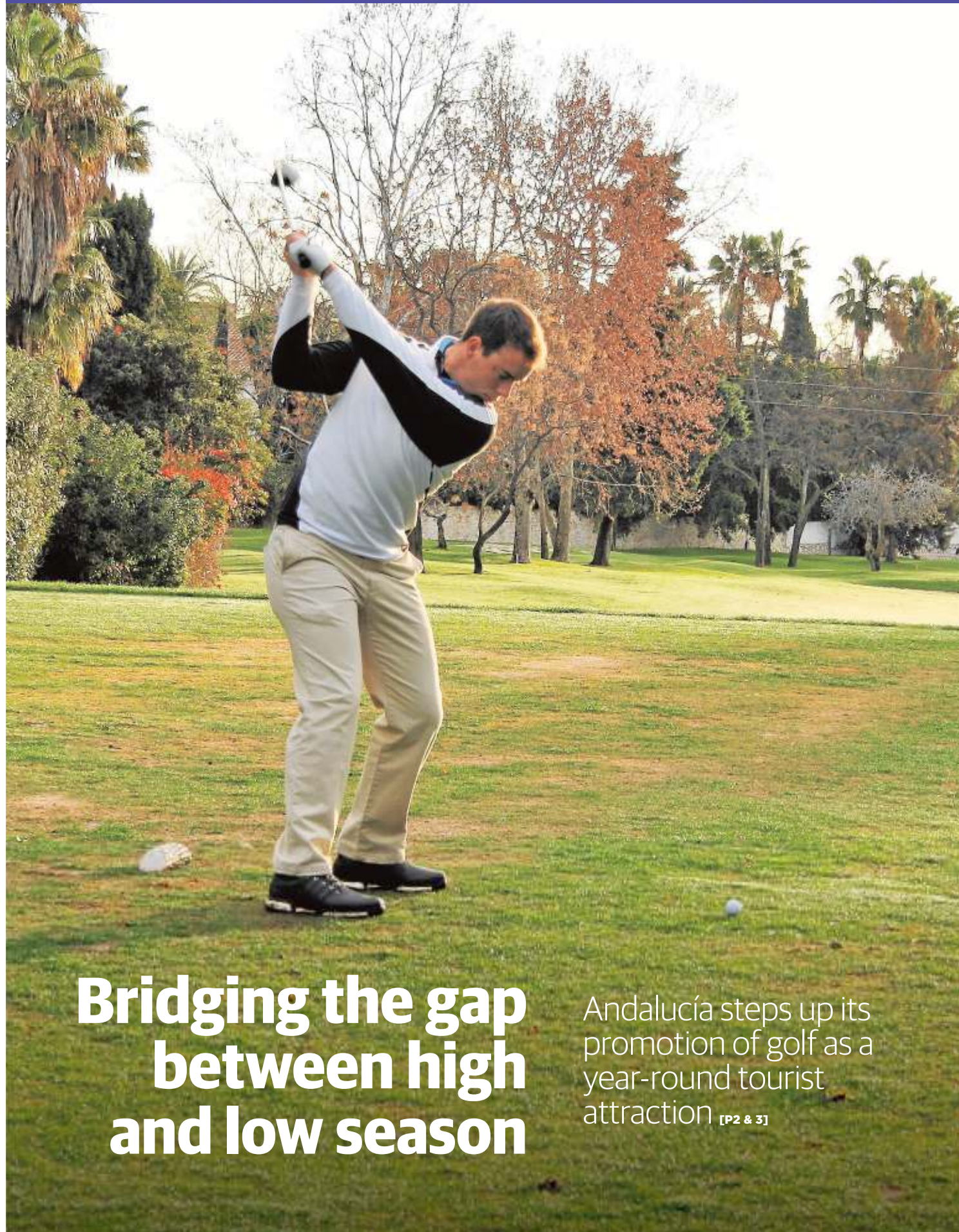


Andalucía Costa del Golf



**Bridging the gap
between high
and low season**

Andalucía steps up its promotion of golf as a year-round tourist attraction **[P2 & 3]**



EUROPEAN TOUR

The Open de España to make its return

The European Tour has announced that this historic tournament will be back this year **[P4]**



LADIES TOUR

**Azahara Muñoz:
"I'm more than
a golfer"**

The Malaga golfer has a new-found maturity and has started the season "with a good feeling" **[P7]**

**Huelva, bringing
sport and nature
together**

This Andalusian province is working to target Scandinavian markets through golf **[P6]**

Andalucía promotes golf to attract more year-round tourism

The region had a major presence at the recent ITB tourism fair in Berlin with the aim of attracting 1.7 million German visitors this year

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

Andalucía was keen to promote itself as a golf destination at the ITB tourism fair in Berlin earlier this month. This is one of the most important fairs of the year, and Germany is the second most important source market for the region after the UK: this year it is expected to grow by 7.4 per cent and attract over 1.4 million visitors.

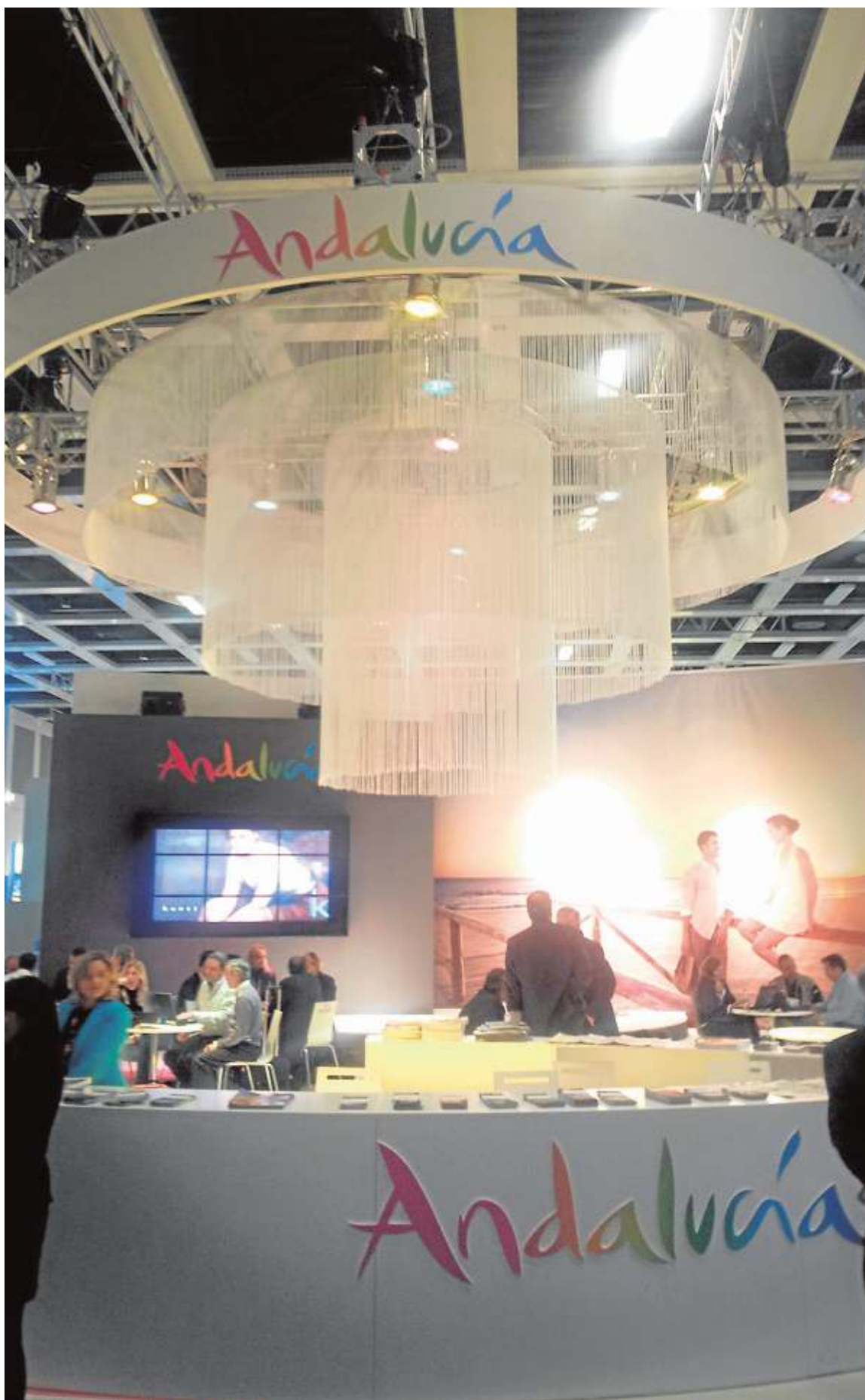
The Junta de Andalucía's Minister for Tourism and Sport, Francisco Javier Fernández, says German tourists have a preference for this destination and good air connections mean that it is easily accessible. It is a "strategic" market for Andalucía, he explains, from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

Last year 1.3 million German tourists came to Andalucía, which was 8.3 per cent more than in 2016. In terms of hotel stays, there were more than 925,000 clients, an increase of 7.8 per cent, and over 4.5 million overnight stays, which was a rise of 9.3 per cent. Both of these figures were higher than the national average. The German visitors stayed for an average of 11.8 days, which is nearly 3.5 more than tourists in general, and spent over 70 euros a day, four euros more than in 2016 and also above average.

With regard to these figures, the regional minister says that "this type of traveller is very much in demand in any destination, and what we want to do is encourage them to stay longer and spend more while they are here".

Fernández says that as a destination Andalucía "still has a large margin for growth", and that the regional government is optimistic in its forecasts for the German market in 2018. "This year we estimate that more than 1.4 million visitors will come from Germany, which would be 7.4 per cent more than in 2017," he explains.

To achieve these results, the Action Plan 2018 includes about 20 activities in this market, aimed directly at the consumer. The strategy will be based on promoting the usual attractions such as sunshine and beaches, culture, family and nature, but segments which attract visitors all year round, such as golf, business



The Andalucía pavilion at the ITB was 500 square metres in size. :: SUR

POWERFUL MARKETING FOR THE COSTA DEL SOL

While the ITB was taking place in Berlin the Costa del Sol, which is one of the favourite destinations for Germans, held a "powerful" marketing campaign including an advertisement on German television and cinema screens.

In September, the Tourist Board is planning to carry out another campaign in travel agents and on public transport in Germany.

Diputación chief Elías Bendodo says the representatives held over 50 meetings with tour operators, travel agents and the Spanish Tourism Office during the tourism fair, because these are "great allies" in attracting more visitors to the destination.

The aim was also to differentiate the area from its rivals for the German market, such as Tunisia, Turkey, Greece and Egypt. Bendodo explains that the Costa del Sol has received more visitors in recent years because of the problems in these countries and the aim now is to attract their loyalty as much as possible. These countries are now "taking giant steps" towards recovery in terms of tourism by "really dropping their prices".

The Tourist Board is also keen for air connections to be improved, especially since Air Berlin went bankrupt. Discussions are now taking place with Germania, TUI, Olimara and the TSS Group, which is run by Manuel Molina, who is from Malaga.

and tourism and 'cosmopolitan' tourism, will also be highlighted.

Stands

There were more than 10,000 exhibitors from 180 countries at this year's ITB, which last year received over 160,000 visitors, 70 per cent of

Fernández says Germany is an important source market because Andalucía is one of the preferred destinations

whom were professionals. The Andalucía pavilion was 500 square metres in size, with space to showcase the attractions of all eight provinces in the region. With the aim of generating business, it also contained 24 work tables for regional businesses, who are estimated to have made over 1,000 commercial contacts. The schedule included meetings with operators such as Thomas Cook and Gebeco and the Easyjet airline, which is planning new routes between Berlin and the Andalusian cities of Jerez de la Frontera and Granada-Jaén.

There was also a focus on flamenco, with the presentation of the 'Lorca and Granada cycle in the Generalife gardens', the Biennial in Seville and the 'Zambombas' of Jerez and Arcos de la Frontera.

This year, general visitors to the ITB were able to take advantage of new facilities, such as being able to download tourist information about the region onto their mobile devices, and over the weekend there were flamenco shows, food tastings and activities for children, among other attractions.

The Junta also launched a communication plan to raise awareness of the Andalucía brand and attract a greater number of visitors to the stand, and carried out a social media campaign aimed at potential clients from Berlin and its area of influence.

The Costa del Sol also promoted its golf facilities at the ITB, to attract German visitors not only in the summer but also in low season, which is autumn and winter.

The president of the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, Elías Bendodo, says that 900,000 German tourists came to Malaga province in 2017; the numbers arriving at the airport increased by 13.5 per cent and there were 12 per cent more overnight stays. He also points out that a third of German visitors to Andalucía stayed in Malaga.

These figures highlight the impact of these tourists, who spent 1.05 billion euros in the destination, and this is why the Costa del Sol was also represented at the ITB, "to continue to capture the interest of the German market".

The Costa del Sol plans over 200 promotional initiatives this year

Malaga will increase its presence at tourism fairs and promote its sports sector, with golf as the principal attraction

■ ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

The president of the Malaga provincial government and the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, Elías Bendodo, recently presented the Action Plan for Tourism 2018, which contains 250 initiatives, and explained that the aim is to attract different types of tourists to the area.

This year Costa del Sol Tourism and Planning will be investing more than 6.2 million euros on marketing. Last year 12.5 million visitors came to the area and their economic impact totalled 13.8 billion euros. It is hoped that this year the figures will be even higher. "We are going to concentrate on the sectors which are most likely to attract tourists all year round, which are golf, rural tourism and fairs and conferences," said Bendodo.

Of the total budget, 4.1 million euros will be spent on initiatives to promote tourism, 1.2 million on human resources in tourism and promotion, 300,000 on promotional material, 190,263 euros on tourist information and 435,000 euros on communication. About 646,800 euros will be spent on the golf sector.

"With our 70 courses, we are the best golf destination in Europe and the most powerful in the European Union, and we are going to attend more golf fairs to promote that," explained Bendodo. The first of these took place in early March in the Finnish capital, Helsinki.

In the sector known as VITA, which covers rural and active tourism, Bendodo said that Malaga's two principal attractions are the Great



With 70 golf courses, Malaga province is the most powerful golf destination in the EU. ■ SUR

Trail and the Caminito del Rey. This sector attracted 1.1 million euros last year, and 138,500 euros will be spent on promoting it this year.

The conference sector in Malaga province also has a great deal of potential and over 375,000 euros are to be spent on initiatives this year. All three sectors will also be promoted in so-called 'multisector' actions, which will cost 1.2 million euros and encompass all the products. It will

include a presence at fairs, online marketing and forums, among others.

Another 262,000 euros are to be spent on holiday and leisure tourism, mostly on initiatives aimed directly at the consumer; 191,000 will be spent on attracting elite tourism, and 75,500 euros on cruises.

Bendodo also stressed that the Costa del Sol wants to attract more

tourists from elsewhere in Spain. This sector increased by four per cent last year, and more than five million visitors came to the province. More than 60 initiatives are planned with this in mind, at a cost of 1.5 million euros. Malaga will also be promoted in 30 countries, including emerging markets, but existing source markets have not been forgotten. "They are extremely important; we have to look after them," he said.






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The Open de España returns

The European Tour has confirmed that the tournament will take place at the National Golf Centre in Madrid

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MÁLAGA. The Open de España, one of the oldest tournaments on the continent, returns to the European Tour for its 91st competition from 12 to 15 April at the National Golf Centre in Madrid, with one and a half million euros in prize money.

After its absence from the international calendar last year, the return of the tournament fulfils a promise made by Keith Pelley, CEO of the European Tour, during his visit to Madrid, where he said the Open de España would take place again in 2018. "I am pleased to announce the return of the Open de España, in which some of golf's greatest names have played; we are keen to know who will be



The tournament returns to the European Tour after an absence due to a lack of sponsors. :: SUR

adding their names to that illustrious list in the near future," said Pelley.

He said that golf is a sport "which is based on national championships such as the Open de España," and thanked the Royal Spanish Golf Federation and the Madrid Golf Federation for their collaboration in making it reality.

The first Open de España took place

at the Polo GC in Madrid in 1912, and it was the tournament which kicked off the first season of the recently-created European Tour in 1972, in Pals (Girona), at which Antonio Garrido was champion.

Over the years he was succeeded by four other Spanish players: Seve Ballesteros (1981 El Prat, 1985 Vallromanes, 1995 Club de Campo Villa

de Madrid), Sergio García (2002 El Cortijo), Álvaro Quirós (2010 RCG Seville) and Miguel Ángel Jiménez (2014 PGA of Catalonia).

Winners of major titles have also inscribed their names on the scoreboard of the Open de España, such as Arnold Palmer (1975 La Manga Club), Bernhard Langer (1984 and 1989 Campo de Golf Parador El Saler), Nick

Faldo (1987 RC Las Brisas), Padraig Harrington (1996 Club de Campo Villa de Madrid) and Charl Schwartzel (2007 National Golf Centre), and several number one players in Europe including Colin Montgomerie (1994 Club de Campo Villa de Madrid) and Robert Karlsson (2001 Campo de Golf Parador El Saler). In 2007 Schwartzel won the second of his 11 titles on the European Tour, four years before putting on the green jacket in Augusta.

For Gonzaga Escauriaga, president of the Royal Spanish Golf Federation, "recovering the Open de España is great news for Spanish golf and we are tremendously pleased to welcome it to the National Golf Centre, the home of all federated players".

As well as the Open de España in 2007, the National Golf Centre has also hosted the Madrid Masters in 2009, a tournament on the European Tour which was won by British player Ross McGowan, and in 2006 it hosted the Spanish Challenge, in which French player Adrien Mörk beat Martin Kaymer.

The National Golf Centre opened on 7 March 2006 and has produced promising youngsters and some of the world's best players, such as Jon Rahm, who for two years combined his studies with high performance golf. In 1990, the Royal Spanish Golf Federation, Madrid council and the Senior Sports Council signed an agreement to build a golf course in Madrid and 15 years later the result was this popular course which is now looking forward to hosting the Open de España for the European Tour.

ADVERTORIAL

A NEW CONCEPT IN LIVING

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Located at the heart of the Costa del Sol, UNICO Benahavís is a unique residential project designed with a new way of living in mind.

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The modern, spacious two and three-bedroom ground and first floor apartments and three-bedroom duplex

penthouses are all constructed using superior eco-friendly materials and include interior LED lighting, security doors and windows, hot-cold aerothermal air conditioning and insulation, all meticulously chosen to reduce consumption.

All apartments come with underfloor heating throughout as well as open fireplaces, and storerooms and parking spaces (one for two-bedroom and two for three-bedroom) are included in the price. With an A energy rating and Breem certification, the homes are modern and contemporary but also environmentally friendly. Health and wellbeing are catered for with communal out-

door and indoor swimming pools and fully equipped SPA area and gymnasium.

UNICO Benahavís's stylish design values the concept of space, with minimal visual interruptions and barriers. All rooms provide outside access and floor to ceiling carpentry blends into the walls to give a feel of complete openness, allowing both outdoors and indoors to be enjoyed equally. Bedrooms and bathrooms incorporate natural light to create spaces of peace, health and wellbeing.

Penthouses come with a second fireplace outside and options include pools, lifts and dumb waiters to the roof level.

Due to be the final development within the consolidated area of Los Arqueros Golf & Country Club, UNICO's modern and sophisticated design integrates elements related to the agricultural and cultural heritage of Andalusia. A sophisticated and qualified team of professionals has been involved in the project, including Milet Oliver for the architecture and Kerstin Schacht for interior design and décor. Landscaping designed by Mathieu Lèbre, whose achievements include the Catalogue of the Gardens of Granada's Alhambra, the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Marakech and the UNESCO World He-



ritage Site of the Dolmens of Antequera, will offer a reinterpretation of old Moorish gardens with stone walls, fruit trees and aromatic plants to surround the private oasis of the tranquil pool.

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Huelva, a remarkable combination of sport and nature

The Andalusian province is focusing on tourism which is possible all year round, such as golf, and has set its sights on Scandinavia



The beaches are among Huelva's many tourist attractions. :: SUR



The golf sector is important in attracting year-round tourism. :: SUR



The Doñana National Park, one of the treasures of Huelva. :: SUR

Huelva is a different type of destination, not just in Andalusia but in the whole of Europe. It has numerous attractions, such as its climate, its beaches and its protected environmental areas, but most of its tourists visit in peak season. However, thanks to sectors such as golf, it is now beginning to attract year-round tourism and every year more hotels in the province decide to open earlier after the winter break.

To try to attract more visitors in the spring, autumn and winter, institutions and businesses are currently focusing on types of tourism which are possible all through the year, and golf is one of them. The regional and provincial tourist boards have drawn up an Action Plan and have agreed to organise two golf tournaments to promote the sector to the Irish and Spanish markets. In July Huelva's golf courses and tourist attractions will also be promoted among tour operators

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

who work in the Danish market.

Although Huelva is working to increase the number of visitors from elsewhere in Spain, it has not forgotten the importance of tourism from abroad, and that is why it is now looking at the Scandinavian market. The authorities are holding discussions with Faro airport in Portugal, which is very close to Huelva and has direct flights to and from countries such as Norway. It is believed that more flights to Scandinavian countries could increase the number of visitors who come to play golf in Huelva by between 10 and 12 per cent.

With that in mind, a delegation from the Tourism Businesses Association recently went to Faro with the president of the Huelva provincial government and provincial tourist

board, Ignacio Caraballo, for a meeting with the director of the airport, Alberto Mota. The aim is to set up connections with Scandinavian countries, mainly Norway and Finland, to bring more golf tourists to Huelva. This would mean an extra 20,000 visitors in addition to the approximately 200,000 who come to play on the province's seven golf courses every summer.

Birthplace of golf

Huelva is the birthplace of golf in

It is estimated that flights to Scandinavian countries would increase the number of visitors to Huelva by 12 per cent

Spain. A long time has passed since the British workers at the Riotinto mines founded the Bellavista golf course in 1916. It was a pioneer on the whole of the Peninsula. The possibility of playing golf at any time of year, and in unique surroundings, meant that golf in Huelva developed at an extraordinary speed.

Nearly 100 years later, numerous courses now await visitors, offering a huge variety of enclaves such as in the Sierra de Huelva or, on the coast, the 'links' type courses beside natural sand dunes, or amid pine trees.

Walking across hectares of carefully-maintained grass is such a special sensation that it can only be compared with the relaxing strolls which visitors love to take, splashing barefoot in the shallows on Huelva's endless sandy beaches. Many tourists and golf enthusiasts walk with a golf club in hand to practise their 'bunker' skills, as these are some of the trickiest features for golfers to play. At low tide there is a golf course of

fine pressed sand where the offside limits are the dunes and the sea, an extraordinary natural space in which some great beach-golf tournaments can be played.

The Corta Atalaya Golf Club, at the beginning of the Sierra de Huelva, has a fantastic view of the mountains and the Riotinto mines. It is a nine-hole course with three par threes, five par fours and one par five. Half of the course is quite flat, but two of the fairways are on very respectable slopes.

For its part, El Rompido Golf Club, the most recently-built, is situated beside the beauty spot of Las Marismas del Río Piedra y Flecha de El Rompido, with magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean.

Situated in the municipality of Ayamonte, the H20 Costa Esuri Golf Club is in a privileged setting beside the Guadiana river, with a spectacular view of Portugal and surrounded by marshes and natural lakes. It has excellent communications with Seville and Faro airports, and is only two kilometres from the Seville-Portugal motorway.

The Doñana Golf Course deserves a special mention: it is in Matagorda (Huelva), beside the Doñana National Park and just metres from the Atlantic. The 18 holes are easy to walk and have been outstandingly integrated into the natural surroundings. The first nine holes (the Doñana Round), in addition to being high quality, are in incomparable surroundings. The second nine (the Atlantic Round) offer players the chance to exercise all their creativity with their golf clubs.

At Novo Portil Golf, the 18 holes open onto a woodland of Mediterranean pines at El Portil, a seaside town with a very mild climate. The round is gentle, and native vegetation lines the Bermuda grass fairways at a prudent distance from the game.

The Isla Canela golf course is close to Ayamonte and beside the sea. It is easy to walk, despite the different levels formed by the sand dunes. The surroundings are dominated by broom, but there are also abundant orange, olive and eucalyptus trees, some of them placed strategically on the fairways to complicate the game.

La Monacilla Golf Club is in Aljaraque, near the Marismas de Odiel marshes, five minutes from Huelva city. The course is in a privileged setting, surrounded by greenery, close to the mouth of the Odiel river and is a benchmark in Andalucía, providing players with some unique experiences.

And that is not all. Islantilla Golf Resort offers different courses to meet the needs of all players. As a whole, Huelva province can boast everything visitors need to make their stay here unforgettable.

Muñoz: "I have realised that I am much more than a golfer"

The player from Malaga is "feeling good" after doing well in two of the three tournaments in which she has competed so far

ALBERTO DÍAZ

Azahara Muñoz continues to go from strength to strength. The player from Malaga is "feeling good" after the three tournaments she has played since the start of the year: the Pure Silk-Bahamas, where she came 11th, the Honda LPGA in Thailand, where she ended in the top 15 and the Australian Open, where she was relegated to 74th place after a bad penultimate day. Despite that disappointment, she went onto the course on the final day "as if nothing had happened" and ended one of her favourite tournaments on a better note. Now she is facing one of the most challenging periods of the year and will be away from home for seven consecutive weeks.

Azahara did very well in two of the first three championships she has played this season, and this has encouraged her to keep training in order to return to the top 20 positions in the world ranking. She says her week in the Bahamas was fantastic: "I'm very happy with my game. The pre-season work is paying off and the good thing is that I want to do even more," says Muñoz,



The golfer from Malaga has already won six titles. :: SUR

who is "grateful for the life I have, my family and being able to spend every day doing what I like most".

She already sounded very optimistic at the end of last year: "I have learned a great deal and I'm happier than ever. I have always judged myself on how I play, but at last I have realised that I am much more than a golfer," she explained on social media. "I'm a daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, wife, friend...I can't thank God enough for everything he has given me in this life and especially because my family love me whether I win or not. I have been winning at this game called life for 30 years."

She started playing golf "by accident" and years later, when she was already one of the best in the world, she celebrated her first title on the American Tour with a family barbecue. Azahara Muñoz shows none of the delusions of grandeur of some stars of this sport, although every week she appears towards the top of the ranking and has won over five million dollars in prize money.

This player from San Pedro Alcántara, who won the last two Spanish Opens, has demolished the

old cliché about women's golf being something for the rich. In Rio de Janeiro, fed up with hearing that, she made her feelings very clear when she spoke after becoming the first female Spanish golfer to compete in the Olympics: "People need to change the chip. Playing golf is cheaper than going out partying. Before, only people who were lucky could play, but now you only have to look at the Spanish women here; none of us come from privileged families. My parents are teachers," she said.

Muñoz was trained in the USA, where the universities offer many more facilities for elite athletes than those in Europe. There, exams can be taken on alternative dates if they coincide with tournaments, there are team competitions and the courses are more complicated. These are all advantages which tipped the scales when Azahara was weighing up whether to stay in Spain or go abroad.

She graduated in Psychology and has a diploma in Business Studies from the University of Arizona, and didn't become a professional until 2009, when she was 21. It may seem late to start a sporting career, but one of the characteristics which makes golf such a tremendously popular sport is the fact that it can be played at any age.

Muñoz alternates the European and American Tours and now has six titles, including the Sybase Match.

Nadal doubles his commitment to golf

The tennis star has just organised a tournament which bears his own name

ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MALAGA. It is not the first time an elite athlete has changed sports and become the personality of the month in this golf supplement. It happened last year, when NBA star Stephen Curry played in an official tournament for the first time, on the American Tour. Now it is the turn of tennis star Rafa Nadal.

It is no secret that Rafa loves golf. In fact, for years he has been organising a charity tournament with José María Olazabal, with these legends in Spanish sport each captaining a

team. His passion for golf has also now led to the Rafa Nadal Golf Challenge Tournament, sponsored by Sotheby's International Realty, which took place for the first time recently at the Rafa Nadal Sports Centre in Manacor, Mallorca.

The weather was good and the condition of the three courses of Son Servera, Pula and Son Gual was excellent during the three intense days of competition.

The best classified team of the three days was Rafa Nadal's, followed by that of Philip Withe, President and



Rafa Nadal, during the tournament in Mallorca. :: SUR

CEO of Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC, and the president of the Czech Republic. Other prizes were given for the longest men's drive, to Pep Juaneda, longest women's drive to Lynn Pearce, and the closest

ball, which went to Peter Mason and Joan Suasi.

Around 80 people, including participants and companions, enjoyed the three-day event at the Rafa Nadal Sports Centre, where they stayed

and where two of the dinners took place.

One highlight of the social events was the dinner in the trophy room of the Rafa Nadal Museum Xperience, where about 100 people enjoyed a special cocktail party and then a sit-down dinner in one of the museum's most special rooms. Those attending were surrounded by the tennis star's trophies, and others which had been donated by international athletes for the collection. They include Nadal's 16 Grand Slam trophies, the car in which Fernando Alonso won the World Championship, Induráin's 'Sword', Severiano Ballesteros' captain's bag from the 1997 Ryder Cup, and shirts and boots from different footballers.

As the host, Rafa gave a speech in which he said he was very pleased with the way the tournament was developing and was excited about organising more of them in the future.

THE MONTH IN PHOTOS

► **'El Niño'.** The achievements of Sergio García this past year were recognised in Monaco last month when he was presented with the Laureus World Breakthrough of the Year award, for his victory in the 2017 Masters. It comes 18 years after he won the award the first time. :: **GETTY IMAGES**



▲ **European Tour.** Shubhankar Sharma secured his second tour win at the recent Maybank Championship with a score of -21. The podium was completed by Spaniards Jorge Campillo and Pablo Larrazábal. :: **SUR**



◀ **WGC Mexico.** Phil Mickelson, 47, came out on top in the WGC Mexico Championship at the end of February - his first victory since the British Open in 2013. The American saw off compatriot Justin Thomas, an opponent half his age, in a play-off. One stroke behind on -15 was Spaniard Rafael Cabrera-Bello, joint third with Brit Tyrell Hatton. :: **AFP**



▲ **Champions Tour.** Malaga golfer Miguel Ángel Jiménez put a disappointing 31st-place finish at the Boca Ratón Championship (his first outside the top 25 on the Tour) behind him as he finished ninth in the Chubb Classic on -12 in late February, seven behind winner Joe Durant, and 22nd in the Champions Tour with -3 at the weekend. :: **SUR**

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2018 SCHEDULE

17 March

La Cala Resort
Saint Patrick's Day Tournament
Open tournament

20 April

Baviera
Gran Senior Femenino
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

21 July

Mijas
Gran Premio Electrónica
Open tournament

28 July

Mijas
Premio Lucha Conrta el Cáncer
Open tournament

10 August

Mijas
Memorial Felipe Pérez
Open tournament

18 August

Mijas
Gran Premio Sanitubo
Open tournament

25 August

Mijas
Asociación Tamisuel
Open tournament

30 August

Lauro
Campeonato Infantil Reale
Open tournament

2 September

Mijas
Club de Golf de Andalucía
Open tournament