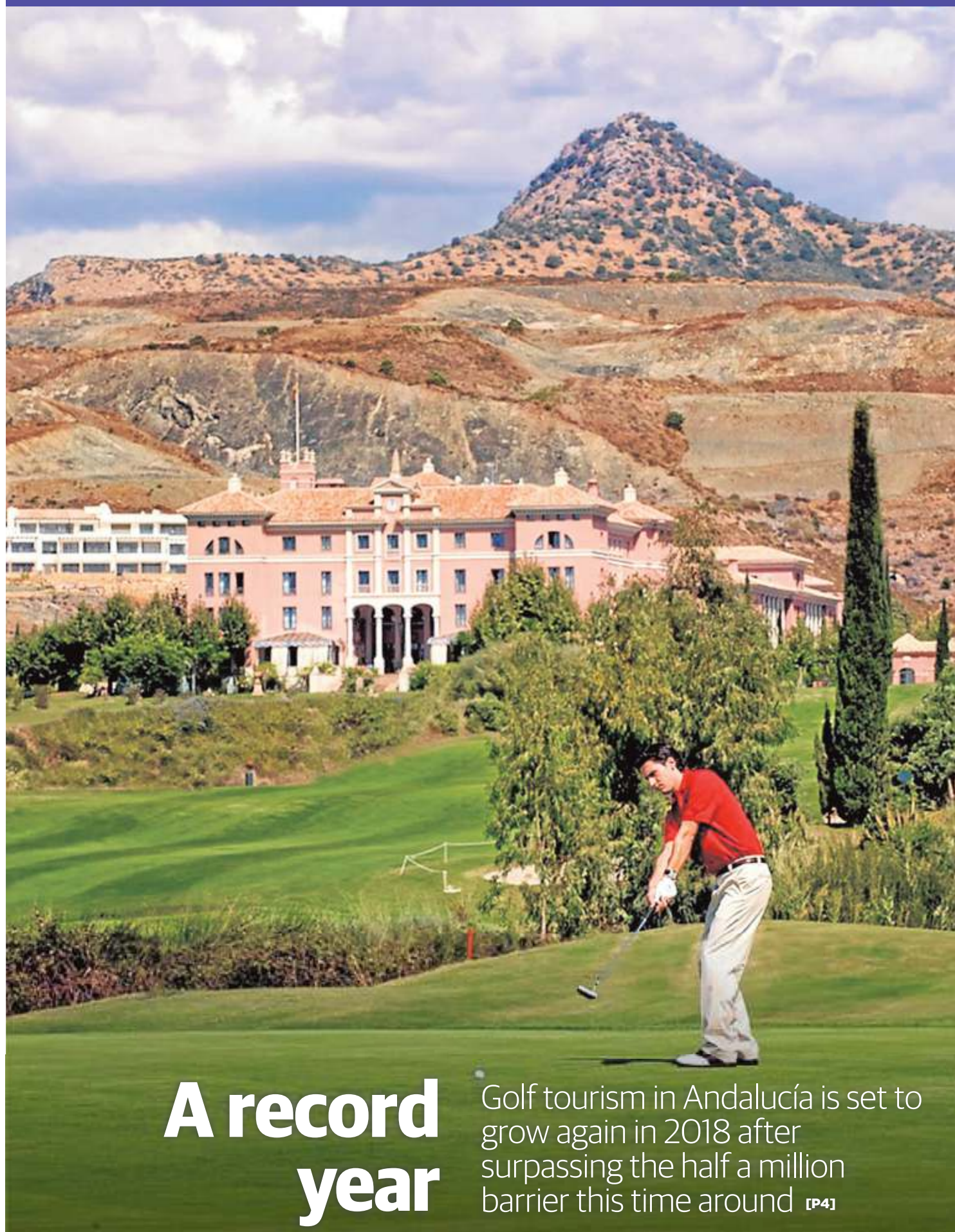


Costa del Golf



A record year

Golf tourism in Andalucía is set to grow again in 2018 after surpassing the half a million barrier this time around **[P4]**



TOURS

The 'Armada' seals its best season in years

Victories from García, Rahm and Muñoz round off a year full of titles for Spanish golf **[P2&3]**



SOUTHERN SPAIN

Lack of rainfall a growing concern for clubs

Many courses now must find more efficient ways to water greens in light of drought warnings **[P5]**

Sierra Nevada's high season gets under way

Granada is a versatile destination where you can combine skiing with other sports such as golf **[P6]**



Rahm and García, who have produced the greatest feats in Spanish golf this year, share a joke during the championship. :: **SUR**

García and Rahm lead Spain to its best season in decades

García won his first major tournament and Rahm achieved several victories in a year in which Muñoz, Quirós and Jiménez also did brilliantly

Jon Rahm's triumph in the final tournament of the European Tour in Dubai is not only definitive confirmation that he is part of the world golfing elite, having been in the 'Top Five' of the classification for months during his first year as a professional; it has also highlighted the strength of Spanish golf, which is as excellent now as it has ever been.

Rahm has closed the showcase of Spanish golf with a golden key this year, and he also opened it, with the first victory following his amateur career, at the iconic Torrey Pines course in San Diego.

Now a professional, he played a second round which will go down in history and his final putt for an eagle at the 18th will be remembered for a

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very long time. At just 22 years of age, Rahm's name joins that of Severiano Ballesteros, José María Olazábal and Sergio García as the only Spanish winners in the history of the American Tour. Nor was that his only feat: in July he won the Irish Open, giving him a hat-trick in what has been an epic season.

However, despite Rahm's impressive arrival on the scene, 2017 will be Sergio García's year. When many thought he had been relegated into the shadow of the Basque player, whose cyclonic arrival on the profes-

sional tours was a reminder of García's own early years, García surprised everyone by winning his first major competition, a Masters at Augusta which he has been chasing for years, and the first green jacket for Spanish golf since 1999.

But he wasn't content with just that. At the Andalucía Masters, which took place at Valderrama in October, he showed the maturity he has attained over time. García was the leader on two days, the second and the last; he witnessed the achievements of his closest rivals, such as the extraordinary albatross by Joost Luiten; topped the table during the final round, solo and in a draw, but none of these ups and downs, which he feared so much in the past, perturbed his serenity.



Muñoz, during the Spanish Open. :: **SUR**

Despite the spectacular arrival of Rahm, 2017 will be Sergio García's year after winning in Augusta and at Valderrama

Muñoz won the Spanish Open for the second consecutive year despite the pressure of playing at home in Malaga

García, who is now 37, used his experience and solid play to end by taking the title by a one-stroke advantage, enough to give him his 32nd trophy, the sixth in Spain, where he hadn't won since the 2011 Andalucía Masters, when he beat Miguel Ángel Jiménez. Earlier, in February, he took the title in Dubai. Another 'triple' for the 'Armada'.

Between them, García and Rahm have six titles but there is more life in Spanish golf in addition to these two champions. In May, Álvaro Quirós won the Rocco Forte Open, a European Circuit tournament held at the Verdura de Agrigento club in Italy, after beating South African player Zander Lombard in a tie-breaker. García took his seventh title on the circuit, and the first since 2011. There was also compensation for Rafael Cabrera-Bello, who won a title nearly five and a half years since the last time he had done so, at the Scottish Open at Dundonald Links, in July. This golfer from the Canary Islands, whose previous victory was in 2012 at the Omega Dubai Desert Classic, won in Scotland after beating Callum Shinkwin at the first hole of a playoff.

Otaegui and Oriol win

Adrián Otaegui also had a triumph, his first title on the European Circuit, when he won the Saltire Energy Paul Lawrie Match Play, which took place in August at the Bad Griesbach club in Germany, after beating German player Marcel Siem in the final.

The 24-year-old Otaegui won by 2 and 1 in a game which ended at the 17th hole. Earlier, in the semi-finals, he beat fellow Spaniard Alejandro Cañizares by a resounding 6 and 5.

Away from the two principal circuits, Pedro Oriol was victorious in the Rolex Trophy, one of the most prestigious tournaments on the Challenge Tour, and Miguel Ángel Jiménez triumphed on the senior circuit, in the Champions Tour, showing what he was made of in the Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic.

Separate mention has to be made of Azahara Muñoz's victory at the Spanish Open, on the European Tour, which she won for the second consecutive year despite the pressure of playing at home in Malaga. This was just one of the epic feats in Spanish golf this year.

SERGIO GARCÍA

First major in Augusta after breaking a run of bad luck

Known for years as the best golfer in the world without a 'major' to his name, Sergio García began to think this would never happen, but in April he finally won at Augusta. The Spanish player now competes with the calm demeanour of someone who has closed old wounds. This season, as well as the green jacket, he won the Andalucía Masters and the Dubai tournament, a triple victory in an unforgettable year: he also got married and will become a father in 2018.



RAFAEL CABRERA-BELLO

A title of his own after years of coming second

Although overshadowed by García and Rahm, Rafael Cabrera-Bello is regularly achieving important successes, despite a lack of fitness on the final days. This Spanish golfer won a title in July, nearly five and a half years after his last, at the Scottish Open, a tournament on the European Tour, which took place at Dundonald Links. After coming second on a number of occasions, he triumphed in Scotland by beating Callum Shinkwin at the first hole of a tie-breaker.



AZAHARA MUÑOZ

A win at home in Malaga after a difficult year

At the Spanish Open at Guadalmina, Azahara Muñoz showed her best form of the whole season. She performed brilliantly on the second day (-8) and her victory on the final day will go down in the history of golf in Malaga. This has not been an easy year for Muñoz. She suffered problems following a wrist injury, had appendicitis and the changes of trainer dented her confidence, but she managed to get back on track and win this title on the European Tour for the second year running.



JON RAHM

The most meteoric newcomer since Tiger Woods

In Dubai, Jon Rahm made it clear that his aim was to place his name as high as possible in the world ranking, and he did so with victories such as the DP World Tour Championship. This year, he has won the Farmers Insurance Open, the Irish open and now, in Dubai, a victory which has enabled him to reach fourth place in the world classification, coming very close to the top in his first year as a professional player. His eruption onto the scene is reminiscent of some of the best players of this sport.



ÁLVARO QUIRÓS

Making a comeback after dropping down the ranking

In May this year Álvaro Quirós won the Rocco Forte Open, a tournament on the European Tour, by beating South African player Zander Lombard at the second hole of an agonising tie-breaker when both players were at -14. The victory brought an end to a bad patch for Quirós, who had not won a tournament since 2011, despite having achieved six victories between 2006 and 2011, and dropped in the world ranking. Now he is making a comeback.



MIGUEL ÁNGEL JIMÉNEZ

Sheer talent, divided between Europe and the Seniors

In April, Miguel Ángel Jiménez obtained his fourth title on the senior tour, the Champions Tour, by winning the Mississippi Gulf Resort Classic at Fallen Oak in Biloxi for the second consecutive year. "I don't care what my birth certificate says, I feel young," insisted the man known as 'Pisha', who in November completed the lowest round for his age in the history of the European Tour. His card showed 63 strokes in Hong Kong: "I can still show the youngsters how it's done," he joked. Sheer talent.



Another year of growth forecast for golf tourism in Andalucía

The sector, which this year surpassed half a million visitors, has confirmed its recovery but the construction of further courses is not yet on the table



Over half a million golf tourists came to Andalucía last year. :: SUR

By the end of this year Andalucía will have welcomed 28 million tourists and there will have been a record number of over 50 million stays in hotels, according to information provided by the president of the Junta de Andalucía, Susana Díaz, at the World Travel Market in London last month.

Tourism figures between January and September were far higher than the forecasts given at the start of this

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year, which stated that about 27 million visitors were expected. This has resulted in the number of jobs in the sector increasing by 5.4 per cent to 378,200, and that figure accounts for 13.4 per cent of all employment in

Andalucía. The golf sector, which attracts over 500,000 tourists to the region every year, is also expected to show excellent figures for 2017.

The regional government's Minister for Tourism, Francisco Javier Fernández, said this is a "very good time" for the golf sector in Andalucía, where the regulations carried out in other fields, such as town planning and the environment, mean that there is no "imperative need" to modify the decree which

regulates the sector.

Fernández said that Andalucía is a leading destination for golf tourism because it has around 100 courses, half of which are in Málaga province. He believes the golf sector is now recovering from the economic crisis, but stresses that with regard to the construction of new golf courses, this would depend on demand.

"Andalucía has 20 per cent of all the golf facilities in Spain, and that

is very important. If there is a demand for more courses then some will be built, but right now I think we're fine as we are," he explained.

Fernández also points out that the development of golf has differed from that associated with sport in general. "The clubs now know exactly what their line of business is and how much they want to grow, and things aren't the same as they were a few years ago."

Golf tourism is one of the most important segments for the region, partly because it helps to overcome seasonal nature of beach tourism and also because this type of tourist spends more than visitors in general.

According to figures from the Andalusian Ministry of Tourism and Sport, the region was visited by 530,000 golf tourists in 2016, which was 10.4 per cent more than in the previous year. The predominant nationality was British, followed by Spanish and German.

Accumulated growth

Last year was the best ever for golf tourism in Andalucía, as the number of visitors who stayed in the region exceeded half a million for the first time. The figures show an accumulated growth of 25 per cent over the past five years.

In 2016, about 40 per cent of golf tourists came from the UK, followed by those from Spain (15 per cent) and Germany (12 per cent). Equally, the importance of this type of visitor is because they come all year round, and they spend more money on restaurants and other activities. In 2016 golf tourists spent about 117.50 euros per person per day, almost double that of tourists in general, who spend about 65 euros. The average stay was 10.8 days, which is two days longer than normal. Andalucía was also given a score of 9.2 out of 10 for satisfaction by these visitors, the highest grade so far.

The Costa del Sol is the jewel in the crown in the golf sector of Andalucía. Europe is the greatest source market for the so-called Costa del Golf, which extends from Vélez-Málaga to San Roque. An exclusive report into this segment, carried out by the Costa del Sol Tourism Board, shows that one per cent of the European population regularly plays golf, which means that 7.4 million people practise this sport and, of those, 55 per cent are federated players.

The 15 principal markets in Europe have 640,000 federated players so this destination, with its 69 golf courses and 1,134 holes in 16 muni-



THE COSTA DEL SOL, A PROMOTION ON WHEELS

The Costa del Sol was represented at the World Travel Market in November, but even though the fair has ended the region will continue to be promoted on taxis until the end of the year, thanks to a campaign which could reach ten million people.

The president of the Costa del Sol Tourism Board, Elías Bendodo, gave details at a presentation in Westminster Abbey, and stressed the importance of 'street marketing' - generating impact in the streets and not just inside the ExCel centre where the WTM was held. The campaign, with its slogan 'Always warm', is being carried on 200 taxis in London, a city which receives a huge number of visitors. The Costa del Sol Tourism Board says it will have an impact not only on the British market, but also on tourists who are visiting the city from all over the world. The campaign has cost 18,000 euros and the publicity is not only on the outside of the taxis but also on the seats and the receipts given to customers. During the presentation, Elías Bendodo also gave information about the Costa del Sol's presence at the World Travel Market, where 350 professional meetings took place to consolidate the area's position as a leading destination for the British market. The UK is the biggest source market for Malaga province and also for the golf segment, as the highest number of golf tourists come from Britain.

Each golf tourists spends on average 117 euros a day. :: SUR

cialities, is the focus of attention in England, Germany, Sweden, France, Holland, Spain, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Norway, Italy, Switzerland and the Czech Republic.

The study shows that the Costa del Sol is home to 67 per cent of the golf courses in Andalucía; in other words, two out of every three are in this area. More than half of the golf courses on the Costa del Sol-Costa del Golf are in Marbella, Mijas and San Roque.

Marbella tops the list, with 15 golf courses and 243 holes, more than 20 per cent of the total on the Costa del Golf. Mijas accounts for more than 17 per cent, with its 12 courses and 189 holes, while San Roque has nine golf courses and over 15 per cent of the holes.

With regard to the profile of a golf tourist, the report shows that they spend on average 1,827 euros on their trip, which is an average of 148.46 euros each per day on transport, accommodation and spending at the golf course. If they play golf, the amount rises to 205 euros a day. They stay between four and eight days and are active with regard to cultural visits and enjoying the local gastronomy.

"Having 20 per cent of the golf courses in Spain is very important for Andalucía," said the regional Tourism Minister



The London taxi campaign continues till the end of the year. :: SUR



Recycled water is often used for irrigation. :: SUR

The drought, a problem for the golf courses

The management of water resources for irrigation is becoming increasingly effective, with a view to protecting the environment

:: ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MALAGA. Whenever the subject of how to modernise golf courses in the 21st century is discussed, one of the main challenges is always the management of water. Irrigation systems, and the sources the water, are two key points in working towards environmental sustainability. For decades, the subject has caused controversy and debate but, equally, there have been some positive results.

In the case of the Costa del Sol, the Acosol water company, which is part of the Mancomunidad de Municipios of the Western Costa del Sol, is a benchmark in Europe for irrigating golf courses with recycled water. Thanks to this system, 45 golf courses are now using this type of water, which is most of the courses in this area.

Recycling water obviously offers financial savings, but it also protects resources. The treatment of waste water can be adapted to satisfy the requirements for the quality of water which is to be re-used.

Water used to irrigate gardens needs less treatment than drinking water. That considerably lessens the impact on the reserves of potable water. Although this recycled water is not suitable for human consumption, there have been no public health problems reported through contact with recycled water which has been treated in accordance with the regulations.

"We are committed to sustainable tourism and our actions in irrigating golf courses with recycled water reflects that; re-using the water helps to preserve the environment, sustainability and

care for our surroundings. It also helps to protect the water reserves in La Concepción reservoir and the aquifers," said sources at the Mancomunidad de Municipios of the Western Costa del Sol.

During 2016, Acosol used more than six million cubic metres of recycled water to irrigate the golf courses. Every year it provides about 300,000 cubic metres of water to each golf course, an amount which is around 2,000 cubic metres a day for an 18-hole course. The total amount depends to a certain extent on the meteorological conditions and the time of year, and how much rain falls between October and March.

Award-winning management

Prizes are awarded for effective management of water on the golf courses in Andalucía, such as Desert Springs in Almeria. This is the only desert golf course in Europe, and it takes imagination to keep it in optimum condition.

More than 11,000 cacti have been planted around the course, because they need no irrigation or maintenance. Also, since the golf course opened in 2001, more than 200 species of animals have been seen there, something which was unthinkable before the course was constructed. In other words, not only did the golf course not detract from the environment: it has proved beneficial for it.

As a result of all this, Desert Springs has been awarded the 2017 Andalucía Tourism Prize for Excellent Management, thanks to the intelligent and innovative treatment and use of water at its facilities.



The ideal winter destination for all the family to enjoy the snow and other attractions. :: SUR



Los Moriscos golf course. :: SUR



Snow Golf. :: SUR

Skiing and golf during the winter season at Sierra Nevada, Granada

The province combines facilities for outdoor sports such as golf with some of the best opportunities for culture and gastronomy

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

In November a new peak season for snow sports began in the Sierra Nevada, and the forecasts are looking good. Many people chose to spend a few days there to coincide with the public holidays on 6 and 8 December, but overall the forthcoming months are ideal for visiting Granada and other places in the province to enjoy the culture, the cuisine, the winter sports and, of course, some golf.

Things got off to a good start in the Sierra Nevada, where it started to snow in October and then did so more intensively last month. Last season, the ski station had the largest skiable area in its history - 80 kilometres - and it received more than 1.1 million visitors.

The president of the Sierra Nevada Business Owners Association, Enrique de la Higuera, said recently that advance bookings were very good, and "better than last year", in the run-up to the season. Apart

from the snowfall, the low temperatures made it possible for artificial snow to be manufactured.

Also, this is a year when investment at this, the most important ski resort in Andalucía and one of the busiest in Europe, should start to pay off. In the summer 1.4 million euros were spent on new facilities for the 2017-2018 season in the Sierra Nevada, and the resort expects to receive a return for its investment in the infrastructure for the World Snowboard and Freestyle Skiing Championships, which took place last March.

With the start of the first season since those events, which began on 25 November, Sierra Nevada also changed its corporate image. The new logo is not dissimilar to the original: it still features the peak of Veleta as a focal point. The station also has new and improved signs in the skiing area and at Pradollano.

Sierra Nevada 2.0

Something else which is new this year is that the webcams are being improved. Three of the six cameras of this type at the station will be changing their software so they can offer real time video images of the station and the condition of its pistes.

This season visitors to the Sierra Nevada ski resort will also find three new automatic ticket vending machines, two of them in Pradollano (at the two stops on the Parador chairlift) to speed up access to the remoter ski runs, and the other at the exit from the underground car park in the direction of the Jara chairlift, the natural access to the Sulayr snowpark.

The Sierra Nevada also has numerous other leisure attractions. Restaurants with food from all over the world, tapas bars, cafés, pubs, discos, cinema, heated swimming pool, spa and a magnificent sports club with modern facilities. The different hotels also have entertainment programmes for adults and children.

Major efforts have been made to make the Sierra Nevada ski station accessible to people with reduced mo-

bility, so they can live their dream of enjoying the snow and the wide variety of attractions which are organised there at a discounted price.

One of the many activities which are now on offer in the Sierra Nevada is the chance to play golf in the snow. Golf on ice is very similar to traditional golf, although the terrain is considerably different because playing on snow makes it more complicated to control the ball and the cold air affects the way it travels: it only reaches around 80 per cent of its normal distance. The balls are fluorescent orange so they stand out against the white background, especially on the green, which in the Sierra Nevada should be called the 'white' instead.

Emblematic courses

The good communications with Granada city and the rest of the province mean that golf tourists can practise their favourite sport on several of the courses in the region, such as the Granada Golf Club, which is in a unique location: on the boundary between the 'vega' and the 'secano', surrounded by small hills, near the village of Las Gabias, about eight kilometres from Granada.

Designed and built by Ramón Espinosa and Emilio Mena, the course is on a gentle slope, like an extended islet in the middle of the plain. On the part which looks over the valley there are two lakes, with a third on the opposite side.

Another course is Los Moriscos, which is the type known as 'links' and is about eight kilometres from Motril, in a sports complex near the beach.

Los Moriscos, whose course covers 5,072 metres, has a flat area adorned with slender palm trees and sugar canes. The greens are generous and there are large lakes.

Santa Clara Golf Club is also to be found in Granada province. It was inaugurated in 2006 and has a spectacular 18-hole par 73 course which was designed by Enrique Canales Busquets. The course is situated in Otura, just ten minutes from the city centre of Granada and less than half an hour from the Sierra Nevada ski station and the Costa Tropical.

The course at Santa Clara Golf Granada has wide greens with many movements and a wide variety of obstacles. It means a variety of strokes are needed, and is ideal for all types of handicaps.

To sum up, then, Sierra Nevada is not only a skiing destination par excellence but also boasts numerous unusual and classic golf facilities within easy reach. It is also close to the beautiful and historic city of Granada, which is well worth a visit at any time of year.

It snowed early this year, once in October and again in November, and the low temperatures made it possible for artificial snow to be created as well

THE MONTH IN PHOTOS



▲ **Rookie of the year.** Despite hardly playing all year because of his PGA commitments, Jon Rahm, 23 and from the Basque Country, recently won the Sir Henry Cotton trophy - given to the rookie of the year on the European Tour. :: GETTY IMAGES



▲ **Charity.** Tennis player Rafa Nadal (pictured) replicated his success on the court on the course at Pula Golf in Mallorca recently as his team saw off the challenge of the team led by former golfer José María Olazabal at a recent charity competition which raised 500,000 euros for children with mental disabilities. :: LUIS CORRALO



▲ **Andalucía Open.** Linares in Jaén province recently hosted the first edition of the Andalucía Open, a competition aimed at promoting amateur golf across the region. The week-end attracted around a hundred competitors. :: SUR



▲ **Andalucía Masters.** The Sergio García Foundation recently presented a cheque worth 123,116 euros to the X-ray unit at the La Paz hospital in Madrid. The sum raised during the Andalucía Masters held at Valderrama will go towards "humanising" the unit, improving patient care on a personal level and making the patient area more welcoming by improving the decor and installations. :: SUR



▲ **European Tour.** Spain's 'Armada' will have two more additions on the European Tour next year after Gonzalo Fernández-Castaño (pictured) and Pep Anglés finished in the top 15 at the gruelling six-round Q-School tournament at Lumine Golf Club in Tarragona. :: SUR

Costa del
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Alberto Gómez
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Advertising
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Telephone: 952 649 700
Fax: 952 612591

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We would like to hear from you!
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surinenglish.su@diariosur.es

MA- 343 96

AGENDA 2018

9 January**Guadalmina**

Men's Copa de Andalucía
Open tournament

Atalaya Park

Women's Copa de Andalucía
Open tournament

28 January**Mijas**

Asoc. Clubes sin campo And.
Open tournament

16 February**Costa Ballena**

Women's Cuadrangular
Open tournament

6 March**Parador de Málaga**

Women's Seniors and Doubles
Open tournament

20 April**Baviera**

Women's Gran Senior
Open tournament

1 June**Lauro**

Camp. España. 3ª Cat.
Open tournament

2 June**Mijas**

Gran Premio AFA Fuengirola
Open tournament

14 June**Mijas**

ASGA
Open tournament

23 June**Mijas**

Gran Premio Solidarios
Open tournament

7 July**Mijas**

Memorial Blas Fernández
Open tournament

14 July**Mijas**

Maderas Gómez
Open tournament



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