

All about **Serrania de Ronda**

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Renowned for its plunging gorge and recently voted in the world's top 100 travel destinations, romantic Ronda is enough to make a girl giddy, writes Iona Napier

A trip back in time

ADRENALIN surges through my veins as I edge my feet over the ledge in pursuit of the most original shot of Ronda's iconic gorge.

One of Spain's most photographed sites, wrought iron railings are the only barrier between me and the River Tajo almost 400 feet below.

It is 15 years since my last visit, and while I may be a foot taller and, hopefully, a little wiser, my vertigo certainly hasn't improved since then.

Looking down, alongside hundreds of other tourists, it is what celebrity chef Jean Christophe Novelli once described as the 'cono moment' ... the second you see that amazing chasm and the sheer

Continues Page 20

CHAIRMAN JULIO: Ronda's olde worlde charm couldn't be better personified than by chairmaker Julio Sanz. Alongside one of his oldest friends, he sits on a wall in the old town, as he has done for decades, weaving his raffia magic

PHOTOS BY JON CLARKE

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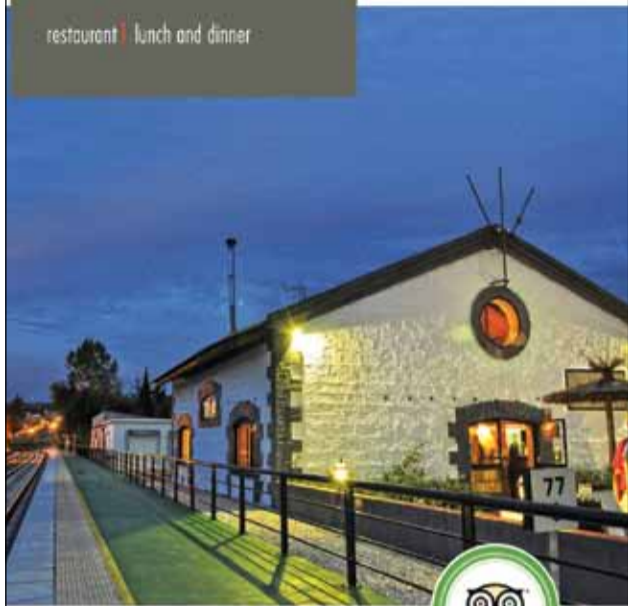


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20 All about **Serronda**

PICTURESQUE: The streets of Ronda's old town



YOU'RE GORGE-OUS

From Page 19

beauty of the backdrop towards distant soaring mountains.

I was just nine when my father decided to tour Spain on his faithful BMW motorbike, while the rest of the family trailed alongside him in a clapped-out burgundy hatchback (without air-con in high summer!)

An incredible three week journey across the whole of Spain, of all the countless towns we visited, Ronda is the one that is most etched in my memory.

Today, although memories of museum visits and plates of paella elude me, the famous Tajo's plunging depths incite an overwhelming sense of déjà vu.

I recall my mother's horror as I threw my head over the wall to gaze down until I got a blood rush, coming back up red-faced and giddy for air.

Fast-forward to 2015 and I'm back to capture the ramshackle white houses, church spires



TRANQUIL: Ocho canos fountain and Felipe V arch

and historic walls and towers. Ronda is basking in the glory of its latest accolade: travel site *Trivago* classed it in the world's top 100 destinations (at number 82 and one of just four Spanish cities).

Andalucía's third most visited

place, in 2014, 300,000 overnight visitors registered at the tourist office, while there are millions of day trippers every year.

Targeted by history lovers, nature lovers and lovers in general, there is a romantic, fairy tale element to 'the city of dreams'

that even cast writer Ernest Hemingway and actor Orson Welles under its spell.

And while the most memorable chapter of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* recalls the horror of Franco's victims being hurled over the ravine to their death - related to actual events during the Spanish Civil War - much of Hemingway's work is a love letter to the town.

The American literary giant visited on many occasions and famously wrote in his 1932 novel, *Death in the Afternoon*: "It is where you should go if you ever go to Spain on a honeymoon or if you ever bolt with anyone."

"The entire town and as far as you can see in any direction is romantic background."

Certainly BBC TV presenter Nick Knowles and his wife Jessica, who live in Sotogrande, agree having spent a romantic weekend here in June.

"It really feels like you're on top of the world and the views are amazing," Jessica told me.



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TIMELESS: Pensioners rest in a typical square, while (above) a former mosque



PHOTOS BY JON CLARKE

They join a long list of celebrities who have holidayed here – Prime Minister David Cameron, US first lady Michelle Obama and a whole library of literary figures including James Joyce and German poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

Bill Gates came on a secret visit last year, while Madonna famously shot her music video, *Take a Bow*, in Ronda bullring on a windy, wet November day in 1994.

Perhaps Ronda's allure is down to the pride the locals have for their town, which bubbles over into a universally warm welcome.

Restaurateurs beckon in diners and drinkers with joie de vivre, a spirit I catch from meeting Spain's (officially) best pizza chef, Flavio, of Italian restaurant La Vitta e Bella. From Calle Nuevo's good-value eateries to those off the beaten tourist circuit (Casa Mateos' chorizo in Jerez wine is amazing), creative cuisine is waiting to be discovered around every romantic corner.

At the tourist information centre, Isabel Melgar and Eva Roman will help you find the best restaurants, not to mention just about everything else.

They tap into 30 years of experience between them to present me with a fan of brochures and map out a tailor-made walking tour, finished off with live Flamenco.

Wending my way over Puente Nuevo (200 years old and anything but new) and taking a

Trailblazers

The word on the street from some of Ronda's famous visitors...



American author Orson Welles (1915-1985)

"A man is not from where he is born, but where he chooses to die."

German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

"The spectacle of this city, sitting on the bulk of two rocks rent asunder by a pickaxe and separated by the narrow, deep gorge of the river, corresponds very well to the image of that city revealed in dreams."

Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)

"It is here, in Ronda, in the delicate penumbra of blindness, a concave silence of patios, leisure of the jasmine and the light sound of water, which summoned up memories of deserts."

Syrian prince Abu'l-Fida (1273-1331)

"Elegant and lofty city in which the clouds serve as a turban and its towers as a sword belt"

Irish novelist and poet James Joyce (1882-1941)

"Ronda with the old windows of the houses, the eyes which spy out hidden behind the latticework so that their lover might kiss the iron bars."

sharp right I discover

El Morabito just as the heavens open.

This stately family home-cum-

restaurant provides a

roaring log fire welcome and

a parapet viewing point over

the gorge severing the old Moorish

citadel from the 'new' town, built by the

Romans and remodelled by the Christians in 1485.

Charming Juan serves us goblets of Rioja and the best lemon meringue pie I have ever

tasted as we shelter from the elements.

"It may be quiet and not very exciting for young people here



HISTORIC: Old tower and (left) Iona with sister

but I have spent time in Australia and Ronda is still the place that I want to be," he explains. If cosying up by the fireside isn't your style, there are some 30 museums, galleries and churches to explore – 15th century Santa Maria church is my favourite – and no one goes home without doing a circuit of the bullring.

Spain's oldest (230 this year), it is a stunning classical building well worth a visit, with some fabulous Goya etchings in a side building.

Outside there is a statue of local lad Pedro Romero (born 1754) who is dubbed the 'father of the *corrida*' for introducing bullfighting on foot and the matador's balletic style.

He killed over 5,000 bulls and passed his skills down the line, with the Romero family providing Spain with over three generations of bullfighters.

September's annual Goyesca bullfight in 18th century costume pays tribute to Romero and Goya's matador paintings and is famous the world over.

In 2009, Armani designed one of the matador's outfits.

If you prefer your nature less 'red in tooth and claw', Ronda is encircled by three natural parks – the Sierra de las Nieves, Sierra de Grazalema and the Alcornocales, so a hike,



CLASSICAL: Ronda town hall and (top) torero Fran Rivera

a horse ride or a 4x4 romp are an excellent option.

The A-397 from San Pedro snakes through rugged 'cow-boy country' to the vertiginous mountain town which pierces

the clouds at 750 metres above sea level – giddy limits that have been inspirational to so many.

Sipping coffee in the main Plaza del Socorro, it's not difficult to imagine Hemingway scribbling in the shadows of a backstreet café.

His legacy remains in a street running round the back of the Parador Hotel – the Paseo de Hemingway. He will be further

immortalised with a bullring statue, alongside one of Orson Welles whose ashes are scattered on the nearby farm of his bullfighting buddy, Antonio Ordoñez.

Since Hemingway celebrated his own final birthday in Ronda in 1960, the town has seen massive growth. Its wine industry is a case in point.

From just two bodegas 15 years ago, there are now 23 and one of Spain's 18 wine routes takes in Ronda.

Hemingway, who frequently overindulged in the local grape himself, would have approved. 'Wine is a grand thing. It makes you forget all the bad', he wrote in *A Farewell to Arms*.

But even Hemingway needed no vino-tinted spectacles to see the romance of Ronda.

Sipping coffee in Plaza del Socorro, it's easy to imagine Hemingway scribbling in the shadows

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Mountains of fun

Ronda is surrounded by two national parks, the Sierra de las Nieves to the East and the Sierra de Grazalema to

the West. Both are full of wonderful walks and pretty towns. Here are a few suggestions for excursions out of Ronda

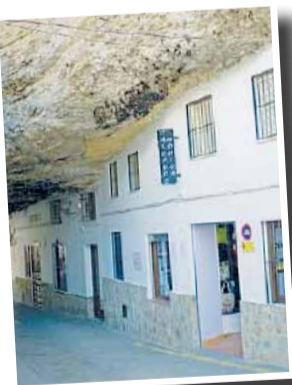
1 - GRAZALEMA AND ZAHARA

Zahara and Grazalema (pictured right) are two of the most evocative towns around Ronda. Both set in spectacular scenery and with some lovely sites, Zahara has a towering castle above it and a great restaurant Al Lago, while Grazalema (a beautifully conserved gem) was once the centre of the wool industry and you can still buy delightful rugs and bedspreads.



2- JUZCAR

While Griffon vultures and crag martins dominate the skyline in the Genal valley south of Ronda, there is another rather different species enticing tourists in - Smurfs. Juzcar is in many ways the same as other beautiful pueblos in the region with its quaint smattering of houses perched on the side of a mountain, surrounded by lush forest. Except for one major difference - it isn't white - it's bright blue. In 2011 the tiny village was painted 'Smurf blue' by Sony Pictures to publicise the release of the new *Smurfs* movie. Although initially intended as a temporary change, Juzcar's transformation into a blue village increased tourism to such an extent that residents declined to change it back.



3- SETENIL DE LAS BODEGAS

Only 20 minutes drive away, the historic Roman town of Setenil is a real eye opener and amazing for photography. Nestled in the rolling landscape north of Ronda, it was built on a series of caves, which served to keep the wines of the Romans cool in summer, hence its name. It is best to leave your car outside the town, wander up to the old fortress before heading down to the famous overhanging cave (left) for a fine tapas lunch.

4 - BENAJOAN AND MONTAJAQUE

If it is wonderful mountain scenery you are after and villages famous for their bandits then this pair are worth a visit. Montajaque has a cave with the oldest cave paintings in Spain, while Benaiojan is the centre of the ham and sausage industry. There is a fabulous walk from Benaiojan Estacion down the river to Jimera de Libar, from where you can get the train back. At each end is a great lunch spot, with Molino del Santo the obvious pick.



5- RONDA LA VIEJA (ACINIPO)

A 15-minute drive from Ronda at the top of one of the highest hills in the area the Roman's built their ancient city. It still has much evidence of their skills with a large part of its amphitheatre intact and a lot more to look at, not to mention the views. The visitor centre is only open for the morning, but one can always climb up to the amphitheatre out of hours.



PROPERTY in Ronda is on the up again! And following the much awaited - and applauded - decision to stop work at the controversial Los Merinos site, the value of legal property is now heading in the right direction. As Villas and Fincas boss Oscar Ernsten (Above) explains, 'property in Ronda and nearby areas is now highly sought after'. "We are now looking to expand our portfolio in Ronda," he adds. "We are looking at everything from fincas to farms. "Following the Los Merinos ruling, having a legal country property is all of a sudden priceless." Villas and Fincas already has a number of listings in the Ronda area including the exclusive La Melonera estate where properties are worth around €5 million. The company - which is expand-

From fincas to farms

ing into Sevilla in the next few months - also has plans to develop its agricultural arm. Tapping into the growing Arab and Asian markets, Villas and Fincas has seen an increased demand not just for country homes but for country lifestyles. "The agricultural market is a very exciting one for us," Oscar says. "Everything from a small farm for personal use to 500 hectare farms to be used as businesses are becoming more and more popular."

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RONDA Properties is the recreation of its owners Thorwald Bodensiek and Irene Cox-Ortiz, a husband and wife team previously based in the U.K. The Real Estate Agency was established in 2006 and specialises in inland property with an extensive portfolio of white village and country houses, equestrian fincas, vineyards, Spanish Cortijos, lifestyle and character properties, renovation projects and large farmhouses. A forward thinking, contemporary Estate Agency, Ronda

Ronda Properties' ideal homes

Properties takes pride in its personal service and professional practice with a track record of successful sales. Its portfolio of clients include expats, Spanish, Scandinavians, central Europeans and overseas investors. The natural setting of Ronda is quite stunning surrounded by the majestic mountain ranges of the Sierra de Grazalema, Sierra de Las Nieves and the beautiful Genal Valley. It benefits from clean air, a quiet and

traditional environment and offers a good standard of living with easy access to the Costa del Sol, main cities and International Airports. Whether you are looking for a small village house, finca or a large country estate Thorwald and Irene offer an extensive knowledge of the local area and property market, and aim to meet your wishes on both a personal and a professional level. Their aim is to make buying a

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Dawn of the web

THE recession has been as deep in Ronda as anywhere else in Andalucía, but that hasn't stopped one expat from succeeding.

Dawn Hutchinson, 34, took a risk in relocating to Ronda in 2007 to set up her online marketing business ArayoWeb.

But her gamble has paid off in style, with ArayoWeb now one of the major English-speaking web agencies in the whole of Spain.

"Our expertise in online marketing and SEO is well proven with a first place position (position 1, page 1) in Google globally for the English keyphrase 'web design Spain'," explains Dawn, originally from the UK.

"Our client base is continually expanding, not just nationally, but also into the rest of Europe including the UK, Belgium and Holland. "We've also

just taken on a contract to create the platform for what will be the next biggest multi-listing real estate portal in Canada and the US."

National newspaper *La Razon* has not overlooked ArayoWeb's success, interviewing Dawn on the topic of Business Excellence in E-commerce and online marketing after she was shortlisted for an award.

But she still has time for the local market, recently taking on a local Ronda based client who owns the Toy Planet franchise in the town. Not forgetting the Costa del Sol too, which brings in lots of business from English companies.

The ArayoWeb team continues to expand, with a new Sweden-based programmer now on board as well as the first Rondenian, who fought off 200 applicants to get the job.



ON YOUR

Joe Duggan takes a ride into the mountains to meet a T

ATHIRD weetabix is a must if you're planning to cycle to Ronda from base camp San Pedro de Alcántara.

The 48 km ascent to this mountain eyrie is a tour de force on a Tour de France scale but 'vale la pena', as they say here in Spain.

And with my cyclist's antennae twitching over tales of Roman amphitheatres, gorge dwellings and underground cave systems hidden around Ronda, I wasn't going to sit and spin the wheels on my 18-gear Rocinante.

Those embarking on the climb are offered spectacular views. Pedal past Los Arqueros Golf Club's gilded gates and Zagalata, home to the rich and famous. To your right, La Concha's awe-inspiring peak points the way.

The A374 twists past thick

green canopies of fir trees carpeting the landscape.

A 'Welcome to the Serrania de Ronda' sign greets me 22km up, as do warning signs for snow. I push on through and take a detour to Parauta, one of Andalucía's famed white villages, guarding the gateway to the majestic Sierra de las Nieves.

A thin ribbon of road leads to this tiny village in the valley, built around the 16th century Iglesia de la Inmaculada Concepcion, cobbled streets and steaming chestnut braziers adding to its charms.

It's a sharp climb back to the main road, but this is the home straight. The fading sunlight deepens the landscape's burnt ochres and vivid emeralds as I power on to Ronda, serenaded by the gentle toll of cow bells.

Ronda's old town bustles with

Friday evening revellers, but I can't linger for too long over El Tajo's swooping splendour. I'm meeting a man who knows a thing or two about cycling.

Jesus Rosado is a born-and-bred Ronda cycling legend who battled his way to Paris in the 1990 Tour de France after hon-



PEDAL THE M
Joe on Parauta (right)
France hero Je
Rosado

ing his skills in his hilly homeland. He opened his bike shop on Plaza del Ahorro 22 years ago but he loves to recall the glory days.

"It was like a dream. I was 23 years old; a year before I was cycling in competitions, and suddenly I was cycling in the Tour de France with my idols; Miguel Indurain, Greg LeMond. It was an incredible experience," he says.

"This region's unique climate certainly helped me become a good cyclist."

Not even the angels are stirring as I leave heavenly Ronda next day at first light. I cycle towards Arriate, the countryside's gold and green parading its Saturday morning best.

Arriate's emigrant monument recalls leaner times, but the town, which has grown in recent years to 4,000 residents, is now home to quality shops.

Its train station, built on one of Europe's steepest track gradients, is part of Mr Henderson's Railway, the 1890 brainchild of British engineer John Morrison and financier Sir Alexander Henderson.

It's a punchy climb from here to Setenil de las Bodegas, burrowed into a gorge carved out by the River Trejo, its houses embedded into the rock like Hobbit homes.

After refuelling with café con leche and a thick slab of pan con tomate on Calle de las Cuevas, the sinuous climb out of Setenil gives way to a flat road



ACINIPO: Roman amphitheatre



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lined with olive trees leading to the Roman ruins of Acinipo. The 2,000-capacity Roman amphitheatre, completed circa 200 AD, crowns the escarpment, offering stunning views. From here, black asphalt, untroubled by the rumble of cars, cuts through golden sunflower fields as craggy mountain peaks serrate the horizon. It's a stunning section of the ride.

Meanders

Disaster strikes as my lower gears malfunction. But help is close to hand and the three bells of the Iglesia de la Virgen del Carmen ring me into Montecorto, where the 450 inhabitants are also gearing up for their first Independence Day celebrations. Bougainvillea climbs white-washed walls and a fresh mountain spring meanders through the village. A khaki-fa-

tigued hunter, rifle slung over shoulder, strides past. Also here to greet me is Claire Higgins, who has run Andalusian Cycling Experience with her husband Ashley for 10 years. The company organises cycling holidays and accommodation around Ronda. Not only has Ashley mapped my route but Claire attends to my bike's gear issues (finding a mechanic is like divining water in a desert to the stranded cyclist). "We fell in love with Ronda," says Claire. "It's got good mountain-biking, there are flat rides for families and some really big climbs for those who want to test themselves." As I say goodbye, the clouds burst (October and November are Ronda's wettest months). I seek sanctuary in a nearby restaurant before braving the

elements and the steep climb towards southern Europe's oldest subterranean cave system, the spectacular Cueva del Gato. Its waterfall and natural pool make a refreshing stop for the summer cyclist. And it's not all downhill from here. If you're feeling a little saddle sore, head to Benaojan-Montejaque station where a train will speed you and your bike back to Ronda for a well-earned beer.

What to buy: an esparto bag

thing to look out for in the da area are baskets woven out esparto grass that grows in the . Once the main source of in- e for many families in the Sierra as Nieves, sadly esparto prod- are now a dying trade. ualeja however you can visit a ens' cooperative that aims to o the tradition alive as well as ing jobs for locals.



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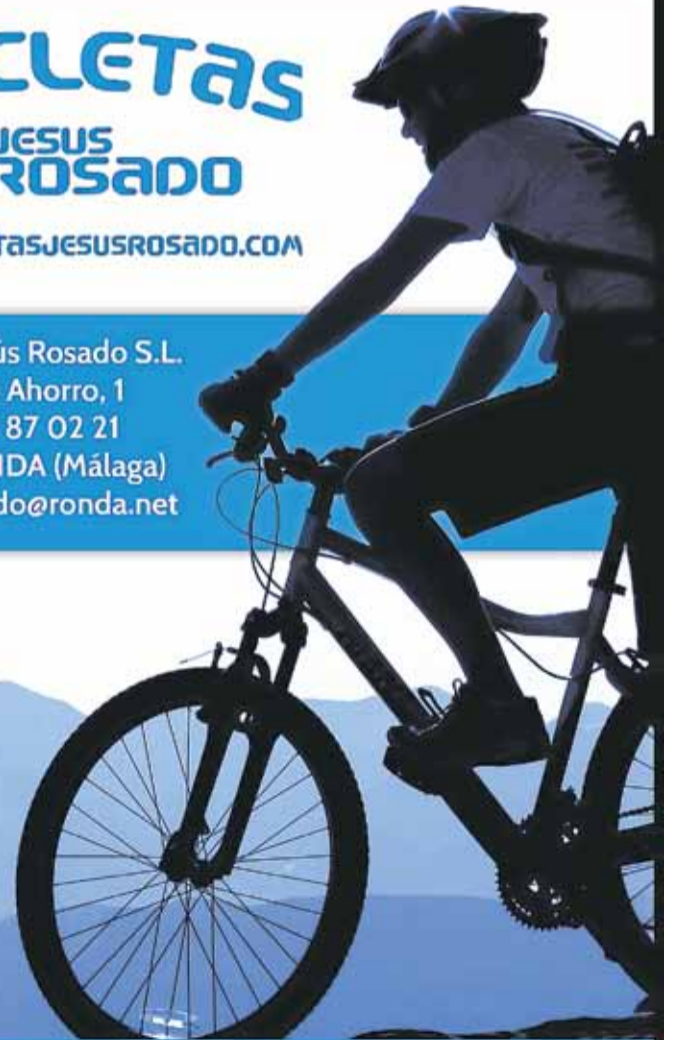
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Top of the world



IDYLLIC: View from the hotel pool, and (right) Arriate

Hotel Arriadh has stunning views of the Ronda mountains and the fantastic village of Arriate just below, writes Chris Birkett

AT Hotel Arriadh you leave your worries at the door and relax among the breathtaking views of the Serrania de Ronda. Set above the bustling village of Arriate, this stylish 'zen-like' retreat offers not just a warm welcome from its personable hosts Wilbert and John, but its location couldn't be better to explore the nearby mountains.

The public areas are bright and airy with some fabulous outdoor terraces and grounds, now including an amazing infinity pool. Bedrooms meanwhile, are designed with luxurious fittings and sumptuous king size beds to sink into, with small outdoor terraces maximising the stunning view towards the distance Grazalema Natural Park.

Sit on the balcony with a glass of wine, sit at your desk writing a post-card and, above all, wake up to one of the best backdrops in Spain. There is an honesty bar, meals can be provided and the Wifi is about as good as anywhere in Spain. Yes, you hardly need to leave the place.

At the very least though, you should take a short stroll down to the village of Arriate below, which counts on dozens of excellent restaurants, including El Muelle, one of Andalucia's best, not to mention atmospheric Taberna Manolo and Juntera Gin & Tonic. There are plenty of good local shops, a series of historic ham factories that must be sought out and even an ancient cinema, which is now Los Caireles and easily the hippest bar in the Serrania. Indeed, so much is on hand, you might not even need to visit Ronda, just five minutes up the road.

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DAVIDS DO

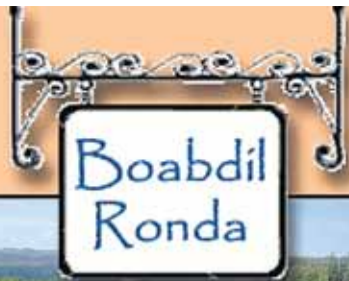
WHEN you've got a formula working, why change it?

Such is the case at Ronda's longest-established patisserie Daver, where three generations of the same family have kept up standards for over 50 years.

All conveniently named David Verdu, there is even another younger David Verdu waiting in the wings to take over from his dad.

"It's our tradition," explains current boss David Verdu, who has done cooking courses around Spain and worked in the best patisseries in Barcelona and Asturias.

As well as two patisseries in Ronda, there is a new Daver in Algeciras, all selling the delicious range of sweets, cakes and gourmet products, including dozens of Ronda wines.



Lovely Guest house in a tranquil area of Ronda old town



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On top of the World!

Arriadh Hotel is situated in the beautiful 'Serranía de Ronda', just a 10 minute drive from Ronda's city centre. The village Arriate, undiscovered by mass tourism, is within walking distance and offers a wide variety of restaurants and tapas bars.

Arriadh Hotel is the perfect 'home away from home' to rediscover Ronda and the area. Or just to relax and take in the breath taking views and sunsets from one of the terraces, the garden, the swimming pool or your own balcony. If you want to stay in, don't worry. Your hosts John and Wilbert always have a variety of tapas available and on request they will prepare a lovely dinner.



Tel.: +34 952 11 43 70 Arriadh Hotel, Los Cañalillos, Ronda, Andalucia.
www.arriadhhotel.com

October 28th - November 11th 2015

Where to stay

Spoilt for choice with romantic and hip places around Ronda



ANCIENT: Terrace at Molino del Puente

Dream on



RURAL DREAM: Molino del Santo

It is unsurprisingly easy to find a great place to lay your head in the 'City of Dreams', as Ronda was once described by Dutch poet Rilke.

In the heart of the city there are many emblematic choices, including the highly original Hotel En Frente Arte and the historic San Gabriel.

But real peace and quiet at spectacular value can be best found at **Hotel Boabdil**, set up by a friendly expat couple in a charming, historic street near the Almorabar gate. Peace personified, the rooms are clean and airy and afford some good views of the surrounding countryside.

Another good cheap central choice is **Hotel Morales**, which sits in pole position right in the heart of the town, perfect for the shops, and the main transport links.

It is in the nearby Serrania though that the whole Ronda experience comes into its own.

Close to the city, beside a bubbling stream is the ancient converted water mill **Molino del Puente**, with an excellent restaurant and well appointed rooms.

Run by friendly English couple Ian and Elaine Love, this historic spot is very popular with visitors from the coast and, best of all, it has a highly-rated restaurant La Cascada, thanks to Ian's cookery skills, which were honed on the coast in Cabopino.

A bit further away in Benaolan you must certainly consider incredible **Molino del Santo**, a classic rural retreat, which has been serving the area for nearly three decades.

Run by English couple Pauline and Andy, the hotel has the knack of keeping guests happy with just the right mix of comfort, good food and character.

Regularly coming top on *TripAdvisor*, not just for Ronda but Andalusia, it sits by a raging stream, that emerges as a spring out of a rock just above the hotel.

Once an ancient mill, it conserves many of its original features, and always displays a fabulous range of local artists. Best of all, it counts on one of the best rural restaurants in Andalusia, its chef Alberto, continuing to adapt classic local dishes with many twists he picked up from his time working in the north of Spain.

Closer to Ronda, in the charming village of Arriate, check **Hotel Arriadh** (see *Top of the World* article left), which counts on some of the best views anywhere in Spain.

Often described as 'zen-like' the clean lines and maximising of light and views is all thanks to the talents of Dutch couple John and Wilfred.

Excellent value, it has an amazingly peaceful garden and a recently added infinity pool.

Another good rural option is **Los Castanos**, over in the General Valley, sitting in the authentic village of Cartajima.

A well appointed village house, you can walk from the door and its cultured expat owners Diana and John Beach, always go of their way to ensure you have a superb break.

Last, but not least, why not try out **Hostal Anon** over in Jimena, which is a great place for a romantic break.

It's been a classic stopover for travellers for decades and the rooms have a Spanish rustic feel, while the outside intertwining terraces have a Moorish décor.



TRAGEDY AT RURAL HOTEL

Hundreds of people "distracted". Supermarkets run out of tissues. Water courses swollen by floods of tears.

Reports are reaching us of huge sadness at the news that the Ronda Area's favourite small hotel is closing for the winter. Floods of tears are swelling water courses and sales of tissues have rocketed as red-eyed people console one another. The full implications of the closure are beginning to hit home. Yes, the hotel recognised by *The Times* this year as "One of the 20 best hotels IN EUROPE for foodies" will be entirely closed from the 15th November 2015 until the 4th of March 2016.

But there is good news from Molino del Santo too:

1) The Hotel and Restaurant remain open until the 15th November 2015 and there is still some availability for most dates.

2) HALF PRICE OFFER : There are just a few rooms still available on a B&B basis at 50% of normal rates for the nights of 10th and 11th November

2015 - the 8th and 9th are now fully booked. Mention *The Olive Press* to take advantage of this deal. You can stay from just 26,75 euros per person with breakfast included. Why not grab a room before it is too late? THIS OFFER WILL NOT BE REPEATED. You may even find the boss in a good mood.

3) Good rates available for other nights before the hotel closes if you read Eddie the Dog's column - e-mail Eddie to ask for the best deal possible for any nights that interest you. E-mail Eddie at info@molinodelsanto.com. Address your message for the attention of Eddie the Dog.

4) The hotel and restaurant re-open on the 4th March 2016. If you can't manage a visit before the end of the 2015 season, why not visit in 2016? 10% discount available on any 2016 room booked before November 4th 2015.



Thank You!...

...from Andy and Pauline and all the staff at Molino del Santo for making 2015 another very special season. We treasure hundreds of great memories from 2015 and so many lovely things have been said to us. We consider ourselves so lucky to be supported by such very lovely people. We hope to see you before we close on the 15th November 2015 and if not, from the 4th March 2016.

More information of any kind e-mail
info@molinodelsanto.com

www.molinodelsanto.com | info@molinodelsanto.com | 952 16 71 51
ESTACIÓN DE BENAJOÁN, NEAR RONDA, MÁLAGA

HOTEL MOLINO DEL PUENTE & LA CASCADA RESTAURANT



The well known Hotel Molino del Puente & the highly acclaimed La Cascada restaurante are now taking bookings for Christmas and New Year

Only a 5 minute drive from Ronda, in the stunning Andalusian countryside. Take all the stress out of Christmas & New Year and enjoy delicious food and luxury accommodation in this converted olive and flour mill.

Treat yourself to a wonderful festive break at Molino del Puente

Traditional Christmas lunch & New Years Eve gala dinner in the comfort of the new La Cascada Restaurant. Afternoon homemade cakes and traditional Spanish Christmas pastries served in the library.

We provide a relaxed, home-from-home atmosphere enabling you to have a real Christmas experience with none of the hard work!



For further information visit
www.hotelmolinodelpuente.com
or call 952874164

Ronda has one of Spain's best collections of restaurants... but you need to know which ones, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucia editor Jon Clarke

Melting pot

Where to eat



LUNCH WITH A VIEW: At Meson El Sacristan

ONE of the key ingredients for the perfect stay in Ronda is a good place to eat.

And few places in Spain have such a good range of restaurants as the Serranía de Ronda. But beware... there are plenty of dreadful places to eat.

Get it right and you will get an enthusiastic chef using excellent local ingredients, including olive oils, cheeses, hams, mushrooms, fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Get it wrong and it will be a lousy tourist-trap serving cheap, substandard fodder.

The real chestnuts include long-standing winners, such as Pedro Romero, Casa Santa Pola and soulful Alcocobar, while the rural delights of Molino del Santo and El Muelle,

in Arriate, continue to take the biscuit.

Up in Ronda check out creative **Tragatapas**, run by former Michelin-starred chef Benito Gomez, who trained at El Bulli, as well as authentic **Porton** - an institution - run by the same two friends Javier and Pepe for the last four decades.

Steeped in bullfighting history, here you will find my favourite Ronda tapa, the wonderful quails egg with ham on toast, not to mention some excellent sea food.

Right in the heart of the old town in the most emblematic town hall square, you will love whiling away the day at **Meson El Sacristan**.

Run by friendly Antonio from Campillos, this busy spot, which counts on Roman ruins in the basement, has easily the best steaks in the town, cooked to a tee in the only wood-oven around.

Another great spot for the full traditional monty and the perfect sit down on a wet day or cold night **Pedro Romero**, opposite the bullring is hard to beat.

Run by two brothers, including Tomas, one of the best somme-

liers in Spain, history is all around you and, of course, *rabo de toro* is one of the very best picks.

Another incredibly atmospheric spot is **Casa Santa Pola**, which certainly takes some beating for location and views, sitting literally in the famous tajo.

But food-wise it is also a big winner (and one of the few places mentioned in the *Michelin* guide) thanks to Catalan chef Ignacio, who knows Spain's culinary scene like the back of his hand, and who has worked around the country and likes to experiment as much as possible.

This hard-working talent has just opened a new restaurant in Sevilla, but he and his son maintain the quality here I am pleased to report. Another long-term stalwart is



WELCOME: At Puerta Grande

Hop on over

IN a land of mass-produced beers the real ale drinker may despair at the idea of finding quality, flavoursome beers.

So it came as a particular surprise for a Belgian brewery boss to discover one of his bespoke craft brews on sale at Malastrana Cervezateca.

On holiday in the town, he marched in, hugged the owner Carlos and bought a bottle of his brew for all ten customers in situ.

The recently-opened bar stocks over 60 beers from as far afield as Canada, America and Belgium.

Malastrana Cervezateca can be found on Calle Pozo, or call 646 656 095



BEER BOSS: Carlos



NEW TEAM: At El Pino

Mesón El Sacristán

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Reservas: 952 87 56 84
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The only Wood oven in Ronda specialising in top quality beef, Iberian pork, goat and lamb. Charming central location

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PERSONALITIES: Boys at Porton, chef at Tragatapas and brothers at Pedro Romero

the three decades old **Almobar**, in the Barrio San Francisco.

Run by a tight-knit team, there are plenty of vegetables and tip top service. Above all, presentation is important and the spectacular wine list, which features practically all the local vineyards, is a massive bonus. Across the road check out excellent value **Bar San Francisco**, while one brand new and exciting spot finds Antonio, ex-Almobar maitre d for two decades, ploughing a new furrow at El Pino in a nearby side street.

A classic hole in the wall local, Antonio is charm personified and his tapas, including an amazing spinach and chicken burger, are fabulous. If you just fancy a browse of various different places to eat, you need to head to Calle Nueva, opposite the parador, where you will find a series of excellent places, cheek by jowl and vying for your custom.

There is an Italian, **La Vita e Bella** (see box) an Indian and the celebrated Tragatapas too. The best places for tapas is charming **Casa Quino**, a family-run joint, where its big boss Joaquin does a great job in the kitchen, producing a range of classic local dishes. A keen photographer, he also has the best collection of old photos of Ronda. Next door, the pair also have a new place **Nueva 13** more geared towards tapas and wines



GRAFTERS: Casa Quino bosses and (right) Ignacio and son at Santa Pola

and with a very different style. For a more formal sit down you should try **Puerta Grande**, consistently highly-ranked on *TripAdvisor* and with excellent quality food and service.

And in pole position, right on the emblematic square by the famous bridge check out

Taberna el Puente, where, in a good sign, its owner Paco is often to be found in the kitchen.

Specialising in gourmet hamburgers, paella and salads, best of all, the kitchen produces various vegetarian dishes, in particular some for celiacs. Ronda also has a friendly Ar-

gentinian **Buenos Aires**, run by characteristic Omar. It is an excellent spot for tapas, breakfast or just a pint to watch the UK football. It also probably also serves up the best coffee in town thanks to its fresh milk. Outside of Ronda a number of great places stand out.

One of the very best, is **El Muelle**, in Arriate, which has been top of *TripAdvisor* for the whole of Andalusia for nearly three years.

Yes, 'Number One' out of 19,100 restaurants in Andalusia, a trip to visit this converted railway store-room is an absolute must, as many people do on a day trip from Malaga and even Sevilla.

'Number One' out of 19,100 restaurants in Andalusia, this converted railway storeroom is a must



Pizza pizzazz

HE is officially Spain's best pizza chef, as judged by the World Pizza Championships held last year in Parma.

And although his mother was Spanish, Flavio Lo Tartaro is most certainly Italian and jokes that his kitchen skills are thanks to 'something that runs in the blood of Italians'.

Originally from Salerno on the Amalfi coast, Flavio, his wife Monica and sister give a warm, Italian welcome in Calle Nuevo's restaurant La Vita e Bella, which he opened ten years ago. The 'pizza de la casa' - a masterpiece in ham, fresh tomato, mozzarella, rocket and parmesan with a squeeze of lemon, is a delicious work of edible art.

"Ronda is a beautiful, wonderful place to live and work and I was proud to represent it in the world pizza championships," says Flavio.



PIZZA KING: Flavio

www.diningsecretsofandalucia.com

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Traditional dishes of Ronda

Restaurante El Almocábar

Ruedo Alameda 4, Bda. San Francisco, 29400 Ronda

Unbeatable!

Intimate restaurant in Ronda's old quarter away from the tourist areas
Innovative food based on local traditions
Excellent quality - Interesting and varied wine list

We can recommend:
Goat's cheese salad,
pork dishes, stone-grilled meats, beefsteaks from the Basque country, oxtail, cream cheese dessert with mango sauce

Tel: 952 87 59 77

Taberna El Puente

Specialities

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RONDA – 1.495.000 €
ANDALUSIAN COUNTRY VILLA WITH
SPECTACULAR VIEWS, GAUCIN

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 4 | Bathrooms: 4 |
| m ² Built: 360m ² | m ² Plot: 50.000 |
| Garden: Yes | Pool: Yes |
| Garage: Yes | |



Ref. Nr. 186-00259P

RONDA – 1.250.000 €
LUXURY MODERN COUNTRY HOUSE,
CORTIJO FOR SALE, RONDA

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 5 | Bathrooms: 5 |
| m ² Built: 573m ² | m ² Plot: 25.000 |
| Garden: Private | Pool: Private |
| Garage: Carport | |



Ref. Nr. 186-00405P

RONDA – 1.650.000 €
AMAZING CORTIJO IN PRIVILEGED AREA,
RONDA

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 5 | Bathrooms: 5 |
| m ² Built: 520m ² | m ² Plot: 26.300 |
| Garden: Private | Pool: Private |
| Garage: Private | |



Ref. Nr. 186-2773P

RONDA – 3.900.000 €
MAGNIFICENT COUNTRY ESTATE,
RONDA

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 6 | Bathrooms: 6 |
| m ² Built: 800m ² | m ² Plot: 268.700 |
| m ² Terrace: 120 | Pool: Private |
| Garden: Private | |



Ref. Nr. 186-00477P

GAUCIN – 2.750.000 €
LUXURY CORTIJO STYLE ESTATE,
GAUCIN

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 8 | Bathrooms: 7 |
| m ² Built: 705m ² | m ² Plot: 94.800 |
| m ² Terrace: 500m ² | Garden: Private |
| Pool: Private | Garage: Yes |



Ref. Nr. 186-00480P

CASARES – 1.400.000 €
MOORISH STYLED COUNTRY VILLA
WITH STUNNING VIEWS, GAUCIN

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bedrooms: 4 | Bathrooms: 4 |
| m ² Built: 429m ² | m ² Plot: 106.162 |
| Pool: Yes | Garden: Private |