

All
about

Costa de la Luz



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IN FINE FORUM:
The Roman town
of Baelo Claudia,
15km north-west
of Tarifa on the
Costa de la Luz

Seeing the light

Roman ruins, pristine beaches, cool kitesurfers ... Tom Powell is blown away (and born again!) by the windy resorts of the Costa de la Luz



THE pungent scent of tuna is wafting down the street from the salting factory, while togas-clad townsfolk make their way to the forum to shop and socialise. It's mid morning, and maybe later - in the heat of the day - they will duck for cover and chill out at the town's spa, punish a few slaves and then treat the wife to a show at the theatre. Picture the scene at Baelo

Claudia 1,800 years ago, at that time one of Spain's most important Roman settlements. The ruined Roman city on the beachfront at Bolonia, north-west of Tarifa on the Costa de la Luz, had a booming economy back in 2AD, based on its fish-salting industry. Today, at this reconstructed living museum, you can walk the cobbled streets, explore old Roman villas or declaim a few stanzas by Seneca from the

stage of the ancient amphitheatre. Stepping through the town gate and exploring this once magnificent Roman city is more than enough to set the imagination racing. Nowadays the Costa de la Luz is home to hippies, kitesurfers and beach-lovers, but the serene wonder of the place hasn't changed in eons. It is, without a doubt, still the most stunning, varied and un-

spoilt coastline in southern Spain (with the Cabo de Gata its only near rival). Perfect for family holidays, romantic weekends or just a day out from the Costa del Sol, diversity abounds here. The light makes this coast a photographer's dream, while it is as activity-laden as it is picturesque. 'Breathtaking' and 'windy' are certainly two adjectives often used to describe trendy Tarifa

- the wind and kitesurf capital of Europe. Glimpsing its long crescent beach of pristine white sand from atop the winding uphill road from Algeciras, flanked by battalions of flailing wind turbines, it's not hard to see why. Here, where the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean, kitesurfers dominate the skyline. It's clearly these water sports lovers who create the laid-back vibe that makes Tarifa a favourite

party town. Its pretty, cobbled streets teem with life and the place comes into its own after dark, when twinkling bar signs light up like stars on every corner. One of the best things about Tarifa is the view of the Gibraltar Straits, hemmed in between Europe and Africa, with the beautiful Mediterranean to the east and the vast, wild At-

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DIVING CENTER

From page 25

lantic to the west. Standing on the town's narrow walkway separating the two waters reminded me of when I used to try and put one foot in the English counties of Berkshire and one in Hampshire, as a youngster. The path connects the mainland with Isla de las Palomas but unfortunately, it's not currently open to the public, although there is talk of it happening later this year. It is not just the wind that attracts tourists to this kitesurfing Mecca. There are whale watching and scuba diving

There are whale watching and scuba diving trips, plus oodles of retail therapy options

trips and oodles of opportunities for retail therapy. Indeed, Tarifa has an abundance of quirky shops selling handcrafts, leather bags, jewellery and musical instruments, as well as pavement cafes touting freshly-baked treats. There's a small town beach, Playa Chica, lapped by the Med (and great if the Poniente is blowing a hooley). But the focal point is Calle Alameda, a lively Spanish walkway lined with good restaurants, including the newly-refurbished Petit Bistro for classy French cuisine. There's frequently live music and an ex-



FORTIFICATIONS: Tarifa castle and (inset) its port

Breezy style tourism

200 kilometre coastline

THE Costa de la Luz officially stretches for around 200km all the way up into Huelva and to the border with Portugal. Split in two by the stunning Donana national park, the coastline includes the so-called sherry towns of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Rota, Chipiona and El Puerto de Santa Maria. It also includes the cities of Cadiz and Huelva.

tensive book market to peruse. Across the road, the refurbished grand fort, overlooking the bustling harbour, has recently reopened to the public, providing wonderful views of the Straits. This little fishing town was the first point of the Moorish invasion of southern Spain in AD711, when the Berber chief landed from Ceuta with 400 foot soldiers and 100 horse-men. They built the fort later, in 960AD. It is a lovely ride from here to Bolonia, through stunning undeveloped countryside and pine fringed beaches, with kites bobbing up above on windy days. There is a vast selection of world-class hotels

here, the oldest and most established being the Hurricane. On the way to the fascinating ruins of Baelo, I was first struck by the breezy nonchalance of Bolonia, a seaside town that takes a casual, dressed-down approach to tourism. It doesn't sneer or look down on the increasing number of visitors, but neither does it pander to their every whim like a certain neighbouring Costa... The village road is in such bad repair you feel it wants to stay that way, a reminder to visitors that Bolonia is a natural, no-frills resort. But the march of tourism is inevitable when the beaches are as wide and white as Bolonia's.



FUN: Whalewatching

Whale of a time

SUN-SEARCHING tourists aren't the only ones who make the trip to Spain every year, as pods of whales can also regularly be seen frolicking in the Straits of Gibraltar. A number of local companies - such as the established Turmares Tarifa - take guests on boat trips to see these majestic mammals, with a slant on marine conservation. The orcas are attracted to the sparkling Mediterranean by the large amount of tasty blue fin tuna, which occasionally brings them into conflict with local fishermen. They also share the waters with pilot, sperm and fin whales emigrating from the Atlantic, as well as three different types of dolphins - common, striped and bottlenose. All of which can be seen during boat trips, depending on your luck! For more information visit www.turmares.com

Deep cover in an octopus's garden...

Octopus, moray eels, sea cucumbers ... Tom Powell went into Deep cover to discover a whole new enclave of cool Tarifa residents

FISHY: Life below Tarifa's surface

THERE'S an underbelly to Tarifa even the surf dudes don't get to see... that is unless they crash below the waves: one that requires an oxygen tank, mask and flippers to explore. Below the Atlantic swell lies a mesmerising undersea world teeming with colourful fish that makes terra firma seem a million miles away. I embarked on my subaquatic adventure with the scuba pros at Yellow Sub, who operate out of Tarifa harbour. They take people of all experience levels on dives and offer official PADI courses. Clients are struck by two underwater wow factors: the clarity of the water and the infinite variety of fish. After a thorough land-based briefing on safety, science and equipment with my dive manager, Sabina Agostini, we kitted up and made our way to the boat. Given that my previous introduction to scuba diving was in a university swimming pool, I too was blown away by the vivid underwater landscape and clear visibility. The sheer number of aquatic species - all sizes and colours of the spectrum - is astounding. We chugged around Tarifa's mini



CUTIE: A moray eel

island, Isla de las Palomas, investigating every nook and cranny, marvelling at the magnificent orange anemones clinging to the rocks. Sassy sea cucumbers, evil-looking moray eels with their malevolent mouths agape, fish that camouflage themselves in the sand... even Sir David Attenborough would wax lyrical! "The diving here is amazing, there is so much to see and the water is so clear," enthused Sabina, from Switzerland. At one point we came upon a pair of octopuses entwined in a passionate embrace and, feeling like a third wheel, I edged away. But from Sabina's hand signals I soon realised they were fighting over the best hiding place under the rocks. It was fascinating to watch and, as the victor took up residence, the loser powered off to regroup, leaving no surface ripple to tell the world above what had transpired in this deep sea ocean kingdom. Yellow Sub, run by Italian Enrico Demelas, offers dives to 10 different sites, including two wrecks for those who take the PADI courses. There are dives every day, accompanied by professional and incredibly friendly instructors. Whether you're a rookie or an expert seeking fresh challenges, Yellow Sub shows you a haunting underwater world you'd never imagine existed. For more information visit www.divingtarifa.com



SPECTACULAR: Los Lances beach and Africa and (inset) Tarifa's arabic arch while (below) some new murals have appeared in town

The super-sized sand dune - the largest on the continent - dares to be climbed

Add the spectacular ruins of the Iberian Peninsula's biggest Roman city - complete with walls, aqueducts, baths, temples, forums, villas and more - and Bolonia becomes a rather special place. It is designed



to be taken slowly, at a stroll, while breathing in the fresh Atlantic air as the wind wafts you gently through the ruins. Baelo's main road - *decumanus maximus* - runs from east to west, connecting two large town gates. From here a well-signposted route leads you around the Roman settlement, with plenty of information in Spanish and

English to accompany the strikingly well-preserved ruins. The town had really started growing in 2AD, after a Baelo-made product, known as garum, took off among the chattering classes of Rome. Made out of fish guts it was a pungent, but allegedly tasty addition to any meal and the whole area became dedicated to its production, with Roman

ships arriving and departing on a daily basis for Italy, loaded up with the magic product. After quenching my cultural thirst, I made a beeline for the alluring beach, which is fronted with a cluster of laid-back *chiringuitos* serving up fresh seafood and jugs of ice-cold *sangria*. Sun worshippers in the know set up camp in the more sheltered zones, but Atlantic gusts are a quintessential part of what makes Europe's 'deep south' so special. And that super-sized sand dune - the largest on the continent - dares to be climbed, just to see what lies beyond. Without a moment's hesitation I kicked off my shoes and raced up on all fours. Admittedly, there was nothing on the other side - no secret cove or crock of gold - just a

slow transition into cool, scented pine forest. But the stunning views from here - a reminder of how all coastal Andalusia once was - made the climb nonetheless worthwhile.

MUDBAKING: Getting therapeutic on the beach

pinch of seaweed to give a creative twist to my recipe. I slapped it on, scraping the ground-up rock into my skin, wincing ever-so-slightly while trying to retain an air of cool in front of the families walking past. My patchwork mud coat dried out in no time and I was soon in the Atlantic rinsing off, exfoliated and born again - or something like that.



el placer de día



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All about Costa de la luz

Vejer de la Frontera has slowly carved itself into Cadiz province's main culinary capital, writes Dining Secrets of Andalusia editor Jon Clarke

LIKE a slow-cooked pork belly, the beautiful white town of Vejer de la Frontera has gently fused its ingredients to carve itself into the definitive food capital of Cadiz. An incredible success story for a once unfashionable out-of-the-way town, Vejer is now – rightfully – one of the genuine culinary reference points for Andalusia. Visitors now flock here from around the country, and it is incredible how many good places there are to eat in and around this gem of a white town. A true gastronomic paradise with a melting pot of chefs from around Europe, at least half a dozen of its eateries would do well in Marbella or Madrid. “We set the bar high,” explains James Stuart, boss of celebrated hotel and restaurant **La Califa**, which now has its own diffusion tapas restaurant, as well as its own twist on a kebab joint. “There is plenty of competition between restaurants and all of us keep taking the level higher in order to get ahead.”



TALENTED: Damien and wife at Brasa de Sancho and (right) Califa terrace

Hotpot of creativity

This is the serious goal that has to be taken by new restaurants like **Peperoncino**, which sits in a breathtaking location overlooking rolling hills and down to the sea in the hamlet of Patria, five minutes from Vejer. Since opening earlier this year, its chef Benito – who trained with Jamie Oliver and Antonio Carluccio in the UK – has had to work hard to perfect his trade. Only importing the best quality Italian ingredients, he has done a fantastic job creating a niche for himself with fresh, original dishes and true panache. “I knew what we were up against,” explains the Iranian, who spent two years working in Jamie’s Kitchen in Leeds

and York. “The quality of food around here is exceptionally high and if we were going to draw punters out here we knew it had to be something different. I hope I am achieving that.” Another local entrepreneur Paco Pacheco, at **La Tarantella**, whose family own a trawling business, knows more than anything else that he has to get the offering right... and above all, deliver quality. “There is so much competition now I had to work out carefully what would be my niche. I certainly know about fresh fish, but figured that what the centre still didn’t have was a good Italian restaurant,” he explains. It is this level of thought that has helped to make this small Cadiz

town into such a foodie Mecca. Much of Vejer’s success is down to the local surroundings, which produce some of the best quality ingredients in the world. The obvious examples are sherry, fish and the wonderful pork and beef from the classic brown ‘retinto’ cows, which you often see wandering around the nearby hills. Of course the amazing ‘al-madraba’ blue fin tuna, caught nearby is spectacularly good and the vegetables available are also of a high quality. Another reason is the type of tourists who visit the town, which has seen a distinctly better heeled crowd than its near-rivals on the Costa del Sol. “We don’t just rely on beaches,” explains restaurateur Ramon at **Vina y Mar**, which has its own wine shop with over 200 references. “And many of the people who visit are keen food lovers, who come here specifically to eat.” This is certainly the case and the huge mix of restaurateurs, who herald from France, Denmark, Britain and the north of Spain have helped to put together a rich and varied offering for them. Frenchman Damien Giroud at long-running **La Brasa de Sancho** typifies the mix. Having cooked since his teens – and even had a stint under the Roux brothers at Gavroche in London – he knows plenty about cooking. Constantly evolving over the last decade, his restaurant is set in his elegant historic home in the heart of the town, with some fabulous outdoor tables. “We hope we know what it is that makes people’s holidays great, good service and, above all, good food,” he explains. His near neighbour Pedro Pardo, at **Trafalgar**, on charming Plaza de España is also doing well, with a fine mix of ingredients and style. Recently opening a new diffusion tapas restaurant **Trafalgar Taperia** next door, Pardo has recently retired from his Madrid publishing house to concentrate on delivering quality for his restaurants. According to his neighbour James Stuart at Califa – an emblematic place that is practically never quiet – everything began with Pedro. “It all began in the late 1990s when Pedro and his partner Javier opened Trafalgar,” explains Stuart, whose hip hotel Califa conveniently put up the new influx of foodies across the square. “It was the start of the food culture and we opened our restaurant in 2002 to give them some competition,” he continues, citing Trafalgar, Califa and **Castilleria**, run by Juan Valdes, as the three cornerstones of the scene. But it is on the outside of town in the most obscure of locations that the bar is really being pushed higher and higher.



CHARM: La Tajeta, Juan at Castilleria and (right) Patria



Up in Santa Lucia you have one of Andalusia’s best meat restaurants Castilleria that gets better and better each year and next door **Venta el Toro**. The obvious examples are sherry, fish and the wonderful pork and beef from the classic brown ‘retinto’ cows, which you often see wandering around the nearby hills. Of course the amazing ‘al-madraba’ blue fin tuna, caught nearby is spectacularly good and the vegetables available are also of a high quality. Another reason is the type of tourists who visit the town, which has seen a distinctly better heeled crowd than its near-rivals on the Costa del Sol. “We don’t just rely on beaches,” explains restaurateur Ramon at **Vina y Mar**, which has its own wine shop with over 200 references. “And many of the people who visit are keen food lovers, who come here specifically to eat.” This is certainly the case and the huge mix of restaurateurs, who herald from France, Denmark, Britain and the north of Spain have helped to put together a rich and varied offering for them. Frenchman Damien Giroud at long-running **La Brasa de Sancho** typifies the mix. Having cooked since his teens – and even had a stint under the Roux brothers at Gavroche in London – he knows plenty about cooking. Constantly evolving over the last decade, his restaurant is set in his elegant historic home in the heart of the town, with some fabulous outdoor tables. “We hope we know what it is that makes people’s holidays great, good service and, above all, good food,” he explains. His near neighbour Pedro Pardo, at **Trafalgar**, on charming Plaza de España is also doing well, with a fine mix of ingredients and style. Recently opening a new diffusion tapas restaurant **Trafalgar Taperia** next door, Pardo has recently retired from his Madrid publishing house to concentrate on delivering quality for his restaurants. According to his neighbour James Stuart at Califa – an emblematic place that is practically never quiet – everything began with Pedro. “It all began in the late 1990s when Pedro and his partner Javier opened Trafalgar,” explains Stuart, whose hip hotel Califa conveniently put up the new influx of foodies across the square. “It was the start of the food culture and we opened our restaurant in 2002 to give them some competition,” he continues, citing Trafalgar, Califa and **Castilleria**, run by Juan Valdes, as the three cornerstones of the scene. But it is on the outside of town in the most obscure of locations that the bar is really being pushed higher and higher.

“Last, but anything but least, take a 10 minute ride towards the sea to Barbate, where you will find the stalwart **Campero**, easily one of Spain’s top fish restaurants and a lesson in hard work and discipline. It is here that Jose Mellero and his team have been serving up the finest blue fin tuna for the last two decades. Miss it at your peril.

Dilute

A little note of caution however, in recent months there has been a spate of new openings in Vejer, which, in my opinion, is starting to water down, just a little, the quality the town has worked hard to achieve. A new food market and at least two or three new places is making it a touch confusing for the punter. This is not to say that the quality of these new spots is bad, but you wouldn’t want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg, by allowing one too many places to open in the town.

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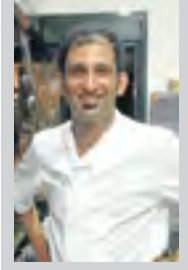
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100% Italian and not a pizza in sight

THERE is no room for complacency when setting up a new restaurant in Cadiz’s food capital of Vejer de la Frontera. So it is great to see chef Benito at Peperoncino arriving at 9am each day to prep for each evening’s service, not to mention growing a large amount of his restaurant’s vegetables and insisting on the best Italian ingredients money can buy. The results are second to none and you will be hard pressed to find a better Italian meal in Andalusia. Aside from the entirely original Italian menu, there was not a pizza in sight. This is serious Italian with a capital ‘I’, split into antipasta, pasta, ‘ferri’ (charcoal grill?) and ‘contorno’ sections. Make sure to take the optional bread basket of olive oil drizzled focaccia and ciabatta freshly baked each day. The starters include a ‘fegato’ of sautéed chicken liver which was a rich dive-in dish, rustic and tender and served up with the most wonderfully sweet cherry tomatoes, m a s c a r p o n e and F r a s c a t i wine. The deep fried Portobello mushrooms were gimmicky but

great as a snack with parsley and alloli. Best of all was the 24-hour marinated pork chop (see below) served on a wooden slate with a side order of delicious grill-steamed courgettes and aubergines from the garden. Last but not least, puddings included a mascarpone vanilla cheese cake with lemon which was unbelievably good and thankfully a small portion. I certainly didn’t need the home made truffle that hotel owner Ana stuck on my plate afterwards. It was little surprise to learn that Iranian Benito (left) has spent a couple of years cooking for Jamie Oliver’s Italian restaurant chain Jamie’s Kitchen in the UK. But, I have eaten at a couple of them and in my opinion this guy is streaks ahead.



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6 **All about Costa de la luz**

High time for a kite surf

Europe's top kitesurfing spot is on the Costa de la Luz, writes Jared Randall

WHEN French Legaignoux brothers ventured out into the ocean in 1984 with kites strapped to their bodies and waterskis on their feet, they could have never imagined that 30 years later, by the famous Trafalgar lighthouse in Canos de Meca, kites would line the skies by the hundreds as kitesurfers worldwide took part in this adrenaline-packed sport.

This new craze has also taken the nearby Tarifa shoreline by storm, completely eclipsing windsurfing in popularity among thrill-seekers. "There is nothing like it," says kitesurfing instructor Ingo Maes, owner of Dragon Kite School in Tarifa, where he has introduced tourists and locals of all ages and athletic levels to the incredible rush of the sport. "It opened up a new life for me," continues Maes, who

worked in Egypt as a diving instructor before moving to Tarifa to teach kitesurfing in 2005. In addition to diving, he is also an experienced snowboarder, skateboarder, and windsurfer. Calling Tarifa "the best kitesurfing spot in Europe", he explains that it has exceptionally mild winters as well as one of the best wind currents in the world. By this he refers to the Poniente, an extremely constant easterly wind from Portugal. It measures between two and five on the Beaufort scale and brings in a cooler breeze from the sea. The other dominating wind – better for windsurfers – is the Levante, which comes from the southeast over Africa and

builds up for a few days before peaking at eight or nine on the Beaufort scale. "When I saw people jumping 15, 20 metres high, I knew I had to do it," he remarks. "The feeling you get on the waves is incomparable. Though such incredible heights may strike equal measures of amazement and horror, Maes says that the landing 'has almost no impact at all'. "It's like jumping from your chair onto the ground," he laughs.

Because of the calmness of the sport, kitesurfing companies such as Dragon, Club Mistral, Hot Stick and Tarifa Air Force can teach clients to kitesurf at any age, from retirees to children as young as eight years old. Tarifa Air Force even offers

special 'children's courses.' "You start with a small kite and as you learn you keep trying bigger and bigger kites," says Patricia. This keeps the level of power always in line with the level of experience of the kitesurfer. To the skeptic, she assures that despite its appearance, the sport is much safer than skiing or snowboarding, with many less serious accidents. Of course, that doesn't mean you should just take a board and a kite onto water without lessons. However, the learning curve is astonishingly quick. In general, beginners need three days to learn the basics, and in only five are out kitesurfing on their own. Both Hot Stick, Dragon and other businesses like Club Mistral and Tarifa Air Force rent out kites, wetsuits, helmets and lessons from as low as €50 per day.

Such incredible heights may strike equal measures of amazement and horror

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Rides take from two to seven hours, and most start from the heart of the town. "You can expect to hear the screech of an eagle, see thousands of buzzards crossing the straits and fields of wild flowers," explains keen cyclist Tony Cassidy.

"There are also plenty of Roman ruins and even remains of Prehistoric Man," he adds.

"It's an outdoor enthusiast's wonderland." Bikes can be rented for around €20 a day from a number of places.

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July 9 - July 23 2014

A tale of two pueblos



BARBATE

While very different the quirky towns of Zahara and Barbate are aw breath of fresh air from the manufactured charms of the Costa del Sol, writes Carey



ZAHARA

TAKE two whitewashed towns lapped by the Atlantic on the sunny Costa de la Luz: Barbate and Zahara de los Atunes. They're slap-bang next to each other on the map but at first glance they seem poles apart. Barbate dresses down, its nondescript housing and low-key sea-

side restaurants are ostensibly worlds apart from the chic shops, upmarket restaurants and cafes of Zahara. My first impression of these two maritime pueblos reminded me of the *Prince and the Pauper*, where a rich boy and a poor boy swap clothes and lifestyles.

But like all good stories there's a twist in the tale and, although wildly different towns, both share stunning beaches and quirky character in common. I discovered their individual idiosyncrasies on a weekend getaway that left me a sunburned but satisfied traveller.

Franco's town

My adventure began in Barbate, a town with origins as a Roman fishing village known as Barbate de Franco until 1998, as the former dictator spent time there during the 1930s. He was said to have enjoyed a number of holidays in the town and later encouraged its development as a key fishing port for Andalusia.

While it is statistically one of the most deprived towns in Andalusia (it has the highest unemployment rate of the region), it is authentic to the extreme and oozes kitsch in the classic Spanish style. Parking in the town centre as the clock struck 6pm, I was surprised at how sleepy it felt for a Saturday evening, until I discovered that all the action was centred on the beach. It was here that the generally humdrum town came alive as sun worshippers were packed on the sands like Barbate's famous sardines, many sheltering under umbrellas and beach canopies.

But this is no tourist trap. It is a wholly Spanish affair, with multiple generations of the same family congregating for a weekend at the seaside. While young parents and their toddlers paddled in the crystal clear water, aunts and uncles watched from a distance, sunbathing or listening to the radio. Away from the water, along the shaded side streets, *abuelos* were studiously avoiding the



INDUSTRY: But fishing fleet has been cut in recent years

UV rays and their screaming grandchildren with a quiet *caña* and a game of dominos. Rebellious adolescents hung out with their *amigos*, taking a break from beach flirting only

Teenage boys chatted with grandmothers, evidence of the strong family culture

to watch the World Cup match, relayed on screens from the plethora of seaside bars and restaurants. I even noticed a few teenage boys taking a moment to chat with their grandmothers, evidence that the culture here is very strongly based around families. As far as eating in Barbate



ABUELOS: Getting away from it all

Luxuryville

After one of the most beautiful seaside drives imaginable you arrive in Zahara de los Atunes, which while remarkably similar to Barbate on first glance, could not be more different. Mostly this boils down to money. To put it into perspective, among the first few cars I saw parked in town were several spanking new Range Rovers and BMWs. Many of these have come down from Madrid and Sevilla and the resort is probably the coast's most upmarket, with prices to match.

But by no means does Zahara put on airs and graces. The town has humble roots as a fishing village dating from Phoenician times and, as its name suggests, it's another landmark destination for bluefin tuna. Its residents are as relaxed as the folk in Barbate, even if they do take to the beach in designer sunglasses. But what really distinguishes Zahara from Barbate is the upscale beach town vibe owed to its gourmet restaurants and wine bars. After a quick stroll around town browsing a few of the novelty home decoration shops, check out one of the numerous restaurants, including Zoko where we had a delicious seaweed salad with, you guessed it, tuna. The flavour was unparalleled! One of the most intriguing aspects of Zahara is how seamlessly the town frays at the edges onto the beach. Roads terminate in sand, reinforcing the municipal-maritime connection of this seaside *pueblo*. After a dip in the perfect blue ocean, I headed to the terrace bar of the Hostal Monte Mar for a glass of *vino* and stunning views of Zahara's coastline. From here you can see the majestic windmills that dot the countryside, providing sustainable energy for the area. For top tuna, quirkiness and pure Atlantic air I highly recommend an escape to the coast of light.



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It was during an unscheduled stop off en route from his home in Ibiza to a holiday in southern Morocco that Peter Whaley first came across Tarifa. A keen windsurfer, he unwittingly found himself on the windiest beach in Europe and had the vision to launch a business there.

It was 1984 and he had soon found a partner (an Australian board maker Barry

Pussell) to help him open the coast's first rental business. Named 100% Fun (now a successful hotel) - the shack sold windsurfs and clothes from his wife Therese's successful fashion label Graffiti Ibiza. "It was a low key launch and we had no idea how well it was going to go," explains Peter today over a beer in his buzzing Ibiza-style beach club Valdevaqueros.

"What we did have was a great board maker and fantastic, totally Spanish-made clothes." It was the spark to launch the wind revolution on the Costa de la Luz, an industry that now brings in tens of millions of euros every year.

But, Peter quickly realised that in order to keep the growing number of surfers happy they needed to offer accommodation, so the following year he and his brother Michael, a



All about Costa de la Luz

July 9 - July 23 2014

HURRICANE FORCE

It is three decades since the talented Whaley brothers launched the first windsurf businesses on the Costa de la Luz



DYNAMOS: Peter and Therese and (right) James run the businesses, while (right) at Valdevaqueros beach club

builder, bought an old ruined 12-room hostel on the beach just up the road. A third brother James, a film director and producer from London, was also soon involved. A big figure in the film business

- as well as the manager of Adam and the Ants - it was little surprise that the Hurricane Hotel was to become one of Andalucía's hippest and most successful places to stay. "I convinced my brothers that we would never make enough money from 12 rooms, so we obtained permission from the town hall to build an extra 23," explains James, who is very much still the life and soul of the Hurricane - and nearby Punta Sur hotel - today. "An architect from Ibiza was also drafted in."

Over lunch at the Hurricane, he continues: "Once opened we converted the bricklayers into our staff, some becoming cooks, others waiters, others receptionists or gardeners. "I explained to the builders that making a cake was as easy as making cement. All you had to do was throw the right ingredients into a mixer and stick it in the oven at the right temperature for the appropriate amount of time," he continues.

As the local restaurants back then were basic, at best, the brothers installed a herb garden and started to plant and grow their own vegetables. As James had lived in Italy he got a friend to send *rucula*, or rocket seeds, and the coast's best restaurant was also born. "It just grew and grew organically," explains Peter, who still spends half the year in Ibiza, where he has a farmhouse. "But now we think we have just the right ingredients to continue to be successful for years to come."

HIP: The bar staff at Tumbao and (right) beach



IDYLLIC: Pool at the Hurricane and (above left) chefs at Valdevaqueros and (top) a punter there

Costa de la hoof

LOOKING for a great horseback adventure on the Costa de la Luz then look no further than Hurricane Hipica, in Tarifa. A series of rides take you up breathtaking beaches and into

the nearby mountains. Run by world-class equestrian Klaartje Muijser, from Holland, the horses are incredibly well looked after, living shoe-free and out in open fields at night.



Another option for punters visiting Vejer de la Frontera is the amazing new riding centre at Cortijo El Indiviso, where there are an incredible 65 horses and ponies on standby. A great place for a private lesson or to organise a hike, Indiviso also holds a series of equestrian events at the finca. The one hour show on Friday nights features 20 horses as well as flamenco and a great barbecue. For information, check out www.tarifahip.com and www.elindiviso.com



HIP: Graffiti clothes shop

windsurf and kite-surf company Mistral. A beach bar/restaurant Tumbao has easily become one of the most fashionable places to hang out in Andalucía, with its distinct laid back Ibiza-style vibe. The next



Pictures and report by Jon Clarke

Making waves

The Whaley story is not over yet with the next generation already making waves. Peter's son Liam Whaley (both pictured above) has recently won the Tarifa kitesurf championship and is now ranked fourth in the world, and sponsored by kite company Cabrinha. Part of the 12 stage world tour, he has been kiting since the age of nine and was the main reason his parents relocated from Ibiza to Tarifa two years ago. "There is never a shortage of wind here," he tells the Olive Press. "And it is one of the most fun places to live." Travelling the world, often with this family, he likes nothing more than kiting from Mistral, which rents boards and kites at Valdevaqueros (see below).

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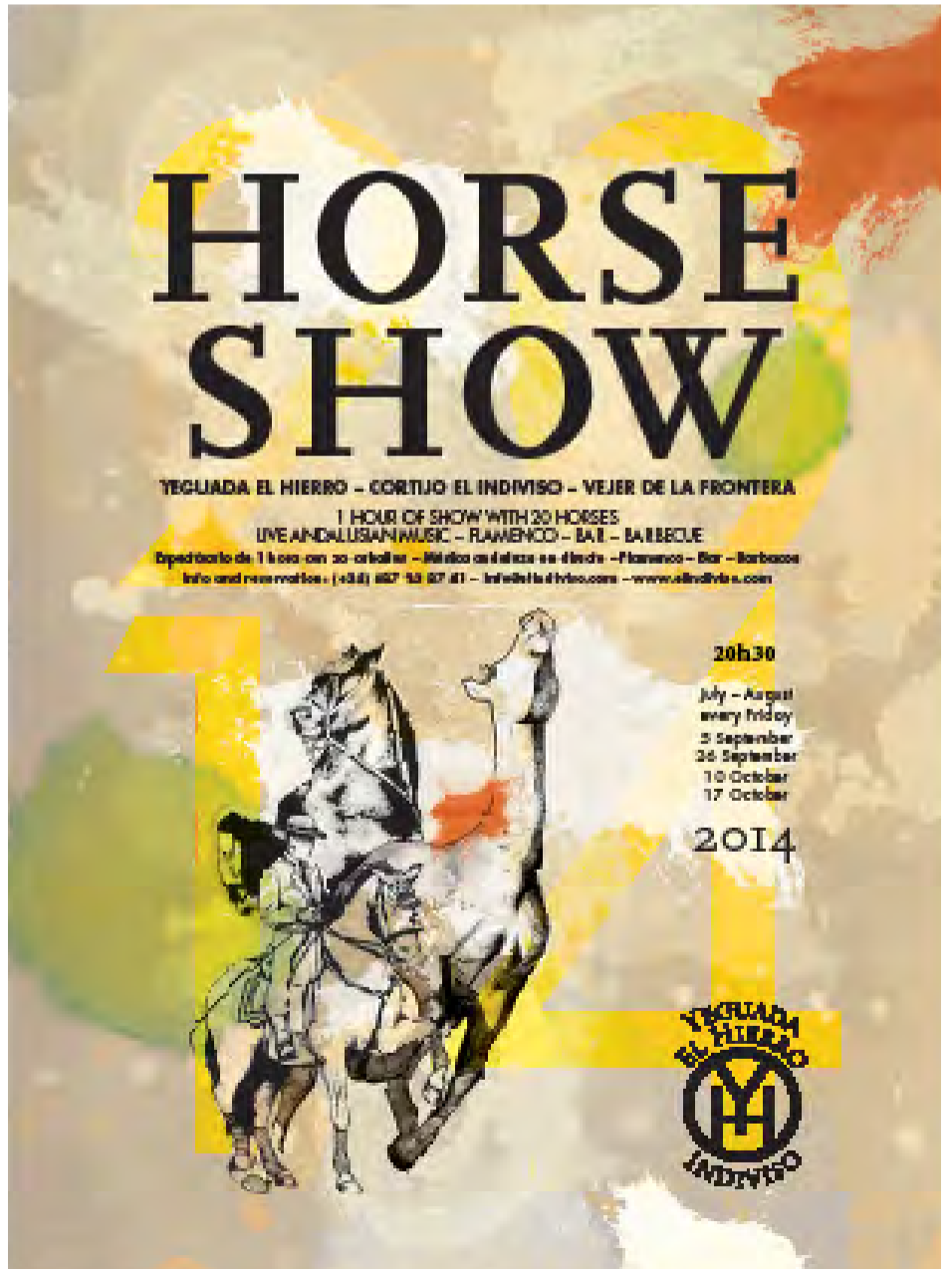
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Tarifa is in the top six key property hotspots in Spain, claims agent Tony Cassidy

TARIFA sits alongside Marbella and Mallorca as one of the key property hotspots in Spain, claims one of its agents, Tony Cassidy, 66, of Tarifa Direct, insists that the town is

also up there with Ibiza, Madrid and Barcelona in terms of demand and price. "It is one of the true dynamos of Spain and demand is incredibly high," explains Cassidy (pictured right), from Leeds, who has been based in the town for a decade. "We are just waiting for a big developer like Taylor Wimpey to



A series of charming old properties in town demand surprisingly high prices

arrive here and things will really take off," adds the father-of-three. He cites the recent sale of a small apartment on the beach at €250,000 as evidence of what a strong market the town has. "It is a really small place yet still went for a lot of money... and I have a villa for sale with a tennis court and swimming pool near the Punta Sur hotel for €3 million, which in Rosario, near Marbella, would be worth €1.5 million." It is the same issue with the se-

ries of charming old properties in town, which demand surprisingly high prices. "They are selling for too much money - at two, three, four million - and after you have spent the money you need to renovate them so it is not really viable," estimates Cassidy. But ultimately buyers are not looking in Tarifa for big places

and luxury. They are coming here for the lifestyle, he continues. "Yes you get less for your money, but you have the most amazing countryside and beaches. "On top of this Tarifa is the adventure capital of Europe with kiting, biking, kitesurfing and bird watching available."

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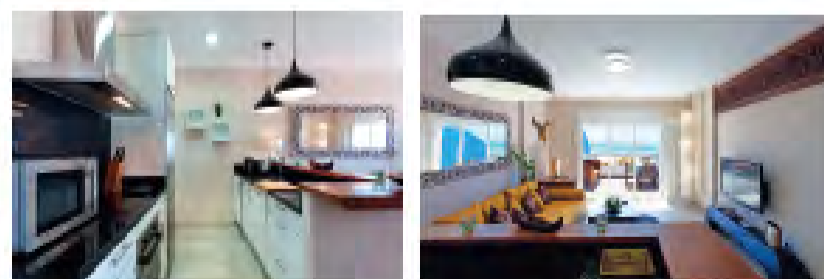
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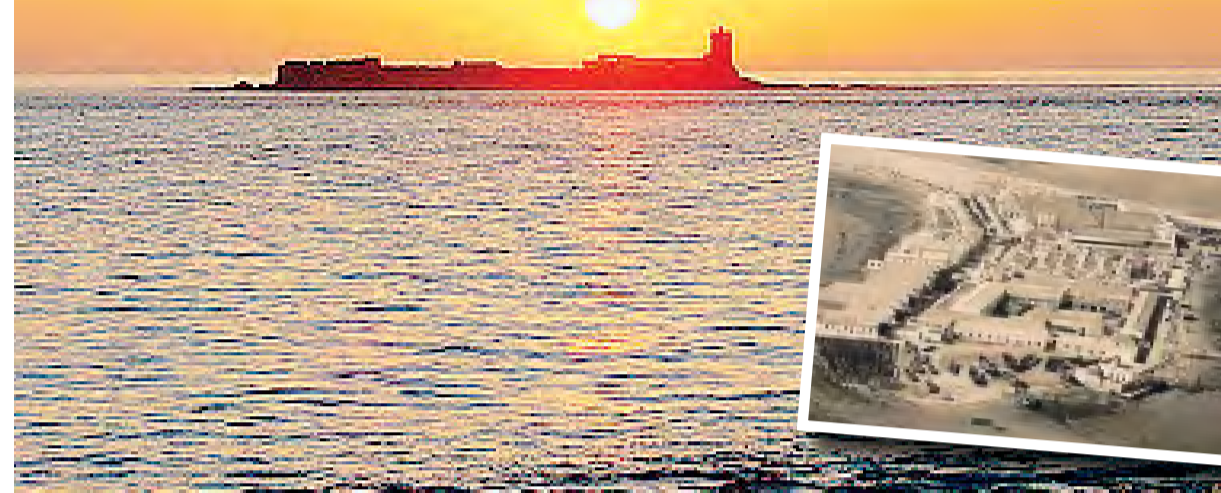
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Perfect Petri



ALLURING: Sancti Petri and (inset) its island from above, while (top right) view to Cadiz from Chiclana

James Bryce has a poke around Chiclana and Sancti Petri, where ancient leaders Hannibal and Caesar are said to have taken their time off

I HAD popped into a salt of the earth fisherman's bar after a morning of sightseeing and was given an instant reminder of Chiclana's links to the high seas.

The walls were adorned with black and white photographs dating back to the 1920s. In one, a crowd of locals watched on as fishermen hauled the carcass of a huge whale onto the quayside, while other images showed fishermen chatting as they tended their nets.

Legend has it that the island was once home to the Temple of Hercules

Separated from the coast by six kilometres of tidal salt flats, Chiclana has always had close ties with the ocean. The *almadraba* fishing technique used to catch tuna is famous along this stretch and at one time fishermen using this method would head out into the Atlantic from the thriving nearby village of Sancti Petri. Sadly the village is now abandoned, sitting largely in ruins, with long-forgotten fishing boats serving as a poignant reminder of its seafaring past. It is claimed that Franco commandeered the village as a holiday retreat for his family while he was in power, forcing the villagers out. It then fell into disrepair following the dictator's death, although there is talk of some villagers moving back to Sancti

Petri to renovate properties in the settlement. As I wandered around the nearby modern marina beyond the village, I was reassured to see that the area still has a strong maritime theme running through it. A large number of boats were moored, accompanied by the

occasional clanking sound of metal clasps knocking against the masts in the breeze, while a handful of anglers sat patiently by

their lines. A small selection of restaurants and sailing clubs attended to the lunch crowd, alongside companies operating out of portacabins offering a variety of water sports. The strong winds, which are a regular fixture on this stretch of coast, make it the ideal spot for sailing, and a cursory glance out to sea indicated there were no shortage of people taking full advantage. For the slightly less energetic, boat trips run twice daily to the Castle of Sancti Petri, located on an island just off shore. The island is situated at the

mouth of the Sancti Petri channel between San Fernando and Chiclana and is steeped in history. Legend has it that the island was once home to the Temple of Hercules, widely regarded as one of the most important religious buildings in the Ancient World.

Roman historians claimed that the remains of the mythical God were buried beneath the temple and Hercules' legacy is acknowledged today in the form of a street name and an imposing statue located at the entrance to the marina. Classical sources claim the famed Carthaginian military commander, Hannibal, came to the island to offer sacrifices to Hercules before embarking upon his conquest of Roman Italy. Meanwhile Julius Caesar is said to have had a dream which foretold his domination of the world while staying at the castle.

In the evenings, the emphasis shifts from the centre of Chiclana to the nearby beach front promenade of La Barrosa. The beach attracts plenty of sun worshippers during the day and was voted by *the Sunday Times* as one of the top five beaches in Spain last year. But as day becomes night the bars and restaurants come

alive with families and couples alike, drawn in by the promise of fantastic sunsets and seafood. As I tucked into a variety of dishes, including octopus and tuna, against a backdrop of excitable chatter, it was easy to see why the area is so popular with Spaniards. And as I sat there listening to the waves despite not being able to see them, I was reminded of the town's links to the sea. Chiclana may be a town that is slow to reveal it-



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EXPATS AHOY

Chiclana counts the largest number of expat businesses on the Costa de la Luz. It has long been popular with the more discerning English, who don't fancy slumming it up on the Costa del Sol. A number of excellent businesses have set up to work with the expat market, including lawyers Temple Cambria, and Monopoly, a popular English supermarket.

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WHERE TO STAY

Sleep tight



There are so many fantastic places to stay on the Costa de la Luz, writes Jon Clarke

THE Costa de la Luz is literally bursting with hip places to stay from beachside gems to inland cortijos and from grand townhouses to campsites. In Vejer you would be hard pressed to beat the seminal **Casa de Califa**, in the town's loveliest square, surrounded by its best restaurants. The Moorish building sits around a charming central patio, where guests take breakfast and dine under candlelight each evening. Historic in the extreme, the building oozes history and has been extremely well renovated. However if you are after something more rustic, then you will love **Hotel El Indiviso**, where Swiss watchmaker Didier and his wife have just opened a charming boutique hotel. Set in rolling Vejer bull-rearing territory, the 200 year old farmhouse has metre thick walls and little to suggest much has changed for a couple of centuries. Beautifully renovated, it counts its old cobbles, doors and window 'rejas', and has been stylishly decorated with comfort at a premium. Children will love the play area and pool, while active adults



HIP: La Vista's view and pool

STUNNING: Sindhura

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will be thrilled with the attached riding stables, where guests can rent one of the 65 well cared for stallions and head out from the door on some stunning local rides. Another great country option on the other side of town is **Hotel Sindhura**, which is peaceful personified with some of the most amazing views. Run by friendly Ana and her husband, it has a lovely pool and, best of all, its own exceptionally good Italian restaurant Pepperoncino. Nearby, right on the beach, in Canos de Meca, is **Madreselva**, set around a central courtyard and with a decent pool for the kids to splash in. A short drive inland and you will find the charming hotel **La Vista** in the white town of Medina Sidonia, which is fantastically sited for visits to all the main towns, as well as Jerez, Cadiz and Sanlucar. Sitting in one of the most amazing top-of-the-town locations it has views to die for and a restaurant to boot. Its leafy garden is one of those classic chill out spots, you never want to leave. In Tarifa you have an equally good group of stylish hotels. On the beach, the best estab-


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WHERE TO STAY

AUTHENTIC: Hotel el Indiviso is a beautifully converted 200 year old farmhouse

lished is the **Hurricane**, which is now 25 years old and run by the coast's long-serving expats, brothers James and Peter Whalley, who also own the more luxurious **Punta Sur** across the road. Both hotels have their own restaurants and serve up a great range of activities on the beach and in the hotel, including pilates and yoga classes every day plus a brand new spa. Two other excellent options in the heart of Tarifa itself are the **Pink House** and **Casa Amarilla**. **The Pink House**, where Sir Winston Churchill once stayed, has an amazing roof terrace with views across to Africa and some superb value rooms. It has free wifi and a laundry service. **Casa Amarilla** offers great value apartments in the heart of the town right next to all the hotels. The charming 19th century building has central heating for winter and is near all the shops and just 200m from the beach. Last, but definitely not least, if you are looking for one of the best beachside escapes then **Hotel Antonio** in Zahara de los Atunes is wonderful. Sitting right on one of Andalusia's top beaches, this is a great value and professionally run hotel with an amazing restaurant to match.



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14 **All about Costa de la Luz**

WHERE TO EAT

Culinary adventure

There is a fantastic range of places to eat and drink on the Costa de la Luz, writes Jon Clarke

LIKE Joe 90 from Thunderbirds, Victor grafts away in his kitchen with trademark scientist-style glasses. A former architect, this taster today designs plates as he would have once laid out floor plans. But there is nothing about **la Pescadería**, in Tarifa, that does not stand up. Over a decade old he is easily running the best fish restaurant in town. A massive tuna fan, boss Victor goes out of his way to prize the very best specimens out of the clutches of the Japanese... and this year bought an impressive 216 kilo fish straight after it was cut up at an event in Marbella by celebrity chef Dani Garcia. "It is vital as our clients absolutely love it," explains the friendly Argentinian. Enjoy the separate tuna menu including a great carpaccio,

STALWARTS: Pepe at Trattoria and Javi at Ternerera Mimosa

sashimi and best of all tartare, all washed down by some excellent wines, including Guitian at just €16. Next door look out for the recently re-opened **Trattoria**, a fabulous Italian just taken over by local business magnate Luciano from Naples. While keeping true to the popular menu of previous owner Paolo, there is a little more seafood and some more organic and better quality vegetables,

delivered each day by Alberto, thanks to Luciano's fondness for his country's Slow Food Movement. Also on Calle Alameda you will find a great French restaurant **Petit Bistro** (see review over), as well as the excellent father-and-son Daniel and Javier's restaurants **La Ternerera Mimosa** and **Lola Mora**. Open for 11 years, both have a Mediterranean flavour, while **La Ternerera Mimosa** now has

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CREATIVE: Tuna slices and (right) Victor at Pescadería with Dani Garcia

its own charcoal grill and some amazing artisan pizzas and grilled fish. **Lola Mora** is better known for fish and has the prestige of having won the first best tuna tapa competition (a tuna tartare with beetroot salmorejo) at last year's event. Coincidentally Javier's brother Rodrigo (and wife Patricia) also own a brilliant Argentinian joint **Patagonia**, with some of the town's best steaks. If it is beach dining you are harking for then a true chestnut is **Bien Estar**, right on the beach. It is open all year and claims to be the southernmost restaurant in Europe. It was set up by three friends with over 50 years of combined catering experience. Outside of Tarifa en route to Bolonia you will find one of the region's most alluring restaurants. Overlooking rows of vines and a sea of undulating umbrella pines, **'Tesoro'** - or Treasure - is one pot of gold that really is worth seeking out. Aside from the fabulous food - including fresh langoustines and a classic 'retinto' steak typical of the region - the views over the Gibraltar straits to Africa are impossible to improve. Heading up the coast if it is Atlantic blue fin tuna you are after, Andalucía's best place to eat it must surely be **El Camp-**

Gallic flair

IN BOCA ONE large dollop of classy French cooking has been added to Tarifa's competitive dining scene. **Petit Bistro** has been refurbished and reborn with a new menu combining owners Veronica Rodriguez and Benoit Mangeon's French influences with the best local produce. The pair, who have been in Tarifa for 15 years, have created one of the must visit restaurants in town. The pair started out selling crepes in a backstreet of the town before launching their own crepe business Santa Fe. But **Petit Bistro** is a complete departure. We started with a refreshing basil-perfumed gazpacho, followed by thin cut foie gras made by Benoit (right) himself, presented immaculately with quince chutney and tomato marmalade. The 'crujiente' is a wholly intriguing dish, combining rich French cheese with crunchy rosti nests, caramelized onion jelly and balsamic freshness. Benoit's addition of cinnamon-spiced apple to Greek classic moussaka is also a touch of genius. But it wouldn't be petit bistro without crepes, and an extensive list is available for those with a sweet tooth.

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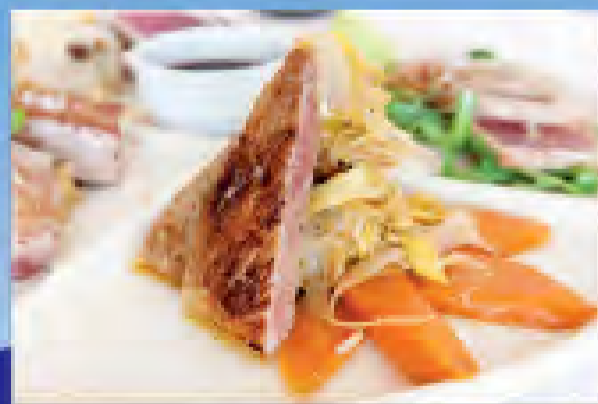
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