

SUR IN ENGLISH November 2020

COSTA DEL SOL

READY FOR RECOVERY



SUR

Tourism and Covid. Professionals and authorities call for safe travel corridors and mass screening at airports to help save the sector **P2-4**

The great outdoors. The province of Malaga polishes its walking routes as tourists look for safe activities **P6-13**

Quality of life. The pandemic imposed remote working, and with it the possibility of choosing to live in the sunshine **P16**



Tourism and Covid.

The industry looks forward to its recovery

Key forum. Professionals and authorities conclude that the Costa del Sol will continue to attract international tourists and that safe travel corridors and screening are vital

SUR



President of the provincial government Francisco Salado (left) speaks at the forum moderated by SUR Editor-in-Chief Manuel Castillo. **SALVADOR SALAS**

Tourism may be the industry that has suffered most from the devastating effects of the pandemic, but it is also set to be the key sector in the recovery of the Spanish economy and the creation of employment.

In Malaga province and on the Costa del Sol more than 117,000 families and 16,000 businesses depend on the tourism industry which represents 15% of the local GDP.

Their survival in the industry that will lever Spain into positive figures, however, needs some input from the authorities: The creation of safe travel corridors for tourism coming by sea or air; extending the govern-

ment's ERTE furloughing scheme until 30 June 2021 at least; reducing IVA (value added tax) on the industry to 7% as other European countries have done; extending the grace period on repayment of loans granted by the ICO credit institute; reducing airport taxes for airlines; and launching promotion campaigns for the Costa del Sol, were some of the demands relayed by industry representatives at Wednesday's Tourism and Covid forum organised by SUR and sponsored by Unicaja Banco.

The event, held in Malaga, was designed to replace the traditional dinner SUR and SUR in English host every year in Lon-

don to mark the World Travel Market, the industry's major trade fair which this year has gone entirely virtual.

"We've organised the forum to keep up momentum and raise the voice of tourism as we want to contribute with debate and context," said SUR Editor-in-Chief, Manuel Castillo, who moderated the event.

Speaking at the forum were the Spanish Minister for Commerce and Tourism, Reyes Maroto, who attended via video conference; as did the president of the Junta de Andalucía, Juanma Moreno; Executive Director of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Manuel Butler; and Director General of Turespaña,

"It's not a question of whether British tourists will come back to Spain; it's a question of when and how," said Deputy British Ambassador Tim Hemmings

Miguel Sanz.

Present at the event, held at the Hotel Miramar in Malaga, was the president of the Diputación (provincial government) and the Costa del Sol tourism authority, Francisco Salado, as well as Mayor of Malaga, Francisco de la Torre, and professionals from the industry.

Safe travel corridor

Cabinet minister Reyes Maroto announced that the government was working on a safe travel corridor for Andalucía which is due to be approved shortly, Covid-19 incidence figures permitting.

The measure, already in place in the Canary and Balearic islands, would connect the Costa

del Sol with the most important countries of origin of its international visitors, such as the UK and Germany, which currently have restrictions on movement and quarantine measures in place.

Maroto explained that the safe corridors would include Covid-19 screening both at travellers' points of origin and destination. The regional government had previously offered to pay for rapid tests on arrival and departure, an offer regional president Juanma Moreno reiterated in Malaga on Wednesday.

"As soon as we flatten the curve of infection, the tourists will come back," said Maroto.

The minister also confirmed that the government planned to extend the grace period for loan repayments and extend the ERTE scheme "for as long as necessary".

18 million tourists lost

The president of the Junta de Andalucía, Juanma Moreno, stressed that the current situation is complicated for the industry, stating that a third of all



Tourism Minister Reyes Maroto spoke at the virtual event by video link. **SALVADOR SALAS**




Regional president Juanma Moreno. **SALVADOR SALAS**

the companies applying to join the staff furloughing scheme in the region were related to tourism. The pandemic could cause losses worth 14 billion euros in Andalucía, he said, with visitor numbers falling by 18 million.

The region is doing what it can to help maintain and lift the industry, the president explained, pointing out that this week's draft regional budget for 2021 earmarks 100 million euros for tourism, 17 million more than this year.

The provincial government president, Francisco Salado, who is also the head of Turismo Costa del Sol, called for central government to drop IVA to 7% for tourism products.

As well as revealing new "green" tourism projects, he expressed the need to promote residential tourism, stressing the advantage of remote working from somewhere as attractive as the Costa del Sol. (See pages 13 and 16.)

The need to reduce value added tax for the tourism industry was also brought up at a round table discussion 



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Joaquín Sorolla, *Rocks at Jávea and the White Boat*, 1905 (detail)



➤ focusing on Covid and international tourism. After the worst summer in history, the industry in Spain as a whole is expected to reach the end of the year chalking up losses of 135 billion euros.

Brits will be back

The UK's decision to impose a two-week quarantine on travelers from Spain came as a major blow in July, just as the industry was hoping to salvage something from the summer.

The Brits will be back, though, was the message delivered by Deputy British Ambassador to Spain Tim Hemmings, who took part in the debate moderated by the SUR Director of Publications, Pedro Luis Gómez.

For Hemmings there is no question about whether British tourists will return as Spanish holidays "form part of our normality". The question is "when and how", he added.

There is a great demand for travel among the British, he said, although they want to leave their country "safely, without fear and as soon as possible".

The president of the Mesa del Turismo, a national association for tourism businesses, Juan Molas, called for more precise action from central government as "tourism is a matter of State".

"This has been like a novel in instalments," he said, describing the events of this year, and announced that a major event was being planned for Malaga in March or April - depending on the King's agenda - to analyse the situation and boost the Spain brand.

The president of Turespaña, the Spanish government's tourism company, Miguel Sanz, encouraged the industry to "fight for every visitor" as each percentage point "represents jobs".

He predicted that the flow of international visitors would not resume until there is an effective vaccine for Covid-19 and that tourist numbers would not start to pick up until the second half of 2021.

"Until then it's unlikely that visitors will return, but we can work to stabilise the situation," he said.

The creation of safe travel corridors with countries of origin and Covid-19 screening before each journey were among the ways in which that stability can be achieved, according to Sanz.

"It's a method that is as effective as quarantine, but does not cause financial losses," he added.

CEO of Turismo Costa del Sol Margarita del Cid said that while the current figures were "dev-



Pedro Luis Gómez, Ramón de Izequilla, Tim Hemmings, Juan Molas, Margarita del Cid and Miguel Sanz by video link. **SALVADOR SALAS**



President of Turismo Costa del Sol, Francisco Salado. **S. SALAS**



Mayor of Malaga, Francisco de la Torre. **S. SALAS**



Executive Director of UNWTO, Manuel Butler, speaking by video link. **SALVADOR SALAS**

astating", she was confident that economic activity and the flow of travellers "will reactivate as soon as there are health guarantees".

The forecasts offered by the participants in the round table discussion were repeated by the executive director of UNWTO, Manuel Butler. Although he predicted that the recovery of the sector would not be seen until the second half of next year, he sent out a message of optimism, saying the Spain would still be a world leader in the industry.

"People clearly still want to travel and that won't change," he said, adding that the industry must not wait for a vaccine before trying to restore normality. "Safe corridors can play a very important role," he said.

In agreement with this was Mayor of Malaga Francisco de la Torre, who defended the use of mass testing to create a "safe tourist zone".

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The Senda Litoral.

Footpaths now cover 80 per cent of the Malaga coastline

Interest. The Guadalhorce bridge has added a new dimension to the route, and the number of visits to the website doubled in a few days

IVÁN GELIBTER



The Senda Litoral at present

— Already open
— Still to be built

Fuente: Diputación Provincial de Málaga

GRÁFICO
ENCARNI HINOJOSA



MANILVA-ESTEPONA

Estepona and its 19 kilometres of the Coastal Path

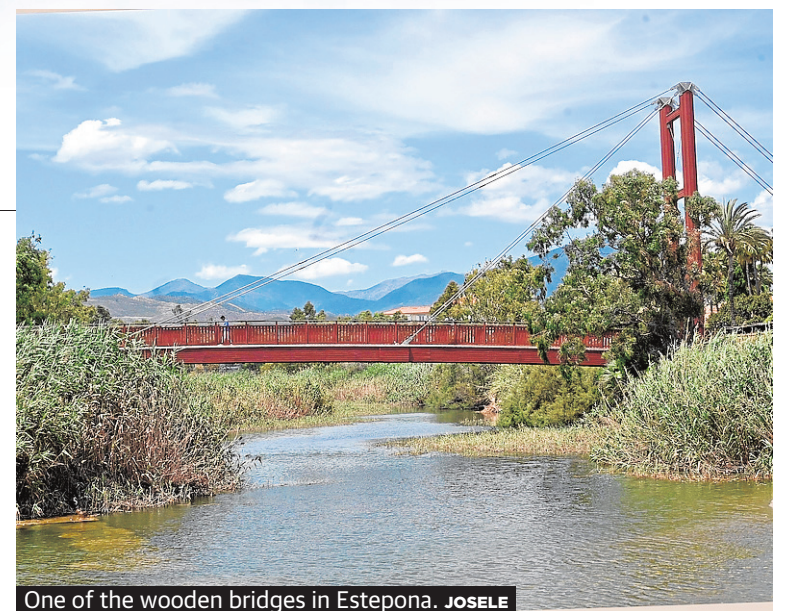
The stretch to link the town which borders Cadiz province with the rest of Malaga is now under construction, although on the western coast the municipality which has been most active in this project is Este-

pona, where another stretch of its 19 kilometres was opened recently. This is in the area known as La Morocha, between the Kempinski Hotel and the Dominion Beach development, which is nearly one kilometre long. It consists of a cement path, 417 metres in length, two wooden walkways and two bridges, one 20 metres long and the other 32.

MIJAS COSTA



The Senda Litoral where it passes through La Cala de Mijas. LUIS MORET



One of the wooden bridges in Estepona. JOSELE

Seafront promenades, cliffs, beaches, bridges and the longest wooden walkway in Europe: those are some of the features of the 140 kilometres of the 'Senda Litoral', or Coastal Path of Malaga, a project which was first proposed less than ten years ago and now stretches along 80 per cent of the Costa del Sol, the famous coastline of southern Spain which runs between Nerja, on the eastern side of Malaga city, to Manilva in the west.

The latest part of the project to have been completed is a bridge

across the Guadalhorce river, and this has added a new dimension to the route. This is an ambitious and record-breaking project in many ways (for example, its length), and bringing it to fruition has been no mean feat.

Although the Senda Litoral was originally the brainchild of the Diputación de Malaga - the Malaga provincial government - it has involved the input and cooperation of 14 councils, the associations of municipalities along the coast, the Junta de Andalucía's Ministry of Agriculture, Farming, Fishing and

Sustainable Development and the central government's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment, via the Coastal and Maritime authorities.

However, it has to be said that the result of this political and institutional brain-teaser has been a real success, as demonstrated by the fact that despite the hot weather at the end of September and fear of Covid-19, thousands of people attended the inauguration of the Guadalhorce walkway, making this one of the province's main attractions. Visits to the Senda Litoral

This is an ambitious and record-breaking project which has involved the input and cooperation of 14 councils, the regional government and other institutions

website also doubled in just a few days around that time.

Some of the stretches of this Coastal Path are about to be included in the European 'Eurovelo' bicycle project. Some areas of every municipality are suitable for bicycles, whether along wooden pathways, seafront promenades or dirt tracks.

It should, however, be noted that some stretches are taking longer to build than others. After all, it is not the same to connect Nerja with Torrox, where there are numerous cliffs, as it is to extend the

The most spectacular stretch of the route

After years of works, some of which are still ongoing, the

municipality of Mijas can now boast one of the most attractive stretches of the Senda Litoral. The combination of sandy beaches and rocky ar-

eas of coastline, especially through La Cala de Mijas, make this a very enjoyable part of the route and the local town hall has shown strong

commitment to the project right from the start. The aim is to make it possible to walk from Mijas to Marbella or vice versa within a few years.



LA ARAÑA

No walkway but still possible to cross

Although there are no specific plans for a walkway at La Araña, it is possible to walk between El Palo and La Cala del Moral along a sandy track.

EL CANTAL

Rincón de la Victoria, almost completely connected

Now that more areas of its Senda Litoral have been completed, the town of Rincón de la Victoria can boast having the longest stretch of this

project on the eastern Costa del Sol. Among all the kilometres of the coast which can be walked within this municipality, (which include some of its seafront promenades), the area of El Cantal is particularly outstanding and is well worth a visit.

NERJA

The Balcón de Europa and the future path along the Paseo de los Carabineros

Nerja has not managed to build much of its Senda Litoral yet, mainly because the rugged terrain and numerous cliffs make it one of the most complicated areas of the province in which to create a walkway by the sea. In fact, the famous Balcón de Europa is one of the few areas which form part of the route in Nerja at present. However, recently the contract for the walkway at El Paseo de los Carabineros was put to tender. This will be a path across the urban cliff areas which have been closed since 2002 due to the risk of rockfalls.



Between El Candado and La Araña. MIGUE FERNÁNDEZ



El Cantal, in Rincón de la Victoria. MIGUE FERNÁNDEZ

PASARELA DEL GUADALHORCE

The biggest attraction of all on the Senda Litoral

The Coastal Path has been under construction for several years, but the biggest attraction along its almost 150 kilometres opened only recently. The new walkway across the Guadalhorce river, which is the longest in Europe at 270 metres long and about three metres wide, cost 1.6 million euros and was jointly financed by Malaga city hall and the provincial government.



The walkway was inaugurated not long ago. MIGUE FERNÁNDEZ



El Balcón de Europa. SUR

beachfront between Mijas and Marbella, which is flatter and where one municipality leads directly into another.

The different parts of the project are classified in three degrees of difficulty, depending on how much of a continuous path already exists. So, the easiest is where there are already seafronts, cycle lanes, paths, footpaths, pavements, crossings or bridges over rivers. This applies to 73 per cent of the trail.

Another 15 per cent is classified as medium: these stretches can be adapted quite easily, such as

Once completed, walkers and cyclists on any stretch of the coast will be able to enjoy scenic views and historical monuments as they take exercise in the fresh air

beaches, areas which have not been built-up, narrow paths and stretches of seafronts which were not previously connected.

The remaining 12 per cent is difficult and will need considerable work and technical expertise. These areas include cliffs, narrow hard-shoulders, river mouths without bridges, and areas where there are buildings, hotels, bars and restaurants.

Further stretches of this project are due to be added shortly. Work is about to begin again in Rincón de la Victoria and the Gua-

dalabón area of Estepona, and the 'kilometre zero' at Manilva, on the boundary with Cadiz province, will soon be complete.

There is no way of forecasting how many people will use this Coastal Path when it is finished, but thousands already go walking along the seafronts of the province every year and this is a good indication that it will be very popular.

After all, as well as being an excellent way of taking exercise and enjoying the sea air, walkers will be able to see areas which are not

only scenic but are of great environmental value, such as the Cantales de La Araña, Peñón del Cuervo rock, Punta Chullera headland and its beach in Manilva, the protected Artola sand dunes, the Vélez delta, the mouth of the Guadalhorce river, and the rocky terrain between the beaches of Calahonda and Calaburras in Mijas. They will also be able to admire the 42 watchtowers which stand proudly along the coast of Malaga, most of which date back to Moorish times, and the Phoenician ruins at Vélez Málaga.



Calahonda beach, Nerja. **EUGENIO CABEZAS**



Distanced bathers this summer in Marbella. **JOSELE**

renown are the beaches around the Puerta Marina, and also the Santa Ana beach, which is towered by the Moorish-looking Bil Bil Castle.

Playa Torrebermeja is another popular beach in Benalmádena. It is a regular winner of the world-renowned blue flag, which represents a commitment to both people and the environment. The area shaded by palm trees is a great option, especially when one needs a break from the burning summer sun.

The Playa Benalnatura, the nudist beach, is a popular destination for naturalists, as are the ones in Cabopino (Marbella) and the Costa Natura in Estepona, which was the first naturist resort in Spain.

Fuengirola has seven kilometres of golden beaches that stretch from the castle to Los Boliches and Carvajal. Playa Los Boliches is among the most favoured in this area. Besides relaxing and enjoying the view, there is plenty to keep the whole family occupied. The beach has special areas where visitors can show off their volleyball skills,

The name of 'the coast of sun' is not due to chance, as the province boasts an excellent all-year-round climate offering around 325 sunny days a year

Some of the beaches include quiet coves where bathers can enjoy a peaceful hideaway, while others offer the most modern services that cater for the needs of every type of tourist

while lovers of the sea can rent jet and water skis, or take a fishing trip in a glass-bottom boat.

One of the most exclusive beaches in Marbella is Playa Nagüeles, a favourite of the rich and famous. Here one can rent a luxurious yacht, or simply top up their tan on one of the well-spaced sunbeds. The beach is perfect for children, as the water is gentle and clean and life-guards are on duty all year.

Most of these locations have beaches designed with special services and easy access for those with mobility problems. There are also many pet friendly beaches along the coast, like the dog beach situated next to the Sohail Castle in Fuengirola, or the Playa Piedra Paloma in Casares.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, this year has been one of the most disastrous in the history of the Costa del Sol's tourism industry, but the authorities have strived to make sure the beaches of Malaga have adhered to all the necessary health and safety measures to ensure that they remain a safe haven for all.

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CAMINITO DEL REY

Stage 20 of the trail

The dizzying walkway across the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes gorge is one of the most unusual of the many attractions in the heart of Malaga province. Those who want to include it as part of their itinerary will find it very close to the start of stage 20 of the Gran Senda de Malaga.



Caminito del Rey. J. ALMELLONES

SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA NATURAL PARK

Emblematic places

This protected park is shared by Malaga and Cadiz provinces and stages 24 and 25 of the Gran Senda pass through it. The former also runs alongside the emblematic Cueva del Gato cave, while the latter goes through the narrows of the Guadiario river and passes close by La Pilata cave, which is known as the Altamira of Andalucía. A lot of the route takes walkers along the riverbank of the Guadiario and is particularly beautiful, especially in the spring and autumn.

THE FUENTE PIEDRA LAGOON

Not to be missed

Between stages 17 and 18 of the Gran Senda is the nature reserve of Fuente de Piedra lagoon, one of the most important wetland areas in Andalucía. It is very big, covering more than 1,300 hectares, and is the permanent home or temporary refuge of many different species of bird, including a large colony of flamingoes.



Fuente Piedra lagoon. J. A.



NERJA CAVE

The most-visited

This cave, which receives more visitors than any other in Andalucía, is one of Malaga's most popular tourist attractions. Stage 5 of the Gran Senda, which leads to Frigiliana, begins just a few metres away. This spectacular cave is one of the largest and most important in the country.

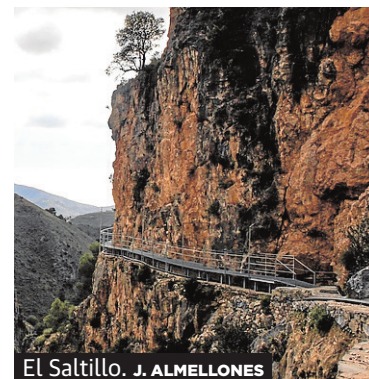


Cueva del Gato. J. ALMELLONES

EL SALTILLO

The hanging bridge

Nicknamed 'The Caminito del Rey of La Axarquía', this bridge is on the seventh stage of the Gran Senda, between Cómputa and Canillas de Aceituno. It is not recommended for anyone who suffers from vertigo, but this spectacular hanging bridge over the Almanchares river will be popular with the most daring.



El Saltillo. J. ALMELLONES

NATURAL PARK OF LAS SIERRAS DE TEJEDA, ALMIJARA Y ALHAMA



Sierra de Tejeda. J. ALMELLONES

Protected area

As well as El Saltillo, the Gran Senda is a good reason to explore this natural park which is shared by Malaga and Granada. Stages 5 and 8 pass across the southern side of the Sierras de Tejeda y Almiijara, and it is stages 5 and 6, in Nerja and Cómputa, which cover the largest part of this protected area.

The inauguration of the Caminito del Rey in 2015 was one of the biggest landmarks for tourism in Malaga province in recent years. This followed on the heels of a project called the Gran Senda (Great Trail), a series of hiking routes along 745 kilometres of paths and tracks through the province, which was created by the Diputación de Malaga (the provincial government). Some parts of this 'Great Trail' coincide with those on the Senda Litoral coastal path, and new attractions are regularly being added to it.

52 municipalities

Unlike the Coastal Path, the Great Trail of Malaga has already been completed. It consists of 35 stages and several optional diversions, and crosses nine regions and passes through 52 of the province's 103 municipalities. It has been designed to be done on foot, bike or on horseback.

This is a pioneering route in Andalucía because of the variety of terrain and different environments in Malaga province. It is stimulating a great deal of interest among

The Gran Senda, 745 kms of walks through Malaga province

Exercise. From short stretches suitable for the whole family to long routes which will delight experienced hikers, this is a fantastic way to explore the region

IVÁN GELIBTER
JAVIER ALMELLONES

local residents and visitors alike because of the stunning countryside through which it passes, and it is boosting the economies of the different places along the route as many people decide to spend

some time there and get to know them better.

Protected areas

The Gran Senda was designed to be followed in an anti-clockwise

direction through the province. It crosses four natural parks (Sierra Tejeda, Almiijara y Alhama, Sierra de las Nieves - which will soon be classified as a National Park -, Alcornocales and Sierra de Grazalema); two nature reserves (the Fuente de Piedra and Campillos lagoons) and five well-known beauty spots: the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes gorge, Sierra de Crestellina, Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja, the Guadalhorce river estuary and El Torcal in Antequera.

The route is marked as the GR-249, and its 35 stages begin in Malaga city, fittingly enough outside the headquarters of the provincial government building. The first four stages take you eastwards along the coast as far as Nerja, and then stages five to 15 lead north-west to Cuevas Bajas. Stages 16 to 26 head south-west to Benalauria, and stages 27 to 29 continue south to Estepona. Stage 30 follows the coast to Marbella, and 31 to 35 head back to Malaga city but via an inland route.

Due to its length, most people opt to do one stage or part of a stage at a time and they can all be ac-

cessed by car. Full details are available on the Gran Senda website, but on average these hikes are about 18 kilometres in length. The longest stretches are stage six from Frigiliana to Cómputa, which is 26.4 kms; stage seven Cómputa to Canillas de Aceituno, 25.1 kms; stage 20 from Campillos to the Embalses del Guadalhorce (23 kms) and the following stage to El Chorro (22 kms); Ardales to El Burgo (stage 22 and 22.8 kms); stage 23, El Burgo to Ronda, 24.2 kms; stage 29, Casares to Estepona, 32.8 kms; and stage 32, Ojén to Mijas, 39.8 kms.

Anyone thinking of doing part of the Gran Senda should study the routes carefully and take the terrain and their level of fitness and experience into account. Bear in mind that many of these stretches are in mountainous areas, and the weather is also a factor to be considered. But one of the advantages of this Great Trail is that you can pick and choose which parts to do, knowing that there will be spectacular views from all of them and that there are stages to suit all ages.

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The Axarquía's new attraction is not for the faint-hearted

Epígrafe. The new suspension bridge near Canillas de Aceituno connects the two sides of El Saltillo gorge, in the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama mountains

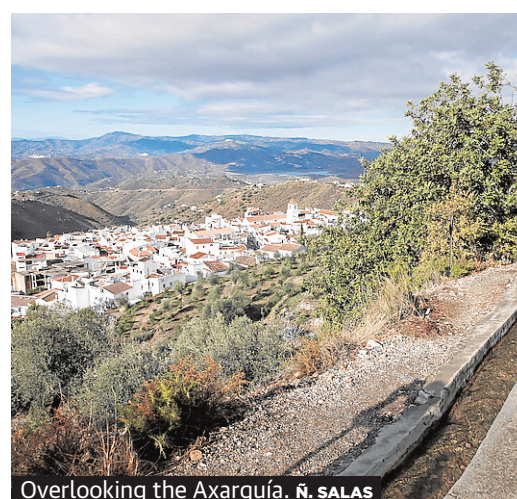
JAVIER ALMELLONES



The suspension bridge measures 64 metres above the river bed and is 52 metres in length. **ÑITO SALAS**



Some of the first walkers to visit the bridge in October. **Ñ. SALAS**



Overlooking the Axarquía. **Ñ. SALAS**

A new suspension bridge above the Almanchares river, in an area known as el Saltillo, is the newest attraction on the Gran Senda de Málaga (great trail), a large circular walk around Malaga province totalling 745 kilometres in length.

The new bridge, which opened at the end of October, stands at 64 metres above the riverbed. Built

with wood and steel, the bridge measures 1.2 metres wide and 52 metres in length. Suspended between the two rock faces of the el Saltillo gorge, the bridge is the ideal attraction for lovers of adventure tourism and mountains.

The new walkway is the highlight of section seven of the great Malaga trail between the villages of Cómpeta and Canillas de Acei-

The bridge stands at 64 metres above the Almanchares riverbed, it is 52 metres long and 1.2 metres wide

tuno in the Axarquía area of the province.

Getting the bridge and access to it ready for the public required a lot of complex work and collaboration. Canillas de Aceituno town hall and Malaga's provincial government, Diputación, have been the main drivers behind the project, which has cost around 600,000 euros.

The company responsible for carrying out the work, Oystec, came up against challenges due to the nature of the terrain they were working with and connecting two sides of rock face either side of a deep gorge in the Sierra de Tejeda mountains.

More than 30 workers were involved in constructing the bridge since work began in February 2020. They continued despite Spain's strict lockdown due to the coronavirus.

Getting the materials on site was one of the major challenges. However, the difficulties were overcome by using, among other things, mules, quads, zip wires and even a helicopter to transport the goods.

Difficult walking

With the new bridge in place, stage seven of the great Malaga trail (Cómpeta-Canillas de Aceituno), has been modified to include the vertiginous route.

Without a doubt, the Canillas to Sedella section, which is approximately nine kilometres in length, will be the most attractive, but arguably the hardest part of the section, from both a physical and technical point of view.

Those wanting to experience the bridge, without doing the full route; 25 kilometres starting or finishing in Cómpeta, can choose to walk as far as Sedella or from Canillas de Aceituno.

However, an unavoidable part of any of the aforementioned options is a walk through an old irrigation canal, which is not suitable for those suffering from vertigo, or for the faint-hearted as there are no safety barriers on this narrow part of the walk.

From Canillas de Aceituno it's just over five kilometres to the bridge, which includes a steep downhill track, or uphill if heading towards the village and for those continuing on to Sedella, there's another challenging section of narrow pathway further on.

Canillas de Aceituno has long been popular among hikers and mountaineers. As well as section seven of the great Malaga trail, section eight, which goes to Periana via Alcaucín, can also be completed from the village. It's also a great place to start the climb up La Maroma, Malaga province's highest peak, at 2,064 metres above sea level. The village also offers other beauty spots including the Fájara, La Rábita and La Rahige caves.

A new walk down the river

Guadalhorce River. The provincial president, Francisco Salado, has announced the project to create a 50-kilometre riverside walk as far as the estuary nature reserve

IVÁN GELIBTER



Estuary nature reserve gains new life thanks to footbridge

The opening of the new wooden footbridge across the River Guadalhorce estuary has breathed new life into the nature reserve. Already a haven for birdwatchers from all over the world, the area, covering 67 hectares, consists of a set of lagoons which attract more than 250 species over the year. Many of them are migrating birds, stopping off at these wetlands on their long journey between continents. Ornithologists use the reserve's several hides to keep their eyes peeled for shovelers, among several other types of duck, flamingos, black-necked grebes, ospreys, as well as cormorants, the common pochard, among many other species depending on the time of year.

The reserve's two walking routes cover more than two kilometres each, leading to the beach and a vantage point over the Mediterranean.



The nature reserve at the mouth of the Guadalhorce river. Above, the new bridge. **ÑITO SALAS / MIGUE FERNÁNDEZ**

Promoting green tourism, making the most of the spectacular countryside of the province of Malaga, is now a priority for the authorities. With the pandemic situation ongoing, outdoor activities have been in increasing demand this year among visitors.

The president of the provincial government and the Costa del Sol tourism authority, Francisco Salado, announced plans to boost tourism in the short and mid-term at the Tourism and Covid forum organised this week by SUR and sponsored by Unicaja Banco.

Salado highlighted the Guadalhorce 'green corridor' as one of the key upcoming projects for the prov-

ince. He pointed out that locals and tourists are demanding "different" tourism options, away from crowds, especially now, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Holidays and excursions that involve being in touch with nature, moving inland rather than staying on the coast, with sports and adventure activities in the open air are the trends of the short and mid term, said Salado.

"We have been working on this strategy for some time and I can say that the Diputación [provincial government] is in a position to lead this so-called 'green revolution' that the president of the Junta is announcing for Andalucía," said Salado.

This 'revolution' has already begun, he said, with infrastructure such as the Gran Senda (the Great Trail hiking route around the province) and the Senda Litoral (the seaside path linking the entire Malaga coastline), and attractions

The project to create riverside paths for walkers and cyclists will affect eight municipalities, from Ardales to Malaga

such as the Caminito del Rey gorge-side walk, the new bridge across the Guadalhorce and El Saltillo, in the Axarquía.

Inland tourism in general has not suffered the effects of Covid this summer as much as the coast, he pointed out, thanks to tourists from the rest of Spain.

Salado announced that the Guadalhorce Corredor Verde (green corridor) project was making progress.

The route will stretch from the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes nature reserve (home to the Caminito del Rey) to the Guadalhorce river estuary, covering more than fifty kilometres crossing through Ardales, Álora, Pizarra,

Cóin, Alhaurín el Grande, Cártama, Alhaurín de la Torre and Malaga. The project is designed to have both environmental and socioeconomic advantages.

While the Gran Senda circles the province, the green corridor will cut down the middle from north to south, following the river. The project was originally presented by the previous provincial government in 2017, and had the support of the Junta de Andalucía, the Guadalhorce Valley Rural Development Group and the town halls involved, as well as local business owners and the general public.

The Guadalhorce valley is an area of great natural importance in terms of flora, fauna and geology. The river, especially its estuary, is a haven for birdwatchers.

The valley also boasts important cultural and historical heritage which will add to the tourist attraction created by the future river walk, and boost local development.

While finer details of the project are not yet known, the aim of the authority is to use the banks of the river to create paths for walkers and cyclists.

This will involve embellishing the current GR-248 hiking route which already runs along the river to its estuary.



A view of the Muelle Uno marina, with the Centre Pompidou in the foreground and the lighthouse at the end. **SUR**

Málaga city, European capital of smart tourism 2020, offers the perfect combination of climate and outdoor spaces making it the ideal destination whatever the time of year.

With year-round sunshine and mild winters, outdoor dining and sightseeing are always an option in this seaside city.

From 14 kilometres of wide, sandy beaches, to the city's tradition of terraces and outdoor monuments, there is no end of options for the visitor to feel safe and relaxed in Malaga city centre.

Even in winter, the terraces of beach and city centre restaurants are popular with tourists and locals alike, where anything from traditional locally caught fish, to top quality international cuisine, vegan and gluten-free options are in abundance.

Much of Malaga's history can be viewed from outdoors; the eleventh century Alcazaba fortress - once home to Malaga's Islamic rulers, as well as the Gibralfaro castle, afford stunning views of Malaga's bay and beyond and offer the visitor the opportunity to discover Malaga's past.

A stroll below the Alcazaba reveals another of Malaga's eras - the Romans - thanks to the Roman amphitheatre which was excavated in 1951.

Another iconic Malaga sight is its cathedral. Affectionately known as 'La Manquita' (the one-armed

The capital of the Costa del Sol

Malaga. With year-round sunshine there is no end to the outdoor experiences on offer in the capital of the Costa del Sol, from al fresco dining to discovering the past and present on foot, or sunbathing at any time of year on 14 kilometres of beach

woman) as its second tower was never completed. Like many churches in the province, the cathedral was built on the site of a mosque from Spain's Al-Andalus period.

Museums

Malaga is the birthplace of Picasso and the city pays tribute to its most famous son through the Picasso Museum, located in the Palacio de Buenavista on Calle San Agustín, as well as the house where he was born, situated on the corner of Plaza de la Merced, near to the Mercado de la Merced indoor market.

In total the city of Malaga boasts no fewer than 40 museums, including the world's only other Pompidou centre outside of Paris, the Carmen Thyssen museum, which houses permanent and temporary art collections and the contemporary art centre (CAC).

All of the city centre museums are within walking distance of each other and many, including the Picasso and Jorge Rando have beautiful outdoor courtyards in the centre of the buildings, a traditional feature of many Andalusian houses, providing a peaceful outdoor area away from the city centre itself.

Malaga has endless 'barrios' (neighbourhoods) to stroll around, or sit and enjoy a coffee while watching the world go by. The newest to have sprung up, since the opening of the CAC (Centro de Arte Contemporáneo) is the area of Soho, known as the art district.

Just to the west of Plaza de la Marina, funky street art has given the area its name.

Interactive maps are available which guide visitors to the street art, much of which is by international graffiti artists including D*FACE, Obey, Pejac and Manuel León. Biographies can be found on the MAUS website (Malaga Arte Urbano Soho).

As well as historic outdoor monuments, Malaga city offers a wealth of alternatives for visitors to enjoy the outdoors.

The Malaga park (Parque de Málaga) runs the length of the main avenue, parallel to the new Muelle Uno harbour area. Known for hundreds of species of tropical and native plants, the park takes in some of the city's other iconic buildings, including Malaga City Hall, the Bank of Spain building and the former post office (Correos) headquarters, which is now part of the University of Malaga and the old gardener's house.

Muelle Uno, Malaga's modern harbour, boasts an ample walkway littered with restaurants and bars offering extensive terraces and fine dining, as well as being home to the Pompidou Centre and the Hard Rock Café.

Boutique shops selling luxury items from designer clothes and shoes to soaps from Provence can be found along Muelle Uno, which ends at the city's iconic lighthouse.

Beaches

Just to the east of Muelle Uno is arguably Malaga's most famous



JENNIE RHODES



Calle Larios, with its arch of lights, ready for Christmas. F. HINOJOSA



Cooking sardines on the beach in Pedregalejo. SALVADOR SALAS



An exhibition in the Carmen Thyssen museum. NIÑO SALAS

beach, the Malagueta. A wide expanse of sand stretches down to the Mediterranean sea and with year-round sunbathing and beach bars on offer, it's an ideal sport to relax, just a few minute's walk from the city centre.

The Malagueta beach gives way to Playa de la Caleta and along the east coast towards Baños del Carmen, Pedregalejo and El Palo.

Pedregalejo in particular is famed for its wide selection of promenade al fresco restaurants and cafés and popular with locals and visitors wanting an authen-

tic Malagueño dining experience. Many of the restaurants in this part of the city offer the best quality fried fish (pescaito frito) - a must for any foodie visiting the capital of the Costa de Sol.

To the other side of Muelle Uno, and Malaga's container and passenger docks, the city centre turns into the historic neighbourhood of Huelin and the beaches of La Misericordia before reaching the river Guadalhorce.

Malaga's promenades extend most of the length of the city's beaches, from El Candado to the

Enjoy life outdoors all year round in the capital of the Costa del Sol

From historic to young, vibrant districts, Malaga offers something for all tastes

far end of El Palo; Malaga's most eastern neighbourhood, along Pedregalejo, La Caleta, the Malagueta, Muelle Uno and then along the Misericordia along to the Guadalhorce estuary.

West of the city

To the west of Malaga city as well as three iconic chimneys; the remains of lead foundries and a reminder of Malaga's industrial past. The Térmica gallery, situated in an early twentieth-century building, offers temporary contemporary art exhibitions.

Also on the west side of the city, the automobile and fashion museum and the Russian art museum now occupy the city's old tobacco factory.

So when in Malaga, do as Malagueños (people from Malaga) do and enjoy life outdoors, all year round, whether it's taking a stroll through one of the city's historic or new, buzzing neighbourhoods, or having a coffee or long, lazy lunch on one of its many terraces, the capital of the Costa del Sol will make you feel safe and welcome.

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Residential tourism, the way forward

Opportunities. During the lockdown, people realised that remote working is not only possible but can be beneficial, so: why not move to the Costa del Sol?

DEBBIE BARTLETT
MATÍAS STUBER

The coronavirus pandemic has had far-reaching effects all around the world and Spain is no exception. Figures released this week show that between January and September the country lost 56 billion euros of tourism income, as the numbers of visitors dropped far below normal levels. With tourism playing such an important role in the national economy, this is devastating news.

However, new ideas often arise out of adversity and in Andalucía politicians and administrations believe they can see new opportunities, thanks - strange though it may sound - to the lockdown last spring.

As the president of the Malaga provincial government, Francisco Salado, explained this week, companies all over the world discovered that they did not need to have all their staff in one place of work and that there are benefits to home working. And thanks to the technology which makes this possible, it doesn't even matter where that home is, so many workers could choose to live anywhere they liked, as long as they have a computer and a reliable Internet connection.

This in turn creates possibilities for residential tourism, as a way of boosting the property market and local economy in the absence of short-stay holiday-makers.

For Salado, Malaga is a particularly attractive option for those who fancy living elsewhere and working from home. "We can, and we should, link part of our tourism promotion to the fact that Malaga and the Costa del Sol are perfect locations in which to work and live with your family, and another benefit is that this would be a fantastic chance to combat the depopulation in rural villages," he said.

Living the good life in Malaga

One person who has already moved to Malaga and agrees that it is ideal for home working is Claudio Gerlich, who moved from his native Germany to the city in the summer, once the lockdown was eased and it was possible to travel.

The 37-year-old works in digital marketing and his clients are German companies who entrust him to optimise their presence on the internet.

Claudio gets up early, works from a café in the city centre in the mornings and has quality time in the afternoons with his

baby daughter, whom he often takes for walks along the seafront. He says he loves the life here. "The climate is definitely an attraction," he admits, "Oh, and so is the gastronomy!"

Although he has travelled all over the world, he fell in love with Malaga when he visited the area for the first time in 2016 and he and his wife jumped at

With the airport so close, people living and working on the Costa can fly back for occasional meetings in a single day

the chance to move here when they realised that it was perfectly feasible to do so. They now live in an apartment in La Trinidad district.

Claudio does need to return to Germany sometimes for face-to-face meetings with clients, but says that with the airport so close this is not a problem and he can travel there and back in a single day.

He believes the benefits of working from home and organising your day to suit yourself definitely outweigh the disadvantages.

"Success in your work doesn't depend on your physical location," he says. He has spent time in many cities in different countries, but right now he is happy in Malaga. It suits him perfectly for work and he wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to others.

The way forward

If the mayor of Malaga, Francisco de la Torre, had heard what Claudio has to say, it would have been music to his ears. He firmly believes this type of residential tourism is the way forward and he dreams of making the city a hub for teleworking: flexibility, infrastructure and an enviable climate, he says, are just some of its advantages.

It should also be remembered that the Costa del Sol, with its excellent international schools, is an attractive option for those with school age children if they are thinking of moving to the area and working from home.

The mayor of Marbella, Ángeles Muñoz, agrees. Speaking at the inauguration of the Residential Tourism Conference at the Anantara Villa Padierna hotel recently, she confirmed that there is already a great deal of interest in investing and living in Marbella and elsewhere on the Costa del Sol. She also said that the administrations need to anticipate the demands of the market, as they had done in the past for the golf sector, education and health.

Speaking at the same conference, the president of the Andalusian Federation of Developers and Residential Tourism, Ricardo Arranz, said that despite the current health crisis "it is essential to start working on ways to move forward", and he also referred to the advantages of the area, such as the climate, infrastructure and quality of life. "At a dramatic time like this for the world, what we have here is pure gold and we need to value that and learn how to sell it," he insisted.

For some professions, working from home - and especially in another country - is not a possibility, but one lesson that was learned from the challenging months of lockdown earlier this year is that in many cases there are different ways of doing things and they can have positive knock-on effects. The Costa del Sol hopes to make the most of them.



Claudio Gerlich fell in love with Malaga and now lives and works here, thanks to technology. MIGUE FERNÁNDEZ



The centre of the village is very traditional. J. ALMELLONES

Benalmádena is one of the best-known holiday resorts on the Costa del Sol, but to find its origins we have to travel a few kilometres inland, to the old village, perched on the mountainside with panoramic views over the coast.

These days it is known as Benalmádena Pueblo to differentiate it from Arroyo de la Miel and Benalmádena Costa, which are part of the same municipality and are much more modern. It dates back to the time of Al-Ándalus, as its name suggests, and it is well worth getting to know.

If you take a gentle stroll through the centre of the village you will see the remains of the walls of a castle which used to be of great strategic importance. Nowadays, though, it is an excellent place to stand and enjoy spectacular views of the Costa del Sol.

Next to it is the Plaza de Santo Domingo de Guzmán, the square where the main church is situated. Another interesting public square is the Plaza de España, which is home to the symbol of the village, La Niña de Benalmádena, the statue of a little girl created by artist Jaime Pimentel.

Benalmádena Pueblo. The Moorish origins of a beachside holiday resort

Background. Benalmádena is one of the best-known destinations on the Costa del Sol, but to find its history we need to head inland

JAVIER ALMELLONES



Outside the village centre there are other popular tourist attractions, including the Mariposario, a butterfly house with some remarkably beautiful examples of the species. The attraction is built in the form of a spectacular Thai temple, where 1,500 exotic butterflies from all over the world fly freely in a tropical paradise with waterfalls and flowering plants.

During the visit you can see in situ how the butterflies are born, how they reproduce and discover plenty of new information about the insects. The butterfly park is open every day in the summer months and entry costs between 7.50 and 8.50 euros if the tickets are purchased online.

Opposite the park is the Estupa de la Iluminación, which is believed to be the biggest Buddhist stupa in the western world. Standing over 33 metres high, the golden cone on the top can be clearly seen from much of the coast between Benalmádena and Fuengirola. Its base is 25 metres long and 25 metres wide, and the interior includes a meditation room more than 100 square metres in size.

On the other side of the village you will find the Colomares Castle, which was completed in 1994 and was designed as a tribute to Christopher Columbus

As a municipality, Benalmádena has everything, from beautiful beaches to Andalusian tradition

The historic village is the perfect base for exploring other places in the area, inland or along the coast

and his discovery of the New World.

In addition to all these tourist attractions of its own, Benalmádena Pueblo is the ideal base for visiting other places in the area, and close enough to Benalmádena Costa to enjoy the extensive beaches it has to offer.

The municipality of Benalmádena as a whole is very unusual because its three separate areas are all very different, and this of course means it has something to appeal to everybody.

Finca Cortesín in Casares will host the 2023 Solheim Cup. **SUR**



Golf, the ideal socially distanced leisure pursuit

Costa del Golf. With sanitation measures in place, the province's favourite sport continues, boosted by being chosen as Europe's top golfing destination and news that Casares will host the 2023 edition of the Solheim Cup

DARYL FINCH



In a time defined by social distancing and curtailments on our favourite leisure pursuits, one has remained almost completely unaffected - golf. Barring increased sanitation and limits to social activities in the clubhouse, golf on the Costa del Sol continues unabated.

Ever since the first nationwide state of alarm was lifted, around 90 per cent of Malaga province's golf clubs have reopened, all with special measures in place to make players comfortable and, most importantly, to keep them safe.

One person is allowed per buggy, trolleys must be disinfected and ball cleaners and even the flags cannot be touched. Luckily, though, golf is a sport in which distancing from one another is quite normal and this won't limit your enjoyment of some of the biggest and best golf infrastructures in Europe.

The Costa del Sol, often known as the Costa del Golf, is a favourite destination for local residents and tourists alike, especially

those coming from northern Europe outside the traditional high season. For them, the province has everything it needs for the perfect golf holiday: climate, hotels, leisure activities, culture and fantastic sports facilities.

Many of the more than 70 courses in Malaga province also boast stunning scenery. Some enjoy spectacular views over the Mediterranean to Gibraltar and North Africa while others are surrounded by breathtaking nature, whether by palm trees, pines, oleanders and olive trees, or meandering streams and magnificent lakes.

According to Turismo Costa del Sol, the provincial tourist board, the province is especially attractive to golfers who seek "an enclave which enjoys mild temperatures, far from the harsh winters in the centre and the north of the continent".

In fact, last year the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) recognised the Costa del Sol as its best European golf destination. It was chosen based on numerous criteria,



Sea views at the Parador de Golf de Málaga. SUR



Courses are irrigated with 100 per cent recycled water. SUR



The women's Open returns later this month. EFE

including customer satisfaction, quality of courses and accommodation, value for money, professional conduct of suppliers, support from the local tourism industry and availability of tee times.

The quality of the courses and facilities is also reflected in the fact that the area is often chosen to host major tournaments such as the Women's Open de España which will take place, Covid permitting, at the Real Club de Golf Guadalmina in San Pedro de Alcántara (Marbella) from 26 to 29 November.

It's also recently been announced that the 2023 edition of Solheim Cup, often described as 'the women's Ryder Cup', will take place on the Costa del Sol at the world-class facilities at the Finca Cortesín Golf Club in Casares.

Environmentally friendly

Not only does the Costa del Sol offer top-notch facilities and a stunning backdrop for your game of golf, courses, especially on the western Costa del Sol, are in-

credibly environmentally friendly.

All 40 golf courses in the area are now irrigated using only recycled water after works to improve the supply network were completed recently by the Acsol and Acuamed companies.

The improvement works, which have cost over nine million euros, first began in 2015 and now means that up to 20,000 cubic metres of recycled water a day can be produced.

Acsol chief Manuel Cardena said: "Projects such as these are a clear demonstration of Acsol's unequivocal commitment to sustainable development."

A vast area

It should not be forgotten that there are two sides to the Costa del Sol, the east and the west, with Malaga city in the middle. Nor would it be fair not to mention clubs inland, such as Antequera Golf, which also has facilities which are unique in Europe.

These inland courses also contribute to making Malaga a

unique golf destination in the world, all year round.

The Costa del Sol also has some of the most exclusive

places to enjoy a unique stay which is based around golf. Marbella is the municipality which is home to the most golf courses

The International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) recently recognised the Costa del Sol as its best European golf destination

Some courses enjoy spectacular views over the Mediterranean to Gibraltar and North Africa while others are surrounded by breathtaking nature

The 2023 edition of Solheim Cup will take place on the Costa del Sol at the world-class facilities at the Finca Cortesín Golf Club

in the province and some of the most luxurious hotels and homes in the area are located around the town, for example Villa Padierna, which is renowned as the ultimate luxury experience.

Special offers

Not only do courses target international tourists, they also aim to attract golf fans who live in the province permanently or spend time here each year, via special offers. There are numerous golf enthusiasts in this province, reflected in the different amateur tournaments which are organised throughout the year by clubs on the Costa del Sol.

These often include heavily discounted prices for families so that children can also enjoy learning and playing this sport too.

Clubs and courses frequently have special offers for long stays too, designed to make more golfers from abroad consider this destination. This time of year, more than ever, is ideal to enjoy your favourite game, at a safe distance, in lovely surroundings.



Recognised as the European golf destination of the year. SUR



COSTA DEL SOL
MÁLAGA

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