

SUR IN ENGLISH NOVEMBER 2021

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ESTEPONA



SUR

The garden of the Costa del Sol. The orchid house, parks, flowers and murals are part of the town's identity **P2&3**

Close ties to the sea. Estepona's traditional fishing port sits alongside its modern marina **P4**

A place for celebration. Estepona boasts a full calendar of festivities, from religious processions to fairs and concerts **P6**



A view of the domes of the botanical gardens looking out over Estepona to the Mediterranean coast. SUR

Estepona. In touch with nature

Green and pretty. Nestled between the coast and the mountainous area dominated by the Sierra Bermeja, the attractive town of Estepona has become known as the Garden of the Costa del Sol

TONY BRYANT



Known as the Garden of the Costa del Sol due to the many streets and squares decorated with an abundance of plants, flowers and trees, the pretty town of Estepona has become one of the major tourist destinations on the Costa del Sol and an ideal place to live.

Nestled between the Mediterranean coastline and the moun-

tainous area dominated by the Sierra Bermeja, this is one of the few coastal towns that has maintained its old village charm, especially in the Casco Histórico (old town), where - in narrow streets decorated with colourful flower pots and overflowing hanging baskets - boutiques and traditional tapas bars offer the true character of the town.

With a population of almost

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70,000 residents, Estepona is also home for more than 20,000 foreigners, of whom, more than 25 per cent are British. It has become a favourite retirement destination for expats, due to its natural environment and its microclimate, which offers over 325 days of sunshine per year.

The town, which was earmarked as the original site for Euro Disney, is renowned for the cleanliness of its streets, plazas and green areas, specifically, the Plaza de las Flores. The square was created when Estepona extended its urban development in the middle of the 19th century.

This attractive square, with its well-decorated central fountain, houses the historic Casa de las Tejerinas, a cultural centre which has a beautiful central patio surrounded by marble columns. A short walk from here will lead to other interesting sites and monuments, like the clock tower, the municipal market, the remains of the 15th century castle, and the Casa Del Aljibe, the old town hall building that now houses the Archaeological Museum.

Urban art centre

One of the attractions that makes Estepona a unique destination for the culture-seeker are its spectacular murals that are spread all over the town. La Ruta de Murales Artísticos de Estepona (Route of Artistic Murals) is an initiative that was



A spectacular mural. **SUR**

launched by the town hall in 2012 to brighten up some of Estepona's neglected districts by turning them into areas of urban art.

The route is extremely popular with visitors and locals alike, as a stroll through the different neighbourhoods offers more than 50 spectacular works of art produced by national and international artists.

To further endorse the town's cultural importance, a small garden devoted to Andalusian poets (Poetas Andaluces) was opened in 2017. This is a delightful area that has twelve bronze busts of



One of the many lush garden areas on offer in Estepona. **SHAY CONAGHAN**

celebrated literary figures created by the artist Elena Lunas.

The town boasts more than 20 kilometres of coastline and 17 different beaches.

Playa La Rada is the town's main beach. It is 2.5 km in length and runs from the marina to the old town.

The attractive promenade has every facility, including underground car parking, bars and restaurants, children's play areas, showers, lavatories and access points for those with restricted mobility.

The Costa Natura is a popular

nudist beach to the west of Estepona, which was the first official naturist site in Spain.

Like most tourist destinations in Andalucía, Estepona has moved forward with the times and it offers all the modern tourist facilities, which makes it popular with every kind of visitor.

However, Estepona has much more to offer than attractive plazas and golden beaches, as it also offers plenty of well-kept sprawling green areas. These include a number of beautifully landscaped parks and gardens such as the Parque La Constitución, Parque

An orchid was named after Estepona in recognition of the orchid conservation carried out in the botanical gardens

Estepona is one of the few coastal towns that has maintained its old village charm

del Carmen, and the Parque de los Niños, which has a separate area reserved as a canine park.

The Orchid House and Botanical Gardens are an excellent place to connect with nature. The stunning display of plants, claimed to be the largest in Europe, includes more than 1,300 species. One of the most stunning features is the cascading waterfall. The route takes the visitor behind the waterfall and over a small bridge, then onto further displays of orchids.

A recently discovered species of orchid found in Guatemala was recently named after Estepona (Stanhopea esteponae) in recognition of the important work of orchid conservation carried out in the botanical gardens.

ESTEPONA HYPERBARIC MEDICAL CLINIC

Hyperbaric Oxygenation: the Solution for Fatigue and Stress

ESTEPONA

SUR. Hyperbaric oxygenation is a medical speciality that consists in breathing pure oxygen, at a higher pressure than the atmosphere, allowing 20 times more oxygen to be absorbed by the lungs and dissolved into the blood.

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In addition, hyperbaric oxygenation works effectively in three main areas of sports medicine: to help with training programmes; when athletes have overtrained and when they have injured themselves. "With any in-



Hyperbaric Oxygenation team **.SUR**

Hyperbaric Oxygenation can help patients who are feeling tired, irritable, drained or bunt out



jury, sports or otherwise, hyperbaric oxygenation accelerates the healing process," explains Rafael Sánchez, the centre's medical director.

If caught in time, pure oxygen can avoid amputations in the case of severe diabetic foot; and ulcers show a visible improvement after various sessions.

One of the lesser known applications of hyperbaric therapy is the treatment of patients with neurological damage. Hyperbaric oxygenation reduces rigidity and muscular spasticity and eases pain, as well as increasing patient's independence and quality of life. It can be especially beneficial in the case of a stroke, brain tumour or heart attack. For this reason, Estepona Hyperbaric Medical Clinic is an international benchmark centre for Child Cerebral Paralysis and Neurological Damage. Special Vouchers - Give wellbeing this Christmas - 3 sessions 399€

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From fishing to cruising. A unique seafaring experience

Tradition and modernity. The old fishing port belies the true identity of the town, while the marina offers all the modern facilities expected in a thriving tourist resort

TONY BRYANT



Aerial view of the marina in Estepona, the third largest capacity in the province. **SUR**

Estepona is a typical Andalusian town with unique seafaring and agricultural traditions. The seafront belies the true identity of the town, which still manages to maintain some of its medieval charm and ambience.

The fishing port and sports marina is situated at the west end of the seafront promenade, between the town's two best-known beaches - Playa de la Rada and Playa de Cristo. This is an excellent area for a stroll among magnificent boats and yachts.

There is also a wide variety of bars and restaurants offering typical local cuisine, especially fresh fish and seafood.

Every Sunday morning throughout the year, the marina also plays host to an artesan market that is popular with both locals and tourists alike.

With 447 berths for vessels up to 35m in length, the sports marina has the third largest capacity in the province. It offers shower and toilet facilities, while electricity, water and wifi internet connections are available for boats in all areas of the port. There are also facilities for a wide range of water sports, as well as the Estepona Yacht Club (Real Club Náutico de Estepona), boat chartering services, and a diving centre.

Lighthouse

The lighthouse is located in Punta Doncella, at the end of the promenade, just before the fishing port. It has a height of 21 meters and a range of 18 nautical miles.

It was built in 1863, although it was only eight metres high and had a range of 12 nautical miles. The light house one sees today was built in 1922.

Fishing has always been one of the main economic activities of the town, a tradition that is traced back to the Phoenicians. The town is still home to hundreds of working fishing families whose ancestors have been casting their nets here for centuries.

The fishing activity in Estepona is one of the most important on the Andalusian Mediterranean coast. In fact, the port is the second most important in the province, after Malaga. The fleet of boats exceeds one hundred and the fishing grounds where they usually fish are between the areas of Punta de la Chullera and Placer de las Bóvedas.

The port offers an opportunity to witness the boats land their daily haul, and the traditional auction where local restaurateurs bid for the days catch, although one will have to arrive at 6am to catch the best of the action.

Among the most representative species sold at the auction are sardines, mullet, bream, boquerones, mackerel and octopus, all of which can be sampled

in the many restaurants found in the area.

Flying fish, in Spanish 'volador', are plentiful off the shores of Estepona, and local fishermen have become known for their expertise in catching this peculiar species. They have also mastered the Scandinavian method of drying the fish, a practice that can be witnessed daily, when fisherman clean and prepare the fish, before hanging them to dry in the sun.

In order to immerse oneself in the daily culture of Estepona's long and fruitful fishing industry, visitors can enjoy a guided tour of the old port. The tour will educate visitors about the most common species of fish caught in the Mediterranean and Alboran Sea, as well as the traditional jábega boats and fishing tools used.



A traditional jábega fishing boat on the beach in Estepona. **SUR**

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Culture. A town of artistic value

Festivities. The town's summer cultural agenda offers an array of different events aimed at every type of audience. These include traditional pilgrimages, fairs and religious parades, along with a varied calendar of concerts and shows held in the bullring and the municipal auditorium

TONY BRYANT



The procession of the revered image of the Virgen del Carmen. SUR

Like most Andalusians, the people of Estepona love to celebrate and enjoy life in the open air, as the many festivals and cultural events that are staged in the town throughout the year demonstrate.

The town's summer cultural agenda offers an array of different events aimed at every type of audience and, along with traditional pilgrimages, fairs and religious parades, locals and visitors can enjoy a varied calendar of concerts and shows held in the

bullring and the municipal auditorium.

The bullring, built in 1972, is used as a concert venue during the summer months and some of the top international artists have performed there. These have included Monica Naranjo, Sara Barras, Paco de Lucía, John Mayall, The Electric Light Orchestra, Helen Shapiro, Kool and the Gang, Boney M and George McCrae, to name just a few.

The bullring also hosts the summer open air cinema.

Opened in 2015, the Felipe VI

Auditorium is the largest and most modern scenic space on the Western Costa del Sol. The theatre presents a varied programme of classical music concerts, ballet, opera, theatrical productions and pantomime.

Once the thrill of the Three Kings has become a distant memory, Estepona prepares for its first big event of the year: Carnival. Traditionally celebrated in the week before Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, Carnival is an opportunity to let of steam before the prohibi-

tions of Easter. As with all towns in Andalucía, the carnival parades in Estepona are gaudy and ostentatious and the main purpose of the proceedings is to poke fun at the government, the church, or anyone currently in the news. The satirical groups (agrupaciones) perform in the plazas and squares in preparation for the main competition, which is held in the Auditorio Felipe VI.

Semana Santa

During the month of March or April (depending when Easter

falls), the town gears up for a series of religious ceremonies of extraordinary cultural and artistic value that are deeply rooted throughout Andalucía.

The route of the main processions is located in the centre of Estepona, where locals and visitors alike queue for hours to admire the religious images of the different brotherhoods. Some of the town's most worshipped images include La Virgen de la Paz (Virgin of Peace), which sets off from the Iglesia del Carmen on Palm Sunday; and Jesús de la

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File image of a local in traditional dress for San Isidro. **SUR**

Vera Cruz, which embarks on its journey from the Parroquia de Santa María de Los Remedios on Good Friday.

As Estepona is known as the Garden of the Costa del Sol, it will come as no surprise that the residents go overboard with their floral creations for the May Crosses Festival (Cruces del Mayo). The event is a contest organised by the town hall, during which, Catholic brotherhoods and neighbourhood associations compete for prizes for the best floral-decorated cross.

Honouring the patron

On the 15 May, Estepona celebrates the day of one of its patron saints, San Isidro Labrador (the farmer), with a procession starting at San José Church in the old town and making its way around the town centre, before returning back to the church. The festival honours Estepona's agricultural heritage and the procession is made up of beautifully decorated farm vehicles, the best of which receives a prize.

The procession usually takes about two and a half hours, after which, the revellers head to the feria ground to enjoy a week-end of folk and flamenco music, agricultural shows and produce competitions.

Traditional tomato soup made with bread, peas, spring onions and peppers (sopa campera) is typical of the San Isidro fair.

One of the biggest gatherings takes place during the first week of July, when the people of Estepona enjoy a few days away from the strains of everyday life while celebrating their annual feria. Both the day fair and the night fair take place at the Parque Ferial y Deportivo and this is a time for dancing sevillanas, eating with family and friends, and to unwind and enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

Virgen del Carmen

The townsfolk have just one week to recover from this celebration, before preparations begin to honour Estepona's other patron, La Virgen del Carmen, which takes place on 16 July.

On the previous evening, worshippers arrive at the Church of Nuestra Señora del Carmen to offer flowers to the lavish wooden sculpture of the Virgin and child, around which the whole ceremony centres. This is followed by a mass.

The celebrations get going the next day in the old fishing port, where the locals gather to participate in the 'walking of the pole' competition, during which, the bravest will attempt to clamber along a greased pole to reach a flag and become a temporary local hero.

The principal event of the festivities takes place on the La Rada Beach in the evening, when the revered image of the Virgin is escorted out to sea by a vast flotilla of boats.



The old town hosts numerous festivals. **SUR**



Tradition on the cultural agenda. **SUR**

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ESTEPONA

Ten Years of Important Changes

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