



Victory over Logroñés has all-but assured safety, and the side can now aspire to gatecrashing the play-off party **P38**

# Provincial borders to remain closed over Easter but business hours get an extension

The night curfew in Andalucía moves to 11pm, although the Junta warns of a fourth wave of Covid



De Balincourt at the opening of his exhibition in Malaga.  
**FRANCISCO HINOJOSA**

## Emotional landscapes

Jules de Balincourt invites reflection with his first solo show in Spain, *After The Gold Rush*, open now at Malaga's Contemporary Art Centre. **P29**

Restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19 were adjusted in Andalucía this week, although fears of a fourth wave of cases prevented the authorities from allowing movement between different provinces over the Easter

holidays. Non-essential business, including bars and restaurants, are able to extend their opening hours to 10.30pm across the region from today, Friday, and the night curfew has been put back to 11pm. **P3**

**Judge orders clinical autopsy of Marbella teacher who died days after receiving the AstraZeneca jab** **P4**

**Costa del Sol indignant at preferential treatment shown to islands in government's 11bn-euro aid package** **P2**

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# Government aid plan to compensate for up to 40% of lost income in hard-hit sectors

Of the 11-billion-euro total, seven billion will be direct aid but two billion of that is for the Balearic and Canary Islands

PILAR MARTÍNEZ



MALAGA. The government has given the go-ahead for 11 billion euros of support to be paid to businesses most affected by the pandemic, including those in the tourism industry.

It says seven billion of this will be in the form of direct aid, to compensate small and medium firms (SMEs) and the self-employed, in some 100 sectors considered to have been hit hardest by the health crisis, for up to 40 per cent of the loss in income. Other companies will be compensated for up to 20 per cent. Apart from the package of subsidies that will not have to be paid back, other measures will be applied to the whole productive network.

Minister of Finance María Jesús Montero and Minister for the Economy Nadia Calviño gave details of this programme after it was approved at a special cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

They explained that of the seven billion euros of direct aid, two billion will be exclusively for the Canary and Balearic islands, which they said had seen the greatest drop in GDP because

of their reliance on tourism. However, the allocation of the funds has aroused controversy and the details given have only led to new uncertainties.

The direct aid will benefit companies whose income dropped by 30 per cent in 2020 compared with 2019. It will enable them to pay expenses such as salaries and rents, debts to suppliers, and electricity bills. Montero said the authorities will be able to tell who has lost 30 per cent of their turnover with information from the tax authority.

The amounts paid will be between 3,000 and 200,000 euros. Calviño said that the self-employed who pay under the module system will be able to receive up to 3,000 euros, while other self-employed people and companies will be eligible for between 4,000 and 200,000 euros.

## Uncertainty over timing

The main uncertainty is when this money will reach the companies and how much each region of Spain will receive. Montero said she was sure that the agreements with the regional governments will be signed within a month and a half, and they will be responsible for paying these non-repayable grants to the companies.

She said the money will be paid according to the same criteria as the EU React funds, although the data on the impact of the pandemic is being updated in each region. In the first distribution of assistance funds, Andalucía received about 19 per cent of the total for the country.



Empty sunbeds last summer show the effect the pandemic has had on the Costa del Sol. NITO SALAS

One condition for receiving this financial support is that the companies must continue their activity until 30 June 2022 and may not pay out dividends or increase the remuneration of senior management in the next two years.

In addition to the direct assistance, the decree includes a line of three billion euros which will be managed by the ICO to extend the periods and amounts of the guarantees. This will enable the credits to be converted into participating loans, and will give the green light for the deductions. A new Code of Good Practice will be put into effect in the banking sector for this purpose.

## KEY POINTS OF THE PLAN

### Direct aid

**Non-repayable:** Between 3,000 and 200,000 euros for companies and the self-employed who lost at least 30 per cent of their income in 2020 compared to 2019 due to the pandemic.

**Self-employed:** Those who pay under the module system can apply for up to 3,000 euros.

**Compensation:** The companies will receive assistance to compensate for up to 40 per cent of the additional drop in income for SMEs and up to 20 per cent for the rest of firms.

### Restructuring of debt

**Beneficiaries:** Companies which have ICO loans. The line of assistance is three billion euros, giving a green light to the deductions and conversion into participatory loans.

### Recapitalisation fund

**Concept:** The sum of one billion euros will be allocated, and this will be managed by Cofides. The aim of this measure is to provide financial muscle to the companies in order to begin the economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

## Special attention to the islands causes indignation on the Costa del Sol

The Canaries and Balearics have seen a major drop in GDP due to their reliance on tourism, but so has Malaga province

PILAR MARTÍNEZ

MALAGA. It is not the first time in this health crisis that the government has shown favouritism towards the islands, but the decision to allocate companies there two billion euros of the seven billion total has caused ructions on the Costa del Sol, which is equally

as dependent on tourism and has also suffered badly.

In addition, Minister of the Economy Nadia Calviño, said that in the Canary and Balearic islands, self-employed people who pay under the module system will be able to receive more than those on the mainland, as long as the amount is within the limits for State assistance set by Brussels.

The indignation in Andalucía, and especially the Costa del Sol, is because Malaga province has suffered the greatest drop in GDP on the Peninsula, 17%, and its economy depends 80% on tourism. The three most popular tour-

ist destinations in Spain are the Canaries, the Balearics and Andalucía. Francisco Salado, the head of the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, says the government's decision is an insult to the area and tourism in general.

GDP in the Balearics has dropped by 27%, in Las Palmas 21% and Santa Cruz de Tenerife by 19%. Salado wants to know how the limit was set because the Costa del Sol comes very close but has been excluded. He accuses the government of not being interested in or believing in tourism and says the situation is disgraceful.



The aid will help companies in 100 badly-hit sectors. S. SALAS



# Fear of expected fourth coronavirus wave stops Andalucía opening provincial borders

From today, and at least over Easter, there will be a later start to the curfew locally and shops and bars almost everywhere can stay open until 10.30pm

SUR / ALBERTO GÓMEZ

SEVILLE / MALAGA. The Junta de Andalucía regional government has said that its fears about a likely fourth wave of coronavirus infections and the mix of new strains are behind its decision not to allow movement between the region's eight provinces until at least 9th April, after the Easter holiday period.

Regional president Juanma Moreno said this week, "The predictive information tells us that we could be in for a fourth wave that could be serious and take the lives of Andalusian people."

"My responsibility and moral and political obligation is to protect the lives of Andalusians, even though I know that decision is hard," he continued.

With its latest range of measures coming into force today (19

March), the Junta has gone further than the national consensus in restricting movement.

Not only will non-essential land travel out of the Andalucía region be banned over Easter but also between the eight provinces of the region.

However there was some good news: the evening curfew across the region will now start at 11pm instead of 10pm but still finish at 6am.

## Relief for shop and bar owners

In addition, bars, restaurants and non-essential shops can stay open in all the region until 10.30pm except in municipalities where the 14-day cumulative incidence rate for Covid-19 is more than a thousand cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Nowhere in Malaga province currently has a rate so high.

The maximum number of people in a group at social gatherings in private homes and outside spaces in bars and restaurants remains at six. Inside the premises the maximum is four.

The measures come on top of restrictions nationally from 26



Juanma Moreno this week. EP

**Malaga province, including the Costa del Sol, had a rate of 90.9 on Thursday, down from 100 a week earlier**

March to 9 April when meetings in private indoor spaces, including holiday homes, will only be for people who live together.

Regional experts are expecting the fourth wave towards the end of March and the start of April, with all eyes on how increased Easter movement could influence it. The World Health Organization has warned Spain and other European countries to prepare for an upsurge in cases.

This week Spain saw its first increase in the rolling 14-day case rate per 100,000 in two months with a very slight rise to 127.91 on Wednesday.

On Thursday (18 March), Andalucía reported a 14-day average case rate of 121.2, almost the same as a week earlier. Malaga, including the Costa del Sol, had a rate of 90.9, down from 100 a week earlier. Only the villages of Colmenar and Gaucín in Malaga province still have rates over 500 and so have municipal borders closed.

Visit [www.surinenglish.com](http://www.surinenglish.com) for daily updates on Covid-19 figures and restrictions, including a handy interactive map.

## Cases of more infectious Covid-19 strains, including the British one, add to Junta's worries

A. GÓMEZ

MALAGA. The behaviour of new strains of coronavirus is one of the reasons for the Junta regional government's reluctance to open up provincial borders until at least after Easter.

Regional leader Juanma Moreno explained that despite 60 per cent of Andalucía's cases now coming from the more contagious British variant, there are wide variances between the eight provinces. For example, while in Almeria province 80 per cent of positives are the British strain, in Huelva it is barely 20 per cent. "We have to avoid it spreading," Moreno said.

The Junta has already detected cases of the South African variant in Andalucía, including one in Malaga province. On Thursday, a new variant seen most in Uganda so far was being reported in the region. While said to be more contagious, scientists are unsure if it is more dangerous.

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# AstraZeneca link investigated after a teacher in Marbella dies following jab

Pilar González Bres, 43, died of a brain haemorrhage days after being given the Oxford formula despite having no previous medical concerns

JUAN CANO / ÁLVARO FRÍAS / ALBERTO GÓMEZ

MARBELLA. Investigations are under way after a 43-year-old woman who worked as a teacher in Marbella died on Tuesday from a brain haemorrhage after having been vaccinated against Covid-19 with the AstraZeneca vaccine on 3 March.

At the time of going to press, the results of an autopsy ordered by a judge on Wednesday to investigate the exact cause of death were still pending.

It is reported that the woman, now named as Pilar González Bres, began to feel unwell just hours after receiving the jab and went to the emergency department at the Quirón hospital with a headache and general malaise - symptoms that doctors attrib-



Staff at IES Guadalpin in Marbella on Wednesday after learning of their colleague's death. JOSELE

uted to the usual side effects of the vaccine.

Days later, on Saturday 12 March, she returned to the hospital because she continued to feel ill. Medical staff performed

a CT scan where they did not find anything significant, but another was performed the next day.

It was then that they detected a massive haemorrhage that they tried to drain in surgery on

Monday, during which they discovered swelling and an accumulation of fluid in the brain.

By Tuesday, her condition had significantly worsened and she died at the hospital.

She reportedly had no history of medical problems so her family are demanding answers as to whether her death had anything to do with the Covid vac-

cine she had.

## A much-loved teacher

Pilar González was born in Cartagena (Murcia) but moved with her parents to Marbella, where she put down roots at a very young age. She met her partner there, married and had two children, aged eight and two.

The news of her death came as a massive shock at the secondary school where she taught, IES Guadalpin in Marbella. The school's director, Fernando Vázquez, recalled his colleague's dedication to her job despite suffering ill-effects of the jab: "Her arm was very swollen. On the first day (Thursday 4 March) she came to class, but had to leave mid-morning because she had an unbearable headache," he said.

"On the Monday she was back and stayed all week even though she still had symptoms, fever and was not feeling well. She said even though she was entitled to time off, because it was the end of term she couldn't miss classes as it would negatively affect her students. That was how she was."

Pilar González had only been at the school for a few months but she had already gained the affection of the community.

Her students remember her as an involved teacher, who was always looking out for them. This Wednesday it was a counsellor in her place, asking them how they were coping. Her students were all asked to write a letter to her or make a drawing as an outlet for their grief at their sudden loss.



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## EMA stresses that vaccine is safe and urges countries to lift suspensions

Spain followed several other nations on Monday in halting giving out vaccines produced by AstraZeneca

### ENRIQUE MIRANDA

MALAGA. The news of the death of Pilar González came just a day after Spain's Health Ministry announced that it had "immediately and as a preventive measure" suspended jabs with all batches of the AstraZeneca vaccine for at least 15 days following several reports of fatal blood clots detected after receiving the jab.

It came after France, Germany and Italy also temporarily stopped injections of the Oxford University formula, ignoring the recommendations of the European Medical Agency (EMA), which throughout the past week still strongly insisted that there was

no scientific evidence that the fatal blood clot cases were related to the vaccinations.

The Minister of Health, Carolina Darias, urgently convened a video meeting of autonomous regions on Monday and ordered them to stop using the formula.

However, following a meeting with AstraZeneca and examining evidence presented from deaths following the jab (including that of Pilar González), the EMA reiterated its stance on Thursday, urging the ten European countries who have suspended vaccination with AstraZeneca, including Spain, to resume it as soon as possible.

Spain's Ministry of Health, which had promised to follow the recommendations issued by the EMA, urgently convened a national health system meeting with the autonomous regions on Thursday night to agree how to reactivate the immunisation campaign with the British formula.



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The bus stop in Genalguacil. V. MELGAR



A minibus connects districts in Álora. A. JIMÉNEZ



A bus stop in Nerja. EUGENIO CABEZAS

# The lack of public transport in rural areas has been exacerbated by the pandemic

The reduction in rail and bus services all over Malaga province has made it even more difficult for people to travel anywhere, especially students and commuters

ANDREA JIMÉNEZ



MALAGA. On Mondays and Thursdays 45-year-old Rosa Brescia goes into town. She lives in Villafranco del Guadalhorce, one of the outlying districts of Alhaurín el Grande. She didn't choose those days, but buses between Villafranco and Alhaurín only run on two mornings a week.

"We only have three hours to do everything, otherwise we miss the bus. If I have a doctor's appointment on a Tuesday I have to ask a neighbour to take me, and pay for the petrol, or take a taxi which costs 20 euros from Villafranco to the centre of Alhaurín. There is no other option," she says.

Although Villafranco del Guadalhorce is not far from the A-357 highway, there is no good connection and this severely affects mobility, especially for people wanting to go to Malaga city. Depopulation and the lack of new infrastructure have worked against pub-

lic transport in rural areas of Malaga in recent years. Now, with the pandemic, the lack of services has been aggravated by a reduction in timetables in all municipalities, especially those with low populations.

"They are killing the villages; we have been completely forgotten. There is a railway but we can't use it because there aren't any trains, and the bus services are inadequate," says the Plataforma en Defensa del Tren Rural, which recently held a protest outside María Zambrano station in Malaga to demand improvements to the rail service.

The lack of efficient public transport means it is not a viable option for people in many villages, and they have to use a car to go anywhere. This is difficult for those without a vehicle of their own, such as elderly people or students who need to travel into Malaga or elsewhere in the province.

"There weren't enough buses to Malaga anyway and now there are only three a day. They have also cancelled the direct service to Álora, which is where most of us have to go for medical care," says Juan Alberto Naranjo, the mayor of Ardales, who is critical that such an "essential service" for local residents has been cancelled because of Covid. "Now, to get to the health centre in Álora, our people have to change at Cerralba, in Pizarra," he explains.

Complaints about the lack of transport to get to health centres are common to many municipalities. In Monda, buses only go to Marbella and Malaga, and there are three a day in total. "In the end we have to use the car, because public transport isn't good enough to get us to hospitals and to work," says deputy mayor Ana Millán.

The connection with the Valle del Guadalhorce hospital in Cártama is also causing complaints.

It's possible to get there by bus from most places in the area, but Alhaurín el Grande and Alhaurín de la Torre are calling for a direct service.

In Cártama, the bus service covers nearly all local districts. "It has been the only one maintained during the pandemic. Within the municipality the buses work quite well, the problem is the connections to Malaga," says Juan Francisco Lumbreras, the councillor for Transport. He says there is a need for a direct service to the university campus at Teatinos, and this is something that students in Coín are also calling for. Coín has already asked the Transport Consortium to improve the connection with Malaga city and with the university.

The situation is similar in Pizarra, where the bus timetables are not compatible with the times of students' classes. "They have changed the times; the first bus leaves at 7am and the next one isn't

till 10, which makes it difficult for people going to university or to work," says Antonio Marín, a councillor in Pizarra, who is concerned at the reduction in railway services as well.

Urban transport has also been affected as a result of the Covid pandemic, such as in Álora, where people in the different districts and outlying areas have to take taxis or use private vehicles to get to work or into the town, says María Dolores González, who lives in Bermejo. "They used the pandemic as an excuse to reduce services, and now they are abusing the situation," she says.

In the Serranía de Ronda, the pandemic has practically finished off a totally deficient public transport service. The worst case is the lower Genal valley, where Jubrique and Genalguacil have no connection to the Costa del Sol along the Peñas Blancas road, because it is not suitable for buses to use.

## QUOTES

**Rosa Brescia**  
Lives in Villafranco Guadalhorce

"There is only a bus on Mondays and Thursdays. If we need to go anywhere on other days, we have to take a taxi or see if a neighbour can take us"

**María Dolores González**  
Lives in Bermejo (Álora)

"They used the pandemic to reduce services and now they're abusing it. We can't use the bus for work or to go anywhere if we have things we need to do"

**Lina Naranjo**  
Lives in Algatocín

"Hardly anyone here uses the bus nowadays, we take a taxi or get a lift with a friend or neighbour. The timetables are inconvenient"

**Ana Sánchez**  
Lives in Jimera de Líbar

"I stopped using the train years ago, they started to change the timetables and it just became too complicated to go anywhere"



# Marbella and Estepona continue to hope for a Costa del Sol rail service

This also has an effect on tourism. Alberto Benítez, the mayor of Júbrique, says the situation is regrettable because there is only one bus, which leaves the village at 7am and returns at 6.30pm. "It's a tourist bus, people here hardly use it," he says. Other villages in the area only have a bus service on three days a week. Lina Naranjo, who lives in Algatocín, says she has stopped using it to get to Ronda. "They don't run at convenient times. Hardly anyone in the village uses the bus nowadays, we all take a taxi or get a lift with a friend or neighbour."

## Trains

With regard to trains, the service connecting Ronda with villages in the area has also been reduced. Soraya García, the mayor of Benaoján, says this is also affecting tourism, because many people used to come to the area to go walking and eat in local restaurants. Ana Sánchez, of the Plataforma Tren Público y Digno para la Serranía, says she no longer uses the service. "I stopped using the train years ago. They started changing the timetables and it became too difficult to go anywhere."

At present there is a strong movement in favour of a fast road

being built to connect Ronda, Campillos and Guadaleba.

Antequera, on the other hand, has major rail infrastructure but a lack of trains and buses. The AVE station in the town centre is closed due to works on the high-speed line between Granada and Madrid, so people have to use a bus. There are nine services to Malaga a day, from Mondays to Fridays, but the last bus back is at 7pm, which makes it difficult for workers and university students.

In the Axarquía, the complaints about reduced bus services began last June in Periana, Cútar, Riógordo, Colmenar and elsewhere. The mayor of La Viñuela, José Juan Jiménez, says talks are being held with the authorities to try to improve the situation. Javier Berlanga, the head of the transport consortium for the Malaga metropolitan area, says services were reduced due to a 52 per cent drop in demand in 2020 but they are gradually being increased, and there are plans to increase services between rural villages and the university.

**Contributors:** Vanessa Melgar, Eugenio Cabezas and Antonio J. Guerrero.

The EU's Covid funds are seen as a new opportunity to carry out this project, which would make such a difference to the area

## JOSÉ MARÍA MARTÍN

MALAGA. The most westerly area of the Costa del Sol has been longing for a railway service for years. At the moment the only way of travelling between Malaga and Marbella or Estepona is by road. There are buses, but this is not enough, not only due to the large towns in the area but also urbanisations and outlying areas.

Marbella is the only town of over 100,000 inhabitants with no train service. Plans for one have been on the table for more than 20 years. There have been numerous announcements, but then nothing happened. It has been an accumulation of disappointments, no matter which parties have been in power.

The latest Budget includes the laughable sum of 83,000 euros for more studies to be carried out and there are calls for the govern-



There have been plans for a Costa del Sol railway for 20 years. **SUR**

ment to take such an important project more seriously.

Now, there is a new opportunity. Spain is to receive EU funds to help its economy recover from the pandemic. This could be a 'now or never' moment, as the construction of a coastal railway fits perfectly with the aims laid down in the restructuring funds.

The possibility of the project being reactivated has also been

welcomed by the mayors of the five municipalities on the eastern coast of the province, Rincón de la Victoria, Vélez-Málaga, Algarrobo, Torrox and Nerja, who want the rail service extended from Malaga to the Axarquía, and point out that these, too, are part of the Costa del Sol.

**Contributors:** Joaquina Dueñas and Eugenio Cabezas

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# British driver involved in motorcycle death crash in Marbella remanded in custody

The 35-year-old woman faces five charges after a food-delivery biker died in a head-on crash with a Mercedes allegedly being driven on the wrong side of the carriageway

JUAN CANO / ÁLVARO FRÍAS

**MALAGA.** A court in Marbella has ordered that the 35-year-old British woman arrested after a food delivery motorcyclist died in an accident should be remanded in custody.

The woman, who lives with her partner in Malaga province, is being investigated for five criminal offences after the 28-year-old Colombian man died on the A-7 in Marbella on Saturday night.



The woman is taken to her court appearance and, inset, the wreckage of the motorcycle. JOSELE / SUR

urday night.

It is alleged that a white, Mercedes car that was being driven by the British woman was on the wrong side of the carriageway

and struck the biker head-on at kilometre 174 of the motorway by Puerto Banús. The young man's bike exploded in a fire-

ball and he died at the scene.

Witnesses claim that the woman fled the scene of the accident, initially at the wheel of her badly-damaged Mercedes GLA 200 which she then abandoned before being found by Local Police hiding in bushes at a nearby petrol station.



The woman now faces charges including manslaughter due to gross negligence, reckless driving, driving under the influence of alcohol, leaving the scene of an accident and refusing to take a breathalyser test.

## Almost 8,000 cases of violence against women reported in Malaga in 2020

FERNANDO TORRES

**MALAGA.** A total of 7,744 cases of violence against women were reported in Malaga province in 2020, representing a significant fall of 1,464 incidents compared to 2019. In 2019, the total had risen by 370 crimes compared to the year before. The statistics come from the Report on Domestic and Gender Violence, a document published annually by the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ).

No murders were reported among the 7,744 cases, compared to the six the previous year. The majority of the cases (5,442) related to assaults. Added to this, 856 women have been reported to have suffered 'crimes against moral integrity'. Also, 928 breaches of sentences were reported.

At a national level, a total of 150,785 criminal complaints were made, down 10.31 per cent compared to 2019. The number of protection orders issued also fell, in this case by 11.94 per cent.

With regards to the rate of women experiencing gender-based violence, the national average was 60.2 per 10,000 women. In terms of the autonomous regions, the highest rate was the Balearic Islands with a ratio of 93.8, followed by the Valencian Community at 81.5, the Canary Islands with 80.5, Murcia at 79.5 and then Andalucía at 67.9 and Madrid with 61.8. The lowest rate was in Castilla y León (39), followed by Aragón (40.2) and Extremadura (41.4).

## Retired expat dies after falling down a two-metre hole in Nerja

EUGENIO CABEZAS

**NERJA.** A 74-year-old British man has died after falling into a two-metre-deep hole when he was walking home with his wife in Nerja. His wife also fell and lay unconscious for nine hours until she woke and called the 112 emergency services.

The tragic incident took place on 6 March on the San Juan de Capistrano development, located to the north of Nerja, a residential complex with more than 500 homes built in the 1970s and on which many British nationals live. The accident happened on a path that connects the San Francisco and Vía Real areas.

Sources told SUR the couple



Scene of the accident. SUR

had lived in the area for more than a decade and regularly used the path to shorten the walk after getting off the bus that took them to the centre of town almost daily.

The fall happened at around 9pm - however it was not until af-

ter 6am the following morning that the man's wife, who had also fallen into the hole, called the emergency services when she regained consciousness.

The man's autopsy determined that his death was caused by a "strong blow to the head" caused by hitting a rock that was in the trench.

One of the caretakers who works on the residential development said that the hole appeared after a flood in 2007. "The community has requested permission to fix it with a bridge but is still waiting," he said.

For now the town council has installed a barrier to prevent residents from using the shortcut, which is on private land.

## Drug smuggling submarine found in Malaga

Hidden inside a Malaga warehouse the National Police last week uncovered what is believed to be the first narco-submarine to be constructed in Europe. The vessel, which is nine metres in length by three metres wide and three metres deep, can navigate underwater - although close to the surface - and has the capacity to transport up to two tonnes of drugs. Officers also arrested 50 people and seized more than three tonnes of cocaine as part of the operation.



### 112 REPORTS

#### MALAGA

### Ex-footballer held over marijuana network

**SUR.** Former Malaga footballer Carlos Aranda, who has also recently been investigated for alleged match-fixing, has been arrested, along with four others, as part of an operation to break up a network of alleged marijuana growers, according to the newspaper El Mundo.

The Guardia Civil said raids took place after they learned of the existence of a network that was growing hundreds of marijuana plants in homes in Antequera, Alcaucín and Periana.

#### FUENGIROLA

### Three held for stealing from a social kitchen

**F. TORRES.** Police arrested three people on Wednesday after a welfare kitchen was broken into in Fuengirola. Tins of meat, olive oil, cheese, alcohol, wipes and baby nappies were stolen in the early-morning raid.

Armed with a description of the getaway car, police quickly mounted a search operation and officers had to chase them at high speed through the streets of the town until they managed to stop the two women and one man, all Spanish.

#### ALMUÑÉCAR

### Paragliders injured in Almuñécar accident

**SUR.** Two paragliders, a British man and a woman, have suffered injuries after an accident in Almuñécar, according to the Local Police.

The accident occurred when the couple were flying a two-seater paraglider and, for unknown reasons, they crashed on a slope near the Camino Viejo de Velilla.

The pair suffered injuries - including a fracture - which required them to be transferred to the Motril regional hospital.

#### MARBELLA

### Insurance pay outs are second-highest in Spain

**F. T.** A report by a trade body that represents 27 insurers has revealed that the average compensation paid out for thefts from homes in Marbella is 2,504 euros. This is the second-highest amount in all of Spain, only behind Pozuelo de Alarcón near Madrid (2,602 euros).

The report also claims that mobility restrictions during the pandemic have led to a surge in break-ins at unoccupied second homes.



## Volunteer interpreters helped 4,025 times last year

### VÉLEZ-MÁLAGA

The normal face-to-face service at the hospital had to stop when the pandemic struck but it carried on offering assistance on the phone

### E. CABEZAS

**VÉLEZ-MÁLAGA.** The group of volunteer interpreters at the Axarquía hospital in Torre del Mar (AVISA) helped on 4,025 occasions to facilitate communication between Spanish health professionals and non-Spanish speaking patients from 14 March to 31 December 2020.

The group was officially created in 2007 and up until March 2020 the majority of interpretation and translation was done

face to face. However, when the pandemic started, the volunteers carried on their work on the telephone.

Fifty-four per cent of all interpretations were done between Spanish and English and the remaining 46 per cent were other languages, including German, French and various Scandinavian languages.

The service runs at the main hospital and also at the Torre del Mar and Nerja health centres and operates from 8.30am to 2.30pm, from Monday to Friday.

## Nerja mayor faces prison sentence over illegal dump

### NERJA

**E. C.** Nerja mayor José Alberto Armijo and Urban Planning councillor Nieves Atencia are to appear before judges accused of crimes against the environment and natural resources for their involvement in the illegal Río de la Miel rubbish dump scandal.

If found guilty, they, along with seven local construction business owners, could be sentenced to two years in prison. The politicians could also face an 18-month ban from public office while the others could be banned from their

professions for the same period.

The public prosecutor has also called for both Atencia and Armijo to pay a 7,300-euro fine, while the companies believed to have dumped the largest amount of waste could face fines of 18,250 euros. No date has been set for the hearing as yet, which will take place in a court in Malaga.

Construction companies started using the site, which is located in the Sierra Tejeda, Almijara and Alhama natural park, in June 1998 and over 800,000 cubic metres of waste accumulated between then and September 2016.



Río de la Miel illegal dump. SUR

### HERE AND THERE

### ALMUÑÉCAR

#### Almuñécar swimming pool reopens to public

**J. R.** Almuñécar town hall announced earlier this week that the municipal indoor swimming pool has reopened as the Covid-19 alert in Granada province has gone down to level two.

The public swimming timetable is: Monday to Friday from 9am to 1pm and from 4pm to 9pm. On Saturdays it is open 10am to 1pm.

Anyone interested in using the facility is advised to either call 958635926 or enquire at the building situated next to the José María García sports centre to find out about reserving sessions.

The town hall said that the pool is following all Covid-19 health and safety protocols.

### NERJA

#### New premises facilitate Correos parcel delivery

**E. C.** Correos, the Spanish postal service, has opened a new office in Nerja for its parcel delivery service. The new office, which is situated in Plaza de la Ermita, employs 21 people and serves both Nerja and Frigiliana.

The decision to move the parcel delivery service was taken in order to improve working conditions for staff and more space for the fleet of eight delivery vehicles that can now be parked and loaded more easily.

The customer facing service of the post office will remain at the same place as always in Calle Almirante Ferrándiz.

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# The contract to expand the Costa del Sol hospital will be put to tender soon

## MARBELLA

The outpatient department and specialist and diagnostic units will be moved to a new building next to the current one

### JOAQUINA DUEÑAS

MARBELLA. The area has had to wait ten long years for the Costa del Sol hospital to be expanded. In February the president of the Junta de Andalucía, Juanma Moreno, promised 75 million euros of investment to finish this essential project and this week, speaking to the press at the hospital, regional government spokesman Elías Bendodo said the contract will be put to tender as a matter of urgency, within the next few weeks.

Luisa Lorenzo, the director of the Costa del Sol Health Agency, said at the press conference that the plans have been well-designed to improve the situation for patients and professionals at



Elías Bendodo, announcing the plan at the hospital this week. JOSELE

the hospital, and the mayor of Marbella, Ángeles Muñoz, described it as a much-needed project and explained that the extension will add 34,000 square metres to the existing size of the hospital, bringing the total to 83,000 square metres.

### Growing population

"The hospital serves a popula-

tion of more than half a million people, and that figure doubles in the tourist season," said the mayor.

Luisa Lorenzo pointed out that the population has grown by around three per cent in the past two years and is expected to continue at a similar rate, and said the hospital was already too small when the extension works were

suspended in 2010.

The situation demanded "a solution for the future, for the province," said Elías Bendodo, before going on to explain that once the extension is finished there will be 86 per cent more space for consultation rooms and new specialisms. "We are multiplying the space for outpatient care, by adding 17 treatment rooms, three beds, 13 armchairs and four cubicles," he said.

There will also be 62 more beds in the hospital, with a new eight-bed palliative care unit, 18 beds for the mental health unit and 36 multipurpose beds.

Luisa Lorenzo said she wanted to stress that there will be a brand new surgical block, because the existing operating theatres "have become obsolete". Some of the old ones will be used as extra Intensive Care Units, two more endoscopy rooms and as a haemodynamic operating unit.

The Emergency Department will also benefit from the project, with six more consulting rooms, two observation rooms and 29 bed-chairs.

## Work due to begin this year on a new health centre in Las Chapas area of Marbella

### JOAQUINA DUEÑAS

MARBELLA. Las Chapas area of Marbella has a registered population of about 13,000, although the actual figure is estimated to be double that. The mayor of Marbella, Ángeles Muñoz, announced this week that in order to meet the needs of such a large community, the project will soon be put to tender for a new health centre for the area, which will be five times the size of the present one.

The site chosen is a 10,000-square-metre plot of land in Calle Hacienda San Manuel. The council plans to build an indoor swimming pool and sports area on the same site. It is very central, close to the Pinolivo and Las Dunas schools. An alternative previously considered in Plaza Chile had to be ruled out for technical reasons.

Construction is expected to begin this year, and be completed by the end of 2022.

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## HERE AND THERE

### ESTEPONA

## Improvements to Las Viñas sport centre

J. M. M. The Cristobal Valero company has been awarded the concession to manage Las Viñas sports centre and to improve and expand its facilities. The 400,000-euro project will include a number of different works carried out over the next eight years. Under the terms of the contract, the company

must maintain the prices to use the sports centre in line with municipal regulations.

The extension plans include two more tennis courts, bringing the total to four, a mini-tennis court, an indoor fitness area and three multipurpose rooms. Changing rooms and lavatories will also be improved, the stands are to be renovated, new energy-efficient lighting installed, new paving and an area for a cafeteria. The works are expected to begin this summer.

### ESTEPONA

## Overpass works cause problems at Cancelada

J. M. M. Estepona council has asked the Ministry of Transport to come up with alternative routes for drivers during the works it is carrying out on the A-7 overpass at Cancelada, because the restrictions are causing problems for traffic in the area. At present drivers heading to Cancela from the Estepona direction are having to go four kilometres up the road to the Benahavis exit, where there is often traffic congestion anyway, to turn round and come back to Cancelada. The council has also asked the Ministry to complete the works as quickly as possible.

### MARBELLA

## Volunteers wanted for beach cleanup event

JENNIE RHODES. Plastic Free Seas Worldwide is calling for volunteers to help out at a beach cleanup at Trocadero Arena, Río Real beach in Marbella tomorrow, 20 March. The event starts at 10am and those wanting to participate are told to look out for the organisation's flags on the beach. All volunteers must provide their own gloves and masks and certificates will be given to children who take part. For further information visit the Facebook page 'Plastic Free Seas Worldwide' or contact Craig on +447535566604.



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# Work to restore and expand the Byblos hotel starts at last

## MIJAS

The iconic establishment on Mijas Golf looks set to reopen its doors under the Hyatt luxury brand before the end of 2022

### IVÁN GELIBTER

The iconic Byblos hotel on Mijas Golf is set to reopen its doors in 2022, as major refurbishment and rebuilding works started on Wednesday after the hotel lay abandoned for more than a decade.

The milestone event was marked by a presentation attended by Mijas mayor Josele González, who described the progress made as “very hopeful” in such a bad year for the industry.

Intriva, who acquired the hotel in 2019, will invest about 14 million euros in the works and has partnered with Marugal Hotel Management that will operate it under a Hyatt brand on a franchise deal.

Together with the price the new owners paid for the establishment, the total investment adds up to close to 50 million euros. This, however, will be supported by the Andalusian Urban Development Fund through a 20-million-euro financing operation, using funds mainly from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and from the Andalusian regional government.



The mayor, councillors and representatives of Intriva on Wednesday. **SUR**

The previous owners of the hotel, Ayco, had acquired the site, which has been closed since 2010, with the aim of operating it themselves. However, in the end they never applied for the building permit for reasons which are not yet apparent.

### Changes to the original plan

Although a large part of Ayco's project remains, the reforms do have some substantial changes that have reduced the overall cost of the work. The main difference is that the original plan had a two-floor underground car park which has now been left out to save around ten million euros.

In addition, the new owner will build an extra floor on top of the three existing ones in order to

accommodate a penthouse level.

The aim is to reach a total of around 215 rooms, and as sources consulted have explained, there will be “significant” work to alter the interior but the intention is not to touch the façade beyond minor alterations in order to “maintain the essence” of the original Hotel Byblos. The aim of the refurbishment is to give new life to the space while maintaining its five-star classification.

The hotel, which will be part of The Unbound Collection by Hyatt, is on a plot of 50,873 square metres in the Mijas Golf development and boasts private sports facilities.

Work should be finished by the end of next year.

# Three kilometres of Mijas Costa walkway included in 2021 budget

## MIJAS

Some 4.3 million euros will be invested in a major step towards the uninterrupted coastal path from Fuengirola to Marbella

### I. GELIBTER

A complete coastal footpath between Fuengirola and Marbella has moved one step closer with Mijas councillor for Infrastructures and Works José Carlos Martín confirming to SUR that the section that runs from La Cala to Fuengirola, valued at 4.3 million euros, would be included in this year's budgets (complemented by investments from other public authorities).

Last year the Junta de Andalucía gave the green light to the project and the works will be put



Mijas already has several kilometres of coastal path in place. **SUR**

out to tender before the summer. The final project, which covers 5.3 kilometres, is divided into three sections, of which the second, middle section will not be put out to tender initially as there are planning wrangles over illegal beach-side development on the route dat-

ing back thirty years.

For the moment, going out to tender will be; the first 703-metre phase of the extension from Fuengirola to just before El Faro lighthouse; and the third, final phase (2.2km) that will connect La Cala de Mijas with El Chaparral.

# Covid testing centre opens in the departures area of Malaga Airport

## MALAGA

**P. MARTÍNEZ.** Passengers and flight crew who require a Covid-19 PCR or antigen test to travel due to the coronavirus restrictions imposed by many countries will be able to get the tests done at Malaga-Costa del Sol Airport from this week.

The new service, located in the older part of the main departure terminal, will be managed by technology firm Arquimea together with the Recoletas hospital group.

Online reservations can be made through its website [www.travelcovidtestcenter.com](http://www.travelcovidtestcenter.com), avoiding queues and unnecessary waiting.

The service will be operational from 8am to 6pm, a timetable that the companies say will grow as air passenger activity increases.

In the case of antigen tests, the results will be available in just 20 minutes, while for PCR the wait will be less than 12 hours.

“The results certificate will be sent directly to the passenger's email and can also be checked and downloaded online,” says the website.

The cost for the PCR test is 58.60 euros and 28.60 euros for an antigen test.

Centres will also be opening at Madrid and Seville airports this week in the initiative from national airports operator Aena.

# Cudeca Walkathon fundraiser participants to stay at home again this year

## COSTA DEL SOL

**T. BRYANT.** The Cudeca Foundation has announced the launch of this year's Walkathon fundraising campaign, which will again be hosted online to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The event will go under the banner of Cudeca WalkaHome and will take place on Sunday 23 May between 10am and 8pm. The charity is inviting people to host a fundraising initiative that can be safely undertaken in the confines of their home or garden. This can include physical exercise like walking, running, or swimming, or a less energetic

event such as a virtual auction or an online quiz. Participants are encouraged to post photographs and videos of their activities on social networks with the hashtag #CudecaWalkathome #Cudeca.

The initiative, which last year raised more than 11,000 euros for the cancer charity, is open to individuals, families and associations, and a prize will be offered to the largest group.

To coincide with the event, Cudeca will broadcast different activities like Zumba classes, cooking lessons, yoga and live entertainment on its YouTube channel.

Registration can be made through the Cudeca website ([www.cudeca.org](http://www.cudeca.org)) with a minimum donation of four euros, or eight euros with a Cudeca T-shirt. Each registration will be assigned a bib-number that can be downloaded and used on the day of the event.

# Environmental concerns raised over heliport plans for Ascari racetrack

## RONDA

**V. MELGAR.** The Ministry for Ecological Transition has called for an environmental assessment to take place before a project to create a heliport at the Ascari Race Resort, located next to the Ronda-Cuevas del Becerro road, can go ahead.

The government believes that the project could have “significant adverse effects” on the environment, putting the brakes on plans put forward by promoter World Aviation which had called for the project to be fast-

tracked.

World Aviation wants to expand the area which is sporadically used as a heliport, creating a 14-by-14-metre square platform, equipped with parking, an access road and security area - all capable of receiving around 200 helicopters a year. The private facilities would be used for medical evacuations in the event of accidents and filming work, as well as being available for emergency services and special operations.

However, based on the arguments put forward by organisations and entities consulted by the ministry, it points out that this project is planned in a Biosphere Reserve and that there is already a heliport some 16 kilometres away. Also highlighted were an “incomplete” acoustic and “insufficient” fauna study on an area which is also “particularly abundant in birds”.



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## Taxi drivers to launch app to fight off competition from Uber and Cabify

The TaxiCostaSol mobile application will be up and running before the summer when it is hoped that tourism will return to the coast

FRANCISCO JIMÉNEZ

MALAGA. Taxi drivers on the Costa del Sol have united to try and get back on track after suffering from the joint effects of the pandemic and the challenge of competition from ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Cabify.

They hope that a new app, TaxiCostaSol, which will be launched before summer, will help them recover their business when tourists eventually return to the coast.

The new app will allow customers to book a taxi specifying the number of seats and whether it is for disabled passengers. Once the booking is confirmed the client will know the model of the car and registration number of the vehicle that will be sent, along with the maximum cost of the



The local taxi service is changing with the times. NITO SALAS (FILE PHOTO)

journey and the facility of paying the fare electronically.

Guillermo Díaz, president of the taxi drivers' confederation on the coast said, "It is going to be a very powerful app, similar to those available at a national level but focused on the Costa del Sol. Our intention is to launch it at the end of May or, if we can, even earlier, so that it can be working by the time that flights to the airport

recover."

A fleet of two thousand cars from along coast from Nerja to Manilva will initially be involved and there are plans to add taxis from other towns such as Antequera and Ronda.

In 2018 the association launched a single telephone number for bookings (952 17 00 17) and the website [www.taxicosta-sol.com](http://www.taxicosta-sol.com) to take reservations.

## Tax office staff warn furloughed workers they may need to do a tax declaration for 2020

SUSANA ZAMORA

MADRID. Representatives of the government's tax inspectors have warned people who have benefited from ERTE furloughing payments in the last 12 months of the Covid-19 pandemic to check if they need to fill out a tax return for 2020.

Normally those earning less than 22,000 euros a year from a single source, typically their employer, don't have to complete a separate self-assessment-style declaration.

However, as many people were

getting furlough money from the SEPE employment service as well as from an employer in 2020, they will be forced to file an individual tax return under the rules.

ERTE payments don't normally have tax deducted at source, unlike a pay packet, and so many people could be caught out on their IRPF income-tax declaration as they will have some money to pay back to the taxman.

The Gesha union of Hacienda employees explained that those who have earned 14,000 to 22,000 euros in 2020 need to fill in a declaration if what was received from

SEPE was above 1,500 euros in 2020. Only those who earned less than 14,000 euros, including from SEPE, are excluded from the declaration paperwork.

The tax office is getting ready for the annual period to fill in tax returns for the IRPF income tax for January to December 2020 and Gesha is keen that the public is ready, especially those who were furloughed as their money counts as income for tax purposes.

Gesha has also warned that those with ERTes in 2020 who were used to tax refunds in previous years, due to reasons such as number of children, should expect to get little refunded this year. It is also recommending that workers check the drafts of their declarations in case extra furlough money has slipped into the calculation that they weren't entitled to and which they paid back.

THE BIGGER PICTURE  
JEREMY BLATCH

✉ [jb@ehh.gi](mailto:jb@ehh.gi)

## An expensive place to find out who you are



**I**f you don't know who you are, the stock market is an expensive place to find out." These words, spoken in 1723 by Adam Smith, philosopher and economist, are a timely reminder that asset prices can fall much faster than they can rise. Apart from March 2020, many investment advisors have not experienced a severe bear market (prices falling sharply and remaining low for a period of time). I am old enough to have lived through and participated in several bull and bear markets, including 'Black Wednesday' in 1992. Bull markets (continually rising prices) lead to bear markets which lead to bull markets. This cycle of market behaviour is as constant as the relentless ocean tide. Bull markets do not die of old age with a whimper; they die of euphoria and go out with a bang! A successful investor understands that the first challenge to navigate these extremes is to 'know thyself'. Without knowledge we won't have understanding, and without understanding we won't be able to control our emotions and think rationally at times of severe movement in prices.

If you had a choice, which would you prefer: a) prices rise by quite a lot and remain high for several years, or b) prices fall and remain low for several years? If you chose high, you would join 90% of investors, both private and professional. However, this is the wrong way to optimise returns; unless you are a seller, you would have chosen against your interests.

When you buy a common stock, what you buy is the right to receive the dividends paid on a share of stock. We buy dairy cows for their milk and hens for their egg production. If running a dairy, we would want to pay low prices for cows

in order to obtain more milk per dollar. For every \$1 we invest in a stock, we receive more dollars in future dividends as a percentage of our investment. Counter-intuitively, long-term investors should wish share prices to stay low so they can accumulate more shares at low prices and thus receive more future dividends. In the 72 years between 1927 and 1999, for example, a \$1 investment grew to over \$106, and by reinvesting dividends, the total return was \$2,592. Reinvestment of future dividends is important because it helps to smooth out the peaks and troughs of market prices.

If you are caught up in the excitement of rapidly rising prices, as is the case today in some crypto, equity and commodity markets, or sharply falling prices, as in the US Treasury bond market, go for a long walk and calm down. Impulse is the enemy of the successful investor; benign neglect is a friend. When prices are rising, we need to guard against attempting to win big, committing too much to a single investment, or borrowing unnecessarily and overextending responsibilities and commitments. Successful investors avoid speculation, understanding that it produces a poor risk-adjusted reward. At the same time, they are careful not to succumb to fear. Knowing who they are, they invest within their sphere of competency.

The author is a member of the Society of Trustees and Estate Practitioners and an investment counsellor. The comments and observations by the author are a reflection of his opinion and do not constitute an offer to buy and hold securities, nor does he receive any remuneration of any kind from names referred to.





Many people live in Spain but cross the border to work in Gibraltar each day . SUR

## Tax treaty between Gibraltar and Spain comes into force

The new agreement includes tax cooperation and exchange of information and has benefits for people who are resident in Spain and work in Gibraltar

DEBBIE BARTLETT



GIBRALTAR. The tax agreement between Gibraltar and Spain, with the somewhat longwinded title of The International Agreement on Taxation and the Protection of Financial Interests between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Kingdom of Spain

regarding Gibraltar, came into force this week, having now been ratified by all three parties. Although the Gibraltar government is able to carry out its own negotiations, in many cases final agreements of this type have to be signed by the UK government on Gibraltar's behalf after receiving authorisation to do so.

The aim of this treaty is to improve tax cooperation and exchange of information between the tax authorities of Spain and Gibraltar and it also sets out rules and mechanisms for resolving conflicts over residency. A press release issued by the Gibraltar government says its arrangements "will provide for greater administrative cooperation, information sharing and for addressing relevant disputes through a Joint Committee structure".

Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said: "This is an important step forward in tax cooperation with our neighbours and I trust it will be seen as undeniable evidence of Gibraltar's commitment to transparency which is widely recognised internationally. We are ready to start the work of exchange of information that is provided for in the Treaty and we look forward to building strong institutional and inter-personal relationships with the relevant Spanish tax authorities in this field, as we have already done with tax authorities around the world."

The treaty will benefit people who are resident in Spain and work in Gibraltar as it guarantees that the benefits of the double taxation agreement will apply to them.

### IN BRIEF

#### NEWS

### Chief Minister: asylum-seeker reports are 'groundless'

DEBBIE BARTLETT. The Gibraltar government was quick to refute claims in some UK media this week that the British Home Office was considering sending asylum-seekers to Gibraltar and elsewhere for processing.

In a statement issued hours after the story appeared, the government said it had received no such proposal from the UK, and that in any case: "Matters relating to immigration to and from Gibraltar are the responsibility of Ministers in Gibraltar under the 2006 Gibraltar Constitution. Gibraltar legislation (the Immigration, Asylum and Refuge Act) governs the presence of asylum seekers in Gi-



Fabian Picardo. SUR

braltar, not UK law".

The chief minister, Fabian Picardo, also pointed out that apart from Constitutional and legal factors, Gibraltar's potential access to the Schengen area, which is still being negotiated, is an additional reason that it could not host the processing of asylum-seekers.

#### COVID-19

### Gibraltar now holds vaccination record

D.B. Gibraltar has become the first nation in the world to vaccinate its entire adult population against Covid-19, the UK's Health Minister Matt Hancock announced on Thursday.

Figures released by the Gibraltar government yesterday showed that 49,981 doses had been administered: 29,834 first doses and 20,147 second.

As well as its own population, Gibraltar has also begun vaccinating its cross-border workers.

#### SPORT

### Coin to mark World Boxing Championship

D.B. A new coin commissioned by the Gibraltar National Mint has been struck to celebrate the Interim WBC Heavyweight Championship fight which will take place in Gibraltar between Brixton born Dillian 'The Body Snatcher' Whyte and Alexander 'Russian Vityaz' Povetkin. The fight, which is being billed as Rumble on the Rock, is on 27 March. The two-pound coin bears the faces of both boxers, and is the world's first Official WBC coin to be released.



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The Unidas Podemos leader controversially used his deputy PM desk to record his surprise statement. EFE / TWITTER

## Pablo Iglesias leaves coalition to 'fight for the left' in Madrid election

### MADRID

The deputy PM's surprise move didn't appeal to others on the left as the Más Madrid party refused to join UP on a single ticket in the 4 May vote

### SUR

Second deputy prime minister and Unidas Podemos (UP) leader, Pablo Iglesias, made a surprise announcement on Monday that he is leaving Spain's coalition government to stand as his anti-capitalist party's main candidate in the Madrid regional election on 4 May.

The snap regional election was called last week by the current regional president, Isabel Díaz Ayuso of the conservative Partido Popular, over fears her ruling coalition with Ciudadanos was about

to break down.

"In politics you have to have the courage to put up a fight and clear the way for new leaders," said Iglesias in a video distributed by his Podemos party.

"Madrid needs a left-wing government and I think I can be useful," he added.

Iglesias is said to have been unhappy with the constraints of his role in the national PSOE-UP coalition government and has only been in the job some 14 months.

### Change at the top

Employment minister Yolanda Díaz was proposed by Iglesias to prime minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) as his UP replacement as second deputy PM. But it was later agreed that Díaz will become third deputy PM instead so she can keep her existing ministerial role which she has won praise for.

Economy minister Nadia Cal-

viño (PSOE) will now add the more senior position of second deputy PM to her role.

### Más Madrid says no to Iglesias

Iglesias very publicly asked former friend and now political rival on the left, Íñigo Errejón, to join his Más Madrid party with the smaller UP under Iglesias in Madrid to create a united far-left force for the regional election.

However, Más Madrid has come out equally publicly against the suggestion. The main candidate for Más Madrid in the regional assembly, Mónica García, said, in a reference to Iglesias, "Women are tired of doing all the dirty work just for them to ask us to move to one side in the historic moments."

Iglesias will therefore head a separate UP candidacy to Más Madrid, maintaining the split in the left-wing vote.

## Government to spend 10 billion euros to try to stop exodus from rural areas

### MADRID

**SUR.** The Spanish government will spend 10 billion euros on a programme aiming to stop the depopulation of the country's rural areas.

In addition to the cash, the plan has outlined a total of 130 policies to be adopted to address the problem.

There are some 6,800 municipalities in Spain with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. Overall it is believed that 5.7 million people live in an area at risk of depopulation.



Macron with Sánchez. EP

## Spain and France sign a dual citizenship agreement for first time

### SOUTHERN FRANCE

**SUR.** Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and French President Emmanuel Macron signed an agreement in Montauban (southern France) on Monday that will allow citizens of both countries to hold dual nationality, if they meet the necessary requirements for it.

From now on, citizens of France will not have to renounce their original nationality when they acquire the nationality of the other.

Until now, Spain only allowed dual citizenship to co-exist with the Ibero-American countries, Andorra, Equatorial Guinea, the Philippines and Portugal.

France, on the other hand, allows double or triple nationality.

"We're making the historical claim of the descendants of Spaniards exiled in France [after the Spanish Civil War] a reality," Sánchez said.

## Court ruling could declare thousands of fixed speed camera fines across Spain invalid

### CORDOBA

**SUR.** A court in Cordoba has declared a fine for a speeding charge that was captured by a fixed radar camera to be invalid and accused Spain's traffic authority (DGT) of not sticking to the rules. Thousands of fines could be appealed based on the precedent.

The court ruled that the fine was invalid as the evidence presented "did not have two photographs taken at different times of the offending vehicle".

### THE EURO ZONE MARK NAYLER

## The battle for Madrid



**T**he result of the early Madrid election on 4 May is likely to be determined by jaded Ciudadanos voters, over 83% of whom told a recent survey that they'd be supporting another party this time around. The same poll revealed that 28% are considering shifting their allegiance to the Popular Party (PP), meaning that the Conservatives might crush their leftist opponents; but in order to attract these wavering,

centrist voters, the PP's Madrid candidate and former regional premier, Isabel Ayuso, will have to get her rhetoric just right.

According to her election slogan, Ayuso sees the stark choice facing Madrileños as being between "Communism and liberty". She's right to point out that these two ideologies are incompatible, of course, but what kind of freedom is she promising for residents of the Spanish capital?

Ayuso has repeatedly criticised Pedro Sánchez's response to Covid, arguing that Spain's regions weren't given sufficient self-control, and that Madrid shouldn't be subject to blanket lockdowns because of its economic importance. But in order to win over Ciudadanos voters looking for a new home, she has to perform a delicate balancing act: if she goes too far in her criticism of central government or with economic libertarianism, she might send some running to the PSOE (although only 5.9% of former Ciudadanos voters said they'd consider going Socialist on 4 May). Having said that, a more explicitly republican, anti-lockdown approach might attract the 6.2% of ex-Ciudadanos voters thinking of switching to Vox.

The "communism" with which the Spanish capital is threatened, says Ayuso, is represented by Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias. But by leaving his position as deputy prime minister to run as a Madrid candidate this week, Iglesias might actually have increased his enemy's chances of success.

Ciudadanos voters, especially the younger ones, don't like the PP - indeed, the party's early victories were won with a promise to clean up the corrupt old-timers, represented by the PSOE and the Conservatives. But if there's one party they dislike even more, it's Podemos, whose big-state, collectivist ideology is fundamentally at odds with any brand of libertarianism. Ironically, the further Ayuso's opposition tacks to the left, the harder

it will be for them to attract centrist voters intent on abandoning Ciudadanos.

As a footnote, one wonders why Iglesias was so quick to forfeit his role in the Spanish government. For years, Podemos worked to achieve the transition from rebellious outsiders to national governors, finally succeeding in late 2019. Now, just over a year later, the party's founder is forsaking this once-coveted power in the (probably vain) hope of stopping a centre-right avalanche in Madrid. Two possibilities arise: either he didn't like co-governing, or he wasn't given enough to do by a distrustful Sánchez. Either way, Spain's unprecedented coalition experiment now enters a second phase.



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LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR

## Tests for passengers

The tourist industry in Andalucía is bleeding. And more and more hotels, bars and restaurants are closing, their owners having lost all. Their employees facing unemployment.

One should think that everything possible would be done to encourage tourists and visitors to come to Andalucía. From abroad most would wish to come by air to Malaga Airport. And leaving again from the same airport. When leaving, the airlines require an up-to-date Covid test. But at the airport no testing facilities exist for departing travellers.

More than a month ago SUR wrote that Aena (the airport company) had plans for a testing facility, but to this day none has come into existence. I have personal knowledge of a family of five who intended to come in April but gave up buying tickets when informed that no testing was available. They would have to find testing facilities themselves, at a cost of minimum 40€ per person. I may add that at many European airports free testing is available for departing passengers.

Personally, as a resident, I have great respect for the public health system in Andalucía, but here is definitely something amiss, and, no doubt, with great consequences for the tourist industry. **GUNNAR MOGENSEN**

## Slow vaccines

I understand the government are thinking about vaccine passports to allow Brits to return to the coast for holidays. We have not been vaccinated on the Costa del Sol, even though we were in lockdown for three months last year. I wish someone could tell me why the Spanish government are drag-

ging their feet on getting the vaccine out in Spain. My theory is that this is a holiday resort and they want to leave us till last, even though all the Brits are going to come flooding in. There is no sign of a vaccine here yet and it's really poor that the Spanish government are taking so long in distributing the vaccine here.

**CAROLINE MCCAFFERTY**

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## Techno prisoners

Technology has improved our lives in many ways - of that there can be little doubt. From washing machines to windscreen wipers; from fridges to flat screen televisions, a steady parade of new and beguiling goods has frequently sprinkled stardust over the mundanity of our everyday lives, especially during the last few decades. In fact, it would be very easy to drown in a sea of smug self-satisfaction if we stopped to list all the wonderful technological blessings that we've been privy to in our time. But wait.

Aside from the many marvels available to us, there are two other categories of technological innovation to consider: the 'take it or leave it's' and the 'for-pity's-sake-that-actually-made-our-lives-worse-not-betters'.

Electric toothbrushes and dish washers can undoubtedly be lumped into the first group. Occasionally you'll meet someone who uses an electric toothbrush and, without fail, before you can say 'lazy lump of lard'

they'll regale you with unsolicited tales about Guatemalan dental experts who say your mouth will explode by Tuesday if you don't use one. I'm afraid they simply can't bear to admit the truth - their purchase was nothing more than a capricious folly.

Similarly, couples with dishwashers seem to be perpetually embroiled in an ongoing bickering concerning what the angle of the pans next to the serving spoons should be. That's when they're not actually washing the pots by hand before putting them in the machine because, paradoxically - and, indeed, laughably - it's what the manufacturers recommend in order to guarantee that the contraption works properly. Only vaguely deluded people own a dishwasher. They sometimes also own an electric toothbrush and always have their divorce lawyer on speed dial.

This brings us nicely to the third category of technological innovations, mentioned above. Space limitations here preclude

me from listing the many absurdities that undoubtedly fall into this group, so let's go straight to the winner: bluetooth earpiece thingies. Good God, they're not possessed of one single redeeming feature. Even if you were lucky enough to buy the only pair in Western Christendom that actually fits the shape of the human ear, and thus avoid the ignominy of being perpetually bent over at ninety degrees picking them out of flower beds and gutters, the batteries last an average of one point four nano seconds and the corresponding voice that warns you that the daft things are about to give up the ghost and you're going to miss the best bit of your favourite programme (again), sounds as if it belongs to a serial killer demanding a hefty ransom in exchange for nothing in particular.

Technology, then, has quite clearly brought us joy and wonder in equal measure. It's the quiet despair lurking in its lengthy shadow that we're loath to mention.

## IDÍGORAS

## SPECIES IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

## The panda



## The puffin



## The tourist



**SUR** in English

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THE BOTTOM LINE  
ALEKK M. SAANDERS

## The criteria for happiness

Ten years ago, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution inviting member countries to measure the happiness of their people and hence use the data to help guide public policy. By definition, "happiness" is quite subjective. That is why probably the UN later identified three key goals - to end poverty, reduce inequality and protect our planet - that would lead to well-being and happiness. For the last eight years it has been celebrating International Day of Happiness on 20 March.

The Top 7 of the latest published World

Happiness Report 2020 reads, in happiness order: Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden. This means their citizens perceive themselves to be happy and also happen to be some of the wealthiest in the world, thus confirming/fulfilling the UN's criteria of happiness.

However, it looks like the variables are more appropriate for measuring happiness on a national rather than individual level.

So, maybe, that is why numerous individual representatives of the happiest coun-

tries leave their homelands quite often and settle elsewhere, in Spain, among other places. For example the Costa del Sol attracts lots of people from the aforementioned happy countries.

If we follow the idea of the proverb - when you are well-off you don't seek better - then nobody would want to move and emigrate. However they are acknowledging that there are better lands. Does it, therefore, mean that the coast of Malaga can be considered as a super-happy place? The answer could be totally affirmative, but not for the local people. Spaniards have never made it to the top 10, let alone the top 30 of Happy Nations. Indeed, only in 2020 did the country manage to achieve the rank of 28th for the first time. All this poses something of a paradox or just peculiarities of national mentality.

Spanish people do love their country but at the same time don't mind moaning about

it. Probably this self-underestimation prevents it from being listed among the happiest nations. And "no pasa nada". Indeed I can see that they don't care about this rating because daily emotional experience is appreciated by them much more. Spanish people just live happily - with their fun carnivals and generous ferias, enjoying big families and creating friendly atmospheres.

Another paradox... Some of the top 'happy nations' are also known for alcohol abuse, a high number of suicides, and high level of depression as well as soft drug tolerance and even the norm of living with firearms. Might it be the cost of happiness? Some psychologists state that being content and happy is better as it's an inner feeling of satisfaction that isn't dependent on external factors.

If this is so, then it would be wrong not to try this Mediterranean lifestyle and live differently, or rather more happily.



# Revealing the mysteries of Mijas in aid of worthy causes

Mijas Walking Tours are conducted in English and offer an insight into the lesser-known sites of the village and its fascinating history

TONY BRYANT



**MIJAS.** The name of Alan Boardman will be familiar to many residents of the Costa del Sol. The 64-year-old Mancunian has been involved with several associations and charity platforms since arriving in Mijas in 2004. He has also helped raise thousands of euros for different causes throughout the pandemic.

A former board member of the Salón Varietés Theatre and co-founder of the Simply Surviving group, Alan also founded Mijas Walking Tours in 2016.

He has now decided to use his street tours of Mijas as another means of raising funds for worthy causes. The tours take place several times a week and Alan selects a different charity each month. In February, he raised 545 euros for the Salón Varietés's appeal, while this

month's walks have so far raised 175 euros for the Donkey Dreamland sanctuary in La Cala de Mijas.

## Fascinating stories

The tours, which are conducted in English, are free, but Alan suggests a donation of five euros. The tour is limited to groups of nine people, which, as Alan points out, enables him to offer "an intimate guide to the history of the village and its fascinating stories."

The two-hour walk involves a tour of the lesser-known areas of the village, and Alan offers his vast knowledge concerning the Spanish Civil War and its effect on Mijas. One of his points of interest is the house of Manuel Cortés, the Mijas mayor who spent 30 years hiding in a secret room of his home to avoid arrest during Franco's dictatorship. As well, the walk includes the route to the secluded chapel perched on the mountain overlooking Mijas. Alan also sets up a WhatsApp group with links to topics discussed during the tour.



Alan Boardman. SUR

"We have lived in the village for a long time and it suddenly occurred to me that there was not a walking tour of Mijas. There are many lovely things to see here, but the aim is to get under the



Walkers during one of Alan's recent tours of Mijas, which raised money for the local donkey sanctuary. SUR

obvious and take visitors into the real Mijas," Alan explains to SUR in English.

Alan, who owns a small shop in Mijas, is also hoping to help local businesses survive the effects of the pandemic. Because of the current regulations, the tours are only attracting locals, but Alan hopes that when restrictions are

lifted, and the tourists return, he will be able to help more causes.

"The idea is to try to get people interested in Mijas, because it is like a ghost town. I want to do my bit to help fellow business owners because the situation is so bad. There are also many charities that have really been under pressure because of the

pandemic, so we are concentrating on helping them," he says.

He already has seven tours planned for April and reservations can be made by e-mail [mijasmagic@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mijasmagic@yahoo.co.uk) or by telephone 6105 22605. For information about times and availability, see the Mijas Walking Tours Facebook page.

## Marenostrum set to rock Fuengirola with packed season of jazz, flamenco, and rock concerts

T. BRYANT

**FUENGIROLA.** Following months of uncertainty due to the coronavirus pandemic, Fuengirola town hall has announced that this year's Marenostrum festival will go ahead in the grounds of the Sohail Castle and other locations in the town throughout the summer. The festival will present an extensive cycle of concerts that will include classical, rock, flamenco, rap, indie and pop music. The four-month cultural extravaganza will also see the return of several popular festivals, like Sohail Jazz (17 - 20 June),

the Festival of Cabaret (2 - 4 August), and the Luna Sur Festival (5 - 8 August).

Organisers have announced the first 30 confirmed artistes, which include Monica Naranjo, Miguel Poveda, Ara Malikian, Hombres G, and two rescheduled concerts by Alejandro Sanz that were cancelled last year because of the pandemic. Organisers have pointed out that more artistes will be added to the schedule providing that the coronavirus pandemic does not prevent it. All tickets will be refundable in the case of cancellation due to further restrictions. All concerts will comply to the necessary health and safety protocols.

Mayor of Fuengirola Ana Mula said: "We will vibrate again with music and secure Fuengirola as the European capital of outdoor music events. We are reinforcing our commitment to music and culture with all the guarantees of safety against Covid-19."



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## MARIPOSA ENERGÍA



## SOLAR PANELS EXPLAINED

## MARBELLA

**Sur.** Despite Spain's sunny climate, which lends itself so well to the production of solar energy, businesses and homeowners historically have not been able to take advantage of this green and highly economical energy source.

The infamous 'sun tax' and the mounds of paperwork and legislation around solar panels had previously made it a prohibitive option.

But now all that has changed. The abolition of the sun tax and the simplified process means businesses and householders can now take advantage of the 300 days of sun per year and generate their own solar energy.

Mariposa Energía's Martin Tye explains the process of installing and using solar panels, along with the many benefits of generating your own electricity.

Installing and using solar pan-

els is actually a very simple and straightforward process. As long as you own your own roof you can benefit from this cheaper, greener source of energy.

We start off with a satellite survey of your roof. Our satellite technology is so accurate it can take the measurements of the roof without the need for anyone to actually visit your property.

From there the solar panels installation is designed and produced and the entire installation process is carried out by our team.

We also handle all the registration paperwork on your behalf and take care of any maintenance work, although you will find that the panels hardly need any maintenance at all.

All our installations come with a 20-year fully comprehensive guarantee, giving you peace of mind that your investment will

stand the test of time. We also offer low-cost financing options to help you spread the cost of the solar panels.

As soon as the panels are up and running you will see your energy bill dramatically drop and if you produce more energy than you consume you will even get paid for the surplus you supply to the National Grid.

Solar panels allow you to really take control of your own energy generation, allowing you to make substantial cost savings over the long term. And, of course, you'll be helping to save the future of our planet. Solar energy is completely renewable. As long as the sun continues to shine there will always be a source of this energy. And with more than 300 days of sun per year, Spain really is the perfect place to generate your own solar energy.

## SWITCHING TO GREEN ENERGY: HOW DOES IT WORK?

## MARBELLA

**Sur.** If you want to help save the future of the planet, and save money at the same time, switching to a green energy provider is a great step to take. But what is actually involved in changing to green energy? Martin Tye, CEO of green energy broker, Mariposa Energía explains the process.

Switching energy supplier is literally as easy as flicking a switch. If you are not familiar with changing energy suppliers then you may be thinking that you will need workmen out to your property, laying new cables and installing new equipment etc. But that's simply not the case. When you choose to switch to a green energy supplier, all that happens is that the new green energy is sent down exactly the same cables to you. There is no need for any work to be done, you continue using the same electricity

boxes and equipment and there is no need for anyone to come out to your home at all.

We have been helping businesses and consumers across Spain to go green and to save money for more than a year now. The switch is so seamless, they only notice it has occurred when they start to receive cheaper energy bills.

When you switch with Mariposa Energía all the energy supplied is certified as 100% green, coming exclusively from Spanish windfarms. This source of energy is completely renewable, meaning it will never run out and it is also cleaner energy. It does not produce harmful emissions that cause greenhouse gases like fossil fuels do.

It is a great way to do your bit to save the planet but it also saves your wallet too. Our customers are saving up to 35% on their energy bills with our cheaper tariffs, so it's



a win-win situation.

When a consumer is considering switching energy supplier we always take a copy of a recent energy bill, analyse it and then calculate the amount they will save when they switch with us. This way our customers always know they are going to save money before they decide to make the switch.

The analysis of the bill is completely free and without obligation and the switch is also completely free. We believe switching to cheaper, greener electricity really is a no brainer.



## The future is green for Spain

In a bid to combat global warming Spain's government has set some ambitious environmental targets which, if approved by parliament, will cut carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

Among the measures proposed to meet these aims, diesel vehicles will be phased out by 2050, fracking will be forbidden and there will be a greater reliance on green energy sources. Already, around 44% of the country's electricity generation comes from renewable sources, according to Statista.com and the consumption of renewable energy has saved the equivalent of 16 million tons of oil.

But more needs to be done if

Spain is to reach its targets. The opening up of the electricity market, has allowed consumers to shop around for electricity providers, paving the way for green energy companies to be able offer cheaper energy tariffs, coming completely from renewable sources.

And the removal of the infamous 'sun tax' and cumbersome paperwork that previously made solar energy a prohibitive option, now means that more and more consumers can elect to install solar panels on their roofs and generate their own clean, renewable energy. Both of these initiatives empower consumers to be able to do their bit to help protect the future of the planet and reduce the reliance on fossil fuels, which are fast running out. There can also be huge cost saving benefits associated with going green.



## Meet the Mariposa Energía team

Launched more than one year ago in San Pedro de Alcántara, Mariposa Energía are a team on a mission: to save people money and to help save the future of our planet. The green energy broker guarantees to help businesses and consumers alike to save money with their cheaper, greener electricity tariffs. And with their more recent addition of solar panels to the green energy mix, consumers can now generate their own electricity and even get paid if they produce more energy than they use.

The company believes in offering first class customer service, which is why every client has their own local point of contact. No more dealing with faceless call centres. They also believe that electricity bills should be easy to understand, which is why theirs are designed to be clear and simple. And, of course, as a green company, all their bills are provided electronically by email.

## MORE INFORMATION

**To find out more about Mariposa Energía**  
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## SCHOOL TALK

Some of the Sunland teachers with their sketchbooks. **SUR**

## A creative idea for teachers' wellbeing

### NOVASCHOOL SUNLAND

Teachers at Novaschool Sunland reduce their stress levels thanks to a sketchbook project

In special circumstances such as those we have seen over the past year schools not only have to look out for their pupils' wellbeing, but teachers also need some care and encouragement.

The art teacher at Novaschool Sunland International, Miss Jenny, came to the rescue by launching a special wellbeing project for teachers called

Sketchbook Circle 2021.

Aimed at boosting morale among the staff, who remain positive under pressure with online teaching and Covid measures, the Sketchbook idea helps them relax, disconnect and do something creative.

Participating teachers each have a sketchbook in which they draw, paint, print whatever they like. At the end of the month all participants will pass their book onto another person.

"This has been an amazing experience," said principal Rachel Evans. "I have actually found myself feeling so much calmer in the evenings and really being able to switch off."

## Good books for good causes at sponsored read

### BSM

Students at the British School of Malaga currently have an extra reason to delve into the world of books thanks to the sponsored

Readathon which continues until June. This is the English Department's fifth annual initiative of this kind, which not only encourages positive reading habits, but also helps local charities as students find relatives and friends to sponsor their progress. Last year's Readathon raised 2,000 euros for Unicef and local charity Fundación Harena, which will also be the beneficiary of this year's event.

## Pupils learn online safety and the need for caution

### SWANS SCHOOL

Online safety awareness is top priority this academic year, says Swans School, which is reminding students of the need for the same caution online as they would show in the "real world".

The campaign stretches across both primary and secondary schools. Activities are intended to promote good digital citizenship with a better understanding of password protection, pressures of so-

Winners of the Swans School Safer Internet Day. **SUR**

cial media, oversharing, online hoaxes and trolling.

The school also holds a Switch Off Sunday every half term where families are encouraged to put down all devices and electronics for one whole day.

While it says it is hugely appreciative of the internet - especially enabling the transition to online learning during lockdown - Swans school also continues to embrace opportunities to interact safely, away from screens.

## Life-size learning for larger-than-life personalities

### CASA DEL MAR

Children in the Elementary years at Casa del Mar Montessori school in San Pedro recently enjoyed a life-size project. They created drawings representing figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Cleopatra, Malala, Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks and Jane Goodall, while they learned about their life stories.

Children at Casa del Mar Montessori with their life-size characters. **SUR**

ISABELLE WILLIAMSON



STEFANI COCECI

## Putting things right - the ideal excuse for another showing

The collage pictured above left appeared in the Education and Learning supplement in last week's SUR in English with the wrong school. Its author, 11-year-old Isabelle Williamson, is a student at Novaschool Benalmádena. This need for correction has provided the perfect excuse to publish the image again and, at the same time, find a deserved space for this doll reading SUR in English, created by another Novaschool Benalmádena student, Stefani Coceci. Apologies and congratulations!

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# Society reveals more winning young artists

The Benahavís Arts Society Competition for Young Artists rewards students at several local schools

JANE NORRIE

Arts Society Benahavís

In normal years the Art Society Benahavís has run a popular exhibition called Art in Action. Sadly this year, as with so many get-togethers, Covid put a stop to it. An integral part of the show was the Competition for Young Artists which has gone from strength to strength since it was started in 2014 and has become a highlight of the school calendar for art teachers and students alike. In the words of teacher Gill Renne, "It is a precious opportunity for young artists to showcase their work." For this reason the organisers were reluctant to let the competition pass and thanks to hi-tech have been able to run the competition digitally.

On board were four international schools, Swans International School, Laude San Pedro International College, the British International School in Marbella and, new this year, Queens Grammar in Estepona. Students aged 11 to 14 years were asked to provide an image to illustrate a lecture title from the Society's programme for the upcoming season. Themes ranged from the more straightforward Cleopatra to the jazzy Mad Men and Artists. At stake were prizes of 300 euros donated by Blevins Franks International Tax and Wealth Management.

In addition the Society has been delighted this year to be able to enlarge the project to include Daidín, the primary



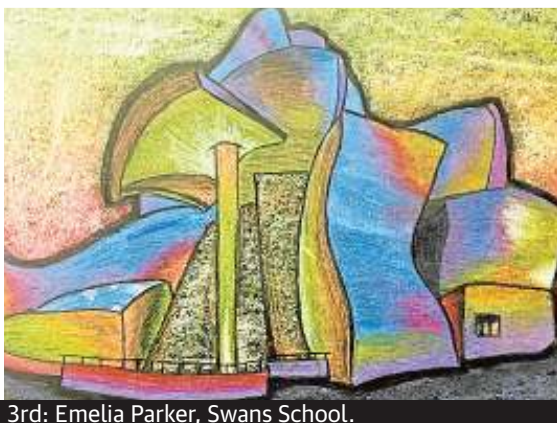
1st: Gabriel Gebrail, Queens Grammar.



2nd: Daria Constanzo, BISM.



Saving the Planet: Zairah Guyen of Daidín school.



3rd: Emelia Parker, Swans School.

school in the village of Benahavís.

Picking up on a highly topical issue, the oldest students at Daidín were given their own competition to create sculptures from recycled materials to highlight the theme of Saving the Planet. They too have been sponsored to the tune of 200 euros by Ibox Insurance Estepona.

The youngsters have been busy creating their artworks since the autumn until this month when the moment of decision arrived with the online judging.

Three judges were involved: Nicole King from RTV's Marbella Now; Billy Dawson, Chair of the Costa del Sol Arts Society; and myself, Jane Norrie, Young Arts Organiser for the Benahavís Society.

As one of the judges I can report that our task was extremely challenging due to the exceptional standard of the entries. A great deal of discussion, not to say argument, was involved until agreement was finally reached. The students showed great imagination, humour and an amazing display of talent. So much so that the Committee of the Arts Society agreed to give an additional prize to three highly commended students.

We on the Costa del Sol are lucky to have so many outstanding young artists among us, not to speak of their generous sponsors.

To see all the finalists artwork go to [www.theartssocietybenahavis.com](http://www.theartssocietybenahavis.com)

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◀ Parque de la Alameda. A green oasis right in the centre of town.

# Natural treasures, hidden yet in full view

► Parks and their plants are a refuge for numerous woodland birds who like to sleep there and stay safe from predators.



► This species of plant is a living fossil which existed before the dinosaurs, 250 million years ago.



**Marbella.** A walk around the town reveals endless surprises within the natural ecosystems, ranging from prehistoric plants to birds of prey

JOAQUINA DUEÑAS

**T**hese days, with non-essential businesses closed and people confined to their municipalities, our options for leisure activities are limited, but this does give us the chance to see the place in which we live in a different way and discover things we had never noticed before. Normally, as we walk or drive we are thinking of where we are going and not particularly enjoying the journey, but our urban ecosystems contain some hidden treasures and unexpected curiosities.

Parks and gardens, for example, are nice places to visit and are good for physical and mental health, but they are also a haven for numerous woodland birds.

One tree which is particularly interesting in the urban environ-

ment is the silk floss tree, which can be seen in Avenida Ricardo Soriano and the Parque de la Constitución, for example, and also on some of the roundabouts in the town where it stands proudly.

## Fresh water at the edge of the sea

**This look at our urban ecosystems cannot fail to include something we find beside the sea, which attracts yellow-legged gulls all year round and black-headed gulls in the winter months. Beside the Virgen del Carmen marina, on La Fontanilla beach, we can**

It is sometimes known as the bottle tree, because of the shape of the trunk. It is striking to look at because the trunk and branches have thick prickles to deter animals from climbing up, and it has

**follow the tracks of sandpipers and occasional ruddy turnstones. These small marine birds can be seen drinking here because, just steps from the sea, like magic, there is a stream of fresh water.**

**This is another surprise which is barely noticed but is in full view of those who go out for a walk and keep their eyes open to what is around them.**

spectacular pink flowers.

Antonio Figueredo, of the Marbella Activa association, says there is something even more unusual about it: "If you look at the trunk of one of these trees you might see that it is green, and that is because this is one of the few species with a high chlorophyll content, so it can perform photosynthesis through the trunk as well".

Both Marbella and San Pedro might seem to be full of ornamental palm trees, but not all are what they seem. In fact, some of them are not even palms.

"Some of the ones along the Paseo del Mar are this type. They are called sago palms, but they are not palms and are considered living fossils because they inhabited the Earth even before the dinosaurs," says Antonio.

"It is a very basic form of life on a botanical level and has nothing to do with palm trees".

On the subject of plants that are not what they seem, José Luis Casado, the president of the San Pedro Alcántara 1860 association, tells us that "on the corner of Avenida de la Constitución in San Pedro, there is an ombú, or bella sombra, and it is a magnificent example of something that, surprisingly, is not a tree at all but a herbaceous plant," he says.

Also in San Pedro, in Avenida Pablo Ruiz Picasso, "there is a ginkgo biloba, or maidenhair tree, a species which is said to hold the secret of eternal youth," says José Luis. "It's in a private garden, but you can see it perfectly from the street outside".

The ginkgos, with their leaves resembling small fans, have a resistance that makes them almost immortal. As an example, several of this species survived just a few kilometres away from where the Hiroshima atomic bomb exploded.

As well as a stroll through the streets, walking in parks is another urban pleasure. In La Alameda you can't help but notice some huge banana trees and three monkey-puzzle trees, tall conifers that tower above the rest of the other plants. These are the oldest examples in the park, since it was remodelled. It used to have numerous black poplars, a species called álamo negro in Spain, which is where the park got its name. The only feature that remains from that period now is the fountain on the eastern side.

## Look up to the sky

The Parque de la Constitución, Marbella's other green space, has a mass of vegetation and is a paradise for birds. "We like to call it the cosmopolitan wood," says Antonio Figueredo, "because you can see birds from all five continents there. One of the most unusual is the common firecrest, which only measures nine centimetres and weighs just six grammes".

If you pay attention and listen carefully, you might even hear a tawny owl, a nocturnal bird of prey which has also been spotted in Vigil de Quiñones and the San Bernabé cemetery.

The town is also home to birds like starlings, who find it a good place to rest and keep away from predators, although it must be said that raptors like booted eagles and Bonelli's eagles seem to find pigeons an easy prey. Soon the swifts will be arriving, born fliers who are very beneficial because they are insectivores, eating while in flight, and they like to use our buildings to build their nests and raise their young.



DENISE BUSH



## GARDENING

# Clusia lanceolata

Clusia lanceolata is an ornamental shrub or small tree three to five metres tall, native to South America and eastern Brazil where it is found growing in the understorey of coastal woodlands.

Common names include porcelain flower, copey or balsam apple. It is attractive all year round with leathery, propeller-shaped leaves, showy, waxy white blooms with scar-

let centres and unusual spherical fruits.

Clusia is one of the few plant genera that can absorb carbon dioxide during the night, Crassula is another. It stores the CO2 in the form of malic acid which it then converts to sugars during the day. It can also save water by

closing pores in the leaves when they are in hot sun. It can use this mechanism to control water loss from individual leaves.

Although it can be grown in full sun, it prefers a well-drained site where it will receive some shade in hot afternoons.

Clusia lanceolata is a tropical plant and therefore needs to be moved inside or given protection during the winter. It can be kept pruned and in a large container or grown outside, where the climate permits.

It is not drought tolerant but can withstand salty air so is ideal coastal gardens.

Clusia can be propagated by semi-hardwood cuttings or by sowing fresh seed. It is fast growing and plants raised from seed may flower in the second year.

The flowers are approximately 4cm across and attract lots of bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. In mild areas Clusia lanceolata may flower intermittently throughout the year although peak flowering period is during the summer.

All parts of Clusia are poisonous and should be kept away from pets and children.

It is sometimes harvested for its wood which is finely grained and of medium weight and has a good resistance to rotting.

A mature specimen of Clusia lanceolata may produce stilt roots from the main trunk.



Clusia lanceolata and flower. (inset). WIKIMEDIA / PINTEREST

## READERS' PHOTOS



ERIKA FEBRES

## Popular Clivia

Clivias are shade tolerant and easy to grow with long strap-like leaves and bright tubular flowers in spring. This photo was sent in by reader Erika Febres Urdaneta.



ANDREW SLOAN

## Grape hyacinth

There are lots of wild flowers appearing in the countryside and Andrew Sloan has sent in this photo of one of the prettiest ones, Muscari neglectum, commonly called the grape hyacinth.

## PHOTOS

### Calling all gardeners

We know many of our readers have lovely gardens, or enjoy growing plants on their terraces or balconies and some like to take photos of plants they see when out and about. Why not share them with others? Email

your photos to [english@diariosures.es](mailto:english@diariosures.es) or send them to SUR in English, Avda Dr Marañón 48, 29009 Málaga, with a caption and a few words of explanation. Alternatively, you can send them to us via Facebook ([@surenglish](https://www.facebook.com/surenglish)) or Twitter ([@SUR\\_English](https://twitter.com/SUR_English)).

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# Sharing the power of positivity with painted pebbles

Decorating stones has been a popular craze in the UK and USA and a local British resident hopes that the idea will take off in Malaga too

JENNIE RHODES



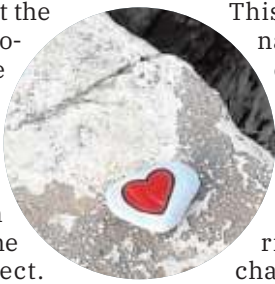
MALAGA. Pebble painting is a craze that took off in the UK and USA around four years ago; now, British resident Henny Illingworth Rodenhäuser, 37, and her 11-year-old daughter Sofia, are trying to get people to take up the artistic challenge in Spain. The idea is to pick up a pebble, paint it and then leave it somewhere for someone else to find. In this local project, participants include the #MalagaRocks hashtag in the design so that finders can share their discovery on

the Facebook group of the same name. “The idea is that people will find your pretty pebble and post a picture of where they found it to the group. They can then either hide it for someone else, or if it’s particularly special they may want to keep it,” the group states. During the first lockdown, Henny and Sofia started painting pebbles with rainbows, which had become a symbol of hope in the early days of the pandemic. They then left them outside their house for neighbours to see when they went out to take the rubbish out or the dog for a quick walk. “A few months ago I decided to get the group going again, because we like to see when a pebble has been taken and we wanted to try and get more people involved,” Henny explained. **Pebble therapy** With limited scope for getting out, as well as people lacking things to do and suffering with



Henny and a pebble one of the group has left for someone to find. **SUR**

mental health issues at the moment, the pebble project could be just the thing to help. One of the first people to have started the movement in the USA is thought to be Megan Murphy, who started the Kindness Rocks project.



This now has an international community of people decorating and leaving pebbles. According to the website their mission is: “One message at just the right moment can change someone’s en-

tire day, outlook, life.” Henny, who lives in the Vélez-Málaga area, says she got the idea after seeing friends in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, doing it. Pebble painting has taken off in a number of other towns in the UK, including Felixstowe in Suffolk, whose hashtag was FelixstoweFinds. In Morecombe, Stockport and Manchester people have been doing it under names such as Pebbleart Rocks and Stockport Rocks.

**Adults and children** The #MalagaRocks Facebook group has just under 90 members so far and designs range from very professional artistic creations to children’s paintings. From an environmental perspective, Henny encourages people to use “nontoxic acrylic paints” and says that people should avoid leaving the pebbles in places where they could get into rivers, streams and the sea. Henny says that she finds painting the pebbles, “really relaxing” and adds that she’s “not artistic at all” and usually shies away from anything “arty” but she admits, “There’s something very therapeutic about painting a pebble.”

**i To find out more :** Facebook - Málaga Rocks!

## WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?

19 MARCH 1812

# Liberals ratify La Pepa, the Constitution of Cadiz

This was not only the first constitution of Spain, but also one of the earliest in world history

TONY BRYANT

On 19 March 1812, the Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy was founded in the Oratory San Felipe Neri in Cadiz. Also known as the Constitution of Cadiz, it was ratified by a group of liberals who refused to support the king (Napoleon’s brother Joseph Bonaparte) imposed on them by the French occupiers during the Spanish War of Independence. In an attempt to protect the fundamen-

tal rights of the Spanish people, a group of around 300 members of parliament drew up a liberal constitution proclaiming a democratic parliamentary monarchy. However, because of French occupation, it was not enacted until some years later. This was not only the first constitution of Spain, but also one of the earliest in world history. It was the first legislature that included delegates from the entire nation, including the Philippines and Spanish America. It also proclaimed Roman Catholicism as the sole legal religion in Spain. The constitution was one of the most liberal of its time and was one of the first to allow all adult male citizens to vote regardless of religion, race or fi-



Monument dedicated to the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz. **SUR**

nancial status. Among the most debated questions during the drafting of the constitution was the status of the native and mixed-race populations in Spain’s possessions around the world. Spanish nationals were defined as all people born, naturalised or permanently residing for more than ten years in Spanish territories. It became known as the ‘sacred code’ and during the early 19th century, it served as a model for liberal constitutions of several Mediterranean and Latin American countries. The text established national sovereignty, a law that allowed each state supreme authority over its own territory. It also introduced free enterprise and freedom of the press. The principal aim of the new constitution, affectionately known as La Pepa, was the prevention of corrupt royal rule. Instead, the monarchy would govern through ministers subject to parliamentary rule.

## LANGUAGE FOOTNOTE

Constitución	Constitution
Parlamento	Parliament
Apoyar	To support
Independencia	Independence
Derechos	Rights
Diputado	MP
Monarquía	Monarchy
Democrático	Democratic
Mundo	World
Votar	To vote
Raza	Race
Borrador	Draft
Colonia	Colony
Sagrado	Sacred
Soberanía	Sovereignty
Libertad	Freedom
Ciudadanía	Citizenship
Propiedad	Property
Sociedad	Society

This historic document was published on the feast day of San José (St Joseph). Pepe (feminine Pepa) is the diminutive for José, and, thanks to the renowned wit of the people of Cadiz, the constitution gained its nickname. Spain has had seven constitutions since La Pepa; the current one was enacted in 1978, during the transition after Franco’s death.

**i Bilingual crossword inside back page**





Jules de Balincourt poses with his self-portrait, where his face is in reality an island. FRANCISCO HINOJOSA



The work Are You An Insider Or An Outsider. F. HINOJOSA

# What Jules de Balincourt is hiding at the CAC

The French artist is exhibiting his "emotional landscapes" for the first time in Spain, idyllic scenes that hide disturbing narratives with vivid colours

REGINA SOTORRÍO

MALAGA. Imagine a beach packed with people. What do you see? What for some are tourists enjoying the sun on the sand in California, for others are a group of refugees who have just landed on the Mediterranean coast. One image (Untitled, 2010), two realities. For the first time in Spain, Jules de Balincourt is exhibiting his deceptive art, idyllic scenes that hide disturbing narratives open to the interpretation of those who see it at the CAC Malaga. With bright and fluorescent colours, this French artist - who divides his time between the

US and Costa Rica - gives shape to a private universe which moves between utopia and dystopia. "Emotional painting," he calls it.

"It's like a family reunion. These works have never been on display before, so that's satisfying. I like the spectator to be able to create their own stories, connecting one with the others," he said.

The exhibition will be in the main room at the CAC until 30 May. There are 40 paintings on pieces of wood, none on canvas, which De Balincourt has created in the last ten years. Curator Helena Junco describes them as "emotional landscapes, physical landscapes that show us mysterious worlds, intriguing and very colourful". They are not taken from photographs.

"They come from my imagination. It is my own way of processing culture, information and life in the 21st century," said the artist. Jules de Balincourt shows the world with a "psychological" focus, through the use of vibrant

tones which move them away from what is real. Because the view of a town which is coloured fuchsia, for example, stops being a mirror of reality and acquires another dimension.

Everything starts from the purest abstraction, from a stain on the wood which, bit by bit, with just his "intuition", starts to take shape with different images. "These works are like a road trip where we don't know where we are heading, an adventure in itself, an ex-

ploration," said Jules de Balincourt.

But on that trip there are concepts which are repeated and this dichotomy of meanings in his work becomes evident. Like caves where you're not sure if people are exploring or hiding; an island that could be a paradise or a reflection

of isolation from society.

The artist was born in Paris and moved to California as a child, but he loves Costa Rica and spends as much time as he can there. He created many of the works in this exhibition while there during the pandemic last year.

## AFTER THE GOLD RUSH

► **Where.** Centro de Arte Contemporáneo (CAC), C/ Alemania, Malaga.

► **When.** Until 30 May.

► **What.** Forty large scale paintings in bright acrylics reflecting emotional landscapes.



View of the exhibition, with the painting City People and Country Roads in the foreground. FRANCISCO HINOJOSA

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## EXHIBITIONS

## Variedades

**ESTEPONA.** Until 25 March. Casa de Las Tejerinas, Plaza de las Flores. The exhibition entitled Variedades consists of 19 works by Estepona native Pedro Amado Fernández.



Pedro Amado, Estepona.

## Entre Mujeres

**ESTEPONA.** Until 11 April. Casa de Las Tejerinas, Plaza de las Flores. An exhibition of photographs including 93 images taken all over Spain to reflect femininity from a woman's point of view.

## Gallery Art Club

**FUENGIROLA.** From 19 March (inauguration evening) until 18 April. Calle Quemada. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 11am - 2pm.

This year's first exhibition is of works by an international group of artists; Michele Uzac, Elizabeth Williams, Bodil Schöön, Magga Nancy, Daniel Huss, Ian Stephen and Lars Hedin.

## Imon Boy

**MARBELLA.** From 20 March until 16 May. Galería Yusto/Giner. La Ermita industrial estate, C/Madera, 9. Cute But Cop is Imon Boy's first solo exhibition at the gallery. Born in 1992 Imon Boy has spent years in the world of graffiti, alternating between street art and other studio projects. He uses graffiti, video-games, internet, cinema, music, and travel to create stories. His works are full of bright and colourful detail. Viewing is by previous appointment only. galeria@yusto-giner.com / 951507053

## Ij García

**MIJAS.** Until 22 March. Centro Cultural La Cala.

Abstract artist Ij García has been influenced in his art by his travels and his life. The intense characteristics of the colours he uses represent nature.

## LIVE CONCERTS AND MUSIC

## OFM Chamber Music concerts

**MALAGA.** Auditorio del Museo Picasso de Málaga.

**28 March, 12pm.** Harmoniemusik play music by Mozart and Soler. Tickets: www.museopicasso-malaga.org

## Malaga Philharmonic Orchestra

**MALAGA.** Auditorio Edgar Neville, Teatro Echegaray or Cervantes. **19 March, 8pm.** Tchaikovsky's piano

# Recreating the magical era of the 1980s pop scene

Part of the Festival of Legends series, the show will present the music of Tina Turner and Annie Lennox and The Eurythmics

## TONY BRYANT

**MIJAS.** Fans of the 1980s pop and rock music scene will enjoy a special tribute night at the Teatro Las Lagunas in Mijas Costa on Saturday 3 April. Organised as part of Ocio Music's Festival of Legends series, the show will present tributes to Tina Turner and The Eurythmics, two of the most celebrated pop legends of the 1980s.

Italian singer Jessica Brizio will take to the stage complete with a full band to present her raunchy live show dedicated to the undisputed 'queen of rock', complete with iconic hits like Simply the Best and Private Dancer.

The 40-year-old Granada-based entertainer trained as a gospel singer and she manages to recreate Turner's incredible voice, while also capturing her powerful energy and spectacular stage presence.



Jessica performing her raunchy Tina Turner tribute show. SUR

Jessica will return for the second part of the show for her tribute to the unmistakable voice of Annie Lennox, lead singer of The Eurythmics, who received global success with hits like Who's That Girl, Thorn in My Side and Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This).

Tickets for the concert cost 15 euros in advance or 20

euros on the door and are available by calling 633 647 260 or online (www.eventbrite.es). Tickets can also be obtained from El Corte Inglés or Rubens Exchange offices.

The show begins at 7pm, but organisers have stressed that the start time might change depending on Covid restrictions.

concerto Nº 1. with pianist Nicolai Demidenko. Teatro Cervantes. Tickets: /entradas.mientrada.net

## The Hall

**MALAGA.** 27 March, 7pm. Calle Heroe de Sostoa, 65. 10€.

The Ana Cisneros Quartet will be in concert.

## Alice Wonder

**MALAGA.** 27 March, 4pm. La Cochera Cabaret, Avda de los Guindos.

Young singer Alice Wonder is continuing her Firekid Tour which she started in 2018.

## THEATRE AND DANCE

## Theatrical March

**TORREMOLINOS.** Until 27 March. Auditorio Municipal.

Torremolinos are holding a month of theatre with four plays, each 6€ entry fee. The plays are in Spanish and tickets are available online: <http://latiendadelasentradas.com/> or by calling: 615652453.

## La Psicología del Color

**MALAGA.** 20, 21 March, 12pm. Teatro Cánovas, Plaza de el Ejido.

David Segura's company, Beyond Dance, will be performing his new show filled with passion, humour and fantasy.



IJ García, Mijas.

## TALKS / LECTURES

## The Arts Society

**NERJA.** Lectures online.

The Arts Society Nerja season of lectures free online via Zoom for members and 10€ for supporters. [www.theartsocietynerja.com](http://www.theartsocietynerja.com)

**23 March 6pm.** Seville. Great Babylon of Spain.

## CHARITY

## ARCH

**ALHAURÍN EL GRANDE.** Open every Sunday 9am - 2pm.

The ARCH team at the Rescue Centre

for Horses and Donkeys has resumed its popular Sunday open mornings. Children can groom the donkeys and ponies, and volunteers are on hand to explain the charity's work. No more than six in a group can be admitted and masks must be worn. Closed on Easter Sunday. More information on Facebook: Centro Andalusi de Rescate de Caballos or [www.horserescuespain.org](http://www.horserescuespain.org)

## Collective Calling Spring Fair

**ESTEPONA.** 20 March, 12-5pm. Tikitano Besayo restaurant.

Live music with the Soulicious band, stalls, food, Easter egg hunt, Easter Hat competition and Easter egg workshop for children. Two course lunch for adults 35€, children 18€. The charity Collective Calling supports the homeless and struggling vulnerable families on the coast with food throughout the pandemic. Tickets: 671316551 or email: [eventos@grupobesaya.com](mailto:eventos@grupobesaya.com)

## St Georges Day for the Poppy Appeal

**NERJA.** 23 April, 2pm. Chapel Bar.

A fundraising event in aid of the Poppy Appeal by the Royal British Legion Nerja branch. Tombola, raffle and fun games. The event is being held outside to enable social distancing.

## MORE IDEAS

## English Cemetery Tour

**MALAGA.** 20 March, 12.30pm.

Visitors will be able to join a guided tour (in English) - starting at the top of Consuls' Walk at 12.30pm. Hear the history of this fascinating monument and stories of some of those who are buried there. Entrance fee 5€, concessions 4€ payable at the gatehouse. Register for the free tour: [www.eventbrite.es/e/entradas-guided-tour-english-cemetery-at-malaga-146622677375](http://www.eventbrite.es/e/entradas-guided-tour-english-cemetery-at-malaga-146622677375)

## Prehistoric workshop for children

**TORREMOLINOS.** 20 March, 12pm.

Centro Cultural Pablo Ruiz Picasso. Cavernario is an initiative by Torremolinos town council that will help explain the origins of humanity to children aged between 5 and 12 years. Places are limited, reservations: 952 385 282 or email: [biblioteca@torremolinos.es](mailto:biblioteca@torremolinos.es).

## Women's Make It Happen Summit

**ONLINE.** 25, 30 March, from 3 to 5.30pm CET.

Since 2012, 1230 The Women's Company and Costa Women have been hosting learning and networking events, helping women in business to make it happen in business and in life. Bookings through 'hopin, IWD Make It Happen Summit 2021'.

## Photography workshops

**MIJAS.** Casa Museo de Mijas. Free.

Learn how to take good photos. Register by email: [cultura@mijas.es](mailto:cultura@mijas.es) or call: 952590380. Free but each participant should donate 3kg of non-perishable foodstuffs to the food bank at the start of the course.

**Urban Photography Workshop.** 20, 21 March. 10am-2pm, 4-7pm and 10am - 1pm Sunday.

## Castle museum open days

**ALMUÑECAR.** From 20 until 28 March, 9.30am - 1.30pm. Castillo de la Herradura. Free.

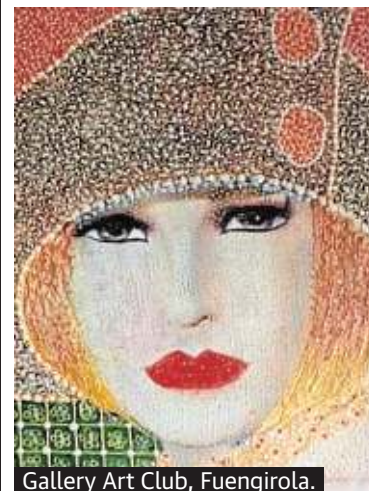
The museum is opening its doors in order to make more widely known the magnificent heritage resource contained within its rooms.

## Botanical Garden Tours

**MALAGA.** Jardín Botánico Histórico, La Concepción.

See the famous wisteria clad dining room in full flower. Reservations: 951926180

**19 March, 7.30pm.** Guided nocturnal



Gallery Art Club, Fuengirola.



tour.  
**20 March, 12.30pm, 4pm, 7.30pm.** Guided historical and artistic tour, nocturnal tour.  
**21 March, 12.30pm, 4pm.** Guided historical and artistic tour.  
**26 March, 7.30pm.** Guided nocturnal tour.  
**27 March, 12.30pm, 4pm, 7.30pm.** Guided historical and artistic tour, nocturnal tour.

**Symphony, Virtual Reality tour**  
**MÁLAGA.** Until 5 April. Mon-Fri, 11.45am - 3.45pm and 4.30-8.15pm. Saturdays and Sundays 9.45am - 8.15pm. Plaza de la Marina. Free. The initiative 'Symphony' gives the opportunity to see the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in two unique experiences, one audio and the other visual, taking the audience directly to the Gran Teatro Liceo de Barcelona. It starts with a short film accompanied by music by Beethoven, Mahler and Leonard Bernstein. A guided visit can be reserved, call: 900801137.



Prehistoric workshop, Torremolinos.

#### Lux Mundi

**TORRE DEL MAR.** Lux Mundi Ecumenical Centre, Avda Moscatel.  
**Taizé Prayer.** 26 March, 7pm. Nuestra Señora del Carmen church. San Andrés church. Taizé prayer is a monthly invitation to join in prayer. Send an email to be included in them.

#### Lux Mundi

**FUENGIROLA.** Lux Mundi Ecumenical Centre, C/Nueva 3.  
**Taizé Prayer.** 25 March, 7pm. Nuestra Señora del Carmen church. Taizé prayer is a monthly invitation to join in prayer. Send an email to be included in them.

#### O. V. FILMS

SUR in English advises calling cinemas to check for any last-minute time changes. Lunchtime and late night screenings weekends only.

#### Yelmo Cines, Plaza Mayor

**MÁLAGA.** Centro de Ocio, Plaza Mayor, Avda Alfonso Ponce León. Tel: 902902103. www.yelmocines.es.  
**The Father:** 19.15 (Tues).  
**Immune:** 16.16 (Sat, Sun), 19.00 (Tues).  
**Minari:** 12.25 (Sunday)  
**Relic:** 19.30 (Tues).  
**The Little Things:** 18.50 (Tues).

#### Yelmo Cines, Rincón

**RINCÓN DE LA VICTORIA.** C/ Arroyo Totalán. Tel: 902220922. www.yelmocines.es  
**The Father:** 19.25 (Tues).  
**Immune:** 19.30 (Tues).

**Minari:** 19.00 (Tues).  
**Relic:** 18.55 (Tues).

#### Yelmo Cines, Vialia

**MÁLAGA.** Centro Comercial Vialia. Tel: 902220922  
**The Father:** 19.20 (Tues).  
**Immune:** 19.25 (Tues).  
**Minari:** 19.15 (Tues).  
**The Little Things:** 18.35 (Tues).  
**Relic:** 19.05 (Tues).  
**The Mauritanian:** 18.40 (Tues).

#### Cine Albéniz

**MÁLAGA.** C/ Alcazaba, 4. Tel: 902360295. www.cinealbeniz.com  
**The Little Things:** 11.45, 16.15.

#### Pixel Digital Cine

**COÍN.** Centro Comercial La Trocha. Tel: 951315153. English films shown on Thursdays.  
**The Little Things:** 17.00 (Fri, subtitled in Spanish).

## A visual language of shape and colour

#### T. BRYANT

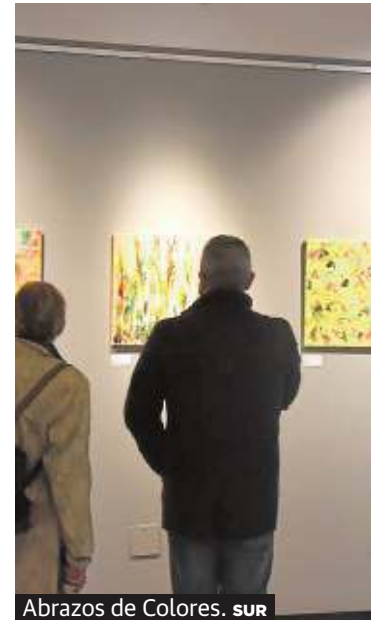
**FUENGIROLA.** The Casa de Cultura in Fuengirola is, until Friday 26 March, hosting an exhibition of abstract paintings by Argentinian artist Graciela Valinoti.

Valinoti has lived on the Costa del Sol for many years and has exhibited her colourful works all over Andalucía as well as in France and Argentina. Her latest collection, Abrazos de Colores, consists of

a series of pictorial abstract works in oil, acrylic and water-colour. Valinoti uses a visual language of shape, form and colour to create her non-figurative representations.

The exhibition, which is free, can be visited from Monday to Friday between 9am and 2pm, and from 4pm until 9pm.

The exhibition is part of the town hall's current drive to reignite the cultural activity in Fuengirola. Covid restrictions are enforced.



Abrazos de Colores. SUR

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## IN THE FRAME

# Meet the Czech who takes 'jamón' across Europe

**Lukáš Beneš.** For the past decade, the Malaga-based entrepreneur has been on a mission to sell Spanish hams internationally

DAVID BALMER

**O**nly salt and meat - and nothing else." That is the assertion of Malaga-based Czech jamón seller Lukáš Beneš, proud of the high-quality ham he began distributing internationally in 2011.

Born in Sokolov in what was then Czechoslovakia, Beneš, 41, comes from an entrepreneurial background (his family had a printshop) and he studied business at university. He initially came to Spain with his wife while she was completing an Erasmus placement in Barcelona. Here, he was something of a pioneer remote worker, combining his position as a European Union subsidies consultant with overseeing the family business, all from the comfort of his home in Barcelona. He comments: "We liked the Spanish lifestyle more than the Czech one and so, after a year back in Prague, we moved to Granada in 2011."

That same year, a Czech friend asked him for a new business suggestion. Although Lukáš remarks: "I had only first tried jamón about a week earlier", it clearly left an impression. It gave him a simple idea to sell jamón sourced from

Spain to people in their homeland. He immersed himself into the world of jamón, commenting: "I also became a professional 'cortador', which means I'm an expert in slicing the ham. I've done this at many important events, even at the wedding of (former Atlético Madrid footballer) Tomáš Ujfalúši."

While the business was initially a side project to his other roles, it quickly grew in popularity and operations spread into neighbouring Slovakia. Nowadays, his "whole world is jamón". Two years ago, he was introduced to Andrew Moore, a Londoner looking for a fresh start. Lukáš invited him to join the business and to set up a new operation selling jamón to customers in the United Kingdom. Last year, a British e-shop (jamon.co.uk) was launched and business is now booming.

In its first year of operations, the British market has doubled the company's overall turnover - no mean feat given that the Czech/Slovakian market experiences a steady rise of 30-40% each year. This means that a total of about 15,000 hams are now exported annu-



Andrew and Mirka Moore with Lukáš (right). SUR

**The explosion of the British market has been a pleasant surprise given the concerns that people would be put off by the hoof that is attached**

ally by the company. So, what makes Lukáš's product so popular? He underlines: "Most of the products these days are not as natural as in the past, many producers use additives and chemicals, but I try to work only with those that make totally natural hams. Only salt and meat - and nothing else."

Spain's tradition of jamón ibérico stretches back centuries and sees pig legs salted and left for dry curing for at least a year. At the end, what is created is described by Lukáš as "probably the best

product of Spanish gastronomy". He explains: "We source our produce from Salamanca and Granada Province, as these places are ideal for dry-curing because of their climate, with quite hot summers and cold winters." Lukáš oversees this production process from the Spanish end. This means he divides his time between Czechia and Malaga, having first come to the city in 2013.

He adds that the explosion of the British market has been a pleasant surprise, given some of the pre-launch forecasts. He explains: "Market research led to concerns that British people would be put off by the hoof that remains attached when we send it." However, these fears proved unfounded, and Lukáš reaped the rewards for not compromising on tradition. For this year, the team has set a goal of increasing sales in the UK by 100%.

While one might have thought that Brexit could be a detriment to the company, Lukáš remains positive. He explains that, while completing customs forms is now more time-consuming and costly, demand is still high. This is because it is now "almost impossible" for Spanish producers to sell directly to British buyers, meaning that the structure set up by Lukáš is the perfect way for consumers to still have access to jamón. More generally, he believes Brexit has made some in the UK "even more eager" to buy EU goods, as many Brits seek to maintain European cultural influences.

In fact, celebrating culture is one of Lukáš's main driving forces. He says: "We send every ham with instructions on how to cut and store it, because we want to create the most authentic experience possible." For him, "one of the great things about jamón is its ability to bring people together". It is because of this that, during the uncertainties of the past year, sales figures have actually gone up. Lukáš suggests: "Buying jamón can maybe be a way to substitute a little bit for all the things we cannot do at the moment, like visiting restaurants or travelling."

As for the future, Lukáš is excited about his company's newly-established own brand of jamón, now available to UK customers, and hopes: "We will expand into other major markets soon, like Germany and France."

Whatever happens, don't expect his passion for tradition and top-quality jamón to fade any time soon.

**Covid restrictions...  
Bad weather...  
Self-isolation...**

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<http://print-edition.surinenglish.com>





# Stephen Spurrier RIP

ANDREW J. LINN



**A**ged 79 and suffering from cancer, Steven Spurrier died last week. He was not well known outside the international wine trade, but inside this world his fame and reputation had few rivals. Superficially he was propelled to fame thanks to what is known as The Judgement of Paris, a wine tasting he organised in 1976 that caused a sensation, indirectly catapulting Californian wines

into the European arena. The blind tasting, involving mainly French judges evaluating a selection of the best French and Californian wines, resulted in the US products coming first in every category, this at a time when no-one questioned the position of France as the world's top producer. Such was the French reaction that one of the judges claimed it was not a fair contest and asked to withdraw

her votes. The film Bottle Shock (2008) was based on the event. Spurrier came from a wealthy family that founded what later

As his reputation grew, he was welcome at any winery in the world

became British Leyland. His uncle believed everyone should be able to do what they wanted and provided Steven with an inheritance sufficient for him never to work. After a series of rash investments, the funds dwindled to almost nothing. Spurrier's other love was collecting art. He had a complete set of Goya's Tauromaquia, and he wrote several books. In 1971 he opened a wine shop in Paris and founded France's first private wine school. As his reputation grew, he was welcome at any winery in the world, from the great domains of Burgundy, Bordeaux, Tuscany or Spain to the famous properties of California, Argentina and Chile. Sadly, adios Steven.

## WINE OF THE WEEK

**Protos White Reserva 2018**  
This bodega's red wine from Ribera del Duero is a favourite of many aficionados. This new label from the same winery is unusual, being a reserve white from the home of cheap and cheerful Ruedas. Very impressive, although only keen collectors will rush to spend 20€ on it.



# A gluten-free haven for celiacs

The artisan Pikito Bakery, located in a neighbourhood of Ronda, only offers gluten-free breads and cakes

VANESSA MELGAR

**RONDA.** Entrepreneurs Javier Criado and Juan Antonio Rosado in Ronda have started up a unique business called the Pitiko Bakery. It is an artisan bakery which produces bread and cakes that are gluten-free and aimed exclusively at people with celiac disease. The business, which only opened recently, is located in the Plaza de la Esperanza, in the San Cristobal district of Ronda, and is a pioneer, said its promoters. "There are other companies that make some bread, but they are not dedicated exclusively [to it]," they explained. The idea came from contact with Juan Antonio's partner who is celiac, which gave these entrepreneurs first-hand knowledge of the problem in obtain-



Ronda entrepreneurs Javier Criado and Juan Antonio Rosado. V. MELGAR

ing products that do not contain gluten. "Once you find out you are celiac, you have to look at everything through a magnifying glass, you get used to doing it. The problem is eating out, there's very few places in Ronda," explained Juan Antonio. Pikito Bakery has started with a basic list of breads, in different formats and flavours. It has also started baking classics such as muffins and biscuits, and also puff pastries: "It is rarer to find gluten-free puff pastry products. We have palmeras, chocolate filled pastries..." said Javier, who also stressed that cakes can also be made to order, including birthday cakes, and that they also make apple tarts. "Everything is made by hand, using quality, gluten-free flours," they added.

**Customer approval**  
"People with celiac disease thank us. Before, they had to buy bread on the Internet or in bakeries in the area," they said. They are both feeling very pleased with their new initiative because they consider that they are fulfilling the main objective they set, which is to fill the gap and the existing demand in the town for these people. In the future, they plan to launch lactose-free products, among others.





# Happiness in the form of chocolate

**International Day of Happiness.** The global crisis has brought a need to boost mood and contentment. Eli McCarthy of the Happiness Lab explains why chocolate could help

ALEKK M. SAANDERS



Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness on 20 March as a way to recognise the importance of contentment in the lives of people around the world. The Costa del

Sol has its own 'Happiness Lab', that was set up by an Irish resident, Eli McCarthy. She believes that, now more than ever, with a global crisis increasing the need for a boost in spirits, chocolate could provide a much-needed

dose of happiness. She explains why.

**First of all, tell us how you personally define happiness?**

There are two concepts I like to think of when explaining happiness. One is the circle, a figure in which there is no start, no finish, no divisions and everything is equidistant from the centre. The other concept is that of happiness as a practice, as in a path or a journey rather than a destination or a prize to be obtained. I think that happiness has more to do with state of mind and an attitude of connectivity and inclusion.

**They say chocolate stimulates happiness. Is this assumption purely subjective?**

To begin with, cacao contains more antioxidants than most other foods, as well as neuroactive substances, which are sci-

entifically proven to facilitate elevated states of mind. Its single most important property is the ability to provide energy, and this is a key component of happiness, right? Additionally, theobromine (the main active ingredient in cacao) is an alkaloid stimulant, which helps to energise the nervous system while at the same time exerting a calming effect on the brain. It also relaxes the bronchial muscles, making breathing easier, and lowers blood pressure by relaxing the walls of the blood vessels. It also helps in gastrointestinal stress. Modern academic research has proved that cacao increases blood flow to the brain and enhances connections between neurons. In addition, cacao promotes hormonal balance via its magnesium and iron content, and has the abil-

ity to lower cortisol. Other cacao minerals, such as copper, impact on healthy bones, immune function and contribute to iron absorption as well as protecting against cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis.

**You have mentioned hormonal balance. Is there any truth in the idea of "happiness hormones"?**

The cacao fermentation process, (a vital stage in the process of converting cacao into chocolate), produces phenylethylamine. This central nervous system stimulant boosts levels of serotonin and also dopamine neurotransmitters, which are two of the body's most important "happiness hormones". Tryptophan, an amino acid present in cacao, is also linked to serotonin production and the feelings of happiness, satisfaction and optimism.

**When someone wants to be happy or, let's say, not down, which 'pills' from your lab do you offer?**

To access the largest quantities of happiness-inducing chocolate, choose a dark chocolate with a minimum 70% cacao content. At least 30g to 60g per day... Or, even better, add organic cacao nibs to smoothies, cereals, fruit salad or as a drizzle on pasta, risotto, etc. Cacao nibs are the purest and least processed version in which cacao can be consumed. By reading the label carefully you can ensure happiness by choosing chocolate and cacao with gastronomic and an ethical quality assurance. We view happiness as a circle that connects the working conditions of the farmers on the cacao plantation to the sofa or dining room table where chocolate is consumed.



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That's why raw material sourcing at our chocolate factory is conducted under the maxim "Find Happy Share Happy".

**Does the link between chocolate and happiness go deeper?**

Although we are of course a chocolate factory, when I set up Mayan Monkey Mijas with my partner, Jason Godwin, in 2012, it very quickly became apparent that what we were purveying was not just chocolate. Although it is true that the big flavour and mouth-melting silky texture of chocolate awaken intense feelings of pleasure, what most of us really look for (be it consciously or otherwise) when we reach for chocolate, in addition to the taste-related enjoyment, is to access the mood-enhancing and energy-increasing properties it unleashes. This was our eureka moment: suddenly, we realised that while we were a chocolate factory on the outside, at heart, we were what I like to term a "happiness lab" - a space in which the creation and communication of happiness were our real priorities.

**Have you personally found**

**happiness?**

Happiness is more of a journey than a destination, and it's definitely the journey I'm on in all levels of my life, personally and professionally. My work, alongside my partner and team, at the factory is an amazing channel for communicating happiness to our visitors, our supply chain and also within the business world. This year has been such a challenging one for the planet. There is still so much uncertainty and fear of the unknown, as well as sadness at loss of life and well-being on so many different levels. Working in the tourism sector here on the Costa del Sol has been scary in that, like so many other businesses down here, we have watched powerless as our business model shattered with the closure of international borders and the restrictions on movement and activity. Like everyone else, we've had our fair share of stress and worry. Without denying any of that, we've managed to stay sane by keeping the focus on the things we can do to be happy and to bring happiness to others.



Candela with her father and kidney specialist Yolanda Calzada. R. C.

## Eight-year-old Candela is full of life after pioneer kidney transplant

**D. CHIAPPE**

**BARCELONA.** Candela is eight years old and since she was two she has had a kidney illness. At the age of four she had to have dialysis. A first kidney transplant was unsuccessful; her body gener-

ated antibodies that rejected her new kidney after 24 hours.

Two hospitals in Barcelona, Sant Joan de Déu and Clínic, have now found the solution: Spain's first blood-group-incompatible paediatric paired-exchange kidney transplant. Three months later

the operation has been deemed a success. "It's a milestone in scientific, technological and human terms," said Antoni Castells, medical director of the Clínic.

"Now she's fantastic, full of energy and vitality," said her father, Àngel, this week.

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# Davidovich crashes out of ATP 500 in Dubai in the round of 32

The Fuengirola tennis star was beaten 7-5, 6-4 by Serbian Filip Krajinović after a disappointing showing at the Marseille ATP 250

PEDRO LUIS ALONSO

MALAGA. Fuengirola tennis star Alejandro Davidovich was knocked out of his second tournament in less than a week after a round-of-32 defeat to Filip Krajinović at the ATP 500 Dubai Tennis Championships on Tuesday. Davidovich was beaten 7-5, 6-4 by the Serbian after defeating Radu Albot in the first round. The loss in Dubai comes less than a week after Davidovich fell to a surprise defeat last Thursday to Arthur Rinderknech in the round of 16 at the ATP 250 Open 13 tournament in Marseille.

The loss to Rinderknech in France was certainly unexpected given that the Frenchman was ranked 138th in the world going into the tournament, almost one hundred places below Davidovich. On top of this, Davidovich had comfortably won the first set 6-3 before the encounter turned on its

head and his opponent took the next two sets 6-1, 6-2 to claim victory. The Spaniard was left particularly disappointed given that a good performance at the tournament could have pushed him into the top fifty of the world rankings for the first time in his career. On the same day, Davidovich and fellow countryman Marc López exited the doubles event in Marseille at the quarter-final stage following a 7-6, 6-1 loss to Australians Matt Reid and Matthew Ebden.

In Dubai, Davidovich took victory on Monday in his first round clash against Moldovan Radu Albot after a 6-4, 6-4 win against the world number 76. Albot had come into the match as a 'lucky loser' injury replacement after losing to Valencian Bernabé Zapata in qualifying. Davidovich did not have it all his own way and let his frustration show at one point in the match. However, he always seemed a few steps ahead of his opponent, who made several unforced errors as the game progressed.

The following day, Davidovich was up against Filip Krajinović, the world number 33 and fourteenth seed for the tournament. The Serbian emerged victorious after 81

minutes with a 7-5, 6-4 win. Davidovich was left to rue missed opportunities on break points, converting 0/4 opportunities in the first set. In contrast, Krajinović converted two of his three break point opportunities. In the sixth game of the set, Davidovich led 40-0, but was then undone by Krajinović, who served three impressive first service shots to which the 21-year-old had no reply. Indeed, Krajinović finished the first set having won 85% of first service points.

Into the second set, Davidovich's performance dropped and he made several errors that proved pivotal in such a close encounter. Krajinović continued to excel when serving, even managing three aces in the final game to see off Davidovich. His dominance in this aspect can be seen in that he managed sixteen aces overall in the match compared to Davidovich with two.

Next up for Davidovich is the Miami Masters taking place next week before he is scheduled to return to home soil for the AnyTech365 Andalucía Open in Marbella, where he will be among the eight top-seeded competitors.



Davidovich strikes a right-handed shot this week in Dubai. **SUR**

## IN BRIEF



## A record win for Ana Peláez

Malaga golfer Ana Peláez continues to shine on what is likely to be her final days as an amateur, this time helping South Carolina University to a record victory at the Valspar Augusta Invitational. Her team set a new record in a 54-hole event (834 with 30 under par), closely followed by the Duke team (837). Peláez was the second-best individual with a total of 206 strokes (-10)

## KARATE

### Quintero back with a bang on the international stage

**P. L. ALONSO.** A year after his last international competition, Damián Quintero was proclaimed champion of the Istanbul Premier League at the weekend. The karateka from Torre-

molinos beat Ali Sofuoglu, third in the world ranking, thanks to the 26.36 points obtained with the Suparinpei kata.

After the final, Quintero acknowledged that with only four months to go until the Tokyo Games, he felt good at that handling the pressure to beat Sofuoglu on home turf was a huge positive.

## HANDBALL

### Date set for Rincón Fertilidad's Euro semi

**M. RIVAS.** The dates for Malaga handball side Rincón Fertilidad's first ever European semi-final have been set. The first leg of the EHF Cup tie against fellow Spanish side Atlético Guardés will take place in Pontevedra on Sunday 28 March (8pm) before the return game on Saturday 3 April in Malaga (7pm), although the exact venue has not yet been decided. Both legs will be televised live on CanalSur.

## MOTOGP

### Márquez with sights set on an imminent return

**COLPISA.** Eight-time world champion Marc Márquez stepped up his recovery from a fractured humerus, complicated by an infection, this week. The Spaniard, who hopes to be ready for the Qatar Grand Prix which opens the MotoGP World Championship on Sunday 28 March, was given the all-clear by doctors to ride Honda's most MotoGP-like street model on the track at Montmeló.



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# Another win leaves Malaga looking upwards towards the playoff spots

Yanis Rahmani's goal sealed a second win on the bounce for the Blue and Whites who now sit a comfortable margin above the drop zone

DARYL FINCH



MALAGA. A second win in a row means Malaga can now start to look up and not down as their cushion on the relegation zone increased to 11 points after a comfortable 1-0 away win at Logroñés on Sunday afternoon.

Sergio Pellicer's side put in an almost flawless performance, dominating practically from start to finish, with the only disappointment being that they couldn't add to Yanis Rahmani's 43rd-minute strike.

That said, it almost started disastrously when Jozabed lost the ball in midfield inside seven minutes. Luckily for him, though, Juan Soriano was on hand to deny Paulino with his foot.

This came perhaps as the jolt that the visitors needed. From then on they dominated possession, albeit without being able to pick out the final pass to break through the Logroñés rearguard and conscious of the hosts' abil-



Malaga forward Caye Quintana has his effort from a narrow angle saved. AGENCIA LOF

ity to strike on the counterattack.

The pressure, however, finally told just before half time when from almost point-blank range Rahmani headed home Caye Quintana's flick from Jozabed's corner. Despite the on-field officials ruling it out for offside, the VAR was quickly able to rectify the error and Malaga went in at the break with a deserved lead.

After the restart, the Blue and

Whites (this time in yellow) maintained their dominance and defender Josua Mejías could have quickly doubled his side's lead but his finishing let him down.

Likewise Jozabed had a chance to score from the edge of the area, while Luis Muñoz scored from a great set piece, but the referee blew for offside and on this occasion the VAR allowed the on-field decision to stand.

In the final phase of the game Rahmani could have been awarded a penalty after a great piece of play, while Luis Muñoz had a close-range shot bounce down off the crossbar but, by a margin of millimetres, not all of

the ball had crossed the line.

"For the first time since the first part of the season we've won two games in a row which is very positive for us," said Pellicer from the Nuevo Las Gaunas.

With safety practically assured and his side just six points off the playoff places, the coach remained cautious about the remainder of the season. "We know perfectly well how hard it will be. We have to be calm and measured and work hard. There's still a long way to go."

Next up Malaga welcome Tenerife, just one place below them, to La Rosaleda on Sunday (kick off 4pm).

# 0-1

LOGROÑÉS-MALAGA

**Logroñés:** Miño; Iago, Álex Pérez, Clemente (Bobadilla, 46'), Iñaki; Andy, Petcoff (Sierra, 65'), Olaetxea (Leo Ruiz, 55'); Rubén (Siddiki, 65'), Nano Mesa, Paulino (Vitoria, 77'). Unused substitutes: Dani Giménez, Medina, Zelu, Bogusz, David González, Andoni López, Víctor.

**Malaga:** Soriano; Alexander, Mejías, Juan de Matos; Escassi; Joaquín (Jairo, 70'), Luis Muñoz, Jozabed (Benkhemassa, 89'), Rahmani (Cristo, 89'), Caye Quintana (Loren, 81'). Unused substitutes: Dani Barrio, Miguel, Benítez, Quintana, Julio, Larubia, Andrés.

**Goals:** 0-1 Rahmani (43').

**Referee:** Ais Reig. Yellow cards for Petcoff, Bobadilla, Rubén and Escassi.

**Venue:** Estadio de Las Gaunas.

## Captain Lombán ruled out after testing positive for coronavirus

In addition to Stefan Šćepović, whose clearance didn't arrive in time for him to feature at Las Gaunas, there was another notable absentee from the Malaga squad on Sunday.

Just moments before the team took to the field, captain David Lombán confirmed that he had tested positive for coronavirus the previous day.

The veteran defender confirmed that he was fine and that he wasn't experiencing any relevant symptoms. "Now I must follow all of the protocols and I look forward to rejoining the team soon," he said.

It's understood that Lombán's was the only positive result during that round of testing.

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**Covid-19 Regular Updates**

## Pablo Chavarría goes under the knife as doubts persist over youngster Hicham

ANTONIO GÓNGORA

MALAGA. This week brought mixed news on the injury front for Malaga as forward Pablo Chavarría underwent successful surgery on his knee while problems persist with winger Hicham.

Chavarría, 33, who picked up his season-ending injury (ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee) during the Mirandés game on 1 March, went under the knife at the Centro clinic in Madrid. The operation, carried out by surgeon Manuel Leyes, took about two hours and was completed without any complications, according to the club who it is understood are still keen



Chavarría after the operation. MCF

to keep the player beyond the end of the season.

The news, however, isn't so positive for academy winger Hicham. He continues to experience fitness issues and despite being included in the matchday squad on Sunday, the Moroccan still has some discomfort after a season plagued by various muscular injuries.

As a result, the club has decided to seek a second medical opinion in France. The 23-year-old has travelled to Lille to see another doctor who it is hoped can help him to prevent any further relapses and get him back onto the field where he had been expected to make a big impact this year.





A LOOK AT LA LIGA  
ROB PALMER  
Commentator, Sky Sports

# The common denominator

Levante are the most average team you'll ever see, but they could hold the key to success for the big boys come the end of the season



I vaguely remember the school lessons when we tackled the term 'common denominator'. Now I know the answer to the question posed by my teachers is... Levante.

I've worked it all out and can reveal that the humble club from the eastern peninsula of Spain is central to the outcome of all the big football competitions in the country.

As we talk about averages, Levante are the most middling club in La Liga. They sit right in the heart of the table, have won as many as they have lost, and no top-half team has drawn as many games. They have scored one more goal than they have conceded. They are Joe Average (or should we say José Promedio?).

The dictionary definition of common denominator is 'a

feature shared by all members of a group.' For Athletic Bilbao to reach their second successive Copa del Rey final they needed to beat Levante in the semi-final. When Atlético appeared to be cruising to the title a month ago, they met Levante twice in a week. In the first game the teams drew but Atlético remained six points ahead of their nearest challengers. The following week, a 94th-minute winner from the halfway line meant Diego Simeone and his players experienced a home defeat for the first time in a year. "Hay Liga" declared the sports papers.

Real Madrid haven't lost in any of their last nine games. Guess the last club to beat them? Yes, it was Levante at the Bernabéu.

Many have pinpointed El



Levante sit comfortably midtable, scoring as many as they concede. EFE

Clásico on 10 April as the most important game of the season and it's safe to conclude that the defeated team will be

eliminated from the chase to be champions. However, there will still be eight games to go. Let me pinpoint round 36.

Barcelona will have clashed with Atlético the previous week; it will be tight at the top of the table. Real Madrid head to Granada, the surprise team of the season; meanwhile at Estadi Ciutat de Valencia, Levante will be hosting Barcelona.

It's highly likely that Barcelona's Liga revival will continue now they don't have the distraction of the Champions League to contend with. So, if my calculations are correct, they will need to win to keep the dream alive.

Unlike Atlético and Real Madrid, Barça haven't dropped points to Levante this season. A single Lionel Messi goal won the game with fourteen minutes remaining at the Camp Nou.

By my reckoning, if Barcelona do the double over Levante, they fully deserve to be the Champions of Spain. The 'Levante factor' is the deciding factor. A club with no chance of qualifying for Europe and totally safe from relegation holds the key to success.

What's the reckoning? Ask your typical Levante fan how they are doing, and you won't get a 'fine' or 'not so good'. I'm sure they'd shrug their shoulders, smile and say they are 'pretty average'. It should be the club motto.

## Loren and Benítez, among a dozen youngsters to commit to the Blue and Whites

BORJA GUTIÉRREZ

MALAGA. With finances limited in the short term, Malaga are looking to their academy for the next crop of first-team players and this week announced the thirteenth player to commit to a new deal so far this season.

The latest to sign on the dotted line was forward Loren Zuñiga (son of the former Malaga player of the same name). The 18-year-old, who has made massive strides in his development, came off the bench against Logroñés on Sunday to make his debut.

Loren has signed a new deal which will keep him at the club until the end of the 2023-24 season.

His renewal followed that of right-back Ale Benítez last week. The 20-year-old, who made his debut in the first game of this season against Tenerife, has signed until 2022, with an option for a further year.

The pair join Luis Muñoz, Juande, Ismael, Cristo and Kellyan (who signed new deals in the summer), as well as Ramón, Haim, Larrubia, Gonzalo, Julio and Kevin in committing their future to the club in the last six months.



An empty La Rosaleda stadium and Javier Tebas (inset). SUR

## La Liga hopeful that 'a percentage' of fans can return after Easter

B. GUTIÉRREZ

MALAGA. The time is fast approaching when we will once again see fans in the stands of Primera and Segunda stadiums, which have not reopened since they were closed a year ago (the last game at La Rosaleda was on 8 March 2020).

The president of LaLiga, Javier Tebas, has announced the club association's intention that "a percentage" of the spectators will return to stadiums

by the third week of April. The idea is to wait and see how the spread of the virus evolves in light of the Easter Week celebrations, after which a small upturn in cases is expected because of the increase in travel and social gatherings.

"We hope that the rise will be smaller than at Christmas and that it will allow us to return to the stadium soon," said Tebas, who fails to see the logic in allowing some crowds for other types of leisure or events, and not for football.



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# Malaga-born Brahim Díaz included in Spain's under-21 squad for the Euros but Antoñín misses out

The attacking midfielder, on loan at AC Milan from Real Madrid, will take part in the tournament which starts next Wednesday

**BORJA GUTIÉRREZ**

**MALAGA.** Malaga-born footballer Brahim Díaz has been included in the Spain squad for the 2021 UEFA European Under-21 Championship which begins its first stage in Slovenia and Hungary at the end of March.

The attacking midfielder, currently on loan at AC Milan from Real Madrid, is one of 23 players selected by coach Luis de la Fuente as Spain hope to retain their crown. Although Brahim was not involved with the victorious 2019 squad, fellow Malaga native Junior Firpo - now playing for Barcelona - was in the team.

Indeed, having a player from Malaga seems to be a good luck charm for Spain in the tournament. In 2013, Isco - born in Arroyo de la Miel - was part of the Spain team that lifted the trophy. The tournament helped launch the career of

## THE 23-MAN SQUAD

► **Goalkeepers:** Álvaro (Huesca), Josep Martínez (Leipzig), Álex Domínguez (Las Palmas).

► **Defenders:** Pozo (Eibar), Pipa (Huddersfield), Cucurella (Getafe), Pedrosa (Espanyol), Miranda (Betis), Cuenca (Almería), Guilmón (Valencia), Minguez (Barcelona), Morey (Dortmund).

► **Midfielders:** Zubimendi (Real Sociedad), Moncayola (Osasuna), Gonzalo Villar (Roma), Fran Beltrán (Celta), Riqui Puig (Barcelona), Manu García (Sporting), Puado (Espanyol).

► **Forwards:** Brahim (Milan), Barrenetxea (Real Madrid), Dani Gómez (Levante), Abel Ruiz (Braga).

the ex-Malaga playmaker and Brahim will hope to use this year's tournament to follow a similar trajectory after making a name for himself in Italy this season.

During his time so far with Milan, he has managed to show his

potential after having been granted few opportunities to showcase his talent while at Real Madrid. So far this season, playing in Serie A and the Europa League, he has made a total of 27 appearances. Over the course of 1,292 minutes, he has scored four goals, provided three assists and made sure of a well-deserved place in the squad.

However, a Malaga-born player who has not made the squad is Antoñín, a forward on loan at Rayo Vallecano from Granada. Despite being Rayo's top scorer this season with six goals, he was unable to fend off the strong competition for attacking places in the squad. Along with Brahim, the other attackers in the squad are both La Liga players - Dani Gómez of Levante and Real Sociedad's Ander Barrenetxea.

The Spain side begin their campaign on 24 March against co-hosts Slovenia. They will also face the Czech Republic and Italy in Group B. The group stage will finish on 31 March, at which point the group winners and runners-up will qualify for the knockout stage taking place some two months later, from 31 May to 6 June.



Brahim during the European under-19 championships in 2018. EFE

## Marbella's relegation is confirmed after uninspiring goalless draw

The Costa side will now compete in the relegation play-off phase to avoid dropping further to the newly restructured fifth tier of Spanish football

**ADG**

**SAN FERNANDO (CADIZ).** A 0-0 draw away to San Fernando on Sunday evening confirms that Marbella will at best spend next season in at least the fourth tier of the newly restructured Spanish football pyramid, with the Costa side now set to compete in the second, relegation phase of the Segunda B season to avoid a possible double relegation to the new fifth tier.

Both sides came into the game desperate for victory, with the hosts holding aspirations of promotion. Accordingly, the game started with intensity, and the first big chance fell to the Cadiz side but Ferrón miscued and missed the ball completely at the far post. The same thing happened at the other end moments later, this time Chumbi being left red-faced.



Chumbi jumps to try to win the ball in the presence of Granero. ADG MEDIA

# O-O

## S. FERNANDO-MARBELLA

**San Fernando:** Perales; Gabi Ramos, Juan, Amelibia, Varela; Lolo, Raúl Palma, Hugo (Manu Moreno, 84'), Biabiany, Omar (Pepe Bernal, 61'), Francis Ferrón (Dopi, 68').

**Marbella:** Alfonso Herrero; Nacho (Busquets, 85'), Redru, Ortuño (Tresaco, 70'), Fernando, Eliseo; Quezada, Álex Bernal (Óscar, 77'), Granero, Callejón (Añón, 85'), Chumbi.

**Referee:** David López Jiménez. Biabiany (65') and Busquets (90+2') sent off for two yellows. Bookings for Juan, Dopi, Gustavo and Óscar García.

**Venue:** Iberoamericano 2010 (around 800 spectators).

Into the second half, the chances dried up and it seemed both teams were too afraid to lose to push for a goal. In the 65th minute, San Fernando were reduced to ten men when Biabiany was dismissed. Marbella's clearest opportunity to capitalise on their numerical advantage came ten minutes from time when Tresaco's shot went just wide. In stoppage time, Chumbi had one last chance for a winner, but his effort went well wide.

Next up for Marbella is their final game of the regular season at home to Linense on Sunday.

## Fixture list announced for next phase in Malaga Femenino's fight for survival

**M. RIVAS**

**MALAGA.** Malaga's women's team now know their opponents for the second phase of their league campaign to fight for survival in the second tier.

The Liga Reto Iberdrola gets back under way this weekend and Malaga face a home fixture (in Cártama) against Valencia B on Sunday (12pm). The reverse fixture will be played on 25 April, according to the recently published schedule.

Next up they take on Jovenut Almansora (away on 28 March, home on 2 May); Aldaia (home on 4 April, away on 9 May); Levante B (away on 11 April, home on 16 May); and finally Fermarguín Gran Canaria (home on 18 April and the final game away on 30 May).

Only the top five of the nine sides competing will remain in the division - the remaining four will be relegated to Primera Nacional.



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THE STARS




**Aquarius**  
January 21st - February 19th  
A creative idea may be worth its weight in gold, and soon you could appreciate how much you stand to gain if you go through with it.




**Pisces**  
February 20th - March 20th  
Is money burning a hole in your pocket? A Sun-Venus combination could find you eager to enjoy a treat, especially if you haven't had much of a chance lately.




**Aries**  
March 21st - April 20th  
Want to make the most of the week ahead? Have a clear sense of what you hope to accomplish. If you are vague in any way you could miss out.




**Taurus**  
April 21st - May 21st  
No matter how difficult it is to face up to certain things, the cosmos urges you to have a go. Once you begin to sort it out you'll experience relief, and new springs of energy will revitalize you.




**Gemini**  
May 22nd - June 21st  
Whatever predicament you're in, try to keep things simple for the best outcome. Make time to unwind and recharge as resting your mind is key.




**Cancer**  
June 22nd - July 23rd  
If you have some resistance to a challenge or opportunity, then it may be old beliefs that are holding you back. Tackle these first by replacing them with a more dynamic outlook.



**Leo**  
July 24th - August 23rd  
You may feel an emotional urge to get in touch with someone, and doing so could be very rewarding. A project might reach a successful conclusion and can be a reason to celebrate.




**Virgo**  
August 24th - September 23rd  
As the Sun and Venus combine in an emotional zone, this could be when a bond crosses the line between platonic and intimate. A temptation to splurge some money may emerge.



**Libra**  
September 24th - October 23rd  
A new romance looks promising. Wondering about a key bond? A potent lunar phase could inspire you to clear the air.



**Scorpio**  
October 24th - November 22nd  
With Venus in the mix and a sensational Full Moon next weekend, things can go faster if you rally others to your cause. It will mean less hours for you, and a chance to chill and unwind.



**Sagittarius**  
November 23rd - December 21st  
The current set-up has a spicy edge that might incline you to take on a challenge. This could involve a hike, jogging or adventure sports, and a chance to get the most out of life.

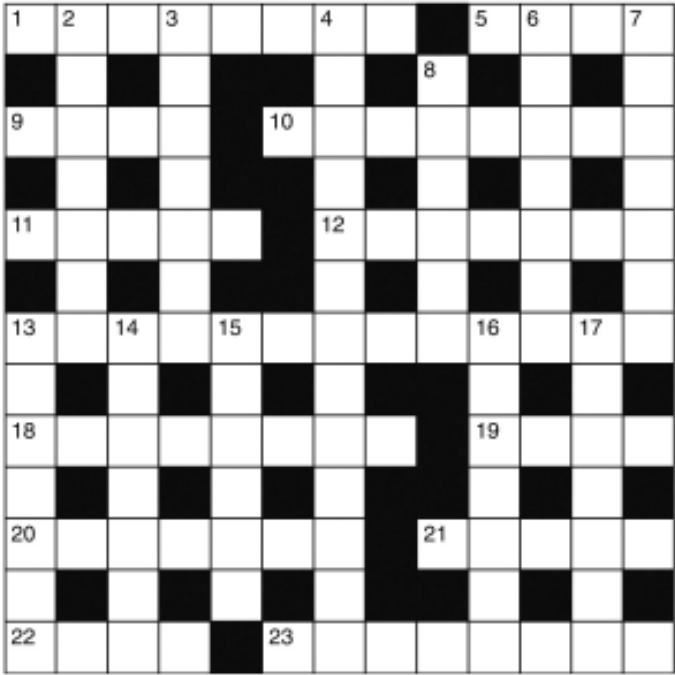


**Capricorn**  
December 22nd - January 20th  
Your curiosity may lead the way regarding a financial decision. With Mars in Gemini you stand to get an excellent deal if you bargain.

THE SEVEN DIFFERENCES



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD N° 11453

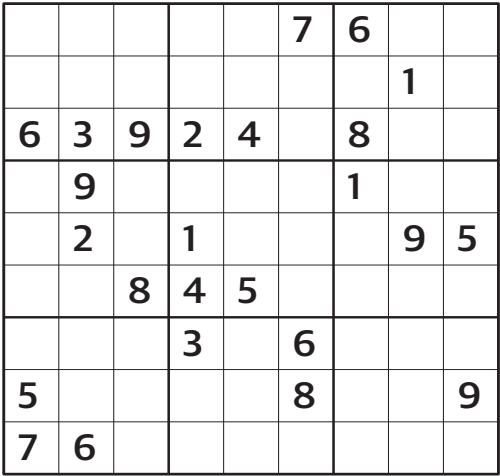


- Across
- 1 Go over to the pub on posts (8)
  - 5 Move from West Ireland (4)
  - 9 Some of them may include a girl's name (4)
  - 10 Attractive when elapsing, perhaps (8)
  - 11 Go out with a girl (5)
  - 12 Closest Eastern resort (7)
  - 13 Hardened, when the elements have been defeated (7-6)
  - 18 Encroach when putting spring in lock (8)
  - 19 Ode or letter at the Post Office (4)
  - 20 Like a number about old rain (7)
  - 21 It's essential that a girl hides it (5)
  - 22 To make a fuss (2-2)
  - 23 Makes believe and nurses beforehand (8)

- Down
- 2 Rush wildly around like a politician in anger (7)
  - 3 Small car allowed to be red (7)
  - 4 Exhausted sportsman? (3-2,8)
  - 6 Spear I would find in a river (7)
  - 7 Hippy agreement at topless resort (5,2)
  - 8 Is able to imitate a party snack (6)
  - 13 Having some deficiency on the outside (7)
  - 14 Corrected before noon and finished afterwards (7)
  - 15 Wishing to find a fastener in a pig (6)
  - 16 Inform of an award, say (7)
  - 17 Red male exchanging a gem (7)

SUDOKU BY HANZO

**Instructions**  
Complete the square making sure that every row of nine numbers includes all digits from 1 to 9, every column includes all digits from 1 to 9 and every 3 by 3 subsection includes all digits from 1 to 9



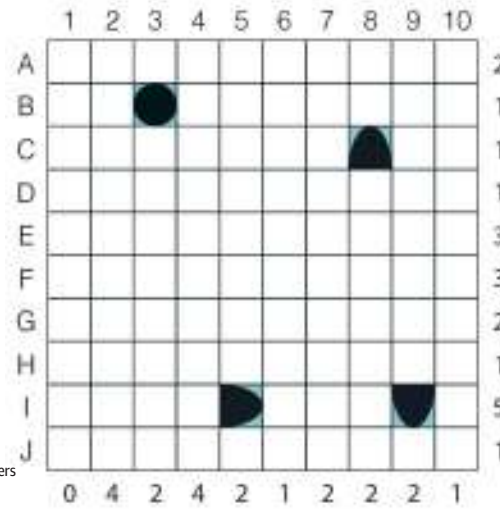
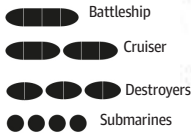
THE WORDPUZZLER



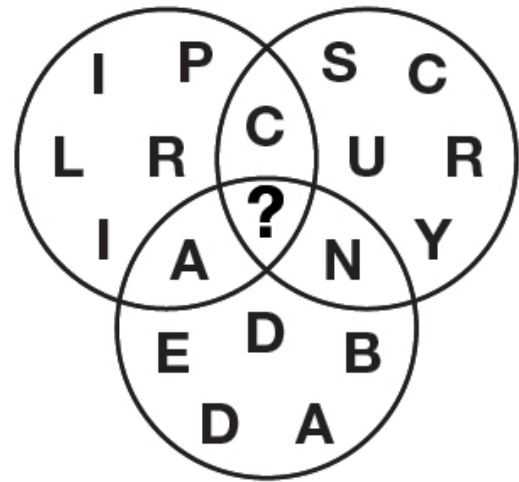
- Can you identify the first names of the poets listed below?
- 1. Day Lewis
  - 2. Ginsberg
  - 3. Dickinson
  - 4. Hughes
  - 5. Akhmatova
  - 6. Larkin
  - 7. Browning
  - 8. Betjeman
  - 9. Brooke
  - 10. De la Mare

BATTLESHIPS

**Instructions** Find where the fleet of ships (1 battleship, 2 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 4 submarines) are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some have been filled in to start you off.



CIRCLEGRAM



**Instructions**  
Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters in each circle can be arranged to form words, names or terms on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?



LANGUAGE CROSSWORD FILL IN THE SPANISH WORD

- Across
- Down
- 1) Independence (13)

7) Politics (8)

11) To spill (8)

13) Member of Parliament (8)

14) Sacred (m) (7)

15) Society (8)

20) It is (2)

21) Constitution (12)

23) Of (2)

25) He urges (5)

27) Freedom (8)

28) He gave (3)

31) Spade (4)

32) Trophy (6)

34) Monarchy (9)

36) You give (3)

39) Race (4)

40) Property (9)

42) Phew! (2)

43) To vote (5)

44) I laughed (3)

45) Travelling (10)

47) To fall (4)

48) Democratic (m) (11)

50) Definition (10)

52) Recognition (14)

53) Colony (7)
- 1) Industry (9)

2) Rights (8)

3) Silver (f) (8)

4) To give (3)

5) To swim (5)

6) They attract (6)

7) I order (4)

8) Magnifying glass (4)

9) Auntie (4)

10) Supporting (8)

12) Wing (3)

16) Weak (5)

17) Life (4)

18) Blame (5)

19) Citizenship (10)

22) Thirst (3)

24) Bounce (6)

26) Uncle (3)

29) Territory (10)

30) World (5)

31) Parliament (10)

33) Requiem mass (7)

35) It dies down (6)

37) Sovereignty (9)

38) Draft (8)

41) Bread (3)

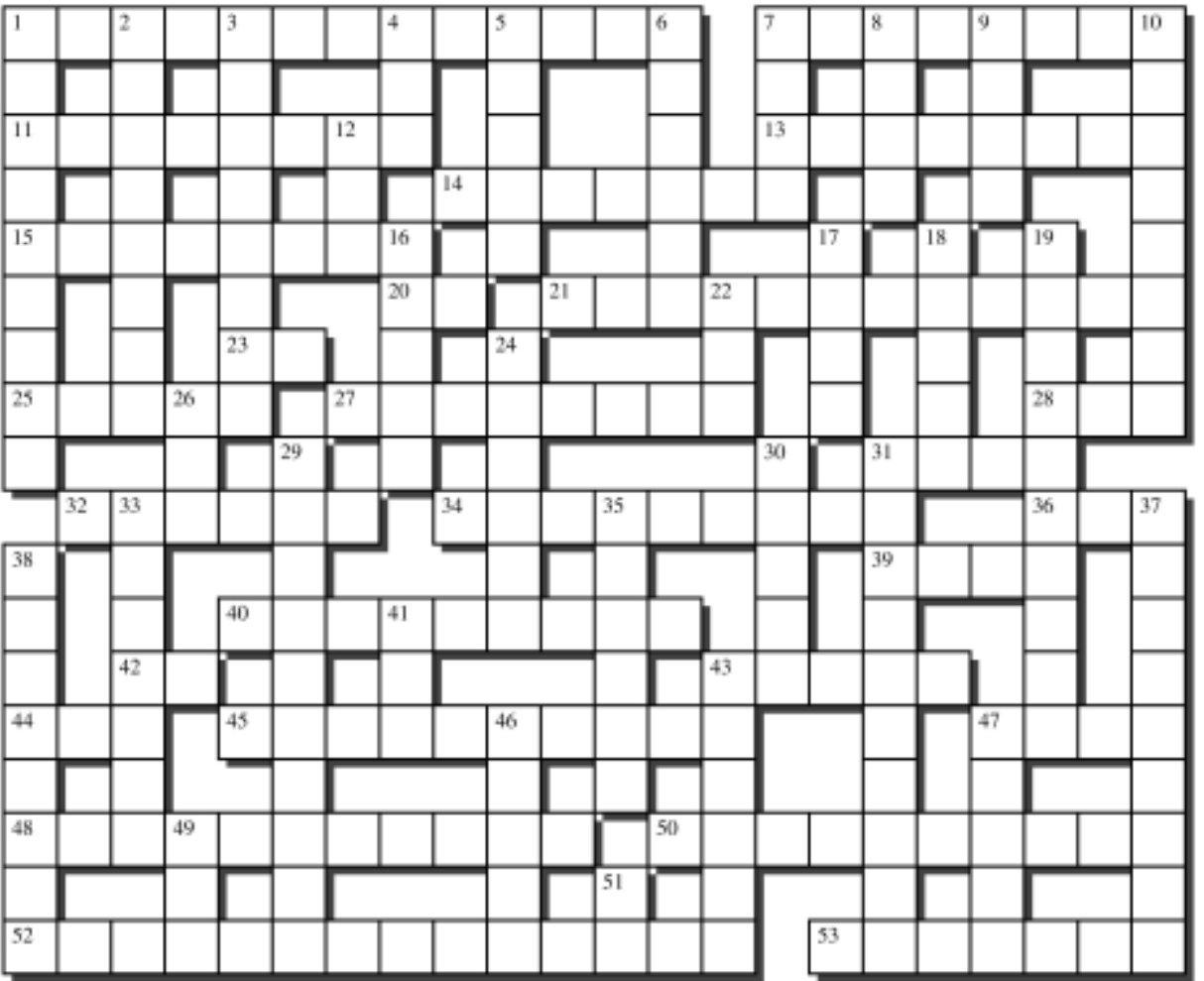
43) Poison (6)

46) I fell back (5)

47) Cycle (5)

49) Eye (3)

51) In (2)



ANSWERS

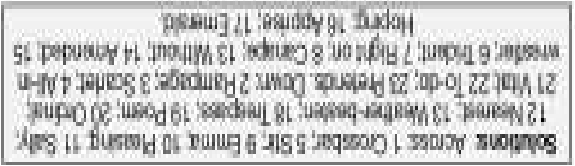
Quiz answers

**Answer:** Chilies.  
was an American chemist best known for the Scoville Organoleptic Test, now called the Scoville scale. He devised the test and scale in 1912 while working at the Parke-Davis pharmaceutical company to measure pungency, spiciness or heat, of various chili peppers.  
**Answer:** Fly a plane  
was a French pilot, thought to be the first woman to pilot a plane. She became the world's first licensed female pilot on 8 March 1910.

Language Crossword



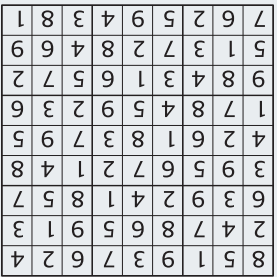
Cryptic Crossword



Wordpuzzler solution



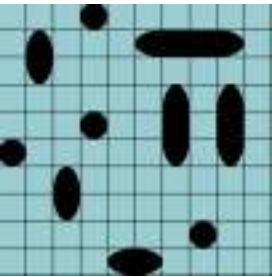
Sudoku solution



Circlegram

The letter represented by the question mark is H. Hairclip, scrunchy, headband, all hair accessories.

Battleships



WHERE IS THIS?



Last week: Coín

This sculpture created by Santiago Santiago in 2004 is called 'Hola' and stands on the roundabout in the Plaza Principe de España in Coín.



THE SUR IN ENGLISH CORNER

Marbella through your lens

Marbella, famous for its rich and famous residents in the heyday of tourism, is one of the most important towns on the Costa del Sol. Besides up-market shops, a lively nightlife and numerous golf courses, it has fabulous beaches and the old town is full of charm. San Pedro Alcántara is a quieter district, with a rich cultural history and important archaeological remains.

At SUR in English we are preparing a special supplement which aims to reflect just how

much our readers appreciate these two towns.

You can help by sending in a photograph that captures the essence of Marbella or San Pedro. It could be funny, artistic, romantic, poignant... so grab your camera and get to work.

Send your photos by 22 March - no more than three images per person - by email to english@diariosur.es, Twitter @SUR\_English or Facebook. surenglish. We aim to publish the best and you may even win a prize!



**S**isters María Jesús and Felisa Arasan were euphoric this week, and so were their ten or so neighbours in the tiny hamlet of Lecina, in Huesca, when they learned that their thousand-year-old oak tree, known to everybody as La Castañera, had been voted European Tree of the Year.

La Castañera is an enormous holm oak, 16.26 metres high and with branches extending to a total width of 28 metres. It stands alone in this diminutive community in the Alto Aragón, in the municipality of Aínsa, near the Somontano vineyards and the Ordesa y Monte Perdido national park.

This beautiful tree, under which dozens of couples have been married, has been the setting where hundreds of discussions have taken place and agreements made. It was saved by Nicolás, María Jesús and Felisa's father, who adored it. These sisters, who recently retired, remember when they were young and he absolutely refused to sell it to a charcoal merchant who was prepared to pay a lot of money for its seven-metre trunk and large twisted branches.

The holm oak, guardian of the woodlands and also a symbol of resistance, life and strength, was a sacred tree for the ancient Greeks, and also for the people of Aragón, who claim it played an important role in reconquering the valleys of the Pyrenees from the Saracens. That is why it ended up being featured on the kingdom's coat of arms, and is now the emblem of Aragón.

However, La Castañera, which was given that nickname because every winter it used to produce up to 600 kilos of fat, sweet acorns which the sheep



The tree is 16.26 metres high. **SUR**

## The tree that got rid of the witches

**Alto Aragón. La Castañera, a thousand-year-old holm oak in the hamlet of Lecina, in Huesca, has been voted European Tree of the Year**

**ALFONSO TORICES**



▲ Residents of Lecina celebrate the naming of their oak as European Tree of the Year.  
**EFE**

loved to eat, has a magical legend of all of its own. For generations local people have venerated it because hundreds of years ago, when it was still a young tree, it is said to have helped to rid the area of the witches who brought bad luck and death to residents and their animals.

### The legend

In those times, Lecina was surrounded by impenetrable woodland, in which witches are said to have hidden. The trees in the woods loved these sorceresses because local people were too afraid of them to come in and cut them down. But La Castañera didn't approve of this woodland's bad reputation, and persuaded many young trees to join forces and oppose the witches, who eventually decided to leave.

But before they went, they granted wishes to the trees. Some said they would like to have branches of gold or crystal, and others wanted a delicious fragrance. The young La Castañera didn't want anything.

Over time, shepherds cut down the trees whose smell was so attractive to cattle, the crystal branches were smashed by storms and thieves stole the trunks of gold. All that was left of the ancient woodland was this large holm oak, that earned the respect and reverence of everybody.

And now, to the immense pride of the villagers, their tree has beaten 13 other emblematic examples to become European Tree of the Year. It received 104,264 votes, which was 25,000 more than the tree that came second, an Italian plane tree, and nearly twice as many as the ancient Russian sycamore in third place.

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