotelier Andy Chapell was having fun.

Jumping at the chance to attempt a classic bullfighting move at Ronda's exciting new bull breeding estate Reservatauro, it didn't matter that he looked more like a *Teletubby* attempting a new dance.

For it is the participation that makes this new venue such fun.

Whether a fan of bullfighting or not, visitors will enjoy seeing how well the fighting bulls live before being

A bull's life

A new estate is demonstrating why the world of bullfighting should be preserved at all costs, writes Jon Clarke

dispatched at four years of age.

Luxuriating in the grounds of this 200 hectare estate, they live off a mix of acorns and meal and have no shortage of space to roam.

Set up by Ronda bullfighter Rafael Tejada and his wife Nuria, this ancient estate, known as a *dehesa*, is a fascinating place to visit.

Set in stunning oak woodland on the edge of the Sierra de las Nieves natural park, visitors have the chance to see first hand how the ancient art functions.

As well as breeding bulls, the estate also trains horses, in particular the giant Spanish shirehorses, who can stand the weight of any bull charge. There is a trainee bullring and visitors are taken on a tour of the estate and given an explanation of how it all functions.

Most interesting of all is how the grandmother cows, known as *Mala Fes*, some as old as 22, are kept to socialise the young calves in



TRAINING DAY: Bulls on the estate come face to face with the owners' fearless boxer dog (top), while a horse receives tuition

sword used to dispatch the bulls in the ring.

"I thought the trip was really worthwhile and think a lot of our punters would go - apart from the anti-bullfight ones of course," explained Chapell, the boss of Molino del Santo, in Benaolan.

That is more the shame though, as there is no doubt, a

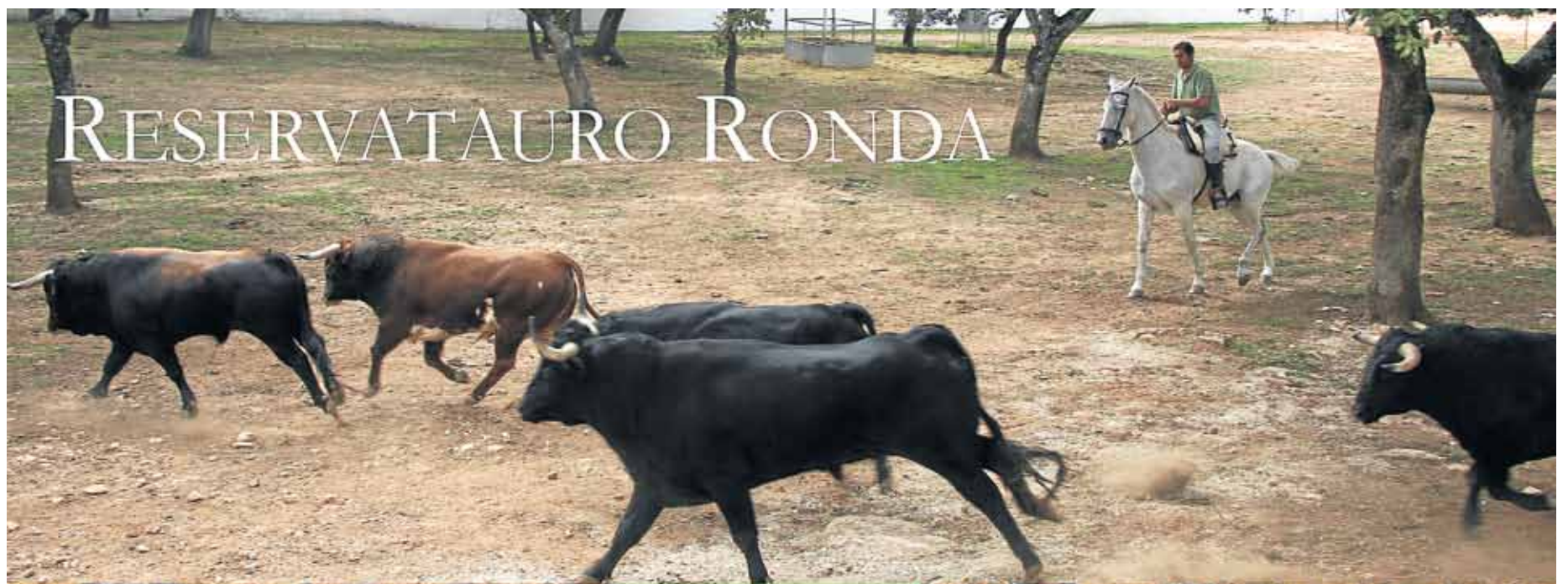
early life.

And then there is the chance to pick up and handle the cape, as well as the sharp

visit to Reservatauro is likely to put the whole art in a very different light... and, dare I say it, convert people.



MATADOR IN THE MAKING: Hotelier Andy Chapell tries his hand and (above) the stables with owner Rafael Tejada (middle)



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General price: 12 euros

Children and over 65s: 10 euros