



Ass good as it gets!

It's not just about donkeys, discovers Iona Napier. World-famous for its chocolate box charm, Mijas has some tempting new flavours to try this season



IF you haven't ridden one of its world-famous *burro* taxis, you must be something of an ass. But the famous donkey-drawn carts are anything but the only carrot drawing tourists to this cobbled village these days. Known from New Jersey to Japan for its chocolate box charm, this classic Spanish hilltop town has many other claims to fame. And with Tuk Tuks and police Segways (see Page 30) now adding to the mix, even the local transport system refuses to stand still! Mijas was discovered internationally by bohemian artists and writers in the 1950s and 60s who fell under the spell of its Moorish vibe. If stepping into the pages of a book is your thing, read historian Ronald Fraser's 1973 historical homage *The Pueblo: A Mountain Village on the Costa del Sol*. The expats who followed were equally captivated, making Mijas one of the richest towns in Malaga province. Despite its peaceful hilltop home, 8km from the fleshpots of Fuengirola and its municipal 'other half', Mijas Costa, the population is 40% foreign, giving the place a pulse of its own. And nowhere does that pulse beat more vibrantly than the colourful Bodega del Pintor, which is heaving with expats and locals throwing their finest salsa moves when I look in on my first evening in the town. Maybe it's something in the water but dance was never

Turn to Page 20

STUNNING: Nestled in the mountains, Mijas is the true gem of the Costa del Sol

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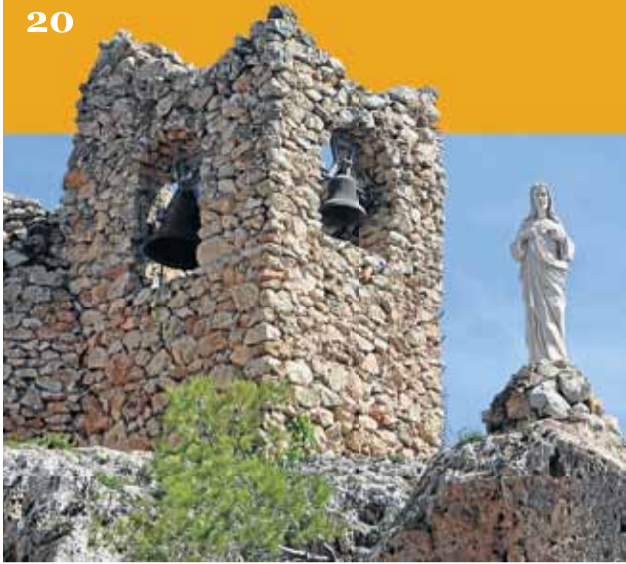
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HISTORIC: Chapel of the Virgin of the rock

From Page 19

in short supply during my 24-hour stay. And it isn't limited to the hours of darkness. The main square is a weekly flamenco free-for-all (see picture across page). The conversation of stallholders, flower sellers and spectators gathered around the Plaza de la Constitucion is subdued to a whisper by the spectacle of guitar strumming, soulful singing and flailing lace sleeves. There's a free show here every Saturday, and another

A town of contrasts

on Wednesdays outside the tourist office in Plaza Virgen de la Pena, both at midday, weather permitting.

It's as good as any you'll see at Sevilla's tobacco factory or Granada's cavernous haunts, and one of the best seductions drawing trippers to this pueblo in the clouds every week.

Start your tour at Mijas Tourist Office, one of the oldest in Spain and extremely switched-on. The bilingual staff will give you a map with



HIDEOUT: Quero's room and (top) with radio

he was finally free. "Was it worth it?" asked Cortes. "I never lost faith in democracy. The tyranny of the dictatorship could not last forever."

They're all well-signposted in perfect English, something of a rarity in Spain!

a walking route and point you in the right direction. Depending on your internal GPS and frequency of pit stops, it will take you to the main sights in under two hours. And get this: They're all well-signposted in perfect English, something of a rarity in Spain!

THE MOLE OF MIJAS

It is one of the most remarkable stories to emerge from the Franco era. Now best known as 'The Mole of Mijas', Manuel Cortes Quero was the last Republican mayor of the pueblo, from March to November of 1936. However, when the town fell to dictator Franco's nationalist troops during the Spanish Civil War he was forced to abandon his wife and newborn daughter and flee the town under the cover of darkness. However he returned in 1939, willing to sacrifice his freedom in exchange for living under the same roof as his family, making himself a prisoner in his own home. For 30 years the Mole stayed

hidden, driven by his belief in democracy and socialism, tucked in a cramped space under the stairs behind a false wall. "I pulled out my own teeth, as soon as I got an ache," Cortes told his biographers Jesus Torbado and Manuel Lequineche, authors of the book 'Los Topos' (The Moles). "I would work at the tooth until it was loose and then I would yank it out with my fingers, without any pliers or tongs. I pulled out nine or ten teeth this way." In 1960, after 21 years of hiding, Cortes' daughter Maria got married. "I had to make do watching her come out of church through a little hole above," he said. "The wedding procession left

the house and after the ceremony Maria scurried away to come to my room and kiss me, just as we had planned." Listening to the radio on March 28, 1969, with his ear pressed to the wall, Cortes heard the news that he had been waiting 30 years to hear. The government had granted amnesty to those people who had committed crimes from July 18 1936 to April 1 1939. "I got a lump in my throat because of the emotion of the moment," said Cortes. "I couldn't think straight." The then mayor of Mijas, Miguel Gonzalez Berral, accompanied Cortes to the headquarters of the Guardia Civil in Malaga, where the world's press waited to hear the confirmation that

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ORNATE: Sculptures in museum

With two Mudejar churches, the old Arab wall, three museums and a wealth of courtyards, shrines and garden - all overlooked by the white Calvary chapel - Mijas has masses of cultural appeal.

Locals leaning from shutters or lounging in beaded doorways spot my map from a mile off and want to help when I stray from the path.

The winding, whitewashed streets lined with artisan emporiums and hung with ceramics and trinkets demand to be wandered.

First I head for the shrine of the Virgin of the Rock, a chapel excavated by a Carmelite monk and dedicated to Mijas' patron saint in the 17th century. According to legend, two shepherds discovered her when they were guided to the spot by a dove in 1586.

This is the first of many 'miradors' from which to view Fuengirola, its coastline of hotels resembling jagged teeth, and across a cluster of urbanisations and golf courses to Mijas Costa.

Plaza de los Siete Canos may not compare to the thrills of



PANORAMIC: The bull-ring boasts spectacular views

Madrid's Plaza Mayor but its low-key Andalucian architecture has charm.

The small but handsome bull ring, built in 1900, is one of

only a few in Spain that is oval not round. It's a sliver of old Spain with its clean, whitewashed lines and ceramic tiles showcasing famous matadors.

These days it's used for concerts as well as bullfights.

With a couple of dozen watering holes and cafes surrounding every cultural sight, refuelling is no problem and if

sugar levels falter, a seriously chocolatey hot chocolate can be found at the Mayan Monkey, which has two cafes and its very own factory in the town.

There are loads of atmospheric places to eat and foodies will be flabbergasted with the choice! Congratulations, Mijas Tourist

Office, for striking a perfect balance between catering for tourists and preserving authenticity.

History lovers will enjoy the municipal museum, the flour mill and the well-preserved

churches while kids (and grown-ups who'd rather not be) will be spellbound by the museum of miniatures, El Carramato De Mijas.

Among the baffling exhibits are shrunken heads, the Seven Wonders of the World painted on a toothpick and Da Vinci's Last Supper, reproduced on a grain of rice!

One euro meanwhile will buy you a bargain blast into the past at the excellent Folk Museum where you can see ancient artefacts and convincing mock-ups of how Mijas houses would have looked centuries ago.

The exhibition also revisits the pueblo's roots in wine-making and weaving *esparto* products. The *Mijenos* are fiercely proud of this heritage and are pushing to bring it back.

The latest attraction is a tour by tuk tuk, which launched this month, and costs from €7 to 9 per person.

"We're really excited about the tours and there has been loads of interest for this new project," says founder Myriam Van der Zalm.

But thankfully the famous *burros* are not living on borrowed time. The donkey taxis and horse-drawn carriages show no sign of being sidelined by these new-fangled machines that are all the rage in the Far East.

And that is the key to Mijas's success... a harmonious coexistence between past and present, newcomer and old timer, foreigner and Spaniard.

If you're leaving by car, before heading down to the coast, take the windy backroad up towards the Guadalhorce Valley for the most harmonious perspective of all.

From here you can see the pueblo shining bright like a diamond in its hilltop setting, just as the tourist brochures promise for 'the jewel in the Costa's crown'.

A harmonious coexistence between past and present, foreigner and Spaniard



ATMOSPHERIC: Flamenco in the street

Not quite the ticket

Even in an underground car park, a kindly gesture can break down barriers, writes Iona Napier



AVID ADVENTURER: Reporter Iona Napier

THE time is 2am on a Friday night.

Revellers have retreated from smoky lounges, restaurants are pulling down shutters and even the *burro* taxis have clocked off.

Leaving the colourful bistro where I've spent the evening, I return to the echoey, starkly lit underground car park. Then, panic!

My ticket has been chewed up and swallowed by the machine and the Fort Knox-style barrier is not receptive to charm.

Twenty minutes of trying to save myself is to no avail and my hotel bed is feeling a lot further than a 20-minute drive away.

There's an emergency button, and though it's hardly likely to connect me to anyone now, I push it.

Joy! A woman arrives to my summons in seconds, and I want to kiss her.

She takes the machine to pieces to extract my 'parking ticket', then her face splits into a smile as we survey the chewed-up evidence ... a business card from the last bar I visited - the same shape and dimension as the ticket.

Doh! I gasp at my own stupidity.

"No pasa nada!" hoots the laughing car park attendant, not angry at all, and I try to recall the last time someone showed me such civility at 2am after such a boob.

With a friendly squeeze of my shoulder, she sent me on my way, leaving me wondering how this would have played out in England...

I was moved. And if even a fraction of the villagers are like this kindly lady who came to my rescue in my hour of need, I'm moving to Mijas too!

Mijas by numbers

- 12,500** - trees to be planted in the El Calvario area
- 7,000** - Japanese tourists visited in 2014 with tour operator Hankyu
- 43** - Picasso's ceramic works in the Contemporary Arts Centre Mijas (CACMijas), the second most important collection of this type in the world
- 254** - UNESCO world heritage sites, 255 if Mijas' application is successful
- 20,185** - foreign residents seen by the Mijas Foreigner's Department in 2013, the first department of its kind in Spain
- 5,911** - patients attended to by the GP Out of Hours emergency service in Mijas in 2013
- 82,184** - population of Mijas
- 2,920** - hours of sunshine per year (243 days of solid sunshine)

COCINAS PLUS .com

Our 'happiness lab'

It is the sweetest project imaginable. But not everyone would have carried it off.

Enthusiasm, imagination and drive, that is what expat couple Jason Godwin and Eli McCarthy have combined to create the Mayan Monkey Mijas chocolate factory.

Making Willy Wonka proud, the factory offers excited children (and adults) a tour into the history of chocolate-making and the opportunity to make their very own bars. Combining a factory, museum, cafe and shop, Jason describes the new venture as a 'happiness laboratory'.

Factory fun

"Eli and I decided we wanted to do something fun, something that the tourists can really feel warm and fuzzy about," said Jason.

"Because it's good to have fun in your work life. And what's more fun than a chocolate factory?"

And Jason, who has been on the Costa del Sol for 23 years and runs his own internet service provider and property portal, designs all of the packaging and helps to create the amaz-

How two of the coast's most innovative expats created a chocolate factory in Mijas

ing array of flavours.

The cocoa comes directly from the Dominican Republic, where the couple are now looking at buying up a plantation 'so we can be involved in all parts of the process'.

Always brimming with ideas, the current gimmick is to offer a free bar of chocolate to the man with the best 'beard of the day'.

Mayan Monkey not only make all their own chocolate, using locally sourced ingredients, they also offer chocolate-making workshops which include an introduction to the chocolatier craft.

And Jason and Eli are now looking at yet another plan... to open an ice cream factory in the town.

The 'Moroccan Munchkin Mijas' - anyone got a better suggestion for a name?



WINNER: Beard of the day, with Jason and (right) Eli



Lookout for Mayan Monkey's fortnightly cryptic-quiz to win a free chocolate-making workshop, starting in the Olive Press next issue!



WAGON OF WONDERS: The museum and one of its bizarre exhibits



Microscopic magic

THE Miniature Museum in Mijas Pueblo boasts a collection of the world's smallest knick-knacks.

Housed in a canary yellow gypsy caravan, the odd exhibits at the Carramoto de Mijas have been baffling tourists since 1972, when the museum was founded by famous hypnotist Juan Elegido Millan.

Going by the stage name of Professor Max, he amassed a collection from over 50 different countries showcasing an eye-opening ensemble of microscopic artistry.

The story goes that economic difficulties led Professor Max to collect miniatures, as his house was too small for artwork of normal dimensions. The collection includes a bullfight painted on a lentil, a portrait of Abraham Lincoln on a pinhead and a bust of Winston Churchill, sculpted from a stub of chalk.

Shrunken heads and three dried fleas dressed up as a family count as some of the more oddball exhibits in the museum, perfectly illustrating the eccentric legacy of Professor Max.

Exhibits are presented in well-lit glass globes with magnifying glasses and information plaques. Although many are anonymous, Cordoban David Reyes features heavily. Reyes, 43, visited the museum when he was just eight years old and can now put his name to around half the pieces in the collection.

One of his most impressive creations is a version of Velazquez' famous Las Meninas, painted on a pinhead. Despite the focus on minutiae, the museum has a big heart: proceeds from entry fees go to AFESOL, a charity founded in 1999 to help families of people suffering from severe mental illnesses.



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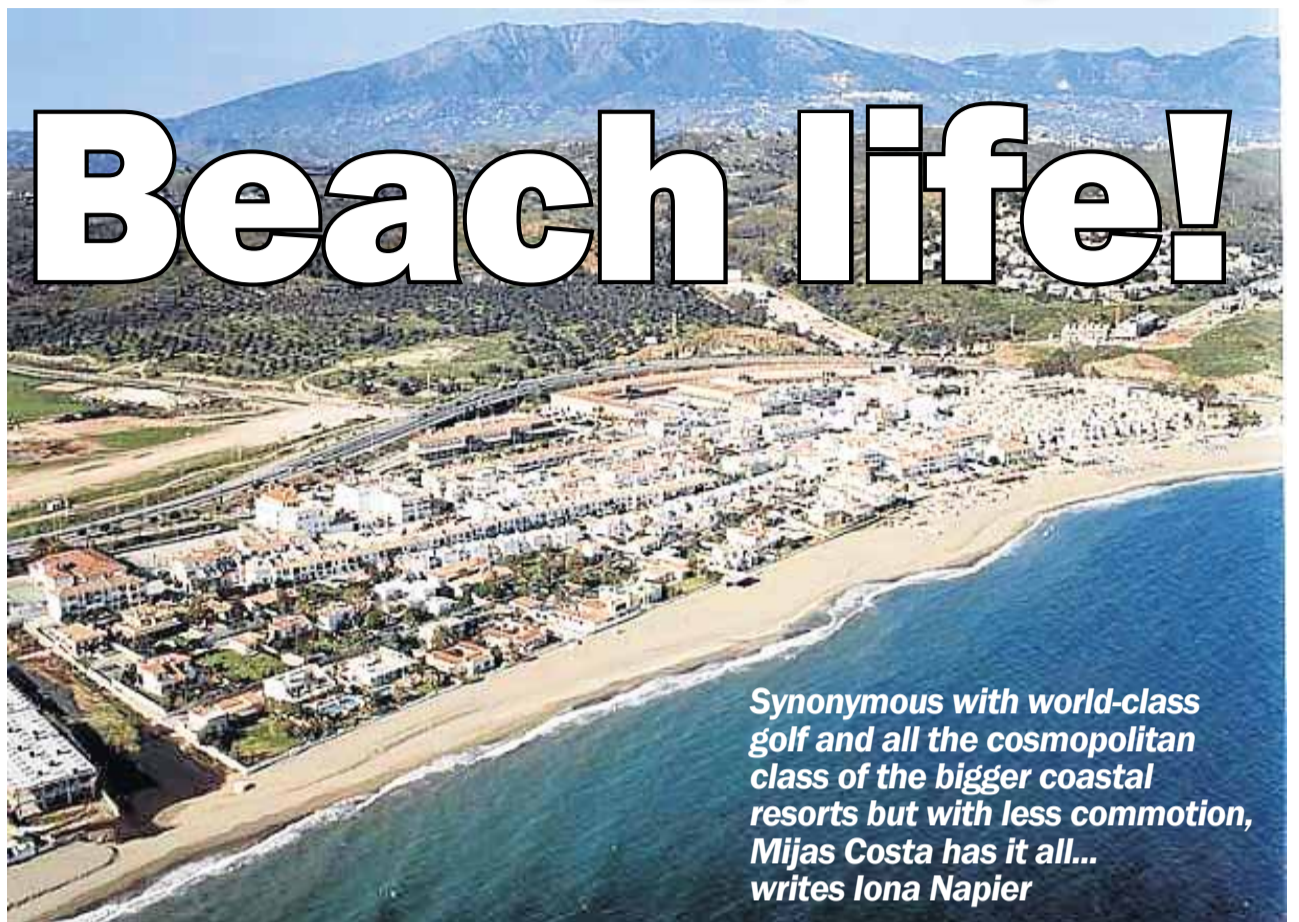
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Craig (affectionately called Grumpy Landlord by all who know him!) and his wife Nicola really are a great team and everyone is made to feel welcome with a friendly smile and fun chat.....they are certainly gaining an excellent reputation from the local residents who have already found this gem of a pub.

You'll see us on the left just outside La Cala as you head to El Faro... don't miss the El Chaparral golf slip road, just after the bend past El Faro/Playa Marina - open every day (except Tuesday) from 12:30pm - Tel: 952493409

Follow and like TheHut2014 on to see what's happening and going on at The Hut... plus the photos are funny to look



MIJAS COSTA: Combining the best of Costa del Sol beach life and Mijas' charm

THE ocean defines Mijas Costa in the way the mountains shape Mijas Pueblo. They are two halves of the same municipality, like a well-matched couple with different hobbies.

While the bijou pueblo appeals to country lovers and culture vultures, the racy oceanfront resort is big on social life and sport. It's not the only municipality with a split personality. Mijas is Malaga province's fourth largest municipality and one of the most profitable destinations on the Costa del Sol, thanks to its beach clubs, golf courses and vibrant nightlife. It spreads over almost 150km² of the province, encompassing a 12km ribbon of coastal communities: Las Lagunas, La Cala de Mijas, Riviera del Sol, Miraflores and Calahonda.

While its sister pueblo is sometimes shrouded in early morning mist, Mijas Costa takes full advantage of the Costa del Sol's 300 days of sunshine annually and, like its neighbours, it's rising again from the smouldering ashes of the financial crisis.

Its coastline curves around secluded rocky coves fringed with sandy beaches and it spreads inland, too, to a fertile golf valley that's a fairway to heaven for visitors.

Its six golf clubs offer a huge range of courses to suit all handicaps and budgets.

Sandwiched between glitzy Marbella and funky Fuengirola, like the satisfying filling in a deli sandwich, no wonder famous Brits like TV presenter Chris Tarrant, Olympic rower Sir Steve Redgrave and soccer star Ryan Giggs have been smitten. Celebrity chef Antony Worrall Thompson owns a property in the area and Irish singer Val Doonican (of diamond-patterned jumper fame) has been coming here for nigh on 30 years.

Between the authentic historical charms of the pueblo and all the sporting and leisure facilities of the coastal scene, Mijas refuses to be pinned down into one single identity.

Its string of seaside villages (see map, far right) showcase an array of great restaurants, bars, hotels and beach hideaways, dazzling like charms on a bracelet.

Synonymous with world-class golf and all the cosmopolitan class of the bigger coastal resorts but with less commotion, Mijas Costa has it all... writes Iona Napier

I'm gagging for it!

THE most famous celebrity to settle in La Cala de Mijas is undoubtedly Scouse comedian Stan Boardman.

"It's one of the few places left on the coast that still has a local village feel," he tells *the Olive Press*.

With a mug of tea in one hand and a steak and kidney pie on his plate, he added: "There is still a very Spanish feel and people are very friendly."



La Cala de Mijas is one of the jewels, known as the Bay of Mulberries until the 1970s after its signature mulberry trees. Since the boom of the 1960s, it has been transformed from an Andalusian fishing village to a bustling resort with so-

phisticated places to dine and dance. But you'll still see fishermen hauling in their catch and you can enjoy sardines fresh from the sea from Easter.

There is no doubt that La Cala truly comes alive in summer, as the beach and neighbouring restaurants start to hum with people.

But the big mix of Spanish with English, German, Dutch and Scandinavians is quickly apparent. "We do not want anyone to feel like a foreigner in Mijas, no matter where they come from," insists local councillor Mario Bravo.

Historically a place of defence, La Cala's past is hinted at by the fortified watchtower in the centre of the village.

The tower was originally part of a series along the coast that provided an important system of defence during the 12th century, warning Fuengirola, Benalmadena and Marbella of the presence of pirates and enemy ships.

Now a museum and tourist information centre, the tower's exhibitions tell the story of General Torrijos - who led a revolt against King Ferdinand VII's regime in 1831 - the history of other coastal watchtowers, and

We do not want anyone to feel like a foreigner, no matter where they come from

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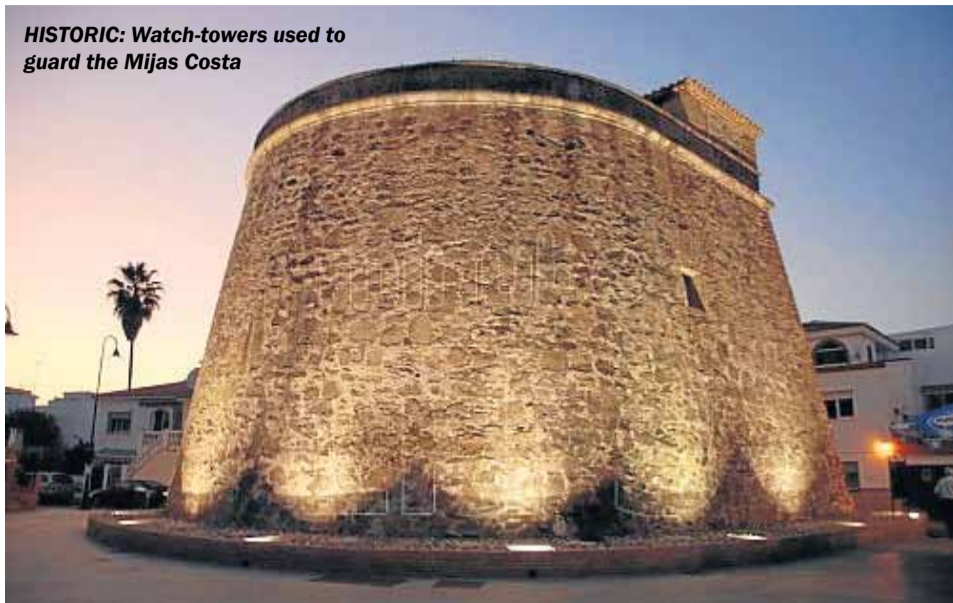
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HISTORIC: Watch-towers used to guard the Mijas Costa



the traditional fishing customs of the Mijas Costa. It was only four decades ago that the village consisted of little more than the watchtower and half a dozen fisherman's cottages.

Even up to the 1970s, almost all transport was by donkey, recalls Pepe Martin, 58, who has lived in La Cala all his life.

"I was actually born in Malaga and my mother got there just in time with an hour donkey ride to Fuengirola, where she took the train," he explains.

A gardener at Las Buganvillas urbanisation, he explains how back in the late 1950s most of the land in the area was split between two big families, the first a German family called Berne and the other a wealthy Malaga family called Cotrina. The two families between them owned most of the land up to Fuengirola and inland towards Mijas village.

"They had most of the land carved up between them and employed many local labourers," he adds.

His family had a little bit of land of its own, where they grew vines to produce raisins.

"My grandfather used to own a lot of vines but they all died when the phylloxera virus hit. But we grew other things as well and shared farming equipment with other families in the area.

"It was beautiful back then, the land was so unspoilt and the fields were full of life. We had an incredible time growing up here. "If you had a little bit of land you could live very well, but if you lived in the town of Fuengi-

rola with no land say, you would be pretty poor," he explains. Many expat Brits have now settled in the area so language is no longer a barrier, indeed many of the attractions and local businesses are run by foreigners, so

you'll feel quite at home. With Malaga airport just 25 minutes drive away, Mijas Costa is spruced up for summer and perfectly poised to share in the profits from this year's predicted tourism bonanza.



PICTURESQUE: Streets in La Cala



A long stretch of sand

FROM Fuengirola to Marbella, Mijas Costa's 12km stretch of golden sand is divided into several sections, each appealing to different types of holiday-maker.

El Faro's rocky, rugged coastline leads to a surprisingly sandy beach, with beach bars and restaurants, and sunbeds for hire in summer. El Faro also offers the town's best fishing, and you can see the fishing rods set up along the shore late into the night.

La Cala de Mijas, presented with an EU blue



PLAYTIME: Kids boat in La Cala

flag for quality, is ideal for children and its 2km long beach is a haven for families, with a huge range of facilities and services and the kids will love the huge play boat and swings.

At Butiplaya, sometimes referred to as Torrevieja Beach, you will find a fantastic 1.5km stretch of sand, which has also been awarded an official blue flag.

Loungers and parasols are available to rent on this famously safe and family-friendly beach which also offers snorkelling.



GOLDEN STRETCH: The 12km of beaches of Mijas Costa



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Mijas mayor Angel Nozal talks to the Olive Press about nature, tourists and hobbies, but not his favourite bar...

MAYOR Angel Nozal works tirelessly to improve Mijas life but once rid of his chains of office he loves playing dominoes with pals or walking the hills. The PP politician has been in power since June 2011 and although a keen traveller (he has a Scandinavian wife and speaks several languages) he is very Mijas-focussed. "I have a goal of trying to make the town a little better each day," he explains. An avid promoter of the town's paths and green spaces, Nozal says the biggest changes have been down by the coast. "We have the best natural beaches of all the Costa del Sol and barely anyone knows about them," says the former insurance agent.



International man

"Mijas is constantly transforming and we are currently working on three huge projects that will improve transport links between La Cala, Mijas Pueblo and Las Lagunas."

As Spain welcomed record-breaking numbers of tourists last year, Mijas enjoyed a hearty slice of the pie. "Of course we suffered during the recession, but we have

seen visitors returning with vigour, especially in 2014. "This has been especially visible in Mijas Pueblo with packed terraces, hotels recording better trade and the tourist office

counting more visitors – especially in summer." The town hall has been working hard to promote tourism – weekly free flamenco shows are just one part of this – and

it strives to keep communities cared for and roads clean. "When I became mayor in 2011, the town hall was in a dire situation, economically speaking.

"But we have really managed to turn this around and over four years have generated almost €20 million."

Nozal is passionate about defending the 'impressive natural treasure' that is the Sierra de Mijas, boasting its over 100km of footpaths, and welcomes expats with open arms.

Mijas' foreign population is 40% on paper, but Nozal believes the real figure to be much higher and confirms expats form a huge section of the community. He continues: "We've got it all here, from spectacular beaches, more than 100km of stunning nature paths, three golf courses, first-rate bars and restaurants and flamenco."

He adds: "It really is the heart of the Costa del Sol and everyone here is delighted to welcome visitors."

He is adamant that the community should be well-integrated, and wants to keep multilingual communication lines open with regular meet-ups and publishing the town newspaper in English and Spanish.

Spain's longest-standing Foreigners Department – celebrating 30 years this year – is in Mijas.

A man of integrity, the only hesitation from Nozal comes when asked which is his favourite bar or restaurant...

"I couldn't possibly choose," he laughs. "There are so many excellent places, it's impossible to pick one!"

WHEN Ian Fishwick's mother asked him to rent out her Costa del Sol home 30 years ago, he never guessed it would lead to a thriving family business.

Word soon spread: Ian had a knack for taking care of everything – from advertising to organising trusted housekeepers, gardeners, pool care and more.

The properties in his care soon grew from a cosseted few to more than 20 and 11 years ago Ian and his wife Jill relocated to Mijas Pueblo and started the company Mijas Villas.

Homes from home

Showcasing hand-picked properties from Mijas to Marbella, the company now boasts 85 beautiful homes and prides itself on paying villa owners before guests come to stay. Trusted and reliable, help is always just a phone call away and more than a staggering 10,000 guests from 60 different countries use their properties each year. It truly is a family business – two of Ian and Jill's three daughters and their partners and six grandchildren have

active roles in the business, while their third daughter takes care of the legal side from the UK.

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With sister company Estepona Villas letting out 40 villas down the road, this family company is keen to concentrate on quality rather than quantity, giving both villa owners and holidaymakers unparalleled treatment.

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MAIN DISH:
Thomas
Weller

TOP OF THE TOWN

Mijas Pueblo's biggest employer after the town hall, Thomas Weller is bossing the Mijas food scene with an award-winning chef and three new additions to his empire

THOMAS Weller is not one to shy away from firsts. From co-pioneering the Costa del Sol's first ever sushi bar in 1998, he is still notching up firsts a few kilometres inland.

The Canadian expat, 43, has just launched Mijas Pueblo's first ever seafood restaurant Latitud 36, while he will open an Italian restaurant in May.

All in all he so far owns five restaurants and four shops in the town, making him one of the Pueblo's largest employers after the town hall at peak times, with over 60 employees come summer.

How funny then that he had never even heard of the Costa del Sol when he arrived from Canada to work in the Swiss Alps as a ski rep in the 1990s. Literally coming across the old town centre by chance on a break, he quickly spotted a gap in the market and, along with business partner Hugo German, had the gumption to go for it.

"We have been really lucky," says Weller, who also owns the popular Secret Garden, Aroma cafe and Taberna Meguinez restaurants in the centre.

But it is hard to believe that luck is the only ingredient in this success story.

"Mijas' culinary scene is getting more and more exciting all the time.

"When I arrived here 18 years ago, there were a lot of over-



priced places in the plaza, charging tourists twice as much as the hidden away places but now there are many great places to eat."

He was first enticed over here with an offer of setting up a photography company on the coast. The business was an enormous success, in particular taking pictures of golfers and golf courses.

Weller's first boutique venture was the opening of 'Mariposa' in 2001, a little shop that now nestles among the three further boutiques and clutch of restaurants that make up his kingdom.

"The key to everything is being different. We're always looking for new designers, products and names that don't exist here yet," he explains.

He continues: "I remember being terrified at the idea of spending 75,000 pesetas



EXCITING LAUNCH: Latitud 36 is Mijas Pueblo's brand new seafood grill

(€450 euros) a month on a shop. It seemed like a huge amount of money at the time," he continues.

Following the success of 'Mariposa', Weller opened a string of boutiques over the next few years, including the largest candle shop on the coast, an artisan cosmetics store, and a shop selling handbags and costume jewellery.

He puts his ability to run so many businesses in one place down to being able to walk between them and his excellent team.

"I think it's good to be involved with lots of very different projects, and to always be taking

on something completely different," he says.

"That way, if one thing starts to lapse you can always rely on the others."

Retail in Mijas did take a hit during the recession, but Weller maintains that across his businesses 'we were too busy for the crisis'.

He said: "We have been so busy throughout it here on the Costa, we have been very privileged but, of course, feel terrible for those who have been going through difficult times."

His one hope for this year is for the British pound to stay strong so the Costa del Sol can continue welcoming the tourists and

rebuild the economy.

Weller insists he rarely makes concrete plans for the future, putting his success down to being fortunate with timing and working incredibly hard...

"Mijas is the best place on the Costa del Sol," he said. "I'm very proud to say that this little town stood up strong in the crisis, because of everything that it is."

"And despite the waves of foreigners that come and go, Mijas hasn't lost its soul or character. It's still just the same as when I first arrived."

Latitud 36 Seafood Grill on Calle los Caños is the most exciting opening in the town this

Bana Bana winner!

Bana Bana chef, Chelo Gonzalez, has bagged three culinary awards, and beat 200 Andalusian chefs with her prize-winning Salmorejo Mijeno.

Now, the new and improved cafe Bana Bana Express Bar will develop the original cafe with more modern tapas and cocktails.

year so far.

The excellent spot, in an excellent corner location, was buzzing over its first weekend.

His new 'authentic' Italian restaurant will even further diversify Mijas' food scene when it opens next month.

His cafe Bana Bana opens at the amazing hour of 5am, while Cafe Aroma and the Secret Garden Restaurant, which opened in 2003 and 2008 respectively, are open all year.

Both extremely popular, The Secret Garden's unique appeal is, unsurprisingly, its secrecy - it can only be accessed through the back garden of the Cafe Aroma.



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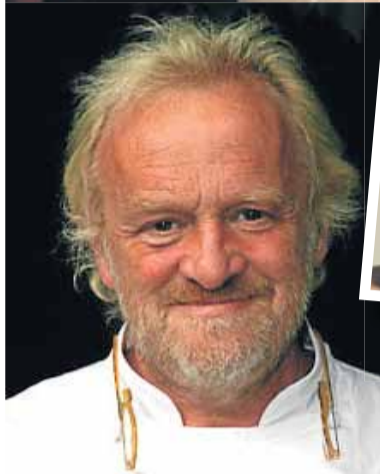
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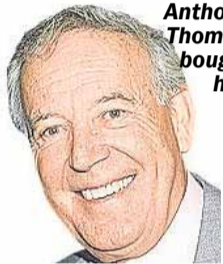
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STAR APPEAL: David Beckham, Lorraine Kelly, Val Doonican, Shed's Ian Anderson, Freddie Starr and Anthony Worrall Thompson have bought Mijas homes



CREATIVITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS: Mijas workers created an industry around weaving esparto grass, men picking it in the high mountains and women folk creating a range of hats and even shoes, with examples at the Mijas folk museum

ARTISAN TOWN



Spotted!

Celebrities have been in on the costa's best kept secret for donkeys' years...

A WHOLE host of celebrities have been won over by the charms of the Mijas area over recent years. From Stan Boardman to Gerry Marsden and Freddie Starr to Rick Parfitt, they've been visiting the tourist hotspot for years. One of its biggest celebs to own a property in the town today is TV luvvie Lorraine Kelly, who has a Spanish villa which she insists is 'nothing posh, just a wee bolthole in the sun.' Irish singer Val Doonican meanwhile, has an apartment in Mijas Pueblo, while celebrity chef Anthony Worrall Thompson's secluded villa is tucked away in Las Lomas de Mijas. Other fans include David Beckham and his wife Victoria, whose parents have long had a house in Riviera.

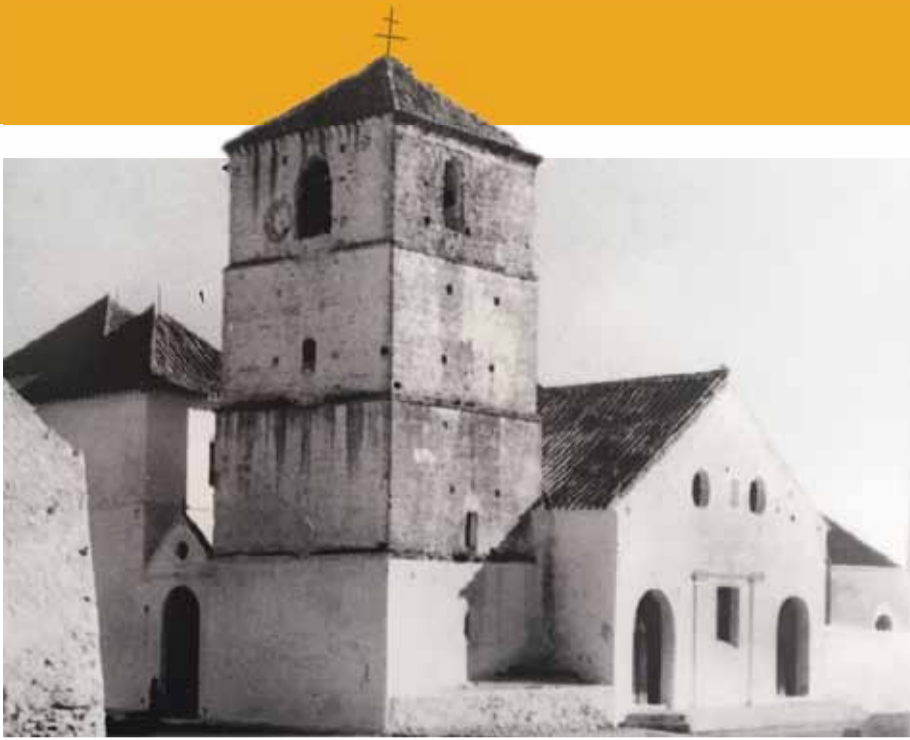


Cave of opportunity

LA GRUTA situated, in Plaza Virgen de la Peña, is a genuine cave of opportunity. First used by a Muslim king Omar Ben Hafsun to store food and arms, this astonishing cave in the heart of Mijas pueblo now houses wares of a very different kind. La Gruta stocks a great collection of jewellery, art works and other artisan goods from around the local region and further afield. Brands include LLadro, Majorica, Gucci, Rado, Sargadelos and Bohemme. It is part of the family-run business, which has two other nearby shops, Tamisa and El

Shop. Owned by Jose Luis Ribera Baño, who started business as an antique dealer in the 1960s, the shops with his English wife Marian Rome have diversified into selling the best quality artworks, jewellery and porcelain on the coast. "Bit by bit we expanded, always offering great value," explains mother-of-two Marian, whose daughter Sonia, 35, now runs most of the business. It is well worth a visit just to browse at the many wonderful pieces they have for sale.





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DAYS GONE BY: A goring by a bull is just as painful today as it was in yesteryear, but don't tell that to this matador... and, my oh my, what a quaint place La Cala once was, all green fields. But what's that curving around it... yes an early version of the N-340 with a few less cars, mind you. Mostly people went around like this (left) and with appropriate sun hats, while (bottom left) ladies freshen up at a village fountain and (top) a view of the church of the Immaculada, and (top right) a rowing crew

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DROP THE DONKEYS

Donkey taxis have ruled the streets of Mijas for 40 years – but some new eco-vehicles are rocking the status quo



CHOOSE YOUR RIDE: Tuk tuks (top right) and segways are taking on the donkeys

DONKEY taxis and horse-drawn carriages are no longer the only ways to get around Mijas Pueblo with the town turning to some wacky new ways of scaling its hilly paths.

A fleet of Tuk Tuks now provide a tourist trail with a difference while the police are set to roam the streets on Segways.

Mijas Town Hall has purchased two electric Segway-style vehicles and is also bidding for 26 new police motorbikes.

The eco-friendly, economical Segways can reach speeds of 20km/h and will facilitate police patrols along the coast and inland.

Meanwhile, Tuk Tuk Spain – brainchild of local entrepreneur Myriam van der Zalm – lets visitors career through the narrow alleyways of Mijas in a chauffeur-driven canary yellow chariot.

The brand new – and unconventional – company offers trips from 30 to 45 minutes and costs €7 to 9 per person. A multilingual tablet gives out information.

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WHERE TO STAY

New kid on the block

But Carlos Baeza is perfectly qualified to take the stunning Hacienda Puerta del Sol to a whole new level, writes Iona Napier



HOSPITALITY runs in Carlos Baeza's blood. From heading over to his father's Mallorca hotel after school in the 1980's to working as Hotel Manager in the Hotel Riu in Mexico, Baeza is no stranger to hotels. He has, just this month, stepped into the role of man-



ELEGANT: Modern luxury at the Hacienda Puerta del Sol

ager at the luxury, four-star Hacienda Puerta del Sol in Mijas and is loving every moment. An economist by trade, Baeza has already started improving, refurbishing and giving a new look to the typical Andalusian

'Cortijo' style hotel, rare on the Costa del Sol.

The hotel is in a perfect spot: near enough to enjoy Fuengirola and Mijas Pueblo but secluded enough should you wish to escape it all.

It also has fantastic grounds, with a stunning pool, and a stylish interior full of an amazing array of antiques and curios.

The 130 air conditioned bedrooms are extremely comfortable and off season some amazing deals can be had.

If you look at TripAdvisor, customer care is where the Puerta del Sol really excels, with a great quality price ratio, a peaceful location and happy staff who really care.

Get in touch with Carlos and the team on +34 91 275 4913 or visit or www.hhpuertadelsol.es



FANCY A DIP?: The hotel has an enormous pool while (above) manager Carlos Baeza

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Walk on the wild side

SPECTACULAR: The Sierra de Mijas could soon become a natural park



TAKE a walk in most directions outside Mijas Pueblo and you'll find a network of trails varied enough to tempt hikers of all abilities.

Although geographically close, the spectacular hills of the Sierra de Mijas - which it is hoped will soon become a Natural Park - feel distant from the buzz of the coast.

With more than 100km of walking trails through unspoilt terrain with stunning wildlife and bird-watching opportunities, there is so much to see. Even better, this trail network is well marked and maps are available at the town hall or tourist office.

Graded by levels of difficulty, walkers can learn about the natural environment through a series of routes.

The starting point for most trails is the Mirador de Mijas Pueblo. Panels throughout walks will direct you, offering cultural information on the surroundings.

Prime-time for walking is mid-September until mid-June, as high summer temperatures can be overwhelming.

Blue skies and almond trees in blossom are typical of January and Spring is beautiful, with the wild poppies, lavender and other flowers in bud.

Head up to the popular 'masts mountain' hike, visible from Mijas, where the antenna tow-

Tranquility and stunning vistas lie in wait around Mijas

ers mark the peak. Once the summit has been reached, walkers are rewarded with stunning 360 degree views for miles inland and across the sea to Morocco. Take care to bring plenty of water and wear proper footwear as terrain can be tricky.

Finally, if you have your trainers handy, a 10km race through Mijas is set for Sunday April 12. The 10km Villa de Mijas race starts on Avenida Andalucia at 11am. Entry is €7 and you must sign up at www.gescon-chip.es before 2pm April 10.

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FRIENDLY WELCOME: Steve and Brenda specialise in gluten-free baking

Unexpected treasure

AN unexpected English treasure-trove awaits locals and tourists alike in Mijas Pueblo.

In a courtyard off the main street waits the English Tea Shop. Walking through the door, you are transported to a Yorkshire tea room and a little piece of England in sunny Spain. Yorkshire tea, homemade scones and cakes with a difference abound.

All the baking is gluten-free, while retaining 100% taste. Steve and Brenda, from Sheffield, have retrained after leaving behind their former careers.

Inspired by family members and friends who suffered from celiac disease and gluten intolerance, Brenda went back to school to learn how to bake with confidence.

For a friendly northern welcome and excellent food, be sure to visit.

Advertorial

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HomeCareontheWeb focuses on the care, maintenance and rental of the property. Many of our owners have been with us since we started in 2003 and one aspect they all agree on that makes us stand out from other property management companies is the comprehensive Owners' Management Area.

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4 Bed 3 Bath Built 154m2
Terrace 55m2

Price: 199.000€

Location: El Chaparral

Ref: R2298350



Very large 2 bedroom apartment located in one of the premier developments in La Cala and only a short walk from the beach. Finished to a high standard and has the added benefit of a private garden.

2 Bed 2 Bath Built 110m2
Terrace 30m2 Garden 20m2

Price: 269.000€

Location: La Cala de Mijas

Ref: R2309051



Fantastic opportunity to purchase spacious 2 bedroom penthouse with amazing sea view. Located within 5 minutes' drive of La Cala and comes complete with parking and large storage room.

2 Bed 2 Bath Built 95m2
Terrace 35m2

Price: 179.000€

Location: La Cala de Mijas

Ref: R2011694



Owner keen to sell. Currently being used as 2 separate apartments this large villa offers various uses. It could be utilised to create rental income or easily converted to a large family home. Private pool and well located.

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Terrace 100m2

Price: 399.000€

Location: Torrenueva

Ref: R233081

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BIG DRAW: New boardwalk



One step at a time

La Cala's exciting new boardwalk has got the property market on the up, writes Tom Powell

WHILE other Costa del Sol resorts saw property value drop by up to 70% in the crisis, stubborn La Cala de Mijas remained almost unchanged. And now the 'recession-proof' resort is leading Mijas Costa's property market recovery - thanks in part to a whole lot of wooden planks.

The new coastal boardwalk, officially opened last October, has become a huge hit, almost too popular on sunny weekends with cyclists, joggers and dog-walkers all vying for space. "It's been a massive draw," explains Andrew Partridge, of La Cala Sales and Rentals. "But we've also got to thank the huge investment from the town hall for driving the market." La Cala is certainly going places. A new roundabout and slip-road is under construction, while it counts on some of Mijas' best schools and medical facilities too.

"People buying property want to do so in an area where it is clear the town hall is investing," adds Partridge. Originally from Oxford, he has been working as an estate agent for 20 years in southern Spain, setting up the La Cala office seven years ago, and as a result has been through the good and the bad. But La Cala stayed strong

throughout the crisis, there was always demand simply because the area was never over-developed. In short, the village never got greedy, and is now reaping the rewards, he insists. He has already had a 'healthy' number of sales this year and there are 'plenty more on the way'. A lot of this is being helped by the rising value of the pound and the strong UK economy, which is bringing a lot more British buyers back into the market.

IN DEMAND: La Cala (below) and (right) Andrew Partridge



HISTORIC: La Cala tower



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Terra firma for Teres

IT'S the stuff of dreams: going on holiday, falling in love with a place and never going home.

This is exactly what happened to Susanne Teres over 30 years ago when she discovered Mijas and fell for the place and its warm-hearted people.

She made it her home in the hazy days 'BC' (before computers) and opened up Mijas Properties, a real estate business, which has built up an unparalleled reputation for honesty and professionalism over the years.



PILLAR OF SUCCESS:
Susanne

Susanne Teres and her Mijas Properties team are going from strength to strength after three decades, writes Iona Napier

From her bright and spacious office in the heart of town with far-reaching panoramic views to the sea, Susanne takes pride in running a friendly, family-run business.

The great team operates in English, Spanish and French and boasts bucket-loads of experience and local knowledge built up over time.

Mijas Properties offers villa sales, holiday rentals and long-term rentals to clients who just keep coming back.

Susanne says: "We have clients renting with us year after year for their holidays and many long-term rentals clients have been with us for many years."

She continues: "The second recession was very long and very difficult, but we are proud to have weathered the storm and are so excited about the future with renewed interest recently."

A number of celebrities have bought properties from her – but she's too discreet to name names.

The logo, designed in 1984, remains the same and Susanne and the company are optimistic for the future with Andalucia attracting ever increasing interest from people looking to buy and let.

For more information call 952 485 025 or email info@mijasproperties.com



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2 terraces * Communal Pool



Ref: V.2171(POR)
Price: 260,000€
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Communal Heated Pool!



Ref: V.2071(SIM)
Price: 795,000€
Stunning villa, pool & garden
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Panoramic views!



Ref: V.2161(LAZ)
Price: 875,000€
Impressive Villa in Valtocado!
4 beds * 3 baths
Sea views and salt water pool!

Here are just a few of the fantastic properties we have on the market – for more information on these properties and others available – please visit our website or pop in & meet us!

Located on the main street in Mijas Village, towards the Town hall, next to Zurich

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blue

Coffee Bike




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All about Mijas (& La Cala)



WHERE TO EAT

An oasis on the coast!

HIP: Burgers at Blue Coffee Bike

Mijas is developing a richer and richer dining scene, writes Jon Clarke

IT bills itself as 'an oasis on the Costa del Sol' and I'd be struggling to put it any other way.

For starters, **La Capucine's** chefs Jose Maria and Pilar Castro have worked at some of the best restaurants on the coast (Frutos, El Lago, etc) and even around Spain. While its *maitre d/sommelier* Jorge Perez did his time at Spain's three Michelin-star temple Akelarre in San Sebastian.

And the food definitely does not disappoint, it being beautifully presented and with numerous stylish touches.

The *vol au vents* with chicken, asparagus and boletus mushrooms were stunning, while the ravioli filled with foie and with a Perigord sauce is hard to beat for a starter.

Recently renovated and taken over by a local expat family, it has a lovely leafy garden with views towards distant mountains... an oasis indeed.

Up in the pueblo there is an



AUTHENTIC: The pueblo's La Reja

This amazing garden is a delight to kick back and dine in good weather

other spot that could equally be described as an oasis.

Appropriately called the **Secret Garden**, it sits behind a more typical white walled restaurant Aroma. This amazing garden is a delight to kick back and dine in good weather and the menu is a nice mix of authentic Iberian dishes alongside Argentinean fare – particularly steaks.

Next door make sure to look out for the Secret Garden's sister restaurant **Taberna Meguinez** (which means 'Are you winking at me?') which has an excellent menu. While easily the most exciting launch of the year is **Latitud 36**, a new fish restaurant also owned by the same group (see article on page 27).

Another authentic restaurant in the pueblo is **Restaurante La Reja**, which is charm personified and has an amazing dining terrace looking over Mijas and the faraway



NUDGE AND WINK: Meguinez

hills. Run by Manolo and his wife, it has a simple good value menu, described as 'traditional Andalucian kitchen', and expect to eat delicious aubergines in honey, perfect steaks and the freshest fish.

If you are more in the mood

for Italian, then next door **La Bella Coppia**, meaning 'beautiful couple' is a surefire winner. Run by Pedro for 25 years, it has a superb dining terrace for warm weather and is charming inside, serving up a good range of pasta dishes and pizzas.

Last, but very much not least in the village, you must look out for the excellent **Blue Coffee Bike**, a stylish café with excellent food. Run by Catalan Rosa, a fashion designer, who has an amazing eye, this is one of the hippest spots in town.

Rosa's partner Antonio is the chef, knocking out some incredible dishes such as the mushroom risotto and his 'croqueton', a giant, succulent croquette. But no visit would be the same without a plate of the amazing mixed burgers, each in their own flavour.

On the coast, there is a great variety including **The Hut**, a well established British-run bar and **Capitan's Bar**, popular with a great garden (see inset).

The pick of the busy El Zoco centre must certainly be Italian **Villa Paradiso**, in a typically romantic square and with excellent fresh food, while **El Toro** nearby is also highly recommended.

On the main road near La Cala

A true captain

THE Captain's Bar is a real hidden treasure with a lovely friendly atmosphere and popular with locals and holiday makers alike. Just off the A7, near La Cala, there is plenty of parking outside and large indoor and outdoor areas. It has a real 'beach-house' feel and a kids play area and pool table. The food is freshly prepared with a brand new menu with daily specials, pie, mash and liquor, plenty of tapas and a grill section, including gourmet burgers and their famous fish & chips now available every day. On Sunday, you can enjoy a superb roast.

RESTAURANTE LA REJA



TRADITIONAL ANDALUCIAN FOOD
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FRESH FISH
BARBEQUE MEAT
HOMEMADE DESSERTS

Calle Los Canos 9, Mijas Tel: 952 591124

look out for **Snack Attack**, one of the busiest cafes on the coast. Its capable owners Mark and Robert are busy throughout much of the day. Start the day with an amazing Eggs Benedict or Florentine or go for the great value €3.95 breakfast deal with all the trimmings. They also own the popular cocktail bar and lounge venue **Bar Tuta** next door.



STALWART: Pedro from La Bella Coppia while (below) La Capucine and a typical dish



Ole indeed!

Mijas' best known dining secret reaches its 21st birthday

IT has been an incredible 21 years since Juan Gomez opened Ole restaurant in La Cala de Mijas. A true local on the road to the race track, his clients are a massive mix of Spanish and just about every other nationality on the planet. It is hardly surprising that this is one of the area's most popular joints (up 30% last year): Juan is a charming host – speaking perfect English – and puts a great emphasis on fresh ingredients. Much of it comes from his finca near Ronda, where he decamps at the weekend when he 'has a moment to spare'. Otherwise he changes the menu regularly and insists on having at least five or six specials every day depending on the season. "I buy all the meat and fish and go shopping every day to the local markets to find the very best ingredients," he explains. "And price/quality is the key to my success." Expect to eat fantastic stuffed red peppers, delicious lettuce hearts with anchovies, and great salmon cooked in a spicy dill sauce.



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RESTAURANTE

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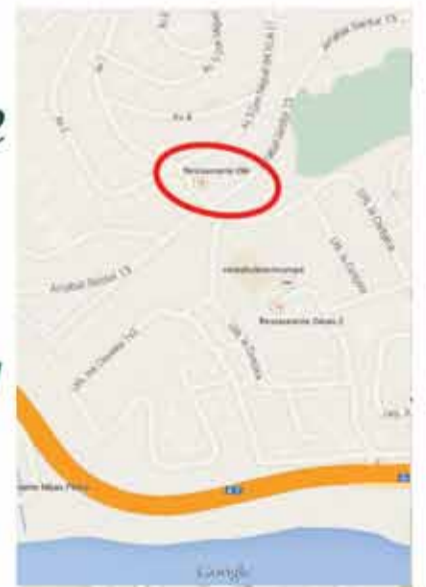
Restaurante Olé

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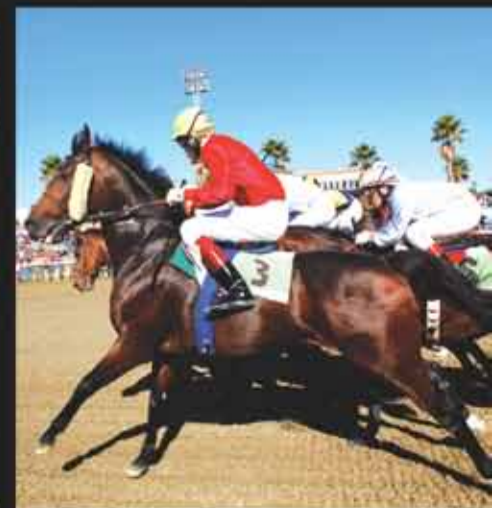


We would like to thank all our clients for their custom & support over the past 21 years of Olé!



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