

FUN-girola!

GROWING up, a holiday was a simple concept; sun, sea, sand and infinite flavours of ice cream. Days were spent swimming and tanning on the beach, evenings were for feasting. Fuengirola – or ‘Fuengi’, as expats have affectionately nicknamed it – epitomises that kind of holiday. In the Costa del Sol’s largest resort, the sun shines gloriously, the deep blue sea is inviting, the sand is soft and golden and there are more ice cream flavours than you can shake a scoop at. Let’s not beat around the bush, though. Fuengirola has been bypassed in favour of more glitzy Costa del Sol destinations during the last few decades; Marbella for one. But those who say it isn’t worth the visit

Nowhere lives up to the buzz of the classic family beach holiday quite like it, writes Tom Powell

are, plain and simply, wrong. Fuengirola is the definitive nerve centre of the Costa del Sol, thriving with business and opportunity. With its 1960s seafront high rises, the town may win no beauty contests (if you want whitewashed houses and pretty streets go to neighbouring Mijas Pueblo) but that’s not the point. Fuengirola is the place to go for that inimitable holiday buzz. And if you live there, the holiday never has to end.

Turn to next page



NERVE CENTRE: Iconic Sohail castle looks out over the liveliest town on the eastern Costa del Sol, and some of the best beaches in Spain



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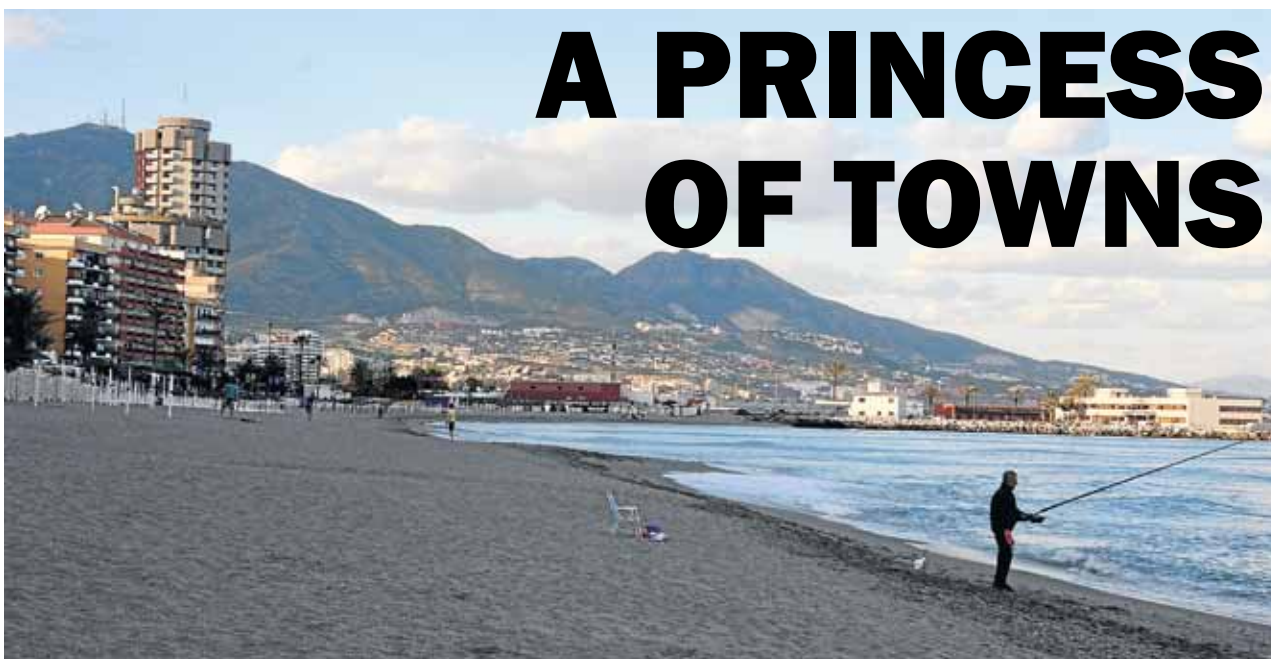
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HISTORIC: A bronze statue in front of the town's bullring



From Page 21

Any tour of Fuengi should begin at its most recognisable landmark – the castle looming high on a hill at the western edge of town. El Castillo Sohail, clearly visible on the bend of the A7 coast road, has had a varied history dating back to Moorish times. After the Muslims left, the Christians took over and the castle again became the town's fortress. Interestingly, it was home to French troops during the War of Independence at

the beginning of the 19th century.

For many years afterwards, the iconic monument was abandoned and left to the pigeons, until 1989 when a major restoration project was launched. Ever since, the fortress has not only been an aesthetic focal point but also a cultural centre, hosting open-air concerts and festivals throughout the summer.

The castle surroundings are worth exploring, with well-kept gardens, paths, Moorish walls and shady fir trees, while nearby parking makes it easily accessible.

From this vantage point, the town's golden sandy beach can be seen, stretching for five miles east to the suburb of Torreblanca, near Benalmadena. A walk along the prom is a delight for the senses, with the smell of barbecuing sardines and langoustines wafting on the breeze.

Like all the big Costa del Sol resorts, Fuengirola was once a small and sleepy fishing village; and by the smell of it, the locals haven't lost their touch with seafood.

But it is the town's proximity to Malaga and the airport (25km), and the handy coastal train line running in between, that helped the resort to become 'the' Costa del Sol destination for decades.

It's also the reason many expats choose to live here, such as Wolverhampton-born

PURE SHORES: Fuengirola has 8km of excellent beaches



PLAYTIME!: Floating assault course - just one beach attraction

Steph Smith, Manager of Yorkshire Linen in the Myramar shopping centre.

"Fuengirola has had a facelift recently, the pedestrianised centre has so much outdoor seating on smart, new paving with shady parasols that it reminds me of Madrid and Barcelona," says Steph, who has lived in and loved the town for 17 years.

"While the seafront is lovely, my favourite part of town has to be Fish Alley. It's got a wonderful atmosphere with hustle and bustle, great places to eat and drink, plus there are often street performers too."

Fish Alley, as it is known, is one

street back from the seafront and buzzing with life at night, is undoubtedly the place to go for dinner. Although be prepared to lose your bearings in the maze of pedestrianised streets and charming squares.

Cheap and cheerful or chic and classy, you'll find all styles here – tapas bars and bodegas, fine-dining restaurants, chillout cafes and cuisine from around the world, with quirky boutiques, Chinese ba-

zaars and, of course, ice cream parlours squeezed in between. British expat Dianne Peel, leader of the Fuengirola Scout Group, says the town is the perfect place for her pack.

"We do so many different activities here with a really multi-national group," says Dianne, a retired school-teacher.

"We use the beach as much as possible for various training activities and games, plus we host a big group barbecue there in November."

This English-language group has been running for 15 years, welcoming boys and girls of all nationalities, taking them on camps into the countryside and on trips to various attractions.

Dianne adds: "I love Fuengirola as a town, it's great for going out to eat and exploring the many little back streets."

These back streets lead me to the port, a place normally full of adventure and Fuengirola's is no different. Various water sports can be tried, like parasailing – flying through the air attached to the back of a boat

Pictures by Jon Clarke and Tom Powell

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BUZZING: The main square comes alive at night-time while (left) Diana visited three times

– if you're brave enough. I was – just about – and you can read all about my experience further on in this supplement! If that seems a little too scary, you can get to grips with speed boats, jet skis or fishing. Talking of sport, Fuengirola also suits keen golfers to a tee, with Mijas Golf's two courses just a few kilometres from the town centre and many others close by. There are some lively bars both in the port and in and off the main square, Plaza de la Constitucion, the town's social hub. When the sun goes down, locals and visitors come out to play big-style, with various bars and clubs playing great music long into the night. In fact, the town's tourism his-

tory goes way back to 1700 when an inn by the castle welcomed the first visitors. It must have had its attractions then, as it did a century later when it became a battlefield during the Peninsula Wars of 1810, with British and Polish troops clashing over the right to occupy the strategically important town. Modern tourism didn't really begin until the 1960s, when foreigners started moving in permanently to

what was still a fairly quiet, authentic Spanish town. Over the years, Fuengirola has hosted its fair share of celebrities. Princess Diana herself stayed no less than three times at the leafy Hotel Byblos in the hills above town, where she was famously photographed topless by paparazzi. Antonio Banderas and Donald Pleasance are among the rich and famous who have enjoyed this

grand dame of Spanish resorts over the decades, as well as former Liverpool and Real Madrid striker Michael Owen, who used to own a villa tucked up in the hills. It's fair to say that, despite its chequered history - there were times when tattooed yobs seriously harmed Fuengirola's reputation - it has stood up valiantly to the test of time. It has regenerated itself, with a thriving cultural scene, great dining and infinite opportunities for adventure. Ice cream styles and brands may have changed over time but Fuengirola's appeal as a fun holiday town will never lose its flavour.



ORNATE: Fuengirola mosque opened in 1993

Mighty Mosque

FLANKED by apartment blocks, Fuengirola's mosque is a sight to behold. The Mezquita de Fuengirola, also known as the 'Centro Cultural Islamico Suhail', was officially inaugurated in 1993 as a place for all Muslim residents on the Costa del Sol to come together. Its mission is to support the principles of liberty, justice and democracy, which are 'the foundations of healthy society'. Gleaming white and with its ornate spire, the mosque is certainly one of the most beautiful buildings in town.



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All about Fuengirola

June 25th - July 9th 2015

A cool port of call



EYE-CATCHING: Fuengirola port

**Fuengirola Port is a great place to drop
anchor for nautical nosh and a wild time
on water, writes Tom Powell**

THERE are two things you can be absolutely certain of in any Spanish port worth its salt.

The fish and seafood will be fresh, delicious and abundant and there'll be endless opportunities to get wet.

Fuengirola Port, with its eclectic range of restaurants and watersports, goes overboard in both senses.

The marina is split into two distinct halves – the restaurant/bar area and the serious fishing section, where the real work continues throughout the night.

The port is popular at all times of day, and at all times of year, not without good reason.

Breakfast and coffee at one of the cafes is the perfect start to the day, while a stroll along the harbour provides fascinating views of fishing boats arriving laden with the morning's catch. There's a good chance you'll be tucking into some of it for lunch. But it is the sports and leisure marina that holds most appeal for tourists.

Dolphins

Sleek yachts bob at anchor in some 225 berths ranging from eight to 20 metres; and you can do more than simply gawp with envy as you watch them head out for a cruise in the Med.

With many companies offering all manner of ocean-going trips, you don't need to remain a landlubber for long. Pleasure trips on glass-bottomed boats, fishing trips, speed boat hire and boat charter are all available.

And when the port is just a speck in the distance, there's a high chance of seeing dolphins disporting alongside your boat. Fuengirola's Yacht Club (Club Nautico) is one of the most popular in Europe and an excellent starting point for those keen to learn.

Lessons are available for sailors of all abilities.

If that wasn't enough, there is also the opportunity to try scuba diving, water skiing and jet-ski riding.

Once the thirst for action has been sufficiently quenched, there's the parade of restaurants to satisfy your inner sailorman.

They serve everything from fish and chips and surf and turf to international cuisine for the eclectic mix of diners.

And perhaps a cocktail or two to finish - yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum?

Steeped in history

IT'S impossible to miss the spectacular Sohail castle as you drive through the town.

Throughout its long and turbulent history, it has been Fuengirola's stand-out monument, looming atop a grassy knoll at the mouth of the Rio Fuengirola.

It is now an open-air auditorium, used as the location for concerts and festivals throughout the summer, including a particularly popular German beer event.

But the castle's past was not always so smooth. Built in 956 AD by Abd-ar-Rahman III to strengthen the Moorish coastal defences, the Christian armies of the Spanish monarchs took control of it in 1485 during the long and bloody war.

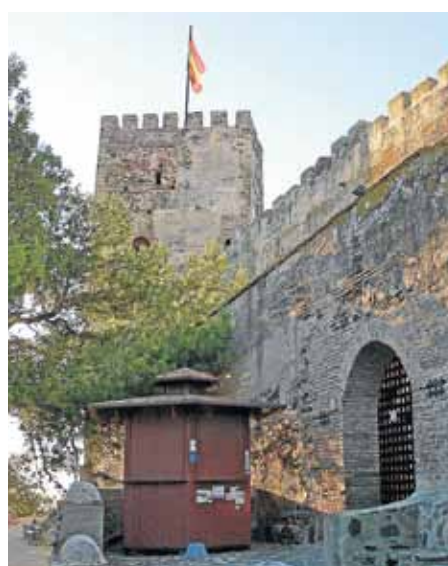
Stronghold

It remained in their possession until the war ended, but was back in use in the 18th century when the Count of Montemar developed the fortress to house a newly formed cavalry unit. During the Peninsula War, the castle was occupied by French troops fighting for emperor Napoleon.

But as the centuries wore by, the castle's importance as a strategic stronghold diminished, to the point where it ultimately became useless and was left abandoned and derelict for many years.

This was the case until 1989, when the Spanish Municipal Heritage organisation decided something needed to be done to preserve this important part of the town's history. A restoration project was launched by the Castillo Sohail School Workshop to make the castle what it is today.

The landscaped gardens make the walk to the top a pleasure, while the excavated stone ruins on public display at the western base of the hill actually date back even further than the castle, prior to Roman occupation of Fuengirola around 300 BC.



FORTRESS: Sohail castle



June 25th - July 9th 2015

MONKEYING AROUND: Gorilla and infant and (top right) a lemur



Brilliant Bioparc

IT was once considered among the worst zoos in Europe.

So bad was former Fuengirola zoo that animal charity Born Free led a probe alongside the *BBC* and various media groups to have it closed down. And duly it did in the late 1990s, reopening again a few years later in 2001 with a totally different philosophy. Gone were the cramped cages constructed in the 1970s, to be replaced by a tropical green paradise of open spaces, rivers, waterfalls and an overriding sense of calm. So good is the zoo - now reborn as Bioparc - that a few years ago *National Geographic* magazine voted it one of the best in Europe.

It has been a massive turnaround for a zoo once disgraced in a hard-hitting BBC investigation

Articles have also appeared in America's prestigious *Time* magazine.

And it has simply gone from strength to strength since then, with the Madrid-based company running it spending millions each year, making it better and better.

The zoo - which has another park and gorillas. There is an important schools

scheduled over the next few years - collaborates with 25 international research and breeding programmes for endangered species.

It even works with some species that are effectively extinct in the wild, in particular the Sumatra tiger

A charming backdrop to various species, including tigers and Komodo dragons



AUTHENTIC: Indonesian temple is backdrop to Komodo dragons' habitat



LIKE BUTTER: An orangutan and (left) Sumatra tiger

and education programme and its charity arm allows for days when underprivileged and seriously ill children can visit for free.

Even better, the zoo has concentrated on making sure animals are able to interact with

one another and that there are absolutely, crucially no bars.

"We fight extremely hard to get away from the concept of cages," explains marketing boss Alejandro Beneit. "It is

vital to keep the animals as happy as possible and unstressed."

The most recent addition is a stunning Indonesian-style temple, built brick by brick to look as authentic as possible.

Constructed by a team of Czech builders, it took a year to build and now sits as a charming backdrop to a number of closely cohabiting species, including tigers and Komodo dragons. In summer the zoo opens until 11pm and has some excellent offers for families, including African dance performances and feeding demonstrations.

"The best times to visit are around 10 to 11 in the morning or the evening," adds Beneit, from Cadiz. "During the heat of the day, like most sensible people, the animals take it easy."

Best of all, make sure your children look out for the ring tailed lemur, who they will quickly identify with Julian, the star of hit movie *Madagascar*.

Not quite Narnia, but very magical

Fiona Tomas takes a tour around Bioparc

I'M not really a fan of zoos. Seeing animals caged makes me feel rather guilty.

So I was a little apprehensive when I arrived at Bioparc, particularly having learnt that it was once one of the worst in Europe.

The first roars that greeted me were from a pack of wild school children, who had been released from their own captivity of the classroom for a school trip.

I feared it was going to be an afternoon of screaming kids, but once I had passed through the barriers, I felt like I was stepping out of a magic wardrobe.

There wasn't the snow, ice and cats of *Narnia*, but the leafiness and greenery certainly resembled a jungle.

In the background, the melodies of chirping birds are accompanied by the percussive sounds of gushing streams and waterfalls.

You can't help but quickly get carried away by the incredible vibes of the park whose animals appear to have adopted - albeit unknown to them - the sleepy Spanish setting.

Gorillas, chimpanzees and other species of monkey perched and swung from trees around roofless, open en-

Gorillas, chimpanzees and monkeys perched and swung from trees

closures and had free access to waterfalls and the river.

I smirked at a tiger that had replaced any trace of his Indian identity by having a siesta.

In the bird sanctuary, birds roamed around freely and had one-on-one contact with their visitors and the park is not short of variety, accommodating animals from five different continents - including armadillos,

otters, raccoons, hippos, zopilotes or kookaburras.

Bioparc really has a different feel to your average zoo. The setting that has been achieved is truly remarkable, ultimately allowing visitors to appreciate animals in an authentic setting while discovering nature at its very best.



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ROLL CALL: The cast of Les Miserables from the anniversary concert and (inset) founder Acker Bilk

Fuengirola's Salon Varietes Theatre is celebrating 30 years in showbusiness, writes Tom Powell

Varietes the spice of life!

It is 30 years since a group of optimistic thespians transformed a fleapit cinema in Fuengirola into a thriving theatre. Chart-topping English clarinettist Acker Bilk, famous for his trademark bowler hat, goatee beard and striped waistcoat, opened Salon Varietes' first show way back in June 1985. For the first seven years the theatre survived thanks to volunteers contributing funds and physical labour. In 1992 it became a cultural association with an elected board of nine people keeping budgets in check.

Fast forward to 2015, through years of popular productions - from Shakespeare to Chekhov and thrillers to comedies and musicals - the theatre is in better shape than ever, thanks to its loyal cast of fans and the Friends of the Theatre Association. The 30th birthday celebrations began in April with the launch of a 50-page commemorative magazine, and continued with a Reunion Weekend earlier this month. "The anniversary concert was sold out as befits a superb show which has everyone raving as they left after three wonderful hours of music, song and dance with a

marvellous climax featuring *Les Miserables*," said spokesman Geoffrey Stansfield. In just three decades, Salon Varietes has become as familiar a landmark in Fuengirola as Sohail Castle, and a key player in the local entertainments scene. The theatre is currently closed for summer but will be back in business from September 1. The next show is the *Jersey Boys* tribute on September 12-13, followed by a play, *The Memory of Water*, from September 18-22. For news of future shows, keep your eye on the website, www.salonvarietestheatre.com



DAYS GONE BY: A Cinderella pantomime in the days before live bands became too expensive

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All about Fuenengirola



LIFT OFF: From the Pirate Parasailing boat

Rob Horgan takes his courage - and a borrowed camera - in both hands to join the 200-metre high club with a posse of parasailing pirates

“WE would normally tell you not to worry about sharks, but after last week's sighting we can't say that anymore,” said Mark from Pirate Parasailing, as we sped out to sea in a sunshine yellow powerboat.

It was only one blue shark, sighted just weeks before off Fuenengirola beach, and they rarely attack humans.

But from my own viewpoint aboard the Magie Ann, watching couple after couple shoot 200 metres skywards over the sea, it's fair to say I

was more than a little apprehensive about my latest Olive Press adventure.

And the ominous skull and crossbone parachute made the prospect of my maiden parasailing voyage even more daunting.

Despite a reassuring speech from the Pirate Parasailing team - and my own unsubstantiated bravado - I would be lying if I didn't admit to having clammy hands and a pumping heart.

In reality, my apprehension was falsely placed. The most worrying part of my journey was holding on to Pirate Parasailing boss Kevin's camera as I dangled perilously high above the ocean.



WIND-SWEPT: Rob



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FREE WIFI



UP, UP AND AWAY: Reporters Rob Horgan and Tom Powell head to the skies above Fuengirola

Setting off from Fuengirola port, kitted out with life jacket, helmet and harness, I watched my fellow parasailers float up into the sky two at a time. Among the group were a British couple 'celebrating' their engagement, clearly confident about making it through to the wedding! But as boss Kevin explained, "Parasailing is for everyone and every occasion. "We've taken everyone up from three-year-old toddlers to 90-year-old pensioners," he added. "We have even taken a blind man up and we cater for those with physical disabilities as well." Saved for last, I sat on the back of the boat, strapped into the giant parachute. After posing for a quick snap, the ropes were loosened and I was up and away. Take-off was surprisingly smooth and, as advertised, it really



EXCITABLE: Tom

was 'effortless excitement'. One minute later I was 200 metres above the Mediterranean sea, looking across Fuengirola with breathtaking views as far as the mountains of the Guadalhorce Valley. As the wind blew through my curly locks and the Magie Ann became nothing but a speck in the ocean below me, it was the silence that struck me most. The noise of the power boat's engine and the shrieks of tourists having fun on Fuengirola's glorious beaches were well out of earshot as I flew like a birdman over the coast. Kevin had kindly (and somewhat unadvisedly) loaned me his camera. Determined it wouldn't meet a wa-

tery end, I clung on for dear life - tricky, with outstretched arms - as I attempted a selfie. Despite the playful breeze gently rocking my parachute, the ride was smooth and much more relaxing and enjoyable than I could ever have imagined. The only disappointment was when the ropes began to roll in and my trip into the blue yonder turned into a gentle skyfall. I could have stayed up there for hours. One final surprise was the 'walk on water' (Jesus it was cool.) before I was reeled back onto the boat like a slippery wet fish and deposited safely back on dry land. Having notched up over 47,000 'flights' between them, you'll be in safe hands with experienced boss Kevin and his two trusty accomplice parasailing 'pirates', Mark and Danyl. Offering solo, couple and triple flights, with room for 10 people aboard the Magie Ann, there's even a champagne flight for parasailers looking for more intoxicating excitement.

But how to pop a cork and drink while dangling from a parachute? Perhaps that's one for my next Olive Press adventure!

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All about **Fuengirola**

June 25th - July 9th 2015

We want the Brits!



It has certainly been a colourful 31 years for estate agent Sven Kallstrom.

Aside from being a TV property expert in Sweden and the author of three books, he has run property exhibitions around Europe... oh, and sold a whole raft of homes on the Costa del Sol to boot.

And things are getting even

A famous face in Scandinavia, agent Sven Kallstrom explains how he hopes to win round the new influx of UK buyers heading to Fuengirola, writes Rob Horgan

better for the boss of Alamo real estate which has seen a decent rise in sales over the past two years.

"Sales have been booming

since last summer and have gone through the roof since the new year," he explains.

"In fact in the first five months of this year we sold more houses than we did in the whole of 2014."

Now - unlike his name-sake, former England manager (messenger Goran Eriksson) - he is hoping to win the hearts of Brits buying abroad.

"At the moment, most of our clients are from Scandinavia," he explains. "But we speak a number of languages and I believe that now is the time to branch out and reach a wider audience."

"I would now like to expand into the English market and I want English buyers to know that I am here and want to help them find their dream home."

Sven set up his current venture in 2009 in Fuengirola after cashing in on his former company Fair Media.

And it is his experience, both of the area and the property market, that makes him one of the most reputable agents on the coast.

"At Fair Media, I was running the biggest property exhibition company in Europe," Sven explains.

"We were putting on 10 to 12 exhibitions a year, which was far greater than anyone else was doing."

"I became the go-to guy in Scandinavia for updates on the Spanish property market and I still get regularly interviewed by TV channels for my expert insight."

And his knowledge is undeniable.



DREAM PAD: For sale at €395,000 in Fuengirola



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UP FOR GRABS: This luxury Fuengirola pad could be yours for €1.9 million

able. Published in Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian, his trilogy of travel books *Move to Spain*, *Dreaming about Spain* and *Footsteps to Spain* have sold over 30,000 copies. Highlighting the dos and don'ts of Costa del Sol life for Scandinavians dreaming of a life in the sun, Sven explains that he wrote his books because he

wished he had the same advice when he moved to Fuengirola 31 years ago. Alamo caters for a range of properties along the Costa del Sol from Nerja to Estepona. And with an office just opened in Nerja and plans for a Marbella office in the pipeline, Sven's team is growing quickly. With properties ranging from

€100,000 into the multi-millions, Alamo has a property to suit all sorts of buyers. To visit Alamo, their main office is in the centre of Fuengirola just beside the train station and Merca Centro.

For more information visit www.alamointernational.com or call 952 46 95 19



STUNNING: New Hilton

Hello Hilton

**Hilton hotels
cashes in on the
Costa dream**

THE Hilton hotel brand is a true mark of quality. So it is fantastic news to the Costa del Sol that the biggest name in hospitality has set up shop right here overlooking the bay of Fuengirola. The lovechild of world-class Hilton hotels and well-established luxury resort Reserva del Higuero opens this summer. And with our famous 320 yearly days of sunshine, who can blame them for chasing the Costa dream? DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Reserva del Higuero promises to be the latest hub of decadence with 177 guest rooms and suites, a spa with hydro circuit, wellness centre, two pools and sports facilities galore.

Upmarket

It will cater to the most demanding and eccentric of holidaymakers, with a semi-Olympic swimming pool and no less than 11 padel courts and two tennis courts. It is the first Spanish venture from the upmarket DoubleTree by Hilton brand which was lured here when the Costa del Sol welcomed its 10 millionth leisure tourist in 2014. "A culmination of Malaga's 320 days of sunshine each year and cultural significance has driven continuous market demand for upscale hospitality, with the number of hotel travellers increasing by 127% in the last 10 years - our first DoubleTree by Hilton in the Costa del Sol will provide further economic stimulus to the local area," said Patrick Fitzgibbon, senior vice president of development, Europe & Africa for Hilton Worldwide.

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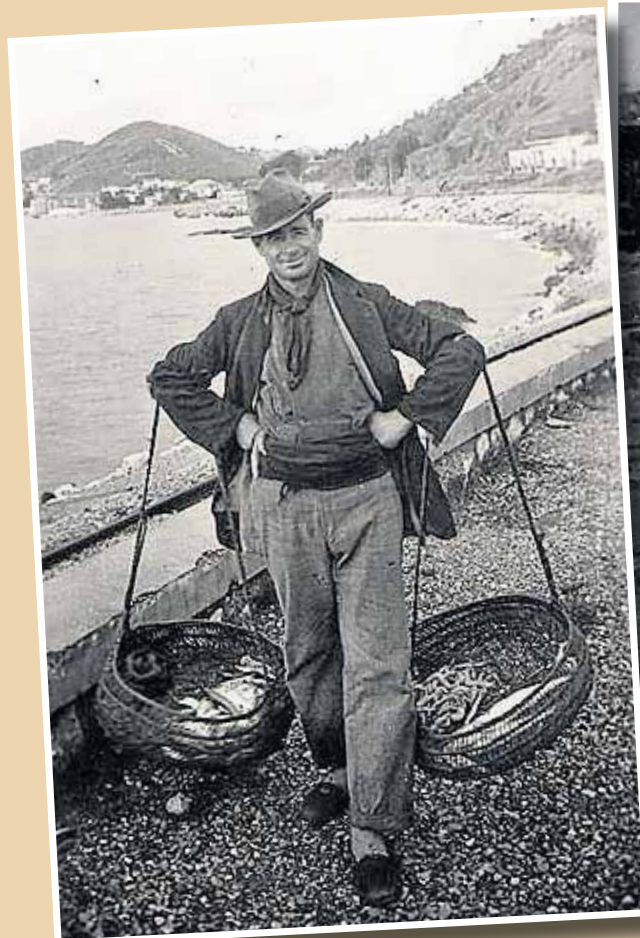


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All about **Fuengirola**

Fish-selling fun



ADVERTORIAL

Top hung and top quality

RDMC is a family run business with over 190 years of combined experience in the glazing, construction and steel industry.

The company manufactures glass curtains, stainless steel windows and doors and pool surrounds.

With its own 'glass toughening' plant and the use of only the highest quality materials, including 316 marine grade stainless steel, you get the best quality products on the coast... and there will be no corrosion problems.

"We also manufacture UPVC and aluminium windows and doors, roofs sliding (electric or manual), complete steel structures, acoustic glass for bars, mirrors, table tops, sealed units, splash backs, shop fronts, shelves, walk-on glass, stairs and glass balustrades," explains a spokesman.

He adds: "The system we use is a German system, typical of German design, and much time, testing and thought has gone into it. "It is completely different to other systems of similar cost and it is top hung, which means that the weight of the glass is distributed evenly and not all sitting on the bottom rubbing metal against metal.

"It runs on stainless steel wheels and thrust needle bearings, each panel of glass has four holes drilled into it so that the profile can be bolted to the glass as well as glued, this is the only system to do this, all other system are merely glued to the profile.

"Other companies will claim that a bottom hung system is better however as glass manufacturers who make our own glass and understand the weight that is in-

Family firm RDMC glass has been making glass curtains - and much more - for years

involved per square meter for 10mm glass. "We know that the best way for a system to function correctly is to hang the glass so as not to impose such weight and strain onto the system below causing scraping and juddering over a period of time and regular use.

"Also being top hung you do not need to maintain the system like you would a bottom hung system where you would have to clean the bottom track out regularly so as to keep it running as smooth as possible, with the top system this is not necessary as no dirt, leaves rubbish etc.. can get in there.

"Our glass curtains also come with an additional adjustable bar, meaning if there is any movement at all they can be adjusted up or down with just an alan key instead of having to take all the panels of glass out and start again."

The company is also keen to stress that anyone considering glass curtains should visit the factory and see where they are being manufactured. "With this financial climate many companies have filed for bankruptcy, unfortunately you will find that these companies are still trying to trade without proper premises and licences and merely change their company names. "Do ask questions, a reliable company has nothing to hide."

sidering glass curtains should visit the factory and see where they are being manufactured.

"With this financial climate many companies have filed for bankruptcy, unfortunately you will find that these companies are still trying to trade without proper premises and licences and merely change their company names. "Do ask questions, a reliable company has nothing to hide."

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AMAZING DESIGN: All RDMC products are German designed

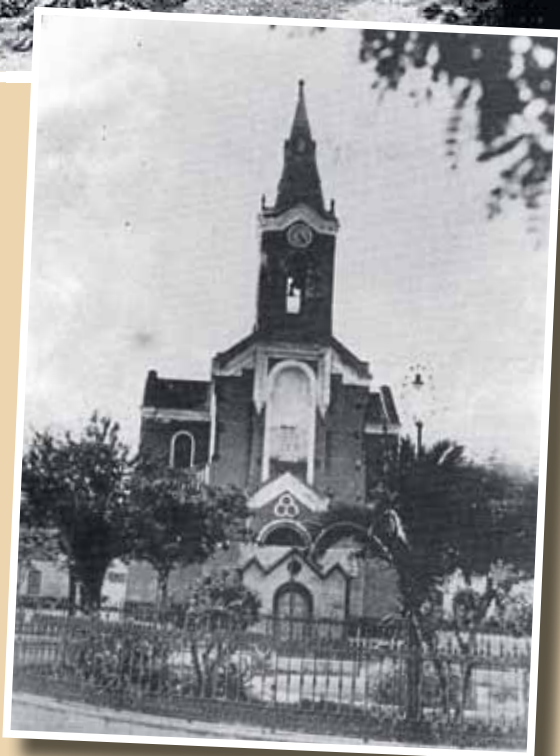


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HOW TIME'S CHANGE: Fish has always been central to Fuengirola life, while the castle (centre) used to overlook bare fields before the tourism boom. The train (above in its previous guise) has been a major factor in the town's success



ADVERTORIAL

Pillow talk

With new shop Beds and More recently opened, the girls from Yorkshire Linen are expanding at a decent rate



ENTREPRENEURS: Julie and Steph are branching out

It may be located just outside the municipal boundary of Fuengirola, but anyone who's anyone in this town knows how to find the ladies at Yorkshire Linen.

Steph Smith and Julie Law opened the doors of the shop seven years ago and it has gone from strength to strength, recently opening a second store, Beds and More, two doors down.

Yorkshire Linen provides everything from furniture to cookware and electrical items from the UK's biggest brands. While the bedding range is the biggest that you will find on the coast with everything from the cheap and cheerful to exceptional quality Egyptian cotton sheets and duvet covers. Beds and More boasts over 20 different mattress types, from soft through to firm and with pocket sprung, memory foam and memory foam gel avail-

able in all sizes (even the really unusual ones!) and various bases.

"We have known each other for ages and are like a family here," explains Steph, from Wolverhampton, who has lived in Fuengirola for 17 years.

"We are also friends with our customers and always stop for a chat when they come into the store."

She is also upbeat about the number of good furniture and bedding stores that have opened up around the nearby area, which include Discount Warehouse next door, providing enough competition to keep them always on their toes.

"We are competing on prices and offers, which has turned this area into a real commercial hub, it is so busy these days," adds Steph.

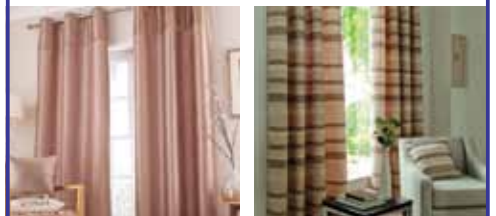
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All about Fuengirola

WHERE TO EAT

No need to fish for compliments



Jon Clarke tries out everything from Fish Alley to fancy fish in Fuengirola

WHILE bustling with eateries and bars of every description, unsurprisingly Fish Alley is best known for its fish. Famous around the Costa del Sol for its heavy concentration of restaurants, the place comes alive at night with entertainment, not to mention its great mix of places to eat. One of the best spots, particularly if you are feeling homesick, is the **Kings Road Pub**, which offers a Sunday carvery with all the

trimmings.

With an all-you-can-drink champagne and wine menu, it is not surprising that Kings Road is a favourite with locals and holidaymakers alike.

But if you are looking for a different type of fine food you should look out for a fabulous restaurant **El Toston** right beside the bus station.

Well established and now with its own diffusion tapas spot **De Tapas** next door, this is one of the definitive spots to eat well on the coast.

In particular, you need to look out for the fantastic tapa of gazpachuelo, with prawns, mash potato and a cold fish soup with sherry and truffled salt.

It is stunning and unsurprisingly won the 'best tapa' at prestigious Madrid Fushion in 2011.



WINNER: El Toston and (top right) its winning gazpachuelo

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TABLE WARS: Dozens of restaurants vie for trade in Fish Alley while (below) Diego at Sollo

I also liked the mushrooms with a poached egg. Best of all, it has one of the finest wine cellars on the coast, stocking more than 600 different references from around Spain and abroad. Many of them can be drunk by the glass. Another exciting addition to the Fuengirola dining scene needs to be hunted down in the hills above the town in Reserva de Higueron, where a new Hilton is to open this summer. Recently moving from Benalmadena where it was before, there is nothing ordinary about **Sollo**, the restaurant of Andalusia's chef-of-the-moment Diego Gallegos, 31. Crowned 'revolutionary' new chef of the year at Madrid Fu-

sion, it was little surprise to discover him snapped up by the Hilton group. This young Brazilian is on a fast trajectory to greatness and this is one meal you are unlikely to taste anywhere else in the world. For starters it is entirely fish based - and 'sustainable' fish, to boot - and secondly, it is mostly fish you rarely try and parts of the fish you probably didn't think you wanted to try. And then there is the attention to detail; the driftwood on which the food is served, the attractive presentation and the seductive lighting and settings of the dining room. If it is more basic fish and chips you are after, then look no further than **La Parra Gold** in Los



Boliches. Run by John 'the fish', La Parra Gold offers everything from cod and chips to home-made steak pies. The four-course meal deal is also great value at just €7.50. A great starter is tomato soup and garlic bread while the cod and chips with the mushiest of mushy peas are excellent, as is the homely apple pie.

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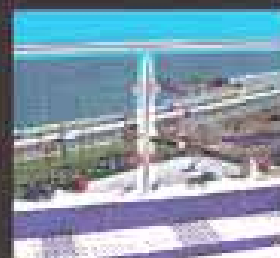
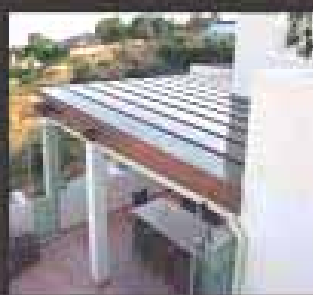
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