

The times they are a changin'

PHIL SPEIRS takes us on a tour of alternative Andalucía to discover how people in southern Spain are working for a more sustainable future

PHOTO CREDIT : Claus Mikosch

GRAFT: Villagers prepare land in a Transition Town

Sanz is hot and cold



HE is one of Spain's hottest pop stars. But now Alejandro Sanz is about to get a lot colder - when he goes on a trip to the Arctic Circle. The expedition, organised by Greenpeace, aims to raise awareness of the fragility of the Arctic ecosystem by documenting the extent of the effects of global warming on the glacier and ice caps. Sanz, who plays Marbella's Starlite festival next month, says, "We have to acknowledge the fact that



if we help save the Arctic we're saving much more. It's the most important environmental battle because it is one of the few places on Earth where an environmental balance still exists." The expedition will travel to the southernmost point of the Arctic Circle, where the travellers will witness

first hand how the original inhabitants of the area live. According to a recent Greenpeace report, the Arctic could be ice-free within 20 years, which would be seriously detrimental to the people and wildlife of the region. Sanz has sold more than 22 million CDs.

WHILE many people are struggling to cope with the realities of Spain's ever deepening recession, small groups of pioneers are looking for alternatives.

Brought together under the banner of 'Transition Towns' these forward-looking social activists believe that endless growth and globalisation is simply unsustainable. The movement originated in Totnes, Devon and provides the inspiration for movements all over the world to develop sustainable solutions for their communities.

Based on the premise that global diminishing resources and climate change will eventually force us to reconsider the way we live, the movement aims to make the transition a smooth one.

This wide-ranging social experiment is now well-established in southern Spain, where groups of concerned individuals have come together and created groups in their local communities. Coín, Fuengirola, Mijas, Marbella, and Axarquia all have active groups and recently hosted the second national

transition congress in Mijas Costa.

The aim was to share experiences and ideas of different groups around the country. Over 150 people learned how to establish more sustainable practices in the towns, cities, and villages that they represented.

Coín, one of the first Transition Towns established in Spain, has already launched various projects - putting forward alter-

ners' market and establishing a system whereby local resources, such as land and abandoned buildings, are regenerated and repaired to become functioning parts of the local community.

"We offer a great opportunity for anyone interested in getting involved in interesting, sustainable projects," explained Jose Martín, one of the founders of the Coín group.

"We always welcome new members and hope that they can contribute something new. One of the key messages of the transition movement is that we should look at developing our local resources and reducing our carbon footprint dramatically to ease the pressure on an increasingly over-burdened planet."

Local currencies bring real value for money, farmers' markets stimulate the local economy, organic farming respects the environment and group activities bring communities closer together.

Alejandro Orioli of the Marbella group said "The transition movement is trying to address these issues in a creative and inspiring way."

We should reduce our carbon footprint dramatically to ease the pressure on our over-burdened planet

natives to 'business as usual'. One of the first initiatives introduced was an alternative currency, the 'coine', which has been used for the past three years to trade all manner of goods and services. Other projects have included creating community allotments, setting up a local farm-

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Organic Andalusia

Andalusia has long exported its produce... now it is finally starting to offer local food to local people



MARKETS: fresh produce available from local market

WHILE Andalusia has been one of Europe's top producers of organic food for many years, most of it has been

destined for the export market, with very little supply, or demand for that matter, at a local level. All that has started to change over the past couple of years

with organic markets springing up all over the coast, more shops selling fresh organic produce, and a clear increase in people looking for chemical-free products. The large supermarkets are now offering dedicated organic sections, but the spirit of the organic movement still lies in supporting small scale, local producers.

A shift in awareness has been one important factor in people's shopping habits. According to Miguel Moreno Trujillo, owner of Bionatura - the coast's first pioneering organic supermarket - "People have heard of food scandals and can see the connection between health and toxins in food. They know that with organic food there are fewer risks and less additives." Bionatura has been going strong for 15 years and stocks thousands of products reflecting the ever increasing variety and choice in the organic market.



PRESSURE group Avaaz and Greenpeace have linked up to collect signatures to protect the Spanish coastline from further development. The two organisations argue that the new *Ley de Costas* law recently introduced by the Spanish government is incompatible with European directives. Once the last few signatures are in it will be formally presented to the European commission this week. Every day building work devours an area of coastline bigger than eight football pitches. But rather than introduce stricter controls to protect the little natural coast that is left, the new law will allow further construction nearer to the sea. The petition's aim is to highlight the fact that the new law infringes on European decrees aims to make the Eu-

ropean Commission step in to stop the law from becoming established. The movement is questioning funds that have been allocated by the European Union to Spain are in conflict with the recent Spanish legislation. "It is scandalous that the government introduces a law that will destroy what remains of our coasts," said Luis Morago, director of campaigns at Avaaz. "With the pace of building it won't be long before we have to catch some sun between cranes and cement lorries. It is for this reason that we are trying any method available to prevent this catastrophe." The main concerns regarding the new law includes urbanisations that will be exempt, reduction of the protected area around coastlines - from 100m to just 20m - and disregarding most delicate ecosystems that are in danger.

We are what we eat and we should be eating more organic living foods

Tapping into this increasing demand for fresh organic produce, a local grower's association based in the Guadalhorce valley, has been building on the success of their organic markets. This year they opened four more venues for their regular markets, including Elviria, Málaga and Las Lagunas to add to the already established markets in Coin and Cartama. "People know that they are supporting a more sustainable form of agriculture as well as the local economy so buying organic is good for them and for the environment," explained Patricia Carrasco from Guadalhorce Ecologico, the association behind the markets. Visitors to these markets and specialist shops know that they are getting certified organic produce that meets strict environmental controls, support biodiversity and natural resources. Vanda Lakatos has been running Biocasa in Fuengirola for the past 3 years and is brimming with passion and enthusiasm for her work. "The food we eat is the fundamental essence of what we are," she said. "We literally are what we eat and we should be eating more organic living foods." Vanda explained that not only have more people started showing an interest in organic food but superfoods are also becoming increasingly important (see article on next page). With more shops like Vanda's and better access to organic produce the revolution is well underway for a more sustainable future.

Natural living special

Superfoods

Amanda Gedeon of Bellaria cafe sings the praises of coconut oil

I never ceases to amaze me how simple it is to make huge impacts on our health. Don't roll your eyes, I'm not going to tell you to quit smoking (although you should), drink less (ummmmm) or to get off your backside and do some exercise (no comment, seriously). I'm going to tell you about coconut oil. I use coconut oil in EVERY-



COCONUT OIL: It's really very good for you

THING, from raw cakes, raw chocolates, smoothies, juices, cooking, baking, hair and skin care - I even spread it on toast

(highly addictive, be warned). Before I start reeling off the countless reasons why, it's important that you know coconut

oil is the only oil which maintains all its properties when heated.

It can help with to relieve stress, maintain cholesterol levels, lose weight, boost the immune system, and aid digestion and metabolism. It can also be used for hair care, skin care, relief from kidney problems, heart diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, HIV, and cancer. Not bad right?

So how exactly does fat make you lose weight? Short and medium-chain fatty acids go straight to the liver, converting into energy. This increases the body's metabolic rate, burning more calories and accelerating weight loss.

Coconut oil is often used by athletes, body builders, and those who are dieting. It contains less calories than other oils, its fat content is easily converted into energy, and it doesn't lead to fat accumulation in the heart and arteries.

Now it's time for a few scientific words you're never going to remember (but reinforce my point rather well): it contains antimicrobial lipids, lauric, capric and caprylic acid, which have antifungal, antibacterial and antiviral properties. It's great for your immune system. I think I've made my point.

Super-charging sizzling minerals

MINERALS are essential to the health of every living thing, something that even many knowledgeable health professionals are unaware of. We need the full spectrum of major and trace minerals to get the best from everything including 'super foods', drinks or any other food or supplement. Minerals control the deli-

cate metabolism within plants and are used to manufacture all other nutrients. The human body requires them to generate it primary source of energy and to activate enzymes: the body's work force.

The nutritional content of super foods, like other plants is determined by the nutrients in the soil in which they were grown. Likewise, our nutrient content depends on the

nutrients in the foods we eat which can be deficient due to poor soil quality. Super foods contain powerful phyto-nutrients and a higher mineral content than most other foods, but to get the best from them we still need to ensure we are getting enough minerals in our diets. One way to do that is with *Sizzling Minerals*, available from *Natural Health Solutions*.



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HEALTHY CHOCOLATE

ENTHUSIASTIC: Eli outside her Mayan Monkey shop

BOUNDLESS enthusiasm and hard work, coupled with a great product is a winning formula. Mayan Monkey owners Jason and Eli have capitalised on all of this in their first year of trading to become a firm fixture in Mijas with their handmade chocolates.

Quickly outgrowing their first chocolate factory, the team has now opened a second outlet downstairs which acts as a cafe and gift shop - while the production and workshops continue in the original premises. This space allows the couple to develop new lines, all in keeping with the Mayan Monkey ethos - to provide innovative, artisan and mouth-watering products.

Their latest venture is to develop a range of truly healthy chocolate using stevia instead of sugar, allowing them to make a blend with an incredible 99% cocoa content. "Stevia is 30 times sweeter than sugar so we can use much less and therefore much more cocoa," explained Eli. The chocolate has proved a huge success over the past couple of weeks and while it clearly appeals to diabetics and dieters, the chocolate is so high in cocoa, that is actually an appetite suppressant, people only need a small amount. "In Tel Aviv scientists are recommending chocolate for breakfast to help with weight loss," concludes Eli.



Mountain meander

Kat Mayhew takes a walking trip in the high Sierra Nevada mountains in a bid to escape the summer heat, with varying degrees of success



STUNNING: Writer Kat (top inset) took a walk out into the hills from Quentar village after an initial mishap and (right) the circuit

THE city of Granada has so much to offer, and it would be understandable for travellers to spend their whole stay within the city. However, just 30 minutes outside of town lies a completely different world. The beautiful and isolated Sierra Nevada mountains have (fairly) easily accessible trails, and a hike in the hills provides good exercise, great views, and a tranquil escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

In a whirlwind weekend in the city we wanted to pack as much activity into as little time as we could.

Even though we had a few

setbacks, we still managed to get ourselves on the trail, do our hike, and still be back in time for a much-deserved 2:00 lunch. With the help of a new, very user-friendly website, www.treksierranevada.com, we filtered through hundreds of hikes by length, season, location and public transport. We found one that sounded perfect for our requirements: only 30 minutes east of Granada, accessible by bus, recommended in the summer, and just 14 km long. The name of the loop was Quentar Circular. We set our sights on an early morning bus, and set our alarms for even earlier.

Due to a slight misunderstanding and an unclear bus schedule, we went to the wrong bus station and missed our bus. If you know us, you wouldn't be surprised. But we asked around, found the real bus stop (if you are going to Quentar, the bus stop

The tiny white-washed village of Quentar is worth the trip in itself

is across the river from the Corte Inglés), and even had time for a coffee. We finally got on the 10:30 bus, a bit more caffeinated and ready to go.

The tiny, whitewashed village of Quentar is worth a trip in itself. While less than 30 minutes away from Granada, it feels like it is hundreds of miles and hundreds of years away. Following the directions from the website, we wandered through the town and almost immediately found ourselves out in the stunning mountains scenery. And we only took one wrong turn before finding the walk proper. The hike itself was moderately challenging: steep but not impossible. Because we had arrived later than we planned—it was mid-day when we got to the trailhead — it was quite hot. Although it was still doable, if you plan to go in the summer months, I would recommend going earlier in

the morning. I was amazed by how isolated we were. We saw just one other person on the trail in three hours. When it's that quiet, it's loud: we could hear a cacophony of insects, the wind blowing through the olive groves and our feet plodding to a steady beat on the dusty trail.

In what seemed like no time at all, we found ourselves rewarded with a stunning view: we were directly overlooking Quentar, nestled in between rolling hills covered in neat groves of olives and almonds. Although we could have continued on, we decided that because of the heat and our desire to see more of Granada, we were happy to turn around and retrace our

Even though not everything went to plan, our hike was unforgettable and well worth it

footsteps back to the bus. We walked back down the hill, winding our way back to the city, sweaty, dusty, and very, very happy. Even though not everything went according to plan, and we didn't even finish the loop, our hike in the Sierra Nevada was absolutely unforgettable, and well worth it. It was a wonderful morning activity, quite easy to organise and execute, and a perfect complement to a big weekend in the city.



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Fair trade furniture

A number of companies are producing top quality furniture that is either fair trade or recycled

WITH the rise of globalisation the gap between rich and poor continues to increase and small producers struggle in difficult conditions in the hope of carving a place in a market dominated by multi-nationals.

Deco-Home, founded in 2004,

imports handicrafts, décor and furniture mainly from Bali, as well as other parts of Indonesia and Thailand.

Owner Claude has returned to his shop in Mijas after a six month trip searching for beautiful and original crafts.

"Deco-Home's products come directly from local village arti-



FAIR: Claude makes sure his workers get a living wage

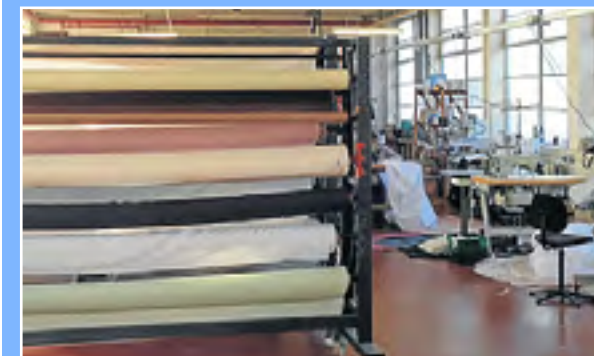
sans and not from large factories or international dealers," explains Claude. "We are committed to sup-

Fair trade is a way of doing business that is ethically and environmentally responsible

porting indigenous cultures through Fair Trade principles which include the payment of fair living wages, supporting environmentally sustainable projects, respecting cultural identity, promoting safe and healthy working conditions and discouraging forced and exploitative child labour." Fair Trade is a way of doing business that is ethically and environmentally responsible –making free trade work for those in developing nations. Deco-home, on the Mijas road between Fuengirola and Mijas, has a large of stock and customers can be content in the knowledge that a fair share goes back to the people that made the goods. They are open every day from 10 am to 7pm, including Sundays and holidays. Another extremely sustainable furniture business is the Wood Factory, based in Marbella.

Made entirely out of recycled wood, there is a huge range on offer at Wood Factory

Made entirely out of recycled wood, the majority imported from Holland, there is a huge range of tables, benches, sofas and chairs. Also available made-to-measure – a team puts it together in a workshop next door – the style is fast becoming the rage this year. As owner Kristel Schoeman-Daneel explains: "We are getting so many enquiries and are battling to turn things around quickly. Best of all, because it is recycled wood we can keep the costs down." Her clients so far include Cafe de Ronda, in Marbella, Tanino, which has just opened a new restaurant in San Pedro, and a new bar in Puerto Banus called Bar Hola.

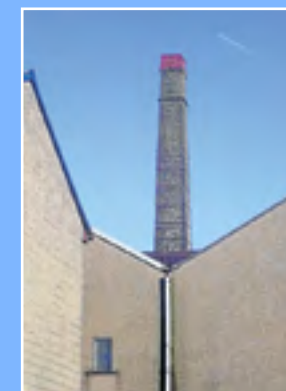


THEY have been manufacturing bed linen for over 15 years. But the location in Hargreaves Mill, in Lancashire – once the global home of cotton manufacturing – goes right back to the 17th century.

The Victoria Linen Company is unusual in other ways however.

While the current trend is to manufacture almost everything in Asia, the bedding and curtain company has opted to stay in the UK. Making the business considerably more sustainable, they also source as many products locally as is possible.

Marketing boss Claire Murphy said, "We see manufacturing within the UK more sustainable in the long term. "Although the current trend is for overseas manufacture we see this as unsustainable with the impact of global fuel and transport costs plus the increased cost in manufac-



TRADITION: Victoria Linen is based at Hargreaves hall

ture from countries such as China." She adds: "And being located in Lancashire gives us a wealth of local expertise in the textile industry which we can capitalise on plus a work force base that is steeped in the knowledge and tradition of textiles."



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From small acorns...

It isn't the first thing most people picture when they think about Marbella, but Arboretum, an environmental charity dedicated to education and creating a 'people's forest', is one of the town's great success stories.

In the two years since it took over a 10 hectare piece of abandoned land near the bus station, thousands of schoolchildren and adults have taken part in tree planting, and other activities, to learn and

be inspired by nature and the environment. Organising hundreds of events through the year, the group has planted 17,000 trees and plants on the site, run dozens of courses and talks. In 2012 the charity and unicasa's Social Work division joined forces to reforest 30 hectares of land which were badly damaged by the fire in summer 2012.

Using the techniques of permaculture they have planted six hectares with 3,450 plants.

How a tree-planting group made a huge difference to one Costa del Sol town

Alejandro Orioli, the charity's director, states, "Despite a difficult year for individuals, businesses and politicians, it has been a positive year for Arboretum because we continue to be fuelled by strength, belief and hope."

"We continue planting trees, educating and inspiring thousands of people and improving their environmental consciousness and this consciousness is sure to bear fruit for the future."

There are lots of ways to get involved with the project. For those interested in the techniques they use they will be running a special, fully certified permaculture design course that will be held in October.

"Permaculture is a holistic system which deals with the design, planning and construction of spaces where

people can relate to nature in an ecologically sustainable way, but which is socially beneficial and economically viable, explained Alejandro. "I believe education is one of the most effective ways to face the current financial crisis and build a sustainable future."

The Permaculture Design Course (PDC) is an intensive two week course, that com-

Permaculture is one of the most effective ways to face the current financial crisis

bines the theory of permaculture with practical applications. "Permaculture's key principles include taking care of the planet, taking care of people, sharing what we have and distributing resources equally," Alejandro continued. "Permaculture designs are resilient, environmentally friendly, productive and stable."

This includes how we manage our food systems. A vegetable

garden should be close to the house, then we can dispose of organic waste to create compost and feed our plants at the same time, giving back to the land. If insects are destroying crops, get some chickens - to eat the insects and turn over the soil - rather than treat with

DIRECTOR: Alejandro Orioli

artificial pesticides. At Arboretum, for example, they use sheep rather than mowers to keep the grass short, creating a happy and productive cycle that benefits everyone.



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Greening the economy



Performing arts festival on the beach

AFTER the success of previous editions of Arte Sano, the organisers are planning another festival on San Pedro's seafront this weekend. "This year we will be bringing the colourful world of alternative Andalucía to life for another weekend for all the family" said a spokesperson for the event.

A diverse mix of classes, workshops, and talks on subjects ranging from personal development to natural health, spirituality and the environment are on offer and all for free. As well as the classes in the open air in the gardens and activities

on the beach, children are always an important part of the event.

This year they will be well catered for in their own dedicated area with theatre, games and crafts, while the grown ups can enjoy concerts by some of the coast's top artists.

A dynamic market extends along the seafront with plenty of artisans, natural products, therapists, art and healthy food for visitors to enjoy. There is an area for sustainable technology, where visitors can see how solar ovens, ram pumps and dehydrators work.

www.festivalartesano.com

A new business forum is a great way to help your company grow and to feel you are taking party, writes Phil Speirs

FOR a look at how we can start making real changes in the way we do business. I was recently involved in the first festival for a green economy in Malaga. The event, organised through our green business associa-

tion RedVerSo and open to the public, was a chance for all the members to set up shop and show how they are working to improve general business practice with respect to the environment and social equality. What really impressed me was

the number of young new business people the green movement is attracting, people dedicated to building a solid business without compromising their eco-principles. Exhibitors included organic food distribution companies, a cooperative

START YOUNG: Respecting the environment

selling fair trade T-shirts, a new concept in recycling for eco-points that can be 'spent' in participating shops, a company specializing in creating urban farms, eco architects and many more - but the key point was that everyone taking part had some aspect of environmental awareness built into their business plan.

Judging by the attendance and the packed talks, there are plenty of people out there interested to know more about how they can apply these principles to their daily lives, through the purchases they make or how they run their own businesses. Including plenty of activities for children to ensure that this message got through to the next generation.

Visibility

Over 200 people resisted the pull of the beach to take part in this first event, and we can only hope those numbers continue to grow.

When we set up RedVerSo last year, one of the main objectives was to create better visibility for the green economy. Events like this and Festival Arte Sano in San Pedro this coming weekend, offer a perfect platform to promote a more sustainable way of doing business and working in harmony with the planet.

RedVerSo aims to help businesses involved in the 'green' economy to meet and discuss ideas and raise awareness of environmental issues in business.

www.redverso.org



SHINING LIGHT



THE Gemasolar Power Plant is making waves in Andalucía as a technological wonder of the modern era. The project is the first of its kind with the ability to produce electricity during both day and night.

Spread over an area of 195 hectares, it can produce an estimated 110 GW(s) of electricity each year. Developed by Terresol Energy, in joint collaboration with Masdar and Sener, the plant uses steam to run turbines and generate energy, supplying electricity to 25,000 homes in the region.

The project is one of the numerous renewable energy projects currently carried out in Spain. However, the distinctive feature which separates Gemasolar from others is its 15 hour energy storage ability, which has the potential to be used for commercial purposes. Following the Spanish footsteps, the Americans have also initiated two mega projects based on the same technology for the production of green electricity at commercial level.

Magnified healing courses

MAGNIFIED Healing is a technique for personal development. According to Almuth Jende, who runs courses on the coast: "We are living in a time of dimensional shifts, both planetary and cosmic, giving humanity the opportunity to enter into a co-creative consciousness "as Earth approaches its moment of evolution, humanity also begins its own development into higher dimensions. In order to obtain our ascension, creating UNITY, we can heal ourselves at all levels: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual." After attending the workshop, and by practising daily, Almuth claims that practitioners will notice changes

and improvements, not only in their physical body but also in spiritual development, people will feel more energised and dedicated to helping people and the planet.

During the first phase workshop of Magnified Healing, the course teaches meditation for empowerment, preparation and alignment of spiritual centres as well as clearing of the light channel. Some of the benefits include increasing energy and unification of the main chakras, healing of self and others, activation of DNA, alignment of the five superior bodies and preparation for ascension. Further courses develop these tools to help reach a state of self realisation.



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