

Andalucía Costa del GOLF



Ciganda breaks into the top 10

After coming second in Phoenix, Ciganda has become the first female Spanish golfer to enter into this elite club [P14]



TOURISM

Golf, key to the promotion of the Costa

The sector attracts more than half a million tourists to Andalucía every year [P2&3]



HISTORY

1979: the year Seve won his first major

This year sees the 40th anniversary of the legendary Spanish golfer's win in the British Open [P4]

Huelva in Berlin to attract spring visitors

This unique Andalusian province was present at the ITB Tourism Fair, promoting its breathtaking golf facilities [P6]

Golf continues to be a key sector for promoting the Costa del Sol

Its ability to attract visitors all year round, with over half a million tourists coming to Andalucía every year, makes it especially interesting to the authorities

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

Golf continues to be central to the way the Costa del Sol and the region of Andalucía are promoted to tourists. The sector has the ability to attract visitors all year round, and in fact more than half a million golf tourists already come to the region every year, most of them outside the normal peak season for tourism, so it is hardly surprising that the authorities are keen to increase this sector even further.

Last week, the Costa del Sol Tourist Board announced that it will be organising around 20 day-long conferences for professionals in the tourism industry in Spain and abroad this year, at an approximate cost of 249,000 euros.

These conferences, or workshops, will be part of a Tourism Action Plan which the head of Turismo Costa del Sol, Arturo Bernal, says aims to make the destination better known and improve its reputation within and outside the country. Commercial alliances will be formed with professionals in the tourism sector, and the idea is to provide made-to-measure products to ensure that visitors will want to return to the Costa del Sol again and again.

The Action Plan started to be put into effect last year, and this year's conferences will focus on "sustainability, economic, social,



A photo of the Gecko Tour at Lauro Golf :: SUR

cultural and environmental aspects of tourism, and ways to achieve an even higher degree of satisfaction among clients," says Bernal.

Intelligent marketing and digital advances will also provide those taking part with a more precise knowledge of the destination and the profile of the type of clients the Costa del Sol aims to attract.

Turismo Costa del Sol will be making good use of these conferences as a tool to promote the destination, and it will be allocating more funds for targeting emerging markets and boosting air connections this year. In total, 11,000 euros have been budgeted for seven projects of this type.

Some of the conferences for professionals in the tourism industry have already taken place, and others planned for this year include Beirut, Muscat, Kuwait, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the USA. These are considered very important because they are a chance to attract tourists from more distant markets, especially Asia, America and the Middle East.

"The majority of these markets are emerging and are in the expansion phase, so our strategy is to improve the profitability of international tourism on the Costa del Sol in the near future," says Bernal.

Investment

The day-long conferences for professionals in the golf sector have been allocated the second-highest budget by Turismo Costa del Sol in 2019, at 75,000 euros. Some of these will coincide with the Costa

THE BEST PLACE IN EUROPE TO PLAY GOLF

Last year the Costa del Sol was named Best European Golf Destination by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) at the Golf Travel Market, which took place from 15 to 18 October in Slovenia.

The then president of Turismo Costa del Sol, Elías Bendodo, who is now an adviser to the An-

dalusian government, expressed his gratitude for the recognition from the principal actors of the international tourism industry: "It is an honour for us to receive such an important award," he said, adding that the recognition "reaffirms our leadership in the segment at a national and international level all through the year, thanks to our 70 golf courses, which are nearly 70 per cent of all those that exist in Andalucía".

Every year IAGTO considers all the golf destinations and resorts which have been nominated,

and presents the award to the one which offers the best experiences for clients based on client satisfaction, quality of the courses and accommodation, price-quality ratio, professional conduct of the suppliers, support of the local tourism industry and availability of golf courses.

The Costa del Sol has been "focusing special attention to the golf segment for several years, with a strategy to achieve optimum management of seasonal tourism," said Bendodo, and he stressed that with this award for Best European Golf Destination "it has received a major boost".



Costa del Sol representatives, receiving the award. :: SUR

del Sol Woche in various towns in Germany in June and the Costa del Sol-Sol Cup Embajadores in Scotland in September .

During the year there will also be conferences, commercial missions and activities aimed at consumers in Spain and Portugal, and Turismo Costa del Sol is allocating 36,000 euros for these.

Two of the conferences organised by Turismo Costa del Sol this year will be on the subjects of the elite sector and MICE (the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions sector) at a cost of 17,500 euros and 10,500 euros respectively.

The Tourist Board will also be holding 'Turespaña Inversa' workshops in Madrid and elsewhere throughout the year, and MICE Andalucía commercial conferences in Spanish and international locations which have yet to be finalised.

"All these aim to increase the level of knowledge of the destination, so the professionals from each tourism sector have as much information as possible and can take the most effective decisions to improve the competitiveness of the Costa del Sol. That will bring with it increased employment and wealth," Bernal explains.

The Costa del Sol is the jewel in the crown of Andalusian golf. Europe is the greatest source market for the so-called Costa del Golf, which extends from Vélez-Málaga to San Roque. An exclusive report about this sector, produced by Turismo Costa del Sol, shows that one per cent of the population of



Two-thirds of Andalucía's golf courses are on the Costa del Sol. :: SUR



Golf brings half a million visitors a year to Andalucía. :: SUR

The golf sector is important because it attracts tourists all year round and they spend more than other visitors

Europe actively play golf, which means that about 7.4 million people practise this sport and, of those, 55 per cent are federated members. In terms of numbers of players, the 15 principal markets alone have 640,000 federated members, so this destination, with its 69 golf courses and 1,134 holes in 16 municipalities, is of particular interest to golfers 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 Golf is home to 67 per cent of all the golf courses in Andalucía: in other words more than two out of every three golf courses in the region are in this area. More than half of the golf courses on the Costa del Sol-Costa del Golf are located in Marbella, Mijas and San Roque.

This type of traveller is so important to tourism because they help to resolve the problem of seasonal tourism (they tend to come to the Costa del Sol outside the peak summer months), and because they spend much more during their stay than other types of visitors.

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1979: the year that Ballesteros made history with his first British Open

The Cantabrian player, who became the father of Spanish golf, paved the way for his five 'majors' four decades ago with a series of stunning strokes

ALBERTO GÓMEZ

It was a red letter day in the history of Spanish golf. The year was 1979 and Seve Ballesteros had just won his first major tournament. He was 22 years old and had come to the British Open, the most famous tournament on the tour, from Pedreña, a small fishing village in Cantabria. There had already been a hint of his potential three years earlier when he came joint second with Jack Nicklaus after a high quality game with some outstanding strokes from every part of the Royal Birkdale golf course. However, for Ballesteros that was already past history. He saw further opportunities for success and made the most of them.

He raised his arms in triumph and his three brothers, Manolo, Baldomero and Vicente, who had been watching, couldn't contain their emotion. His parents, Mero and Carmen, celebrated at home, setting off fireworks and welcoming neighbours who came to share their excitement.

Many fans still remember the stroke Ballesteros played when approaching the green at the 16th hole. Also the image of American Hale Irwin waving a white handkerchief as a sign of surrender as he walked towards the 18th. This was one of the greatest highlights of Spanish sport, comparable to Manolo Santana's win at Wimbledon and Paco Fernández Ochoa's gold medal in the 1972 Winter Olympics at Sapporo. Ballesteros forged his way to join the great golfers of the time, like Nicklaus and Tom Watson, but this would not be his only success. The story was only beginning.



Ballesteros, with five Grand Slam wins, made history and became the father of Spanish golf. :: SUR

He accumulated 87 titles, 50 of them on the European Tour, and gave continental golf the boost it so badly needed in the late 1970s. Together with British golfer Tony Jacklin he was directly responsible for reviving Europe's luck in the Ryder Cup. Ballesteros became the father of Spanish golf and replaced Arnold Palmer as

the most charismatic player in the world. The Spanish 'Matador' excited fans with his courageous style, magic touch on the green, creativity and passion for his sport.

He started playing when he was seven years old, using a three iron on the beach near his home in Santander. That helped him dominate the art of

shooting to the green, a trick he used during his whole career.

Seve leapt onto the international scene, with practically no warning, in the British Open in 1976, as a raw 19-year-old talent with an extraordinary swing which seemed to turn 360 degrees. That exuberant swing almost made him lose his balance be-

THE 'MAJORS' WON BY BALLESTEROS

1979: British Open
1980: The Masters
1983: The Masters
1984: British Open
1988: British Open

cause of the momentum on many occasions, long after the ball had shot off into the distance. Seve didn't win that week at the Royal Birkdale, but he left no doubt that a star was born and European golf would rival the USA for the first time in years.

Three years after his first victory in the British Open he won again in Augusta and in 1984 he once again lifted the coveted trophy at the birthplace of golf, St Andrews. Before, in 1980, he had won the green jacket at the Augusta National, becoming the first European to achieve victory in the Masters since its inaugural edition in 1934. In 1988 he achieved his fifth major with the British Open at the Royal Lytham. At the age of 31, it seemed his talent as a golfer had no boundaries.

That success, however, proved to be his last, something which nobody expected. His subsequent descent from the peak of golf, despite a brief resurgence in the early 1990s, was tortuous and very public as he changed his trainer and caddie several times. He was still hitting the ball prodigious distances, but he often ended up in problems because his shots went astray and he lost the par. He died at the age of 54, after battling a malignant brain tumour for two and a half years.

EXPO Costa del Sol holds its first golf tournament

Los Naranjos recently hosted the first edition of the Golf Networking Cup

EXPO Costa del Sol, the largest real estate exhibition centre on the Costa del Sol, held its first golf tournament, the Golf Networking Cup, on 21 March as part of a series of corporate events sponsored

by the EXPO Business Club.

The tournament took place at Los Naranjos golf club, where the course measures almost 6,500 metres, and boasts professional tees, wide lanes, strategically placed obstacles and lush, undulating greens.

The tournament, which focused on "connection from disconnection", gave golf entrepreneurs, executives and professionals a forum to share their thoughts and projects for their companies, combining leisure, sport and emotion in an entertaining and competitive game of golf.

The Golf Networking Cup was organized by EXPO Costa del Sol, along with its proud sponsors AUDI Safamotor and El Corte Inglés, and



yukyukyukyukñol. :: SUR

the collaboration of Picking Málaga, Oxén, Zeecló and Viajes Nuba, as well as the support of leading me-

dia, Golf Circus and Solkysten. The Golf Networking Cup returns on 20 June.



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Huelva promotes its golf facilities to attract tourists in the spring

This unique province in Andalucía was represented at the ITB Tourism Fair in Berlin last month as an all-year-round destination

ALEJANDRO
DÍAZ

Huelva is a unique destination, not just in Andalucía but in the whole of Europe. It has many extremely positive aspects, such as its climate, beaches and environmental conservation, but it does face one problem with regard to tourism, because most visitors choose to come to Huelva in the summer months. However, thanks to the efforts of some tourism segments, including golf, that is now starting to change and proof of this is that nowadays hotels are starting to reopen earlier in the year after their winter break.

It was to raise awareness of Huelva as a year-round destination that its tourism authorities attended the ITB tourism fair in Berlin last month. This is the most important event of its type for the German market, and Huelva wanted to promote its many attractions, including the countryside, culture and gastronomic routes, among others, because German visitors have always shown a keen interest in aspects such as history, culture and nature.

At the ITB, which together with the World Travel Market in London is a key event for tourism every year, Andalucía had a 500m² stand with four areas for the provincial tourist boards, including Huelva. Representatives held meetings with tour operators and travel agents from Germany and other European countries to make new agreements and attract new travellers to an area which is renowned for its lovely weather.

Also present were representatives of the Almonte and Islantilla Tourist Offices and other businesses from Huelva, including Islantilla Golf Resort, Precise Resort el Rompido and Puerto Antilla Grand Hotel. During the fair, they held approximately 35 meetings with professionals in the fields of tourism and golf and with specialist media from Germany, Holland, the UK, Poland and France.

Between January and December last year a total of 868,086 visitors from Germany stayed in hotels in Andalucía, amounting to 4,126,720 overnight stays. The average length of stay was 4.75 days. Germany was the second most im-



Huelva was the birthplace of golf in Andalucía. :: SUR



Golf beside the Atlantic, a unique experience. :: SUR



Huelva has some of the best courses in the region. :: SUR

maintained grass is such a special sensation that it can only be compared with the relaxing strolls barefoot along the seemingly endless beaches of Huelva, which so many visitors enjoy. Many golf fans take a golf club with them so they can practise their stroke for getting out of the bunkers, as that is the trap most feared by players. When the tide is out there is a huge expanse of compacted fine sand bordered only by the dunes and the sea, an extraordinary natural setting which is ideal for impromptu beach-golf tournaments.

The Corta Atalaya Golf Club, situated where the Sierra de Huelva begins, has fantastic views of the mountains and the area of 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 respectably hilly.

Meanwhile El Rompido Golf Club, the most recent to be inaugurated in Huelva province, is just beside the beauty spot of Las Marismas del Río Piedra and the Flecha de El Rompido, offering players fabulous views of the Atlantic Ocean.

Situated in the municipality of Ayamonte, Costa Esuri Golf Club H2O is located in a privileged setting beside the Guadiana river, with a spectacular view of Portugal and the river estuary, surrounded by marshes and natural lakes. There are excellent communications with Seville and Faro airports, and it is just two kilometres from the Seville-Portugal motorway.

Doñana Golf deserves a special mention. It is situated in Matalascañas, beside the Doñana National Park and just metres from the Atlantic. This is an 18-hole course which is easy to walk, and it has been beautifully integrated into the surrounding area. The first nine holes (the Doñana Round), as well as providing high quality golf, are a walk through incomparable natural surroundings. The second nine (the Atlántico Round), give players the opportunity to be really creative with their golf clubs.

In addition, the 18 holes at the Golf Novo Portil course open onto a woodland of Mediterranean pines at El Portil, a seaside town with a lovely climate. The course is gentle with plenty of native trees and shrubs flanking the fairways of Bermuda grass at a prudent distance from the game.

The Isla Canela golf course is close to Ayamonte, and beside the sea. It is an easy course to walk, as the only slopes are due to the sand dunes and are not steep. The vegetation is predominantly retama, but there are also plenty of orange, olive and eucalyptus trees, sometimes strategically placed on the fairways to complicate the game.

The province was represented at the Berlin Tourism Fair to promote its attractions to potential foreign visitors

portant source market for tourists to Andalucía, representing 15.4 per cent of all international visitors. Andalucía is also one of the principal destinations in Spain for German visitors, after only the Balearic Islands and the Canaries.

Birthplace of golf

Huelva was the birthplace of golf in the region. A great deal of time has passed since the British miners who were working at the Riotinto Mines founded the Belavista golf course in 1916, which was a pioneer in Spain. The possibility of playing golf at any time of year and in a unique setting meant that golf in Huelva developed at an extraordinary speed.

A hundred years later, numerous golf courses now await visitors to Huelva and there is a wide variety, ranging from the mountainous Sierra de Huelva to the coast with its links courses surrounded by natural sand dunes, or amid pine trees which have an influence on the way each hole is played.

Walking on hectares of carefully-

Ciganda making steady progress

She became the first female Spanish golfer to reach the top 10 in the world after coming second in Phoenix



A major could be just around the corner for Carlota Ciganda. :: AFP

:: ALEJANDRO DÍAZ

MALAGA. Carlota Ciganda continues to storm ahead in her career. Last month she finished second in the Bank of Hope Founders Cup tournament in the USA, thanks to her 63 strokes in the final round. It was the best round of the whole tournament, and helped to place her within the world 'top ten' for the first time. Ciganda is on a roll.

She was extremely focused as she started the last day, scoring four birdies at the first seven holes, and, after two bogeys, another birdie at the 14th to put paid to the rest of the par and achieve a total of 63 strokes. These figures demonstrate that Ciganda is very strong, not only physically but also technically and mentally, and her game is in great shape. It's true

that she still lacks a major title, but if she continues like this that won't be long in coming.

Carlota totalled 228.27 points in a total of 51 tournaments and since the CP Women's Open in August last year, she has never missed a cut; in fact, in the 11 tournaments in which she has played since then, she has mainly

been in the top ten, her lowest position being 33rd in the Evian Championship. She took third place in the Honda LPGA Thailand and also two second places (Toto Japan Classic and Bank of Hope).

With regard to the other classification, the CME Globe, which is a type of FedEx Cup and the great

event of the end of the year, Carlota is in eighth place (in this classification Azahara Muñoz is tenth), just 17 points away from sixth position, which is held by Sung Hyun Park.

Asian leadership

However, the oriental hegemony continues on the tour. Korea's Jin Young Ko achieved her third LPGA title, winning the tournament with 266 strokes in total, one less than Ciganda. Asian players are doing extremely well: Sung Hyn Park, from Korea, continues to be number one, Ariya Jutanugarn, from Thailand, number two, Jin Young Ko, from Korea, fourth, Nasa Hataoka from Japan seventh, and Inbee Park is eighth in the ranking.

Jin Young Ko, who won her last title in February 2018, the ISPS Handa Australian Women's Open, presented a card with no errors and seven birdies on the last day, ending with 65 strokes, seven below par, which earned her the title.

The player from Seoul, who is 23 years old, won her first tournament of the LPGA tour in October 2017 after giving an impressive performance in the KEB-Hana Bank Championship.



Muñoz strikes the ball on the first day. :: KELVIN KUO-USA TODAY SPORTS

Mixed fortunes for Spain's stars in the ANA Inspiration

:: DARYL FINCH

MALAGA. Ciganda's momentum carried into last weekend when she came out in fourth place in the first major of the year, the ANA Inspiration at Rancho Mirage.

The golfer from Navarre completed the four days at Mission Hills Country Club with a score of 283 (72-72-71, 68), finishing just one shot off

third place.

Her fourth-place finish, shared with South Korean In-Kyung Kim, won Ciganda 139,634 dollars in prize money, placing her fifth in the prize rankings.

Her compatriot Azahara Muñoz, meanwhile, started well but quickly fell away, finishing joint 68th on seven over par.

More than 120 players to compete in La Reserva de Sotogrande

:: A. GÓMEZ

SOTOGRADE. Some 120 female golfers from 27 countries across five continents will all come together for the La Reserva de Sotogrande Invitational next month.

This tournament, part of the Ladies European Tour, will take place on the course of the same name from 16 to 19 May and could have implications for the Solheim Cup.

Catriona Matthew, who will captain the European team at Gleneagles in September, will not only be looking to add to her list of honours in Sotogrande, but will also have her eyes on potential teammates such as Marianne Skarpnord, Anne Van Dam or Meghan MacLaren, all winners on the Tour in 2019.

Among the Spanish players confirmed for the tournament are Nuria Iturrios, Luna Sobrón, Noemí Jiménez, Carmen Alonso and María Parra. Spain's leading women, Carlota Ciganda and Azahara Muñoz have confirmed, however, that they will not be taking part.

Points for the world ranking are up for grabs and the tournament will be broadcast live nationally (on Movistar Golf, Teledeporte and Andalucía TV) and internationally.



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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 Ibarondo
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
Campeonato de España Interclubes Infantil 2019
Open tournament
- 28 September**
Torrequebrada golf
Campeonato de España Dobles Senior Femenino 2019
Open tournament
- 5 October**
Aloha
Trofeo Benéfico ASPANDEM
Open tournament
'Pitch and Putt' Nacional
Open tournament

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