Welcome to our February 2020 issue of Almeria Living.

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‘Look Good - Feel Great’

Wine Critic - Bill Riley

By Adrian Foster

‘Homes & Gardens’

Puzzles

Emma Randle’s Feature

‘Trades & Services’

‘Classified’

Wheels’

Avda Andalucia 1, La Alfoquia

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What’s Inside..........
The province of Málaga in Andalucía is probably the best known Spanish province amongst Brits and many other Europeans. It is situated in the western end of the Spanish Mediterranean coast, bordering on fellow Andalucían provinces Cádiz, Seville, Córdoba and Granada. It is famous for its many bustling tourist resorts, sandy beaches, high rise hotels and lively nightlife. Admittedly, the coastal area of the province, Costa del Sol, is where most people live, where most tourists visit and where most income is generated. But there are other aspects to the province as well. Málaga province covers an area of 7,308 km²; a third of the territory is at 0-400 MASL, one third between 400 and 800 and one third between 800 and 2,000 MASL. The highest point in the province is at 2,066 MASL, a mountain peak called La Maroma. Several rivers traverse the province although excessive use of water has caused some of them to dry up over summer; almost all of them have been reduced to small lakes. Málaga province is home to 1.641 million (2018) souls, 574,626 of whom live in the capital of the same name. This makes Málaga one of Spain’s 6th most populated city, the second in Andalucía and the latest 30s in the day time and then drops to around 20 at night. The maximum temperatures at higher altitudes are more moderate. Rainfall is highest in autumn and winter with an annual average of 534 mm. On the coast the temperature in summer often hits the 30s; at this time it is advisable to travel as far inland as possible to avoid the heat. This is why the province enjoys a larger number of tourists than most other provincial capitals. The province of Málaga is also the birthplace of Pablo Picasso, and there are several museums dedicated to this artist, who lived there until the age of ten. Málaga is one of the most popular ports of call for Mediterranean cruises, and there are always several cruise ships to admire when you walk along the harbour.

The climate in Málaga is mild with hot summers and warm winters. Rainfall is highest in autumn and winter with an annual average of 334 mm. On the coast the temperature in summer often hits the late 30s in the day time and then drops to around 20 at night. The maximum temperatures at higher altitudes are more moderate. Málaga province is home to 1,641 million (2018) souls, 574,626 of whom live in the capital of the same name. This makes it Spain’s 6th most populated city, the second in Andalucía and the 46th in Europe.

The province is a paradise for nature lovers with mountains, forests, scrublands and wetlands as well as its famous coast, and it is home to a large and varied wildlife. By far the most representative animal in the province is the gorse, the symbol of the province.

The city lies on the coast in the middle of a large bay and is backed by mountains to the north. The city followed the usual Spanish pattern of being conquered by first the Romans followed by the Visigoths, the Moors and finally the Catholic Monarchs. It has been declared a historical site, and only few cities in the world offer such a wealth of evidence from past civilizations, both Eastern and Western, and in as great a concentration as in Málaga. Some of the most outstanding monuments are the Roman Theatre, the Alcazaba, the Cathedral, the Palacio de la Aduana and the Jewish Quarter; and the city rests on a wealth of underground archaeological treasure.

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. Our next of Spain’s provincial Capitals takes us to Almería.
Places of Interest in Málaga

Castillo de Gibralfaro

High up on a hill, with spectacular views over the city and the sea, you will find the Castillo de Gibralfaro, a fortress castle built in the 14th century to house the troops and protect the Alcazaba. With its double walls and eight towers, it was for a while considered the most impregnable fortress on the Iberian Peninsula; until it was besieged by the Catholic Monarchs during the ‘Reconquista’, and eventually had to surrender.

After the victory, Fernando el Cartólico made the castle his temporary home, and he designated it as a symbol on the city’s coat of arms. The Castle is divided into two parts. The upper part is called the main tower and houses the Interpretation Centre where you can discover the history of the castle. You will find the Main Tower (Torre Mayor), 17 metres high, the Phoenician well and the baths in this section. The Airón well was dug in solid rock to a depth of 40 meters.

Museums

Apart from the above and many other interesting sights, Málaga is also home to a large amount of museums.

There is of course the Museo Picasso, which has a permanent collection of paintings from every period of this, their most famous son’s career. And Museo Casa Natal Picasso, the unassuming house where he was born in 1881 and which houses, not only a selection of his work and that of his father, but also various trinkets from the great artist’s childhood home.

The Glass and Crystal museum is an unusual collection of glassware from the time of the Phoenicians up until the present, all laid out in rooms kitted out in the style of the different periods they represent. There is also an outpost of the Centre Pompidou of Paris, various art museums and a local heritage museum, amongst many others.

Málaga is home to more than 30 museums, enough to keep you busy on one of the city’s infrequent rainy days.

The Roman Theatre

El Teatro Romano is Málaga’s oldest monument. It dates back to the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. and it is the most important evidence of the Roman presence in the city.

It is situated in Málaga’s historic centre at the foot of the hill of the Alcazaba; it was discovered in 1951 during works to create a green space. At first it was thought to have been part of the old city wall, but it then became apparent that it was an aditus maximus, and that a Roman theatre was buried under a modern building for Archives, Libraries and Museums known as the Casa de la Cultura.

After years of debate it was finally decided, in the 1990s, to demolish the culture house, unearth the whole theatre and restore it. Malaga’s Roman Theatre has been declared a monument of cultural interest, and is still an archaeological site, but even so it is open to guided public visits from Tuesday to Sunday.

La Manquita

Málaga’s cathedral (Santa Iglesia Catedral Basílica de la Encarnación) is set opposite the Plaza del Obispo in the centre of Málaga.

It was ordered built by the Catholic Majesties immediately upon the defeat of the Muslim rulers in 1487 on the site of a primitive mosque. The cathedral is one of the best examples of Renaissance architecture in Spain, and the height of its vaults is second in Spain to only Palma cathedral in Mallorca.

The cathedral has the nick name ‘La Manquita’, the one-armed lady, due to its top-sided look with only one tower on its front façade; there was not enough funding to build the other one.
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To help us on the way we would like to raise money for charity and ask for your support and contribution.
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La Alcazaba
The old Moorish fortress palace is the best preserved in Spain. It receives over a million visitors every year.
It was built on the ruins of a Roman fortification during the reign of Abd-al-Rahman I, the first Emir of Córdoba, some 300 years before the Alcazár of Seville and the Alhambra of Granada!
After the reconquest, the Catholic Majesties celebrated mass in the compound, and after that it was left to fall into decay until restoration work started in the 1930s – and is still ongoing today.
The Alcazaba was a walled city with cobbled paths winding between houses with patios and courtyards, and much of it has been preserved or restored and the fortress is a magical place to spend the day.

Is it a Tangerine? Is it a Mandarin? Is it a Clementine?
These little orange winter fruits are a real saver at a time of year when fresh fruit is actually in season can be hard to find.
We can always get any fresh fruit we fancy nowadays, but it makes sense to go for the fruit and vegetable that is in season, both for our health and for the environment.

For a start, when a fruit is in season it yields its maximum in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants etc. And by buying fruit in season we stimulate the demand for local produce, reduce the need for force-grown out of season products and, not least, vastly cut down on the need for polluting transportation.
The mandarin originated in China, and it is thought it was named after the ruling Mandarins, who dressed in orange. When the mandarin hit Great Britain it had been shipped out from the port in Tangiers, which is why many Brits call it tangerine.
The mandarins stay green until the weather gets cold, then they start turning orange. If you can get them while they are still a little green, go for it, they are impossibly sweet and sharp at the same time and incredibly moreish.
The clementine is a slightly different fruit; it was developed from the mandarin by the French priest Père Clémentine, and it is a little sweeter, usually pip free, and harder to peel.
The nutritional advantages of mandarins and clementines are the same, so I shall just refer to them all as mandarins.
Mandarins are very rich in vitamin C, and just three a day cover your body’s requirements, helping protect you against Alzheimer’s. They also contain folate (Vitamin B9) which helps strengthen your heart, and they are high in fibre contents.
At the same time, 100g of the fruit gives you only 43 kcal and a paltry 0.1g of fat, so it is a good little helper if you are trying to lose a bit of weight but are dying for a snack.
And last but not least, it is rich in potassium which helps regulate your blood pressure.
Apart from being an ideal and delicious snack, the mandarin looks nice as topping on salads and cakes. If you can get hold of ecological mandarins, dry the peel and add pieces of it to your tin of tea for a nice fresh flavour, or blend it finely and sprinkle it on your café latte or indeed a fish dish.
We all like to have bowls of these pretty little fruits on the work top or dining table, but truth is that they are best preserved in the fridge at 1- 5ºC; in the right conditions they can keep fresh for up to two weeks.

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Lavander+salade+chips+croutons

Price €17.00 per person

¡Buen Provecho!
Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday, is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

Lent – the 40 days leading up to Easter – was traditionally a time of fasting and on Shrove Tuesday, Anglo-Saxon Christians went to confession and were “shriven” (absolved from their sins). A bell would be rung to call people to confession. This came to be called the “Pancake Bell” and is still rung today.

Shrove Tuesday always falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, so the date varies from year to year and falls between February 3 and March 9. In 2020 Shrove Tuesday will fall on the 25th February.

Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the Lenten fast and pancakes are the perfect way of using up these ingredients.

A pancake is a thin, flat cake, made of batter and fried in a frying pan. A traditional English pancake is very thin and is served immediately. Golden syrup or lemon juice and caster sugar are the usual toppings for pancakes.

The pancake has a very long history and featured in cookery books as far back as 1439. The tradition of tossing or flipping them is almost as old: “And every man and maid doe take her turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for fear they burne.” (Pasquilles Pamphlet, 1619).

The ingredients for pancakes can be seen to symbolise four points of significance at this time of year:

- Eggs - Creation
- Flour - The stuff of life
- Salt - Wholesomeness
- Milk - Purity

In the UK, pancake races form an important part of the Shrove Tuesday celebrations – an opportunity for large numbers of people, often in fancy dress, to race down streets tossing pancakes. The object of the race is to get to the finishing line first, carrying a frying pan with a cooked pancake in it and flipping the pancake as you run.

The most famous pancake race takes place at Olney in Buckinghamshire. According to tradition, in 1445 a woman of Olney heard the shriving bell while she was making pancakes and ran to the church in her apron, still clutching her frying pan. The Olney pancake race is now world famous. Competitors have to be local housewives and they must wear an apron and a hat or scarf.

Each contestant has a frying pan containing a hot pancake. She must toss it three times during the race. The first woman to reach the church is the winner. She must toss the pancake three times. The winner is the first woman to complete the course and arrive at the church, serve her pancake to the bellringer and be kissed by him, is the winner.

Famous Pancake Race

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We’ll Meat Again!

I do apologize to all my colleagues who are embarking on the Great Trimathon to lose pounds and gain euros for Harmony, but I shall carry on as always: First consideration is flavour, second is simplicity and I’m afraid calories come a poor third.

So I’ve revisited some lovely meaty recipes I’ve done in the past. The only new thing this month is yet another lovely loaf of bread – I’m approaching new avenues in the bread making game, but I’m still only practicing, so this month’s recipe still follows the same old pattern.

Stout Braised Chops

One of those absolutely fabulous and delicious recipes that taste of lots and lots and yet are so, so simple to make!

Ingredients for two:
2 (large) chops
20g butter
2 onions peeled and chopped
200ml stout (Sorry, you’ll have to drink the rest of the can!)
100ml water
2tbsp soy sauce
2tbsp dried bread crumbs

Quickly brown the chops in the butter, then reserve. Add the onions to the pan and cover. Fry gently until soft. Add soy sauce and bread crumbs and mix well. Return the chops to the pan and spoon half the onions on top of them. Pour over stout and water. The chops shouldn’t be completely covered.

Put the lid back on and simmer slowly for an hour without stirring. Take out the meat and boil the sauce fiercely until reduced and thickened.

Serve with potatoes and vegetables of your choice.

A Wonderful Spanish Loaf

My dear friend Karen (ed.) treated me to the most amazing Spanish bread making book for Christmas, together with an array of other lovely bread-making paraphernalia.

I never realized that making bread was actually similar to rocket science, so I’m still studying before throwing myself out into the real thing with your sour dough, different kinds of flour and complicated kneading and oven techniques!

In the meantime, this wonderful and easy Spanish loaf does the trick for us!

Ingredients for 1 loaf:
500g strong white flour (Harina de Fuerza)
7g fresh yeast
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp oil

Sieve the flour into a large bowl and mix it with the salt and the crumbled yeast. Add the oil and 325ml lukewarm water (35°C). Mix with a wooden spoon until everything is well incorporated. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and start kneading:

Press the dough forward with the heel of your hand then double it back over itself. Carry on the same for 10 minutes, adding a bit more flour if you must; but do try not to and simply carry on working the dough until it stops sticking (hard, I know!).

When the dough is elastic and pliable, place it in a clean bowl lined with baking paper. Cover it with a clean tea towel and leave it to rise at room temperature for an hour until it has doubled its volume.

Gently press it down with your fingers, cover again and leave it for another hour.

Put an oven proof casserole with a lid into the oven and preheat it to 240°C.

When the oven is hot, retrieve the casserole and take off the lid, lift the dough into it using the baking paper; sprinkle it with a bit of flour and score it with a sharp knife. Put the lid back on and bake the loaf at 240°C for 15 minutes.

Take the lid off and reduce the heat to 200°C and let it bake for another 35-40 minutes until it is golden and baked through.

Leave it to cool on a rack.

Simple and irresistible!
Ribs in Port

Ingredients for four:

- 1 – 1.5 kg pork ribs cut into smaller pieces
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped
- 100ml olive oil

In a large bowl mix together the soy sauce, ginger and 50ml of the olive oil.

I do love ribs when they are cooked properly, and this recipe really brings out the very best in them!

When I found this recipe in my search for something meaty I fancied it so much that I cooked it again yesterday. And it was just as wonderful as I remembered!

Sometimes you can only get pigs’ cheeks on the bone here, but don’t worry. Once they are cooked they slide off their completely flat bone which you can discard – and obviously it will have lent extra flavor to your gravy!

A good old-fashioned German recipe – the Germans do some wicked dishes with pigs’ cheeks, and they are all lovely. I chose this because it is not only super tasty, it is also super simple. What more can you ask!

Ingredients for four:

- 800g pigs’ cheeks
- 300g onions, coarsely chopped
- 500ml stout
- 250ml beef stock
- 1 slice white bread, spread with
  - 2 tbsp strong mustard (Dijon)
  - 2 tbsp butter
  - 2 tbsp plain flour

Boquet garni
Salt and pepper

Put the flour in a large bowl (we don’t use plastic bags anymore now, do we!?) with the salt and pepper and mix thoroughly. Add the pigs’ cheeks and stir with a large fork until they are all evenly coated. Heat a bit of oil in a frying pan and brown the meat on all sides. Reserve.

Heat up a casserole, melt the butter and fry the onions until they are soft and slightly coloured. Add the meat.

Pour the stout in the frying pan and heat it up while loosening the residue from the bottom of the pan. Pour all this over the meat and onions together with the stock, bring to the boil and lay the slice of mustard bread on top. Cover and simmer for at least a couple of hours, stirring from time to time.

When the meat is tender (it’s like butter when it’s done, wow!) take it out and reduce the sauce if you think it necessary.

I did throw in a slug of cream, I must admit, and it came out absolutely delicious!

I served it with potato, yam and leek mash. And a bit of cranberry jelly.

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The History of the Potato Chip

The first cultivated potato is thought to have been planted in northern Peru about 7,000 years ago. Thousands of years later, it was the stable diet of the Incas, and this relatively easy to grow tuber enabled the population of the Inca kingdom to reach a stunning 12 million.

It was one of the first plants from the Americas to be brought back to Europe where it was introduced in 1560. The potato revolutionised the amount of food the European peasants were able to grow for themselves with its simple requirements and easy adaptability, especially in areas not propitious to cereal growing. Once firmly planted in Europe, the potato became the staple diet of both lower, middle and upper classes, especially in northern and eastern Europe. Back then, potatoes were typically boiled or cooked in stews, but little by little other ways of cooking them emerged, and one of the greatest successes of all times, probably the world’s most popular presentation of the potato, was born: The Potato Chip!

Writing the history of the potato chip is a difficult task, because there are many different versions of how it came about, and several countries lay claim to be the true inventor of the potato chip, or French fry as it is also called.

However, here are some of the stories my research dug up:

An early version of the potato chip was actually mentioned in Robert May’s ‘The Accomplished Cook’ in 1660, one hundred years after the potato’s arrival in Europe. He described ‘potato’s boil’d and fried in butter’, but after that the invention of the potato chip goes continental.

The Belgians, who consider the potato chip their national dish and even have gone as far as petitioning the Unesco to endorse the fry as an official icon of Belgian cultural heritage, stubbornly claim that the deep fried potatoes were a Belgian invention.

According to the Belgian version, the inhabitants of the town of Namur on the River Meuse in the French speaking part of Belgium, were very fond of small fried fish. But in the freezing winter of 1680 the river froze over and there were no fish to be had. So the townsfolk cut potatoes into narrow strips and fried them instead. Et voila: The potato chip was born!

This version has however been challenged by historians and the French alike. For a start, it is said that the potato did not actually reach the region until 1735; and secondly, fat was a luxury article, especially animal fat, and it is very unlikely that people of limited means would ‘waste’ it by using it for deep frying.

Of course, the French support these observations with a vengeance and claim that the potato chip (pomme frite) is definitely a French invention! They say that already at the end of the 18th century there were street stalls on the Pont Neuf in Paris which sold deep fried potato strips. And their ‘proof’ is the fact that the ‘Pomme Pont Neuf’ is a native French potato chip.

Truth is that we’ll probably never know who fritted the first potato strips. And their ‘proof’ is the fact that the ‘Pomme Pont Neuf’ is a native French potato chip.

But even this widespread belief has been challenged! It has been claimed that the name French fries has nothing to do with either France or Francophile Belgium; on the contrary, it refers to the way the potatoes are cut: Most of us have tried French or French green beans which is green beans cut into narrow strips longwise. Indeed, you can buy a bean fricheur which is a kitchen tool that does the job for you.

I wonder whether it works with potatoes?

Writing the history of the potato chip is a difficult task, because there are many different versions of how it came about, and several countries lay claim to be the true inventor of the potato chip, or French fry as it is also called.

However, here are some of the stories my research dug up:

An early version of the potato chip was actually mentioned in Robert May’s ‘The Accomplished Cook’ in 1660, one hundred years after the potato’s arrival in Europe. He described ‘potato’s boil’d and fried in butter’, but after that the invention of the potato chip goes continental.

The Belgians, who consider the potato chip their national dish and even have gone as far as petitioning the Unesco to endorse the fry as an official icon of Belgian cultural heritage, stubbornly claim that the deep fried potatoes were a Belgian invention.

According to the Belgian version, the inhabitants of the town of Namur on the River Meuse in the French speaking part of Belgium, were very fond of small fried fish. But in the freezing winter of 1680 the river froze over and there were no fish to be had. So the townsfolk cut potatoes into narrow strips and fried them instead. Et voila: The potato chip was born!

This version has however been challenged by historians and the French alike. For a start, it is said that the potato did not actually reach the region until 1735; and secondly, fat was a luxury article, especially animal fat, and it is very unlikely that people of limited means would ‘waste’ it by using it for deep frying.

Of course, the French support these observations with a vengeance and claim that the potato chip (pomme frite) is definitely a French invention! They say that already at the end of the 18th century there were street stalls on the Pont Neuf in Paris which sold deep fried potato strips. And their ‘proof’ is the fact that the ‘Pomme Pont Neuf’ is a native French potato chip.

Truth is that we’ll probably never know who fritted the first potato strips. And their ‘proof’ is the fact that the ‘Pomme Pont Neuf’ is a native French potato chip.

But how come they are widely known as French fries? Well, the generally accepted explanation is that US soldiers during WW1 first tried and loved deep fried potato strips in the French speaking part of Belgium and thus named them French fries. However, to be fair, it should have been Francophile fries.

But even this widespread belief has been challenged! It has been claimed that the name French fries has nothing to do with either France or Francophile Belgium; on the contrary, it refers to the way the potatoes are cut: Most of us have tried French or French green beans which is green beans cut into narrow strips longwise. Indeed, you can buy a bean fricheur which is a kitchen tool that does the job for you.

I wonder whether it works with potatoes?
Clams are a common sight in Spanish supermarkets and fishmongers; they are a popular shellfish here and encountered both as the main ingredient of a dish and as part of a greater whole. Clams have neither brains nor eyes, but they do have a heart, mouth and rectum, and their open circulatory system allows water and blood to surround their organs and provide them with nutrition and oxygen. Just like octopus and squid, the clam does not make any sound at all.

The clam has a fine shell which is convex in the centre and has very fine grooves which are visible to the naked eye. Its colour varies between light and dark grey, and it can have brown lines from the umbo to the edge of the shell.

The shell consists of two equal valves bound together by a filament which enables them to open and close. There are several types of clam, which are also known as 'carpet shells'. The grooved carpet shell, 'Almeja Fina' in Spanish, is the most appreciated for cooking; it has a thin shell and grey flesh. It lives much longer than any other clam out of the water. However, this is a very expensive variety, and there are other, far more common and affordable types available, such as the pullet carpet shell, 'Almeja Babosa', Japanese carpet shell, 'Almeja Rubia'.

Especially the Japanese carpet shell is readily available here as it grows very quickly and is widely cultivated along the British, French and Spanish coast lines. The clam lives off plankton. It ingests it by filtering sea water through its siphon; this allows it to live buried in the sand down to a depth of 15 to 30 cm, surviving the low tide without any problems.

The lifespan of a normal clam (who doesn’t get dug up and eaten) is 20 years; however, in 2006 off the coast of Iceland, a clam was found which was estimated to be 400 years old; its age was calculated by counting the growth lines on the valve.

One of the world's largest edible clams is the geoduck which is found off Canada's and the USA's east coast. Geoduck clams usually weigh about 1.5 kilos although some can reach as much as 7.5 kilos. This subspecies is one of the oldest animals on earth and it can live more than 140 years.

Another, even bigger, clam is the giant clam which is the world's largest bivalve (clam, oyster or mussel). The giant is in fact a beautiful being. It has an undulated shell opening and is very colourful. It lives on coral reefs.

The largest known specimen of giant clam was over 1.3 m wide and weighed approximately 250 kg. The giant clam is a delicacy in the Japanese cuisine. In the majority of specimens the shell is the largest mass, with the soft, edible parts accounting only for approximately 10% of the total weight of the beast.

Almejas a la marinera

250g clams 3 cloves garlic, chopped
3 tbsp flour Chopped parsley
500ml water Oil
White wine
Heat the oil in a frying pan and throw in the chopped garlic. Cook until it starts going golden.
Pour in a little white wine and then the flour. Stir until everything is well mixed, then add the water, the parsley and the clams.
Bring to the boil and keep boiling until the clams have opened, and then another minute or two more.
Serve the clams hot.
Clams are also present in many traditional Spanish stews, rice dishes and soups.

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From a nutritional point of view, clams are a very healthy and nourishing whole food with a host of benefits. They are a lean source of protein; are rich in minerals, vitamins, and Omega-3 fatty acids; they promote sexual health; and have been found to possess cancer-preventing properties.

Before cooking clams, always leave them to soak in cold water for fifteen minutes twice to get rid of the sand inside them. Lift them out carefully with a slotted spoon and rinse under the tap.

Like when cooking mussels, clams should be alive in the moment we start cooking them; discard any open clams that don’t close rapidly when handled or tapped lightly.

Here are two of the simplest and most traditional Spanish recipes for clams. Both recipes really let you appreciate the lovely flavour of these little molluscs; serve them with bread for mopping up the delicious sauces.

Almejas a la sartén

250g clams
3 cloves garlic, finely sliced
3 chillies, seeds removed, cut into rings
200ml white wine
50ml extra virgin olive oil
Fresh parsley, chopped
Heat the oil in a frying pan with the chillies and garlic; when the garlic starts to take colour throw in the clams.
Stir to mix everything then pour over the wine.
Once the wine bubbles, cover and wait for the clams to get done. This takes 5 to 10 minutes; they are done once they are open.

Lift them out and reserve. Turn up the heat, add the parsley and reduce the sauce a little.
When the sauce is to your liking, pour it over the clams and serve them immediately.
Cabernet Sauvignon is, almost certainly, the most popular red wine grape variety in the world, though Merlot is hot on its heels. Virtually every producing country has some Cabernet Sauvignon planted in their vineyards – from Chile to China.

For centuries the origin of Cabernet Sauvignon was uncertain; then in 1996, DNA was used to establish that around 1650 in South-West France, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc had been crossed and Cabernet Sauvignon was born. Not surprisingly the variety grew in popularity with it’s fruity flavour redolent of blackcurrants appealing to nearly every palate. The thick grape skins give the wine plenty of tannin to enhance the ageing potential. Cabernet Sauvignon wines prosper well in poor, gravelly soil such as that found in the Medoc in Bordeaux and many other, less likely places throughout the world. Even in Lebanon where at Chateau Musar, the Hochar area of Bordeaux and many other, less likely places throughout the world. Even in Lebanon where at Chateau Musar, the Hochar family make superb wine – even during the fifteen-year war when the world. Even in Lebanon where at Chateau Musar, the Hochar family make superb wine – even during the fifteen-year war when the world.

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How to avoid spending thousands on damp repairs

Before you splash out on costly professional damp repairs, make sure you follow our top tips for identifying and solving damp yourself. Serious damp issues can cost as much as €15,000 to rectify. But thankfully, there’s a lot you can do to identify and fix the problems yourself, before resorting to professional help.

From droplets of condensation on your window panes to crumbling skirting boards, peeling wallpaper and unsightly patches, damp problems have many different symptoms.

There are three main types of damp - condensation, rising damp and penetrating damp. But damp isn’t always clear cut, you may have two types that are intermingling, or different types in different areas.

Condensation problems

A very common form of damp, condensation occurs when warm, moist air inside your home comes into contact with colder surfaces, often windows and exterior walls, and releases water in the form of droplets. If the moisture isn’t removed, mould can quickly grow.

Problems with condensation tend to occur when a building has a high moisture content, often due to a lack of adequate ventilation.

There are five simple, cheap condensation solutions:

1. Ventilate your home. If possible, add air vents, including air bricks, keep the doors closed while the fans are on to help them work more effectively.
2. Control humidity levels. Cooking, showering and drying laundry all produce moisture, which can lead to condensation.
3. Wipe away condensation as often as you can to keep surfaces dry. A dripping tap or a leaky roof can be a big source of moisture.
4. Consider buying a dehumidifier – they’re a cheap way to draw moisture out of the air.
5. Whacking your heating up when the house is freezing can contribute to damp problems.

Keeping your heating on at a constant but slightly lower temperature. That, open the windows as often as you can.

Keep your heating on at a constant but slightly lower temperature. Whacking your heating up when the house is freezing can contribute to damp problems.

Consider buying a dehumidifier – they’re a cheap way to draw moisture out of the air.

Penetrating damp problems

Penetrating damp appears where walls and joinery are subject to concentrated, prolonged wetting. Externally, this can come from poorly maintained rainwater fittings, leaks in your roof, or hairline fractures in pointing or render. Internally, it might be caused by overflowing baths, sinks or shower trays, cracked or damaged tiles or burst pipes. The result is unsightly patches of damp on walls and ceilings, as well as peeling wallpaper and paint. These patches often darken when it rains, and they usually spread horizontally instead of vertically.

While you may find that your home needs extensive work, some basic maintenance can go a long way to curing or managing a damp problem:

Clear overflowing gutters. Overloaded gutters can force water to spill down your walls. Locate and mend leaking pipes. Look for leaks from which water is escaping on both internal and external pipes, which can rust through at the back.

Fix roof problems, wall cracks and window damage. These can all let excess moisture into your home. Replace old bricks that have become porous, or paint with an exterior silicone water-repellent paint or limewash.

Clear wall cavities. If walls are consistently getting damp, it may be that debris lodged into the wall cavity is providing a direct route through to the inner walls.

Rising damp problems

Rising damp problems are quite rare, but it’s one of the hardest types of damp to fix. It tends to be caused by moisture below the ground that creeps up through your floors and can rise up your walls. It can cause crumbling skirting boards, tide marks on walls and mineral deposits that leave a white, powdery substance on walls and floors.

The most important thing is to make sure your building can breathe. While it may be tempting to completely waterproof your floor to seal it off, this can exacerbate a damp problem as, with nowhere to go, the moisture will soak up into the walls instead. To treat rising damp, you may have to call in the professionals. But there are some things you can check and do yourself first:

Check your damp-proof course. It should be at least 15cm above ground level. If it’s not, see if you can lower the floor level outside yourself. Make sure your walls can breathe. Hard cement render or pointing will trap moisture from the ground in your walls, while breathable lime-based mortar will allow them to dry out naturally.

Paint over small damp patches underneath the floor covering with two coats of bitumen latex waterproof emulsion, which you can buy from many DIY stores.

Paying for damp proofing

Damp can be a complex issue, and it may be that your home is being affected by more than one type. Plus, trying to solve one problem can sometimes create another. If the solutions above don’t seem to help, it may be time to call in a professional. We’d recommend asking three companies to assess the problem, make suggestions for repair work and give you a quote, as professional solutions and costs can vary. Meeting a few tradesmen should help you choose what the best course of action is for your home.
Over the years we have kept various birds. Our first additions however were budgerigars. Bella was the first budgie to go into the aviary, she was a lovely moss green colour and was a wonderful chick; in one clutch, she raised seven of them which is above the norm of usually 4-6. She lays an egg every other day, sitting on them from that first egg. They take 18 days to hatch so the first egg hatches earliest which means you have chicks at all different stages. When they are ready to fly (leave the nesting box), dad takes over. He feeds them and teaches them to fly; they are very interesting to watch. Evening time is hilarious. They decide to get ready for bed, all vying for the best perch. They natter away at each other, swapping places, flying from end to end and then they all settle in down in the exact same place every night, it is funny to see and obviously a game.

We haven’t had any budgies breeding for a couple of years now, they are probably too old, what we have had success with this year are the Kakarikis. Native to New Zealand, they are a type of small parrot. They make some lovely noises and are very pretty birds. We keep them in the same aviary as the budgies but have a much larger nesting box. Over the years breeders have colour bred them. In the wild they are green with a red cap, ours are yellow with the same red cap. Back in September when we had the Gota Fria here, we realised she had laid eggs. They do breed in the wild during the rainy season so all the rain must have spurred her on. She managed to hatch all 4 of her eggs and like the budgies they hatch days apart. Dad kept her well fed and she came out now and again for a bath, which they do enjoy. On average they reach about 11 inches, although much of that is attributed to their tail. They are a very friendly bird and will eat off your hand, but it takes patience to let them gain confidence. If you fancied keeping them though they do love to fly (as do all birds) and are quite acrobatic, so are suited to an aviary rather than a cage.

Back to the farm now and on the veg front we have quite a lot of things on the grow. Hopefully with a bit more sun and a fewer warm days, we will once again be collecting our own broad beans, onions, garlic, carrots and parsnips. The garlic was kind of accidental as it isn’t really the right time of year for it. Greg didn’t remember planting it, and suddenly noticed a few weeks ago, they were a number of perfect lines of it all peeping through the soil … Maybe we had missed them last year and they have sprouted again, who knows?

That’s about it for this month, thank you for reading!
You can follow the progress of the family and farm on our Face Book page https://www.facebook.com/OliverTreeFarmSpain/
To contact us regarding restoration of your swimming pool, find Olive Tree Farm Pool Services on Face Book https://www.facebook.com/OliveTree-Farm-Pool-Services-297410800717334/ or contact us by email … olivetreefarmalmeria@outlook.com
Greetings,

I’m always on the lookout for an interesting topic of discussion and for this month’s article we will be looking towards the stars. Life on other planets has been the theme for an entire genre of films & TV series. Recent improvements in Technology has brought the answers closer than ever. NASA and other agencies have been searching the skies for signs of life for decades and the answers are coming.

Before we go any further, here are some facts and figures; our Galaxy (the Milky Way) is 100,000 light years across. There are between 100-400 Billion stars in our Galaxy. Our Galaxy is held together by a Supermassive black hole at its centre. Our Solar System is located approximately half way out from the centre (26,000 light years). Light travels at 186,000 miles per hour. A light year is roughly 6 million million miles. Our Solar System is orbiting the centre of the Galaxy at over 500,000 miles per hour. A light year is roughly 6 million million miles. Our Solar System is orbiting the centre of the Galaxy at over 500,000 miles per hour, taking roughly 250 million years to complete one orbit. Put another way, the last time we were here, was when the Dinosaurs died out.

Dr. Frank Drake who created the Drake equation in 1961, as a discussion starter at the inception of SETI (the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). For the more mathematically-inclined, the equation is as follows: N = R * f * p * ne * a * f * l. You can, if you wish, delve further into what it measures but the basis was to have a rough idea of how many stars to check out.

So where is everybody, and why haven’t they called?

Kepler and TESS have between them discovered over 4000 planets, beyond our own Solar System. Bearing in mind that there are roughly 100-400 Billion stars in our Galaxy, that is only scratching the surface. Their principle objective is to ascertain how many planets are in the habitable zone and of those, how many could support life... Estimates, based on Kepler data, state that there could be up to 11 Billion Earth-like planets in our Galaxy that orbit their Sun in the Goldilocks zone (being at a distance from their Sun that could support liquid water). Unfortunately, there are several other factors that come into play; mass, composition etc that narrow it down considerably. Time also plays its part. The light from some stars has been travelling for longer than our civilization has existed, so even if “they” are there today, we wouldn’t know for years to come.

Distance is also a problem. Within a radius of 10 parsecs (32.6 light years) of Earth, there are approximately 60 stars with planetary systems, of which approximately nine could have a suitable planet in their ‘habitable’ zone and of those, how many could support life... Estimates, based on Kepler data, state that there could be up to 11 Billion Earth-like planets in our Galaxy that orbit their Sun in the Goldilocks zone (being at a distance from their Sun that could support liquid water). Unfortunately, there are several other factors that come into play: mass, composition etc that narrow it down considerably. Time also plays its part. The light from some stars has been travelling for longer than our civilization has existed, so even if “they” are there today, we wouldn’t know for years to come.

Kepler has been searching the skies for decades, looking for that elusive signal, amongst all the cosmic noise to no avail. ET, if he is out there, has not yet called. Other civilisations may have launched probes similar to Voyager 1&2 (Voyager 1 is still transmitting data from the Solar System, of which approximately nine could have a suitable planet in their ‘habitable’ zone and of those, how many could support life... Estimates, based on Kepler data, state that there could be up to 11 Billion Earth-like planets in our Galaxy that orbit their Sun in the Goldilocks zone (being at a distance from their Sun that could support liquid water). Unfortunately, there are several other factors that come into play: mass, composition etc that narrow it down considerably. Time also plays its part. The light from some stars has been travelling for longer than our civilization has existed, so even if “they” are there today, we wouldn’t know for years to come.

The disappearance of the Incan civilisation is most likely due to Spanish explorers bringing their viruses and infections with them. There have been studies of Amazonian tribes that have been wiped out by Measles and Influenza, after having been discovered by Western explorers in the last century. Their isolation meant that they had no immunity to European viruses. The disappearance of the Incan civilisation is most likely due to Spanish explorers bringing their viruses and infections with them. There have been studies of Amazonian tribes that have been wiped out by Measles and Influenza, after having been discovered by Western explorers in the last century. Their isolation meant that they had no immunity to European viruses.

Ironically, we would face the very same problem if we came into contact with an alien civillisation. We would have no defence from pathogens carried by our visitors. The resulting infection could wipe us out (or the other way around). HG Wells touched on this possibility in his novel, the War of the Worlds (published in 1897).

So, if we are to be in contact with aliens, it would need to be by radio until such time as we can guarantee our safety. This may eventually be our default method of exploration. Holographic and robotic versions of us would not be susceptible to infection or damage (or poisonous atmosphere). Also, we would need to get our house in order. As a species we have damaged our planet (not beyond repair) and overpopulated it. We consistently fail to be able to get along with each other. Any sensible race of beings would leave us alone until we have grown up.

It is one of the oldest questions and has yet to be answered by philosophers and religion, so maybe Science can lend a helping hand. Are we alone?... I will be posting links to the relevant websites and resources covered in this article, should you wish to delve further. Incidentally, the star Betegreus in the constellation of Orion is currently a hot astronomical subject. It is a Red Giant star that is undergoing an extreme contraction. It will eventually explode into a Supernova but don’t worry about missing it as it may not happen for some thousands of years. When it does, however, it will shine as bright as a full Moon.

Live Long and Prosper!

The laws of probability mean that it is likely, at some point in the future, we will achieve some form of contact with an extraterrestrial civilisation. What form this will take is uncertain. It is highly likely that it will be the receipt of a faint radio signal. Advances in technology have allowed the discernment of naturally-occurring repetitive radio signals (from Pulsar stars and such like), helping Scientists to report with confidence, should it happen. It is likely that we will, eventually receive proof that life exists outside of our blue and green bubble. Conspiracy theorists believe that this may have already happened and is being kept quiet. There is a nugget of logic on that argument. There are some amongst the conspiracy community that believe we have already been visited in the distant past. Places such as Machu Picchu and Cuzco, the Egyptian Pyramids and even Stonehenge are used as ‘proof’ of Alien visitation. Although this is possible, there are several more likely explanations.

The disappearance of the Incan civilisation is most likely due to Spanish explorers bringing their viruses and infections with them. There have been studies of Amazonian tribes that have been wiped out by Measles and Influenza, after having been discovered by Western Explorers in the last century. Their isolation meant that they had no immunity to European viruses. The disappearance of the Incan civilisation is most likely due to Spanish explorers bringing their viruses and infections with them. There have been studies of Amazonian tribes that have been wiped out by Measles and Influenza, after having been discovered by Western Explorers in the last century. Their isolation meant that they had no immunity to European viruses.

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Anyone who reads my ramblings knows that I admire engineers who made a big difference to our lives, yet seem to have never made the big press. Gordon Welchman is one such man. You probably have heard about Bletchley Park, the code breaking centre for the war effort and the likes of Alan Turing. The combined efforts from this establishment, in breaking enciphered Morse codes used by the Germans in WW2, is said to have shortened the war by at least 2 years. Little is spoken about Gordon.

In the late ’30s, Gordon was a Fellow of mathematics at Cambridge College. By then, it was guessed that WW2 was likely. The boss at the Government Code and Cipher School (Bletchley Park), Alienist Demeston requested that Welchman join the team which included Alan Turing, Stuart Milner-Barry and Hugh Alexander. These four chaps realised that in order to have the edge over the enemy, signal intelligence, i.e. heads-up knowledge as to what was going on by the Germans, was of massive value. Collectively, they wrote to Churchill, setting out the requirements for a huge increase in resources at Bletchley. Churchill reading this, stamped the letter with “Action this day”, in other words, do it now or else.

Germany had the Enigma cipher machine. This was a clever electro-mechanical system which encrypted the alphabet. It looked like a typewriter keyboard but had sets of wheels and lamps. To go into detail would fill the day’s traffic could be decrypted…result, “Cribs”. This meant, that if the cipher code was changed at midnight (opposite Mediterraneo supermarket)

A Rosetta is made up of a centre coloured hexagon encircled by 6 white hexagons. To complete the puzzle, fill in all 7 Rosettas with each number between 1 and 7 in no particular order while ensuring that:
1. No number is repeated in a horizontal row
2. Each number for 1 to 7 are represented in the 7 grey hexagon cells

Rosetta

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Buggy</th>
<th>Safety Gate</th>
<th>High Chair</th>
<th>Baby Monitor</th>
<th>Changing Mat</th>
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<td>950 634 388 / 627 635 514</td>
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Bletchley Park The Heroes - 3 part series Pt.1

He knew that in order to listen to what the Germans were saying, the enciphered codes had to be broken very quickly. He organised radio operators to listen to the radio Morse and try to see patterns that were repeated. He saw that there were formal codes between German radio operators, in Morse, which were in “plain” un-enciphered text.

Welchman worked with Turing who had designed the “Bomb”. This was an electro-mechanical machine that could simulate the way in which the enigma machine worked. This machine would be configured using information gained by the Bletchley Park radio listening teams, Morse communications etc. The machine would run a few sentences through hundreds of thousands of possible encrypted codes. If an operator saw some plain ‘German speak’ coming out, the code for that day was broken and in theory, all German traffic was readable.

Code breaking machines at Bletchley Park continued to become more sophisticated and more efficient. Alan Turing’s machine was very much electro-mechanical. A brilliant ex GPO engineer, Tommy Flowers, had been instrumental in designing the first programmable computer using valves. This made processing the cipher codes much quicker. The machine was called Colossus. Again, there we go, Tommy Flowers. He needs to take a bow.

After the war, Gordon went to work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the States, teaching ground breaking computing technology. He then joined MITRE, where his work in cipher analysis put him in the forefront of secure communications. After retiring in the early ’70s, he was retained as a consultant. He wrote a book “Hut six” which was about his time at Bletchley Park. He thought it was correct that people knew about what had gone on during the war years and how much the work there brought it to a sooner end. He was ill health and the authorities hounded him, taking away his security status, funding and making his last few years a misery. He passed away in ’85.

An amazing hero, brilliant man. And, possibly why I am writing in English, not German.
Seth Pitham

These conversations included hints as to their names, locations, military status and settings of the Enigma encryption machines. This sort of detail was incredibly useful. He saw that the cipher codes were changed at midnight every 24 hrs. This information was known as “Cribs”. This meant, that if the cipher code could be broken within a few hours, the whole day’s traffic could be decrypted…result, happiness. He also understood the importance of analysing the detail of the way the German radio operators worked. Their nicknames, style of Morse, their common phrases etc. This all added up to help understand what was going on. This was termed “Data Analysis”, the fundamentals of which are absolutely used today.

Seth Pittham
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Simple Ways to Make Your Home Smell Amazing

You know how you notice a weird smell when you get home from a vacation? That’s what your house smells like all the time to people who don’t live there. That’s because the longer you’re exposed to scents, the less you’re able to notice them. It’s called sensory adaptation, or informally, “nose-blindness.”

They say that the actual smell of clean is no smell at all. But getting your house to smell like nothing is next to impossible. Between the pets, cooking and just living everyday life, you’re bound to wind up with a mixture of different aromas. However, there are a few smart ways to mask them without resorting to artificial room freshening sprays.

Sprinkle baking soda on rugs
Regular old baking soda has natural deodorizing properties and it costs next to nothing. To keep rugs smelling fresh try sprinkling a bit of baking soda and letting it sit for at least 15 minutes. Vacuum as normal and enjoy the clean, odour-free air.

Make your own room freshening spray
Commercial room freshening sprays aren’t just expensive and unnecessary—they’re also made with potentially harmful chemicals. Instead, try making your own with water, alcohol, and real essential oils. Spritz generously when you have company coming or when you just need a little pick-me-up for your nose.

Add dryer sheets to your rubbish bin
Bins get pretty stinky. Keep them from stinking up the house by adding a dryer sheet into the bottom to absorb some of the odours.

Stick votive candles in coffee beans
Chances are you have some of those votive candles around. Make your home smell wonderful by placing a few lit votives in a container of whole coffee beans. It’s a natural, safe way to keep your house deliciously odour-free.

Decorate with eucalyptus leaves
Real eucalyptus leaves aren’t just pretty — they also emit a pleasant smell that can help to freshen up your entire house. Keep some in a vase in the bathroom for pretty and effective deodorizing where you need it most.

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HOMES & GARDENS

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**Identifying Good and Bad Bugs in Your Garden**

When you find insects in your garden, your first instinct might be to destroy them, but that's not always the best course of action. Some insects are destructive and should be controlled, but of the more than 1.5 million known insect species in the world, more than 97 percent are beneficial to gardens, or simply benign. That leaves less than three percent that are agricultural and nuisance pests.

Beneficial insects perform vital functions in the environment. More than 75 percent of crops and an equal amount of flowering plants rely on animals to distribute pollen, and most that perform this task are insects. Bees, butterflies, moths and even beetles and flies pollinate plants. Every year in the U.S., honeybees alone pollinate about $15 billion in crops.

Insects also perform the important tasks of aerating soil, breaking down dead materials and returning them to the earth, and serving as food for wildlife. Some insects, such as ladybird beetles and green lacewings, also eat harmful pests, which helps to keep the environment in balance.

**Identifying and Managing Insect “Strangers”**

What should you do when you spot an unknown insect in your landscape? You certainly don't want to squash a good guy, but it's not advisable to ignore a troublemaker, either. The next time you see an unknown bug in your garden, follow these three steps to assess whether it's a good or bad bug:

1. **Observe.** Take a close look at the insect and note what it's doing. Snap a photo, if possible. If the bug is eating, and the result of feeding is causing extensive damage, it's likely a pest. Also, note if more than one insect is present. A large number of insects congregating on plants may indicate a pest infestation. The sooner you verify this fact, the sooner you can get the problem under control.

2. **Research and Identify.** Compare your photo — or an actual bug that you've captured and killed — to images of insects on various expert sites.

3. **Use high-quality control products.** If you wish to wage battle against invasive pests in your garden you can by insecticides at most garden centres, one active ingredient is pyrethrin, which is derived from chrysanthemum flowers and is quickly destroyed by heat and light, so there are no residual effects. Keep in mind, however, that this product will harm any insect that comes in contact with it.
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**J is for Jujube**

Jujube or Jinjole .......do those names mean anything to those of you reading them??

Well, they belong to a very special, small, fruiting tree grown in the areas of Almeria, Murcia and Alicante and other parts of the peninsula. Its proper botanical name is Ziziphus jujube (known in Spanish as La azofaifa). It has been known in cultivation for thousands of years in China and Asian cultures as a food and a medicinal plant and where it is grown still, on a large scale.

Owing to their size, they don’t possess a large amount of any one nutrient, but they do have a very large assortment of interesting and nutritionally beneficial ones. These include calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. They are also very high in vitamin C and contain several flavonoids which, amongst other things, have sedative properties which is why they are used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat anxiety and insomnia. Certain flavonoids also contain, apparently, anti cancer and anti tumour qualities and there is a fair bit of research ongoing in various countries across the world.

The leaves are said to repel insects and a tea can also be made from the leaves that will, apparently rid your body of intestinal parasites should you be encumbered in that department!!

Other uses include pigment from the fruit as a silk dye and pigment from the bark is used to make a brown dye. In Spain it is widely grown in gardens and also is found growing wild in various locations. It is a smallish tree with unusual zig zag twiggy branches, small, leathery, deciduous leaves, small, yellowish flowers and horror of horrors....spines.....both straight and wickedly hooked! Some varieties are thornless but not here! The spines are one of two drawbacks to this tree as it also tends to send up thorny suckers, sometimes a fair way from the mother tree! It doesn’t seem to be grown on any large commercial scale here in Spain although in those provinces previously mentioned, it is a popular and well-known fruiting tree and fruit can be found for sale at many fairs in those areas in early September. Worldwide, there are hundreds of varieties, many with quite large, tasty fruits but not here! Here, the fruits themselves are to be found in various, smallish sizes, depending on the cultivar but the best variety to have is one called Great Albatera, mainly because it’s the largest! The individual drupes being almost plum sized whereas the other varieties tend to be a lot smaller. They ripen in August, gradually changing colour and appearance and are eaten when brownish and slightly wrinkly or just before this stage. The texture can be quite dry as the fruits ripen, and it depends on when you like to eat them. They remind me a bit of biting into a dryish apple with one or two seeds inside when they are fully reddish brown and over ripe.

The trees are quite cold and drought tolerant and will tolerate minus 10 but need high temperatures to produce fruit. They can also fruit twice a year in some areas. The trees can take their time growth wise so best to buy as big a tree as you can afford. The leaves are also edible, and a tea can be made from the leaves and the dried fruits. They also tolerate some salinity making it a good coastal tree. They prefer a position in full sun in order to fruit well. A major insect pest here in Spain is the coddling moth, the larvae of which destroy the fruits. Although drought tolerant, frequent watering will vastly improve the crop. Many varieties are grafted to make varieties with larger fruits. I see them sold here at street markets in the various towns and villages so still sought after....despite the thorns! www.cactusinspain.com
An extraordinary artist and man, Picasso was the leading figure and creator of the different trends that revolutionised the visual arts in the 20th century, from cubism to neo-figurative sculpture, from engravings and etchings to ceramic craft and even the stage design for ballets. Pablo Diego José Ruiz Picasso, better known by just his second surname, was born on 25th October 1881 in 36 Plaza de la Merced, Málaga. He was the first born son of the Basque painter, José Ruiz Blasco and Andalucían María Picasso López. His father was a drawing teacher at the Escuela San Telmo. The early years of Picasso’s life were marked by the family’s financial difficulties, but also by his very close relationship with his father, which they both treasured. As a student, the young Pablo left a lot to be desired; he was lazy and easily distracted, but he early showed an innate talent for drawing, and his father encouraged this.

In 1891 the family moved to La Coruña where Picasso’s father had been offered a job. Picasso started experimenting with his drawing and painting, and his father gave up his own art in order to help and encourage his son whose talent he greatly admired. In 1995 Ruiz Blasco was offered a job in Llotja in Barcelona as a lecturer at the Official School of Arts. However, the new style soon had lots of followers both amongst artists and art lovers, and Picasso exhibited this new style in 1907. Picasso produced the great experimental painting ‘Les Demoiselles d’Avignon’. The painting caused great stir and scandal with the misshapen bodies Picasso never completely abandoned the figurative. Around this time Picasso went back to making sculptures, and he and spend more than a year travelling around Spain.

By now he had found a new love, Marcelle Humbert; still in close contact with Georges Braque who followed his example when creating art, he developed the synthetic cubism, which put them on the borderline to the abstract. However, in all his years of production Picasso never completely abandoned the figurative. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War I, Picasso’s friends Braque and Apollinaire were conscripted and the following year his love, Fernanda Olivier, and he developed a warm friendship with fellow visual artist Georges Braque, together with whom he elaborated the initial strokes of analytical cubism. In 1907 Picasso produced the great experimental painting ‘Les Demoiselles d’Avignon’.

One of the most famous and copied works of Picasso was his painting of the stage design for the ballet Parade by the French composer Erik Satie. This introduced him to a new love: the ballerina Olga Khokhlova whom he married in 1918. He carried on working on ballet stage designs until 1925, which boosted his artistic development. Picasso had painted a portrait of his mother in 1918, and in 1930 the painting won him the Carnegie Prize; the prize provided him with enough money to buy a luxurious country house in Boisgeloup, and spend more than a year travelling around Spain.

Pablo Picasso

Pablo Picasso abandoned cubism almost completely and started looking for other ways of artistic expression. He found them in 1917 when he was introduced to Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of the Russian Ballet. He put Picasso in charge of the stage design for the ballet Parade by the French composer Erik Satie. The Republicans were defeated in the Spanish Civil War in 1939, and Germany occupied France in 1940; these events greatly depressed Picasso and he spent the larger part of World War II at his refuge in Rouyn. Picasso painted a giant mural for the UNESCO in 1958 and he continued creating, loving, working and living intensely until his death in 1973. He left behind the largest and most varied personal works of any artist of the 20th century, and the valuable inheritance was bitterly disputed until it was bestowed on a being with a name that depicts peace: Paloma.

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Luxurious villa with various terraces and unbeatable sea views. 6 bed / 4 bath with spacious lounge and dining area as well as a big fully fitted kitchen. Wonderful south facing terrace for outside dining. Second lounge area. Enormous basement with games room / gym / lounge and a garage. Built area: 485 m². Plot: 690 m².

REF: ME 1984     PRICE: € 599,000

Charming cortijo with stunning views to the Sierra Cabrera mountains. 5 bed / 4 bath with 2 sitting rooms, one with a fireplace, the other with an open plan kitchen. Large south facing terrace with big private pool. The house is surrounded with terraces and gardens plus a BBQ area. Built area: 236 m². Land: 2246 m².

REF: ME 1965     PRICE: € 495,000

Stylish villa set near the Cortijo Grande golf course with 4 bed / 2 bath / 1 cloakroom/wc and various large terraces with beautiful views. Spacious lounge with fireplace, dining room, equipped kitchen, patio with bar, Centrex heating, AC, heating throughout. Private pool and built BBQ. Built area 426 m2. Plot size: 729 m2.

REF: ME 1901     PRICE: € 265,000

An immaculate 2 bed / 1 bath apartment on the Urbanización Vistamar with panoramic sea views. Enormous terrace of 62 m². Solid fully furnished. The apartment comes with a parking space and a store room. Lift. 10 minute walk from the beach, restaurants and shops. Beautiful communal pool and gardens. Built area: 69 m².

REF: ME 2073     PRICE: € 160,000

A wonderful apartment, beautifully decorated and looked after on the main street in Turre and with open views to the countryside. On the third floor with 2 bed / 1 bath, a lounge-diner, kitchen, utility area and good sized terrace. 2 entrances to the building. Lift. Fully furnished and ready to move into. Built area 72 m2.

REF: ME 1857      PRICE: € 67,500

SEGUEVIDA will be presented at the next round table meetings, Thursday 20th February at 5pm at “Bar Solare” in Turre.

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Mojácar Playa
Tel: +34 950 478 935
espadevida@mojacarestates.com
The Eagle Owl

The Royal Owl as it’s called in Spanish (Latin name Bubo Bubo), or one of its many sub-species, can be found from east to west all across Eurasia, although not in the extreme northern or southern parts. It thrives in semi-deserts, forests, steppes and even on the tundra, and it can be found all over the Iberian Peninsula, even near cities, as long as it can find trees, cliffs or rock faces where to build its nest, and sufficient prey.

It usually builds its own nest in crags in rocks or trees between sea level and 2,000 MASL, although it also sometimes uses nests abandoned by e.g. the common buzzard or the goshawk. In closely inhabited areas it may even build its nest on the ground.

The eagle owl is a very territorial beast and it uses both its call and its droppings to mark its territory. The size of the territory is determined by the density of owl population in the area and the amount of its prey that can be found there.

This super predator is very close to the top of the food chain; its diet consists of rodents, pigeons, blackbirds and hedgehogs, and it can even manage a fawn of up to ten kilos!

The eagle owl hunts at night; its silent flight, night vision and acute hearing combine to turn it into an ace hunter.

The height of the eagle owl varies between 29 and 73 cm and it weighs between 1.5 and 4 kilos. Bubo Bubo is easily recognizable with its tufts on both sides of its head which look like ears, the ‘V’ line between its eyes and its orange irises. The male’s tufts are more pronounced than the female’s.

The eagle owl’s flight is straight, powerful and silent with frequent gliding. Its calls are deep cries which can be heard over a distance of up to two kilometres; each specimen has its own unique call by which it can be identified.

Mating takes place in winter. Until the mating season starts the male and female live separately, and only get together when the time comes to choose a good place for starting a family. Once they find their place they mark it by digging a shallow hole in the ground while making a series of characteristic cries.

They then make their nest in a tree or a crag in a cliff face. The female lays two to six eggs once a year in late winter or early spring. The eagle owl is very sensitive to its environment, and if there is a shortage of space or food she lays fewer eggs. While the female incubates the eggs the male is in charge of supplying the food.

The eggs hatch after 36 days. The chicks are semi nidicolous; they do have some white feathers which turn brown after about ten days. During this period the female is the main provider of food and care, but the male does help out as well.

The chicks are ready to start flying when they are two months old. At first they only fly a few meters at a time and they are still not fully covered in feathers. For the next couple of months the young birds are very vulnerable and make easy prey for predators, although their excellent camouflage often is a life saver.

At the end of the autumn the young are expelled from their parents’ territory and go off to fend for themselves.

In Spain, the young usually establish their territory within a radius of 50 km from that of their parents; in central Europe they have been known to move up to 400 km away.

The Spanish eagle owl reaches sexual maturity at the age of one. However, approximately 80% of the specimens do not live to see their first birthday; but if they do manage to survive this critical period they can live for up to 20 years in the wild. In captivity there have been documented cases of eagle owls living for up to 60 years.
Spanish Airports - part 5

By Mike Woolough

The Canary Islands have three of the top ten busiest airports. Gran Canaria is in 6th position, followed by Tenerife South in 7, although the combined figures for Tenerife South and North exceed those for Gran Canaria. Lanzarote comes in at number 9.

Gran Canaria Airport (Las Palmas), also known as Gando Airport is situated on the Bay of Gando (from which it derives its other name) 19 km (12 miles) to the south of Las Palmas, and 25 km (16 miles) from the popular tourist areas in the south. It is not clear when flying first started from Gando field but in 1930 King Alfonso XIII issued a royal decree ordering that the military base there would become a civilian airfield. (Although it remained a shared facility.)

The airport officially opened on 7th April 1930 although the first flight with paying passengers was not until 1933. These were ad hoc flights and it would be a further two years before the route to Madrid flew. The airport officially became an international airport.

Over the course of the year, nearly 60 airlines use the airport and in 2018 there were over 13 million passengers, a figure which is likely to have been matched if not bettered when the final figures for last year are available. The five busiest routes are all internal flights, many to other islands, the next ten are to other European cities, only two of them to the UK. Gatwick and Manchester. The remaining eight are to Germany and Scandinavia. There are also a number of flights to African destinations but the number of passengers is not great. Currently, there are no direct flights to the USA, though, as we will see, this has not always been the case. In the last week of January, there were 1,600 departures scheduled to 118 airports (one of which is Corvera) in 26 different countries.
Magical, Mystical Pearls

There is something magical about pearls. The thought of opening an oyster and finding one within, is for many just a dream, but for many others it is big business!

If you are under the impression that pearls are only found in oysters, or in other words it can be made in a shell, can theoretically also create a pearl. This includes some snails, believe it or not?

How the pearl is formed in the first place is often misunderstood. It is formed by an irritant which has entered the shell, which could be a grain of sand or a tiny piece of broken shell, but more typically it is a little parasite.

The substance which lines the shell is called nacre (mother of pearl), and it this substance which begins the process of forming a pearl. The irritant bores into the mollusc, so it tries to protect itself and coats the irritant with nacre, the layers build up over time and the result is a pearl. The size and shape of the irritant dictate the size shape of the pearl.

Pearls come in many colours. The colour depends on the part of the ocean or other body of water in which the mollusc lives. It takes many years for the pearl to form. Generally, pearls in the wild take around 7 years before they reach a decent size.

It is because of the time taken to form in the wild and the difficulty in finding one, that you will find most pearls on the market today are farmed. The farmer can insert a larger than normal irritant into the shell. This results in a much shorter time frame in which the pearl develops, normally around 3 years.

The irritant bothers the mollusc, so it tries to protect itself and coats the irritant with nacre, the layers build up over time and the result is a pearl. The size and shape of the irritant dictate the size shape of the pearl.

The irritant gets stuck in the body of a very specific type of oyster, the Tahitian black-lipped Pinctada margaritifera. The interior shell, called the nacre, of most oysters is of a very specific type of oyster, the Tahitian black-lipped Pinctada margaritifera. The interior shell, called the nacre, of most oysters is usually a glossy white or silver but the Tahitian black-lipped oyster features a thick band of black.

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What different types of pearls are there?

Akoya pearls - For nearly 100 years, akoya pearls grown off the coast of Japan have been the classic pearl of choice. When one pictures a round strand of white pearls, they are usually thinking of akoya. While exceptions do exist, most akoya pearls produced today range in sizes from 4 to 10 mm.

Freshwater pearls - The most affordable pearls sold today, freshwater pearls are known for baroque shapes, white and pastel body colours and softer lustre than akoya (except in the case of rare metallics). With natural pastel colours and shapes that range from perfectly round to free-form baroque, freshwater pearls offer a widest range of options. Common sizes range from 5 mm to 12 mm, but recent advances have led to the development of round and baroque pearls as large as 20 mm.

South Sea pearls - Grown primarily in Australia the Philippines and Indonesia and ranging in colour from white to gold, South Sea pearls are the largest saltwater pearls grown today. Because of their tremendous size, perfectly round South Sea pearls are quite rare. Other more common shapes are drops, baroques and ovals. All are considered very valuable. While South Sea pearls range in size from 8 mm to 18 mm, the most common sizes range from 10 mm to 14 mm.

What are pearls worth?

The value of a pearl varies dramatically depending on many factors, such as its type, size, colour, surface quality, and more. A wild pearl will be worth more than a cultured pearl. However, on average, a pearl’s value ranges from €300 to €1,500.

Tahitian pearls - Tahitian pearls grown in French Polynesia are the only naturally pearl pearls. Although often referred to as black, Tahitian pearls come in a rainbow of exotic colours. Round Tahitian pearls are quite rare but other fun shapes like drops, baroques and ovals are highly sought and still considered very valuable.

When measured perpendicularly to the drill hole, most Tahitians range in size from 8 mm to 15 mm regardless of shape.

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09.00 – 21.30.

Opening times:
Monday-Saturday
09.00 – 21.30.

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Pearl Care

Pearls are the world’s only organic gemstone, and therefore, tend to be quite delicate. Proper care of your pearl jewellery is essential to ensure your investment will last a lifetime. Personal care products, such as perfume or hairspray, can severely damage the lustre and beauty of a pearl. It is said when getting ready to go out, your pearls should be the very last thing that you put on! It is also recommended that you keep your pearls safely away from other jewellery to avoid damage to the lustre.

---

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January 2020 started off with a bang and February and March diary is filling up rapidly with clients coming to view property in the area. Our marketing platforms mean that we are attracting buyers not just from the UK but from France, Germany, Belgium etc.

We urgently require new property listings in Arboleas, Albox, Zurgena, La Alfoquia and surrounding areas, so if you are looking to sell or are already on the market and looking for a fresh approach get in touch to see how we can help you get moving.

There was a hiatus. Everyone was focussed on the baby and the dog. I grabbed Mrs Worsley’s hand. ‘We’ve got to go. Now. Immediately.’ I pulled Mrs Worsley urgently towards the door, and out into the car park.

Neila…’ Mrs Worsley began. ‘We’ve got to go. I’ll explain when we are out of here.’

Was I in time to save her, and will she believe me? And what was that flash?
What is Happening in the Local Property Market?
By Voss Homes Estate Agents - Huércal Overa

Well!... What a great start to the year. 2020 is going to be an excellent year for property sales in our area.

Usually the first 3 weeks of January are fairly quiet but this year started excellently with buyers coming from all over to buy in Spain.

The Belgians, Dutch, French & Germans etc are obviously not affected by Brexit but now the British buyers are fed up of it and are coming to buy so if you want to sell your property then choose the right estate agent to do it for you.

Our three tips this month are:-
1. Choose the agent who is actually selling the most properties in your area. Don’t choose an agent because your neighbour or friend say they are “nice” or they bought from them 10 years ago.
2. Do not put your property with numerous agents. One should be enough as long as they are investing in all sorts of advertising.
3. Check out your properties “kerb appeal”. Walk in your potential buyers shoes. Your agent will be driving them to your house and will pull up outside.

DO THE SAME.

Pull up on the road outside your property and see what they see. Are there weeds on the footpath? Is there paint flaking off your garden or house walls? Do the plants and trees need cutting back?

Are there old building materials, tiles, blocks etc laying around? If so please clear these away. Your agent will be driving them to your house and will pull up outside.

Remember, any starting letter may be used by more than one word at the same time!

Apple Genial Relied
Bides Hello Representative
Braiding Impedes Rhododendrons
Bumper Incur Screwdrivers
Confirm Molten Singe
Cubed Officers Sinner
Early Perpendiculurs Squids
Elicits Phases Tapped
Ferry Phobia Tariffs
Films Pinkest Vogue
Flyover Pored Veneers
Forces Procrastination Wiser
Friar Proofs Worth
Fries Purrs

“Only get one chance to make a good first impression.”
Off the coast in the province of Alicante, at some 20 km from the city of Alicante and 6 km from Santa Pola, lies a tiny island with a lot of charm: the Isla de Tabarca. The island has a surface of just 0.3 km2; it is 1,800 m long (east to west) and 450 m wide. Its highest point is at 15 MASL. It is the smallest inhabited island in the Mediterranean and it is home to just 60 souls.

In 1970 Tabarca had a population of 242, but due to the difficulties of earning a living there, the lack of services and the better prospects on the mainland, the population has been dwindling over the last few decades.

The oldest proof of the presence of man on the island dates back to the 3rd century AD, during the Roman presence in Hispania. The finds do not come from settlements, but from people on the move. We then jump to the 14th century; there are documents from this time mentioning the construction of a defensive system to prevent Berber pirates from settling there and using the island as a base for attacks on the main land.

There were plans again in the 17th century of constructing a military fortification, but they were abandoned due to the cost of maintenance. The island was left for another hundred years.

Then in 1768 Carlos III paid a large ransom to free 69 Italian families from an existence as prisoners and slaves on the Algerian island of Tabarka. He had constructed a fort on the small island off the Alicante coast and needed civilians to carry out the auxiliary jobs. So he installed the Italian families on the island and named it after their old place: Tabarca. Many of the old Tabarcan surnames bear witness to this: Russo, Capraia, Chacopino etc.

Over the years the island acquired a church, a cemetery, a defence wall and, in 1854, a light house. The light house was one of the first in the area and it was a great step forward as many ships ran aground on the flat island and its many islets.

The lighthouse still stands, and today it houses the biological laboratory which is in charge of the Tabarca Marine Reserve.

There are other interesting places on this small island: The old defence wall and, in 1854, a light house. A walk on the wall takes you around the perimeter of the island in just 15 minutes. Some parts of it have been restored, others are crumbling. There are three gates still in existence.

Construction of the church was started in 1770, and the building was finished by 1780; its silhouette dominates the view of the island as you approach from the sea.

The Governor’s House had been meant to house the town hall, but with the changes of Spain’s naval politics in the Mediterranean it was turned into quarters for the few troops left on the island. It consisted of two parallel buildings joined by an interior courtyard.

Today it has been restored and it has been converted into the island’s only three-star hotel.

There are regular crossings from both Alicante, Santa Pola and Benidorm; they are more frequent in the tourist season. In fact, this tiny island receives more than 150,000 visitors each year; the majority go there for just a day out to lounge on the beautiful little beach with its crystalline water and maybe have a nice meal in one of the restaurants in town or the chiringuitos near the coast. But a few do choose to stay for a night or two, and they see a very different side to the island when the day tourists have left and the small town returns to what it has been for centuries: a quiet place where the pace is unhurried and the inhabitants are friendly.

Physically, the island is divided into two: The western third houses the little town and is connected to the eastern two thirds by a narrow isthmus; the eastern part is natural countryside and here you will find the Torreón de San José, a defence tower, the lighthouse and the cemetery.

The sea around Isla de Tabarca was the first in Spain to be declared a marine reserve in 1986. The crystalline waters and the abundance of marine life make it a dream for snorkelers, and scuba divers can enjoy it too – if they apply for permission from the environmental council. Isla de Tabarca offers something all year round: peace, nostalgia and beauty in winter and bustling beach holiday mood in a very special setting in summer.

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Travelling abroad this year? The Spanish Ministry of Health recommends that international vaccinations are administered at least 4-8 weeks before your trip. Some vaccines need to be given well in advance to allow your body to develop immunity. Other vaccines involve a number of doses spread over several weeks or months.

International vaccines in Spain are obtained from International Vaccine centres with prior appointment. The closest centre in this area is in Almería city. Appointments are made online by searching cita previa vacunacion internacional and following the link on the Ministry of Health’s website.

In order to book an appointment and provide a prescription, the centre needs to know where you are going, type of trip (business or pleasure), and duration. They give you a specialist prescription on the day of the appointment. They do not usually administer the vaccines there.

The following vaccinations are available for people travelling abroad, depending on the continent and country:

**Cholera**
- Most cases are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central America and the Caribbean. If you have already received a cholera vaccination, a single booster dose is usually recommended before your next trip where infection is common.

**Hepatitis A**
- This vaccine is recommended if you’re travelling to sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East, or South and Central America where levels of sanitation and hygiene are poor.

**Hepatitis B**
- Vaccination is recommended to anyone travelling for long periods of time as Hepatitis B is found worldwide and can be spread in a variety of circumstances. However, it is more common in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and South and Central Europe. A combined hepatitis A and B vaccine is usually available if you could be at risk of both when travelling.

**Japanese Encephalitis**
- Commonly found in Asia, Australia, Western Pacific Islands, and the Western borders of Pakistan. Vaccination is recommended if you are travelling in tropical climates during rainy seasons, rural areas including rice fields and marshlands, taking part in activities like camping or cycling. Despite its name, Japanese Encephalitis is now very rare in Japan, due to mass immunisation programmes.

**Meningococcal Meningitis**
- If you are travelling to high risk areas such as Africa and Saudi Arabia for long periods of time, within close contact with locals, you should be vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis with a MenACWY vaccine, also known as the quadrivalent meningococcal meningitis vaccine. All travellers for the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages will be required to provide proof of vaccination.

**Rabies**
- Rabies is present in many countries and vaccination is advised if you are staying for a month or more, unlikely to get quick appropriate medical care, or plan on doing activities that could increase the risk of exposure such as cycling or running. If you are bitten, licked or scratched by an animal in a country where rabies is a problem, further doses of the vaccine may be required.

**Tick-borne Encephalitis (TBE)**
- This vaccine is usually recommended for anyone who plans to live or work in a high risk area, or hike and camping in these areas during late spring or summer. The ticks that cause TBE are mainly found in forested areas of central, eastern and northern Europe. Other susceptible areas include Eastern Russia, East Asia, including some regions of China and Japan.

**Typhoid Fever**
- Vaccination is recommended for high-risk areas such as the Indian subcontinent (Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India), Africa, South and Southeast Asia, South and Central America, and the Middle East.

**Yellow Fever**
- The BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccine is recommended for tuberculosis (TB) susceptible areas include Eastern Russia, East Asia, and the Middle East.

**Tick-borne Encephalitis (TBE)**
- The BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccine is recommended for anyone under 16 who will be working or living with friends, family or local people for more than 3 months, having an increased risk of coming in contact with TBE. The risk of exposure is high enough in the following countries for any unvaccinated travellers to receive the vaccine: the Indian subcontinent including Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, South and Central America, and the Middle East.

**Tuberculosis (TB)**
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- 4* Hotel Torremangana
- Central Cuénta

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- Coach travel
- Three nights in 4* hotel
- Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
- Visit to Ciudad Encantada

Pick-Up Locations:
- Murcia, Tarragona, Albacete, La Alfoquia, Hotel Osuna

*Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement €60

**Valencia**

3 Nights

- €240 per person

Staying at:
- 4* Ciudad de Valencia
- Central Location

**Price Includes**:
- Coach travel
- Three nights in 4* hotel
- Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
- Visit to La Albufera lake

Pick-Up Locations:
- Murcia, Tarragona, Albacete, La Alfoquia, Hotel Osuna

*Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement €60

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Vitamins and Minerals – A to Z

Although essential to your well-being, vitamins and minerals cannot be made in your body so you have to get them through diet and supplements - but what should you take and how much?

Over the coming months we will bring you the A to Z of the different vitamins and minerals that our bodies need to keep us in a healthy condition. This month’s introduction details the differences between the two types and making the right choices.

To be healthy you only need small amounts of each one but you need to get them regularly - ideally, every day. Deficiency diseases caused by inadequate intakes are rare, but not unknown, in most European countries.

Among other things, vitamins help drive biological processes, they help absorb other essential nutrients such as minerals, they protect us from free radical damage, are involved in hormone production and help release energy from food.

Minerals are involved in a wide range of crucial functions throughout the body. They are a necessary part of over 600 enzymes and are involved in every tissue. Some are needed in amounts of more than 100 mg a day, and these are called macro-minerals. Others are needed in much smaller quantities and these are called micro-minerals.

As we grow older, our body becomes less efficient at extracting nutrients from our food and absorbing them into the blood. It becomes more important to top up our reserves as time goes on.

Vitamins are either fat-soluble (A, D, E and K) or water-soluble (the Bs and C). Fat-soluble vitamins are stored in the body, so we need less, but they can also build up if we take too much. Water-soluble vitamins pass through easily, so we need daily top-ups. They are washed out of foods during preparation and cooking.

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Minerals come from the soil and are absorbed by plants that we eat or are eaten by animals. The mineral content of food depends on where the plants grow and on what the animals are fed. Modern farming methods produce large amounts of food, but a lot of it does not have the nutrients of the equivalent organic crop or traditionally farmed version.

Dietary vitamins and minerals
Fresh food, destined for the supermarket and stored in chilled containers, can travel hundreds or even thousands of miles and take several days to get to and from distribution centres.

Processing removes most of the nutrients. White flour, white rice and refined white sugar contain no vitamins at all and only 10% of the minerals they originally had. Manufacturers compensate by adding back some, but not all, of the nutrients removed or destroyed – the “fortified” foods. Cereals, margarines, bread, milk and orange juice have added vitamins B1, B2, B6, C and D and also minerals such as iron and calcium.

Many fruits and vegetables contain a lot less of some nutrients now compared to 40 years ago. For instance, broccoli and pineapples now have less than half the calcium; the vitamin C in cauliflower is 40% less and 30% less in sweet peppers; watercress has 80% less iron, and some oranges have no vitamin C at all.

Specialist diets such as low-protein, low-carbohydrate, vegetarian and the like may mean you get less of the essential vitamins or minerals that you need. Research shows that most of us don’t come anywhere near to reaching the daily requirement of vitamins and minerals and suffer from minor deficiency symptoms as a result.

Choosing vitamin and mineral supplements
Supplements are a simple way to compensate for the falling standards of our food and the modern lifestyle. True deficiency diseases are uncommon, but this does not mean we don’t need supplements to help our health. Supplements can’t compensate for poor food choices, and they don’t replace missed meals. Buy the best supplement you can afford. Cheap does not necessarily mean poor quality but may come with fewer ingredients.

Check the label for ingredient range. Including herbs or cod liver oils is not necessarily a good plan as there needs to be reasonable amounts of such “extras” to have any positive effect.

Liquids or granules get into the blood stream quickly and efficiently. They are the best but also the most expensive. Tablets are less costly and less efficient at delivering the goods. Capsules are in between – a bit more expensive than tablets, but gentler on sensitive stomachs and release the nutrients quicker. Prolonged action or time-release tablets and capsules tend to pass through the gut too quickly to dissolve properly.

Consider the physical size of the tablet or capsule. Swallowing an enormous bomb of a capsule puts some people off. Make sure you are capable of getting it down.

How much?
The supplement label lists ingredients in grams (G), milligrams (mg) or micrograms (mcg) then gives this amount as a percentage of the RDA - the Recommended Daily Allowance. This is a measure of the minimum amount of a vitamin or mineral the body needs to avoid a deficiency disease. Please remember it’s not the ideal, nor the optimum but the absolute minimum. The better supplements give you 100% of the RDA in each dose.

Side effects
Stop taking the supplement if you feel worse or have unexpected allergic reactions and side effects. Tell your doctor or health professional and ask for advice.

There is a wide safety margin between what most supplements deliver and what would be required to cause side effects or toxic reactions. As an example, it would take at least 100 times the RDA of vitamin D to cause a possible toxic effect.

Minerals can and do cause more toxicity problems than vitamins but, a multi-mineral supplement is unlikely to cause such problems since they contain only small amounts of each mineral.

Single mineral supplements can be helpful if a particular mineral is extremely deficient, e.g. iron in anaemia, but if they are not needed they can give sudden excesses that unbalance other vitamin levels and could cause more problems than they solve.

In the March issue we will take a look at Antioxidants including Vitamin A.
As Pretty as a Picture

I have long been fascinated by ladies makeup, not wearing it you understand (at least, not during the week) but whether the ladies wear it for us menfolk, for themselves, or for other ladies. It kind of started a while ago when I was waiting for Mrs D in a ladies hairdressing. I happened to pick up a popular ladies magazine and was thumbing through it. For some reason I started at the back and worked forward, past the Horoscopes which promised me I would be meeting someone with a financial connection which could be expensive and to beware! It was absolutely right, Mrs D eventually emerged, elegantly coiffured and I had to pay the hairdresser what I thought was an extortionate sum.

I then moved through the ‘Problems Page’. You know the sort of thing, “My husband has run off with the checkout lady at Tesco’s, what should I do?” Answer, “Cash in your Clubcard and switch to Asda”......

However, it was the adverts which interested me, especially for the cosmetics, promising to reduce wrinkles, make you look 10 years younger, to smooth this and lift that.....(but what I find really difficult to understand is why ladies shave, pluck or wax off eyebrows, only to pencil them back in afterwards! What's that all about?)

There were also photos of incredible transformations, ‘before and after’ shots of ladies without makeup and then having been ‘beautified’. I have to say they were impressive!

Then I started thinking, when did it all start?

When did ladies start to paint themselves......?

Then I started thinking, when did it all start?

As Pretty as a Picture

Certainly the Yardley London brand of soaps has been sold, originally only in London, for over 250 years. In fact, Charles I gave a license for the distribution of soap in London in the 1600’s. The Vaseline brand of Petroleum jelly products has been around for more than 140 years with the first lip gloss. It was after WW2 that cosmetics became an International business, now worth some 530 billion dollars worldwide!

So, who is the oldest cosmetics company still trading?

What is Sciatica?

Sciatica is pain which arises because of an issue with the sciatic nerve. It usually affects only one side of the lower body, and can be caused by irritation of the nerve roots of the sciatic nerve, and/or because of compression of the sciatic nerve itself, as it passes through the buttock into the back of the thigh.

You may experience:

- Pain in the hip, buttock, leg and/or lower back
- Burning/tingling down the leg
- Weakness, numbness, or difficulty moving the leg or foot
- Shooting pain that makes it difficult to stand up

The term ‘sciatica’ gets thrown around A LOT, but the important thing to understand is that ‘sciatica’ is NOT a diagnosis. The term simply refers to the nerve which is being irritated.

Sciatica can be caused by a variety of things, such as:

- Spinal stenosis
- Degenerative disc disease
- Bulging disc
- Spondylolisthesis
- Pregnancy
- Muscle spasm
- Injury/trauma

Therefore, the key to effective treatment and recovery, is to first work out WHY you have sciatica.

Your Osteopath is trained to assess, diagnose and treat the causes of sciatica, and will always give home care advice and some gentle exercises to help ease your discomfort.
New Year’s Resolutions
I can hear it already: January is the time for New Year’s Resolutions. So why talk about them in February?

The answer is in two parts.
Firstly, rest assured that if you made a resolution about weight or fitness you are not alone. A couple of years ago a large scale study was conducted to determine the most popular end-of-year resolutions. With respondents able to pick more than one option, the three aspirations that topped the list were:
• Lose weight - 35%
• Get fitter - 33%
• Eat more healthily - 31%

Health Heads the List
And across all the polls I accessed, health proved to be the priority for those committing to a change in the new year.

Now the question that must be asked is: What is the situation by the time December rolls around again?

The January Deadline
Which brings us to our second reason for talking about January resolutions in February.

According to one international research group, nearly a third of respondents suggest their resolutions are usually broken by the end of January; while another survey puts the figure even higher, with more than half the participants saying that their commitment failed before January 31.

So the intentions are good, but the actualisation of them is falling short. What can be done?

From Resolution to Reality
A well known saying in business is that a goal without a plan is merely a wish. As we leave January behind, the challenge is to plan a health-focused year that moves from wish to reality.

Amanda is both trainer and nutritionist, a lifelong athlete who knows and understands the workings of the body from youth to the silver years. I am a fellow traveller on the road to fitness - one who has ‘been there, done that’ when it comes to diets, injuries and restrictions.

Together we’re taking time to explore how wishes can grow into plans, and how physical fitness, balanced eating and weight loss can become goals that are attainable.

The All-Year’s Resolutions
What we’re looking at is not the brief firework of a New Year’s Resolution. Rather think of stoking a steady fire throughout the year - a bit like working with one of those classic Aga stoves.

We’ll be encouraging you to:
1. Determine realistic goals.
2. Change what you can.
3. Don’t fret about the rest.
4. Remember that this is part of an ongoing lifestyle.
5. Be open to new ideas.

Comments and queries welcome josnovas@gmail.com Jacey Cánovas is a journalist on a discovery journey about diet and fitness. Amanda Cantle is a qualified trainer, nutritionist and competing athlete. This article is © to them. Information and opinions contained in this article should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a licensed health care professional.
Both glaucoma and cataracts are physical conditions which cause loss of vision.

Cataracts are gradual and painless and are manifested by a loss of transparency; glaucoma, on the other hand, can be either quick and painful or slow and subtle.

A cataract is a change in the lens of the eye; the result is cloudiness as light is prevented from entering the eye properly. Glaucoma is a condition where a build-up of pressure in the eye causes damage to the optic nerve which is the vital link of the eye to the brain which processes visual information.

Cataracts are unlikely to be the cause of blindness, not so with glaucoma; it can cause irreversible blindness and must be treated. Glaucoma and cataracts are more prevalent in people who suffer from diabetes. Although glaucoma may be worse in one eye than the other, usually both eyes are affected. There are a number of different types of glaucoma, the most frequent is called “open angle”; it develops slowly. The cause is fluid which collects in the chamber in the front of the eye; under normal circumstances, this fluid drains away as new fluid is produced to replace it. In the case of glaucoma, this fluid is prevented from flowing out when the minute drains become blocked, as new fluid continues to be made, pressure builds up in the eye and eventually, the optic nerve is damaged.

Both cataracts and glaucoma can be treated surgically but unfortunately, the loss of vision caused by glaucoma cannot be reversed whereas it can be reversed with cataract surgery. When cataracts begin to have a detrimental impact on everyday life, it is time to have them surgically removed. With glaucoma, the symptoms are very different; it can happen suddenly and can be the cause of rapid loss of sight along with acute pain, nausea and blurred vision.

Cataract surgery is different than the surgery used to treat glaucoma. In the case of cataracts, the lens of the eye is removed and replaced with an artificial lens; glaucoma surgery often involves the use of a laser which is used to open the tiny canals which are blocked, stopping the fluid from escaping from the front of the eye. When the conditions are caught and properly treated, the outcome can be positive. In the case of cataracts, there often is no degree of urgency, with glaucoma early diagnosis and intervention is necessary.

Cataracts & Glaucoma

IN OPTICA ALMERIA WE ARE FOCUSED ON EARLY PREVENTION

Glaucoma’s month

THIS PATHOLOGY IS COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE SILENT THIEF AS IT DOES NOT PRESENT ANY SIGNS

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Crinolinemia: 10 Fascinating Facts About the Crinoline

If there was one thing a broad crinoline skirts guaranteed the wearer, it was plenty of personal space! However the fashion became so popular that Punch magazine nicknamed the crinoline craze “Crinolinemia”.

And it’s not difficult to see why, even today, the bell-shaped profile of a crinoline-supported dress lends a fairytale quality to a wedding. Here are 10 facts about the crinoline—some of which you may find surprising.

1. The 16th century Spanish farthingale was the grandmother of the crinoline

Wide and full skirts were popular as far back as the 15th century. Queen Consort Joan of Portugal made the hoop skirt popular when she wore one to court. Originally called the Spanish verdugado and later corrupted to “farthingale” in English, it was alleged that Joan wore it to help hide an illegitimate pregnancy. There’s nothing like a bit of court gossip to help a fashion’s popularity.

2. The crinoline gets its name from horsehair

Described as a combination of the French words crin, meaning horsehair, and lin meaning linen, the name essentially describes the materials used to make the original crinoline, i.e. horsehair and linen.

3. Cage crinolines were mass-produced in huge quantity

The steel-hooped cage crinoline, first patented in April 1856 by R.C. Milliet in Paris, and by their agent in Britain a few months later, became extremely popular. Although cage crinolines looked very rigid, the spring steel they were made from was very flexible and could be compressed. Aside from the inevitable accidents, women learned how to walk in crinolines and how to sit down in them without revealing underclothes.

4. Cage crinolines were mass-produced in huge quantity

One of the biggest producers was Douglas & Sherwood’s Hoop Skirt Factory in New York. It employed 800 women and produced in excess of 8,000 hoop skirts each day.

5. There were accidents with crinolines, some tragic and fatal

Overzealous advertising tried to reassure potential customers that their freedom of movement would be unhindered by wearing a cage crinoline. This gave a false sense of security about the level of care and attention that was needed to avoid accidents while wearing them. Not being constantly aware of exactly where the extremities of the dress were could lead to tragedy. Thousands of women died in the mid-19th century as a result of their hoop skirts catching fire. Other hazards included the hoops being caught in machinery, carriage wheels, gusts of wind, or other obstacles.

6. Crinolines crossed class barriers

Crinolines were worn by women of every social standing and class across the Western world, from royalty to factory workers.

Continued on page 72....
7. Crinolines reached 18 feet in circumference.
At its widest point, the crinoline could reach a circumference of up to six yards—providing the perfect opportunity for satirical cartoons to exaggerate dimensions even further. Contemporary photographs show that many women wore smaller versions of the crinoline, as opposed to the huge bell-shaped creations so often seen in fashion plates. Large crinolines were probably reserved for balls, weddings and other special occasions.

8. Media scrutiny
Widespread media scrutiny and criticism followed the crinoline, from journal articles to poems decrying the fashion, to songs complaining about them. The crinoline also came under heavy fire from moralists, publicists, and satirists who often condemned the fineries of fashion and sensationalized the most extreme situations—none more so than London’s satirical magazine Punch and New York’s Harper’s Weekly.

9. Queen Victoria is said to have detested crinolines.
Queen Victoria is said to have inspired a song in Punch: Long live our gracious Queen, Who won’t wear the crinoline!
When Queen Victoria’s daughter was married to the Prussian Prince Frederick in 1858, the queen requested the Prussian ladies not to wear crinolines because there was not enough room in the Chapel Royal at St. James’s Palace.
This incident probably led many to believe she disliked crinolines, but numerous photographs show her wearing one.

10. The crinoline craze reached its peak during the early 1860s
Falling out of favour by about 1862, the silhouette of the crinoline changed from bell-shaped to flatter at the front with the fullness projected out more behind.
Called the “crinolette,” it was typically composed of “half hoops” made of the same spring steel.
Crinolettes would bridge the gap until the next big fashion craze to sweep the world appeared—the Bustle.
WE DIDN’T WANT A KITTEN

The true story of a kitten called Claudia

Imagine. Imagine how she must have felt, a cat barely more than a kitten herself, being abandoned with her litter, in a box, miles from familiar smells and sounds.

Struggling, she forced a way out of her ‘prison’ and fearful for her kittens, managed one by one, to take them to a place of safety. Now, without revealing the whereabouts of her family, she must set off to find food… and help, if humans could be trusted again.

Happily, the empty box was soon found by staff at the PAWS sanctuary and being experienced in such matters, they set about looking for what may have been within. Before too long, a small black and white cat was found and a further search, based on a lunch, found a handful of kittens waiting quietly for their mother to return. A happy reunion soon followed and Claudia, with her brood, were soon safely settling into a comfortable pen with food and water on hand.

This was the story then, which greeting us when we went to look for a companion to our black Tom, Leo. We were introduced to Claudia by Paul Gough and her family. Claudia seemed quiet and compliant. Resigned and somewhat distant, she responded well to being picked up and fussed. But we didn’t want a kitten.

She had made her mark. So it was, that a few days later we returned, with cat carrier in hand, and took Claudia (all her kittens had found new homes) to begin a new life: a fresh start after a traumatic start.

Searching began of the area and neighbours asked if they had seen any kittens. No, but we heard a constant calling of Claudia’s name. Not a sign of Claudia, nor the smallest of dark places behind files in a cupboard. The first week was slow work, but through play and reassurance she became increasingly more confident and soon the whole house was her domain.

And Claudia? Oh, she is growing, always playful and very affectionate. Here to stay. Her early days, hopefully, are fading from her memory and she can enjoy the prospect of adventures in the garden, keeping Leo on his toes (he doesn’t mind) and continuing to ‘train up’ her new humans. But, we didn’t want a kitten!

Epilogue – two years later.

It was strange how quickly time passed and in no time a new calendar on the kitchen wall announced January 2019 had arrived. Claudia and Leo continued their routines, unaware of New Year celebrations, save for the noisy fireworks, which seem to leave Spanish cats somewhat unmoved. January 13th began and passed no differently to any other day: breakfast, followed by mid morning snacks; lunch; afternoon sleeps and at last, tea. Much the same for Claudia and Leo of course!

Then to bid our cats farewell for the night, a last special treat, before they took up their ‘prairies’ and naps in the porch.

The next morning saw Leo waiting, nose pressed against the fly screen, waiting for breakfast service. But, no Claudia. She’ll be along in a moment, we thought, when she hears clicking of plates. But, no.

Lunch time came and went, as did the afternoon. No Claudia. Searching began of the area and neighbours asked if they had seen any kittens. No, but we heard a constant calling of Claudia’s name. Not a sign of Claudia, nor the next day, or the next. Leo too, joined in the search, checking her favourite resting places and ‘ambush’ sites.

The weeks and months passed and of Claudia there was no sign. Of course, the mind fills of horrific possibilities, but perhaps she just answered the call of the wild and went off on adventures. We hope for that. We comfort ourselves that we gave her time to become independent. Of course, the mind fills of horrific possibilities, but perhaps she just answered the call of the wild and went off on adventures.

Each morning though, we continued to hope that two small faces once again would greet us – alas it wasn’t to be.

End
Dental Care for Dogs

The good news for dogs is they’re not as prone to cavities as human beings are. But despite the old conventional wisdom that a dog’s mouth is cleaner than a human’s, dogs can still develop problems like tartar and plaque buildup and gingivitis. But it’s not just bad breath and yellow teeth you have to worry about. As with humans, these canine dental problems can actually lead to life-threatening infections and issues including heart, liver, and kidney disease.

Here’s how to practice good dog dental care that will extend your dog’s life:

**How to Brush Your Dog’s Teeth**

If your dog can brush his own teeth, you can stop reading this article and start posting the video to YouTube. For the rest of us, we have to

Your dog might not go for the tooth brushing at first, but hopefully, you can make it a reasonable pleasant experience for both of you. Try and choose a time when your dog has had a decent amount of exercise, so he’s more inclined to sit still for the procedure. Don’t overdo it the first few times. Start slowly and quit if your dog gets agitated, even if you don’t brush the whole mouth. You can increase the time every day as he gets used to it. Also, make sure to speak soothingly and pleasantly during the brushing and reward your dog with a treat afterwards. Before too long, your dog should start looking forward to the event.

**Start Early With Your Dog as a Puppy!**

Grown dogs can learn to become comfortable with dog teeth cleaning, but make things easier for yourself by working with your dog as a puppy.

**How to Pick the Right Tooth Paste for Your Dog**

This is very important. Do NOT use regular human toothpaste for your dog. Most human toothpastes include fluoride, which is extremely poisonous to dogs. You can find toothpaste formulated for dogs at most good pet stores.

**Dry Food is Better Than Soft Food**

If the tooth brushing ends in blood, sweat, or tears, there are still choices you can make to help improve your dog’s oral health. Crunchy kibble is better for your dog’s teeth than soft food, as soft food is more likely to stick to the teeth and cause decay.

**Chew Bones and Chew Toys to Clean Teeth**

There are many synthetic bones and chew toys that are specially designed to strengthen your dog’s gums and teeth. Just make sure you’re providing safe objects for your dog to chew on. Hard objects can cause broken teeth.

Giving your dog a good bone to chew on can help get rid of build up and keep teeth strong, but imagine a human who only chews gum and uses mouth rinse. That’s not an effective means of ensuring good dental hygiene and overall health. The same is true for your dog.

Dental care can be a hassle for humans and dogs, but proper maintenance can be a money saver in the long run and even a lifesaver. Letting it go can lead to costly and often painful vet visits down the road. Many dogs have to be given anesthetics to have their teeth and gums cleaned if the buildup is bad enough. Keep your dog’s mouth clean though, and you’ll both be smiling!
Time of my life V. my time of life

I’ve finally joined a local association – La Guajira, a cultural group that runs a venue for flamenco and music events.

It’s not exactly a residents’ association, but it is just round the corner opposite the Alcazaba castle and it has a good ethos of promoting local culture in an inclusive and low cost environment.

I went for the first time last night, and joined in their language exchange class – English and Spanish. The only thing was I was about 30 years older than all the others and we played hangman with idioms for two hours!

Next I went up to the roof terrace where there was a concert going on. It was pretty cool – every second person I talked to seemed to be an aspiring American writer – but after an hour of sitting alone on a bar stool I lost the will and went home.

So, overall it was interesting, and I will definitely keep going, but I have to steel myself not to mind the whole being nearly 50 and on my own thing – or at least go with a friend next time!

To be honest it had been a close call whether to drag myself out or put on my pink stripy dressing gown (lighter version of the purple furry one) eat pasta and start watching ‘Game of Thrones’, and perhaps I would have been happier doing the latter!

At my time of life and all that.

And my time of life has been preoccupying me a bit lately. I had this bad experience of catching sight of myself in one of the many full length mirrors in my office foyer.

Normally if I look in them I prepare myself – stomach in, shoulders back, eyebrows raised; that kind of thing.

But I accidentally turned my head, and there I was – a fattish, middle aged woman, greying at the temples and sporting an unflattering cycle helmet.

It was pretty cool – every second person I talked to seemed to be an aspiring American writer – but after an hour of sitting alone on a bar stool I lost the will and went home.

The assistant looking at me straight in the eyes (mine being tearful at the decline of my assets and increase in girth) and saying matter of factly: “It’s the menopause. You just have to accept it.”

Great.

So unless I’m suddenly going to turn into a diet and fitness freak (unlikely to say the least, the first hint of an uphill slope and I’ve switched to electric on my bike) that’s it, I probably should just accept it, along with the fact that life is full of change.

And if you are lucky enough (as I am) for those changes to be also a chance for new opportunities, then it’s best to embrace the positive, accept the not so positive, and live in a neighbourhood where you can go out in comfortable nightwear if you wish to!

Her story continues........
Ferrari 512S Modulo

This car was developed to be as fast as possible, and so has quite an uncommon design to make it that way. The Ferrari 512S Modulo is very low (less than a metre high) in order to be as aerodynamic as possible. And it succeeds... this race car can reach a top speed of 350 km/h. Although built back in the 70s, it still looks quite futuristic today. Unfortunately it never went into production; Ferrari kept it as a one-off.

ISO Isetta

This is a cute little Italian car with a big door which opens at the front. Because there was a lack of material after World War II, small vehicles were very popular. It became famous when BMW built the Isetta on license and it was the first car to achieve a fuel consumption of 3L per 100 kilometres. The 3-wheel car is very efficient, but not very fast. During it’s production run, from 1953 until 1961, more than 160,000 Isettas were produced.

Stout Scarab

This car looks a bit like the Isetta, but is longer and has 4 wheels. Believe it or not, it is considered as the first minivan in the world. It is not a very big car but despite that, it is fitted with a Ford V8 engine in the back. It was designed in the early 30s and cost 4 times more than a luxury Chrysler Imperial of the same era. Unfortunately few people were willing to pay for the innovation; only 9 examples of this minivan were built and only 5 still exist today.

80 Almeria Living
F1 wants to be 'carbon neutral' by 2030

It is no secret that Formula 1 racing is a polluting sport, or that its previous owner Bernie Ecclestone wasn't particularly interested in sustainability. But things have changed since the elite motor-racing series was taken over by US media giant Liberty Media in 2017. Last year F1 announced its first ever sustainability plan, with an ambitious goal to make itself "carbon neutral" by 2030.

When I meet Yath Gangakumaran - the man responsible for leading the plan - at the World Economic Forum in Davos, he is keen to distance himself from sport's old guard, although he won't comment on Mr Ecclestone's tenure.

"Up until 10-15 years ago sport wasn't run in a mature way - typically by ex-players not business professionals. It's become much more professional and is catching up with other industries, and that includes on sustainability."

Formula 1's carbon footprint is "material", he says, but it has little to do with the cars, which are among the most fuel efficient on the planet thanks to their lightweight design and innovative hybrid engines.

The main reason are the races themselves - 22 in total this year - which require large amounts of equipment, cars and people to be shipped around the world, often by aircraft. In 2019, the sport's 10 teams each notched up an average of 110,000 air miles.

Then there is the huge amount of CO2 emissions generated by F1's engines. According to Liberty Media, which calculated F1's carbon footprint across its 1,400 supermarkets and convenience stores in 2017, that amounts to some 256,000 CO2 equivalent tonnes per year, about 15% in some supermarkets.

To make the 2030 target seem wildly ambitious - 'We think F1 can achieve these targets', says Yath Gangakumaran

"One of the obvious ways to reduce the carbon footprint would be to make races sustainable by 2025, including banning single-use plastics."

But F1 also needs to increase its sales so there is a tension there. "We are looking at the potential to reduce the number of races. But F1 also needs to increase its sales so there is a tension there."

"We think it is just too difficult to control what our fans do because they are ultimately their own custodians."

"One of the obvious ways to reduce the carbon footprint would be to make races sustainable by 2025, including banning single-use plastics."
The importance of maintaining your vehicle correctly

Do you know the true condition of your vehicle?

When your vehicle is serviced are you told the condition of your brakes, suspension, steering, engine, gearbox, fuel system, tyres and most importantly if your vehicle is fitted with one when is your timing belt due for replacement? I could go on and on but there are many items that should be checked on a full service and inspection.

Do you get a full report from your garage explaining all of these things, any faults found and any items that are due for replacement in the near future?

Does the garage you use show you any parts that have been replaced on a service or repair?

Here at the “The Garage” in Arboleas we pride ourselves on maintaining your vehicle to the highest possible standard and carry out all servicing work and repairs according to the manufacturer’s guidelines and specifications. We have an up to date extensive database on every make and model made from 1970 to the current day.

Vehicle diagnostics, our speciality

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Río Chilar – an Unusual Hike!

Are your grandchildren coming over in summer? Do you get fed up with the same old visit to the beach and Mini Hollywood? Do you want to surprise and delight them with something truly special? If your answers to these questions are affirmative, do read on!

One of the most enchanting and also refreshing outings about, especially on a hot day, is a walk up the Chilar River up to La Presa; it combines hiking with the opportunity for a swim.

The river is in the eastern part of the Málaga province in the municipalities of Competa and Nerja, right in the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama natural park. The Chilar River is one of the most beautiful rivers in Málaga province with its canyons, gorges and countryside cut out by the water. It is surrounded by greenery and flowers, and the birds’ chirping and singing adds extra enchantment!

The walk starts near an electricity generation plant. The walk follows the course of the river, and you actually walk in the water which does not get much above knee height along the whole route. The river is fairly narrow at the beginning, only a couple of metres wide.

It does not take long before you meet the first water fall, and it is almost impossible to resist a dip! Do beware if you are with young children though, the water falls with quite some force.

As you continue upwards from the waterfall, the river starts getting narrower. The cliff towers over your head and there are some spectacular narrow passages with just a metre’s width which are known as ‘Los Cahorros’.

Once you have passed Los Cahorros, a little further up stream, you meet more waterfalls and pools of transparent water; this is a great place to take a break for swimming and eating your packed lunch. It may also be your point of return as the hiking gets a bit more complicated from here on.

If you decide to continue, the whole return hike is 8 kilometres. From the pools upwards the river bed gets a bit more slippery, but if you persist, you will get to a series of pools and ponds which are great for the kids to jump about in, thus providing you with a good excuse for a little rest!

Not too far to go now. Soon you get to the ‘Vado de los Patos’, a larger pool with a small waterfall; and after a last effort you reach ‘La Presa’, an old construction with a pool which captures the water from the electricity plant – and you have reached the definite point of return.

Whenever you decide to turn back, do not think it will be boring to return the same way as you came because everything will look different as you walk back, and the whole hike is a great experience!

Do make sure to wear tight fitting shoes or sandals which (obviously) won’t be damaged when they get wet. It is also advisable to wear socks.

The water is at ankle depth most of the route, but it does get deeper in Los Cahorros, so best thing is to wear socks.

A last word of advice: the water spring is quite cold, so use a rucksack to carry your arms free and keep the contents safe and dry.

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