



**Christmas card snowscapes and adrenaline-pumping thrills are guaranteed at one of Spain's finest ski resorts. Iona Napier (above) negotiates the slopes of the Sierra Nevada**



# Costa del Ski



ICE COOL: Swimwear ski party

**WINTER WONDERLAND: Sierra Nevada is paradise for snowboarders, skiers and dogs**

**M**Y colleague lay spread-eagled in the snow, one ski several hundred feet uphill and the other at my feet.

"That's it, I'm giving up," he sulked. It had been a testing day on the slopes for ski virgin Rob, and after a particularly ambitious blue run with three consecutive wipeouts, his sense of humour had vanished without trace.

His grimace was barely visible through the layers of buff, hat and goggles, but the snarls were audible. "I'm not skiing down this slope; I'll walk back up and take the lift down," he pleaded, looking longingly uphill, while skiers zipped effortlessly past us.

Our impatient group had already sped off back to base, in Pradollano, for a hot chocolate, without a second thought for our Rob. But, the good natured person I am - plus admittedly several years' experience on the slopes - I stepped in as his impromptu 'teacher'. After some cajoling, we set off gingerly down the highest mountain range in peninsular Spain, making 'giant pizza slices', as my first teacher had called them, with our skis.

Before long, Rob was back in his stride - or slide - and I was considering a career change, as I sped down the Laguna de las Yeguas piste, which has staggering views towards the Mediterranean and, on a clear day,




PHOTO: Alejandro Molina

Turn to Page 18

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FLYING HIGH: The largest piste is 6km long

# UP UP AND AWAY

From Page 17

the Rif mountains of Morocco. It was the start of a fabulous weekend of skiing in the Sierra Nevada, with bright sunshine, perfect powder snow and some of Spain's best après ski to look forward to at the end.

The longest piste, Aguila, is a dreamy 6km of easy turns and magnificent views.

The Sierra Nevada is easily one of Spain's best skiing resorts, with 110km of pistes over 1200 vertical metres, famous for being a place where you can ski in the morning and sunbathe on the coast, pina colada in hand, by the afternoon.

Some even brave it in bikinis for the last day of the season in May (*la bajada en bikini*), an unmissable day festooned with champagne, near nudity and hedonism.

But it's not just for fun junkies; expert skiers treasure the snow which, particularly in springtime, is a soft and sumptuous ride, unlike the tightly-packed ice found in many European resorts.

Locals proudly describe it as 'cream snow' (*nieve crema*), and most say it is at its best from February to April, although the season often begins in late November, weather permitting (this year it has been a bit



JUMP FOR JOY: There are 110km of pistes

shaky to be fair with just a few kilometres open by the middle of December).

And thanks to a €3.1 million cash injection from the Andalusian tourist board – with three new lifts last season, the price for passes has remained the same for the past four years (€45 for an adult day pass) and even less at the season's opening (€25), with free parking chucked in.

"It is a magnificent resort," explains Mercedes Delgado, who has worked here

for Cetursa, the company that runs the resort, for many years. The charming 50-year-old was born in Granada and has worked in the resort for 29 years. She is living proof that it is near impossible to leave a place like this.

And she is far from the only one, with numerous local business bosses having done three decades, and many even more. "The really strong points here are the sun and the location," explains Mercedes.

"The climate makes excellent snow conditions, a pleasant temperature to be in, with late night skiing too, and the season continues to May making it very versatile."

She continues: "And our proximity to Granada is a huge plus, whereas many European resorts are very isolated."



NOVICES: Tom and Rob learn to ski

## Uphill ski

THE price of renting an apartment in the Sierra Nevada has rocketed this winter. Rising by 12.5%, the average weekly apartment rental costs €1,015.



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# Festive fun



**MAGICAL: Three kings on the slopes and (inset) snowy Pradollano**

The resort is one of the most festive places to be in Spain, and the Spaniards know it, as they descend in their droves for Christmas and New Year. 'Nochebuena' or Christmas eve, when the Spaniards celebrate the festive season with a huge family meal and lashings of turrón,

is usually a sell out. Meanwhile 'nochevieja', or New Year's Eve, where massive screens show the countdown in Madrid's iconic Puerta del Sol, with grapes galore, is a riot. For the eve of the Reyes on Jan 5 the three kings duly arrive on skis. Kids will love it. Carnival, from February 6-14, also sees a mass arrival for the fancy dress competition, snow-sport contests and spectacles from Granada University, while February 27 2016 will see a huge jump competition, just next to the main resort.

"You can come to the Sierra Nevada and also see the Alhambra, and eat some famous Granada tapas." She also mentions the strategic location: near the beach, not far from Madrid, and perfectly accessible from most of southern Spain.

Indeed the 106.8km of slopes are just an hour-and-a-half by car from Granada's Costa Tropical and the nearby Nerja beaches, and only half an hour for Granadinos.

Madrileños do not flinch at their four hour drive, while Sevilanos and Malagueños can get here in two hours easily. The Portuguese also have a strong following.

Alongside a fiercely loyal British crowd, many from Alicante and Murcia, the majority (around 80%) of the Sierra Nevada's skiers are Spanish.

The resort has kept its authenticity and charm that swanky French resorts have long since lost, with prices to match. "We have been growing massively in popularity since the world ski championships in 1996," continues Mercedes. The night skiing is something the resort prides itself on, with 9am-9pm uninterrupted snow play on weekends at the height of the season, and also late-night skiing on Thursdays.

"But the resort has not been



**ROYAL APPROVAL: King Felipe loves Sierra Nevada**

ruined; it is still very Spanish and fairly low-key."

Spanish is still the *lingua franca* - although virtually all restaurateurs speak English. By contrast, in high-end French resort Courchevel, where the

Russian women walk their Chihuahuas in white skintight salopettes, you're hard pushed to find a native French speaker. That said, Russian tourists migrate enthusiastically to the Sierra Nevada area, and all nationalities are met with open arms by the hospitable resort staff, well over 90% of whom live in Granada.

The resort is very family friendly, with the majority of the 124 runs at a beginner or intermediate level. There are 19 green runs, 41 blues, 50 reds and 14 black and orange (the scariest), to be exact.

There are several zones pur-

pose-designed for little ones: with Dreamland and Alpine Garden for infants. There is a magic carpet lift, bike-skiing and toboggan runs for kids or non-skiers.

Pista del Bosque features animal figures for children too, and the new Pista del Mar in the heart of Borreigüles has been a hit since last season with its weekly gymkhanas.

More experienced skiers - and hundreds of snowboarders - head to the Sulayr Terrain Park, where there are 110 different ramps and rails, with the largest ski-jump in Europe.

The cool kids also hang out in the Loma de Dilar area, which boasts the biggest half-pipe in Spain, with a cross country ski and snowboard run.

And it's not just the skiing that keeps punters coming back (it was my second trip), the nightlife and restaurants are second to none.

And the Sierra Nevada's businesses are delighted to meet you, run by friendly, down to earth folk that do not mock their customers with ski-high prices. In fact you can still get a *cana* and a *tapa* for under €2 in some places. Then, after dinner, head to lively watering hole Jaleo, run by Sevillano Roberto. A laid-back bar with great music and reasonable drinks, it's the perfect place to test-drive your moves before venturing uphill to bars, including Soho and Hippodrome, 10 minutes up into the resort. There is even a discotheque Mango.

You may well find yourself distracted by the Marbella Club's Sierra Nevada outpost, El Lodge, a sumptuous, five-star, high-end addition to the local scene, just reopened after a fire burnt it down two years ago.

This is the sort of top end place that rivals anywhere in Ibiza or Cannes, and keeps the wealthy expats on the Costa del Sol more than happy whether there is snow or not.

Yes, all in all, there really is something for everyone in the Sierra Nevada, however you cut your cloth.

**The resort has held on to its authenticity and charm**

## Pocket-friendly resort

THE Sierra Nevada is incredibly good value, blasting its international competition out of the water. A day ski pass is €45, while Colorado resort Beaver Creek charges a mind-boggling €131 per day. Whistler in Canada is €91 and Switzerland's Zermatt can set you back €92.

And that's before skiwear, accommodation and food is also great value, where French resorts can demand silly money for the most bog standard of spaghetti Bolognese.

In the Sierra Nevada, the Spanish ethos of delicious food and alcohol at highly reasonable prices is exemplified across the resort.

Xavi at Tito Tapas and Paco at La Bodeguita are hospitable bosses with no sign of the ice queen reception to be expected in swankier resorts, and the Granada 'free tapas with your drink' tradition exists in most establishments.

Try Tito Tapas' brie parcels and the goat's cheese with caramelised apple at La Bodeguita... before washing it down with a comforting, velvety hot chocolate on tap at Mama Goye's. It's not just the food, drink and accommodation that are reasonable - the warm Spanish welcome sets them apart.



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# Off piste perfect

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**Swap your skis for a wild mountain adventure with experienced Telemark, writes Jon Clarke**

Whether there is snow or not, the two-decade-old company offers one and two-day cross-country adventures into the mountains.

Both trips end up taking you through (hopefully) deep off-piste snow onto narrow mountain tracks. "We try to put an emphasis on ecology and nature and it is impressive to



see the typically old farmhouses in the area and how little they have changed," explains boss Luis Casanova, who spends the other half of the year in Africa. "It is a real, fun adventure, something you will not forget. "Best of all, a team of mules ends up helping to bring your

stuff back to Pradolano," adds Luis.

The day trip costs just €100 per person and includes transport and lunch.

Another popular pastime for those, who don't fancy risking life and limb on the pistes, is to have a day of cross-country skiing on two or three well established paths around the resort. "It is great fitness and you do get to enjoy the fabulous views and nature at the same time," he adds.

The company can also help organise hard-core uphill climbing for mountaineers and a half day soft snow walking trip with snow rackets.

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**THE A-TEAM: With boss Luis (right)**

## A shoe-in

**H**E has one of the most infectious laughs in Andalusia.

And, no surprise, with happy Javier Nagore co-running three of the resorts top eateries, as well as doubling up as a shoe entrepreneur on the side.

Menorcan Nagore is half of the talented team behind Tito Luigi's two restaurants and nearby Tito Tapas.

But when he is not overlooking the foodie empire on the slopes, he is keeping an eye on his family business, which makes hand-made shoes for sale in dozens of shops around the UK alone.

Manufactured back in his second home of Menorca, his shoes sell in the British chain the Natural Shoe Store, as well as many places elsewhere in Europe.

He and Tito business partner Luis Alija, started life setting up the first 'hippy market' in Menorca in the 1970s, before branching out to sell shoes and jewelry around the world.

Today they are very much alive and kicking in Pradolano, ensuring that their restaurants - alongside emblematic Tia Maria, owned by Luis' brother Carlos - continue to adapt and grow.

Counting former King Juan Carlos, not to mention a host of bullfighters and flamenco




**JAVIER: Tito Luigi boss**

singers as clients, they have certainly done well since setting up Tito Luigi 27 years ago. The flagship restaurant has just doubled in size with a stylish makeover, while the recently opened Tito Tapas, is one of the hippest places to dine on the slopes.

Meanwhile, the third restaurant Tito Luigi's II, sits higher up in the village and is popular with locals. Together they employ around 40 people.

"The idea behind Tito Tapas was to create a natural yet modern place where friends could come and meet, something a bit different," explains Javier.



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## ADVERTORIAL



**HOSPITABLE:** Rafa (above, second right) and his employees while (right) the terrace at La Bodeguita and (inset) huevos revueltos with eels and prawns

**E**VEN the most hardened adrenaline junkies like to 'come down' from a day on the slopes with convivial drinks and tapas shared around a glowing brazier.

Just ask dashing bullfighting brothers Fran and Cayetano Rivera, who normally choose the venues of La Bodeguita and La Tinaja.

Overlooking the hustle and bustle of Pradolano's main square, it is little surprise that many of the resort's most famous après skiers make a beeline for this bar/restaurant double act.

Like yin and yang, both offer a fabulous range of dishes and wines, with the fun part thrown in for free.

La Bodeguita alpine bar, with its beer barrel tables and magnificent pizza oven, is usually buzzing late into the night, while upmarket La Tinaja has one of the most sophisticated menu and wine lists in the resort.

### Luxuriate

The terrace at La Bodeguita is the perfect spot to luxuriate with a beer or glass of wine at lunchtime or at sunset.

Its outdoor braziers and attentive staff do a great job at making you comfortable and the excellent dishes include baked goat's cheese with caramelized apples and the amazing acorn-fed jamon and scrambled eggs with eels, prawns and potatoes (see pic inset top). La Tinaja has a more chic, formal vibe and a stunning mezzanine level with breathtaking views across the resort through floor-to-ceiling windows. Charming host, Rafael Vigo, 37, took over and revamped both establishments two years ago, and since then popularity has soared to keep 17 members of staff run off their feet.

"We are probably the biggest restaurant in the Sierra Nevada," Rafa ex-

# A taste of the high life

*From Flamenco stars to celebrity bullfighters, few places beat La Bodeguita and La Tinaja for apres-ski and fine dining, writes Iona Napier*

plains.

"At 400m2, we have a lot of space and we can serve over 200 people at once between the two restaurants in high season."

An entrepreneur in the resort for seven years – and a weekend visitor for many decades – Rafa has owned and revived several restaurants in Pradolano.

Having been 'brought up on the beach' in Almunecar, he applied the relaxed mentality to all his successful establishments, combining style with top quality food.

The most-ordered dish is charcoal grilled steak, served with green pep-

pers and chunky chips.

The pizzas are also a hit, with Rafa's favourite: a tomato, mozzarella, ham and egg concoction.

For the sweet-toothed, the mango and custard apple mousse is a refreshing alternative to the decadent turrón cheesecake on a brownie base.

"We keep an incredibly high standard, with uninterrupted service from 1pm until 1am, at least 120 wines, so we can cater for everyone," Rafa continues.

He's right... even on a quiet day, this is the place to be seen and attracts people from all walks of life.



**FAMOUS FANS:** Cayetano and Fran Rivera



**TEAMWORK:** At La Tinaja



**CASUAL DINING:** In La Bodeguita

As well as welcoming celebs like the Rivera brothers, Rafa has even played host to Franco's millionaire descendants, the Bordiu family, not to men-

tion the bosses of the Melia hotel chain.

"We're like a family here, and there's always a great atmosphere," he says.



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## No easy sport

THERE haven't always been gondolas, magic carpets and chairlifts to escort skiers and snowboarders up the slopes. Back in the day, the only way to get to the top was to walk, or call in the help of a donkey!

Up until 1969, when the two main lifts, Borreguiles and Parador were built, the burro taxi was the best way up the hill.

The ski resort dates from 1912 when Spain's oldest ski club, the Sierra Nevada Society, was founded.

It started to grow seriously in popularity from 1964 when lift pass company Cetursa was launched and a regular bus service came in.

## SUITED AND BOOTED



PROFESSIONAL: The team

FOR five decades the Sanchez del Rio family have been running ski shops and teaching on the slopes.

First in Australia and more recently in Spain, their company Riosport has been ahead of the game in terms of quality of equipment and expertise.

Set up originally by Alfonso and wife Joan in the Sierra Nevada in 1988, the business is now run by sons Philip and Alexander, both in their 30s.

Based out of two locations, both just yards from the main ski lifts, they have cleverly cornered the expat and foreign market that makes up around 20% of the resort's clientele.

"Over 60% of our clients are foreign, at least half of those British and Irish but we have lots of Dutch too,"

explains Alexander, who went to school in Granada before studying law at university.

"I put our success with expats down to giving straightforward good service and good quality products," he continues.

"We are not the cheapest, nor the most expensive, but above all we know what we are doing.

"We either do things properly or we don't touch it," he adds.

One of the areas the company specialises in is the quality of its boots. Indeed, Riosport is one of only two dozen places in the world where you can get the top quality, personalised Strolz brand of ski boots.

Custom-fitted for the most tricky customers, they almost guarantee not to give you pain. "They are perfect for any foot," he explains.

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**THRILLSEEKERS:** Grinding and carving around the Sulayr park



### Sierra Nevada's slopes offer Spain's snowboarders a pleasure playground

**W**ITH snow like fine powder, the Sierra Nevada is a Mecca for thrill-seeking snowboarders.

For beginners and experts alike, Spain's highest resort is a glorious snowboarding setting.

Stunning scenery is matched by the top-class facilities, which saw the resort awarded the 1996 Alpine World Ski Championships and could see it host the Freestyle Ski and Snowboard World Championships in 2017.

Those who are

just starting out should head to Borreguiles. Twenty-two lifts deposit snowboarders on this gentle gradient where you can easily get accustomed to the slopes.

And Sierra Nevada is also home to SuperPark Sulayr, Europe's largest freestyle snowboard park. The park has now relocated from Loma de Dilar to an altitude of 2,700 metres on Borreguiles.

Spain's most famous snowboarding park also houses the country's biggest permanent half-pipe, measuring an astonishing 165 metres in length with a height of six metres. The special design flattens the snow on the side of the half-pipe so snowboarders can jump on both sides.

More experienced snowboarders have two railings with a jump of four metres. Intermediates can enjoy a railing with a two metre jump. Most importantly, an airbag is on hand to ensure a soft landing!



# Snow patrol



**FREESTYLE:** Mountain sp



**SNOW LOVERS:** Dani (second left) and the team

**W**HEN a trio of brothers visited the Sierra Nevada for a season in the early 2000s, it was to be an adventure from their native Argentina, which would change their lives forever.

Coming to teach snowboarding, Richard, Dani and Leo Martinez loved the buzz of Europe's most southerly resort so much they literally never looked back.

A decade on and the boys from Mar de Plata are still here (well two of them at least), running their own snowboarding and ski school, Rules, plus a brand new shop with clothing and mountainwear. "We came to enjoy the snow and spotted a huge gap in the market with nobody working the snowboarding scene," explains Dani, 37, who has been riding the slopes since the age of four.

Offering snowboard rental and classes, the small marginal sport has grown to such an extent that it is almost now as popular as skiing.

"It's a huge market, probably as big as skiing, and we have so much demand for good equipment."

He continues: "The snow park and the skateboarding scene are also incredible, and we are changing the way people see and understand snow sports."

So successful has their business been that this season they have opened a brand new school, Rules, based just 50 metres from the main ticket office.

The stylish shop (above) has cutting-edge design,



modern equipment, with the latest mountainwear and clothing, as well as other brands, including Bonfire and Volcan.

"We are all about board sports, all about free-style and our school and you can really see it in our shop and school," says Dani.

The 12 instructors he employs this high season are all professional trained to bring out the best in students and encourage them to embrace the 'freestyle mentality' and enjoy the buzz of mastering the elements.

A one-stop shop for all your snow-related needs, Dani and the team are always delighted to have a chat so drop in to the Plaza Andalucia or Edificio Telecabina office to get tutored, suited and booted.

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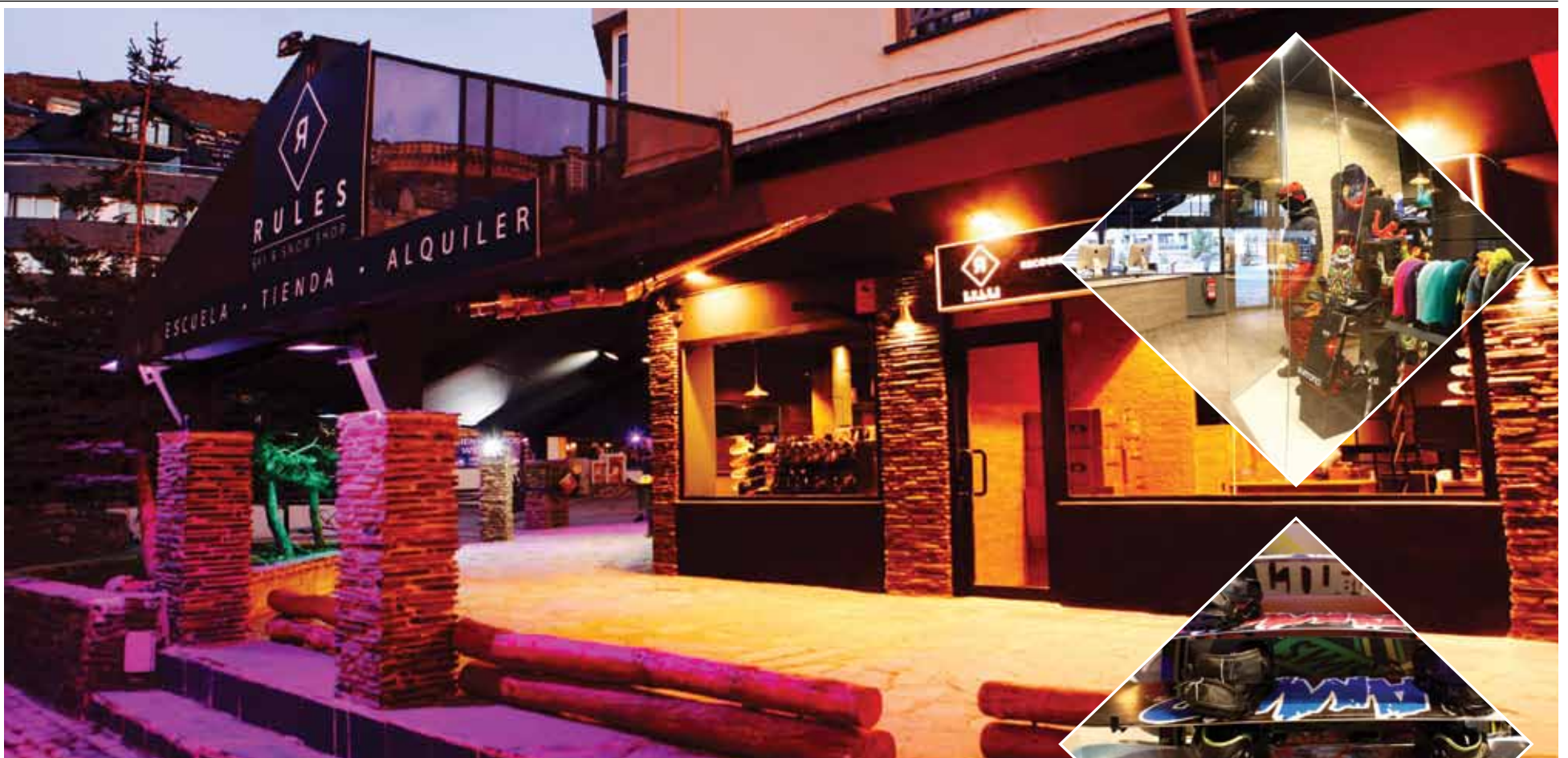
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**ANNIVERSARY**





**British ski teachers Giles Birch and Jonathan Buzzard have been teaching on the slopes for an incredible 20 years, writes Jon Clarke**

WHEN Jonathan Buzzard walked into Sierra Nevada's seminal Crescendo bar in the early 1990s, Giles Birch knew he'd found his man. With a long flashers' mac, 'big hair' and a friendly, outgoing persona, he knew he would make the perfect transport rep.

In his first season working as a coordinator for the big travel companies, including First Choice and Thompsons, he needed someone with a bit of knowledge and experience to help him out.

"I had no idea what was going on but had been told that Crescendo was the place to find the Brits and the reps-in-the-know," he recalls.

"Next thing in walks Jonathan with just the right attitude and he was soon helping me deal with the three to four flights we regularly dealt with on a Sunday." The pair are still working together some two decades later, collectively running the extremely successful British Ski Center from their base near the resort.

Great mates, they both now teach, as well as sort out holidays for hundreds of clients each year.

"Of course things are completely different to back then,"



DECADE DUO: Jonathan and Giles in the 1990s and today (right)

## Guiri guiding!



PISTE POWER: Sierra Nevada

explains Jonathan, who lived in Marbella in the golden years before it was ruined by corrupt leader Jesus Gil.

"We used to bring in thousands of foreigners every week, but after a couple of dry years in the 1980s the resort's reputation suffered badly and things all began to change.

"Luckily the snow came back, albeit not yet this year, but these days it is all independent travellers and the agencies have all but disappeared." Of course there have been some bad years such as 1995 when Jonathan recalls cycling up Borreguiles run on a mountain bike in shorts on Christmas Day.

"But generally it is as good as most other international resorts and the range of skiing and schools is hard to beat,"

explains Giles, who is now in his benchmark 20th season in Granada.

Since arriving he has married (a Portuguese girl), had a family and taught literally thousands of clients.

So what makes the Sierra Nevada so special, according to him?

"It is the length of the season. We start in late November and stay open until early May while other resorts don't open until mid December and end their season in March."

This is partly due to the resort's altitude and the quality of the snow which is constantly worked on during the night.

"That's why you'll never see slush even in the latter part of the season," he adds.

Visit [www.britishskicenter.co.uk](http://www.britishskicenter.co.uk) for more info



EXPERIENCED: Skisol shop and boss Jose Antonio (left)

## Customer is king

IT is a classic family business.

Jose Antonio Lopez and his wife Montse are often joined by their two children at weekends when the resort gets busy. But thankfully it's not too far, the family living in nearby La Zubia, just at the foot of the slopes.

In an excellent location, their shop Skisol has some of the best quality skis and snowboards to rent and customer service is the key to its success.

"We always put the customer first and have plenty of returning business," explains Jose Antonio, who has been renting out skis in the Sierra Nevada for 35 years.

Best of all, the prices have not gone up for a decade, "And we don't just rent out any old equipment... we buy at least 50 new pairs of boots alone each season," he adds.

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# All about **Sierra Nevada**

## WHERE TO EAT

# Icy spicy!



**TALENTS:** Brothers Gonzalo and Luciano at La Muralla, Luis at Tito Luigi and (top) La Sideria

**Sierra Nevada has one of the best mixes of quality restaurants in Andalusia, writes Jon Clarke**

**T**HERE has been a massive influx of money into the Sierra Nevada over the last year bringing in a string of new restaurants, wine bars and tapas joints. There is even a brand new Asturian-style Sideria, where the waiters do the classic over the shoulder pouring of northern Spain's finest.

The real plaudits, however, must go to the group behind **Tito Luigi**, who have turned their recently-expanded Italian into a stylish blend of classic and modern architecture, in line with their hip opening last year of **Tito Tapas**. Contemporary and cutting edge, the beautiful space, with its historic 'cave' at the back, counts dozens of famous guests including the former king.

On the walls lies the photographic evidence that the long-standing spot has provided good food and ambience for the last quarter century. There is a great range of pizzas, salads and pasta dishes, with my current top pick: the amazing squid-ink spaghetti with prawns.

On the subject of institutions, look no further than **La Lonja**, which is a great place to eat seafood and the selection of marisco is impressive and there are always fresh lobsters waiting to be cooked.

Three decades serving skiers, boss Antonio began life as a waiter in Granada, and counts another restaurant in Sanlúcar de Barrameda and unsurprisingly stocks its famous langoustines.

Another long-term fixture is **Bodega Casablanca**, next door, run by Jose Carlos Villanueva, who grew up on the slopes, with his father opening one of the first hostals in the 1960s.

He, of course, knows a fair bit about catering, and the bar has a nice range of photos and memorabilia and is a great place for tapas or simply to hang out.



**LENTILS:** At Casablanca

The food is delicious, real heart-warming soul food, including tasty lentils, as well as prawns wrapped in potato with a soya mayonnaise and lovely lamb chops with whisker-thin wild asparagus.

Another superb institution, regularly number one on Trip Advisor on the slopes is **Antorcha**,

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**TOP TEAM: The boys at Ci Vendiamo**

which sits by the Kenia Nevada hotel.

Run by Antonio and Maite for a decade, each table gets its own 'sausage tree', while its speciality of the house is the 'hot and spicy platter' on which you can cook your own rump steaks, up to 400g.

Another popular and successful spot is **La Muralla**, run by brothers Luciano and Gonzalo, which is rarely empty and has some of the resort's best tapas and excellent wines by the glass.

Apart from the amazing steaks, a real highlight are the 'tostas', which come in various guises and a *milhoja* of foie gras.

The brothers, meanwhile, have



**SAUSAGE TREE: La Antorcha**



**FABULOUS FISH: At La Mar Sala and (below) La Lonja**

another excellent spot Las Gondalas, right in the heart of the town and perfect for some apres-ski light bites, a hot drink or a beer.

Without a doubt though, the most consistent place to eat in the Sierra Nevada is the brilliant Italian **Ci Vendiamo**, where chef/owner Stevie Silva produces a great Michelin-starred range of food.

Silva, a professional snowboarder, just gets better and better, thanks to help from his talented team, including Austrian chef Tomas.

It is an amazing place to eat steak and superb pizzas thanks to his pizza oven, but it is the sushi which most impresses this season.

The 'false' sushi rolls, with courgettes, seven spices, cress, chives and edible flowers are unmissable, while the superb duck roll with ginger, guacamole, tuna and soy sauce is delicious.

There are fabulous mini 'gambas pil pil' hamburgers and a lot of the classics such as raclette and provolone with tomato. And this year, the guys have launched a kids menu for just €7.50 and English breakfast from 8am!

A new chef to watch out for, meanwhile, is Albert Niesta, who previously worked at Ci Vendiamo. Now installed at the stylish **Vinoteca**, he learned to cook in Girona and Mallorca, where he turned a failing local into the number one rated restaurant on *Trip Advisor* for the whole island.

And it is not at all surprising, his knowledge of the cookery scene being tip top and his repertoire being wide.

A fan of 'molecular cooking', which he studied for six months, he has turned his kitchen into a sort of science lab, and experiments with all sorts of foams and fads.

Either way, his crude tartar of salmon with wakame and sesame seeds was amazing, as was

# La Antorcha

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## 30<sup>o</sup> *All about* **Sierra Nevada**

From Page 29



**CREATIVE: Albert at Vinoteca**

his 52-hour slow cooked lamb. A 'basil cake' pudding with apple ice cream, tomato and amaretto was incredible. I was also impressed with the recently-upgraded **La Mar Sala**, where Carlos has created an ambient spot, perfect for tapas and wines by the glass. This bijoux spot by the Melia hotel counts on some excellent wines from around Spain and the very best seafood from Motril, including boquerones, cigalas and conchas finas. For a great place to eat overlooking the slopes make your way to **Tia Maria**, which has a good mix of dishes and is a great place for breakfast. Finally, for coffee, **Vertical** is hard to be beaten and also has a great range of snacks and light bites, including hot dogs for the British clientele.

### WHERE TO STAY

**From modern to traditional, there is something for everyone's budget in the Sierra Nevada**

It is hard to describe Pradolano as an authentic mountain village.

But, with a metre of snow on the ground and the sun finally out, it certainly has its charms. In terms of places to stay there are plenty of modern hotels, such as the stylish **Sol Melia** in the heart of the town or the incredible five-star **Lodge**, part of the Marbella Club chain, which recently reopened after a fire gutted it two years ago.

But easily one of the most charming has got to be the stalwart **Hotel Kenia Nevada**, which is well located near the centre of town and open most of the year.

Run by the friendly Don Pedro – who used to ski for the country as a youngster – it is clean, well run and serves up one of the best breakfasts in Spain.

It also has a gym, with an amazing in-house masseur Belen Gomez, and plenty of communal areas, filled with charming old furniture.

Slap bang in the centre, then you can do no better than the **Melia Sol y Nieve**, which has a celebrated spa, comfortable luxury rooms and all the mod-

# Sliding to sleep



**TRADITION: Kenia Nevada Hotel and (below) Melia Spa**

ern feel of a top urban hotel.

If you are looking for somewhere to rent then **Sierra Nevada Alquileres** ([www.alquileressierranevada.es](http://www.alquileressierranevada.es)) is a good bet, with the company having over 100 places on its books.




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**REVELLERS:** Apres ski fun in the 1970s

# Party pistes!

## WHERE TO GO OUT

IT has been an institution for apres ski nightlife in Spain for decades. But unless you know where to go it might leave you scratching your head.

Something of a secret scene, based in half a dozen key spots, you need to ask the Sierra Nevada locals where and at what time things kick off. One thing is for sure, the place will be rocking at key times of the year, particularly Christmas

**There are plenty of nightspots in the Sierra Nevada if you know where to look**



**PARTY BOYS:**  
At Jaleo

and New Year and at Semana Santa. Outside of this week-ends are pretty busy most of the season. As the sun sets in the afternoon you need to be hanging out at various terraces in the heart of the village, including **Tia Maria** and **Crescendo**, and the legendary **Bar Ski**. Later, things start hotting up at **la Bodeguita**, at the Sol Melia hotel, **La Mar Sala** and at the institution **Jaleo**, which is rocking well into the early hours.

The montage of photos on the walls are testament to this factory of fun and this is your best spot in the heart of the resort come nightfall. From here you need to head up the hill to the main concentration of nightspots, which congregate about halfway up the hill in Edificio Bulgaria. Here you will find an **Irish pub**, **Hippodromo** and the stylish **Soho Soho**, which bangs out some fabulous dance tunes well into the early hours.

## Burger breakthrough



**MARIA:** Meaty treats at Telesilla Burger

WHEN Maria Rosales Donaire got a decent severance payment from her previous job as an accountant for a French multinational in Madrid, she knew exactly her next career path. Coming from Granada, it was only natural that the canny mother-of-two would set up a new business in the nearby Sierra Nevada.

Seeing a gap in the market, she invested in a restaurant in pole position right on the main square in the heart of Pradollano. Rebranding it as a quality hamburger joint, Telesilla Burger, she has cleverly trapped a large part of the expat and foreign market. Installing some funky ski lift seats, not to mention a big screen for all the big footie games - including the Premier League - she has seen big growth over the last four years.

"We just offer good quality, simple food, that is my motto," she explains. And it seems to be working.



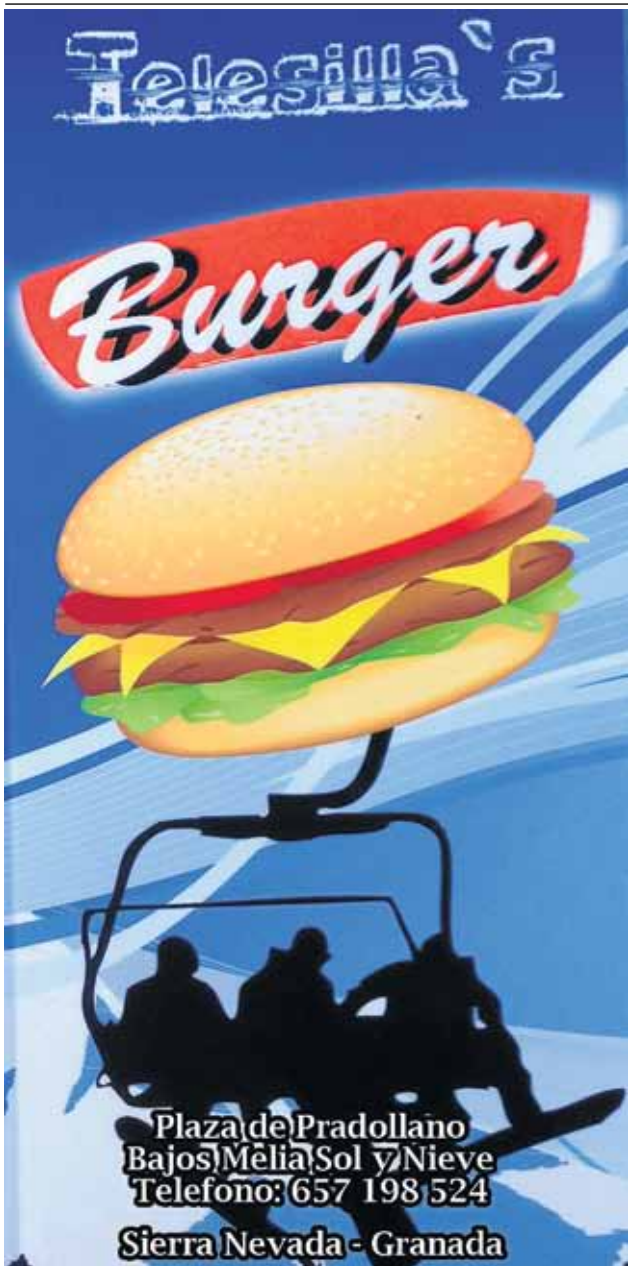
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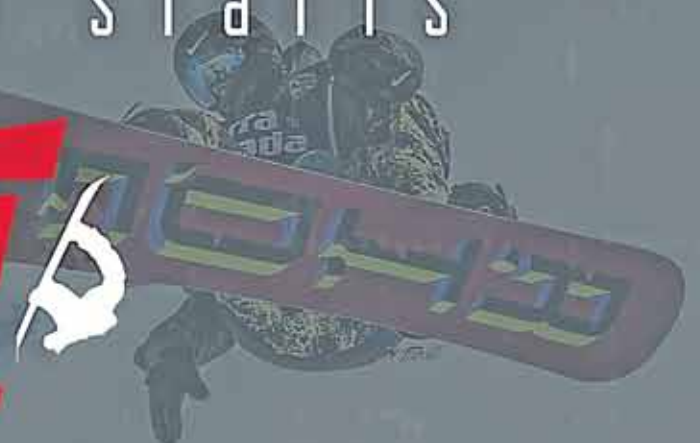
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The countdown starts

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