

All about **Manilva, Sabinillas and Puerto de la Duquesa**

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The town that enraptured a Roman emperor, a British Prime Minister and a flamenco star is not resting on its laurels in its drive to attract new admirers. Indeed as Joe Duggan discovers, Manilva is...

The perfect catch



PHOTO BY: JON CLARKE



END OF THE LINE: Manilva is the last resort on the Costa del Sol while (left) Roman baths and (inset) flamenco star Camaron de la Isla and Prime Minister Ted Heath

JULIUS Caesar came for the smelly sulphur springs, flamenco legend Camaron de la Isla for the tranquillity, while tourists today come for its rich and varied beaches, emblematic marina and cosmopolitan vibe. Brand Manilva may not have the instant recognition of its brasher costa cousins but like its locally-grown wine – now being given a Michelin star boost by Basque chef Martin Berasategui – the town is definitely improving with age. “There is nowhere quite like Manilva,” explains proud expat councillor Dean Tyler Shelton, a businessman who has lived in the town for 18 years. “We share a fantastic and unique mi-

cro climate nestled between the Sierra Bermeja mountains and the Straits of Gibraltar, there is a great mix of locals and tourists and there are excellent views of the north African coastline, including Ceuta. “In fact, most of the time you feel that you could almost reach out and physically touch three countries and two continents from anywhere you are standing.” Manilva’s first port of call is San Luis de Sabinillas, a tourist resort that keeps growing and growing in popularity. ‘Sabi’, as it is affectionately known by locals, has boomed over the past few decades from its humble beginnings as

a small fishing village with fishermen’s shacks literally on the beach. This jumble of buildings huddled along a narrow strip of the A7 motorway is home to a thriving expat community. In fact, the European Union flag fluttering at the entrance to the close-knit town of 6,000 is a fitting symbol of Sabi’s multinational appeal, with Moroccans, English, German and Spanish among the easy blend of nationalities living in harmony here. Street signs in English underline Sabinillas’ undeniably British feel while in bars such as Ricky Lee’s sports bar and

Turn to Page 18

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PALS: Reporter Tom Powell (left) with writer Chris Stewart

MANILVA - HOME OF THE OLIVE PRESS

THE Olive Press is proud to call Manilva its home. Relocating to the well located Costa del Sol town two years ago, we have been treated well by the locals and seen business grow as a result. Based in a spacious self-contained office overlooking the busy N-340 motorway, we are just 25 minutes from Marbella and 25 minutes from Gibraltar. "It is a fantastic location, strategically for our growth and due to its friendly, down to earth locals," explained publisher Jon Clarke. The official launch last month was attended by the mayor and Driving Over Lemons writer Chris Stewart.

All about Manilva, Sabinillas and Puerto de la Duquesa

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O'Callaghans, expats gather to while away the evenings. But Sabinillas' healthy foreign contingent is far from the stereotyped insularity of some expat communities which hermetically seal themselves off from their Spanish neighbours. Organisations like the Duquesa Society of Saint George, whose charity shops are based in Sabi, have helped foster strong ties between foreign and Spanish residents. The Boxing Day swim, held to raise money for an operation to save a Manilva teenager's hand, is another example of their community spirit and heroic altruism. Brit Karen Langridge has lived in Sabi for nearly eight years. For four of them she has run La Boutique on Avenida de Espana. "It's such a diverse town, a real hidden gem on the Costa Del Sol. Everyone supports everyone, if anyone has an opening of a new business, for example," said Karen. "The beach is stunning and you have a nice blend of the old and the up-and-coming. I have seen Sabinillas change a lot over the years. It's now becoming more cosmopolitan and elegant." Sabi's scintillating events calendar has also been helping to raise its public profile. The Sunday flea market has quickly gained a reputation as one of the best on the Costa del Sol. Every August, thousands of

FORTRESS OF FUN



RAMPARTS: Castillo de la Duquesa

revellers descend for Manilva's Full Moon Party. Inspired by the legendary beach parties of Thailand's Koh Pha Ngan island, this family-oriented event features Chinese lanterns soaring skyward over the sea. Those same Mediterranean waters have sustained Sabinillas over decades. Fishing

is still part of the village's lifeblood, and the vast monument on the promenade honours those local men who have risked their lives at sea. A mosaic (see right) on Avenida Manilva also pays colourful tribute to this vital industry. Meanwhile, sun worshippers and bathers can enjoy the

Blue Flag beach - one of the coast's best - which fans out invitingly. Strolling past the restaurants that line the promenade's wide expanse, you eventually arrive at bustling Puerto de la Duquesa, where the vessels are primarily geared towards leisure. Ranks of sleek yachts bob

in the harbour, enclosed on three sides by dazzling white buildings.

Famed for its nightlife, Puerto de la Duquesa is also home to well-known bars like Hemingway's and Leisure Lounge, which has one of the biggest screens to watch sports on the Costa del Sol. Restaurants paying court to a cornucopia of cuisines offer everything from a traditional British carvery to Asian fare and Spanish staples. The best, including Parapiros and Il Capitano, have been plying their trade for over three decades.

Continue on and after five minutes you arrive at the impressive Castillo de la Duquesa.

This hardy fortress has faced the Mediterranean since 1767, when King Carlos III ordered Francisco Paulino to strengthen the coast's defences. Once home to the king's cavalry, it now houses a museum. Visitors can amble freely around its well-preserved rooms and ramparts. In Roman times, Duquesa was famed for its production of garum, a foul-smelling sauce made from anchovies that was hugely popular and exported back to Italy by the tonne (British chemo-chef Heston Blumenthal recently tried his hand at this Manilva



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3 Bedroom Apt - Duquesa



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Bedrooms: 3 M2 Built: 212 m2
Bathrooms: 3 Plot size: 1260 m2

Townhouse Casares Costa



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Marina Casares – Ref 253
Price: 245,000€

Beautifully refurbished townhouse with views from the roof terrace, Cosy interior, fully modernised and walking distance from the beach, supermarkets, shops, bars, restaurants along the promenade of Sabinillas.

Bedrooms: 3 M2 Built: 147 m2
Bathrooms: 2 Plot: 54 m2



speciality). Plentiful traces of the area's Roman roots are also still to be found.

Excavation work in 1989 uncovered a bath house site near Plaza de los Baños Romano, and a Roman necropolis lies just north of Castillo de la Duquesa.

However one of the most impressive Roman sites in Spain

lies away from the coast in the hills below Manilva village, on the border of Casares.

The Roman Sulphur Baths of Hedionda tempted no greater personage than Julius Caesar to take a restorative dip and is the reason town got its name Casares.

Today, visitors can still wade into the same waters as Rome's most revered emperor. The sulphur springs gushing from the valley's limestone outcrop have strong medicinal properties. And although the underground baths aren't the

most fragrant experience, the cloudy blue pools and arched brickwork offer a fascinating step back in time. In summer, families frolic in the waters or under the shade of eucalyptus trees. For a primal DIY mud pack, simply grab yourself a handful of clay from the surrounding walls and smear it all over!

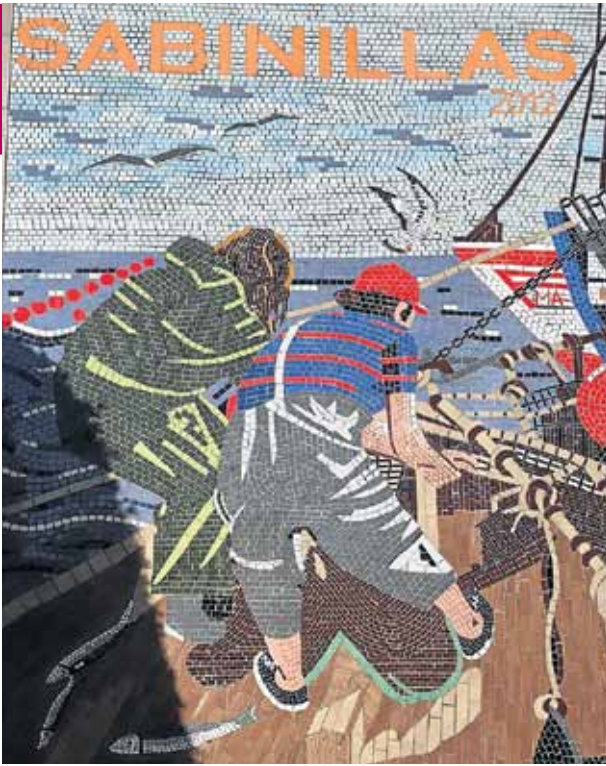
And let's not forget Manilva vil-

During the Napoleonic wars, Manilva was one of few villages not occupied by marauding troops

lage itself, a sleepy little idyll perched high above the hustle and bustle of the costa below. Its white-washed buildings are framed

with a neat mustard-yellow trim and capped with terracotta tiles, a picture-perfect Andalusian image in a town that remains truly Spanish.

Behind this unpretentious facade, Manilva has another less immediately obvious claim to fame: a small wine and grape industry.



TRADITION: Manilva's wine and fishing industries in murals

Good old St. George

THE Duquesa Society of St George has long been a cornerstone of Sabinillas' expat community - and now it has expanded.

Renowned for its charitable exploits, some of the society's recent good deeds include providing 500 Christmas gift bags to underprivileged local children, donating €2,217 to La Linea charity Hogar Betania and raising €10,000 for an operation to save an 18-year-old rock climber's hand.

Now as the charity continues to grow, it has opened a new larger shop at Plaza de las Naranjas.

Selling mainly second-hand furnishings, decorative items, books, dvds, cds and pictures.

Its committee of Dean Shelton, Gary Beaumont, Daniela Caballero and Judith Beaumont helps organise events throughout the year, including a Sunday market.

Both shops welcome donations of second-hand goods and volunteers.

The surrounding vineyards harvest the Moscatel grapes to produce a young wine called mosto.

They also sell the grapes around the country.

The NILVA white table wine (see Page 24) is another local speciality (beer lovers, fret not: local brewery Gran De Select makes some of the finest ales on the Costa Del Sol). In September, the town's sought-after juicy Malaga raisins are plucked and set out to dry.

The Plaza de la Vendimia (Wine Harvest Square) boasts a lovingly-recreated mosaic depicting grape-pickers at work (all except one character, portrayed enjoying a sneaky smoke, adding a humorous touch of realism).

On the first weekend in September, the square becomes the focal point for the town's annual harvest festival.

Held since the 1960s, Manilva buzzes into life as visitors pour in to celebrate the area's most famous export.

The opening of the Manilva Wine Centre in 2010 further

cemented the town's links with viticulture.

Manilva has a strong sense of its own history.

Old photographs offering snapshots of times gone are proudly displayed outside the town hall and in Plaza de la Vendimia, while a sign reminds visitors of the civic motto. 'Manilva: Very noble and very loyal'.

It honours the town's resistance during the Napoleonic wars, when Manilva was one of the few villages not occupied by the emperor's marauding troops.

Gazing out from the Pedreta mirador towards the rolling green hills embracing the neighbouring white pueblo of Casares, you can see why Manilva's town folk were so protective of this strategic vantage point with its incredible coastal views.

Meandering back through town, St Anne's church stands like a sentinel to the town's past, present and future. Worshippers have been flocking through its doors since 1776.

Next door is the final stop for many of the locals who have spent their whole lives here - the traditional Spanish cemetery whose row upon row of whitewashed niches bloom with fresh flowers left by caring relatives.

Even in death, the Spanish instinct to remain close to one another endures.

Today expats have been welcomed into the mix and this easy blend of nationalities is a huge part of Manilva's appeal. Anyone seeking an authentic taste of Andalusia's laidback charm will find Manilva has it in spades.



WHEELY GOOD: Sabi Sunday market

Market leader

IT is said to be the best flea market on the coast. And hours can certainly disappear while perusing all the weird and wonderful oddities at the bustling Sabinillas

SUNDAY MARKET

The New Fairground on the Rio Manilva road is the latest home for the famous rastro, a colourful combination of flea market stalls and fresh produce.

The market is always extremely busy with visitors coming from afar to bag a bargain. The recent appearance of bullfighter Javier Conde and his wife, flamenco star Estrella Morente, has only strengthened its reputation.



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THE ANARCHIST GESTOR

WHEN I do a ten-hour day it feels like a half day these days," explains rushed-off-her-feet Katie Rawlins, of Breaking Spain. Whether it's explaining medical documents, translating in court cases or sorting out a driving licence, she does the lot...and the phone starts ringing before 9am and often doesn't stop till 10pm. "Chasing up ITVs, sorting out NIEs, enrolling kids at school, sorting out a problem with the electricity bill, getting on the padron, those are just some of the things I do," she explains. The all-round problem-solving magic lady/fixer/agony aunt has been helping expats in the Manilva area (and a long way beyond) for the last decade.

Married to a financier, based in Gibraltar, the 37-year-old Briton moved to the town 12 years ago, following in the footsteps of her mum. Describing herself as an 'anarchist gestor', she spends her time running around helping her 200 odd clients that often give her just hours to get a job done. As well as working for Premiership footballers and millionaire businessmen, Rawlins - whose grandmother is Spanish from Valencia - mostly helps the common man on the street. "I only charge 25 euros to sort out a utility bill and I think I am very good value for what I manage to achieve," she adds.

Visit www.breakingspain.com
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Port of Adventure

La Duquesa is a culinary voyage of discovery, writes Tom Powell

IF the idea of travelling around the world in 80 restaurants floats your boat, bustling La Duquesa Port is the perfect spot to drop anchor.

A walk around this white-washed marina takes scarcely longer than five minutes but just count the blackboards promoting cuisine from all over the globe: China, India, Japan, and Singapore, and a plethora of European ports of call too! In the maze of alleys behind the port you will also find the excellent Hemingways, its bustling Irish next-door-neighbour Kinsales, as well as Tim's fish and chips, Italian pizzerias and authentic Spanish eateries, packed together more tightly than wheels in the car-park.

It could be argued that La Duquesa lacks Spanish identity, with more English voices than yachts and more burgers than tapas. But step out either side of the port, where Spanish chirriguitos (and boatfuls of grilling sardines in summer) fringe



PORT OF COOL: Duquesa

expansive soft sand beaches and you'll be left in no doubt which country you're in. This social meeting point sings through its restaurants, cafes and bars, the people who work in them and the visitors who sit in the sunshine enjoying them.

This elegant enclave of turrets and towers, pretty plazas and steps leading to different levels juts out from the mainland, encircling its attractions like an oyster encloses

a pearl.

Quirky and eclectic, it's like a younger sister to Puerto Banus - less glam perhaps, but less snooty too; more affable and, importantly, very much



Anything but lounging

AFTER following in his parents footsteps to Duquesa Port a couple of years ago, professional chef Matthew Heath needed a business to run.

Not just content to cook for mum Beverly in her cafe, Coffee Lounge, and help dad, Stewart, in neighbouring bar, Leisure Lounge, he decided to use his skills as a golfer to get on.

Playing off 'plus one', he decided to set up a business helping tourists have the 'best possible' golf holiday on the Costa del Sol.

Organising everything from club hire to transport and from accommodation to green fees, it meant he could spend as much time as possible involved in the sport he began playing at the age of 11.

"I was playing three or four days a week on arriving in Spain and was hoping to become a pro, but the language barrier stopped me sadly," explains Matthew, from Romford, in Essex.

"Luckily with the new job I get to spend a lot of time on courses and using my knowledge of the

coast to make my clients as happy as possible." When he is not organising trips with company Duquesagolfandleisure.com, he still helps out cooking at Coffee Lounge, which has a great range of fresh, healthy tapas and dishes, changing by the day.

He is also busy helping his dad organise the annual Duquesa darts tournament, which takes place over four days in the summer.

A keen Spurs fan, his dad's bar Leisure Lounge has been showing most live football games and boxing matches on its huge 155 inch screen for the last eight years.

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more affordable.

This sociable spirit is enhanced by the people who work here, who hail from all over the world and are woven into the ethnically diverse fabric of La Duquesa.

It makes sense that one of the men heavily involved in the port's growth is Moroccan Zac Hauswirth. In 2014 he opened his fourth restaurant here - Casablanca, specialising in food from his homeland.

He also runs the Ocean Café, where bartender Christian Llosa, who has lived in Spain since 2006, raves about his 'workplace'. "It's friendly, trendy and always busy, rain or shine.

Because of the people the port is alive and rapidly growing." While Christian admits the average age of customers is over 30, that changes during busy weekend 'happy hours' which are popular with young and old alike.

And of course, it's hip to 21st century requirements, with wifi freely available in all the cafes and every possible amenity a short distance away.

TURNING POINT

Tom Powell discovers how a daytime TV game show victory earnt Olive Press' Head of Sales Chris Birkett a fresh start in Manilva

TO viewers it was just another TV game show. But to 45-year-old Chris Birkett this was one final chance to give his family the life they dreamed of.

Nerves were high, he hadn't exactly got off to a great start on ITV's *Tipping Point* and the prospect of returning home empty-handed to his two-up, two-down in Essex, seemed a racing cert.

And then host Ben Shephard asked the question that convinced Chris fate was on his side.

"In which British Overseas Territory would you find Barbary Macaques?"

Chris, grinning from ear to ear, replied:

"I got married there so I should know this one: Gibraltar!"

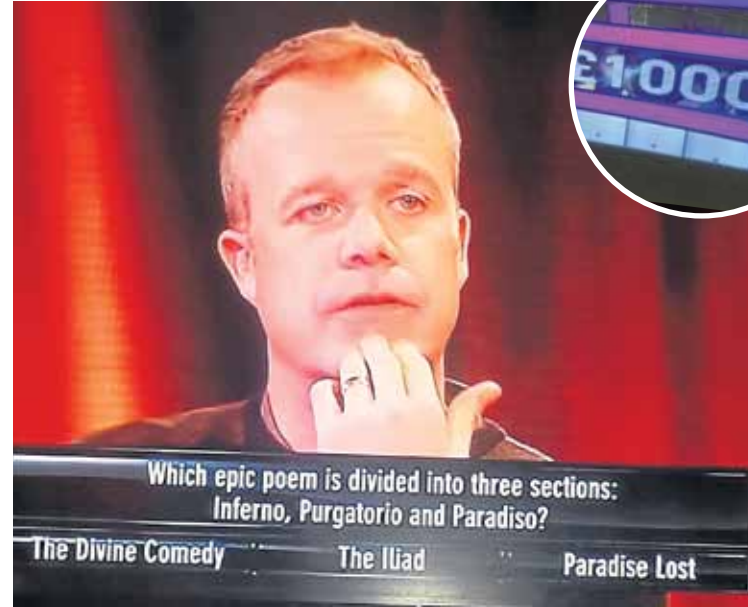
Now let's rewind a bit ... The year is 2014. Chris, wife Natalie and three-year-old son

Ethan are living in Ilford but dreaming of sun, sand and sangria (well, Ethan doesn't know about the sangria yet). Chris had previously lived in Mallorca (party-lovers might recognise him from his DJ days) so cold, grey England was far from paradise.

He had been working as a presenter on a shopping channel for four years, but they were desperate to move to Spain.

"I went freelance after leaving shopping TV to help us move to Spain but it wasn't going that well. I was working in dribs and drabs," reminisces Chris.

He applied for *Tipping Point*, not expecting a whole lot, and after a lengthy application process was eventually invited on the show in September.



PENSIVE: Chris considers the answer and (left) with Ben Shephard

Tipping Point, for those without an IPTV box, sees contestants answering general knowledge questions to win counters, each worth £50, via a large arcade-style slot machine. Only the winner takes home their accumulated money. The rest go home empty-handed.

As Chris recalls, it didn't start too well for him and the others were soon

racing into the lead, until serendipity seemingly intervened.

"There was the Gibraltar question, then one about Egypt where I had been on holiday the year before, and one about Maldon salt which is where I used to work as a chef," laughs Chris. "I knew that it was meant to be at that point."

And it was. Not only did he win the show, the jackpot counter dropped



HAPPY FAMILY: Birketts

on his final go, scooping him the full £10,000.

Before his wife knew of the win, he cheekily sent her a picture of him and the host, captioned: "Oh well, at least I got to meet Ben Shephard."

"You gave it your best shot, well done," she replied.

Then he sent a photo of the £10,000 jackpot and rang her. Her exact words aren't suitable for print, but she also wept tears of joy, knowing that this was the moment their lives changed forever.

Looking back now from his Duquesa village home on a sunny February morning, Chris says: "If we hadn't won the game show, we would still be in London. We moved here just over a year ago now and chose Duquesa because it's so close to Gibraltar and a great area to bring up a kid."

"I owe a lot to Ben Shephard too, he is a great guy and between the rounds he calmed me down."

Chris joined the *Olive Press* sales team last April and was rewarded for his hard work by being made Head of Sales just three months later.

Perhaps, along with luck and a little help from Ben Shephard, sheer determination and willpower also played a hand in dealing Chris and family their shiny new life in Spain.



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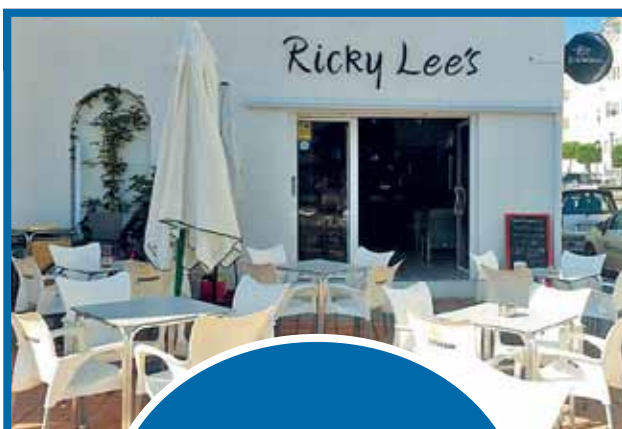


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Not just a bookshop

The Sabinillas Bookshop offers something for every occasion, as boss Steve Davies earns his stripes as a certified balloon artist

WHEN Steve Davies took the English Bookshop on in Sabinillas a lot of eyebrows were raised 'Good luck with that one' were among many of the comments made. However five years on and the transformation is almost complete. The 'Sabinillas Bookshop' as it is preferred to be called now boasts 28 bookshelves carrying secondhand books including crime, adventure, romance, saga biographies and many more. Why change the name to Sabinillas Bookshop? Well, we also have books in Spanish, German, Dutch, French, Scandinavian etc so it is not just an English Bookshop!

As well as secondhand books we also have a huge range of greeting cards to cater for every occasion as well as partyware including badges, banners, table confetti, candles and

sparklers. Our large selection of gift wrap, bags and tags compliment quirky gifts suitable for all ages. Daily newspapers are available and from May onwards we will be opening again on Sundays. Weekly and monthly magazines are also on sale in Spanish, English, German and French. The TV Choice magazine is available every Thursday so you can

plan what's on! Our PO Boxes are available to rent on a yearly basis and can be shared by up to four names per box.

A passport service is also available where passports are sent and brought back by courier, currently within a three week time frame.

In September 2015 Steve carried out a series of courses focusing on helium balloon decor which resulted in him becoming a member of the Qualatex

Every balloon order is tailored to the individual. The options are endless...



BALLOON MAN: Steve Davies

Balloon Network and Certified Balloon Artist, which funnily enough a lot a people found hilarious, however according to Steve it was very intense! So, with newfound qualifications and fresh ideas Fantástico Celebrations and Events was born, which is the new name for our helium balloons. As well as offering balloons in bunches, we can also create balloon displays, such as bal-

loon bouquets, columns of balloons staggered in heights and weighted at the base for floors or tables, and even balloon arches. Every balloon order is tailored to the individual. The options are endless since there are so many types and colours of balloons to choose from.

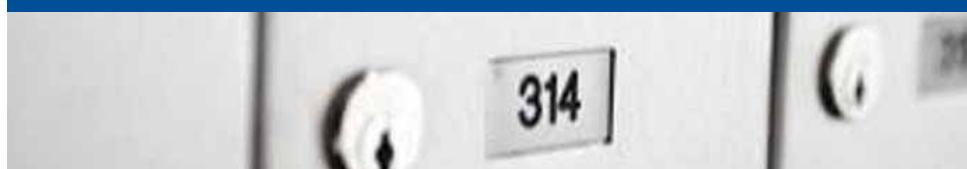
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More growth

Manilva property market continues to rise ahead of new luxury Crystal Lagoon site, estimates boss of Primrose Estate



STUNNING: Crystal Lagoons resort

AS 2016 kicks into life, Manilva's property market has plenty to be excited about, according to Duquesa expert Lynn Van Wilderode from Primrose Real Estate.

With the Costa del Sol continuing to see healthy growth, Manilva's superb beaches, proximity to Gibraltar and relaxed pace of life make it a standout draw for those looking to invest or rent.

The luxury €121 million Crystal Lagoons resort - in the hills between Manilva and Casares - is also set to create a huge leisure area for local watersport lovers.

And with thousands of golf fans attending the Sergio Garcia-hosted Spanish Open at the nearby Real Club Valderrama, in Sotogrande, this April, the future is bright for Manilva.

"We are really excited," says Lynn, who has lived and worked in the area for 13 years. "A lot of people are

finding Estepona too busy, or too expensive, so they are venturing further down the coast. "There are lots of changes happening down here and things are looking really promising."

The area's wide expanses and warm community spirit make it perfect for those looking to avoid the hustle and bustle of other Costa resorts. "It's nice and quiet," says Lynn. "People are not crammed into a small space. It's also residential - there are people here all year round."

With a shortage of long-term lets in the area and demand high among people commuting to Gibraltar for work, it's an ideal market for those looking to invest.

"I have seen an increase in people looking to rent and they can't find properties. If people are looking for an investment, this is a great area," says Lynn. And with the rental

market offering exciting opportunities, Lynn's Primrose Real Estate is introducing a rental section to its website as the company expands.

Manilva's resale market is also buoyant, with a lot of big investors buying half-finished developments, finishing them off and selling them as separate units.

As always, British buyers are leading the charge. But concerns over security elsewhere in Europe appears to be leading a growth in interested buyers from elsewhere. "There are a lot more Belgian people, these days," says Lynn, who speaks Flemish, Spanish and English.

"I was in a beach bar with a client the other day and every single person there was Dutch or Belgian."

The USA firm Crystal Lagoon's first project in Spain, Alcazaba, will create four-acre crystal-clear lagoon that is ideal for swimming, kayaking and other water sports. The site will initially see 450 new apartments with 350 more to be added.

"It is something different we have never had here before," says Lynn. "We are hopeful that when that is finished it will bring a lot of international people."

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Europe comes to the coast

EVERYTHING from small apartments to luxury villas are being snapped up in Manilva. That is according to leading agent Coast to Coast properties.

Set up in 2002 by Brit Brian Berney, Coast to Coast has established itself as a go-to agent for clients from across Europe.

With staff able to speak English, Spanish, French and Italian, Coast to Coast has been finding dream homes for people from all corners of Europe and even further afield.

"The last 18 months has seen a boom in the number of people coming to Manilva from across Europe, especially Brits and Scandinavians," Berney says. "Being close to both Marbella and Gibraltar is definitely a pull for Europeans."

He adds: "People are still on the lookout for a bargain, but as more and more property is bought up the real bargains are becoming harder to find."

"However, it is good news for the market which at last looks to be stabilising."

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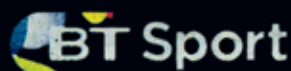
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All about **Manilva, Sabinillas and Puerto de la Duquesa**

Just one man stands in the way of developers to protect Manilva's historic wine tradition. In a remarkable success story, he has now managed to get his wine into the world's best restaurants, writes Iona Napier

If you are lucky enough to dine at the swish Basque Restaurante Martin Berasategui – the world's best restaurant according to TripAdvisor – order a bottle of Nilva from Manilva. Produced from moscatel grapes grown on a tiny vineyard overlooking the sea, the dry, fruity white made a big impression on the eight-Michelin-starred chef, Berasategui, who personally selected it for his wine list last year.

And he's not the only big name to back Nilva: the wine is now also available at three-Michelin starred Arzak in San Sebastian and endorsed by TV chef David de Jorge of Telecinco show 'Robin Food'.

This success would be remarkable by any standards but the fact that Nilva is the realisation of one Albacete man's dream makes it all the more astonishing. When I ask Argimiro Martinez Moreno how many people he employs to make the wine, his answer is simple: one, himself! Not long ago the only local wine came in a plastic bottle with no label.

Now Argimiro is leading a battle to revive and promote the town's winemaking which, after all, has been going on since Roman times.

His wine, says Argimiro, is 'the only wine made on the Costa del Sol and



TOP BUYER: Argimiro with Berasategui

the first to be sold in restaurants and official shops'. Several restaurants and bars along the coast stock the delicious wine, but there should be far more.

"I don't know why more local establishments don't serve up local produce, particularly as Brits and Scandinavians love dry, fruity wine and have given great feedback."

The Manilva vineyards are now, officially, at the heart of a massive project to boost local tourism. Argimiro also runs the new wine mu-



FROM GROUND TO GLASS: Picturesque I

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le origins



Penoncillo grapevine in Manilva

seum and 'wine interpretation centre' at the entrance to Manilva, a treasure trove of exhibits, with audiovisual room showing educational films, a chance to see wine being made, and local art exhibitions which change monthly. Entrance is just €3 (and free for Manilva residents). There are extra options for every budget, including a guided tour with wine-tasting and appetisers for groups, starting at €13, and a new tour of the museum, bodega and vineyard followed by a local speciality of lamb chop grilled on vine branches ('buenísimo' according to Argimiro) from €30 per head.

The impressive museum which boasts an underground bodega and lab, huge auditorium, bar and terrace, was built by the town hall in 2008 and used for two years as a wine school (Argimiro was originally a teacher) for 24 lucky students until the Junta ran out of funds.

But, either way, Argimiro is convinced that the town can cash in on the estimated six million people coming to Spain for wine tourism each year.

"I believe we can attract a new cultured crowd to Manilva, aside from the traditional beach tourism," he estimates.

More than just a tourist attraction, the museum's purpose is to inform locals as well as tourists about the area's long-standing winemaking tradition. And also the need to protect it.

Maps and guides some 500 years old show that Manilva was covered in vines way back from Roman times. But since then nearly three quarters have vanished, most of them in the last two decades due to development. "Ultimately owners made a lot more

money selling their land to developers than from making wine," he explains.

"Perhaps 30 to 40 times that amount."

Some of the most productive vineyards, such as around Dona Julia golf course in Casares, have long gone due to the construction boom.

One of Spain's most infamous developers Rafael Gomez Sanchez, aka Sandokan, allegedly bought up around half of the land around Manilva village and it was only the property crash that stopped him digging up the lot.

"I am passionate about protecting the vines," says Argimiro, who is now lobbying the authorities to protect the vineyards and help to give them new life.

An agricultural engineer by trade, he moved his family to Estepona in 2009 and rented the vineyard 'del Penoncillo', the bodega and museum from the town hall.

"It certainly hasn't been easy," admits Argimiro, who, currently bottles between 2,500 and 5,000 bottles a year depending on the harvest.

"It definitely isn't profitable yet, the world of wine is very slow, but I believe it will be." He continues: "It is also perhaps ironic that I have to pay so much to use the museum and land while I am doing so much for tourism."

"I guess I must be a little bit mad to pursue this, but if that's what it takes to succeed then I'm happy to go with that. I really believe in this project."

It's hard not to admire this man for uprooting his life in Albacete to bring his wife, Inma, and kids Argimiro, 20, and Carlos, 15, with him on his wine crusade. He was raised by a father who made



wine as a hobby, so the passion for winemaking is almost genetic.

And his agricultural engineering degree, which he got in Cordoba, led to designing vineyards and other projects. Now his key goal is to get more international chefs, like Martin Berasategui, to visit the winery and stock his wines. He had first met Berasategui in San Sebastian, last year, after sending him some samples to try.

"He has completely backed our project, sponsored some vines and is planning to visit in the future to continue supporting our vision," he said. If you don't have the budget to sample Nilva along with a three-course dinner at Restaurante Martin Berasategui, you can buy a bottle from the museum in Manilva where it sells from €5.

You never know, the local restaurants nearby might let you open it with lunch.

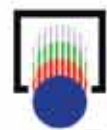
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²⁶ **All about Manilva, Sabinillas and Puerto de la Duquesa**

Cirque to Soleil

Rob Horgan discovers how a British expat went from elephant trainer in the USA to chef at Manilva's coolest chiringuito



UNLIKELY PALS: Nigel with Flora, while (below) his new beach bar home Floria

FROM training elephants to topping pizzas, Floria chef Nigel Crumplin certainly has an interesting CV.

Arriving in Manilva five years ago, Brit Nigel swapped the circus for the kitchen when he teamed up with Floria's charismatic Dutch owner Peter Nette. And while Nigel, 48, admits there are 'little-to-no transferable skills' between training circus animals and serving up tapas, his move from Circus Flora to Floria chiringuito 'seems like fate'.

"The similarity in name is uncanny," Nigel, originally from Wiltshire, says. "If you had told me all those years ago that I would be working at a beach bar named Floria I wouldn't have believed you."

Nigel spent four years touring the USA with the circus in the 1990s.

His main duty - and the one he enjoyed the most - was training with the star act, Flora the elephant.

"We had a great relationship," Nigel says. "Our act was a theatrical circus, it was mainly comical stunts."

"Flora could do all sorts of things, but her best trick was spraying a member of the audience with shaving foam and pretending to give them a shave."

He added: "To be honest, once you were shown how to train the animals it wasn't that hard at all."

"It really was a unique experience, it was the best time of my life."

As well as training Flora, Nigel also worked with four horses, a goat and a piano-playing cockerel. Nowadays, sporting an apron and chef's hat, he has trouble convincing Floria's punters of his glamorous past.

"People see me in the kitchen

now and assume that is what I've done my whole life," he adds.

"I now don't leave the house without taking the photo of me kissing Flora on her trunk."

"It certainly is a conversation starter."

Find Nigel at Floria, where there is a large decked area as well as musical performances, for kids' parties and special occasions.

For more information call 600 654 286



Famous faces at the Oasis



PAUL Hickling created his dream restaurant on the side of a hill, miles away from civilisation at the time.

Over three decades later it has developed into one of the most famous, emblematic eateries on the Costa del Sol, as well as being a personal favourite of the late Keith Floyd.

With more than one bump in the road along the way to success, Paul has penned the ups and downs of his time at the Roman Oasis in his book, *My Roman Oasis*.

FROM A FIELD TO FUN, FUN, FUN: The Roman Oasis has changed a lot over its 30-year genesis and (centre) owner Paul Hickling with Keith Floyd

In an excerpt from his book *British restaurateur Paul Hickling recalls how he set up a restaurant the Roman Oasis up a dirt track behind Manilva three decades ago*

The day I arrived in a dusty ghost town



SPAIN has changed out of all recognition in the past 30 years and mostly for the good. But driving into the village of Manilva in the 1970s was a little like entering a Mexican border town in Wild West times. As I rode in on my steel horse to the centre of the village, the sound of the exhausts reverberated off the neat white houses of this apparent ghost town, and when I parked, mine was the only car in town. Heat shimmered off the empty, dusty streets where the only moving thing was the hind leg of a scratching dog and the only sound was of loud male voices coming from a nearby bar. But when I looked at the windows up and down the street there were female faces at them, all staring at me as though I had just landed from the planet Splogg. Had not these humanoids seen a scarlet Versace shirt before in a Morgan Plus Eight? Probably not, as the car was a British right-hand drive, the like of which they had never seen before in Spain. Then I noticed they weren't actually looking at me but at my Alsatian dog, Maeda, who was in the passenger

seat and appeared to them to be the one who was driving. I walked across the street, parted a beaded curtain and stepped into the bar which was dim and reeked of stale booze and where men sat around tables on wooden chairs playing dominos and drinking. It was just like in the movies when the bad cowboy pushes through the swing doors into the good guys' bar, and it was at about this point that the shirt got some notice. There was instant silence as 41 uneasy eyes turned to fix on me, which added up to 21 people if you included the one eye belonging to Miguel el Ojo, a veteran of the Spanish Civil war which loosely translates as Mike the Eye. Was I going to accuse someone of cheating, kick over a table, draw my guns and blast away? I decided not and, mentally spinning my pearl-handled

Colts back into their holsters, walked up to the bar at the rear. A barman of dubious hygiene standards was polishing a glass with a cloth to match and on the shelf behind stood a few dusty bottles keeping him company. After keeping you waiting for no reason, an upward jerk of the head and a grunt in these parts seems to mean, 'Buenos dias señor, what can I have the pleasure of serving you?' Oh, and imagine the smile 'cause it ain't there. As I didn't know the Spanish for 'a shot of red eye', I ordered a San Miguel beer 'cerveza' (pronounced San Miggel unless you are more recently in Spain and order a San Migwell which gets a few laughs from the locals).



People began to speak again, but in low voices which is a rare occurrence indeed in a country where even little old ladies can deafen you at fifty paces by speaking in their nor-

mal tones. Atrocious Spanish was used on my part due to ignorance, and atrocious Spanish was used on their part due to the complete disregard by the people of Andalucia to use the correct pronunciation as practised by the rest of Spain.

I gave up verbally and resorted to hand gestures and maps drawn on those ineffective paper serviettes from the plastic dispensers that are found in all Spanish bars. After a couple of hours, many beers and tired arms I hit pay dirt. The land was owned by a Señor Ferrer! The shaking of hands and the clapping of backs signalled my imminent departure, for the only thing left to complete my mission was to know where he lived. That wasn't to prove too difficult as, with my ample experience by then, I could have been the star in a charade contest. To my dismay when I mimed the question of 'where does he live?' the answer was the internationally recognised sign - a finger drawn across the neck. Yes, he had snuffed it. Back to the drawing board!



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All about Manilva, Sabinillas and Puerto de la Duquesa



Venta that drew the crowds

FOR decades it was the stop off for artists, politicians and celebrities.

So, it was something of a tragedy when Venta Madrona was knocked down due to the construction of an underpass through Sabinillas a decades ago.

One of the main stop-offs for travellers between Gibraltar and Malaga for centuries, the historic restaurant was always full and served up an excellent range of dishes.

"We had an amazing range of visitors, including Frank Sinatra, Ted Heath and former Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez," recalls the son of the former owner.

Now running his own wine and lottery shop nearby, Jose Antonio Madrona recalls the frequent visits from famous flamenco stars Valerin and

Cameron, Spain's most famous flamenco star.

"He was often here as he was a friend of my uncle. He stayed the night and frequently sang. I remember even dancing for him as a child."

The venta, which was built in 1929, also counted on the founder of Andalucian nationalism Blas Infante as a regular. "He had plenty of meetings here in the run up to the civil war," added Jose, who studied history at Malaga University, before studying viticulture.

The family now run the wine and lottery shop next to the roundabout, which at least prides itself on being a busy hub of the community - like Venta Madrona before it.



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Jane Clay has opened the doors to her plush new office in Sabinillas and couldn't be happier!!!

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Keeping it in the family



EXPERTS: Carlos (left) and Gabriel, while (inset) Juana

THE Recio & Madrona team is made up of economist Gabriel Recio Madrona and lawyer Juana Maria Madrona, who are cousins and are both born and bred in Sabinillas.

They are supported by hard-working Carlos in the office. Between them they combine charisma, legal know-how and tax expertise which makes for an unbeatable team.

They have had many British clients and continue to enjoy a thriving trade.

The homegrown team provides legal, tax, accounting advice as well as specialist assistance with partnerships, vehicle transfers, non-resident procedures, rentals, sale and purchases, property registry, litigation, wills and inheritance.

They are both graduates of the University of Malaga: Gabriel trained in Economics and Business and Juana in Law.

Gabriel has 20 years experience in tax and has developed his career from originally starting as a tax consultant in 1995 and then expanding into administration management in 2013.

He is currently the only person in Manilva who can register a vehicle under a new name after sale, and is in high demand for changing cars' foreign number plates to Spanish ones.

Juana has been working as a lawyer since 1997 and has experienced practically every possible scenario.

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**All about Manilva, Sabinillas and
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WHERE TO EAT

**There is a host
of good places
to eat in Manilva
if you have the
knowledge, writes
Dining Secrets of
Andalucia editor
Jon Clarke**

Manilva munchies



MEAT FEAST: At Bistro in Duquesa

It has taken a number of years to sniff out the true dining secrets of Manilva.

Starting in emblematic Duquesa Port, you need to get away from the waterfront and head up into the warren of squares to find the best places to eat.

Here you will find two of the longest-serving Italians on the entire Costa del Sol, **El Capitano** and **Parapiro**.

El Capitano has been here since 1983, when there were only three restaurants in the entire port.

Run by talented Pino, from Basilicata, it is charm personified with sumptuous deep red

decor, talented paintings and, even a ceiling not a million miles away from the Sistine chapel.

In total, there are over 200 dishes and more than 30 pizzas alone to keep punters satisfied.

Pick of the bunch was easily an amazing panzerotti with spinach, cheese, mushroom and cream, while pasta stuffed with pear, ham and balsamic vinegar was also impressive.

Nearby at **Parapiros**, which opened just two years later in 1985, you are also spoilt for choice with quality Italian food. Usually packed at weekends,

this 'institution' has a slightly more traditional menu, also with a nice range of pastas and pizzas.

I particularly liked the veal chop, stuffed with ham and parmesano, while a beef carpaccio starter was delicious loaded with fresh mushrooms and celery.

Also in the port, make sure to look out for the well established

The Bistro, a steakhouse which serves the best steaks in Manilva, unsurprising given that its 'sister'



SWEET TEAM: At Miel



PIZZA PERFECT: Young diner at Parapiros

business is the English Butcher next door.

Sitting in a great location, there is a good kids menu and the Panko breaded prawns and the duck parcels, with shredded duck in filo pastry, come highly rated.

A true dining secret is **Floria**, which has been dubbed a cross between a 'Spaghetti Western and the Flintstones', but to me feels more like Robinson Crusoe's shack.

Out on its own with the deep blue sea crashing onto the nearby shore, this spot is run by amiable Dutch-South African Peter and his missus Karen, from Antwerp.

The menu is simple and is all about good fresh fish and barbecued meats, while the pil pil

prawns are easily some of the best on the coast.

Nearby on the main road look out for **Marlows**, probably the finest fish and chip shop on the entire coast.

Well established, having first opened in Gibraltar in the 1960s, punters drive for often over an hour - from Ronda, for example - to sample the amazing cod and chips.

A true institution, owner Steve Marlow, has run restaurants around the world and is a classically trained chef, with a good knowledge of the business, having learnt everything from his father before him.

Across the road, down by the sea look out for the area known as 'el Castillo', where you will find the ancient 18th fortress.

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ALTERNATIVE: Hip Floria



This is a real hive of decent restaurants, many having plied their trade for decades, and well known along the coast. One recently opened spot though is **Freiduria Anka Juanito**, where Juan and wife Noelia, serve up a great range of seafood in a charming spot. Having worked as a chef nearby for 27 years, Juan is a talented chap and his three Ps, the prawn *pil pil*, *pulpo* and *paella* come highly rated. Up in central Sabinillas, the beach is lined with restaurants, but one of the best is **Miel**, run by friendly Dutch boss Kaat. An institution with high standards for breakfast, lunch and dinner. With excellent coffee and a great snacks and tapas menu, it is hardly surprising it is usually full. Another fine place to eat is **Marengo**, which has a distinctly different feel to its nearby rivals. Run by Isabel, from Madrid, it has a great range of tapas, pinchos and raciones to share. Just inland on the main square be sure to look out **Lo de Andres**, run by Andres, of course, who grew up working in his dad's tapas bars in Ronda.



TASTE LESSON: Pino explains his tiramisu to a client

A friendly chap, the mixed tapas plate is fabulous, while the ribs and other fresh dishes are extremely popular with expats. On Friday night, this is the place to come for live entertainment and now a *Spotify* set up, where you choose your own songs. Nearby hunt out **Cruz Blanca**, a typical Madrid-style bar/restaurant, which serves up ice cold beers and some excellent fresh seafood. There are specials by the day

and always some good value tapas at the bar. Owner Juan is a local businessman, who takes a real pride in the place running like clockwork and being the sort of place that he would like to eat. He has recently opened an ice cream parlour next door and is soon to open, yet another, restaurant alongside this Spring. Another institution and a fabulous surprise walking in is **El Molino**, which is beautifully built and created in a basement, just off the main N-340 highway. Deceptively big, it has been lovingly created with old wooden decor in the style of a windmill, hence the name. Best of all, it has a great mix of tapas and raciones, in particular the *bacalao* and the foie with jamon. Another emblematic place is **Café Nemit**, where Jose and his team serve breakfasts and pastries from early morning, tapas for lunch and bar snacks into the evening. In the heart of the town meanwhile, look out for **O Calagahan's** pub if that is more your bag. A great range of beers and snacks, you would be advised to look out for Karaoke and quiz nights each week. While not open till July it would be impossible to write about food in Manilva without mentioning the amazing **Roman Oasis**, just inland on the road to the Roman baths, of course. Over three decades old, it was here that legendary UK chef Keith Floyd came to spend some of the last few weeks of his life. A massive fan of the eclectic, original spot, he and owner Paul were close buddies and this is obvious by the amount of photos of Floyd on the walls.



WINNER: Plate of mixed tapas at Lo de Andres



TYPICAL: Madrid style bar Cruz Blanca

El Molino

Restaurante



TAPAS · RATIONS · MEAT · FISH

OPENING HOURS: 13:00-16:00 19:00 · until late
TUESDAY CLOSED

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