

Andalucía Costa del Golf

The Solheim Cup moves one step closer to Malaga

The province
aspires to host the
world's biggest
women's golf
tournament in 2023



LADIES EUROPEAN TOUR

Muñoz comes second in the Open de España

Anne van Dam denied the
Malaga golfer the chance
to win the tournament for
the third time **[P4]**



EUROPEAN TOUR

Cañizares regains his Tour card

The local star has fought
back after a year blighted
by injury and personal
problems **[P5]**

Golf tourist destination: Marbella

This Malaga town is widely recognised for the quality of its courses which cater for all levels, all year round **[P6]**

Malaga, one step closer to hosting the Solheim Cup in 2023

The regional government, the Costa del Sol Tourist Board and the Mancomunidad are finalising an agreement to bring this women's competition to Spain for the first time

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

The Solheim Cup, the women's version of the Ryder Cup, is gradually getting closer to the Costa del Sol. The Malaga provincial government is still trying to negotiate an agreement with the European Tour to host the competition in which the USA and Europe face each other every two years, in 2023. Also at the negotiating table are the Junta de Andalucía, the Mancomunidad de Municipios of the Western Costa del Sol, the Royal Golf Federation of Andalucía (RFGA) and the Spanish Royal Golf Federation (RFEG). If the attempt is successful, this will be the first time since its creation in 1990 that the Solheim Cup has taken place in Spain, and only the fourth time outside Britain.

The president of the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, Elías Bendodo, says that Malaga province has all the technical requirements, tourist facilities and infrastructure necessary to host the Solheim Cup, which is the biggest women's golf event in the world.

Bendodo points out that the women's Open de España was held at La Quinta Golf & Country Club in Benahavis, something which "confirms that the Costa del Sol is a leading destination" in this sector. He also insists that "the province fulfils all the technical characteristics and has all the tourist infrastructure needed to host a world sporting



The Solheim Cup was created in 1990 and is very similar in format to the Ryder Cup. :: GETTY

event of this type", which is something the organisation of the Ladies European Tour (LET) insists upon for the Solheim Cup. Several courses in Malaga province, he says, "pass the cut demanded by the organisation in terms of competitive level, length, expanse, maintenance, equipment, machinery and organisation of staff".

Another requirement is that the courses have spacious areas for stands and hospitality marquees, because world-famous events of this type attract thousands of golf fans during the competition.

Apart from meeting these conditions, the destination also "easily exceeds other requirements, such as the capacity and quality of hotels on the Costa del Sol, and the connections between Malaga province and the principal airports in Europe," says Bendodo.

The Costa del Sol's candidacy, announced during the World Travel Market in London after a meeting with representatives of the Ladies European Tour, "is a historic opportunity which we can't afford to miss," he says.

The Malaga provincial government considers that its application to host the Solheim Cup "is unbeatable and would be a recognition of the effort we put in to promoting women's golf. This is evident because we have hosted the Open de España for three years as well as 62 per cent of the biggest women's tournaments which have taken place in Andalucía, such as the Andalucía Cup, the Interclub, the Irma Stemmann Selections Trophy and the International Pitch and Putt

SEARCHING FOR A SUITABLE SONDEHEIM COURSE

The course upon which the Solheim Cup would be played has yet to be chosen, although Marbella council has already expressed an interest in participating so it could well be played on one of the courses in that municipality.

The competition would attract around 70,000 specta-

tors, and although there is no information about the economic impact, the income from the sale of tickets and merchandising would go directly to the organisers. The amount of the investment would be offset by the publicity for the destination, thanks to international coverage of the Solheim Cup. The European Tour, however, would keep the TV rights.

Sources consulted by this publication agree that the three institutions are very keen to organise the event, as part of the commitment to attract professional tourna-

ments after years of 'drought' because of the economic crisis.

The Junta de Andalucía is committed to promoting the region's golf facilities via major tournaments, aware that competitions like the Masters at Valderrama have a potential audience of more than 400 million homes with 15 hours of live TV broadcasts in source markets such as the UK, France, Germany and the USA.

There are 102 golf courses in Andalucía, of which approximately half are in Malaga province and just over 20 per cent in Cadiz.



The LET insists different technical requirements are met. :: GETTY

Championship”.

Although he has not mentioned specific dates, Elías Bendodo is confident that within a short time “we will be able to celebrate being the official host of the Solheim Cup, because our proposal includes making the Costa del Sol the mecca for women’s golf over ten years, with the Solheim Cup taking place in the years before and after the Spanish Open”.

Quality of the courses

Mark Lichtenhein, chairman of the Ladies European Tour, who attended the Spanish Open, agrees that the Costa del Sol “is a prestigious destination and is famous in the world of golf for the number and quality of its golf courses”. He says “we must recognise the way the administrations have promoted women’s golf by hosting the final of the Women’s Open and, as it has more than 70 golf courses (67 per cent of all those in Andalucía), it is the European destination with the highest number of facilities”.

Bendodo stresses “the double importance” for the Costa del Sol in hosting the Solheim Cup in 2023, describing it as “a unique opportunity to showcase everything the whole province of Málaga has to offer in terms of tourism, and it will also reinforce our commitment to developing women’s golf, a field in which we have been working for years with the Royal Golf Federation of Andalucía”.

For the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, the Solheim Cup would be a



The competition takes place every two years. :: GETTY

major benefit for golf tourism, which is one of the most important sectors in the province, because “it is an excellent way of attracting year-round tourism” to the area.

Although little information is available about the direct economic impact of the Solheim Cup, the promoters consider it “a tool of incalculable value for attracting American visitors,” a market in which the

The promoters consider that the tournament would be “a tool of incalculable value” in terms of publicity for the Costa del Sol

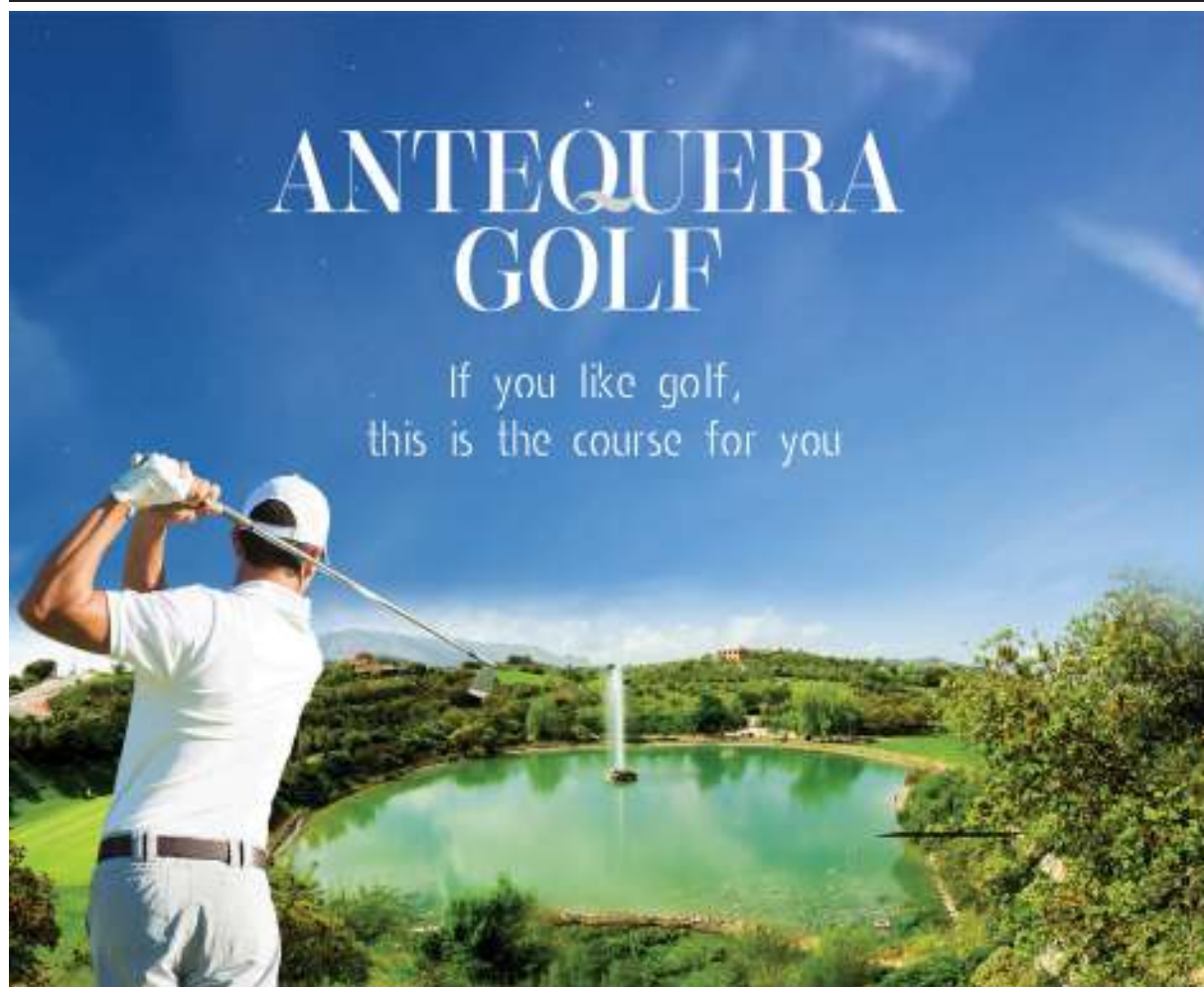
Costa del Sol still has a considerable margin for growth.

Golf tourism in Málaga province is led by players from the UK, followed by Scandinavia, Norway, France and Germany. This is an important and strategic tourist profile, because on average they spend 1,827 euros on their trip including transport and accommodation, and about 148.46 euros a day on the golf course, which is far more than other types of tourist.

The biennial Solheim Cup is played by 12 teams representing Europe and the USA and is one of the most popular sporting events in the world. It takes place over three days, like the Ryder Cup, and numerous activities are organised beforehand.



The USA has dominated the competition in recent years. :: GETTY



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Azahara Muñoz, despite missing out on a treble, has ended the season strongly. :: JOSELE-LANZA



Anne van Dam holds the Open de España trophy. :: JOSELE-LANZA

Azahara Muñoz narrowly misses out on Open de España hat-trick

Dutch player Anne Van Dam came out on top but the local star never gave up and fought right up to the final hole at La Quinta

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

This year's Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de España at La Quinta Golf will be remembered for a long time, thanks to the tremendous battle between the two star rivals: Azahara Muñoz, who was playing at home and hoped to achieve her third consecutive victory in this tournament; and Anne van Dam, from the Netherlands, who led from the start and maintained a moderate advantage throughout with little fuss.

The two women faced each other on the final day, first thing in the morning. They played the seven

holes which were still pending from the Saturday. That ended by strengthening the position of Van Dam, who then returned to the course to play the definitive fourth round with a four-stroke advantage over the Malaga player. It wasn't quite an abyss, but nearly.

Despite that, Muñoz fought back strongly: two consecutive birdies with the first two strokes made it clear that Van Dam wasn't going to have it easy. As the afternoon progressed, she kept the birdie machinery in action, a strategy which enabled her to reduce the distance from the Dutch player from six strokes to two.

However, just when she thought she had successfully got over the most difficult part, an error at the 16th hole put Muñoz out of the game. Van Dam had become more



Veteran Catriona Matthew. :: J-L

CLASSIFICATION OPEN DE ESPAÑA

1. Anne van Dam	271 (-13)
2. Azahara Muñoz	274 (-10)
3. Catriona Matthew	278 (-6)
T4. Natalia Escuriola	279 (-5)
T4. Olivia Cowan	279 (-5)

hesitant by then, barely managing two birdies throughout the whole course: a conservative strategy based on pars which almost cost her the victory. But at the aforementioned hole, just three away from the end of the tournament, the Malaga player sent the ball into the trees and it was declared unplayable, meaning she had to return to the tee and start again. The consequence was a bogey against a new par by Van Dam, who then appeared to give a sigh of relief.

"I had scored four birdies and wanted to continue like that, but I used the wrong club and went to the right, and you can't afford to make a mistake there.

"It's a shame, but I am proud that I fought to the end. I was aggressive and I tried to score another birdie. Sometimes you win, sometimes you

don't. So all that remains is for me to congratulate Anne," said Muñoz, who hadn't conceded defeat and continued to fight the last two holes.

Van Dam didn't assume she had won until the 18th hole, when it was mathematically impossible for her to lose the tournament. That was when she finally smiled. The tension had built up to an almost unbearable level, and the young Dutch woman was aware that she had been up against the ropes until just a few minutes earlier.

Spanish success

Someone who did save her place at the last stroke at the final hole was Catriona Matthew. The veteran golfer recovered her position with a masterly putt. Had she not done so, she would have shared a place in the ranking with Spain's Natalia Escuriola.

Four players from 'the Armada' ended the day in the top ten of the last official tournament of the season on the European Tour. In addition to Muñoz and Escuriola, Luna Sobrón and Marta Sanz took sixth and eighth place respectively.

Cañizares regains European Tour card following nightmare year

The Malaga golfer earned medallist honours after a six-round marathon at Qualifying School to return to the tour he first qualified for in 2006

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MALAGA. Alejandro Cañizares has got his career back on track after a nightmare spell, regaining his European Tour card after earning medallist honours at the Qualifying School.

Cañizares, from Malaga, had lost his spot on the European Tour due to a combination of events. He suffered a number of poor results because of ongoing injury concerns while, at the same time, his wife was found to have what was then thought to be a malignant tumour.

However, after having undergone treatment on his wrist from specialist Dr Ruiz Cotorro (who has also worked with tennis star Rafael Nadal), his form has recovered.

Off the course, too, things have improved. His wife's tumour was found to be benign and now the couple are expecting their first child.

This will be the icing on the cake



Cañizares, right, with the School's champion trophy. :: GETTY

After overcoming injury and personal problems, 'Cañi' won back his card after a final-day haul of seven birdies

for what has been an incredible turnaround which culminated at Club Lumine de Tarragona in November.

The two-time winner on the European Tour (the Imperial Collection Russian Open in 2006 and the Trophée Hassan II in 2014) shot 66-64 over the final two rounds to reach 24-under and share top spot with South Africa's Zander Lombard.

However, thanks to a superior final round, Cañizares was given medallist honours.

'Cañi', as he is known, will now be eligible to compete in all European Tour tournaments in 2019.

IN BRIEF

Ciganda finishes the year in the top 20

LGPA TOUR

Spanish golfer Carlota Ciganda rounded off her most successful season to date with a fifth-place finish at the CME Group Tour Championship in Naples (Florida).

Her placing in the final tournament of the season meant that Ciganda ended the season in 16th place in the LGPA Tour rankings, having spent much of her career narrowly missing out on a top-20 finish.

Spanish success in Hong Kong Open

EUROPEAN TOUR

A. DÍAZ. Sergio García and Rafa Cabrera Bello finished tied in sixth place at the recent Hong Kong Open.

The Spanish players started strongly with Álvaro Quirós finishing the first day in fifth place. However, the Cadiz-born golfer soon fell away, leaving García and Cabrera to lead the Spanish charge.

The pair ultimately finished on nine under par with 271, continuing a strong end to the season for García.



Miguel Ángel Jiménez led for much of the tournament. :: SUR

Jiménez lets lead slip in Benidorm

STAYSURE TOUR

COSTA DEL GOLF. The Costa Blanca's date on the European Senior Tour ended with a grandstand finish: a face-off between local favourite, Malaga golfer Miguel Ángel Jiménez, and English player Paul Streeter in the Costa Blanca Benidorm Senior Masters.

On the final day of this Staysure

re Tour competition, Streeter, after hitting an impressive 156-yard strike within putting distance of the flag, reeled in leader Jiménez who started to feel the pressure and commit errors.

This meant that Streeter only needed to birdie the final hole to become the first winner of the tournament.

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IV GOLF TOURNAMENT

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Atalaya Golf & Country Club

Marbella, a benchmark for year-round golf tourism

The Costa del Sol town has outstanding golf courses, suitable for all types of player because of their number and variety

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

During the winter months southern Spain is an ideal destination for all types of sport tourism, which includes the golf sector, because the region meets all the requirements of this demanding but at the same time attractive profile of visitor: quality infrastructure and a lovely climate. Marbella is becoming increasingly popular with these tourists from all over the world, who range from people who play sport for enjoyment - including golf, for which this is high season - to professional football clubs.

Marbella stands out for the quality of its golf course facilities, and this makes it a favourite destination all year round. It boasts some truly emblematic clubs such as Río Real, an enclave in the most privileged area of Marbella, just five minutes from the town centre and inaugurated in 1965. The course runs beside the Real river, after which it is named, and the river forms an integral part of the course, accompanying it all the way down to the Mediterranean Sea.

Another renowned club in Marbella is Aloha, which has hosted the Andalucía Open three times. In parkland style and with a par 72, it has the traditional design of four par five holes, ten par four and four par three, distributed uniformly over the two rounds.

The two courses at the Real Club de Guadalmina are an important part of the history of the Costa del Golf, and some of the best Spanish golfers and famous figures from all over the world have played here. One of its attractions is the location, very near San Pedro Alcántara but also situated strategically close to Marbella, at the heart of the Costa del Golf. The land of the original estate proved perfect for these facilities. Guadalmina has two 18-hole golf courses and a nine-hole par three. There is also a practice course for 40 players with an indoor platform with 21 places, chipping, practice bunker and putting green.

Los Naranjos, meanwhile, is one of the best golf courses on the Costa del Sol and is right in the heart of Marbella. Since its creation in the mid-1970s, a significant



The area's golf courses are part of Costa del Sol history and very popular at this time of year. :: SUR

There are iconic clubs such as Río Real, in the most privileged area of Marbella, just five minutes from the town centre

number of professional and amateur championships have been played at Los Naranjos. For example, in 1988 it hosted the Marbella Ladies Open, part of the Ladies European Tour, in which Laurette Maritz from South Africa played and won the tournament. In 1989 the club hosted the Spanish PGA Championship, in which José Rivero and Severiano Ballesteros both took part.

Another jewel of this sport is Cabopino Golf, on the eastern side of Marbella and opposite Cabopino marina. The 18-hole course was designed by architect Juan Ligués Creus and has spectacular views of the Mediterranean as well as a lovely array of trees, including many magnificent pines.

Also in the Marbella area is the Villa Padierna Golf Resort, whose courses form an important part of the Costa del Golf. Some of the best golfers in the world have played here. The courses at Villa Padierna are famous because their rounds are not only suitable for experi-



Marbella is the place to shop for luxury designer labels. :: SUR



Puerto Banús, always lively. :: SUR

enced players but also those who are just beginning. One of its many attractions is that it offers three different courses, suitable for any level of handicap, high or low. Everyone who plays here enjoys themselves and can find a course which best adapts to their level of play. These courses are also in a unique setting, with no noise, away from the bustle of the towns on the Costa del Sol.

Also in this area is La Quinta Golf, which hosted the women's Open de España last month and attracted golfing legends like Laura Davies, up-and-coming stars such as Georgia Hall and the winner, Anne Van Dam, as well as Málaga's most internationally well-known player, Azahara Muñoz.

These are just some attractions of a destination which has 25 kilometres of coastline, four marinas and a fabulous climate. Marbella has the second-highest population in Málaga and the eighth in Andalucía. It can boast a microclimate which gives it a privileged average temperature.

Its beaches of white sand are another attraction, and for those who love to shop Marbella is a special destination on the Costa del Sol, with some of the world's most luxurious designer labels. In fact, its Golden Mile is famous: a four-kilometre stretch between the historic town centre and Puerto Banús. Some of the grandest residences in Marbella are here, as well as luxury hotels like the Puente Romano and Marbella Club.

The Plaza de los Naranjos, the public square which was built after the Christian conquest of Marbella, is home to the Santiago church, the town hall and the Casa del Corregidor, all built between the 15th and 16th centuries. This is the very oldest part of the town, with quaint whitewashed houses and balconies of colourful flowers in pots. Close to the square is the chapel of San Juan de Dios and the church of Santo Cristo de la Vera, both from the 16th century, and La Encarnación church, from the 17th. The latter has three naves and the main entrance, carved in Rococo style from ochre-coloured stone, is a real marvel.

History

The old town of Marbella still has remains of the wall which used to surround the town during the Moorish era, and the castle. On one tower Roman capitals can be seen, which shows that even older building materials had been used to build the defensive precinct. The Bazán Hospital, in the same area, is now the Contemporary Spanish Print Museum, housing works by Picasso, Miró, Tàpies and Chillida.

As well as these treasures, Marbella offers lovely beaches, beautiful mountains and gardens, and an infinite range of restaurants and leisure facilities. This town has all the ingredients to be the epicentre of the most coveted tourism in the whole of Europe and also, now, America. It should also be remembered that 'Costa del Sol' means 'Sun Coast' and takes its name from the fact that it has around 3,000 hours of sunshine every year.

THE MONTH IN PICTURES



▲ **La Cañada.** La Cañada golf club in San Roque recently presented plans for its new high performance centre which will be constructed in early 2019. The new centre will benefit 270 children who belong to the club. :: RFAG



▲ **Charity.** The Seve Ballesteros Foundation has received 100,000 euros from the EurAsia Cup 2018 organisation which, alongside proceeds from the ongoing Seve & Jon Golf For Kids tour (pictured), will go towards cancer research. :: J. BARRENECHEA

► **Tourism.** The regional Sports and Tourism departments hosted a stand at the Signature Travel Network conference in Las Vegas from 27 to 30 November. This was the first time that Andalucía, promoting golf tourism as one of its main attractions, was represented at this important event -one of the biggest for operators in North America. :: SUR



◀ **Race to Dubai.** Italian Francesco Molinari rounded off his best season to date with victory at the Race to Dubai in November. The British Open winner and star of the Ryder Cup has finished the season as European number one. :: EFE

2018 / 19 AGENDA

7 December

Playa Serena
Gran Premio Marbella Open
Open tournament

15 December

Campanario
Final Nacional 'pitch and putt'
Open tournament

9 January

Guadalmina
Copa de Andalucía Femenina
2019. II Puntuable Nacional 2019
Open tournament

Atalaya Park

Copa de Andalucía Masculina
Open tournament

11 May

Aloha
Torneo Benéfico Concordia
Open tournament

8 June

Aloha
Torneo Benéfico Niños Mariposa
Open tournament

17 June

Lauro
Interautonómico Absoluto
Femenino 2019
Open tournament

24 June

Antequera Golf
Campeonato de Europa

Universitario 2019
Open tournament

13 July

Aloha
Torneo Benéfico Horizonte
Open tournament

20 July

Aloha
Torneo infantil
Open tournament

3 August

Aloha
Valle del Golf Aloha - Brisas
Open tournament

10 August**Aloha**

Memorial Ibarrondo
Open tournament

13 August

Aloha
Torneo Junior
Open tournament

17 August

Aloha
Torneo padre e hijos
Open tournament

22 August

Bil Bil Golf
Campeonato de España Sub 16 y
Benjamín de Pitch & Putt 2019
Open tournament

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