



Andalucía Costa del Golf

A year defined by Ryder Cup success

Besides victory for Europe in Paris, 2018 was far from a vintage year for Spanish golf [P2&3]



TOURISM

30 million tourists in Andalucía

The region has had a record year with golf alone bringing half a million visitors [P5]



EUROPEAN TOUR

Noemí Jiménez is aiming high for 2019

The Malaga golfer has her sights set on her first win on the Ladies European Tour [P6]

Snow and golf: an unlikely combination

Outstanding natural beauty, winter sports and golf come together in the Sierra Nevada at this time of year [P4]



García and Rahm hug after Europe's win over the US at the Ryder Cup in September. :: **SUR**

García and Rahm the leaders in an uneventful season for Spanish golf

Europe's Ryder Cup success, Muñoz's recovery and reliable performances by Cabrera-Bello and Ciganda were the highlights of a year with no big wins

It's time for Spanish golf to plan for the forthcoming year, but also to evaluate the past 12 months. It has to be said that 2018 won't go down in history as the best in terms of titles, especially as there was still an echo of Sergio García's spectacular triumph in the Augusta Masters in 2017, the first major title for Spanish golf since 1999.

García, with his indomitable talent, was also the Spanish star of 2018, but there were some disappointments too: he didn't make the cut in any of the major tournaments, but made up for it by winning his third Andalucía Masters at Valderrama and becoming the player with the most points won in the entire history of the Ryder Cup.

It happened on 30 September,

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

when García sealed his victory over Rickie Fowler at the 17th hole. As well as contributing to the unexpected European success in a Ryder Cup in which the US began as the clear favourite, this made the Spanish golfer the top scorer of this competition, above even the legendary Nick Faldo.

García has played in nine Ryder Cups and is always at his best there. This time he didn't qualify directly and his participation had been hanging by a thread, but the European captain finally invited him to form

part of the team anyway and García responded as he usually does in the biggest golf competition, with an excellent performance and making it clear that he had made it to Paris in his own right.

The case of Rahm is quite the opposite. He played a discreet Ryder Cup, apart from the overwhelming win over Tiger Woods, but won three trophies in 2018 and consolidated his place in the Top Ten. He ended sixth, two lower than at the end of 2017, but the ranking doesn't take accumulated experience into account and this will allow the young Spaniard to tackle the major tournaments with greater assurance. Rahm has added the Hero World Challenge, the Spanish Open and the Career-



Muñoz and Ciganda, in a file photo. :: **SUR**

García didn't make the cut in any big tournament, but made up for it by becoming the top scorer in Ryder Cup history

Rahm added three wins and a triumph against Tiger Woods to end the year as the eighth best player in the world rankings

Builder Challenge to his trophy cabinet.

The most recent of these victories took place in the Bahamas in December where, in the tournament organised by Tiger Woods, Rahm won his sixth title as a professional by winning with 268 strokes in total (20 below par) and a final round of 65 (-7) with seven birdies. The 24-year-old, who only turned professional in 2016, had already accumulated three wins on the PGA Tour and another three on the European Tour. In the first, he won the 2017 Farmers Insurance Open and the aforementioned 2018 CareeBuilder Challenge, and in the second he won the Irish Open and the DP World Tour Championship in 2017 and the Spanish Open in April.

Far below Rahm, in 23rd place, is García, whose position was affected by poor results in the big tournaments. Rafa Cabrera-Bello is in the Top 30, in the shadow of Rahm and García but undoubtedly a valuable member of the 'Armada' - reliable and with a powerful drive. His best result in 2018 was third place in the World Championship in Mexico and the CJ Cup Nine Bridges.

Lower in the classification we find Adrián Otaegui, at 67th, the fourth Spanish player to occupy a place in the Top 100. Jorge Campillo ended the season very close to the Top 100, while one of the surprises of the year, Adrià Arnaus, with his new European Tour card, ended in 135th place.

Making the cut

On the women's tour, Carlota Ciganda and Azahara Muñoz continue to highlight the strengths of Spanish golf. Carlota had a fantastic end to the season after playing well during the rest of the year, making the cut in 22 out of 25 tournaments and reaching an extraordinary third place in the US Open. She holds a rightful place in the world Top 20.

The player from Malaga, meanwhile, has overcome her health problems and returned to the Top 50, although she was unable to repeat her win at the Spanish Open and came second. She also played magnificently and came second in the Lotte Championship.

One certain bet for 2019: Spanish golf can expect to win many more trophies this year.

JON RAHM

The future of world golf has a Spanish accent

The player from the Basque Country gave a discreet performance in the Ryder Cup, apart from his overwhelming victory over Tiger Woods, but he won three trophies in 2018 and made the Top 10, ending in sixth place, two lower than a year previously. The ranking doesn't take accumulated experience into account, so the young Spanish golfer can now go into major tournaments with greater assurance. Rahm has added the Hero World Challenge, the Spanish Open and the CareerBuilder Challenge trophies to his collection. This is where the future lies.



SERGIO GARCÍA

A year of ups and downs for an indomitable talent

Sergio García, with his indomitable talent, played an important role in Spanish golf successes in 2018, although there were also some disappointments: he didn't make the cut in any of the big competitions, but made up for it with his third Andalucía Masters at Valderrama and by becoming the top-scoring player in the history of the Ryder Cup. This was another important victory after his fantastic win at the Augusta Masters in 2017, the first 'major' for Spanish golf since 1999.



RAFA CABRERA-BELLO

Reliability has a reward and a place in the Top 30

Rafa Cabrera-Bello is still in the Top 30 of the world, almost always in the shadow of Rahm and García but undoubtedly an asset to the 'Armada'. He is a reliable player, with a powerful drive. His best results in 2018 came in the World Championship in Mexico and the CJ Cup Nine Bridges. The golfer from the Canary Islands didn't win any titles last year but he has worked hard in pre-season to try to ensure that a tournament will be his this year.



ADRIÁN OTAEGUI

His best year so far and an important win in Antwerp

He has just ended the best year of his professional career, climbing more places than ever in the world rankings and reaching the Top 70. He also won a tournament (Antwerp, in May), has come close to winning others and has taken part in his first major competition. But what his position in the world rankings shows is that Otaegui is now one of the most in-form players, and one of those showing the most promise. He will be part of Spanish golf for some time to come.



CARLOTA CIGANDA

An exciting end to the year with the Top 10 not far off

She had a fantastic end to the season and played reliably all through the year, making the cut in 22 out of 25 tournaments and achieving third place in the US Open, one of the most important competitions. In the fast-paced Asian Tour she came 11th, ninth, fourth and second in four consecutive weeks, with an extraordinary fifth place at the close of the LPGA, ending 16th in the world ranking and eighth in the list of winnings in 2018.



AZAHARA MUÑOZ

Not just back on form, but better than ever

Azahara Muñoz has overcome her health problems and is back in the Top 50, although she didn't retain her title in the Spanish Open and came second. She also played magnificently and took second place in the Lotte Championship. In May she revealed that she had been diagnosed with a thyroid problem in 2016, which had led to a lack of energy and physical changes. Now, she is back on form again and looking with interest at major tournaments in 2019.



A record-breaking start to the peak season in Sierra Nevada

The excellent roads mean that golfers can combine their skiing holiday with a visit to some of the very good golf courses in Granada province

**ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ**

Peak season at the Sierra Nevada ski resort began in early December with optimistic forecasts. This winter, a trip to visit the city of Granada and the province of the same name would be an excellent choice for anyone who loves culture, gastronomy and, of course, sports - especially winter sports and golf.

The first days of peak season at the Sierra Nevada began with 68 kilometres of skiable runs open, and the numbers for the holiday weekend early in December couldn't have been better. Hotel occupancy was around 80 per cent, and in terms of ski kilometres available, the Sierra Nevada was the seventh ski resort in Europe. In addition, the weather was good throughout.

The positive figures continued over Christmas and the New Year, with an average of between 80 and 90 per cent occupancy. The Sierra Nevada is a beautiful setting for Christmas festivities, with activities such as Santa Claus skiing down El Río run on 22 December, and special Christmas illuminations.

There were seven screenings of childrens' films in the cable car cinema, concerts in the Plaza de Andalucía in Pradollano and at midnight on 31 December the bells rang out as they did everywhere in Spain to mark the arrival of the new year. On 5 January, the Three Kings arrived, also by skiing down El Río with an entourage of ski and snowboard school students, club members and teams.

Nocturnal skiing down the illuminated El Río piste is one of the most popular activities at this ski resort in Granada, especially during popular holiday periods in Pradollano, such as 5 January. Unless weather conditions make it impossible to ski, those descending El Río can see where they are going thanks to approximately 30 spotlights. It is 3.2 kilometres long, and runs from Borreguiles to the Pradollano residential complex.

This year the resort has also introduced new functions on its mobile application. In addition to improvements and updates to the information provided about ski conditions (pistes, lifts, weather, webcams etc), the Sierra Nevada app now incorporates maps and trackers in 3-D as well



A winter destination to enjoy the snow and facilities for the whole family. :: EFE

as an audioguide navigator.

The Sierra Nevada also offers numerous leisure options. There are restaurants serving food from all over the world, tapas bars, cafés, pubs, nightclubs, a cinema, a heated swimming pool, a spa and a fantastic sports club with modern facilities. The different hotels put on entertainment for adults and children. Huge efforts have been made to make the Sierra Nevada ski station accessible, so that people with reduced mobility can live their dream and enjoy the snow and extensive facilities at discounted rates.

Among the range of activities available in the Sierra Nevada is 'snowgolf'. Golf on an icy surface has almost the same features as traditional golf, although the snowy ground makes a great deal of difference and greatly complicates control of the ball. The cold air also affects the flight of the ball, which travels about 80 per cent of the normal distance. The balls are fluorescent orange so they show up, especially on the 'green', which in this case is actually white.

Emblematic courses

The ease of access to Granada city and the rest of the province means that golf tourists can practise their favourite sport on some of the local courses,



In winter you can practise 'snowgolf'. :: SUR

such as Granada Club de Golf, which is in a unique location, about eight kilometres from the city, on the boundary with the 'vega' plain. It is surrounded by low hills, and close to the village of Las Gabias. Designed and overseen by Ramón Espinosa and Emilio Mena, the course is on a gentle slope and resembles a long island amid the plain. On the side facing the interior valley there are two lakes, and a third lies on the opposite side.

For those who like the coast there

is Los Moriscos, a links-style course eight kilometres from Motril, in a sports complex close to the beach. Los Moriscos, which covers 5,072 metres, has a flat surface adorned with slender palm trees and sugar canes. It is characterised by generous greens and wide lakes.

Also in Granada province is Santa Clara Golf Club, which was inaugurated in 2006. This is a spectacular 18-hole par-73 course, designed by Enrique Canales Busquets. It is situ-

ated in Otura, about ten minutes from the historic centre of Granada city and less than 30 minutes from the Sierra Nevada ski resort and the Costa Tropical.

The course at Granada's Santa Clara Golf is characterised by its spacious greens and a variety of obstacles which means a wide variety of strokes. This means it is an ideal design for all handicaps.

To sum up, then, the Sierra Nevada is a ski destination par excellence which enables visitors to enjoy both unusual and classic golf thanks to the proximity of the courses in the province.

All these options complement a visit to the capital city of Granada, with its historic buildings, monuments and streets which are full of charm, especially in winter.

In the city of Granada visitors can stroll along the Paseo de los Tristes, sample the local gastronomy in the hundreds of taverns and bars, relax by the Fuente de las Batallas, admire the Alhambra from the San Nicolás viewing point, wander around the narrow streets of the Albaicín district and marvel at the beauty of the high mountains which surround it, gleaming white from the snow in the Granada winter.

Tourism in Andalucía reaches all-time high

Golf attracts over half a million visitors to the region every year and the sector plays an important role in boosting year-round tourism, especially in coastal areas

■ ALBERTO GÓMEZ

Andalucía once again had a record year in terms of tourism in 2018, with more than 30 million visitors. The average hotel occupancy was 64.7 per cent between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, which the regional government's acting Minister of Tourism, Francisco Javier Fernández, says was five points higher than the previous year. He also points out that the Junta de Andalucía had predicted 30 million tourists for 2020: "December was better than in 2017 and that means that the measures we have been taking to boost tourism are paying off," he says, referring to the wish to attract visitors to the region all year round and not just in the summer.

Between January and November last year there were more than 51 mil-

lion overnight stays. Although there are no official figures yet, the total could well be over 53 million, and November proved to be "a historic month in an already historic year", says Fernández.

At Christmas, provinces such as Málaga and Seville reported occupancy figures higher than 73 per cent, while in Granada it was 70 per cent, and in Jaén occupancy increased by ten per cent. In November, there was an inter-annual increase of 4.7 per cent in the number of hotel workers in Andalucía. This contributes to the objective of extending tourism throughout the year, because "Andalucía has something for everyone and we want that to be the case all year round", says Fernández.

The record figure of 30 million tourists is important because it generates more wealth in the region. Andalucía

also continues to attract one in five visitors from elsewhere in Spain.

In November, hotels in Andalucía registered a total of 2.7 million overnight stays, which was five per cent higher than in the same month in 2017. The number of travellers that month rose by 6.5 per cent compared with a year previously, to a total of 1.1 million. Andalucía and the regions of Madrid and Valencia are the principal destinations for visitors from Spain.

Hotels stayed open

This Christmas, 2,213 hotels were open in Andalucía, with a total of 199,253 rooms available. In November, the occupancy per place was 45.4 per cent, and it rose to 55.77 per cent at weekends. Hotels in the region employed 25,928 staff that month, compared with 38,477 in October and



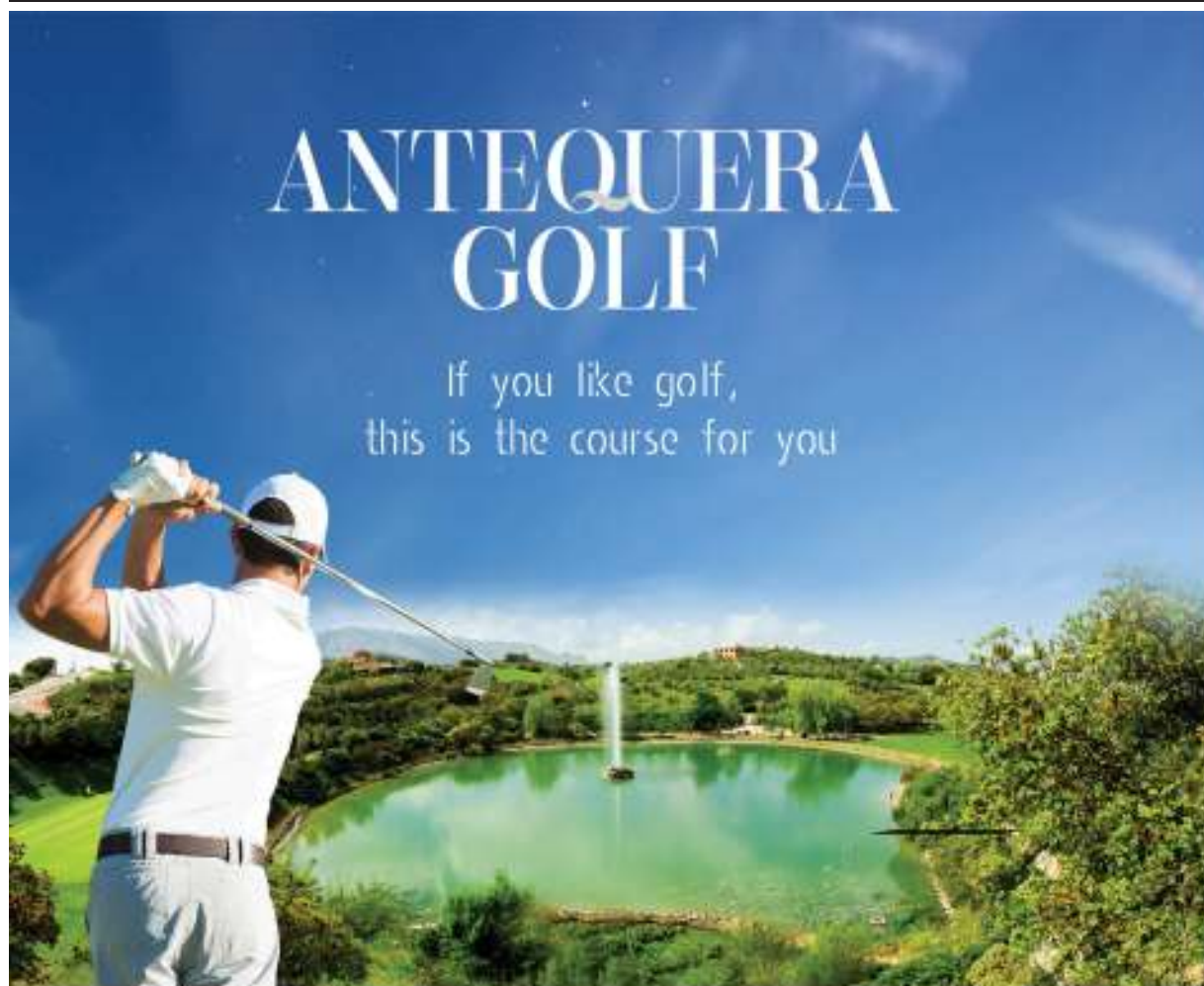
More than 30 million tourists came to Andalucía last year. ■ SUR

24,756 in November 2017.

Turnover per occupied room was 69.62 euros on average, 8.51 per cent more than in the previous year, while income per available room was 37.91 euros, 9.94 per cent more than October 2017.

For golf tourism this was the best year so far in Andalucía, with more than half a million people staying in the region. About 40 per cent came

from the UK, followed by Spain (15 per cent) and Germany (12 per cent). Golf tourists help to increase year-round tourism because they tend to come out of peak season and they spend more. For example, in 2016 the average spend was 117.5 euros per person per day, almost double the 65 euros spent by other tourists, and they stayed for 10.8 days, which is two days longer than average.



Booking

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heart of Andalusia





Jiménez, one of the most promising Spanish players, hits the ball during a tournament. :: SUR

QUOTES

"The season was very positive. I think I learned a lot and I am feeling quite confident now"

"Winning in Switzerland was a dream. I was delighted that all the work I had put in had paid off"

"I started when I was six and have felt a bit downhearted at times, but I've never wanted to give up"

"We only receive a tenth of the men's winnings and we do exactly the same. Let's hope that changes, some day"

"My main aim is a win on the European Tour"

Noemí Jiménez. Golfer. After victory in the LET Access Series in 2018, the player from Malaga is starting the year on a positive note

She is one of the most promising Spanish players right now. Noemí Jiménez, from Malaga, the winner of an LET Access Series tournament, is feeling optimistic about the start of the new season, and hopes to achieve her first victory on the European Tour after ending last year on a very positive note.

–How was 2018 for you?

–It was a very good season. I think I learned a lot and played very well, so I'm feeling quite confident about this year and looking forward to my first win as a professional.

–What did your victory in Switzerland mean to you?

–It was a dream, because I played really well and was delighted that all the work I had put in had paid off.

–How do you see Spanish women's golf at the moment?

–It's really good, the level is ex-

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

tremely high. We have several players on the American Tour, quite a few on the European Tour, and there are some very good girls who are showing great promise.

–Do you think the women are given the attention they deserve, or is there still a long way to go?

–We feel very supported by the federations on a sporting level, but I think there ought to be more sponsors because they are essential for any sport.

–Is it possible to make friends on the tours? How do you get on with Azahara Muñoz?

–Yes, of course it's possible. In fact,

many of my best friends are on the tour. I get on very well with Azahara; she's a lovely person and a great player, and I have known her since I was very young.

–Your parents are both involved in sport; how has that influenced you?

–It has helped me a great deal. They instilled good values in me and taught me how to make sport part of my life. They still do that, even now.

–You have spent your whole life on golf courses. Have you ever thought about throwing in the towel and doing something else instead?

–I started when I was six and sometimes I have felt a bit downhearted, like anyone else, but I have never wanted to give it up.

–Are there many differences between amateur and professional level?

–Yes, many, mainly from an emotional and mental point of view, because in the end you are still playing the same sport, but it's hard at first.

–What are your aims for 2019?

–A win on the European Tour, and to enjoy every tournament.

–What's it like to travel so much, being away from Spain for so long? What do you miss the most?

–The travelling is the worst thing of all. Everyone likes visiting other places, but it's quite hard to be so far from your family and friends, especially when there are tournaments over several consecutive weeks. For example, this year I'll be in Australia for six weeks. It'll be a great experience, but I'll really miss my family.

–Is there anyone who particularly inspires you?

–Jon Rahm, because of his attitude and self-confidence. He knows he

plays incredible golf. Miguel Ángel Jiménez is an example of consistency. I also like the happiness he radiates when he plays golf. Azahara Muñoz and Carlota Ciganda also inspire me, because of their passion.

–What do you like doing when you have a bit of free time?

–Lots of things, from going to the beach to watching films. I love just watching nature. I also go dancing with my friends.

–How are you preparing for pre-season? What aspects of your game do you think you can improve most?

–I'm changing some technical aspects. I want to boost my confidence, so I'm focusing on the mental aspect as well as the physical side. There won't be any major changes, just details.

–What's it like having fans on social media?

–Social media is a bit difficult. I have to make sure it's always up to date because that's important for the sponsors, but I don't want to spend any more time on it than necessary or be glued to my mobile phone. I try to keep a balance between social media and real life.

–Do you check the ranking every week, or is it not as important as in other sports?

–I never look at it. Sometimes my family says something about it, but it doesn't matter to me. I just want to feel good and happy when I go out onto the golf course.

–Have you ever suffered from chauvinism?

–Well... the prize money. We only receive a tenth of the men's winnings and we do exactly the same, although they get more media coverage. Let's hope that changes some day, because I think the difference is far too big.

THE MONTH IN PICTURES



▲ **Spanish golf.** The Royal Spanish Golf Federation recently held a gala in Madrid to celebrate the success of the country's amateur golfers and the 22 professional titles won throughout 2018. :: SUR



◀ **Solheim Cup.** Head of Turismo Costa del Sol, Elías Bendodo, has provided an update on the area's bid to host the Solheim Cup in 2023. He said: "Negotiations are very advanced. The Costa del Sol has put forward a very strong bid." :: NITO SALAS



▲ **Celia Barquín Memorial Trophy.** Patricia Garre came out on top in the inaugural Celia Barquín Memorial Trophy in Siero (Asturias) in honour of the young Spanish golfer murdered in September, earning her points on the women's rankings. :: SUR



▲ **Sergio García Foundation.** During the Christmas break, 2017 Masters champion Sergio García gave a masterclass to golf enthusiasts with physical and mental disabilities through his foundation, in conjunction with Obra Social La Caixa, Catalana Golf and PGA Catalunya Resort. At Caldes de Malavella-PGA Catalunya Resort, he taught attendees some basic concepts and shots. :: SUR



◀ **Charity.** Pula Golf in Mallorca was the venue for the Olazábal & Nadal Invitational which took place at the end of December to raise funds for the victims of the recent flooding on the island. Organised by José María Olazábal and Rafa Nadal (pictured), the tournament was won by the team led by the tennis star with a score of 69 under par. :: SUR

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2019 AGENDA

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

29 August

Lauro
Interautonómico Absoluto
Femenino 2019
Open tournament

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