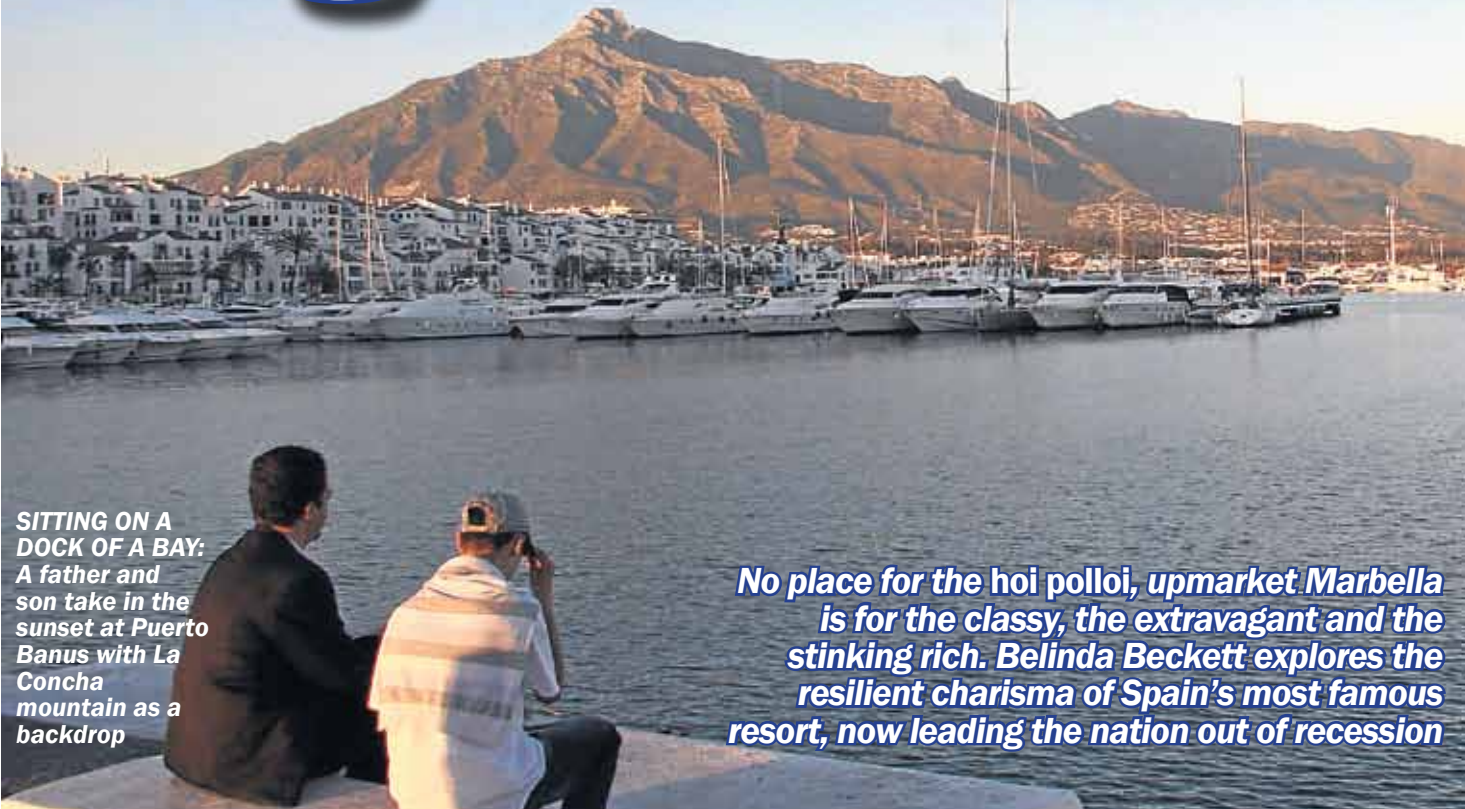


The rebirth begins



SITTING ON A DOCK OF A BAY:
A father and son take in the sunset at Puerto Banus with La Concha mountain as a backdrop

No place for the hoi polloi, upmarket Marbella is for the classy, the extravagant and the stinking rich. Belinda Beckett explores the resilient charisma of Spain's most famous resort, now leading the nation out of recession



ELEGANT: Marbella's cathedral



AFFLUENT: A beach club hedonist



ANCIENT: Historic Orange Square

picture by Jon Clarke

SANDWICHED between Fuengirola and Estepona like the *foie gras* filling between two slices of Hovis, Marbella has always remained aloof from other resorts in coastal Spain – for reasons which mainly concern money. I remember one of my mother's snootier neighbours 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." Zoom forward to the heart of the crisis in 2010 and the kudos of the town is at an all time low, with one British ex-tabloid editors freely smearing mud over the façade of the once glamorous spot. "A place to make a fortune, spend a fortune, drink shots, get shot – whatever takes your fancy – that, at its heart, is Marbella," explained Piers Morgan on his now seminal TV documentary on 'Marbs', as half of the UK's *yooof* now knows the resort. But mud doesn't stick for long in a

Mediterranean microclimate, where 320 days of sun will turn it to dust in no time. And the time for Marbella's comeback is now. According to financial pundits, the economy is recovering faster than anywhere else in Spain, the property market is rallying, and the glamour is back with a vengeance. 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. The *paseo marítimo* is a real fashion catwalk lined with succulent palms and beach showers sculptured in the shape of elephants. It is trodden by

beautiful people sporting Ray Bans, 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). 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 €500 which you thought you might run to, turns out only to refer to the belt.

The shops in Marbella could have been expressly designed for the man or woman who has everything: Cartier key rings, handbags shaped like croissants, watches whose price tags give new meaning to 'not being able to afford the time of day', and paintings that discriminate against anyone who hasn't got a home at least the size of the Tate Gallery. 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 – as 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

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Continues on Page 19

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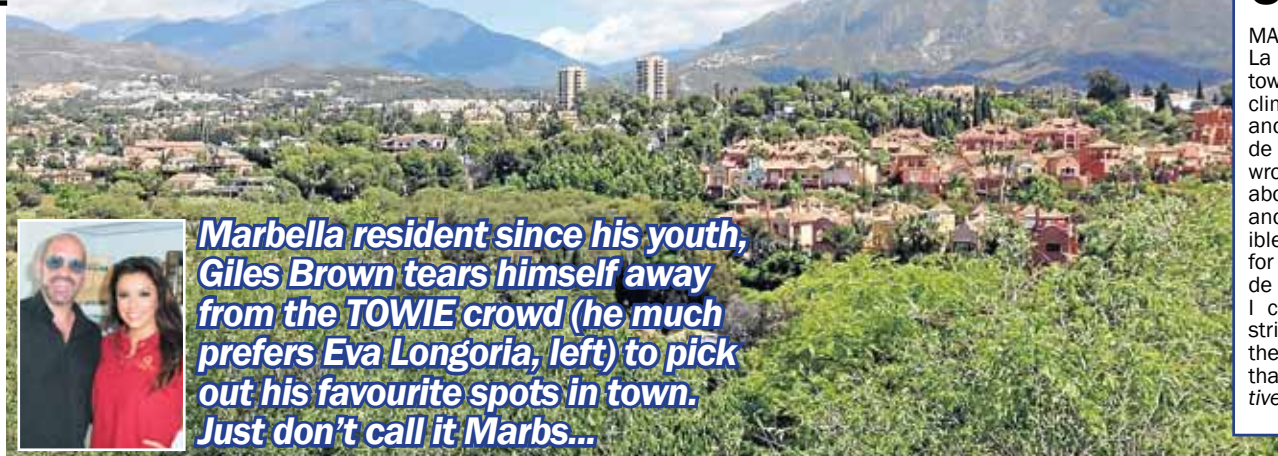


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All about **Marbella**

Super eight!



Home of Cruella

From page 17

nose there are plenty of people who'll fix it for you. Marbella is full of 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.

Tanned

But as 'the season' approaches, a socialite's thoughts turn 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 until amour or a hernia carries them home to monogrammed silk sheets.

I've had to give up the dawn-to-dusk clubbing for medical reasons, but it's still fun to watch the bright young things boogying at Nikki Beach, Aqwa mist or Sisu and thinking, thank God I'm too old for all that youthful angst and eyelash batting! They still talk about the do 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...

Marbella certainly has the Xcess Factor. The swankiest hotels, the flashiest yachts and motors, the chic-est shops, the wildest parties. For yes, it's that sort of place. A place to love or hate and one quite unlike anywhere else in the world.

Marbella resident since his youth, Giles Brown tears himself away from the TOWIE crowd (he much prefers Eva Longoria, left) to pick out his favourite spots in town. Just don't call it Marbs...



HELLO ALOHA

I'M not a golf player but I have always liked Aloha, situated right in the middle of 'golf valley'. It was the preferred golf course of Sean Connery and James Hunt, who trained his beloved Alsatian Oscar to hunt down any errant golf balls. Coincidentally, Oscar, who James later named his Marbella night club after, was granted honorary membership of Aloha Golf Club on the grounds that he was better behaved than most of the other members!



My real port for fun

I SPENT most of my teenage years in Marbella's 'sporting port' where you could get a litre of beer for 300 pesetas and the place was packed with young oiks having a wild old time. It got so wild that in the early 1990s then-mayor Jesus Gil caused a riot when he marched down one Saturday night, flanked by his local police and declared we were all 'junkies and whores'. Cars were overturned and he was forced to flee. How different it has now become, with a Sunday arts market and upmarket terraced restaurants making it a great place to hang out.

Artola beach and dunes

ARTOLA has one of the few stretches of untouched sand dunes on the Costa del Sol, a tribute to the local action group who fought long and hard to keep it that way from the clutches of developers.

This is one of my favourite beaches, and if you fancy a little bit of time travel, pop into the Hotel Artola that hasn't changed since the 1960s, as the placards to various travel associations at the entrance will attest to!



Bohemian home

A SLEEPY hillside enclave, La Virginia attracted a bohemian community of artists, photographers, writers, plus a veritable smattering of flower children when it first opened in the 60s.

Hedonistic in the extreme, at one legendary party developer Freddie Wildman borrowed an elephant from a visiting circus. The wild times may have gone, but there are still several idyllic spots to sit back and reflect, none more so than at La Virginia's beautiful chapel.



Ruck and roll

MARBELLA Rugby Club is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year and fittingly its teams are Andalucian champions at a number of levels, and last year were Spanish champions. A great mix of cultures and nationalities, the club, located rather handily across from the Costa del Sol hospital, is one of my favourite places to socialise and puts on a fabulous bbq!

Fear and Loathing in Las Chapas

WHEN I come to write my Gonzo-esque autobiography, I'm going to call it Fear and Loathing in Las Chapas. There isn't much to loathe about the pine covered area, with its discreet villas, well ordered German school and immaculate infrastructure. Though I might try and liven it up a little by having a go at the jungle swings and zip wires at the Amazon adventure park that they have constructed there!



Guadalmina - Power brokers home

SLEEPY, well-heeled Guadalmina transforms into a suburb of Madrid every August when ex Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar holidays here. While he relaxes behind the high hedges his wife, Madrid mayor Ana Botella hacks around Guadalmina Golf Course. Meanwhile the rest of the area is packed full of Madrid yuppies - all Hackett polo shirts, Alice bands and identically dressed children. No surprise it is known locally as *Guadalpijo* (Guadal-posh, literally) in summer then.



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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

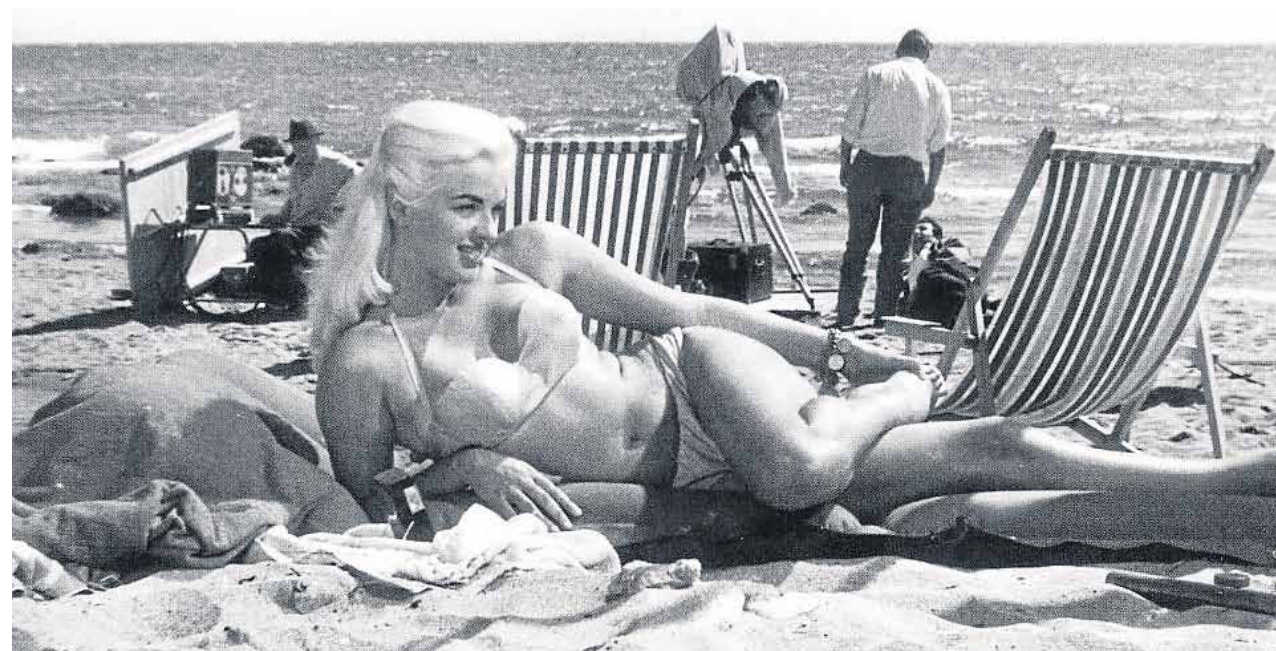
WHETHER it was Diana Dors or Sean Connery, Ava Gardner or Audrey Hepburn, James Hunt or Rod Stewart, none would have come to Marbella without the influence of Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe.

For the German aristocrat was the svengali with the necessary capital to turn the dusty village into a *highfalutin* millionaires playground to rival the likes of Cannes and Deauville, in France.

It was in 1947 that the charismatic playboy had been sent to the coast by his father Prince Maximilian to purchase some land. The family already had business interests in southern Spain, particularly in Malaga.

The 23-year-old was told to hook up with his eccentric uncle Ricardo Soriano, who had been eulogising about the merits of the coast for a number of years.

A huge fan of watersports, Soriano especially liked powerboat



BABE-MAGNET: Prince Alfonso and Bardot, while (left) Diana Dors

the 'King of Clubs' or the 'Little Prince', locals came to know him affectionately as Olé-Olé, because of his difficult 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.

Idealistic

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 advantage 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 Marilyns 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 Andalucia, 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."



STARS: Sinatra and Ava Gardner flew in

Stardust memories

racing and lived an enviable bohemian life.

He was soon chaperoning his nephew up and down the coast in his vintage Rolls-Royce looking for land.

The bilingual Alonso – who was a keen painter – was immediately taken by what he saw in Marbella.

Sheltered by the dramatic Sierra Blanca and with crystal-

clear waters just a stone's throw away, the savvy prince immediately saw a wealth of opportunities.

He ordered his father to sell off his wine cellars in Malaga and began developing his now seminal Marbella Club hotel, which opened in 1954.

But that was not enough and the well-connected prince soon embarked on a European-wide

campaign to convince all his high-flying friends that Marbella, not San Sebastian or Cannes, was the only place to be.

And his campaign worked with the grand families of central Europe, including the Bismarcks, Rothschilds and Metternichs, coming to see what the fuss was about.

A string of celebrities followed suit, with actresses including Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren, photographer Patrick Lichfield, footballer George Best, model Brigitte Bardot, and Rolling Stone Bryan Jones joining the in-crowd.

Even British aristocracy got in on the act, with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (Edward and Mrs Simpson) visiting the hotel.

Gorgeous

"The people I met in Hollywood, in New York, and 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 of the world was trembling that World War III was starting," explains Count Rudi Schonburg, a former manager of Marbella Club.

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.



FILLING HIS BOOTS: Sean Connery and Jackie Lane



ON THE BALL: George Best spent time in Marbella

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 urbanisation) were able to dock their luxury yachts in the port.

"Thanks to my initiative, Marbella's Golden Mile alone now provides 60,000 jobs," Alfonso once said.

While his friends called him

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BUZZ FOR BOATIES: Picture of the old Puerto Deportivo



SLEEPY: Marbella as a quiet fishing village



BIG CHANGES: The Club Maritimo (above) and carrying the Virgen del Carmen during an Easter parade in the 1960s



BIRD'S EYE VIEW: Marbella has exploded in the last 50 years



NO SIN: Nuns having fun in the sun



HEART: The Marbella Club kick-started the town's glamour



MINING: At Sierra Blanca

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EYESORE: Design for one skyscraper and (inset left) how we reported it

The sky's the limit

AJ Linn on how he helped to form a successful campaign group that stopped a billion euro skyscraper project that threatened to alter the Marbella skyline forever last year

I received a call at home that evening from Pedro Rodriguez, developer of Sierra Blanca and a long-time friend (maybe I should use the past tense now), and potentially the promoter of the first skyscraper. His argument was almost convincing. 'Marbella has to com-

pete with the rest of the world, with Dubai, Miami, and Singapore, and this project puts the city on the 21st-century map'. He explained that leading Catalan architect Ricardo Bofill had been commissioned to prepare designs and they were really rather attractive.

But I wasn't to be swayed and I contacted everyone who, I believed, would be against the plan and within days we had formed a platform 'No to Skyscrapers in Marbella'. A host of local personalities, including Pablo de Hohenlohe and Matias Villarroel, helped to steer this coherent opposition group under the stewardship of lawyer Carola Herrero. We met in the Hotel El Fuerte within hours, and the following day national daily *El Mundo*'s front page featured our stance, attracting more support from higher up the social scale with the *Duquesa de Alba* and Beatriz de Orleans reportedly weighing in.

Monstrosities

Many established property developers, while wishing to remain in the shadows for the time being, also promised to come to the barricades if necessary.

Pablo de Hohenlohe wrote a personal letter to the mayoress telling her that his uncle - who had set up the Marbella Club hotel in the 1950s - would never have approved of such monstrosities, and Juan Orbaneja published a list of the various 'skyscraper' projects that had been proposed unsuccessfully over the years.

Soon, a social media campaign showed that 86% were against and only 3% in favour. News reports appeared all over the world, and even the BBC ran the news.

Next came a news report that the coast's richest summer-time visitors, the Saudi Royal Family, had also threatened to cancel their annual sojourn. After all, at least one of the blocks overlooked their main palace on the Golden Mile.

In less time than it takes to read this (well, almost) we got the news we were waiting for. The town hall backtracked and at a special council meeting on January 10 this year the initiative was cancelled.

It was a fantastic lesson in people power and we should, of course, also thank the mayoress and town hall for fortunately listening to us.

The best local bites...

Financial Foodie Mark Rickard picks his favourite places to unwind



- Cabana Nagueles, on The Golden Mile**
Great local meat cooked in a wood-burning stove, served with jackets and salad. Wines are priced fairly and delivered with a smile. You must book though as it is popular! If you have to wait there is a cozy little bar next door.
- La Red, Fontanilla beach**
Sit on the beach eating the best Galician Mussels and Chips...to share with a bottle of Vina Sol ALL for under €25.
- Bijou, Marbella Old Town**
Serving classics like Lobster Prawn Bisque, Beef Wellington, Duck a l'orange...
- Magna Cafe, Nueva Andalucia**
An excellent restaurant with beautiful views and a great bar. Share the steak tartare as a starter...you won't manage a whole one!
- Links Bar, Aloha Pueblo**
I must mention my local, the little bar in Aloha Pueblo with a big heart. The best Friday night quiz, Great Sunday Roast and Jason; the Scottish version of 'Pub Landlord' but ruder!

I HAD been relaxing at home, near Marbella old town where I have lived for over four decades when I heard an interview on the radio referring to a town hall decision to 'authorise' the construction of six skyscrapers in the town.

The interviewee was my friend Viruca Yebra and she was unsurprisingly explaining that the town hall 'had clearly gone mad'.

Who on earth, in their rightful mind, could possibly conceive that Marbella would be better off with 30-storey skyscrapers dotted around its landscape?

She questioned who would benefit except the town hall (income from building permits) and the developers. The minute the interview was over I phoned Viruca and we agreed that immediate action was required. From that moment it was a non-stop deluge of support from the four quarters of the globe, but mostly the good local people of Marbella.

Feeling blue



MARBELLA has more blue flag beaches than anywhere else in Andalucia... for the third year running. The decision takes into account public access, lifeguard posts and disabled access with Artola, Venus-Bajadilla, Guadalmina-San Pedro, El Cable-Pinillo, Rio Verde and Faro all

getting the honour. Marbella environment boss Antonio Espada, said: "We are delighted to have received the award for the third year in a row. I would like to thank the town hall workers and cleaners for all the hard work they have put in."

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Tunnel vision

Green zone and skate park for San Pedro as huge reconstruction project starts to take shape, writes Giles Brown

SAN Pedro's renaissance is almost complete. The remodeling and regeneration of the town, that has taken over a decade and included underground parking and a new tunnel, is now in its final phase.

The creation of the tunnel



RENAISSANCE: Regeneration of San Pedro

has created a large new green zone running through the centre of San Pedro.

The new boulevard will feature a park, sports facilities, an auditorium, sheltered

walkways and cafes. And last week, Mayor Angeles Munoz also announced that the boulevard would feature a skate-park for 'skaters, rollerbladers and bikers', close to the new bus terminal.

Munoz commented that: "The objective of the park is to create a green space at the entrance to San Pedro."

Get on the register!

MARBELLA Town Hall is launching a campaign to encourage foreign residents to sign up to the *padron*, or municipal register. Currently only 4,693 Britons are registered, which is estimated to be perhaps as little as a quarter of all the expats who live in the town.

The *padron* shows the number of inhabitants in a town and is important as the number of people registered affects the financial contribution the town receives from central government.

The more inhabitants that are registered, the more funds that are received by the town hall for municipal infrastructure and services. "We know there are substantially more and we urgently need to encourage them to sign up as it is costing us vital income from the state," explained councillor Jose Luis Hernandez.



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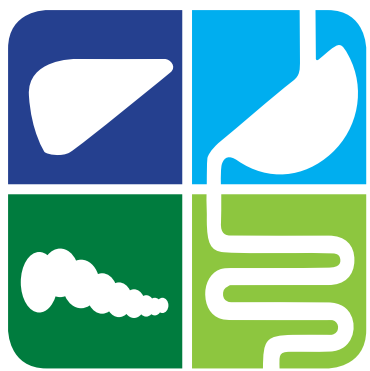
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All about **Marbella**

On the road

There are more luxury cars in Marbella than just about anywhere else in Spain

MARBELLA is a classic petrolhead's paradise. You only have to take a cruise up the Golden Mile from the centre of town to Puerto Banus and you will pass, or more likely be passed, by an exotic collection of machinery including Porsches, Ferraris, Bentleys and more recently McLarens. The town sells more luxury cars than practically anywhere else in Spain.

So it is no surprise to find so many upmarket dealerships in town, including VIP Cars and No1 Cars Marbella in a nearby industrial zone, which offer a full range of services by British trained mechanics.

Heading in the other direction towards Estepona, you will find C. de Salamanca and Guarnieri selling the types of cars most can only dream of -



Maseratis, McLarens and Rolls Royces. Another well established dealer Miguel Domenech has been selling dream cars for over two years having made the decision to relocate from his native Sevilla and considers the Costa del Sol one of the best places to sell.

"In the last six months we have seen the market getting busier and busier," he told the *Olive Press*. "I was involved in the luxury car business in Sevilla and when the crisis hit it was at its worst, but I didn't want to leave the high end of the market."

So what is Miguel's dream car for the Costa del Sol? "Well, I drive to Sevilla a lot so for me it has to be something practical like an Audi A4 or A6 Avant."

"The most popular cars among my clients however are the Mercedes and BMWs. Though I suppose my perfect car would be a convertible Bentley!"

Window on the world

A HUGE collection of original paintings is drawing art lovers from across the world to the gallery Novo Cuadro. Exhibiting works from a wide range of artists - the majority of which are local - Novo Cuadro aspires to bring works of great artists closer to its coastal clientele.

The leading dealers and promoters of art in Spain exhibit works from both emerging and acclaimed artists.

Novo Cuadro - recently opening a new gallery in Marbella - also crafts and designs all their artisanal frames in their workshop to add the finishing touches to the piece. For more information, call 952 662 791, or visit www.novocuadro.com

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All about *Marbella*



Jumping Jacaranda

It is only for a few weeks, but in May and early June, Marbella becomes a riot of purple thanks to its Jacaranda trees, brought in from South America a century ago.



The healthiest option

HELPING people through the process of choosing the right medical insurance cover, liaising with local medical facilities and supporting the local community is very much a part of day-to-day life for Sue Wilson and her staff at ALC Health. With the opening of a new office in Gibraltar next month to add to an office in

Marbella which has been established for over ten years, ALC Health has established itself as a company that really understands the local needs of the expatriates in the region. Indeed, with all of the company's staff being expatriates themselves, ALC Health understands better than most what it's like to be living overseas and

the issues that have to be faced each day when living in a different country.

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ALC Health also understand that no two individuals or organisations are the same, which is why they take great pride in offering a personal approach when assisting clients to make sure that they get the right cover at the right price. The company has positioned itself away from the 'big brand' players by delivering quality products backed by local support at an affordable price. Contact ALC Health at 952 931 609 (Spain) or 350 200 77731 (Gibraltar) or at enquiries@alchealth.com

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STM Nummos Life is the official intermediary for health insurers, Bupa, Inter-Global and ALC Health. The FSA-registered company is committed to helping both individuals and companies find the best health insurance solution – and its service commitment doesn't end there.

"We give advice on all aspects of insurance and can assist in helping arrange treatment through to making a claim. "These personal services come at no extra cost," explained a spokesperson. Contact STM Fidecs at 956 796 148 or www.privatehealthcarespain.com. Or email sonia.fendley@stmnummos.com



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DAILY OFFERINGS: Fresh fare at Tempora

Since the visit of Michelle Obama, the old town of Marbella has become a hive for some of Andalusia's top dining... and some amazing shops to boot

THE morning had started early - at 5am - with dozens of Spanish police joining over 100 American special agents, sent to Marbella to guard the President's wife.

No-one was taking chances and every manhole cover in the old town had been lifted to carefully check for bombs in advance of the arrival of Michelle Obama in August 2010. Bristling with nerves, the area's narrow cobbled streets were combed by a phalanx of plain-clothed policemen, while shopkeepers and waiters waited for Marbella's most famous visitor for years. Considering the number of sites in Spain that President Obama's wife could have visited, it was a genuine honour that she chose the centre of Marbs.

But, it was entirely justified - along with further visits to Ronda and Sevilla - and it was to become the start of a total rejuvenation of easily the Costa del Sol's prettiest historic centres. Surrounded by the bright lights and modern buildings of most of Marbella, the old town comes as a real shock to the system. In fact, driving into Marbella it is actually quite easy to miss the old town entirely. But miss it at your peril, for its winding white-washed streets and pots bursting with colourful geraniums make it feel like the most traditional of Andalusian pueblos.

And like most Spanish historic centres, wandering aimlessly



Presidential material

GAMECHANGER: Michelle Obama's visit to Marbella helped to trigger its rejuvenation

is the most rewarding way to explore. Ultimately, all roads lead to the Plaza de los Naranjos - or Orange Square - the beating heart of Marbella's old town (see above). Dating from 1485, the square is named after the orange trees that act as parasols (alongside many actual orange parasols) offering shade for the many cafes and restaurants.

Frescos

It is a lovely spot to while away an hour with its renaissance fountain - built in 1604 - still running and the orange blossom delightful when in bloom. Built after the Christian conquest of the city from the Moors, the square was designed to be the urban hub. Besides the typical Andalusian houses, three historic buildings have their home on the square: the Casa Consistorial, the Casa del Corregidor and the Ermita de Santiago (Hermitage of St James). The Casa Consistorial, constructed in 1568, currently houses the town hall. Its wrought iron balconies look out over the square, while in-

side are Mudejar-style torches and embellishments, and painted frescos.

The Renaissance-style palace Casa del Corregidor dates from 1552, while the Ermita de Santiago - built at the end of the 15th century - actually predates the plaza.

Branching away from the square are several idyllic Andalusian streets. The Calle Remedios, the Calle San Cristobal and the Calle de los Dolores are all worth exploring. You could spend hours wandering the little backstreets - and the superb range of sweet independent shops have great browsing appeal.

Some of the best are the charming Toy Shop, run by Joe Cayetano, in Calle Nueva, which is in fact three shops selling exclusive and brilliant handmade toys.

It is an Aladdin's cave of charming old toys and musical boxes, as well, and will enchant children and adults alike.

Make sure not to miss Déjà Vu, a vintage clothing shop on Calle Pedraza, which was established in 1997.

It is a beautiful shop with a great choice of high-end designer vintage stock on offer, including Hermes, Gucci, Dior and Chanel. Déjà vu will also sell your luxury or vintage items. Another top boutique is Jacaranda which opened last year in Calle Remedios.

It is a great boutique selling great fashion at reasonable prices. You can buy Cavalli scarves, leather bags, beautiful dresses and brands such as Naf Naf and Morgan.

Finally make sure to pop into the newest delicatessen and champagne bar La Santa on Calle Plaza Puente Ronda.

Recently opened by three local Spaniards, it has a great position and sells a superb range of products, from fine wines to top hams and cheeses.



Exclusive picture by Jon Clarke

Feria time

MARBELLA will come alive for partygoers for the annual feria y fiestas de San Bernabe next month.

Colourful canvas marquees, called casetas, line the streets, playing host to the week-long fiesta from June 9-14.

This year the celebrations - organised by the town hall - will feature a whole host of parades and concerts.

These range from performances from winner of TV show 'The Voice', David Barrul, to enormous processions winding through the old town.

A full schedule of events and performances for the feria can be downloaded from the town hall's website: www.marbella.es/fiestas



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Once a scruffy haunt for tacky souvenirs and pickpockets... now Marbella old town has become one of Andalucia's true references for eating out

THERE has been a quiet revolution in the heart of the old town of Marbella. Not just in its appearance and shops, but in its incredible range of good places to eat.

As well as its very own Michelin-starred restaurant **Skina**, the centre has one of the finest concentrations of good restaurants in Andalucia. Charming, candle-lit and offering increasing quality, the days when you could get away with serving any old muck are well and truly over. Indeed, there are easily half a dozen fabulous places to eat in the old town, each offering its own style and flavour.

Without a doubt though, the godfather of the centre has to be **Cassanis**, now over a decade old and consistently reinventing itself.

Set up by your perfect host Guy Sirre, who formerly worked for the Sultan of Brunei, it is constantly refining its cuisine and coming up with new recipes.

Set in a typical Andalusian townhouse – based around an evocative patio – there is a very distinct ambience at work.

Its head chef Fabian Cangas has been at the helm since day one, but frequently takes time out to train at different restaurants around the world.

And equally rated (consistently ranking well on Trip Advisor and with a certificate of excellence award) is the **Orange Tree**.

Owned by former hedge fund manager Irene Maher and her husband Tunisian Faik Ammar, their chefs herald from around the world and certainly know how to cook.

Between them, they have put together a solid mix of dishes that weigh heavily towards quality ingredients and value.

Menu's change every couple of months, but there is always home-cooked bread, such as walnut and five spice foccacia, and a good mix of starters, including pan fried lamb's liver with puy lentils and bacon, or chicken liver and pistachio pate with ciabatta toasts.

Mains include the signature dish of Irish beef in a fricassee of wild mushrooms and set on a bed of spinach and champ mash. The knob of black truffle butter was the perfect final flourish.

During the day you might want to try its sister restaurant **La Muralla**, which sits in picturesque Plaza de la Iglesia.

Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the Summer, it is ideal for post or pre-wedding drinks, canapés and tapas... or just to watch the world go by.

Another fantastic new arrival, which has recently opened just beside the historic centre is **Yamas**, possibly the only – and certainly the best – Greek restaurant on the coast.

Set up by Kulis and Hayley, who previously ran a



GALLIC FLAIR: Cassanis

restaurant in Rosario, the couple have invested heavily in making this a true secret in Marbella. Set around a stunning courtyard, the menu is a trawl through all the Greek classics you can name. But you would be highly recommended to try the plate of mixed starters, which at €11 is incredible value and includes a wonderful display of dishes, including stuffed vine leaves.

I also enjoyed the traditional beef steak of mince meat stuffed with feta cheese and red pepper and served with tomato, rice and Greek yoghurt and vegetables. The wine list was surprisingly good, with some chestnuts from around the world, including a bottle of Italian Prosecco at €21, a half bottle of French rose Minuty at €26 and even a Greek red Rapsani, which was a pleasant surprise.

Another fantastic new addition to the Marbella dining scene is Italian **Casa Tua** in a charming cobbled street with pretty candle-lit tables.

Opened by Adriano and his wife Catherine last year, the Irish-Italian couple, who have two kids Viviana and Massimo, have travelled the world running restaurants in Italy, Ireland and the US.

They certainly have a lovely eye for detail and the restaurant is stylish in the extreme, using



CREATIVE: At popular Orange Tree

some clever ideas, such as the recycled wood planting boxes.

The menu is a nice mix of Italian classics with some original twists like the buffalo mozzarella deep fried in tomato sauce. A lemony ricotta cheese 'fagottino' was creamy and delicious, while the fresh scallops with caviar went down a treat. And, as you would expect, tiramisu pudding was the icing on the cake. Last, but anything but least, is the splendour

ORIGINAL: Casa Tua



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SPLENDID: Waiter with amuse bou-ches at Tempora (above) and (left) boss Kulis talks diners through his mixed starter dish at Yamas



STYLISH: New delicatessen La Santa

In one of the most delicious meals tasted in Marbella, I started with a wonderful carpaccio of grouper in a 'tigers milk' sauce, which is cress, rocket, ginger, lime and garlic. Next up, was the highly original 'crunchy apple', which was two slices of dried apple cooked in the oven with a dollop of parmesan in the middle and caramelized with ginger and a king prawn. The presa Iberica with mushrooms and a lick of truffle in a red pepper sauce was one of the most delicious main courses imaginable. A fresh, passion fruit compote to finish was original, tangy and a surefire winner. There was a great wine list and owner Andres, from Madrid, has catering in his veins, having worked his way up from being a waiter at the age of 14 to running restaurants in Mexico and the Dominican Republic. It was no surprise to find the place busy from arrival at 8pm to 10.30pm when new diners continued to arrive. Make sure you book.

restaurant Tempora, which just gets better and better, all thanks to its very capable Peruvian chef Aldo Espinosa, a Cordon Bleu trained whizkid, who understands freshness and spices more than most.



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PUCKERING UP: TOWIE stars bring the big bucks

THE high-spending UK party crowd could bring in as much as 20% of Marbella's income from tourism, believes nightclub mogul Neil Acland. The boss of nightclub Sleek explains that the partygoers, that include footballers, soap stars and the huge retinue of hangers on, bring in a steady

stream of revenue unaffected by the recession. The group - found each weekend at Marbella hotspots also including La Sala, Aqwa mist, Nikki Beach and Ocean Club - have no concerns about spending vast sums of money. "They spent a lot of cash whatever is going on with the

Feelgood factor is coming back

The high-spending UK party crowd is a continuous dynamo of income for Marbella believes club boss Neil Acland

economy and create a lot of jobs, not to mention social security and money in licenc-

es for the town hall," says Londoner Acland, who also runs hotel Sisú.



CELEB STRENGTH: Towie stars and Aston from JLS and (below) pool party at SISU

"This is a young group of 20 to 30-somethings with a lot of disposable income. They don't get affected by the recession."

The businessman, who previously worked in security in Denmark, explains that groups of professional footballers happily spend between '20,000 and 50,000 euros' in one weekend.



of champagne and around 7,000 bottles of vodka a year. "And around 10% of those bottles of champagne will get sprayed around," he admits. He also believes that Marbella is increasingly getting a reputation for its music and acts. "It is getting increasingly more like Ibiza here with better quality music and DJs," he continues.

MARBELLA LUX OUT!

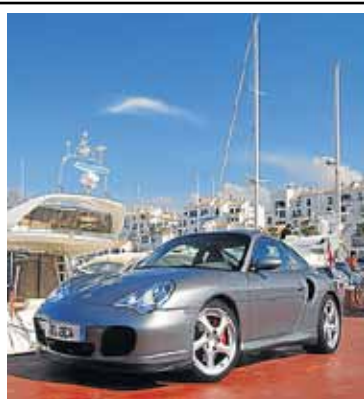
NOWHERE does luxury better than Marbella.

The town has recently overtaken Madrid to become Spain's second most important place to buy luxury brands, after Barcelona. The town is now set to celebrate its fourth Marbella Luxury Weekend in Puerto Banus in June.

Over four days, between June 5 and 8, the jet set marina will be an international showcase for some of the world's leading luxury brands with over 90 events taking place.

A floating catwalk will see collections by Custo, Bikkembergs, Swarovski and others. Meanwhile, Porsche and Pagani will be presenting their latest models and once again there will be a luxury business forum held at upmarket La Zagaleta estate with speakers from Renfe, Telefónica, Grupo Osborne, Chanel and Amazon.

"This is a huge flow of tourists as well as an increase in employment in this sector, and all tourism related activities," said mayor-ess Angeles Munoz.



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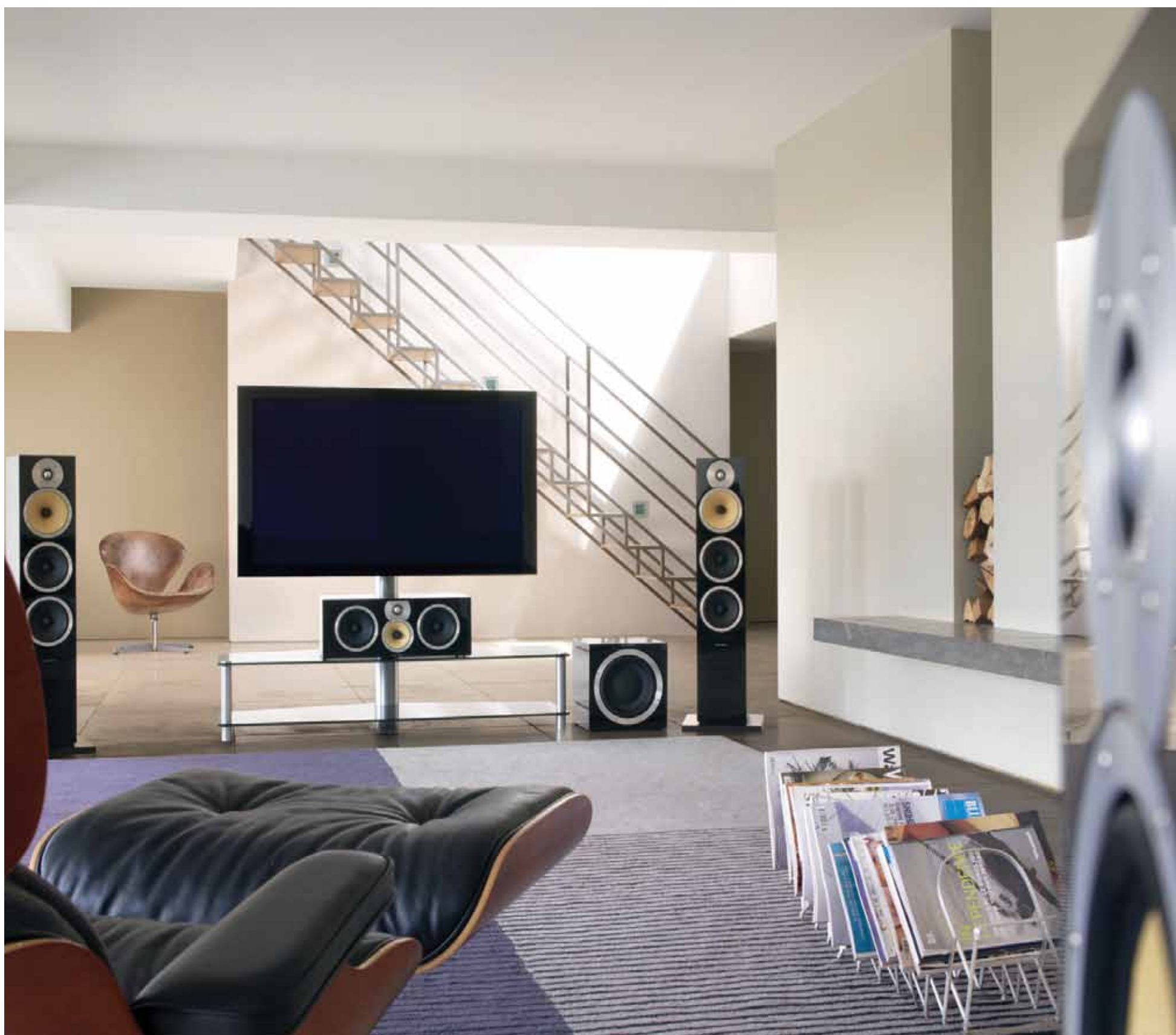
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WHEN John Stephenson moved to San Pedro 13 years ago and set up Andalucian Properties, 90% of buyers were British expats.

But that has all changed now, with Belgians, French, Scandinavians and many from outside Europe searching for their dream Spanish home.

And variety is certainly the spice of life for John and his wife Kathy, as they previously owned a restaurant, a butchers and even a nursing home back in the north-east of England.

"We were on our way to Australia but thought we would spend a year in Spain first and sell our home in Nueva Andalucia before moving on," said John, 65.

However, they never made it to the home of their son down under, after getting hooked on the Costa del Sol and the opportunities on offer.

And there has never been a better time than now to buy a home in the Marbella area, with John confirming prices are as low as they will go and 2014 will see a slow but steady rise.

Private view no sell out

Andalucian Properties' John Stephenson was all set to leave Spain 13 years ago for Oz. Now he is staying put as Marbella's property market gets healthier and healthier, writes Tom Powell

Andalucian Properties mostly sell homes between Marbella and Estepona, with prices ranging from €20,000



to €2 million. Unsurprisingly, those homes at the higher end of the scale are situated in

the coast's most exclusive estate, La Zagaleta, where Hugh Grant and the mayor of Moscow are known to have taken up residence (see pages 6 + 7). John, who owns a boat in La Linea and enjoys sailing and skiing, has even dabbled in TV fame, appearing on several episodes of the BBC's 'Living in the Sun' property programme.

"It was very interesting and I was very fortunate to be asked to appear on it." "People from across northern Europe occasionally come in and say they have seen me on the programme, it was undoubtedly good for the business."

Beacon

The reason so many have lost faith in the area's market, with countless demolitions and legality issues, is the number of unofficial estate agents, explained John.

"We have seen a lot of people claiming to be estate agents, but if you play the game properly and professionally then it is absolutely fine," he said.

"It is a pity that there aren't tighter regulations against any old person deciding to sell property."

Nonetheless, with the economic crisis slowing down, the coast's property market appears to be a beacon of hope.

"Over the next couple of years we will see prices slowly going back up, a natural process as the cheapest properties in an area are all sold and people are forced to move up a rung," he said.

And no, they don't have plans to move on from their El Paraíso home just yet, with the climate, culture and ambience keeping them put.



More than money

THEY are the dream family team. And Zara Gayon (above) and mum Araceli insist that they have set up their business for a lot more than just making money.

"We set up Elviria Estates with one purpose only; to enjoy our work and make as many customers as possible as friends," said Zara. "We hope this will lead to that magical multiplier effect where everyone feels part of our family team."

The pair have over 40 years of experience of the Elviria area to draw on and 'our customers and friends do not hesitate to trust us with their properties whether to sell, rent or manage them'. Contact us at 952 831 020.

How we became number one

THEY had only been in Spain a couple of months, when Bryan McCavitt and Claire Cockrill bought a small flagging TV satellite business that needed some urgent investment.

With their skills in TV installation and marketing (Claire worked for leading London PR company Hill & Knowlton), they had soon stabilised the business and started to expand along the coast.

"We initially worked out of a bashed up old van and our home in Calahonda, before opening a small shop in Las Chapas," recalls Claire. "There was enough space for one small desk and a couple of dishes."

However over the next two years TVONE expanded fast and by 2008 it counted on five full time staff and a brand new high profile office in Puerto Banus.

"Our consistent attention to detail and great customer service led to our clients wanting much more from us - in a good way - and so our TV /Audio Video showroom was born."

"Some saw the move as risky just as the recession was beginning to bite, but we were getting so many requests for installations, TV and audio and we knew we had to expand."

The move has paid off and today the company counts on up to 3,000 clients and a solid reputation for the greater Marbella area and further.

"Our doors are now open to anyone worried about the imminent changes to UK TV. We have solutions catered to the individual's needs and we welcome anyone to drop in to see what's available," adds Claire.



SERVICE WITH A SMILE: Claire



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This beautiful residence is set in tranquil countryside with wonderful open views yet only minutes from San Pedro.

The 3 bedroom house has been totally refurbished and has retained its traditional and homely feeling. There is the added potential of building 2 separate villas on this property.



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GROUND FLOOR APARTMENT IN ELVIRIA - R2213363

Unique apartment situated in a front line beach complex on the best sandy beach of Elviria. Just two minutes drive to the town center of Elviria with many shops, local bars and restaurants.

The gated community offers a gorgeous communal pool surrounded by landscaped gardens. From the terrace one enjoys views over the garden, pool and the sea and there is direct garden access to the beach.

BEDS: 2 • BATHS: 2 • BUILD SIZE: 70 m² • TERRACE: 40 m² • PRICE: € 320,000



DETACHED VILLA IN MARBESA - R1977144

In a residential area and just a few meters from the beach, this magnificent home is located on a plot of thousand meters and a floor area of 350 meters, with a large garden with a magnificent heated pool with swim jet.

The house has 4 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms. One type apartment in the lower part of the house with access to the pool. On the upper part it has two bedrooms with two bathrooms with access to a big terrace bordering the whole house. A large fully equipped family kitchen, and a spacious living room with a magnificent terrace in front of the pool. It is the ideal home for year round living, and noted for its privacy and tranquillity that exists within it.

BEDS: 4 • BATHS: 4 • BUILD SIZE: 325 m² • TERRACE: 100 m² • PRICE: € 785,000



MIDDLE FLOOR APARTMENT IN ELVIRIA - R778909

Luxury 2 bedroom 2 bathroom second floor apartment, located in the prestigious and popular complex of Hacienda Playa in Elviria. The apartment is furnished to a very high standard. Large terrace with glass curtains. A/C hot and cold, underground parking space and a storage room.

The apartment is within walking distance to the beach and near to all amenities.

BEDS: 2 • BATHS: 2 • BUILD SIZE: 120 m² • TERRACE: 50 m² • PRICE: € 420,000



No time to dawdle

THERE is no more dawdling in Marbella's property market, as demand outstrips supply and buyers are snapping up homes at a rapid rate for the first time in years.

In order to keep up with the healthy growth, agents in the town are desperately trying to find new properties to sell.

Scandinavian agency Fastighetsbyran is looking for anybody consider-

There are simply not enough properties to satisfy the deluge of buyers now looking for a home in the Costa del Sol's crowning jewel, according to Swedish estate agent Fastighetsbyran

ing selling their property, as more and more clients get in touch.

"It's getting harder and harder to find good, quirky properties in attractive areas," said Sigrid Jegleim, the office manager. "And we have so many clients looking to purchase a second

home or permanent residence here right now."

She explained that two and three bedroom properties, facing south-west and with a terrace, are all the rage at the moment, particularly with their primarily Swedish clientele.

The Swedish firm, with nine offices in Spain and three of them on this coast, set up in Marbella in 2010 and was taken over by new owners in March 2013, just as the area's property market was beginning to recover from the biggest slump in recent history.



ALL SMILES: A great time to buy

"I believe it is a wonderful time to be buying," added Sigrid, who has worked in Spain since 2002 but moved to Fastighetsbyran in 2012.

First-class

"The market is moving a lot. Properties are being sold, people are making decisions a lot faster than previous years and prices are beginning to rise."

At the moment, Nueva Andalucía and San Pedro are the most popular areas, because of their close proximity to Marbella, great beaches and of course Malaga airport.

Not to mention the numerous first-class golf courses on their doorstep, a major draw for many prospective buyers. Top of the range homes in Nueva Andalucía are selling for as much as €2 million.

Although a lot still depends on the Spanish banking situation and wider economic recovery, for now Marbella's property market has definitely got the wind back in its sails.

The building blocks of recovery

MARBELLA is leading the way out of the financial crisis, as data shows it to be streaks ahead of other towns in Andalucía.

And nowhere is the town's rapid recovery more evident than in its thriving property market.

Indeed, property sales in Marbella last year were more than three times that of any of the region's main cities, with 21.9 sales per 1,000 inhabitants.

In comparison, Sevilla sales were just 6.75 per 1,000.

As well as booming second-hand sales, there has been a dramatic rise of requested building permits, leaping from 1,660 to 2,539 in the past four years.

Boss of local accountancy and legal firm Fideso, Douglas Goulet has seen some spectacular growth this year so far.

"In terms of property sales I reckon we have seen up to



30% growth this year," he explains. "Marbella is really coming back and I reckon in a year's time it will be nicely consolidated and money will start trickling down to the

man on the street."

The Bolivian, who grew up in Marbella attending EIC school, gave a development in the Sierra Blanca as an example of how fast the market

is moving.

"Of the 40 units being built, 80% of them have been pre-sold and each of them costs from one million upwards."



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Zen and the art of a good night's sleep



WHERE TO STAY

HIGH in the hills, in one of the most privileged spots in Marbella sits one of Andalucia's most stunning boutique hotels.

A true oasis of calm, the Marbella Heights Hotel is certainly appropriately-named, with its stunning views across the Mediterranean as far as Gibraltar and even Morocco.

This Zen-like retreat, run by charming host Mercedes from Valladolid, comprises five well appointed rooms.

But the real charm is the amazing garden, surrounded by nature, where you relax on deep sofas or sunbeds beside the alluring pool.

Meals can be cooked by order and the breakfasts are a real treat.

Another excellent place to stay is The Urban Villa, a boutique retreat with five stunning suites, also above the city of Marbella.

This luxury residence is a haven of peace with each suite individually furnished with a great sense of creativity combining traditional style with an artistic modern twist.

CHILL OUT: At Marbella Heights

Some even count on their own saunas and Jacuzzis. For those however, looking to be in the heart of the action, close to all the clubs and bars on Puerto Banus, you must definitely take a look at Sisu.

Footballers

Recently taken over by British businessman Neil Acland, he has spent millions creating a string of stunning suites, stylish and comfortable in the extreme.

But you are here really for the scene and, in particular, partying around the pool area which is usually buzzing in summer with fantastic music, celebrities and footballers partying into the early hours.

There is also a new chef poached from Nikki Beach and food is served 24 hours a day.

And new for this summer, the hotel now counts on an amazing rooftop terrace, with jacuzzis and views to die for. Even better there is a huge screen perfect for watching the next World Cup match.



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QUALITY: Chefs at Japanese joint Takumi

WHERE TO EAT

Capital

Marbella is Andalucia's fine dining capital, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke

A Thai with a twist

A GLASS of champagne, furnished with ice cold strawberry slices, you could certainly call it a Thai with a twist.

Sitting by the beach, under shady palms and with a series of tranquil water features - well pools really - the setting could however, easily be Koh Samui.

It was little surprise to learn that the restaurant is the brainchild of Claire Strutton, who spends considerable time on the Thai island with fiancé Ian Radford, the La Sala group's chairman.

The word 'sala' actually means a wooden pavilion in Thai and everything about the

place has a flavour of the Orient.

The meal began with a bang with the Thai tapas selection, which oozed authenticity. The platters appeared to be overflowing with colour and flavour, including sticky satay skewers, crunchy samosas and sumptuous prawn toasts. All complemented by four sublime sauces, including a smoky semi-spicy and a sweet chili.

Thick, juicy criss-cross squid, flavoured delicately with chili and smothered in generous dollops of aioli, also went down a treat.

The mains were stylishly presented, with big helpings of sticky rice to offset the heat of the meat and vegetables.

While my Kaprow - stir-fried beef with chili and basil - was tender and tasty, it certainly packed a kick, demanding serious amounts of liquid to cool down my tongue!

Across the table, Pla Pad Khing - monkfish with ginger - also earned rave reviews. It too combined spice with fresh crunchy veg-



HOT: Tom Powell enjoys a true taste of Thailand



etables, namely pak choi.

The curries looked and tasted sublime too, both the melt-in-your-mouth salmon and the exotic Thai yellow chicken.

As the last strip of beef disappeared from my plate I thought I couldn't possibly eat any more, but I'm glad I chose otherwise. Because the chocolate brownie that came for dessert was so much more than an ordinary brownie.

It was simply delicious. Soft, sticky, nutty, the texture was mouthwatering and its relationship with the sweet cinnamon ice cream tasted like true love on my tongue.

Especially with the extra addition of more cool strawberries, bringing the whole dining experience full circle and rounding off a wonderful afternoon in a tranquil setting.

Tom Powell

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You no longer need to travel to Paris to enjoy this amazing dish

of food

Comprising half the Michelin-starred restaurants in Andalucía, it is fair to say that Marbella is the region's food capital. Aside from the trio of Michelin-honoured establishments – El Lago, Skina and Dani Garcia's new place at the Puente Romano Hotel – there are at least half a dozen more that come close to deserving the plaudits. The town's most famous chef Garcia, who has two Michelin stars, agrees. "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," explained Garcia, who grew up in the town, before studying at the top-rated cookery school La Consula in Malaga. In terms of variety, Marbella certainly takes some beating with up to 50 different nationalities represented in the town from Greek to Vietnamese and

Thai to Japanese. "You have just about every style you can think of," explains Japanese restaurant owner Alvaro Arbeloa at **Takumi**. "But most of all, whatever restaurant you open, if the quality is not good enough you will not survive." This boils down to the fact that Marbella locals – and tourist alike – expect quality and are not scared to pay for it. "There is nowhere else around, where the clientele is so well off and so demanding for quality," continues Arbeloa, who previously ran a restaurant in Mallorca with his Japanese partner Toshio, before opening in 2011 just off the Golden Mile. Without a doubt, one of the businessmen making the biggest waves in the food stakes these days is Ian Radford. The former professional squash player has been constantly adding to his **La Sala**



LIGHT LUNCH: Boss Douglas at Cafe de Ronda

brand over the last six 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. And now the group has a third **La Sala by the Sea**, a fantastic Thai restaurant in the old Buddha Beach site, near Puerto Banus. (See review left). The original **La Sala** on the way up to the Nueva Andalucia bull ring is probably the most talked about eatery in Marbella. Certainly abroad.

This is the place to find the 'ladies who lunch', the movers and shakers, celebrities, footballers 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 good too, with a superb range of classic dishes with a contemporary twist.

Just around the corner is another fantastic offering if it is Italian food you are after.

Opening last year **La Trattoria** is the brainchild of capable restaurateur Paolo, who spent ten years working in Tarifa before switching to Marbella.

Claiming to be the 'best and most authentic' Italian in Marbella, it is an elegant place, in a great location for parking.

There is no doubt his fresh pastas and salads are among the best on the coast.

Tipple

I was particularly keen though on a plate of wafer thin *brasaola*, which came with delicious burrata mozzarella which is flown in especially every week by a friend of Paolo's in Puglia.

A plate of *maltagliati* (rough cut pappadella pasta) with truffle shavings and parmesan was amazing... and so was the wine list by the way if you fancy a decent tipple.

On that front, you must try out the new wine emporium **D Wine** in Puerto Banus. Just on your left before you reach San Pedro this amazing spot not only has 3,500 different wines on offer, which you can drink at a great price with your meal, but it has 32 different wines to try by the glass.

An amazing investment, this really is one for the wine buffs and the food is also a decent range of top quality steaks and many other dishes all pulled together by a talented Japanese chef who previously trained at Kabuki at Finca Cortesin, in Casares.

Another great place to drink wines with fine food is at the long-time rated **Albert & Simon** restaurant in San Pedro. The brothers Albert and Simon, appropriately, took over the baton from their father, who had one of Marbella's first Michelin-starred restaurants.

Continues on Page 47



ELEGANT: La Trattoria and (inset) its brasaola

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From page 45

In terms of quality it is very hard to beat and the French culinary talent is all too obvious. There is an excellent wine list to boot, with some chestnuts from all over France. (See page 59 for a full review).

Staying with the French flair, you must try Casa Mono just off the Golden Mile, where Guy Sirre, who is actually Belgium, has created a very stylish and delicious spot for lunch.

This is perhaps no surprise, Sirre coming to Marbella, via a career straddling Michelin-starred restaurants in France, London and San Francisco, not to mention a decade working as the Sultan of Brunei's interior designer.

Changing the menu frequently, there is some distinct Gallic flair at play here, so expect to find *vol au vents*, parmesan souffles, *bouillabaisse* soup, as well as white veal sweetbreads and a great duck terrine, served with crisp biscuits and fresh bread.

There are always a number of specials on the board such as scallops with green chopped asparagus, beans, morel and



EMBLEMATIC: Terrace at La Sala



TEAMWORK: The guys at Yanx with boss David behind

Dining secrets

trumpet mushrooms and cherry tomatoes, served in a lobster sauce with cod roe.

Literally next door and completely different in style is the extremely popular **Cafe de Ronda**, run by successful local businessman Douglas Goulet, who also owns Fideso accountancy and legal firm.

Cruelty-free

A long-time fixture on the Costa del Sol, you will find a decent mixed menu and now a special set lunch for under €10 thanks to a joint venture with Relais de Paris, serving its 'sauce originale' with a lovely entrecote

steak and classic French fries. It is usually full of businessmen for lunch and is also known for its amazing eggs Benedict, as well as its steaks and fresh salads with fresh buffalo mozzarella and fresh tomatoes.

For similarly tasty fare, head to **Yanx** in Centro Plaza in Nueva Andalucia, which is a superb American-style diner 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 many cruelty-free ingredients as possible, including humanely raised chicken, without antibiotics or unnecessary chemicals. He is also set to open a new section at the other side of the restaurant serving more delicatessen-style takeaway fare.

Finally if it is a great beach restaurant you are after then look no further than **The Beach House**, sitting on lovely Montebach beach, in Elviria.

It 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 ambiance, you will be hard pressed to find anywhere better for lunch or supper.

Finally, in the heart of the old

JUST FOR STARTERS

TWO exciting new restaurants are opening in June.

The first is **Le Petit Bistro**, a French restaurant opening in Nueva Andalucia. The rustic French bistro combines the finest, fresh produce with a hint of 'Je ne sais quoi.'

There will be a big attention to flavours and detail, served up in relaxed intimacy with favourites including snails in garlic, frogs legs and *coq au vin*.

Even more ambitious is exciting new joint **The Boardwalk**, which opens on the Paseo in Marbella (next to Garum). It is offering casual beachside dining in contemporary surroundings with diners enjoying everything from breakfast and cakes to freshly baked pizzas and traditional English afternoon tea.

The impressive menu features timeless classics including prawn pil pil and Thai chicken laksa with pak choi. To receive an invitation to The Boardwalk Opening Party email media@theboardwalkmarbella.com.

town of Marbella you have a huge range of places to eat and the choice keeps getting better. The best include **Tempora**, **Cassanis**, **Casa Tua** and **The Orange Tree** (see our article on pages 32 + 33).

The true taste of Italian cuisine

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