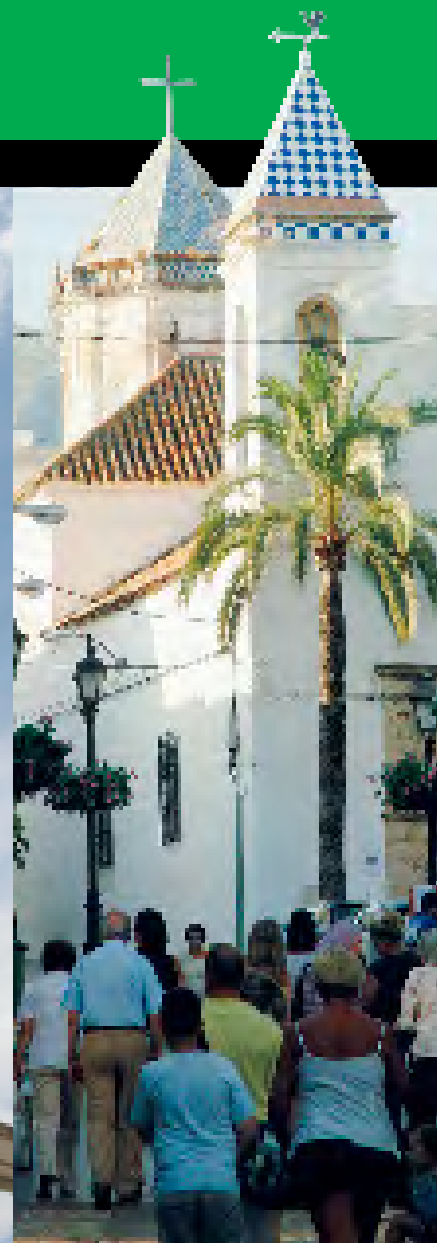


Issue 162 May 30 2013

Giles Brown goes behind the bling to find the very essence of Marbella



VARIETY: From golf to culture to partying



## The Many Sides of Marbella

WHISPER it quietly but there is a new confidence returning to Marbella. High end properties are continuing to sell at a rapid rate and the hotels, beach clubs and restaurants report that visitor numbers were up last summer and look to be up again this year. High profile events such as the Marbella Luxury Weekend, Starlight Festival and Global Gift Gala have attracted media attention to the town and celebrities including Eva Longoria, Enrique Iglesias, Michael Bolton, Jamie Cullum, Antonio Banderas and Will.I.A.M, are all due to visit Marbella this summer. While the €400million Al-Thani Port in Marbella has reached an uneasy standoff, other projects are under-

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## 24 Marbella special

From page 23

way such as the redevelopment of the emblematic Don Miguel Hotel, while the opening of the San Pedro Alcantara tunnel last year has massively improved the transport infrastructure.

"I think that Marbella has regained its positive image again internationally," explains Marbella's tourist boss Jose Luis Hernandez. And, of course, it needed to after two decades of corruption and decline led by former boss Jesus Gil and his cohorts, who made Marbella a byword for greed and scandal.

It wasn't as it turned out the first time. Travellers in the seventeenth century were warned in a risqué proverb "Marbella es bella, pero no entrar en ella" (Marbella is beautiful, but don't go into her) as the town had a bad reputation for villainy.

Thankfully, these days things have been cleaned up. An ongoing five year court case, Operation Malaya, is bringing the central figures to justice and it is generally felt that Marbella's murky past is now firmly behind it.

There is certainly plenty to shout about. Much more than many people think. Marbella has been a town since the seventh century BC, and traces of a Phoenician village were unearthed at the mouth of the Rio Real. The Romans called Marbella 'Saluba' and one original Roman bridge still stands rather surreally in the middle of the appropriately named Puente Romano Hotel. The newly-restored and re-opened Roman villa at Rio Verde also offers an insight into Roman life in Marbella. Among its stunning mosaics is even a fashionable-looking flip flop that would not look out of place by a TOWIE toenail just up the road in Puerto Banus.

Unlike other towns in the province, Marbella has never had much of an appetite for a fight, being sacked by African Pirates in AD 170 and then easily taken by the Moors and in turn retaken by the Christians in 1485.

The Plaza de los Naranjos (Orange Square) has been the focus of Marbella life since 1485 and the town hall is still located there. Other notable buildings in the Old Town include the Museo de Grabado Español which is housed in the old hospital, and the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación. One of the most important visitors to the Old Town in recent years has been Michelle Obama. The decision of America's first lady to take a holiday in Andalucía and base herself in Marbella made a significant impact.

It has been estimated that the international media coverage it brought would have cost the town around €800 million and the visit marked



## Marbs Massive

the turning point for Marbella, which had been many years in the doldrums. Since then international analysts have identified three places in Spain as key centres for investment - Madrid, Barcelona and Marbella. Madrid is a city of 6 million, Barcelona 4 million, whereas in Marbella there are 200,000 people. "If we are regarded

This classic fleshpot was once the hangout of Rod Stewart, Sean Connery and James Hunt. In recent years Banus has become the destination of a younger brasher crowd, collectively known as the 'Marbs massive' including footballers, models and TV stars. While plenty of the

**"The visit of Michelle Obama was extremely important for the economy of Marbella"**

in the same breath as these capital cities it underlines the fantastic investment potential that Marbella has," says tourist boss Jose Luis.

Another huge factor in Marbella's growth has been golf. Nueva Andalucía, the area just behind the jet set marina of Puerto Banus, is home to three of the best known courses in Spain - Real Club Las Brisas, Aloha Golf and Los Naranjos, collectively known as 'Golf Valley'. In addition there is Guadalmina and numerous others up the coast to the east.

And then you have the now famous/infamous Puerto Banus, opened in 1970 with Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly as guests, while a young Julio Iglesias sang at the official opening party.

**MICHELLE'S MARBS: The First Lady in town and (top) Jacaranda trees and La Concha**

## Marbella special



restaurants offer style and quality the weekend bars including Linekers and Portside heave with the Stag and Hen party crowd.

While the Town Hall likes to promote its multi-million euro international projects, and the British Press concentrate on the antics of the cast of *The Only Way is Essex (TOWIE)*, Callum Best and the usual squad of Premiership footballers and WAGs who are snapped on the beaches (Sala Beach and La Sala restaurant are favourite places to spot them) Marbella has much more to offer.

Look a little behind the bling and you will find a vibrant old town and real flavour of Spain. During feria week,

which this year takes place between June 9 to 15, Marbella proudly wears its Andalusian colours, but throws its arms open to all nationalities and you'll hear a colourful mixture of languages.

A walk around the streets of the Old Town, stopping in one of the many tapas bars - El Estrecho is one of the oldest in Marbella, while La Venecia is an institution - or across the Alameda Park, grabbing a coffee in Cafeteria Marbella (another institution, but be prepared to linger as service is, ahem, old style) is enough to dispel the idea that Marbella is all bling and bling.

Wander past the Dali statues on the Avenida del Mar down to the Paseo Marítimo on a

Sunday early evening and you'll see families taking their traditional stroll or just coming off the beach after a day at one of the chiringuitos.

A short drive west of Marbella brings you onto The Golden Mile and the Marbella Club Hotel. This is where it all started when Prince Alfonso von Hohenlohe stopped off in Marbella in the 50s on the way to visit relatives in Sevilla (see *King of Clubs feature overleaf*).

**The area around the Marbella Club is home to some of the most expensive and exclusive villas in Spain**

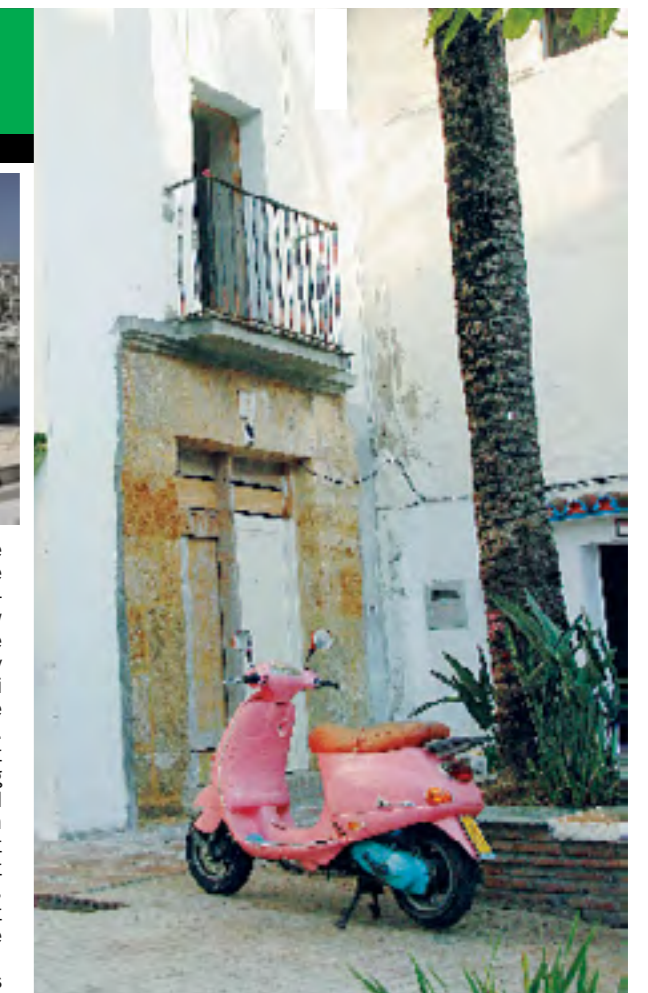
Needing to make a telephone call he was told that a line would be available after lunch, and so decided to have a picnic under the pines close to Finca Santa Margarita. Alfonso was so enchanted by the location that he decided to buy the land and open a small hotel for his friends, the Marbella Club Hotel.

In the 50 years since that picnic, the hotel has become a byword for luxury and the area around the Marbella Club is home to some of the

most expensive and exclusive villas in Spain - indeed the road below it is Spain's second most expensive. And just a few kilometres further on is the Mosque and Palace built by the late King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the Palace's façade a replica of the White House. The Saudi royals are frequent visitors to Marbella and bring a massive boost to the local economy when they are in town, a subtle reminder that while the flashy Al-Thani port might get all the attention, the long term investment comes from elsewhere in the Gulf.

From celebrity laden galas to chilled-out afternoons at the beach, to an evening of flamenco or a round of golf, Marbella really does offer you options whatever you want to do. And although some may bemoan that Marbella has changed to become all bling and celebs, the town itself is still an incredibly popular destination.

The late Sir Dai Llewlyn put it best when he told me, quite possibly over a glass of something light and bubbly, that "Marbella is like the hostess of a party who, halfway through the evening goes up to change outfits. She may come down wearing a different dress, but the party still continues!"



CHARM: Marbella's Old Town

### Marbella Factfile

Population - 140,473 (20 per cent are expats)  
Second largest town in Malaga province  
Size - 114.3km<sup>2</sup>  
The town's boundaries are to Cabopino on the east to Guadalmina on the west  
Length of coast line - 26km  
Origins - remains have been found from Phoenician, Carthaginian and Roman settlements  
Name - derives from Moorish settlement, "Marbil-la"  
Tourist Information Office - Plaza Los Naranjos 952 823 550  
Exclusive residential areas include Elviria, Nueva Andalucía, Guadalmina, Sierra Blanca, Marbella Hill Club, Naguelles, La Zagaleta and Santa Margarita.  
Famous residents have included Antonio Banderas, Dolph Lundgren, Hugh Grant, Sean Connery, Deborah Kerr.

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AUTHENTIC: A square in the Old Town and (top) Puerto Banus



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# Full circle for the 'King of Clubs'

*The Olive Press looks back at the lives of the aristocrats and celebrities that turned a small fishing village into a glitzy, star-studded resort for the jet set*



**DOWNFALL:** After building the regal Marbella Club Hotel, Hohenlohe moved to Ronda and started a vineyard that recently had a ring road carved through it (story top)

It was with great irony that the *Olive Press* reported that Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe's mountain estate was facing the indignity of a ring road being carved through it three years ago. For the German aristocrat is the man often credited with lighting the touchpaper that led to the building boom on the Costa del Sol back in the 1950s. Hohenlohe – a classic playboy with a love for the ladies – had been the svengali who brought in the necessary capital, both in human and financial terms, to turn the small coastal town of Marbella into a *highfalutin* millionaires playground to rival the likes of Cannes and Deauville. It was in 1947 that the bright-eyed and charismatic Alfonso had been sent to the coast by his eminent father Prince Maximilian von Hohenlohe to purchase some land. The 23-year-old son of six children first met up with his eccentric uncle Ricardo Soriano, who would often eulogise about the merits of the coast. A self-proclaimed womaniser, Soriano was a huge fan of water sports, especially powerboat racing and lived an enviable bohemian life. While taking Alfonso on a jaunt along the coast in a classic charcoal-powered Rolls-Royce they, perchance,

decided to stop in the then small fishing village of Marbella. The bilingual Alonso – who was a keen painter – was immediately taken by what he saw. Sheltered by the dramatic Sierra Blanca, with crystal-clear waters just a stone's

throw away, the savvy prince was wooed by the wealth of opportunities this coastal enclave had at its fingertips. He ordered his father to sell off his wine cellars in Malaga and begin developing what was to become the first of many new hotels in Marbella. The well-connected prince

then embarked on an impromptu campaign to convince all his high-flying friends that Marbella, not San Sebastian or Cannes, was the only place to be. Despite the doubts, Alfonso persisted with his dream and it was later realised when he opened the now legendary Marbella Club hotel in 1954. The royal socialite soon came into his element as he busily promoted his luxury accommodation, and, sure enough, the world's rich, famous and powerful soon began to pour in. First up, the grand families of central Europe, including the Bismarcks, Rothschilds and Metternichs, began visiting the exclusive hotel. Soon a string of well-known celebrities were following suit, with actresses including Ava Gardner and Sophia Loren, photographer Patrick Lichfield and racing daredevil James Hunt joining the in-crowd. Even British aristocracy got in on the act, with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (Edward and Mrs Simpson) enjoying the experience served up by Alonso. He even employed a piano player, Don Jaime de Mora y Aragon, who was directly descended from 56 kings and was also the brother of the Queen of Belgium.

"The people I had met in Hollywood, in New York, in Europe, they were the roots, the bridge that brought people to Marbella... who made Marbella," explained Alfonso. Marbella took pride in being cut off from the hectic, stressful and often scary modern world. Indeed, news of the Cuban Missile Crisis did not reach the resort until it was over. "Everybody had the most gorgeous parties when the rest

**As celebrities flocked to the land of plenty, the cement mixers and cranes arrived in force**

of the world was trembling that World War III was starting," explains Count Rudi Schonburg, a former manager of Marbella Club. And coining the nickname the 'King of Clubs', Alfonso's reputation quickly preceded himself and he soon opened up a disco which got the club swinging every Tuesday and Friday night. Despite revelling in its exclusive status, the Marbella Club was anything but formal.

"At dinner everybody arrived with a dinner jacket, but I said 'Stop! This is not the Marbella way! You only wear a dinner jacket on New Year's Eve'," recalled Alfonso. As the inspired prince's creation boomed, so did Marbella and its surrounding hillsides. New restaurants, bars and sports clubs began sprouting up as the Costa del Sol quickly entered its so-called golden era. Developers included Jose Banus, who built Puerto Banus marina and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who built a white palace (still there today) that is modelled on both the White House and a mosque. The likes of multi-millionaire arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi (who formerly owned La Zagaleta, Spain's most expensive real estate enclave in the hills en route to Ronda) were able to dock their luxury yachts in the port. But as the celebrities flocked to the land of plenty, the cement mixers and Spain's national bird – cranes – arrived in force. Alonso assumed the role of head of the Costa del Sol Promoters' Co-operative. He lobbied vigorously for improvements in the local roads, airports and water supply. His vision for the coast soon spurred the rapid growth of neighbouring Torremolinos as

its grey concrete skyscrapers shot up along the seafloor. Yet thanks to Alfonso's vision, Marbella maintained its classy appearance while today, Torremolinos' buildings are now crumbling away into the seafloor. Alfonso and his friends ensured that Marbella was tastefully developed with low rise white-washed houses and palm-filled gardens. "Thanks to my initiative, Marbella's Golden Mile alone now provides 60,000 jobs," Alfonso once said. And the arrival of the 1960s witnessed Alfonso and Marbella at the peak of their fame. Hollywood stars, Arab sheikhs and former European royalty all accompanied Alfonso at his prestigious Marbella hang-out. Celebrities Ava Gardner and Kim Novak were among the many high-profile girlfriends he dated. Even Scottish acting legend Sir Sean Connery became a frequent visitor of Marbella's glitzy, star-studded clubs and bars. While his friends called him the 'King of Clubs' or the 'Little Prince', locals came to know him affectionately as *Olé-Olé*, because of his difficulty to pronounce surname. Yet as the Costa del Sol dream began to spiral into

uncontrollable development, Alfonso became aware of the monster he had helped stir. Concrete towers were sprouting up as far as the eye could see, from Malaga all the way down to Estepona, almost 100 kilometres away. Worse still, wanted British criminals began to take ad-

**He grew weary of the mass tourism that was lowering the tone of his town**

vantage of a lack of an extradition treaty between England and Spain. This influx of crooks and subsequent crime left the idealistic Alfonso disillusioned with the vision of rich grandeur he once envisaged for Marbella. After growing weary of the mass tourism that was lowering the tone of his town, he sold up all his Marbella business interests in 1978 in search of a new vision. Entering his 60s, the idealistic prince settled in his last home with his third wife Marily Haynes, a Gibraltar divorcee. He plumped for a mountain retreat, in the hills

close to Ronda, with a trout lake, partridge wood and an impressive library. And the ever-inventive Alfonso decided on another successful business pursuit – producing the soon-to-be award-winning wine Principe Alfonso. And it was nestled in the heartland of Andalucía, close to the sleepy village of Arriate, where Alfonso – despite all the celebrities, parties and glamorous girlfriends – finally found true happiness before passing away, leaving his estate to his children, in 2003. "I have lived in castles, in Venetian palaces and the world's finest hotels. I have watched the sun rise over the beaches of five continents and I have looked into the eyes of the most beautiful women of the universe," he famously remarked. "Everywhere I sought my dreamed-of city and at last I have found it in Ronda." So it is certainly an incredible irony that little Arriate's much needed ring-road is concretising over the adored, final home of Marbella's development behemoth.

**DEBONAIR:** Frank Sinatra drinking with Ava Gardner



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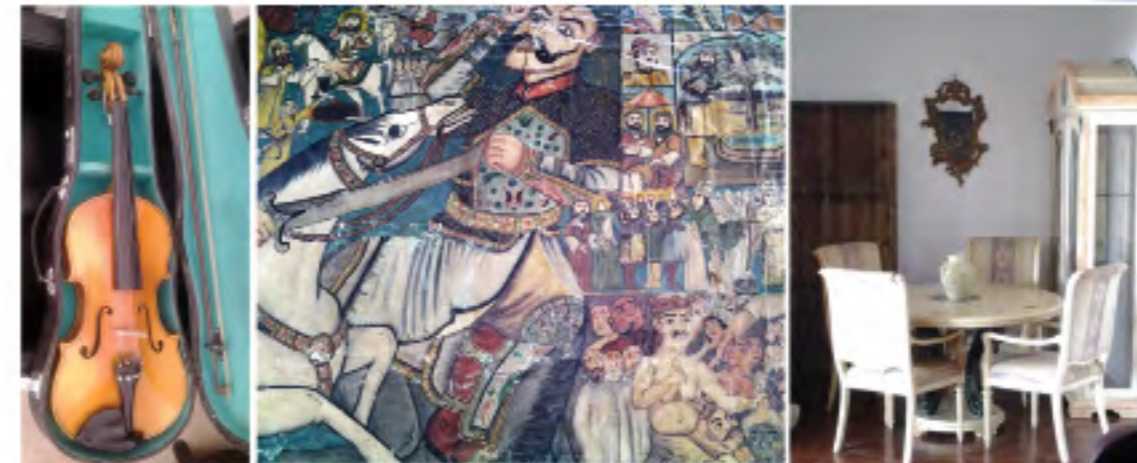
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# His and hers Banus



## Mason Jones: A museum of strange people

IT'S safe to say I was a little more than sceptical as we left the office in Estepona for the A7. My Spanish flatmates had just given me a collective roll of the eyes when I told them I was off for a night out in Banus. Famous for its ostentation (and the cast of TOWIE, a show I have studiously avoided) I knew Spain's most popular party destination would be nothing like the charming former fishing village where I currently live. But that said, I promised to have an open mind and was determined to find some of

the Spanish charm I had experienced elsewhere in Andalusia. The first thing that hit me was the parade of summer dresses, bright jeans and well-pressed shirts swanning past the ridiculously large yachts that sit in the marina. And rather than a bunch of lager louts, it soon becomes clear it is more of a handbag-hungry clientele dominating the marina. Eagerly shopping in the world famous fashion stores, the accents are distinctly Scouse and Scottish, rather than Andaluz. And the smell is not spilt beer but perfume trails

and excitement. People pose next to the gleaming-white floating palaces and it is not long before I am guilty of having a gawp. The sports cars which slowly roll through the busy port also receive their fair share of male attention, with half a dozen camera phones flashing simultaneously as they pass. I spot one well dressed woman step elegantly out of a top-of-the-range Bentley. As the drinks flow and the early hours arrive, it is clear Banus has a certain energy about it. The bars become fuller and the volume increases as more people stagger from the street behind and down to the marina.



It would be unfair and, more importantly, untrue, to say I did not enjoy the few hours I spent there. I may not have found that Andalusian charm, but Puerto Banus is certainly not charmless. Like the irritating relative you can not help but love, Puerto Banus is the extravagant, outlandish, loud but loveable uncle of the Costa del Sol. Or, as my flatmate quite eloquently put it, 'a museum of strange people!'



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## Annabel Grossman: Billionaires Butlins, but bloody good fun

HAVING grown up in a certain part of north London plenty of my friends spent their formative teenage holidays in Marbella and Puerto Banus. But one way or another I missed out... not that I cared mind you. For me Banus always had a reputation as being a bit of a 'Billionaires' Butlins' and I figured as my parents didn't own a yacht or a big collection of Jimmy Choos I'd never quite fit in. Now however, living just a stone's throw away, it wasn't long before I found myself tottering along the marina in my highest heels and preparing for a night out in Banus. I am clearly too easily impressed and love gawping at the giant yachts, reeling at the champagne prices and admiring the lush restaurants. And while I haven't quite got the budget to splash out on Cristal, there are plenty of places where you can grab a bite to eat and a couple of drinks without breaking the bank. But



while a pint down the pub is all very well, it doesn't take long before my north London side is whipping out the credit card and taking a pew at one of the more swanky bars. I never thought I'd be the type to enjoy partying with WAGs or sipping champagne with the cast of TOWIE, but a few drinks in Sinatra's and I'm practically dragging my mates to Sala Beach Club, where I've been promised glitz, glamour and the odd celeb sighting. Admittedly, it may not be an A-lister hangout, but the alfresco restaurant is great for dinner and drinks in luxurious surroundings and you are bound to meet a footballer. A couple of Mojitos and some

Thai tapas later and it's on to Olivia Valere for cocktails, which inevitably leads to drinks at Opera and dancing until the early hours at Funky Buddha. The main thing about Banus is there is something for everyone - you can enjoy a couple of relaxing sunset cocktails at the marina, a quick pint at Linekers or spend the afternoon guzzling champagne with Premiership footballers. Admittedly, the damage to my bank account is a bit painful and my feet ached for a few days. But if it's drinks, dancing and great food you're after, you can't really go wrong in Puerto Banus.



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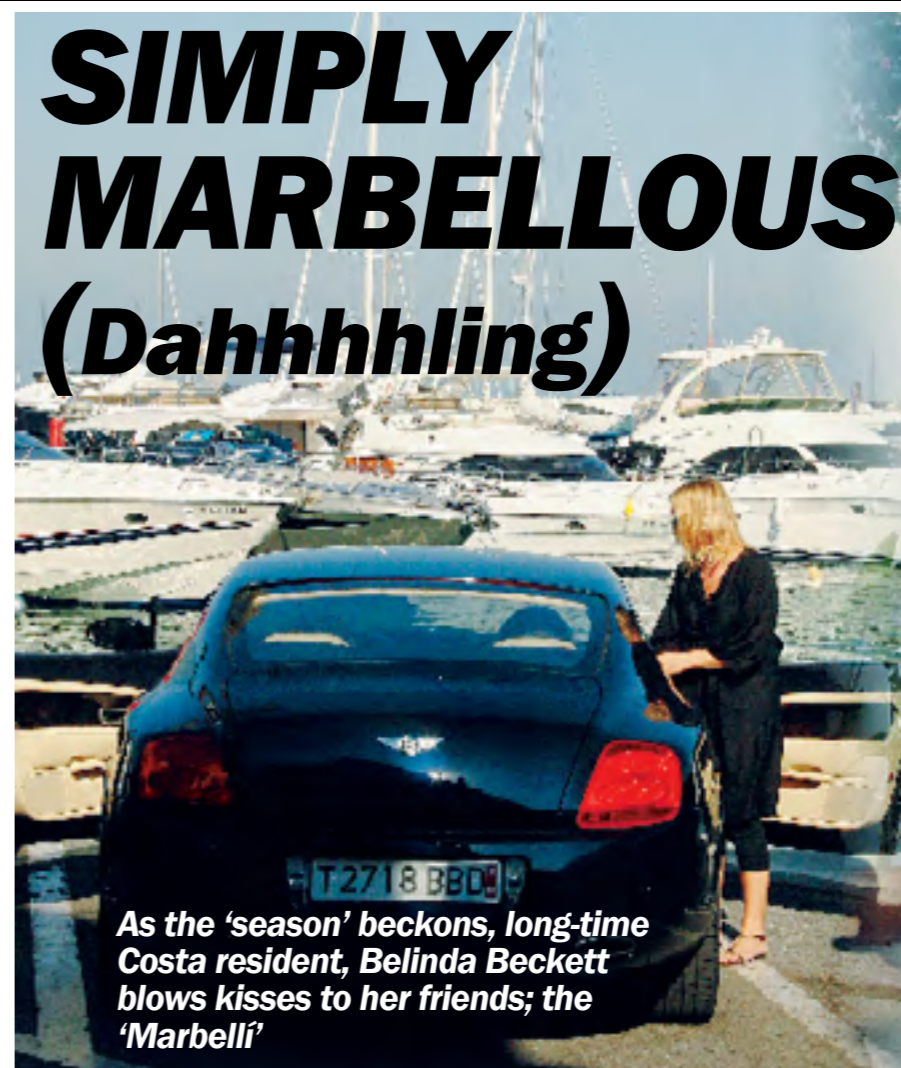
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## Marbella special

# SIMPLY MARBELLOUS (Dahhhhhling)



As the 'season' beckons, long-time Costa resident, Belinda Beckett blows kisses to her friends; the 'Marbelli'

UNIQUE: Marbella is unlike the other costa resorts, here a beauty steps out of a Bentley in Banus, while (below) a lady has lunch and (top right) girls shop

REMEMBER one of my mother's snootier neighbour's once spreading out a map to show us where she was going on holiday that year. "Ah, Spain," my mother nodded knowingly. "No, not Spain," retorted her friend, somewhat miffed. "Marbella dahling. There's a world of difference."

And so there is. For reasons which mainly have to do with vast amount of money, Marbella has always remained aloof from other resorts in coastal Spain. Sandwiched between Fuengirola and Estepona like the foie gras filling between two slices of Hovis, even the people are called 'Marbelli', instead of Spanish or foreign.

Marbella begins where Calahonda ends and for years (just to make sure no one associated the select, millionaire's playground with the resort upon which the cheap and nasty *Eldorado* TV series was based), the grey crash barriers on the main road were painted blue and white in the colours of the (late) town Mayor Jesus Gil's political party.

Not in Marbella do the *hoi polloi* slop around in crumpled shorts, baggy T-shirts and flip-flops from Tesco Home and Wear. Marbella's paseo marítimo, a fashion catwalk lined with succulent palms and beach showers sculptured in the shape of elephants, is trodden by beautiful people sporting sunglasses by Ray Ban, sandals by Dolce & Gabbana and, in cooler months, a pashmina (careless of how many rare

Himalayan goats froze to death sacrificing their coats on the altar of high fashion). The shops in Marbella could have been expressly designed for the man or woman who has everything: Cartier key rings, handbags shaped like



**You could easily blow several million euros in the furniture stores before you get round to buying a home**

Even the boutique sales assistants are beautifully tailored in Dior and Chanel, all the better to persuade you that the little pink number is an absolute must, even if the C500 which you thought you might run to, turns out only to refer to the belt.

Here, among the many furniture stores you could quite easily blow several million euros before you get round to buying the house. Talking of which, no one has anything so vulgar as an apartment here, unless

it's to let out to the poor for a profit. A villa or a penthouse is *de rigueur* or, if push comes to shove, a townhouse - so long as it's *bijou*.

In this modern-day Babylon you can have a mosaic copy of a Titian or *The Rape of the Sabine Women* rampaging over your patio, a jacuzzi with solid gold taps, a diamond tattoo on your tooth or a *trompe l'oeil* door in your wall so realistic, you are in danger of walking slap bang into it after a few bottles of Bollie. But don't worry, if you bust your nose there are plenty of people who'll fix it for you. Marbella is coming down with dashing cosmetic surgeons all ready to bundle you into their clinics and have you lifted, tucked, liposucked or Botoxed 'to go'. There are no end, either, to the alternative health centres offering everything from liposuction to Colonic Irrigation, nor to the beauty parlours proposing to extend your locks and sculpt your nails like Cruella Deville's.

Marbella is a town for ladies who lunch and here, the restaurateurs take the view that life is never too short to stuff a mushroom. In fact, if it was possible to insert Paxo into a corn kernel they'd probably try, so competitive are they to stay hip to the trends. But as 'the season' approaches, a socialite's thoughts turn

**Divorcees spend the night on the prowl for frog-faced men who turn out to be princes**

to parties. In Marbella they are legendary. During July and August the glitterati will be turning conspicuous consumption into an art form. Legs will be tanned and waxed, tuxes and frocks ordered from Armani and Versace, Ferraris hired from €450 a day (but with a €10,000 deposit put down and two credit cards) and the 'moi moi' air-kissing ritual begins. Married couples will work the room, seeking greater social status or a lucrative business deal; singles will be looking for a suitable mate;

predatory divorcees will spend the night on the prowl for frog-faced men who might turn out to be princes. Barons and billionaires, celebrities, social climbers and humble hangers-on will be dancing 'til amour or a hernia carries them home to monogrammed silk sheets.

They still talk about the dog given by the Belgian playboy with the sharp sense of humour who thoughtfully provided door-to-door transport for his booted, suited, elegantly-gowned and tiara-ed guests - donkeys. For yes, it's that sort of place. A place to love or hate and one, quite unlike anywhere else in the world.

For yes, it's that sort of place. A place to love or hate and one, quite unlike anywhere else in the world.



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By Guy Hunter-Watts

The walk first leads through the irrigated terraces that lie just beyond the village of Istan, ten minutes drive from Marbella centre. Since Moorish times these fertile *bancales* have been irrigated by an intricate series of water channels or *acequias* that which are fed by the waters of the Rio Molinos.

Angling north you cut through a swathe of avocado plantations before descending to the valley floor of the Rio Verde. Here you follow a track along its eastern side before crossing to its west bank via stepping stones to reach the Charco del Canalón.

Set time aside at the beginning of the walk to visit Istan's diminutive main square where there are a couple of cheap and cheerful bars for a *café con leche*. It feels a thousand miles from the nearby Costa which is only a dozen kilometres down the road.



## A green paradise

This easy ramble leads north from the pretty village of Istan, near Marbella, to the beautiful river valley of the Rio Verde and the rock pool El Charco del Canalón. This is a heart-achingly beautiful spot for a dip during the warmer months or a picnic at any other time of year

### The nitty-gritty

Distance: 15kms  
Time Required: 4 hrs  
Rating: Medium  
Total height gain: 350m  
Map(s): IGN 1:50000 Marbella 1065 (15-45)  
Water: no springs so take plenty

### The Walk

The walk begins in the Plaza de Andalucía next to the Istan Ayuntamiento which you'll see to your left as you arrive from the coast. From here cut left and head in towards the village centre passing an esplanade with benches that look out across the valley west of the village. At the three way junction pass right of Bar Rincón de Curro then drop down a flight of steps to the Unicaja bank, turn right and drop down to a junction. Turning right you leave the last village houses behind as you head east along a track with fences to either side. After 350 metres the track angles left and reaches a ford: you can cross it via the concrete footbridge to one side. Climbing in a northerly direction you pass a high breeze block wall as the track cuts past thick stands of prickly pears, running more or less parallel to the Rio Verde which is down to your left. Passing the green gates of Casa Los Abuelos the track

descends then crosses a (dry) watercourse where it angles left then climbs past a white building with twin porthole windows. Gently descending, with great views out into the valley to your left, the track runs on through avocado groves before passing above a small white building with a statue of Saint Anthony. Looping across the course of a (dry) streambed the track angles left before climbing up to meet with a broader track. (40 mins) Angle left and head down the track to the floor of the valley then follow the track on north parallel to the river. After passing by an area where cars can park, then crossing the Arroyo Bohornoque, you reach a junction. Here cut right at a sign Charco Canalón up a steep concrete track. Reaching a metal gate angle left then climb a narrow path to meet again with the track. Turn left. Climbing gently, and sticking to the main track, Istan comes into view back to the south. As the track begins to descend back towards the



river a sandy-coloured house comes into sight to your north. Crossing a (dry) streambed via a concrete section the track bears right and climbs before angling back left and passing above the sandy-coloured house beyond which you reach a fork. (1 hr 15 mins) Cut right following a sign Ruta 5 Casa El Balatín. As the track arcs left you reach another fork. Take the lower branch which descends

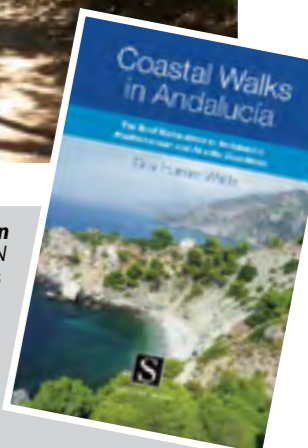
STUNNING: El Charco del Canalón



SIGHTS: Views on the walk from Istan and a fountain in the village itself

Guy Hunter-Watts' *Coastal Walks in Andalucía* contains a selection of 50 stunning walks close to southern Spain's Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlines. The book describes a range of ocean-side rambles, gorge and ridge walks, and forested circuits that are all easily accessed from the Costa del Sol, the Costa de la Luz and the Costa Tropical. Walks vary in length and difficulty but all are within the capabilities of anybody in reasonable health who walks on a regular basis.

*Coastal Walks in Andalucía* (ISBN 9-788489-954939) is published by Santana Books www.santana-books.com tel: 952 485 838 The book is available at most bookshops in southern Spain as well as from amazon.co.uk or direct from the publishers. For more details of Guy's other walking guides, and his guided walks, check out www.guyhunter-watts.com



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34 **Marbella special**

# Schools in the Sun

*Marbella has one of the best collections of international schools*

MARBELLA is truly spoilt for choice when it comes to education options with several well-known and well established international colleges in the town. Schools such as Swans International School and the British School of Marbella provide an international outlook, yet follow the British curriculum. Most British style schools in Marbella work from specially built campuses with state-of-the-art facilities and offer a wide range of subjects. At Swans these include Psychology and Theatre Studies, while at the British School of Marbella the curriculum includes sport, drama and educational trips together with a range of other activities to form an integral part of a broad curriculum that aims to help students learn essential skills. Educating your children in Marbella also has the added



**SINGERS: Pupils at Swans International School**

benefit of allowing them to interact with different nationalities and cultures. At Swans for example, there are over 600 students from 30 different countries, providing much more than just an academic education. Other schools include Laude in San Pedro, Aloha in Nueva Andalucía and EIC. For secondary education the Marbella Design Academy up



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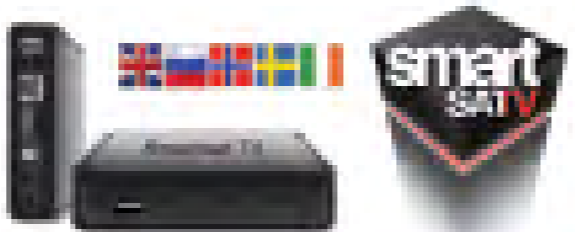
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SNAP: Photo featuring Howes' aunt circled

It couldn't have come as a bigger surprise. A long-time art dealer Stephen Howes jumped at the opportunity to buy the large black & white photo that had sat in an old restaurant in Fuengirola for decades. An evocative shot of a chiriguito, known as the Sugar Shack, it summed up everything the Brummie businessman remembered about the coast as a child growing up. So one can imagine his shock when he got home to discover that in the picture - in the background sunning herself over an evening's cocktail - was his old aunt Jen. "It wasn't until I got home and really studied it that I thought I recognised the woman sitting down having a drink with a man. "It really looked like my aunt Jen, so I took a photo and sent it back to my mum in the UK to confirm it, which she did." It emerged that it really was his aunt, who had lived for a time in the hills above Mijas. "What we don't know is who the gentleman she is sitting with is?" He continues: "I had always loved the photo, so I was chuffed when the owner of the Harrods bar called me and told me he was happy to sell it as he was shutting down. "I had tried to buy it a few times since I first saw it in the 1980s but he had always refused to sell." The picture - which has an old expat figure 'Gribber' in the foreground - is now being used as publicity material for popular local restaurant The Beach House, whose owners are close friends of Howes. Howes, who represents a number of the coast's leading artists, has been an art dealer for nearly two decades. Among his collection are 40 paintings by former Mijas artist Don Clarke, who he represented until his death in 2012, and others by Michael Parks, Roland Fade and Alfred Rogaway. Visit [www.thomasbrownart.com](http://www.thomasbrownart.com) for more info.

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## 38 *Marbella special*

### WHERE TO SHOP

**M**ARBELLA is a classic shoppers paradise with everything from the top designer shops to arty boutiques in the old town.

For the big designer brands you need to head to Puerto Banus, where you will find Gucci, Dior, D&G and Jimmy Choo, etc.

Marbella old town has a wide variety of interesting exclusive speciality shops including Deja Vu which has beautiful vintage clothing and offers a great choice of high end

## Gucci to thrift store

*Elizabeth Gould gives a few shopping tips*

designer and vintage stock including Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Hermes and Gucci. The shop will also now sell your vintage items on a commission basis. For lovers of tea and coffee La Gota de Te sells coffee from 25 different countries while D'Oliva sells the best

olive oils from around Spain. Around the corner is the charming Toy Shop which has a great range of old toys and at the Tiny Cake Secret you can buy everything you need to make cupcakes, cakes and cookies.

Cudeca has recently relaunched its new shop, where I bought a Versace tee shirt for just €10. Finally, Posh Seconds is an exciting new shop located just outside of Marbella, on CN340 Exit 184. The shop buys and sells artwork, quality new and second hand furniture and interesting items which can also be accepted for sale on a commission basis.

This venture is a new concept as the owners can also provide a complete service with their own interior design team. In addition they are working with six local artists, selling their work and taking commissions for home and garden.

### WHERE TO STAY

## Style and grandeur

**B**EING one of Spain's top resorts there is a huge range of places to stay in Marbella.

Aside from the historic Marbella Club, you have Spain's top rated hotel La Villa Marbella and the stalwart Puente Romano.

But if you are looking for something really special you MUST visit the Marbella Heights Boutique Hotel, which is situated in the hills behind Marbella and has

stunning views of both sea and mountains.

This luxury boutique hotel has four stylish bedrooms and one beautiful suite and you are only seven minutes to the beach. The perfect stop off for some pampering, it has a great pool, jacuzzi and gym.

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# Fine food AND fun

VARIETY: (From left) Cafe de Ronda, Playwrights, Chowka and Chef Ravi

A SUCCESSFUL restaurant in Marbella must have a sense of fun," explains Ram Nandkishore, and he should know, having opened a dozen establishments in the town, including **Mumtaz, Jacks** and **Chowka**.

"People don't want to go to a boring place that takes itself too seriously... people come down here to have fun. They want places with a sense of humour."

But it is not just fun restaurants on offer in Marbella... the town has half of Andalusia's Michelin star restaurants with **El Lago** and **Skina** counting on a star... and Dani Garcia restaurant **Calima** having two.

A massive supporter of the town, where he grew up, Garcia told the *Olive Press*: "Marbella just keeps getting better and better and the real tragedy is that it is not being properly rewarded for its great cooking and variety." Without a doubt one of the businessmen making the big-

gest waves in the food stakes these days is Ian Radford. The former professional squash player has been constantly adding to his La Sala brand over the last five years. With a series of famous backers, including footballers David Bentley, Stephen Carr and Shay Given, he has been able to create two of the town's landmark restaurants; **La Sala** in Puerto Banus and **Rincon de la Sala** in San Pedro.

Currently turning away over 100 bookings a day, the original **La Sala** on the way up to the Nueva Andalusia bull ring is probably the most talked about eaterie in Marbella. This is the place to find the 'ladies who lunch', the movers and shakers and the wealthy empresarios who make Marbella what it is. An emporium of glass and seductive lighting, its real strength though, lies in its wood-decked terrace, that serves as the ideal tourist sun-deck.

Oh, and the food, is surprisingly very good too, with a superb range of classic dishes with a contemporary twist. And to keep its chefs on their toes a second restaurant **Rincon de la Sala** opened in San Pedro last year, with perhaps an even better quality of food.

And finally don't forget the group's beach restaurant **Sala Beach**, in Puerto Banus, where just about every self respecting TV star and footballer heads come the summer season.

## Marbella is the best served town in Andalusia for fine dining and a lot lot more, writes Jon Clarke

A little out of the heat of Puerto Banus, but well worth the trip is the excellent **Playwrights** a short drive away in Elviria. Now well established, it is run by owners Marc and Lynn, who cut their teeth in the Irish restaurant scene and also run **Beckitts** in the heart of Marbella. Busy for much of the day,

this stylishly-decorated place with a theatrical theme, has an enticing menu with some classic dishes and a great €25 'early bird' special with three courses, served before 7.30pm. Nearby is easily one of the best beach restaurants on the coast. **The Beach House**, sitting on lovely Monteros beach, has become one of the key references of the Marbella scene over the last decade.

With an adventurous head chef Jeff Mynott and a boss Guy McCrow who works hard to constantly improve the quality of food and ambience, you will be hard pressed to find anywhere better for lunch or supper. Somewhere however, which can equal the standard is **Nueva Campana**, in the heart of Nueva Andalusia,

where stalwart of the restaurant scene Garry Waite has carved out his niche as a must-try modern European. Spectacularly good food with a contemporary twist, the authentic venue is romantic and very good value with a set menu coming in at just €15 euros. Also in Nueva Andalusia - in Centro Plaza - is the superb American-style diner **Yanx**, which is nearly 20 years old.

If burgers, ribs or chicken wings are what you are after, then you will find no better in town.

Fanatical about quality, its genial expat owner David Fisher is insistent on using as much cruelty-free ingredients as possible, including humanely raised chicken, without antibiotics or unnecessary chemicals. In the heart of the old town of Marbella you have a huge range of places to eat. Easily one of the best though is **Il Tartufo** which serves authentic Italian food. The original menu consists of home made pasta, risotto, meat and fish with the speciality of the house being fresh truffle which is imported from family in the north of Italy.

Just off the golden mile is the well established **Cafe de Ronda**, run by successful local businessman Douglas Goulet. A long-time stalwart



FACES: Garry Waite, Dani Garcia and team at Yanx

TOP DOG: La Sala is the most talked about eaterie in the Marbella area



you will find a decent mixed menu and now a special set lunch for just €9.50 thanks to a joint venture with Relais de Paris, serving its 'sauce originale' with a lovely entrecote steak and classic French fries.

Just up the road on the heart of the Golden Mile is the incredibly popular **Pan & Mermelada** set up by the enterprising Canadian Lauren Gilbert.

A psychotherapist by trade, she fell into the restaurant trade by accident, after starting a cake business, bored

### Selling like the proverbial hotcakes it was no surprise when Laura started her own cafe

of waiting to be allowed to practice here. Selling like the proverbial hotcakes it was no surprise when she started a cafe and now it is one of the busiest in town.

Another great place for a cake and a coffee is **Bellarria** near the H10 in Puerto Banus while a typical Irish venue where you can get a great pint of Guinness and mouth watering steaks is **Hogan's Stand** in San Pedro. Choose from T-bone, Filet, or Rib Eye

and enjoy every live sporting occasion.

If it is traditional Indian you are after then you should look no further than **Mumtaz** in the port. Now open for 28 years it is the second-oldest restaurant in the port its style comes from the Moghul tradition, weighing heavily on tandooris, biryanis and sabjis (seasonal vegetables).

Finally, if you want an Indian with a real twist, then you must head to **Chowka** (meaning Mother's kitchen) on the Golden Mile. This amazing spot is fast becoming one of the restaurants of reference on the coast, with its head chef Ravi Deulkar, formerly of Rasoi in London, cooking up a creative storm every night.

Billed as 'a rising star in the Modern Indian food movement' his food is healthy and heavily influenced by the traditional cooking methods found in typical Indian chowka's - or 'mother's kitchens'. Last but not least a mention must go out to **Iglu**, which, while technically just across the border in Estepona, is an amazingly good place to head for supper (see *Chilling Time* on page 61). You read that here first, but really - if it is quality food you are after - you won't be disappointed.

### Locals Reap Rewards

ALREADY well established as one of the coast's leading restaurant and nightclub groups it was probably only a matter of time that they would reward their loyal customers.

The La Sala Group's new 'Local Loyalty' card can be used at all four venues, **La Sala, Sala Beach, Aqwa Mist** and **Rincon de la Sala**.

The card offers a range of discounts including invites to the legendary **Sala Beach White & Gold Party**, €1 house wine, €1 beer at **Rincon de la Sala**, free entry and 25% discount at **Aqwa Mist**, plus a 10% discount from your total food and drink bill at **La Sala**.

"Our success is as the result of the continuous support from our loyal local customers so we decided it was time to give something back," explained chairman Ian Radford. Fill in the form at any of the venues.



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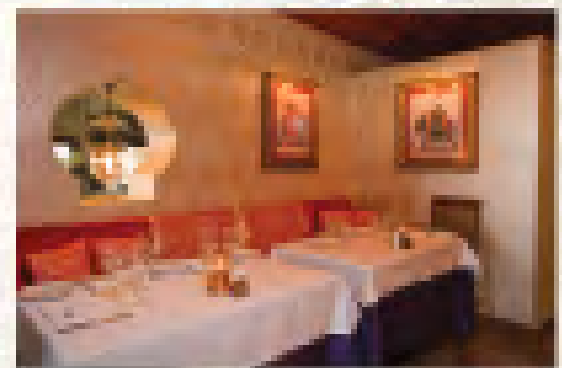
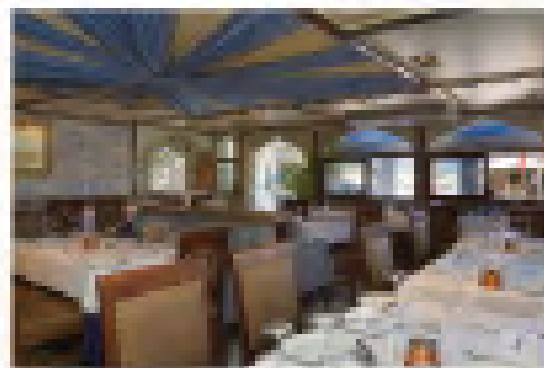
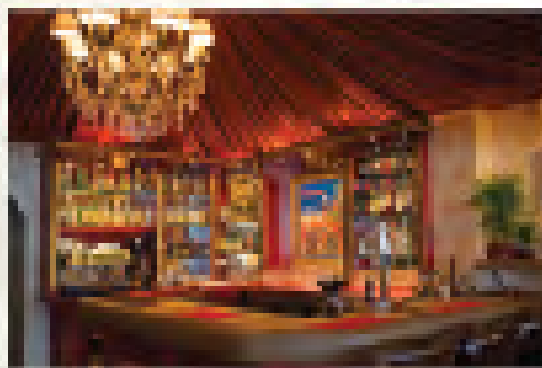
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