

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

FUENGIROLA

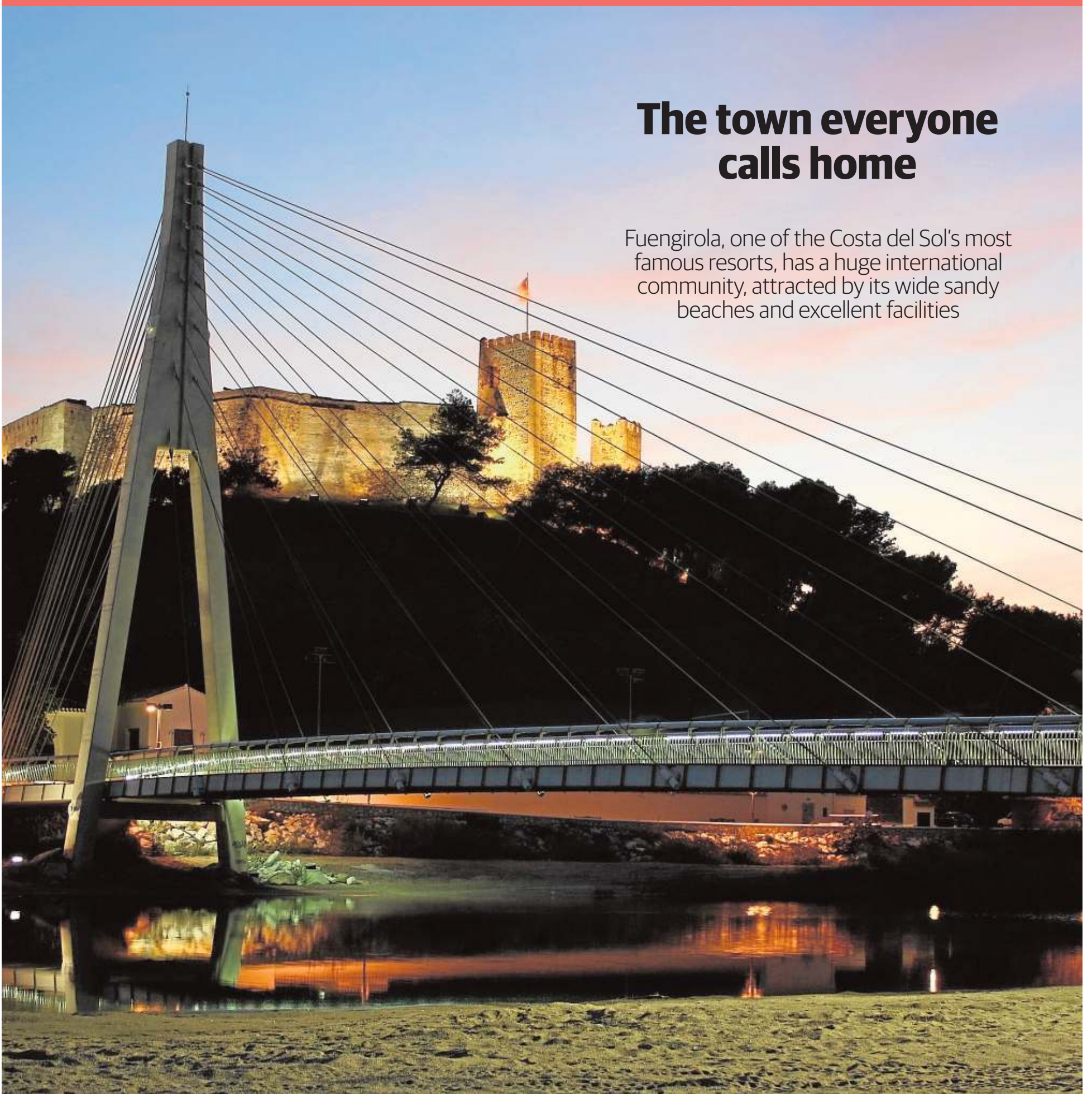
Interview. Councillor for Foreign Residents Rodrigo Romero: "The foreign community is part of the town's DNA" **P4**

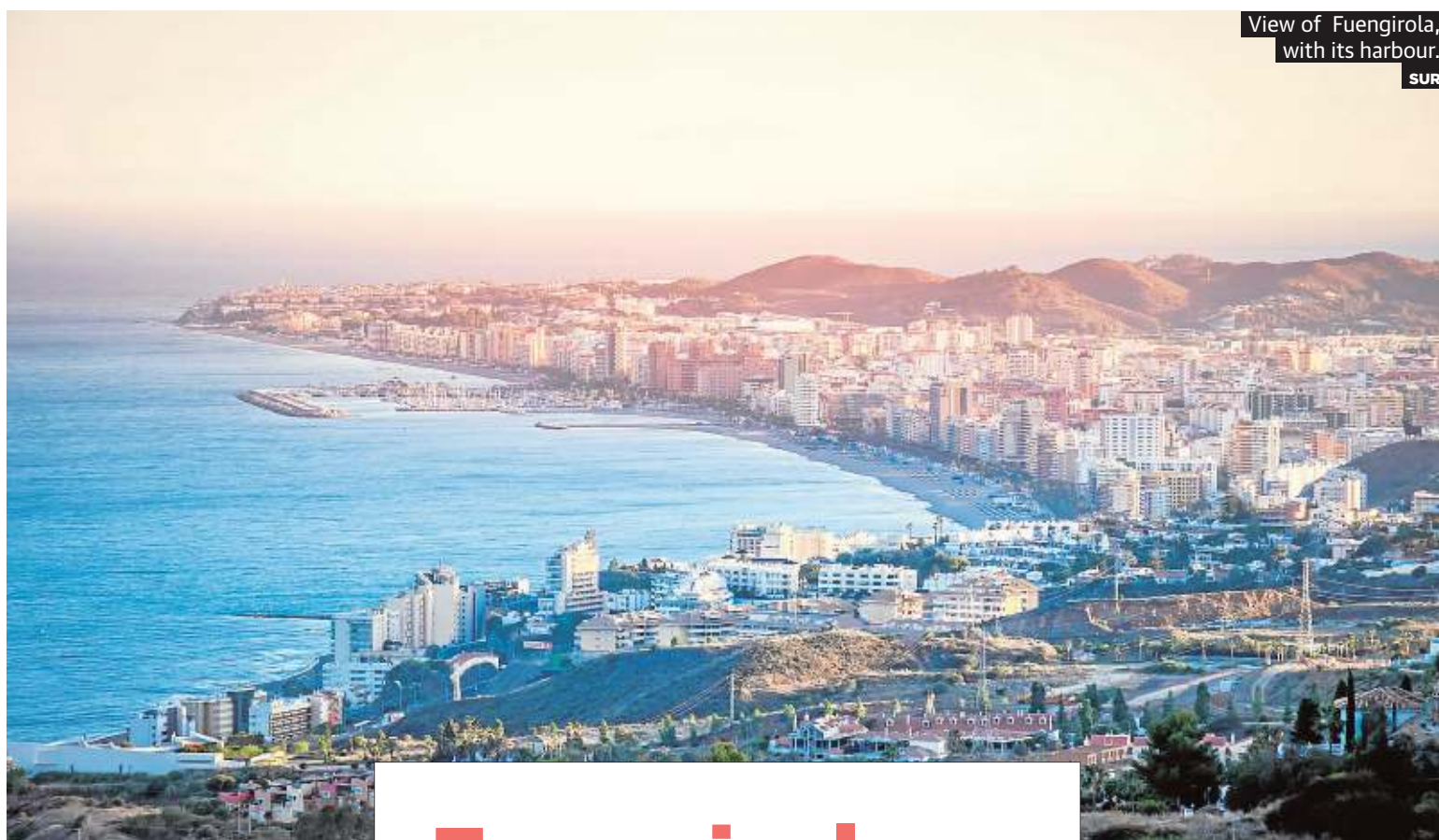
International life. Support, advice, learning, entertainment... a wide network of English-speaking organisations for all ages **P6**

Local interest. The ups and downs of Fuengirola port: its lively past, crisis-stricken present and bright plans for the future **P11**

The town everyone calls home

Fuengirola, one of the Costa del Sol's most famous resorts, has a huge international community, attracted by its wide sandy beaches and excellent facilities



View of Fuengirola, with its harbour.
SUR

Fuengirola, like most towns on the Costa del Sol, has changed beyond recognition since the advent of mass tourism in the early 1960s. It was formerly an unhurried village whose main economic activities were fishing and agriculture. It remained that way until the mid-20th century, when the tourism boom began to transform the quaint village into a bustling, high-rise coastal town. Tourism changed not only the landscape, but also the lives of the locals, many of whom hung up their fishing nets and sought employment in the plenitude of bars, restaurants and hotels that sprung up around the town.

The Fuengirola area has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years: it is believed that the Phoenicians first settled on a site close to the castle and named it Suel.

The name survived until Roman times, but was later changed to Suhayl (Sohail) by the Moors.

The Romans left plenty of evidence of their settlements and way of life, and a good account of the history of Fuengirola can be discovered at the town's history museum.

A reconstructed Roman temple can be found in Los Boliches, approximately one kilometre north of the marina. The archaeological remains of several roads, a salting factory and the hot baths (Torreblanca) are a reminder of this area's rich Roman past.

Moorish castle

The Moorish castle was built in 956 AD by the Caliph Abderramán III and sits above the area where the Roman town is thought to have been located - between the coastline and the mouth of the Sohail river. Evidence of the Roman town comes from a column

Fuengirola A modern resort with a long history

A haven in the sun. The popular tourist destination has a long-standing fishing tradition and is home to thousands of international residents, who find everything they need for a life in the sun

TONY BRYANT



pedestal used in the castle's construction. The column records the name of Suel, and also that the town was granted municipal status in 53 AD, acquiring a certain importance in the Bética region as a result.

Although the Moors had a considerable fortification in Fuengirola, the main seat of power was Mijas. The town did not officially gain its independence from Mijas until 1841.

Sohail was a large settlement, which included farmland and a small village, and it is believed that most of the surrounding area was used as pasture for the Moorish rulers' camels.

The settlement became a

mound of ruins after the town burned to the ground during the Middle Ages. Only the fortress remained in 1485, when the Christian Monarchs retook the town during the reconquest of Spain. An attempt to repopulate the site failed, and in 1511, it was registered as uninhabited.

A new urban settlement developed in the 17th century, and at the beginning of the 18th century, a tavern was opened close to the beach, offering accommodation to travellers, muleteers and seafarers. A small village made up of fishermen's huts was built nearby.

According to historian Alonso de Palencia, the name was

changed to Font-Jirola, in reference to the spring at the foot of the castle. Many historians claim the name is of Castilian origin, as it bears no relation to either the Roman Suel or Arabic Sohail. They believe it alludes to the presence of a number of springs which provided sailors with water. The current name of Fuengirola first appeared in the 18th century by which time it had become a provisioning stop-off for Genovese ships on route to the Straits of Gibraltar.

The castle was renovated in the 18th century and played a defining role in the authorities' efforts to control smugglers and pirates. It was occupied by invading French troops during the Peninsular War, and then gradually fell into ruin. It was opened to the public in 1997, and three years later, the interior of the castle was completely renovated and the surroundings were transformed into landscaped gardens, giving breathtaking views over the Mediterranean. Today, it is used to host many of the town's cultural events.

Postcard image

Fuengirola old town has adhered to the charm of the postcard image of Spain, although most of the tiny whitewashed houses and narrow streets are overshadowed by the mass of construction that grew up when the town was developed into a vibrant coastal entertainment hub.

Just a stone's throw from the beach, the old town is located close to the Church of our Lady of the Rosary (Virgen del Rosario, the town's patron) in Plaza de la Constitución, an area bustling with pavement cafes and artisan shops.

Today, Fuengirola has broad, sandy beaches along a seven-kilometre promenade extending to

Los Boliches and Carvajal. All of the beaches in Fuengirola have been awarded the distinction of Blue Flags and the Q of Spanish Tourist Quality (ICTE).

The promenade, which is officially called the Paseo Marítimo Rey de España, offers every kind of seaside amenity: of particular interest are the excellent chiringuitos (beach bars) which offer fresh fish and seafood, some of it caught earlier in the day by local fishermen.

Another popular area during the summer is the Sohail river and the Parque Fluvial, which attracts thousands of locals, especially at weekends. The park is a perfect green space for an afternoon stroll or picnic with the family, while the river offers a multitude of water sports and activities.

The town's old zoo opened in 1978. It was revamped in 1999, and changed its name from Fuengirola Zoo to Bioparc Fuengirola in 2010. The zoo specialises in captive breeding for endangered species. It houses the largest and most poisonous lizard in the world. Other residents include Sri Lankan leopards, lesser one-horned rhinoceroses, western gorillas and Nile crocodiles.

Foreign community

During the 1970s and 80s, Fuengirola became a favourite destination for foreign residents from all over Europe and America, who settled in the town to enjoy their retirement years in the sun. Fuengirola boasts one of the biggest foreign resident populations on the Costa del Sol. Of the 80,309 permanent inhabitants registered in 2019 in the municipality, 28,864 were foreign, the highest proportion of whom come from the UK.

The second largest expat community in the town is the Fin-



The seafront promenade.
NITO SALAS

FUENGIROLA IN FIGURES



Total area: 10.36km²
Height above sea level: 6 metres
Length of coastline: 7 kilometres
Population: 80,309 (2019)

Foreign population: 28,864 (2019)
Postcode: 29640
Mayor: Ana Mula (Partido Popular)
Patron: Our Lady of the Rosary

PLACES OF INTEREST

Sohail castle

Fuengirola. The Moorish castle was built in 956 AD by the Caliph Abderramán III and is located on a hill next to the mouth of the Sohail river. The castle boasts a Roman column pedestal which records the name Suel. After falling into ruin, the interior of the castle was completely renovated in 2001 and the surroundings were transformed into beautiful landscaped gardens. It is now a summer concert venue.

Fuengirola Church

Fuengirola. Situated in the Plaza de la Constitución, the Parroquia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario is known by most people simply as Fuengirola Church. Built in the middle of the 20th century, the neo-Baroque building, which marks the very centre of Fuengirola, is one of the town's most important monuments. The temple houses the sacred image of Our Lady of the Rosary, an icon carved in 1947.

History Museum

Fuengirola. The Museo de Historia

has several rooms full of artefacts from past civilisations, with an extensive section on the history of its ancient settlers. Other exhibits include a video explaining the different phases of the history of the Sohail castle, as well as a large collection of old photos and information about the fishing heritage of Fuengirola and Los Boliches. There is also a section devoted to the advent of tourism.

Roman temple

Los Boliches. The reconstructed Roman temple can be found in Plaza San Rafael, on the promenade in Los Boliches. A series of architectural components, probably transported from the Mijas quarry during the Roman era, were discovered in Los Boliches in 1984; these have now been mounted to form a temple entrance.

Catholic Monarchs statue

Fuengirola. The monument to the Catholic Monarchs is situated opposite the Hotel Casa Consistorial in the square which also bears their name, Plaza Reyes Católicos. The three-metre-high bronze statue of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, who conquered Sohail Castle on 7 August 1485, was created by local artist Rosario García.

nish, who mainly occupy the area of Los Pacos.

Fuengirola offers just about everything foreign residents require to enjoy life with a few home luxuries.

The town has certainly changed beyond recognition over the last 60 years, but it has up-

held the quaint Spanish village atmosphere of yesteryear.

The traditional and the modern now stand in harmony as Fuengirola continues to grow in popularity for tourists and a multitude of foreign residents eager to enjoy the pleasures the town has to offer.

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Rodrigo Romero. T. BRYANT

"The foreign community is part of the town's DNA"

Rodrigo Romero Deputy Mayor of Fuengirola and Councillor for Tourism, Culture and Foreign Residents

T. BRYANT. Born in Malaga in 1974, Rodrigo Romero (PP) has been active at the town hall in Fuengirola for more than 13 years. In a candid interview with SUR in English, the deputy mayor, and councillor for Tourism, Culture and Foreign Residents, talks about the importance of the foreign population of the town. He is also optimistic that the expat community will remain after

Brexit, and that tourist industry will survive the coronavirus pandemic.

Why does Fuengirola attract so many foreign residents?

There are many things that are attractive. We are a small town and everything is very organised. It is a flat town, so it's ideal for senior citizens to walk without any effort. This makes it very ac-

cessible and the town is ideal for those with mobility restrictions. We also have a very good quality of life, and good weather compared to northern Europe. We have plenty of amenities that offer services in English and a varied selection of expat bars and restaurants, as well as associations that cater for the needs of our foreign community.

How many foreign residents live in Fuengirola?

Our town is home to around 28,000 foreign residents. The British make up the largest community, followed by the Finnish and then the Moroccans. We currently have 136 different nationalities living in Fuengirola.

How important is the expat community?

Extremely important. The foreign community is part of our DNA. We are extremely happy to have such a large expat community because it makes our town very attractive. Spanish children grow up among many different races, cultures, religions and languages. This diversity makes us

very attractive to foreigners because they don't feel alien, they feel accepted.

Some business owners say they feel they are being treated differently because they are foreign: what do you think about this?

We don't treat people differently. It doesn't matter if you are Spanish or foreign, everybody has to comply with the laws, especially at the moment. The police treat everyone the same and they are just trying to make sure that everyone complies with the regulations set out by the Junta de Andalucía regarding social distancing, the wearing of masks and the general health and safety rules. This is necessary, because we think the catering sector is one of the areas where there is a threat of contagion. It is a simple case of respecting the rules and respecting the safety of the staff and customers.

Does the town hall encourage integration?

Yes, we encourage integration as we think this is important for the

whole town. We understand that not all of our foreign residents speak Spanish, so we offer services in English and in other languages, so there is no real reason for them to feel left out. We also offer cultural activities and Spanish lessons for foreigners, in order to help the expats get involved with the local community. **Do you think Brexit will mean that many British foreigners will return to the UK?**

No, not really. I think people were nervous at first, but most are reasonably sure that they won't really see any difference so long as they have all the necessary documents.

Will there be any big changes for British expats after Brexit?

No, none really, so long as they are legal. I think relations between the UK and Spain will be better than they were before 1986 when we joined the European Union. We had many foreign residents then and we didn't have any problems, so I believe the relationship between our countries will still be very good and very strong. There may be things that the politicians have not yet thought about, but if there are problems we'll solve them.

Does the town hall offer any help to those who are worried about the effects of Brexit?

Yes, our Foreign Residents Department is very willing to offer help and assistance to anyone who is concerned. We have held meetings with the British consulate and organisations like Brex-pats in order to keep people updated with the requirements.

Will the tourism industry in Fuengirola survive the coronavirus crisis?

Yes, without a doubt. We have everything under control in Fuengirola and I am sure that the foreign residents will return very quickly when allowed to do so. The tourists will also come back, but we don't know when: this depends of the spread of the coronavirus, but we are trying to help everyone as much as we can. I think that the population has done a great job; they have been really responsible and have followed the rules in order to stop the virus spreading.

When will work start on the new port project?

We have been working for a long time to make a modern, bigger and better port which is open to, and is part of, the town. This will completely change the look of Fuengirola. We have presented the basic project to the Junta de Andalucía. Once it is checked and passed by the government, which will take about 18 months, the work will begin in stages and should take around three years to complete.

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Fuengirola and Mijas

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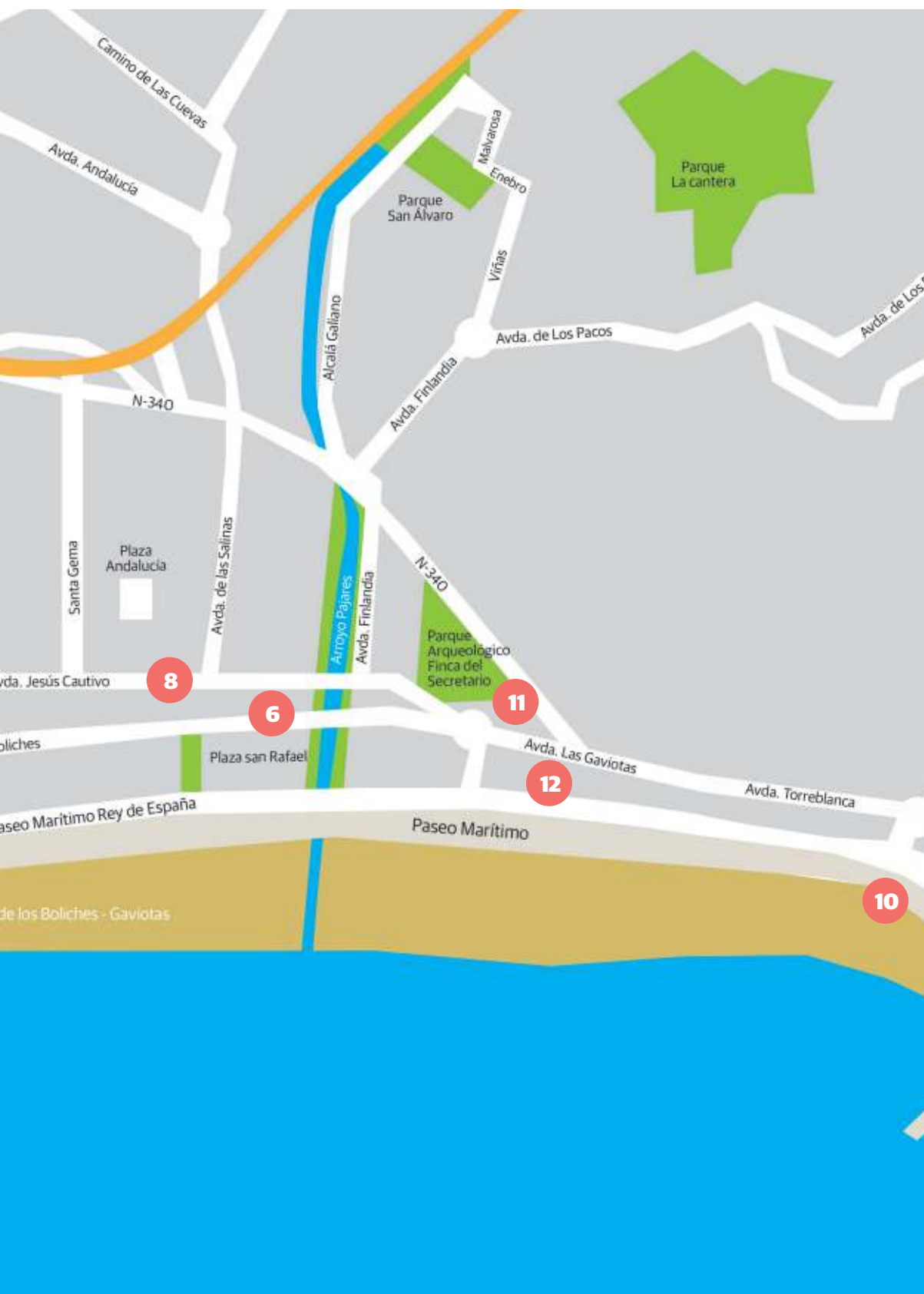
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Home from home

Clubs and services for an international community

The town boasts numerous charities and services that cater for the needs of retired expats

TONY BRYANT

Fuengirola has long been the destination for retired expats eager to while away their golden years in the sun. The town boasts several organisations and associations that cater for the needs of retired expats, along with an ecumenical centre and Anglican church, an English theatre and a third-age learning centre.

One of these is Age Concern Fuengirola, a registered, non-profit association staffed entirely by volunteers. The organisation, along with its sister groups in Estepona and Manilva and in Marbella and San Pedro, is part of Age Concern España and was formed in 2014 by a small group of devotees who recognised that there was a need to help older expats living in the area. Originally just catering to the needs of the Fuengirola district, the branch is now also active in Mijas and Benalmádena.

Age Concern is primarily concerned with the local expatriate community and its well-being. It favours integration with the Spanish way of life as befits foreigners living in a host country. The charity offers a variety of services, including a lifeline for lonely or isolated people, a professional welfare team, care equipment that can be borrowed on a short-term basis and social activities that bring people together. Weekly coffee mornings are held in the drop-in centres and these offer senior citizens a chance to enjoy a social gathering with bingo, quizzes and raffles, but most of all, they offer a warm and friendly ambience to anyone who wants

to take part.

The association also has a charity shop located on Calle Francisco Cano in Los Boliches.

Learning

The Fuengirola branch of The

University of the Third Age (U3A) is ideal for those looking to further their education during retirement years. Established in 1998, the U3A Fuengirola-Costa del Sol is a non-profit making organisation that focuses on the

interests and requirements of local English-speaking people. The group offers a broad range of courses, activity groups and lectures for mature people and its aim is the promotion of learning for enjoyment. The organi-

sation is a self-help group and the leaders are volunteers who share their interests and expertise with others.

Membership is open to all English-speaking adults of any nationality. Groups offer the chance to study many different subjects, including astronomy, photography, art, poetry and the Spanish language.

Theatre

Those who love the arts should head to the Salón Varietés Theatre, which celebrated its 35th anniversary earlier this year. The English-language theatre, the only one of its kind in Spain, was founded by a group of likeminded British residents whose ambition was to offer amateur productions on the Costa del Sol.

In 1979, The English-Speaking Players Association (THESPA) was formed with the aim of giving aspiring actors, actresses and playwrights the opportunity to flourish. The group's productions were first staged in the Hotel Las Palmeras. However, in 1985, the lease on the old cinema building became available and THESPA acquired the building and named it the Salón Varietés Theatre. The amateur theatre was inaugurated on 14 June 1985 with a concert by English clarinetist Acker Bilk.

In the early nineties, the SALVA management team was established and this board continues to oversee the running of the theatre today. Shows are presented from early September un-



The Salón Varietés Theatre offers English-language stage productions from September until May. SUR

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til the end of May and include a variation of theatrical dramas, musicals, pantomime, farce, concerts and stand-up comedy.

Age Care

Age Care is another association that supports the English-speaking senior citizens in the Fuengirola area. Mayor of Fuengirola Ana Mula inaugurated the charity's new drop-in centre, situated behind the Salón Varietés Theatre, in July.

Founded in Calahonda in 2001, the volunteer-run group is a fully registered, non-profit organisation that hosts weekly social meetings, as well as offering welfare support, practical information, appointment assistance and translation services.

Ecumenical services

Lux Mundi Fuengirola, which has been serving the local expat community for more than 40 years, maintains its ecumenical centre in the Nuestra Señora del Carmen parish church thanks to the daily efforts of its volunteers, friends and benefactors. The Christian centre offers religious services for different denominations, ecumenical courses and talks, along with the opportunity to meet and get to know people of different nationalities.

The association also offers a range of services to the homeless and people in need, including a soup kitchen that caters for people who come from varying backgrounds.

Anglican chaplaincy

The Anglican Chaplaincy of St Andrew's is a community of the Church of England Diocese in Europe. Since 1968, it has administered the Gospel to both



St Andrew's Church in Los Boliches. D. FINCH



The Age Care Association centre was opened in July. SUR

residents and visitors of the Costa del Sol through worship and community activity. The church, in Los Boliches, welcomes Christians of all denominations and, in addition to worship, it offers many activities like lectures on the history and liturgy of the Church, Lenten lunches, a monthly lunch club, church fetes and fairs, as well as the annual Burns Night celebration.

Masons

The local Masonic Lodge in Los Boliches also plays an important role among the expat community. Fuengirola 96 has raised thousands of euros over the years to support local charities and causes. The lodge hosts meetings and social events throughout the year and it welcomes visiting Masons from all over the world. The meet-

ings are conducted in English, although the lodge is registered with the Grand Lodge of Spain, which is recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England.

1st Fuengirola Scouts

The British Scouting movement has been available to youngsters aged six upwards in the Fuengirola area for more than 20 years. The 1st Fuengirola Scout Group comprises Beavers (age 6-8), Cubs (8-10), Scouts (10-14) and Explorers (14-18), and forms part of the France and Iberia District of British Scouting Overseas.

The youngsters meet on Thursdays (Beavers and Cubs) and Fridays (Scouts and Explorers) for activities adapted to allow for social distancing and to meet Covid-19 health and safety rules.

The group's annual calendar

CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS

Age Concern

Activity: Help for senior citizens.
Helpline: 652 53 76 15.
Email: info@ageconcernfym.com
Website: www.ageconcernfym.com
Shop: Calle Francisco Cano 56, Los Boliches.

U3A Fuengirola

Activity: Adult education.
Telephone: 952 478 939.
Website: www.u3afuengirolacostadelsol.com
Email: vadawnbu3a@yahoo.com

Salon Varietés Theatre

Activity: English-language stage productions.
Address: Calle Emancipación.
Telephone: 952 47 45 42.
Website: www.salonvarietes theatre.com
Email: boxoffice@salonvarietes theatre.com

Lux Mundi

Activity: Ecumenical services.
Telephone: 952 47 48 40.
Website: luxmundi.org
Email: luxmundif@gmail.com

1st Fuengirola Scouts

Activity: British Scouting for children and young people aged

six and over. Adults interested in becoming helpers and leaders are also welcome to contact Group Scout Leader Robert Troost.
Telephone: 610755995.
Email: robert.troost@britishscoutingoverseas.org.uk
Website: fuengirolascouts.com

Fuengirola Brownies

Activity: British Girlguiding.
Email: lynnebgo@gmail.com

Age Care

Activity: Help for senior citizens.
Website: agecarecosta.org
Telephone: 657494635.

St Andrew's Chaplaincy

Activity: Anglican worship.
Telephone: 952 58 06 00.
Church address: Avenida Nuestro Padre Jesús Cautivo, 74B.
Website: www.st-andrewscofe-spain.org
Email: vicar.costadelsol@gmail.com

Fuengirola 96 Freemasons

Activity: Masonic Lodge
Address: Masonic Center, Edificio Bougainvillea, Bajo Calle de Pulpo 5, Los Boliches.
Website: www.fuengirola96.com
Email: glynemerton@hotmail.com

Girlguiding

Fuengirola is also home to a Brownie unit that forms part of British Girlguiding Overseas. The Brownies, ideal for those seeking a girl-only environment, are aged seven to eleven. The group is currently not meeting due to the coronavirus circumstances but hopes to get back under way next year.

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TALK OF THE TOWN

"I am very happy in Los Boliches and I feel quite at home"



Marilyn Jephson

Retired. Marilyn loves the laid-back way of life in Los Boliches and she says she will never leave.

How long have you lived in Fuengirola?
20 years in Los Boliches, but I have been in Malaga for 30.
What do you like best about Fuengirola?

There are plenty of nice bars and we have the train and bus right on our doorstep.

What do you like least?

Nothing really. I am very happy here and feel quite at home.

Favourite beach?

I don't go to the beach much these days, but before I would use the beaches in Los Boliches because they are always beautifully clean.

A place to eat.

There are so many, but I prefer the traditional Spanish tapas bars.

A place to drink.

I try to visit different places, because I am a great supporter of local business.

A place to shop.

It's much the same answer. Although I do use El Corte Inglés.

A place to relax.

I like to stroll around the market on a Saturday morning.

Where do you take visitors?

It depends on the person, because they all have different tastes, but one place would be the Salon Varietés Theatre.

How could Fuengirola be improved?

The only thing would be publicising big events, because we normally have to rely on SUR in English for this.

"Fuengirola is a lively town in winter as well as in the summer"



Peter Saunders

Retired. Peter is an active member and coordinator of U3A International.

How long have you lived in Fuengirola?

We have lived here permanently for four years.

What do you like best about Fuengirola?

It is a lively town in winter as well as summer and it has everything one needs.

What do you like least?

While occasionally it is good to have a supply of 'home from home' cafes and bars, we feel the emphasis too great.

Favourite beach?

We don't use the beaches much as it happens, but we often use the dog beach and stroll along the leisure areas by the castle.

A place to eat.

The restaurant in Pueblo López offers decent prices. There aren't many of that calibre that we have found.

A place to drink.

I don't go out drinking. As for cafes, Granier seldom disappoints.

A place to shop.

While the town has a variety of shops, Parque Miramar is really the place to head to.

A place to relax.

I cannot think of anywhere really, other than the leisure areas around the castle.

Where do you take visitors?

To be honest, we normally take our visitors out of town.

How could Fuengirola be improved?

More shady areas along the paseo for sure. There is plenty of seating, but all in full sun.

"I love the indoor food market because it has a massive range of spices"



Chris Dove

Author . One of Chris's favourite pastimes is relaxing in a plaza people-watching.

How long have you lived in Fuengirola?

I came to live in Fuengirola 15 years ago.

What do you like best about Fuengirola?

Everything is within a ten-minute walk and all the main amenities are easily accessible.

What do you like least?

The run-down port. It needs to return to what it was before. It is in need of urgent refurbishment.

Favourite beach or park?

Parque Plaza España is one of my favourites.

A place to eat.

Restaurante Oscar. This place has an international menu that suits all tastes.

A place to drink.

Bar La Fría near the bullring. It serves cold beers and excellent tapas.

A place to shop.

I love the indoor food market because it has a massive range of spices.

A place to relax.

Chiringuito Gali Gali on the Paseo Marítimo.

Where do you take visitors?

Taberna Volapié in Plaza de Los Chinorros (Behind the Post Office). This bar is great for people-watching and spontaneous entertainment!

How could Fuengirola be improved?

More parking spaces for those who don't have the luxury of walking.

"This is a main tourist town, so we need to remove the siesta"



Steve Marshall

Age Concern Secretary. Steve spends his time helping run the Age Concern charity.

How long have you lived in Fuengirola?

About 10 years now.

What do you like best about Fuengirola?

The flat promenade, good beaches and lots of nice restaurants and bars.

What do you like least?

The centre is too built-up and parking is a nightmare.

Favourite beach?

Carvajal Beach, because it's wide and sandy.

A place to eat.

Fish Alley, because it offers a great choice of places to eat and a vibrant atmosphere.

A place to drink.

The bars located close to the church in Plaza de la Constitución. We call it yuppie square because it's always buzzing.

A place to shop.

The Miramar shopping centre has great choice of shops and also free parking. One of the benefits is the fact that they do not have siesta.

A place to relax.

We like to chill out with a drink and watch the sea in any of the chiringuitos along the promenade.

Where do you take visitors?
Definitely the Bioparc.

How could Fuengirola be improved?

This is a main tourist town, so we need to remove the siesta and offer more free parking. We also desperately need more live music and entertainment venues.

"Fuengirola is a buzzing town and there is always so much to do"



Oliver Leiva

Theatre stagehand. Oliver likes to stroll along the promenade enjoying the sea views.

How long have you lived in Fuengirola?

I have lived and worked in Fuengirola for most of my life.

What do you like best about Fuengirola?

Fuengirola is a buzzing town and there is so much to do.

What do you like least?

The difficulty of finding a parking space in the summer season.

Favourite beach?

Playa el Castillo. A perfect spot as the beach has a beautiful view of the historic castle.

A place to eat.

The Salon Varietés Theatre Bar is an ideal place to eat. Their choice of menu is a mix of tapas and good value for money.

A place to drink.

Studio Bar is a great place to go. The bar has an excellent outside terrace.

A place to shop

It is good to support local businesses and I can find just what I need in Avenida Condes de San Isidro in the heart of Fuengirola.

A place to relax.

Titans Resto Bar. The bar is decorated in a very quirky and eclectic manner.

Where do you take visitors?

The park surrounding the Castle - it is a beautiful spot.

How could Fuengirola be improved?

In my opinion, there is a shortage of parking, and we need more cultural events and heritage spaces.

Fuengirola Port

An enclave of tradition and hospitality

The Puerto Deportivo de Fuengirola has, since the 1960s, been a popular destination for both tourists and local expats in search of a little of the town's tradition and hospitality. Famed for its wide range of watersports activities, the coveted yacht club and a popular restaurant scene, the port is formed by two distinct areas: the old fishing port and the sport and leisure marina.

Until the beginning of the 1960s, it was a traditional fishing port from where local fishermen set off to make their living from the sea. Still today, this practice can be witnessed, especially at night, when the tiny illuminated boats can be seen on the horizon.

An early morning stroll will reveal an age-old custom that was once one of the main economic activities of the town. The boats used by the fishermen are known as jábegas, whose origins are traced back to the Phoenicians.

The jábega was used to launch the land-based nets, which could measure up to 100 metres in length, although this practice has now been banned.

Even though the fishing activity still plays an important role in the lives of the locals, the advent of tourism

saw the port being extended and embellished with waterside bars and restaurants. The leisure marina was added to cater for tourists and it has been managed by the municipal port company since its creation in 1991.

With berths for more than 400 boats, the sports marina offers facilities nautical services, such as a 24-hour seafaring service and a yacht club. The club is frequented by some of Europe's keenest sailors and the level of instruction is considered to be among the highest on the Mediterranean. As well as sailing, there is a full range of water sports, including scuba diving, jet skis and parasailing.

Visitors will also find a wide range of companies offering fishing and pleasure trips: one of the most popular being a trip in a glass bottom boat to see the dolphins.

An abundance of bars, restaurants and cafes, the majority of which are run by European expats, offer a variety of different cuisine choices. These have always been popular places to enjoy the outside terraces, especially those with

The old fishing port offers a range of watersport activities, a yacht club and enticing restaurants, although the pandemic has caused a drastic drop in business

views out across the moored boats and the Mediterranean towards North Africa.

The nightlife scene really took off during the 1980s and '90s, when tourists and locals flocked to the port to enjoy live music and entertainment, making the area one of the liveliest enclaves in the town.

Even though the port is still popular, it has long been in need of refurbishment. Plans have now been set in motion for a brand-new

marina at a cost of more than 90 million euros. The town hall recently revealed the initial plan for the project, which is expected to take around three years to complete.

The basic plan, which includes a large square that will connect directly to the seafront promenade, is to transform the existing infrastructure into a marina with spacious areas lined with shops and restaurants. The number of berths will be almost doubled and a quay will also be built for large yachts, along with a special anchorage for cruise ships up to 160 metres in length. There will also be an underground car park with space for over 700 vehicles.

News of the plans to revamp the port has come at a time when the area is suffering the devastation of the coronavirus crisis.

As with just about all bars and restaurants along the Costa del Sol, a lack of tourism has caused concern for many of the business owners in the port.

It is hoped that the new marina will inject a new lease of life into the town and pin Fuengirola on the map with other iconic marinas on the Costa del Sol.

TONY BRYANT



Fuengirola marina in 2015. SUR



An image from 2000. SUR



The new project. SUR

LOCAL VIEWS

Gill
Desperate Dans

"We are hoping things will pick up soon, as trade has been very unpredictable this season"



Dave
The Water's Edge

"We've had the bar for three years and we are very happy here. It's hard work in the summer, but we enjoy it"



Kay
Harp & Shamrock

"We opened in July and we knew it would be slow this year, but we have no regrets as it's not been too bad so far"



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READERS'
PHOTOS

Searching for
the essence of
Fuengirola

Earlier this month SUR in English readers were asked to send in their own photographs which, in their view, sum up the essence of Fuengirola.

The images highlight the value residents and visitors give to the town's seven kilometres of coastline, with numerous seascapes popping into our mailbox.

The castle and river also

appear high up on the list of iconic views, as well as the urban landscape formed by the many high-rise hotels, the result of the thriving (Covid hiatus excepting) tourism industry that has formed the identity of Fuengirola.

Of course the essence of the town is also created on its fairground, the venue for the famous Saturday flea market, and, under normal circumstances, the Feria Internacional de los Pueblos in May and the Feria del Rosario in October.

SUR's art and design department made this selection of images received.



Lining up on the beach to watch the sun rise

Fuengirola's sunshades on its wide beaches were the subject of several photographs sent in by readers. In this one, selected by SUR's art director Fran Ruano, the shades almost look like soldiers standing to attention to greet the sun. Other images captured the same scene later in the day, this time the regimented lines looking at the beautiful blues of the sky and sea.



A view over the river

Reader Fati Hariri sent in this image looking over the Sohail river and waterside park.



Urban culture and street art

Fuengirola's skate park was the subject of images sent in by Tom Hackwood.



Sardines on the beach

'I love Spain,' says the boat-barbecue as sardines roast in this image sent in by Arthur Curley.



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