

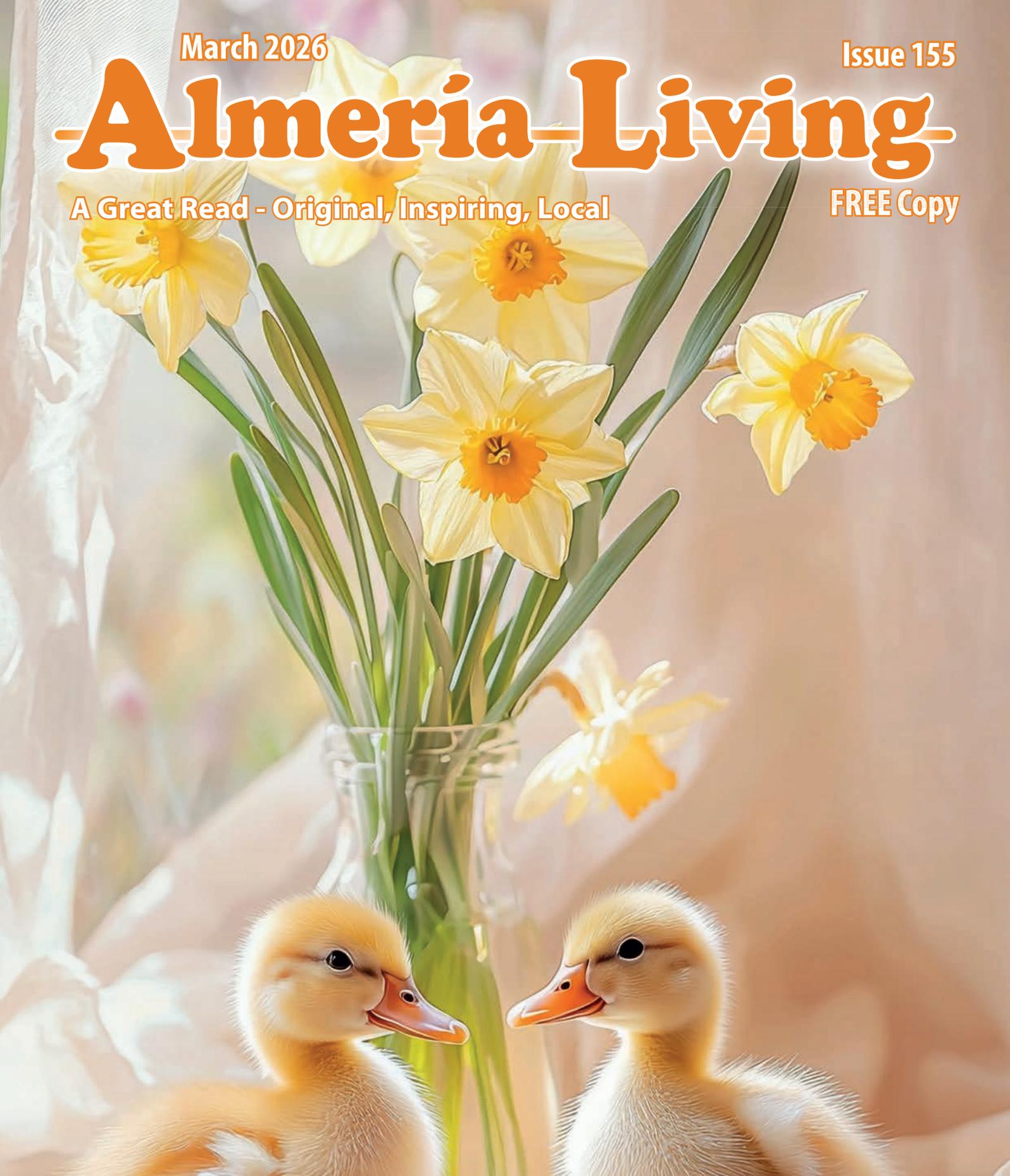
March 2026

Issue 155

# Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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Don't take too long getting the ticket, people have sometimes been fined while away from their car to pay! Leave the ticket on the dashboard for the car park attendant to see.

If you fail to obtain a ticket, or if you leave your car longer than you have paid for, you may get fined! But don't panic. Not all is lost...

If you have been fined, there will be an envelope and a small selection of documents under your windscreen wiper. In these it is explained that you can cancel the fine if you pay a small amount of money within 24 hours of the fine being issued. (Or up to 72 hours if you pay a car park attendant instead of putting money in the machine).

If you have failed to obtain a ticket the amount to pay is €4.25, if you have overstayed your welcome it is €2. (This applies to Huércal-Overa and correct at time of going to print. In other towns, check the amount).

Go to the ticket machine and press the yellow button three times. Then put in the correct amount. Press the green button and out comes a ticket.



Tear the ticket in two along the dotted line, keep the smaller part and put the larger part in the envelope together with the piece of paper that describes your vehicle and the fine.

Put the envelope through the slot at the top of the machine. And voila! You've saved yourself over 85 euros.

## Epilogue

Your trusting reporter went out of her way to get fined in order to be able to write this article.

In her eagerness to please, she failed to include the description of the vehicle and fine in the envelope and duly received a 90 euro fine in the post four weeks later.

But even then not all was lost! Armed with the aforementioned piece of paper and the counterpart of the receipt, she bravely swooped on the illustrious Town Hall of Huércal-Overa.

And there all the problems were solved. They duly took note of the fine and the proof of payment and all was forgotten and forgiven.

# Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local



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Welcome to the March 2026 issue of Almería Living.

This is a very festive month that includes Easter, St Patrick's Day, Spanish Father's day and, of course, Mother's Day.

On that note, I would like to wish my very special Mum a very happy Mother's Day on Sunday March 15th and I look forward to seeing you in May when we can celebrate together.

We welcome our new scribe, MGM, who has written an amusing tale about his experience at a local Spanish fiesta. Read more on pages 52-54.

My scribes have been very busy, and I am most grateful for all their contributions, which I know you, the readers, also enjoy.

Many thanks, as always, to our many advertisers, who continue to support our magazine and reap the benefits of doing so. Local businesses rely on our trade so please try to use them whenever you can.

We hope you enjoy your read this month. Please don't forget to tell our advertisers that you saw them in the Almería Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in April.

Karen (Ed)



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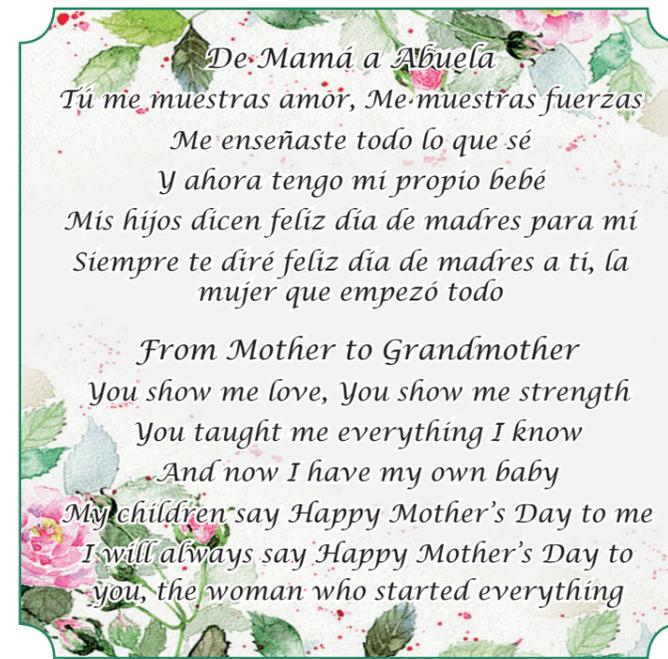
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# Digital Certificate – everyone should have one

A Digital Certificate, also known by many as a Digital Signature, is an electronic tool that allows secure identification of an individual or company in the digital environment.

It is essential for securely carrying out online tasks with the Spanish administration. Whether you need to sign documents electronically, or access government services, a digital certificate ensures your identity is verified and your transactions remain secure.

With this certificate, you can perform multiple procedures online, saving time and avoiding unnecessary travel and allows access to public and private services 24/7.

There are several Certification Authorities authorised to issue digital certificates in Spain. The most well-known is FNMT (Fábrica Nacional de Moneda y Timbre) which is a widely used public entity for obtaining certificates and DNIe (Electronic National ID Card).

Some people may already have a Clave, which is also a form of digital identification, but this has its limitations and is not as user-friendly.

With the Digital Certificate, you can carry out various procedures including:

- Access electronic medical records
- Carry out procedures with Townhalls and other public administration offices
- Perform procedures with Traffic (DGT)
- Access the Social Security electronic headquarters
- Sign documents electronically
- Consult and manage requests with the Tax Agency

- Request criminal record certificates
- File tax returns
- Tourism License processes

It is only possible to have one active digital certificate – if a new one is requested it overrides any that are already in the system. For example, many people have an accountant who files their tax returns and that company may already have a digital certificate set up for them. The certificate can be shared with anyone who needs to use it.



To obtain a Digital Certificate, it is necessary to register on the FNMT website, which generates a unique code.

This code must to be presented in person, along with photo ID, to an authorised verification entity such as the Townhall or Notary, where they witness the applicants signature.

Once this has been verified it is possible to download the certificate from the FNMT website. It is only possible to download a certificate from the same device it was applied for so it is important to create a back up that can be used on other devices.

Digital certificates in Spain have an expiration date depending on the type. If it's a personal digital certificate, it expires within 4 years. If it's a company digital certificate, it expires in 2 years.

An email is sent when the Digital Certificate is due to expire and this can then be renewed on the FNMT website. If action is taken before expiry then there is no need to revisit the Townhall for verification.

If you would like help obtaining and using a Digital Certificate or would like assistance with some of the many processes, such as changing address with DGT or obtaining a Fiscal Certificate from the Tax Office then please contact the team at C.A.T. Services.

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# Spanish Provinces

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. In February we journeyed to Cuenca and now our next of Spain's provincial Capitals takes us up to the Costa Brava .....

## Gerona in Gerona



Gerona is Catalonia's northernmost province. It borders on the provinces of Barcelona and Lérida, on France and the Mediterranean Sea. Gerona also has a small exclave surrounded by French territory, Llívia, which covers a territory of 12.83 km<sup>2</sup> and has 1,665 inhabitants.

The highest point in the province of Gerona is Puig Pedrós at 2,914 m, situated in the Catalan Pyrenees.

The province's greatest claim to fame is undoubtedly the Costa Brava (the Wild Coast) which stretches 214 km from Blanes in the south to Port Bou on the French border in the north. The wild rocky beauty of this coastline turned it into one of the first tourist areas when foreigners began to discover the charms of Spain. Today, the majority of the small, traditional fishing villages have turned into busy tourist resorts with high-rise buildings and noisy music pounding throughout the night.

But there are still unspoilt beauty spots to be found and quiet coves that will take you back to the Spain that first attracted foreign visitors.

Gerona province covers an area of 5,910 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to 830,994 souls, 108,352 of which are to be found in its capital of the same name.

Sadly, the city of Gerona, situated where it is, close to France, Barcelona and the Costa Brava, tends to be a place people pass through on their way somewhere else. This is completely unfair as it is a beautiful city in its own right with no end of fascinating and interesting features and areas.

Just like last month's featured city, Cuenca, Gerona is famous for its 'casas colgantes', hanging houses, which in this city are hanging out over water rather than over a deep gorge. They are sat on the river Onyar, and they have been painted in beautiful pastels. One of the many bridges that cross the river in that area was constructed by Gustave Eiffel's company, and

when you go there, there will be no prize for guessing which bridge it is!

Gerona's Jewish quarter, El Call, dates back to the Middle Ages and it is one of the best preserved of its kind, not only in Europe, but in the world! Gerona's Jews co-existed peacefully with Moors and Christians for centuries and the community thrived. However, during the Inquisition the Jewish population had to renounce their faith or leave, like everywhere else in Spain. But the medieval quarter has been preserved, and it is a labyrinth of steep and narrow streets; here and there you will find small patios that let in the light, and the ambiance feels like it would have been 500 years ago.

The Arab baths are also worth mentioning as well as the Rambla de la Libertad with its arched pavements and its weekly flower market, when the whole area is an explosion of colour and fragrance.

The climate in Gerona is warm in summer and temperate in winter with variable spring and autumn temperatures. There isn't a dry season as such, although the rainfall is much sparser in summer than



he kept his primary home there, although he spent some years in Paris, Madrid and the USA during the Civil War.

Dalí left his mark on the province, not least with the so-called "Dalinian Triangle". The Dalinian Triangle is a cultural route in Gerona's Empordà region connecting three key sites in Salvador Dalí's life and work: the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres, which is where he was born, created his surrealist museum, and died, Portlligat House-Museum, where he lived and worked for many years, and Púbol Castle, which was a gift to his wife and muse, Gala.

during the rest of the year.

Gerona takes its gastronomy very seriously, and there are no less than 20 Michelin stars to be found in the province as a whole, distributed on 15 establishments. El Cellar de Can Roca, a three star restaurant, can be found in Girona capital, as can several other one star establishments.

Thanks to Gerona's situation between mountains and coast, much of the gastronomy is based on surf and turf; Gerona is also proud of its cold meats and dried sausages, and the butifarra, which is a well-known Catalanian fresh sausage can also be found in its Gerona version in all shops and restaurants.

The world-famous surrealist artist, Salvador Dalí, was born in Figueres in the province of Gerona, and throughout his lifetime



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# Cadaqués

## The Pearl of the Costa Brava

Should you ever have time to spare on your drive back to the UK, and if you are taking the route going up the east coast of Spain, do yourself a favour and stop off for a day or two in the coastal town of Cadaqués.

It is the most easterly town on the Iberian Peninsula, tucked in on the coast in the district of Alto Ampurdán in the province of Gerona, Catalonia. It is cut off from the rest of Ampurdán by the Puig del Paní and Puig de Bufadors mountains, and up to the end of the 19th century it was a fishing village virtually isolated from the rest of the mainland.

The name Cadaqués comes from 'Cap de Quers' or 'Cap d'Aques' which translate into 'Cape of Rocks'.

Traditionally a fishing village, there are fishing regulations especially for Cadaqués that date back to the 16th century.

In the 19th century the village was famous for its curing industry, and although it is no longer as extensive and important as it was before, it is still one of the main sources of non-tourist income. Anchovies from Cadaqués are famous for their flavour and quality.

The long-standing isolation of Cadaqués has produced a unique version of the Catalan language, and although it contains the typical particularities of the province, it also has some of its own differentiations, and there are language books that are dedicated to dealing with this particular way of talking.

The isolation of Cadaqués became attractive to artists and tourists alike from the beginning of the 20th century, and they spread out



over the easiest accessible areas. The more secluded areas were ignored and they have preserved their original urban appearance.

Many wealthy families from Barcelona, Figueres and Gerona started acquiring summer homes there at the beginning of the 1900s. One of them was the Dalí family from Figueres, and their son, the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, made the summer home into his fixed abode in the late 1940s.



There is a museum dedicated to him in the town.

Today Cadaqués has preserved its fishing village charms at the same time as being a popular tourist destination.

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# Look Good - Feel Great

## The Power of Fragrance

Inhaling, smelling, sniffing – the human nose is capable of detecting the most diverse aromas. However, the act of smelling encompasses more than the simple scent. If something bothers us, “it stinks”. How are our actions influenced by what is in the air?

On average, an adult will inhale and exhale 26,000 times per day. Despite the millions of scent molecules entering our nose, humans are capable of detecting and distinguishing only about 10,000 of the 400,000 scents that exist on earth.

At the same time, these must be highly concentrated. This makes us humans rather poor smellers - microsmites. By comparison, the mucus membrane of a cat's nose covers five times as much surface as that of a human, and while dogs possess approximately 240 million olfactory cells, humans must make do with only about 10 million.



All these insights do not change the fact that science knows considerably more about the other four senses than it does about the olfactory sense. The visual sense depends on the wavelength of the light, and the auditory sense detects frequencies and amplitude.

*Continued on page 10 .....*

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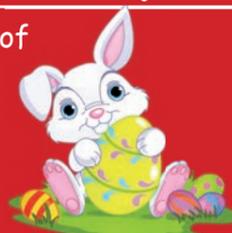
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..... Continued from page 9

The factors that make a difference during the act of smelling are not easily discerned. This is why we refer to the other senses, when we describe a scent. A fragrance is therefore heavy or floral, or it is circumscribed by using comparisons, such as “smells of freshly mown grass”. Researchers are nevertheless certain: our olfactory sense, and what it perceives, exerts a vast influence on our daily lives – consciously and unconsciously.

For example, certain emotions may be elicited if they are connected to a scent – a fact that has been recognized since antiquity. The Greek philosopher Aristotle knew: “Man does not perceive a fragrance without experiencing a sense of either pleasure or displeasure.”

Our sense of comfort also depends on what we smell. Even our mood and our actions can be manipulated, or even directed, by fragrances. Industry in particular has discovered this power of manipulation called scent branding. For the past few years, supermarkets have been enveloped in the aroma of freshly baked bread, and movie theatres smell of popcorn where there is none.

All these manipulations have the same goal: to prompt impulse purchases that visitors may not have considered in the absence of the surrounding smell. Or they are supposed to feel so comfortable that they will always return. An American hotel chain sprays its lobbies with the scent of apple pie so that guests will feel immediately at home.

They are taking advantage of the fact that the olfactory bulb is integrated into the limbic system, the very region of the brain that is responsible for processing emotions. This is why scents will typically elicit an instinctual response and only rarely a rational one.

Olfactory perception is passed directly from the hippocampus to long-term memory storage, without being filtered. For this reason, scents are closely linked to memories. When we inhale certain fragrances, images, emotions and even physical reactions often

appear instinctively.

Surrounded by the smell of freshly baked cookies, we think of Christmas. If a person ahead of us on the street wears a perfume that reminds us of someone familiar, that person will appear before our mind’s eye.

This also works the other way around. Looking at a photograph from our childhood, at times the very smell that our memory associates with the event will enter our noses – although it is not present at the time.

Every person has their very own olfactory memory triggers. The important difference is whether the salty smell of the ocean or the warm summer rain is linked to positive or negative memories.

Our olfactory sense not only influences our purchasing decisions and our memories. Love, too, goes through the nose. “Whoever controlled the fragrances controlled the hearts of men”, says Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, the perfumer with the distinct ability to discern fragrances in Patrick Süskind’s bestseller “Perfume”.

We are under the impression that when it comes to the choice of a partner, external factors decide whether or not we will find someone attractive. However, it is finally the nose that guides us. Men and women with distinct aromas, in particular, will find each other interesting.

The fragrance of the body represents an expression of our immune system. This is the reason our olfactory system prefers those



potential partners whose bodily scent – and therefore whose immune system – is as different from our own as possible. Such a union will produce offspring who are equipped with an ideal and especially robust combination of both immune systems – an evolutionary mission that should not be underestimated.

There are, however, factors that may change olfactory preferences: the contraceptive pill, but also age and past experiences influence our reactions to scents. Even if the aroma may be the initial trigger – once we get to know a person more closely, all the senses will have their say.

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INTERVIEW WITH CARMEN DEL ÁGUILA FOR THE ALMERÍA LIVING MAGAZINE

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**Almería Living:** *Who are the ideal candidates to use these types of lenses?*

**Carmen:** Mainly people from 40 years old who have noticed difficulty seeing or using devices but who also want to see clearly from a distance. They are perfect for those who are looking for comfort and style in their day-to-day life.

**Almería Living:** *What advantages have users noticed in their daily routine?*

**Carmen:** Less visual fatigue, better posture, ease of reading, using a computer or driving. Besides, treatments like anti-reflective, or photochromic, further increase the comfort.

**Almería Living:** *On the subject of photochromic lenses, why are they indispensable?*

**Carmen:** They protect the eyes from UV rays, preventing long-term damage, for example, cataracts or macular degeneration. They reduce glare, improve contrast and of course, give a touch of style to any look.

**Almería Living:** *Can you combine progressive lenses with sunglasses?*

**Carmen:** Absolutely! Photochromic progressive lenses offer UV protection and clear vision from any distance. They are ideal for those who are looking for comfort, health and style without compromising any aspect.

Photochromic lenses are ideal to be worn in any situation throughout the day and can adapt their colour to the light.

**Almería Living:** *Any final advice regarding choosing the perfect lenses?*

**Carmen:** Always go to a specialist for a complete check-up. Choose good-quality lenses suited to your needs and adequate for your daily routine.

Comfort, visual health and style go hand in hand. At Optica Almería we are experts in progressive lenses and we can adapt them to your needs.

**Almería Living:** *Any final words?*

**Carmen:** Good glasses don't only improve your vision, they improve your life.

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# Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row of each 9x9 cube must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

				8		6		
7				3	9	8		
		7		5	1			
	5	2	1	8		3		
7			3			9	6	
3	6	8		2				
		3		4	1	8	5	
2	4		7	6	9		7	8
		9	4			4	3	
								6
								2
								5
								9
								6

## Samurai Sudoku

				1	9	3		
				5	8	4	7	1
				2	7		3	
								8
5		6	1			4		
	3			6		7		
	4	3	2		2			
1			7	5				
				1	4			9
			9			5		
9	8		1					3
4		2		3				6
	7		2			8		

## Star Puzzle

To complete the puzzle fill in each of the empty hexagon cells with numbers between 1 & 7 following the 3 rules below;

1. No numbers in a horizontal line can be repeated.
2. No numbers in a diagonal line can be repeated.
3. No numbers in the 7 grey hexagons can be repeated.



\* Note that each white hexagon belongs to a line of 7 that must contain each of the numbers between 1 and 7

# An Osteopath on a Mission - Ep. 5

By Ree Hyde DO MROE. 629.



## Hands With Heart

Foundation

If you've been following my adventures over the last few issues, you may remember the decidedly dilapidated minibus that was waiting for us on the opposite bank of the Rio Telire, to carry us on the remainder of our journey into the heart of the Talamanca jungle, and for the duration of the next 5 days. With its screaming clutch, blistered paint, desiccated seat covers and wonky chassis, clearly, it had seen some action. And it was on day 4 of 5, that it finally shuffled off its automotive coil.

After a full morning treating indigenous BriBri tribespeople, we'd had another delicious home-cooked lunch back at Radio Cultural La Voz in Amubri village, then boarded the minibus to head off to the first location of the afternoon session. Alighting into a warm drizzle, a handful of kilometres and half an hour later, the squawks of scarlet macaws above, the dense jungle in every direction, we threw on our rain ponchos and donned our backpacks ready for whatever the afternoon had in store.



the family elder to announce our arrival, and to request permission to enter. A wave from the doorway, and we approached the house, removing our wellies before stepping onto the raised concrete porch.

Continued on page 16 .....



Splitting into 2 groups, a Hands with Heart team leader and 2 Bri Bri guides with each, we moved off in opposite directions into the dense canopy, to find the homes of the next patients on the list.

The first house that afternoon was set in a clearing amid a large expanse of soft green grass, dotted with grumpy chickens and white Muscovy ducks. A pair of tethered mules briefly raised their heads, as a tribeswoman carrying the day's crop in a bag suspended from her forehead passed through, a pig and a dog at her heels.

Respecting BriBri tradition, we waited a few metres away from the single story, block-built structure, as our guide called out to

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..... Continued from page 15

Entering the home single file, our eyes adjusted to the darkness beneath the corrugated metal roof, the only light in the narrow hallway peeking around the edges of a window draped with a heavy blanket. One by one we introduced ourselves to the family elders, shaking hands, repeating the traditional Bribri phrases of respect and

gratitude, in a manner, which after almost 4 days living within the indigenous community had become almost second nature, and set to finding out what the family needed, and how we could best help them.

A couple of hours later, 2 elders and 2 children successfully treated, we said our goodbyes to humans and livestock alike, and hiked back through the trees to find the minibus to carry us onward to our second location of the afternoon. Already waiting, doors open, we hopped aboard, to find a newly acquired passenger.

Head thrown back over the metal seat frame, heels up on the seat in front, grinning ear to ear, a plastic bottle of the local firewater thrust into the air in greeting, the extremely friendly young chap was absolutely soused off his bazookas!

The engine idling, our driver, guides and team leader discussed the schedule for the rest of the afternoon as our inebriated friend lolled his head side to side, unable to focus; it really was a very funny few minutes, as he chatted away utterly unintelligibly, as we took turns to push him back onto his seat each time he swerved into the aisle.

But up front there was an issue, it seemed we needed to be heading in the opposite direction to pick up the other team, but the dirt road was not only rutted and extremely narrow, it was lined either side by a dense screen of banana and cacao trees as far as the eye could see. We were already pressed for time if we wanted to reach all of the patients on today's list, and combined with the lack of somewhere to turn the minibus around without travelling a long way in the wrong direction, this was clearly a bit of a problem, given that we had limited time remaining in the jungle.



A moment of tension, as the team decided how best to proceed, when suddenly, in a moment of sheer bravado, our lovely, though it would turn out, misguided driver, threw caution to the wind, attempted to hang a U-ey, and slammed us nose first into a ditch. There was a very loud bang, followed closely by what can only be described as a wail of despair from the direction of the driver's seat, and well, that was that.

Continued on page 18 .....

## Pain in your hamstrings?

The hamstrings enable you to bend your knees and pull your legs back as you walk.

They also assist the gluteal muscles (or "glutes") in the buttocks, which propel you forward when you get up from a chair or climb stairs.

The glutes also help you come to a stop from a run or walk and lower your body to sit down or squat.

But when the glutes are weak, which is common in the age of sitting too much, the hamstrings are continually overworked and overloaded.

Tight, overworked hamstrings are easily strained, especially if there's a sudden burst of energy.

The best way to protect your hamstrings is to keep all of your leg muscles healthy and working together, including the glutes, and the quadriceps at the front of the thighs.

Your Osteopath can assess you and prescribe a strengthening programme for you to do at home, as well as treat other areas of the body which may be contributing to your hamstring pain, such as the hip, knee or ankle, or areas which are painful, such as the lower back, due to functional compensatory changes which have occurred.

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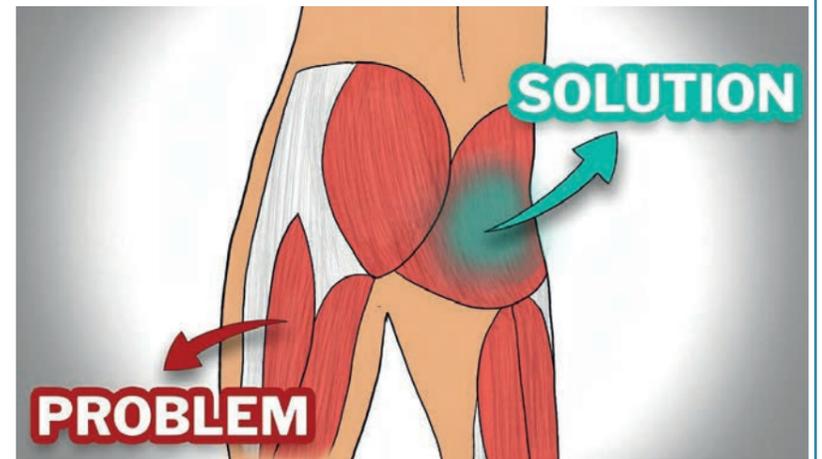
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..... Continued from page 16

Miraculously, after a lot of grinding of gears, and muttered obscenities, he eventually managed to manoeuvre us out of the ditch, all of us still aboard, Horacio home-brew completely oblivious to the drama.

We got out to ascertain what level of catastrophe we were dealing with. And there was our poor driver in front of the minibus, staring at the ground, head in hands. Prior to our inelegant plunge, the front axle had already clearly seen better days, but it was now, most definitely, an ex-axle. The front axle was no more.

So the situation was.....the other team were waiting to be collected, we were a long way from a workshop, there wasn't likely to be a tow truck available this side of the river, and time was getting on. We needed a plan, we also needed a phone signal.

Our guides leapt into action and marched off to find higher ground with less tree cover. 20 minutes later they were back with good news. Someone was en route to collect us. Another 10 minutes passed, until finally we heard a vehicle approaching, and there it was, our saviour, the school bus! With team 2 already aboard! Now facing in the right direction, off we went to our next destination, to finish what would turn out to be a very long day indeed.

To this day I don't know how long our driver waited with the bus, or

where it went, or how it got fixed so quickly. Or in fact, what happened to our home-brew connoisseur friend. But the next morning to our amazement, there was our driver looking very smug, waiting at the entrance to Koswak Lodge, our home in the jungle, alongside the now burned into my memory forever, white and sky blue minibus with its spanking new front axle.

Astonished, but happy to see that both driver and bus were completely recovered, we climbed aboard and headed off to our last few patients of our jungle mission, before our final stop, a very traditional and very special cacao ceremony.

*Hands With Heart Foundation is a registered charity, founded in 2016. Providing free healthcare services to children and adults with disabilities in Indonesia, Argentina, Ukraine and Costa Rica, who have limited or non-existent access to healthcare services, the foundation seeks to empower communities through healthcare, education, and social action, and to raise awareness about disability and inclusion.*

<https://handswithheartfoundation.org/>  
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# Pets Corner Dakota - The Two-Year Itch

Hi again – and Happy New Year! Better late than never, they say, and seeing as this is the first time I'm talking to you since Christmas, I'm gonna take the opportunity to wish you a fantastic 2026.

And I'm hoping that I'll have one as well. At least better than last year!

When I came home from my summer holidays at the training centre in July, I started itching, and that itch just got worse and worse as the weeks and months passed, no matter what mum and Uncle Javier, my doctor, came up with to try to help.

So the year ended with me itching and scratching all over and gnawing at my backside because it bothered me so much! This, in turn, made the hair fall out of the back of my legs and my tail, and I tell you it could get pretty cold to do a 'sit' at training on a cold winter's evening!

Uncle Javier took photos for someone called El Laboratorio, which was okay, but when mum wanted to take photos for My Journal, I drew the line! I mean, how would you like to have your manky backside photographed and published in Almería Living?

For the first few months, mum and Uncle Javier tried to get rid of the itch with pills. I don't like pills. They taste bitter and turn into paste on your tongue. Mum knows this, and nonetheless she tried to make me take them.

I always do everything in my power to avoid taking pills. Mum thinks she can disguise them in ham or pate and that I'll swallow them without realising. Dream on! Medication stinks to high heaven, so I know already before I accept the proffered bribe that it's there, and it's just a question of separating the good stuff and swallow it before spitting the pill out on the floor.



Humans reckon they're so clever, so surely they should be able to think of another way of helping us, their sick friends, that isn't disgusting pills or painful injections? It seems not.

Continued on page 20 .....

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..... Continued from page 19

Anyway, the pills didn't work, and things looked up: In order to eliminate grain allergy, they changed my diet to grain free dry food, and it was delicious! I ignored the pained look on mum's face every time she got out her wallet before going into the vets to pick up my gourmet dinner. Not my problem.

However, after 8 weeks of that, it was clear that it didn't affect my itch, so it was back to the drawing board.

It was decided that I should have a blood test to decide what it is I'm allergic to. More pricking! Just as well that there are no dog junkies, or I could be mistaken for one!

So, yet another blood-letting session was initiated and completed. The result of the test? I don't appear to be allergic to anything! Hallelujah!! In theory. But the itch persisted, so what could be causing it?

Uncle Javier said that the next step would be to send me to see a skin

specialist, but that one of those wouldn't see me until I had been on a completely hypoallergenic diet. And who's that when it's at home? I'm not sure, but it tastes fantastic! And mum went white when she had to pay for it!

I've figured out that food taste is in direct proportion to mum's misery. The more miserable she looks when she buys it, the better it tastes! If I ever see her burst into tears when she buys food for me, I'll know that I'm in for a real treat!

Apart from the delicious food, I'm also on a special monthly pill which is supposed to get rid of absolutely all parasites, also those that the normal pipette and wormer tablet don't reach. And miracle of miracles: It tastes fantastic! It's just like a treat, and I wish I had to have it every day instead of only once a month.

Why don't all pills taste like it?

I enjoy it all the more because the downside of my hypoallergenic diet is that I'm allowed nothing else whatsoever! Can you imagine that? No farewell toothbrush by the gate in the morning when mum goes to work. No special treat when she comes home again. No frankfurters in training or treats when we practice at home. And no washing up after dinner.

Pretty grim, huh?



But actually, it's okay. My special dry food works as a replacement for all that, and I do enjoy it as a reward at training. It's a bit boring not being able to help in the kitchen, though. I've always helped mum getting rid of the unwanted bits when she's cooking, and rinsing the plates after dinner.

We've got six more weeks of this special regime, then I'm to go back to the full-on snacks and leftover regime to see whether this has made any difference.

So far, so good, I'm not itching at all anymore, and my fur is growing back on my backside. Just as the weather is getting warmer, typical!

The 22nd of this month will be my Happy Birthday, and hopefully by then I'll be back to my former glory so I can celebrate it looking as fit and healthy as ever – even if my birthday dinner will be no different from my daily dinners, and my birthday treats will be just the same as my dinner.

But at least I won't be itching!

# Spain's Working Dogs

They help track down people who have disappeared, they travel to scenes of natural disasters to help sniff out victims, they mark the place where someone is buried under the snow.

Spain's working dogs do this and much more thanks to their well-developed sense of smell, their personality, specialist training, and a desire to work and to please.

These rescue dogs can save our lives. Let's have a look at what characterises these furry heroes.

Any breed of dog can be used for rescue work. However, they must have certain traits that make them better equipped for the job.

The kind of dogs that are sought after are playful animals who love to have fun with their toys (the toy is the motivator and reward for working), who have a good hunting instinct (again, for fun, not aggressive), a good sense of smell, as well as the will to work. They must also be very sociable and be able to work without distraction when surrounded by lots of people.

It is a known fact that dogs have great connection and empathy with man and that they can perceive pain and unhappiness. This motivates



them even more to rescue people who are suffering. Again, basic socialisation is a must, both for the training period and also once they work in places with throngs of people and other dogs.

Rescue dogs must also be impervious to loud noises such as explosions, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, etc., and never be put off working and playing by anything in their immediate surroundings.

The most common breeds used in rescue work are Belgian Malinois, German Shepherd and some retrievers, such as Labrador and Golden Retriever. These are animals who have the necessary characteristic in their genes and the potential for reinforcing these genes to turn them into good rescue dogs.

Of course, Saint Bernard and Newfoundland dogs are also known as rescue dogs in specific situations, especially in mountainous and snowy regions.

Any other breed can perfectly well become rescue dogs and save lives, the

only basic requirement is that they have the special characteristics required for the job.

Continued on page 22 .....

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..... Continued from page 21 .....

And of course, whether or not the dog is a breed that is genetically predisposed for the job, they all need thorough training. From about one year of age, a dog with the right characteristics can start his training, although some are ready earlier, and others may need a bit more time before they are receptive to education.

Training continues throughout the working life of the dog, and he is always accompanied by a handler whom he recognises as his leader. It usually takes one or two years of intense training, both emotional, physical, and to a high standard of discipline – and the training is always done through play.

During training the dog learns to associate finding a victim with a reward (getting to play with his toy), which makes him do his very best to succeed; and eventually the very accomplishment of his task becomes a reward in itself.

Continuous training is essential, as is the exposure to different

situations and environments: Landslides, debris, burnt down, aquatic, and subterranean areas amongst others.

During the whole process the training team works in close collaboration with veterinarians who make sure the dogs are well, both physically and emotionally, that they enjoy what they are doing, that they do not get wounded, and generally that they are in optimal health.

The training technique consists in teaching the dogs to relate their toy – their motivator – with a person, and every time they are with this person, he will use the same toy. They also learn to relate the smell of human beings with their toy. They are never rewarded with food, the reason being that a rescue dog might ‘mark’ the smell of food under an avalanche or debris rather than the smell of a human being.

Although for a rescue dog working is playing, these brave animals carry out a very hard job with great physical and emotional demands, so they are usually retired between the ages of seven and ten, in accordance with the toll the work has taken on them over the years.

Rescue dogs are true heroes, and they deserve to be able to enjoy their last years in a relaxed environment without physical and emotional demands and pressure.



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## La Zenia

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### MINI BREAKS

Following a very successful choice of destinations during 2025, Parra Travel would like to hear from you about places you would like to visit in Spain.

We are already working on 2027, we would like to continue to put together programmes that suit every budget and dream.

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# Cartagena






**17<sup>th</sup> March**  
From **19.00€** per person

Pick-Ups Possible From:  
Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa & Huércal Overa

An opportunity to visit this historic City and Naval Port - so much to see and enjoy. Visit the museums, the Roman Amphitheatre, stroll the promenade or take a boat trip around the busy harbour.

# Guadix






**22<sup>nd</sup> April**  
**19.50€** per person

Pick-Ups Possible From:  
Los Gallardos 0800, Hotel Overa 0820, La Alfoquia 0825, Arboleas 0835, Albox 0845  
Return leaves at 1700

The coach will take you to Guadix city with plenty of time to browse, see the sites and take a leisurely lunch. Why not take a trip to the famous troglodyte caves in Purullena where the locals are more than happy to show you around.

## The Spectacular Easter Celebrations of Lorca



One of the most spectacular Easter celebrations in all of Spain is in fact right on our door step: in Lorca.

The Easter processions in Lorca were declared of International Tourist Interest in 2007 by the General Secretariat of Tourism of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade of the Government of Spain.

Furthermore, some of the costumes embroidered by hand in gold and silk, depicting important events in the life of the personages who wear them, are the first fabrics to ever have been declared Assets of Cultural Interest.

This fiesta is also known as 'Blancos y Azules' (Whites and the Blues), referring to two of the brotherhoods of Lorca. Although there are other fraternities in Lorca, these two are the most important and there is a clear rivalry between them to put on the most spectacular and colourful show.

The main processions are on the Friday before Palm Sunday, Palm Sunday itself, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

The processions on the two first days are more religious than biblical, in other words not as spectacular and with fewer horses and chariots.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday evenings see the event of the two main processions of the whole Lorca Easter Week.

The grand processions take place in what is known as 'La Carrera'. There are people dressed as Roman emperors, Egyptian troops, Roman gods in heavy carriages, chariots and on horseback, and sculptures of virgins with rich embroidered robes, luxurious standards, and so on. The standard of the 'Prayer in the Garden' (white), better known as 'the floral cloth', is noteworthy.

The most highly anticipated floats include Cleopatra, carried on the shoulders of Egyptian troops, or the Antichrist, with its demonic appearance. There are also chariot races. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, the town is a splash of colour, gold and silver in a Baroque procession where the Brotherhoods (white and blue) try to outdo each other. The Whites gather round the Virgin of the Affliction, while the patron saint of the Blues is the Virgin of the Suffering.

Easter week is one of the most spectacular and emotional fiestas in Lorca. Religious devotion, art, colour and music combine in acts to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. Members of the different Easter brotherhoods, dressed in their characteristic robes, parade through the streets carrying religious statues to the sound of drums and music – scenes of sober beauty intermingled with spectacular processions. Lorca at Easter is well worth a visit.

## Caravaca De la Cruz & the Wine Horses

From the 1st to 5th May, Caravaca De la Cruz dresses up to enjoy its festival in honour of the Santísima y Vera Cruz de Caravaca. A main part of this festivity is the outstanding celebration of Wine Horses that takes place during the two first days. This has been declared of International Tourist Interest.



As well as the horses there are parades, battles of Moors and Christians and religious events, such as the Bathing of the Cross.

The history of this unique fiesta centres around the extraordinary story of the Vera Cruz (True Cross). This fragment of wood is said to have been part of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified and it has protected the city since the 13th century.

The presence of the Vera Cruz in Caravaca is the reason for its status as a Holy City, one of only 5 in the world, on par with Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela.

The legend dates back to the days of the Knights Templar, who had to seek refuge in the castle with the townsfolk because they were besieged by the Muslim armies. At one point the water supply became contaminated, people were becoming sick and dying of thirst, so the Knights were forced to leave the castle to look for fresh supplies. They couldn't find any water, but they did find flagons of wine! These were tied onto their horses and without delay raced back up the hill to the castle before the Moorish armies realised what was happening, bringing the precious liquid to the townspeople.

The wine was first blessed in the presence of the Vera Cruz, which was then bathed in the wine and when this was given to the people miraculously the sick and wounded were healed, and the contaminated water became drinkable!

On 2nd May each year, to commemorate this happening, 60 horses are dressed in spectacular embroidered cloaks and run up the hill to the sanctuary one by one, in a race against the clock. Four young men have to run together with each horse without ever releasing their hold so as not to be disqualified.

It can be extremely exciting and dangerous, as the streets are packed with onlookers who part to allow the horses to rush past just centimetres away!

Prizes are awarded for both the fastest horses and those with the most exceptional embroidered outfits.

The cloaks and hoods have all been embroidered by hand, often using gold thread, by members of the Peña (a group of family/friends), who work tirelessly all year to prepare for this special occasion.

# Merida

3 Nights  
**\*258€**  
per person






**13<sup>th</sup> ~ 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026**  
Staying at:  
**4\* Hotel Velada**  
Just 600m to Amphitheatre

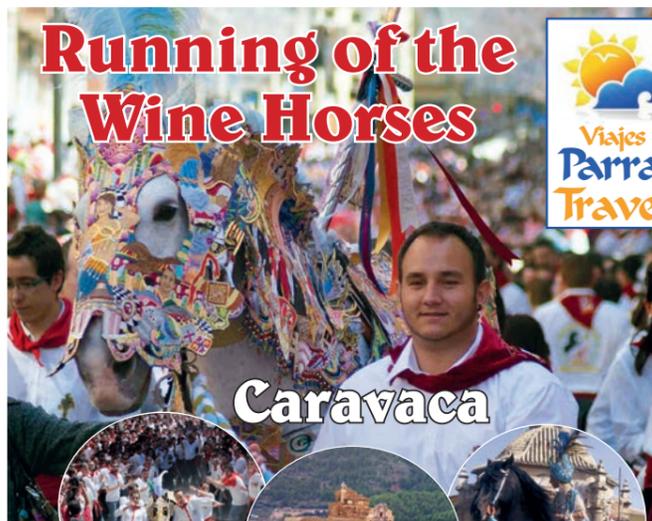
**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4  
Visit to Cáceres

\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

Pick-Ups Possible From:  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



# Running of the Wine Horses






**2<sup>nd</sup> May**  
**\*FROM 16.50€**  
per person

Pick-Ups Possible From:  
Albox 0850, Arboleas 0900, La Alfoquia 0910, Hotel Overa 0915 & Huércal Overa 0925, Turre 0845 Mojácar 0835  
Return leaves at 1730

On this day, locals recreate the legend in which the Knights Templar braved the Moorish armies besieging the castle to bring wine to the thirsty inhabitants, barricaded within. Horses dressed in spectacular embroidered mantles parade during the morning and then run up the hill to the Sanctuary in a race against the clock. There is also a splendid Moors & Christians Parade. Comfortable flat shoes and a packed lunch are highly recommended



# Salamanca

3 Nights  
\*358€  
per person






04<sup>th</sup> ~ 07<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Abba Fonseca - central location

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4  
Visit Ciudad Rodrigo  
Visit Alberca



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Cádiz / Jerez

3 Nights  
\*355€  
per person

**FULLY BOOKED**






18<sup>th</sup> ~ 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Soho Boutique Puerto in Puerto de Santa Maria

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4  
Visit to Jerez - day 2



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Ronda

3 Nights  
\*349€  
per person






14<sup>th</sup> ~ 17<sup>th</sup> September 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Maestranza Central city (opposite Bullring)

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4  
Visit Setenil de las Bodegas



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Sevilla

3 Nights  
\*422€  
per person

**FULLY BOOKED**






12<sup>th</sup> ~ 15<sup>th</sup> October 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Doña Maria Central Sevilla (near Cathedral)

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Transfer to/from hotel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Valencia

3 Nights  
\*477€  
per person






01<sup>th</sup> ~ 04<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Ininside Valencia Oceanic

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4

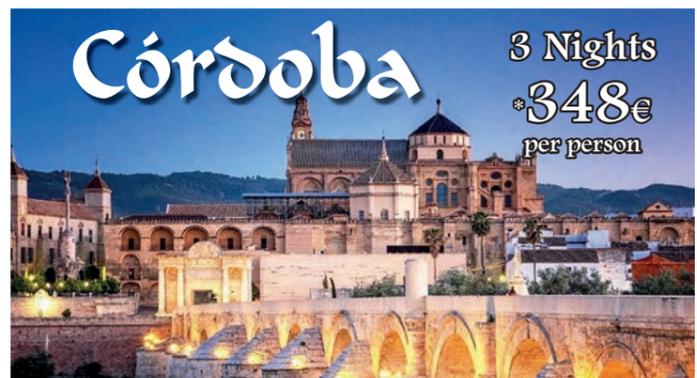


\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Córdoba

3 Nights  
\*348€  
per person






15<sup>th</sup> ~ 18<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel Hesperia central location

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Granada

2 Nights  
\*tbce  
per person






20<sup>th</sup> ~ 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Soho Boutique Central Old Granada (near Cathedral)

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Two nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2 + 3



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**  
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

# Gibraltar

3 Nights  
\*263€  
per person

**NEW**






16<sup>th</sup> ~ 19<sup>th</sup> November 2026

Staying at:  
4\* Hotel OH Campo Spain - 800m from border

**Price Includes:**  
Coach travel  
Three nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4



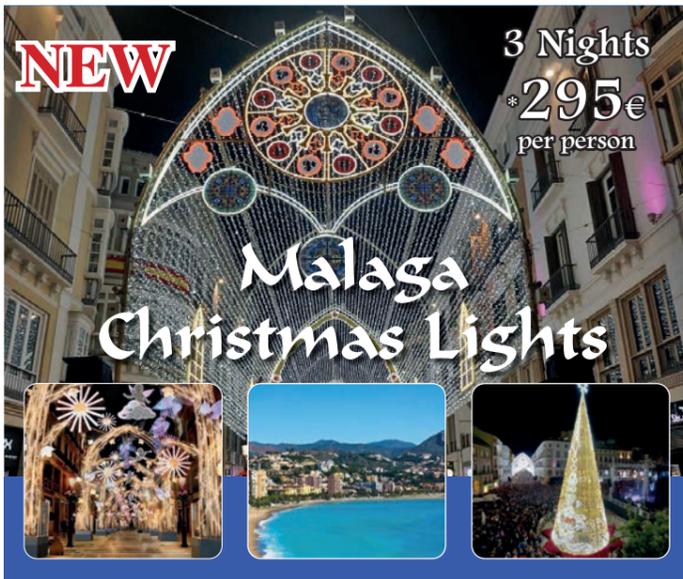
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per person

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**Benidorm Christmas**

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**NEW**



9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> December 2026

23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> December 2026

Staying at:

4\* Hotel Soho Boutique Equitativa

4\* Hotel Presidente or  
4\* Hotel Ambassador Playa I

Price Includes:

Coach travel  
Four nights in 4\* hotel  
Full Board includes wine and water  
Gala Meal (25th)

Price Includes:

Coach travel  
Two nights in 4\* hotel  
Breakfast - days 2 + 3

Pick-Ups Possible From:

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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa  
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request



\* Price based on 2 people sharing a room  
Single supplement upon request

## Proposed Mini Breaks 2026/2027



Here are more proposed mini breaks being arranged by Parra Travel for 2027

Lisbon - Portugal

El Escorial & Valley of the Fallen

Ubeda & Baeza

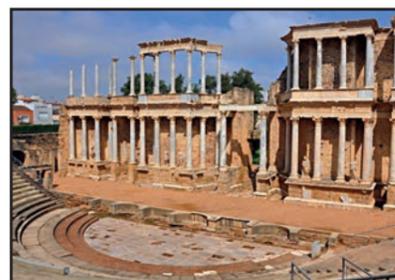
Don Quijote Windmills

Málaga

Benidorm

Anywhere you fancy?

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# HOMES & GARDENS

## A Brief History of Spain...part 7

By Mike Woolnough

Now, where were we?

Ah, yes... Aragon-Catalonia and Castile-León had become the two major Christian kingdoms with an embryonic Portugal on the side. Before we go any further we'll drop the double-barrelled bit and just call them Aragon and Castile.

We left our story in 1230 and the state of the kingdoms remained much the same for many years. The two kingdoms continued their push against the Moors; it was not a continuous battle but irregular incursions into Moorish territory. Sometimes the Moors won, sometimes the Christians, but the general trend was a gradual movement of Christians southward.

There tended to be tracts of "no-man's-land" forming the frontiers between the two and many towns have acquired the word "Frontera" as part of their name to remind us that they once were the borders of the Christian kingdoms. Similarly, "Puerta" and "Puerto" indicate the gateways to the kingdoms.

At the risk of becoming a bit like Mills and Boon, we will now add a touch of romance. The year is 1469 and in Portugal, King Alfonso V decides he wants a wife.

Continued on page 30 .....



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..... Continued from page 29

He is a widower, his first wife had died 14 years previously and at 37 he was not exactly the catch of the century! These apparent drawbacks did not stop him from aiming high. He had his eye on an 18-year old by the name of Isabella. She was heir to the throne of Castille. Alfonso wanted an alliance, and no, this is not a euphemism! In those days if you wanted to annex a kingdom there were two ways of doing it, fight for it or marry into it. The latter was much more preferable!

Sadly, Isabella was having nothing to do with a man twice her age, she had her eye on a young man called Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Aragon. He was actually a year younger than her and good looking. (Though to be fair, neither of their portraits do them any favours!) True to form, the course of true love did not run smoothly for her as the nobles of Castille favoured Alfonso. Isabella sent envoys in secret to Zaragoza, the site of the Court of Aragon and invited Ferdinand to meet her in Valladolid.

Ferdinand set off, also in secret. It is said that to avoid discovery he travelled as a servant, waiting on his entourage throughout the journey. When he met Isabella the attraction was instant and Alfonso's plans were dead in the water. But more problems lay ahead because as they were fairly closely related they needed a certificate from the Pope allowing them to "marry within the third degree of consanguinity".

A certificate was provided, but it was a forgery, cobbled together by Ferdinand's father and an obliging Bishop. They didn't waste much time with a long engagement and married in a private ceremony on 19 October 1469, in the Palacio de los Vivero in the city of



Valladolid.

Their marriage heralded a new age for Spain. In 1474 Isabella became Queen of Castille and five years later Ferdinand became King of Aragon. From that point on, they ruled both kingdoms jointly and with the defeat of the last Moorish kingdom of Granada in 1492, they jointly ruled all of Spain. Both of them were pious Catholics, in Isabella's case this was coupled with evangelistic zeal. This resulted in all Jews and Muslims being given an ultimatum. Convert to Christianity or leave the country. Many converted, many left and many took a third option.

They made it look as though they had converted, the outsides of their houses and the entrance halls took on the appearance of Catholic homes, but venture further in and they were still obviously Jewish or Muslim. They fell into a sort of "Catch 22" situation as regards the Spanish Inquisition. This was set up in 1478 to maintain Catholic Orthodoxy and replaced earlier less rigorous campaigns. It only had jurisdiction over Catholics so, in theory, Jews and Muslims were exempt. If they claimed exception they were expelled, if they claimed to have converted then they were subject to the very strict rules enforced by the Inquisitors.

In 1491 a young man from Genoa arrived on the scene and set about selling Isabella his grand plan. He believed the world to be round (as did most people) and by sailing west he would be able to reach The Indies. He wanted Isabella to bankroll his enterprise. In return, he promised her that he would bring great riches and along with these he reminded her of all those heathens that would be ripe for conversion to Catholicism. Her evangelical zeal was fired up but the clincher was the suggestion that the riches he would bring would finance an army that would enable her to capture Jerusalem from the Moors and return it to Christian rule – something that the Crusaders had failed to manage. She was hooked!

In 1492, as we have already learned, Isabella and Ferdinand defeated the last Moorish state of Granada, uniting Spain as a single Catholic country. In the same year, our Genoan's plan came to fruition and although he didn't reach The Indies he did manage to bring back great wealth and did provide what was to become an endless supply of potential converts. The man, as if you didn't know, was Christopher Columbus and, almost single-handedly he turned Spain into a super-power.

My inspiration for these articles comes from "SPAIN, an amazingly short history" by Bob Fowke. Published by Travelbrief Publications. ISBN 0-9548351-0-7



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# Melitta Bentz

By Jos Biggs

There's Mercedes Benz and then there's Melitta Bentz, who I think was more used to humanity than the former.

Mercedes Benz, a very nice car, but how many of us have daily cause to say 'thank you Mercedes?'

Melitta, on the other hand, is appreciated daily by coffee drinkers everywhere, most of whom have no idea who she was or what she did.

Melitta, maiden name Liebscher, was born in 1873, married Hugo Bentz, nobody is quite sure when, and so became Melitta Bentz, housewife and mother of three children.

They all drank coffee, they weren't sure why, because it didn't taste very nice, but everybody drank it so it must be alright.

In those days coffee was made by boiling the beans directly in the water and hoping that the sediment would stay in the bottom of the pot and not get poured into the cup.

To settle the grouts some hopeful souls put eggshells in the brew - well, that was never going to help, was it?

Others more entrepreneurial poured the coffee through a cloth, which was better, but what do you do with a soggy cloth when you fancy another cup?

One evening in 1908 she was sitting watching her children finish their homework, sipping her coffee and sifting the grouts out with her tongue when she had an idea.

She assembled a sheet of blotting paper, a copper cup, a hammer and a nail. She then hammered the nail into the bottom of the cup to create a small hole.

Her daughter Hertha looked up from her school book. 'Papa! Come quickly!' she cried as she ran out in search of her father, 'Mama has gone mad! She's hammering things into things.'

Hugo thought this quite unlikely; his wife was a level-headed woman, not given to fits of random hammering, but nevertheless he came.

Melitta had finished hammering. She had taken the blotting paper and folded it into the copper cup, which she was holding above a clean empty cup.

'Watch.' She said as she poured the coffee into the copper cup. It



seeped gently through the blotting paper and trickled out smooth and groutless through the recently hammered out hole and into the empty cup, held poised beneath.

'Try that.' She urged her husband.

He took the cup and a cautious sip. 'Mmmm, that's better.' He took another sip. 'Much better. No grouts. Tastes better too.'

He turned to the children. 'Hurry up, finish your homework and get ready for bed. Your mother and I have things to do.'

Horst and Willi exchanged a look and giggled. Hertha went red. They were all at the age when Mama and Papa having things to do meant something entirely different from inventing coffee filter papers!

Melitta refined her original blotting paper experiment, wasted no time in patenting her idea, and now, 118 years later, filters in her name are available in just about every supermarket.

Not only did she benefit coffee drinkers with her filters, but in 1932 she passed the business on to her children and set herself full-time to providing better working conditions for staff, including a 5 day working week, 3 weeks holiday, a Christmas bonus and Melitta Aid, a social fund for employees.

So it is not just coffee filters for which we should say 'thank you Melitta.'



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# Las Fallas – One of Spain's Most Spectacular Fiestas

Every year from 15th to 19th March the city of Valencia celebrates its most important fiesta of the year, Las Fallas.

Las Fallas is best known for the spectacular papier mâché models that are exhibited during the first days of the fiesta, and burned on the last, but there are many other aspects to this important fiesta.

No one is quite sure how Las Fallas actually came about, but of course there is no lack of theories.

The most popular of these is that for hundreds of years in Valencia, on the day before Día de San José, their patron saint, the carpenters would burn all the materials they did not need, as well as the wooden structures they used for their oil lamps which, with spring equinox, would now become surplus to requirements as the days grew longer.

Another theory is that Las Fallas is simply yet another of the many pagan celebrations with fire and fireworks of the equinoxes and solstices of the year, which have existed since time immemorial.

The last one we will mention here, is that the models, or 'Ninots', as they are called, stem from a long European tradition of hanging dolls representing personas 'non grata' from balconies or lamp posts before burning them on the fire.



million visitors that flock to the city to experience this unique fiesta.

The fiesta lasts five days, from 15th to 19th March, but the fiesta atmosphere starts already on 1st March from when, each day at 2pm in front of the Town Hall, a thunderous display of firecrackers is let off. This lasts about ten minutes and is in fact more auditive than visual.

*Continued on page 34*



The meaning of the word 'falla' has changed over time since its original meaning of 'torch'. In the 13th century, a 'falla' was the special torches that were lit during fiestas, and later, by the 16th century it had become the bonfire that was lit during meetings or fiestas; still later it meant the fire on which satirical puppets were burnt - until finally the word came to refer to the puppets themselves.

During Las Fallas, the population of Valencia swells. The regular population of 800,000 is more than doubled by the almost one



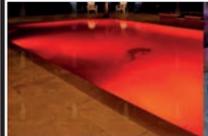

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..... Continued from page 33

But things start to sharpen up on 15th march when more than 700 giant 'Fallas' are raised all over the city, and most of the central streets are closed for motor vehicles. During the five days of the fiesta, the streets are full of people and activities.

The fires, the firecrackers, the spectacular fireworks, and not least the popular participation in all the aspects of the fiesta has made it world famous and earned it the declaration of 'Fiesta of International Tourist Interest'.

Music is an important part of this fiesta, and there are musical bands that accompany the various acts, from the daily firecracker display in front of the Town Hall to the spectacular 'Nit del Foc' (Night of Fire) on 18th March and the culmination of the fiesta with the burning of the 'Fallas' on the last day.

Another important event is the Flower Offering to the Virgen de los Desamparados (Defenceless), which happens on the 17th and 18th March in honour of Valencia's Patron Saint. The participants parade in their colourful regional outfits through the most central streets, accompanied by musical bands, to the Plaza de la Virgen in front of the cathedral where they lay down bouquets of flowers until these form a beautiful carpet which covers the plaza for several days.

But to the majority of visitors, the most important moments of Las Fallas are the raising and the burning of the giant 'Fallas' which are made from papier mâché, carton, wood, and gauze. The 'Fallas' are very life-like and they show scenes and personalities from current political and social events. Many of them tell several stories and



are so large that they need to be taken to the place where they are exhibited. They reach a height of 20 metres or even more.

The 'Fallas' compete in several different categories for prizes, the most important of which goes to the biggest and most spectacular of them all.

On the last day of the fiesta, all the 'Fallas' are burned, except one which has been chosen by popular vote to be spared. The lucky one will be exhibited in the Museo Local de Fallas together with the other models that have been spared in the past.



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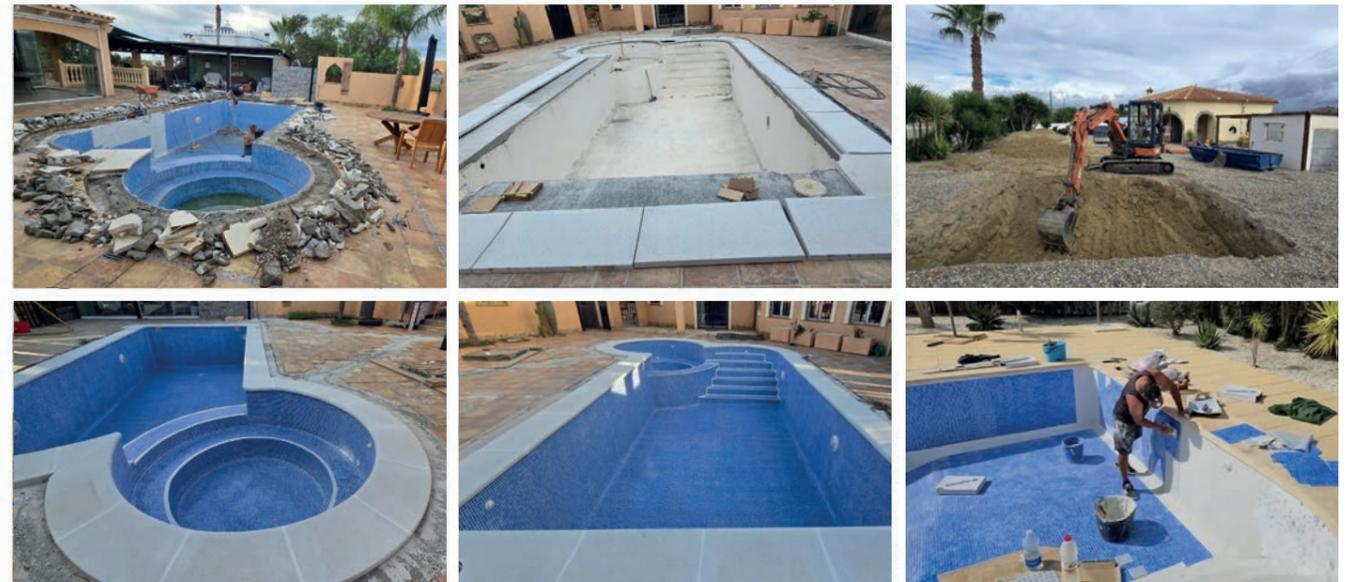
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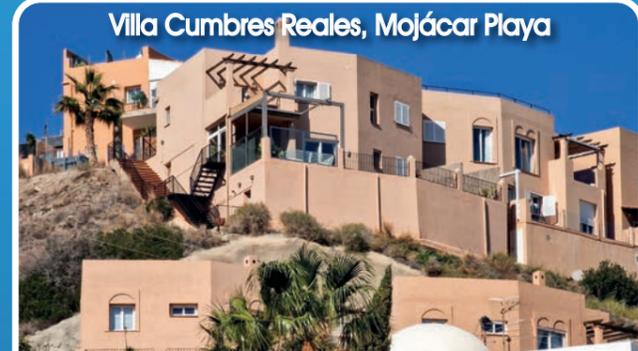
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# Clara Campoamor & International Women's Day By Tom Fynes

It is International Women's Day on the 8th of March. This is a very big deal in eastern Europe where the men will smother their women in flowers in a grand show of appreciation. It does not resonate so much in The West as we focus more on Valentine's Day and Mother's Day to celebrate women.

In 1910, Clara Zetkin proposed an International Women's Day at the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen. The first IWD was held on March 19th, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, with over a million participants. This then took off. On March 8, 1917, Russian women staged a strike for "bread and peace," which led in a way to the Russian Revolution. This event solidified March 8th as the date for International Women's Day.

In Spain we had Clara Campoamor campaigning for women's rights and, against hard opposition, she had some success. Women got the right to vote in Spain in 1933 before the likes of France & Switzerland. Campoamor became one of the first prominent female lawyers in Spain and was the first woman to argue before the Spanish Supreme Court. In 1931 she was elected deputy for Madrid to the Constituent Cortes and served on the Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Republican constitution

But not so fast you liberated women. Enter onto the Spanish stage, one Francisco Franco Bahamonde, who will call himself El Caudillo. Or Warlord. Better known to the world as just Franco.

His view on women's rights were not aligned with Clara Campoamor and he soon started implementing some very harsh rules that would affect Spanish women. Under Franco, women had basically no legal rights. Without a husband's consent (permiso marital), a wife was prohibited from employment, travelling away from home, and property ownership. Women were barred from a lot of professions. For example, magistrate, diplomat, notary, customs officer, stockbroker, and prison doctor. Want to go to university? Forget about it. Voting rights were removed.

Franco's regime promoted a strict Catholic view, that emphasised women should be confined to roles as stay-at-home wives and mothers. Divorce was now illegal and women were, more or less,



considered the property of their husbands. Spain had their own Moral Police Force. Among them was, The Brigada Político-Social (BPS) whose job was to go after morally corrupted citizens. Women and girls could be reported to authorities for violating female morality and imprisoned without trial. This New Spain was being made in Franco's image, and it clearly did not include a liberated woman.

And what of our women's rights here Clara Campoamor? She was forced into exile, first to France, then Argentina, before settling in Switzerland where she died in 1972, three years before Franco himself died in 1975, so she never saw the end of

the dictatorship. Clara Campoamor's ashes were repatriated from Lausanne, Switzerland and buried in the Polloe Cemetery in San Sebastián in May 1972.

If she had returned to Spain during Franco's reign, she would have faced a 12 year sentence for being amongst others, a feminist, which would have been seen during that regime as being morally corrupt. When Franco passed away in 1975, the "permiso marital" (marital permission) was abolished.

In 1977, Spanish women voted again in an election.

In 1978, Spanish women became, by law, equal to men.

In 1981, Spanish married women got civil rights, and divorce was back on the menu.

The Franco Spanish Inquisition days were over. But as we can see in other countries they can, very quickly, make a comeback.

So, on the 8th of March, pause for a moment, and remember Clara Campoamor and all the other brave and valiant women, who suffered so women in Spain could live a full and meaningful life.

Happy International Women's Day 2026.

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# MANIFESTO

By Evelyn McCrorie

I'm not particularly politically minded. When young, I was always too busy Scottish Country dancing or cycling for miles, or even just daydreaming.

So, it came as a big surprise to me to hear my parents, at the breakfast table, discuss politics in a heated fashion. I hasten to add; they were both on the same page.

One evening, my father came home, a triumphant gleam in his eye. He had mercilessly heckled Willie Ross, who in later years became Secretary of State for Scotland. My father took most of the credit for the man's defeat. His own chosen candidate just scraped home with a majority of 728 votes but went on to serve the Burgh for 33 years.

Later on, they had occasion to seek advice from that very man, Sir Thomas Moore. A perfect gentleman who dealt with their issue with grace and efficiency. As far as I knew, all family and friends voted for Sir Thomas. They liked him and he cared for them.

Fast forward to today. One very close family member living in England has been voting for the other side. My father will be turning in his grave!

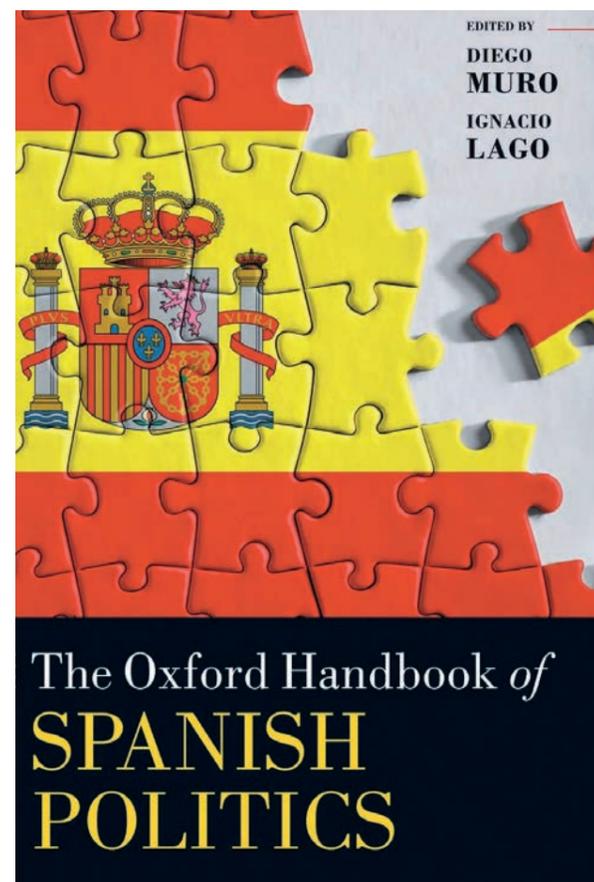
That close family member was very involved in the latest general election in Britain. She met up with aspiring candidates, handed out leaflets, knocked on doors, and attended the Party Conference. Nineteen months on she's had a change of heart. She considers her party's Manifesto isn't living up to its promises. She is now a passionate member of another party.

Here's my own Manifesto, for what it's worth.

Bring back good manners. They smooth our path through daily life. And they begin at home. I was taught to say, "Please may I leave the table?" A horrible aunt taunted "You can't take it with you." I never forgot that. Black mark to Aunt Jean. She forgot her manners.

Honesty would be good too. At school, in order to practise handwriting (do you remember handwriting?) we wrote "Honesty is the best policy." over and over.

Perhaps that motto could be emblazoned on the walls of corner



shops and supermarkets. And of course, in Whitehall.

And how about some fun? When was the last time you had a good chuckle? When did you last hear someone whistling as they walked down the street?

None of the above is easy.

But let's start with manners. "Manners maketh the man (or woman)." What a difference good manners make in all walks of life. My Party would declare them mandatory. Jeering, muttering or desk thumping would be outlawed.

Honesty would also be expected in those hallowed walls. My members would be required to admit mistakes, expose corruption and resign over principles.

And there's nothing wrong with a good sense of humour, with laughter rippling through the chamber when a witty remark is made.

Living in Spain, I confess to know nothing of its politics. I like the look of Pedro Sanchez but wouldn't know my PSOE's from my PPs!.

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# A Time for Change

"Hello, can I help?"  
 The assistant looked straight at me.  
 "Oh, don't mind me, I'm just his wife, he makes all the decisions"  
 Derek proceeded to puff up his chest.  
 Here we go, I thought to myself.  
 He took the folded paper from his pocket.  
 "Right young man, I have a few questions about this tv here" I walked off and left them to it.  
 Turning round, I saw they were in deep conversation. A ceiling light shone on Derek's bald, sweaty head.  
 I made my way towards the store entrance, and spotted a cafe.  
 Derek would be a good hour and I wasn't going to stand around like the little woman while he preened his way through the purchase of a new tv.  
 A few minutes later, drinking the hot sweet coffee, I lost myself in thoughts about where my life was going.  
 I took out my notebook and started writing.  
 "Excuse me. I couldn't help but notice your beautiful pen. Is it a Montblanc?" I looked up



By Berni Albrighton

at the handsome man standing before me.  
 "Mmm, yes," I replied, "it belonged to my Grandmother."  
 "It's lovely. Are you a writer, only I noticed you writing in your notebook. Sorry, my name is Damien. Let me buy you a coffee"  
 Without waiting, he headed off and returned with two coffees. "Do you mind if I join you?"  
 Time flew.  
 We fell into a comfortable rhythm. One minute laughing and the next debating furiously over everything and nothing.  
 "I could talk with you all day, Jenny" he said.  
 Over his shoulder I could see Derek standing up, ready to leave. "Well Damien, I have to go I'm afraid, thank you for the coffee."  
 I stood and stretched out my hand expecting that he would shake it. Instead he gently pulled me to him.  
 "Here is my number," he whispered as he kissed my cheek. "Give me a call, please. I would love to see you again."  
 I walked away. I could feel him watching me.  
 "Right, let's get off home then." ordered Derek. "We need to move things around, the new tv is being delivered later on."

He never asked how I had entertained myself for the past hour. He didn't even look at me.  
 I reached into my pocket and touched the card that Damien had given me.  
 I thought of his kiss, the smoothness of his skin, the smell of his aftershave.  
 I wouldn't see him again, I knew that much.  
 Once home I went straight to the bedroom and took out my pen and notebook.  
 The words flowed effortlessly.  
 'I am never again going to refer to myself as just somebody's wife. I am not 'just' anything. I am my own woman. I am attractive. I am desirable. I am strong.'  
 I closed my notebook and went downstairs where Derek was manhandling the tv set.  
 "Can you put that down please and look at me. We need to talk"  
 The end.

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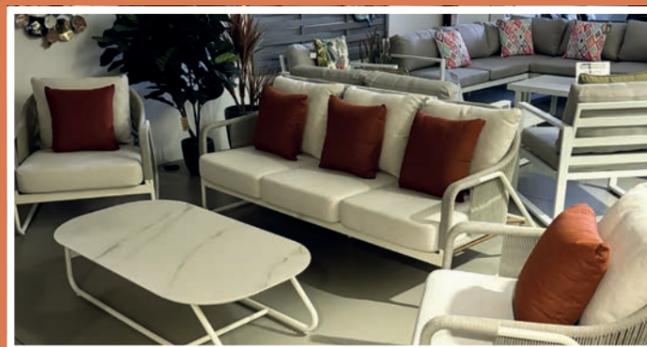
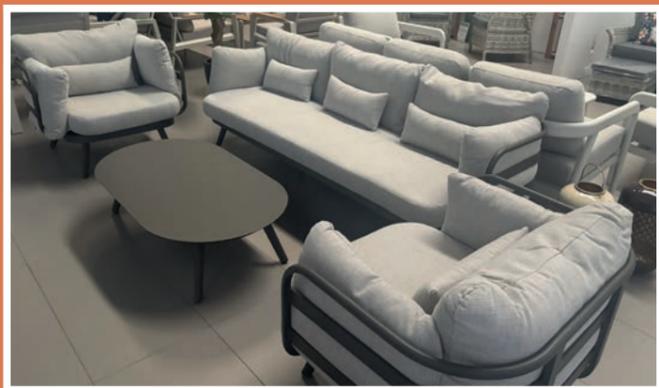
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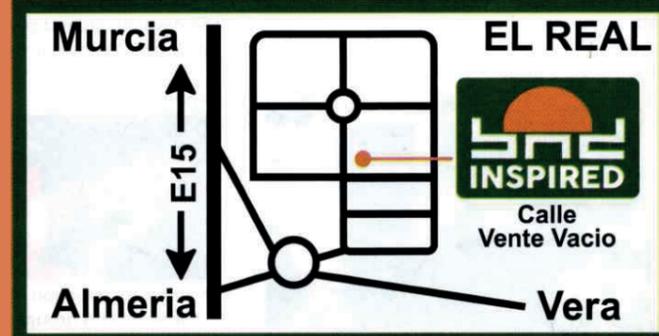
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## What do we know about The 'Ides of March'



You would think that such a fanciful expression must signify something more than merely another day of the year? Not so. It is a date in the Roman calendar now recognised as 15th March.

The word Ides comes from the Latin word "idus", a word that was used widely in the Roman calendar indicating the approximate day that was the middle of the month, which actually suggests there is more than one Ides throughout the year – possibly 12 depending on the calendar used at the time!

In modern times, the term Ides of March is best known as the date, as predicted by a seer, on which Julius Caesar was assassinated, in 44 B.C, when he was stabbed to death in the Roman Senate by a group of conspirators led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus.

The soothsayer's warning to Julius Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March," has forever imbued that date with a sense of foreboding. But in Roman times the expression "Ides of March" did not necessarily evoke a dark mood—it was simply the standard way of saying "March 15." Even in Shakespeare's time, sixteen centuries later, audiences attending his play Julius Caesar wouldn't have blinked twice upon hearing the date called the Ides.

It is also said that on Ides of March the sea succumbs to chaos and the full moon brings high tides.

The Roman calendar organized its months around three days, each of which served as a reference point for counting the other days:

Kalends (1st day of the month)

Nones (the 7th day in March, May, July, and October; the 5th in the other months)

Ides (the 15th day in March, May, July, and October; the 13th in the other months)

The remaining, unnamed days of the month were identified by counting backwards from the Kalends, Nones, or the Ides. For example, March 3 would be V Nones—5 days before the Nones (the Roman method of counting days was inclusive; in other words, the Nones would be counted as one of the 5 days).

## 19th MARCH – DÍA DE SAN JOSÉ



### Happy Father's Day

In Spain every day has its own saint's name, and the name of March 19th is San José – Saint Joseph.

Día de San José is a holiday in certain regions of Spain, but it is not a national holiday. It is also Father's Day all over Spain.

And that is actually quite logical, because San José was, of course, Jesus's father and the head of the Sacred Family.

After Santa María (Saint Mary) he is considered the most important of all saints by the Catholic Church because God chose him to protect His most valued treasure.

Numerous towns and cities all over the world have been named after San José, the most famous one probably being San José in California.

Also here in our little corner of Spain do we have a town by that name. It is a very attractive little fishing village turned tourist destination, which is a very popular place to visit; people from all over the world go there to enjoy its beautiful beaches and its many charms.

Father's Day is celebrated in Spain much the same as in other countries. The tradition was started back in 1946 when the school mistress of a girls' school took heed of her pupils' fathers' wish that their daughters had a day to honour them, just like they had one for the mothers.

She instigated Father's Day on Día de San José because San José was considered a model father and family head. The idea spread slowly to other places, and by 1953 it had become a national phenomenon.

If you fancy a day out on March 19th, do go down to our local San José, it is well worth a visit, especially on its saint's day!



# Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

5	7		1
3	4	8	9
		2	4 5
8			9 1
		4	6 5
6		4 9	2
		1 6	4
7		3	8

Easy

## Regular Sudoku

Every Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically.

5		4		2
3				5
7 9			8	
	9		5	
	6			
		6 8		3
3			1	9
	1 6 9			
2	7			3

Medium

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8												
9			10			11						
12						13						
						14						
15									16		17	
18			19									
20						21						

### Across

- 1 Irons
- 5 Axes
- 8 All over the world
- 9 Expanse of water
- 10 Discount
- 12 Idiom
- 13 African furniture timber
- 15 Water sprinkles
- 16 Fitting
- 18 City in W. Colorado (5,8)
- 20 Ancient Nile river city in Egypt
- 21 State capital of Georgia

### Down

- 1 Nuisances
- 2 Remarkable
- 3 Shocked
- 4 Tolerates
- 5 Hit the slopes
- 6 Deliberation
- 7 Quiet
- 11 Music genre
- 12 City in Umbria, Italy
- 14 City in S central Mexico
- 17 Neighbour of Fiji
- 19 Morse E

# Spring Cleaning Tips



The flowers are blooming, the birds are serenading, and the house still feels like it's stuck with the winter chill. Let's blow away the winter blues and turn to the dusty corners and the windswept terraces.

Spring cleaning is a tradition that allows us to freshen up our homes and get a head start on the often hectic seasons of spring and summer. It can feel like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be difficult.

### Clean Room by Room

Approaching your home room by room is the most effective way to deep clean it. Create cleaning checklists for each room to help you get organised and to remind you of the areas that need extra attention. Feel free to skip the areas that have been cleaned recently, and focus on the parts of your home that were largely neglected over the winter.

### Organise and Clear the Clutter

One of the biggest parts of spring cleaning is often getting rid of clutter. A systematic four-step approach can be helpful for this. Identify problem areas, analyse reasons for the clutter, determine solutions, and implement these remedies.

Sorting your belongings into four categories - rubbish, give away, store, or put away - can also be effective as you go through the spring-cleaning process.

Move the clutter out as soon as possible, whether it's taking a donation box to a charity, visiting a recycling centre or planning a trip to a boot fair.

### Tackle the Seasonal Chores

Many chores need to be done seasonally, especially in preparation for warmer weather. So, incorporate them into your spring-cleaning routine to get them out of the way early.

For instance, tackle outdoor chores, such as cleaning the barbeque and grill, jet wash the patio, and wash down the rejas, doors and windows, as soon as the weather warms up.

Also, pack away and store winter clothing, bedding, decor, and other items ready for the next season. Pull out your spring and summer items to give your home a refreshed look.

### Keep Cleaning Products to a Minimum

A myriad of cleaning supplies can create unnecessary clutter, and

you probably don't need all of them to keep your home fresh and clean.

Opt for a good all-purpose cleaner and microfibre cloths. Those items will cover the majority of surfaces in your home. Then, purchase other speciality cleaning supplies only as needed.

### Get the Household Involved

Make spring cleaning a household endeavour. Even young children can be excellent helpers. Assign age-appropriate chores, so everyone feels included. Try throwing on some music as you all clean or establishing a household reward as an incentive to get the work done.

### Establish New Cleaning Habits

A thorough spring clean that covers the whole house is a great opportunity to establish ongoing cleaning habits, which can make the next spring

cleaning even easier.

For instance, don't try to do all of your spring cleaning in one day or even one weekend. Instead, tackle items on your spring cleaning to-do list for just 30 minutes each day. That will help to get you in the habit of tidying up for 30 minutes per day even after you're done with your spring cleaning tasks.

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# Why Do We Celebrate St. Patrick's Day?

Although the holiday originally started as a Christian feast day celebrating the life of St. Patrick and the spreading of Christianity to Ireland, today, it is a day of revelry and a celebration of all things Irish. Don't forget to wear green!

St. Patrick's Day is officially observed on March 17 each year, though celebrations may not be limited to this date. The significance of March 17 is that it's said to be the date of St. Patrick's death in the late 5th century (circa A.D. 493).

## A Young St. Patrick Finds God

The man who would eventually become St. Patrick was born in Britain (part of the Roman Empire at the time) as Maewyn Succat in the late 4th century. His family was Christian, but it was said that Maewyn himself was an atheist throughout his childhood.

That would change at age 16 (around A.D. 400), when Maewyn was kidnapped from his home on the west coast of Britain by Irish pirates, who proceeded to carry him off to Ireland and force him to work as a shepherd herding sheep. After six years, he escaped his captors, walking nearly 200 miles through the Irish landscape and convincing a ship to carry him with them back to Britain. This harrowing experience certainly had an effect on Maewyn, who was



convinced it was the Lord who protected him and delivered him safely home.

## St. Patrick Spreads the Gospel

Upon returning home, Maewyn received his call (in a dream) to preach the Gospel—in Ireland, of all places! He spent the next 15 or so years in a monastery in Britain, preparing for his missionary

work. When he became a priest, his name was changed to Patricius, and he returned to the land of his captors to begin his teachings.

Although some Christians already lived in Ireland at the time, the country was largely pagan, so spreading a foreign religion was not an easy task. Patricius traveled from village to village to share the teachings of the Lord, and was successful enough to eventually found many churches there.

## Why Is the Shamrock Associated With St. Patrick's Day?

We wear a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day because, legend says, St. Patrick used its three leaves to explain the Holy Trinity in his teachings. (The Trinity is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as three divine persons who are one divine being [God].) The truth of the St. Patrick legend, however, is in question, as there is no direct record that the saint actually used the shamrock as a teaching tool.

Note: The symbol of St. Patrick is a three-leaf shamrock, not a four-leaf clover. However, long before the shamrock became associated with St. Patrick's Day, the four-leaf clover was regarded by ancient Celts as a charm against evil spirits. In the early 1900s, O. H. Benson, an Iowa school superintendent, came up with the idea of using a clover as the emblem for a newly founded agricultural club for children in his area. In 1911, the four-leaf clover was chosen as the emblem for the national club program, later named 4-H.

## St. Patrick's Day Facts, Fun, and Folklore

- Blue was the colour originally associated with St. Patrick, but green is now favoured.
- The first St. Patrick's Day parade in the American colonies was held in New York City on this day in 1762.
- St. Patrick's Day is the traditional day for planting peas, even in the snow!
- Cabbage seeds are often planted today, too, and old-time farmers believed that to make them grow well, you needed to plant them while wearing your nightclothes!

## Joke of the Month

Q: Why should you never iron a four-leaf clover?

A: You don't want to press your luck!



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## The Fire Salamander

*Salamandra salamandra*, the fire salamander, is a large and robust amphibian which normally measures between 12 and 23 cm, tail included. Its head is almost as wide as it is long, the nose usually rounded although some specimens have a more pointed nose.

The eyes are large and protruding. The legs are short and thick as is the tail which is never any longer than the head and body added up.

The skin on the back and sides is smooth and shiny, black with irregular yellow spots. The colour varies with the geographical area; some have almost no yellow, others are more yellow than black, while some have yellow stripes rather than spots. On the throat and tummy there are fewer yellow spots, and they are not so bright.

The life expectancy of a fire salamander in the wild is about 20 years, whereas they can live to be 50 in captivity.

Fire salamanders like forested areas, especially near water courses, orchards, and pastures; in other words, wherever it is shaded and damp. They avoid dry areas.

They live on forest floors covered in leaves or moss, hiding during the day under stones, fallen tree trunks, or in holes. They can adapt to life anywhere between sea level and 1,800 MASL.

Autumn is the mating season, and the male and female only stay together during the coupling. The female gives birth to between 30 and 40 larvae between December and February. The larvae are robust with a very wide head, and they are born with four legs and are able to swim straight away. The female deposits them in freshwater pools where they live until they are five months old and ready to leave their water world. At this stage they are about 6 cm long and have



the coloration of an adult fire salamander.

Once they have metamorphosed, the young salamanders are identical to their older counterparts, and they reach sexual maturity when they are three to four years old.

They are carnivores and feed on prey that measures between 4 and 20 mm, mainly worms, snails, and insects.

The fire salamander is a nocturnal creature which can only be observed in daylight when it rains. Its period of activity starts in autumn with the first rains having spent the summer in relative repose.

Its natural enemies include various species of snake and vipers as well as polecats and otters.

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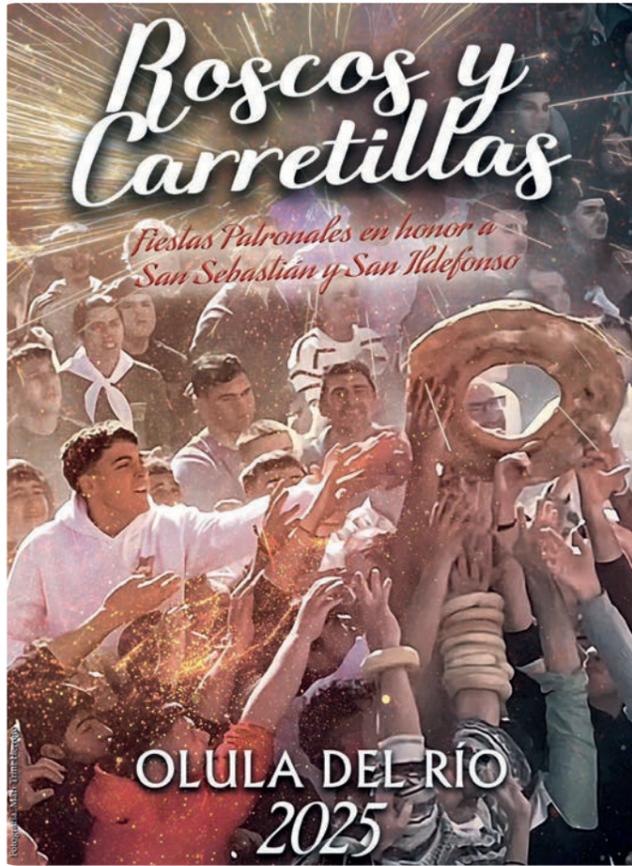
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# Fiesta los Carretillas - Olula del Rio

By MGM



The religion of Spain is predominantly Catholic, and my Spanish diary shows me that there is a saint for every day of the year. Most places, from the smallest village to the biggest city, have an association with a saint. Olula Del Río, here in Andalucía, favours a partnership, San Sebastian and San Ildefonso – I mean, why stick with one if two means the celebrations can go on longer?

If there is one thing the Spaniards do well it is to find a reason to have a party and adopting a saint with a good backstory is prime material. On this occasion it is San Ildefonso who provides the link. Way back in 7th Century Toledo our lad was drawn to the cathedral one evening, which had become engulfed in a fire like blaze of light. As is the way with miracles, one thing leads to another and before you can say “saint who?” several Spanish towns, including Olula del Río, spotted a great opportunity for a fiesta where the community could get outside on a cold winter’s evening, have a bonfire, cook sausages, have a drink and throw fireworks at each other.

We went for the first time several years ago after hearing about this fiery fiesta one cold January night sat in the village bar. This year was my third time.

To really experience this unique event, you have to get right into the heart of the action and that means going sartorially prepared. If you have an uncle who is a Formula One racing driver or a fighter pilot, then borrowing his fireproof overalls would be a good place to start. If not, maybe a motorcycling aunt with leathers, all-in-one for preference. For the rest of us, it’s old clothes you don’t mind coming home in reeking of gunpowder, bonfire smoke and with the odd scorch mark. The bottom line is that all parts of your body need to be covered.

I wore my old work clothes with overalls and sturdy boots; trouser and sleeve cuffs sealed with Gaffa Tape. My old woolly hat had to do – it was better than nothing, but ideally it should have been a fireproof balaclava with a crash helmet or site hard hat. Eye

protection is the most important part of your outfit – professional level face-fitting safety goggles are the best. For myself, I favour my chainsaw face screen; it can be tipped up when one needs to have a drink and then tipped down again when the rockets start to fly. Finally, gloves. I could only find one of my welding gauntlets so I went with option 2, my sturdy chainsaw gloves. On this occasion I added an additional layer as it was a bit nippy – my old work jacket, a relic from my seafaring days, a bright yellow plastic stormproof yachting coat with lots of pockets handy for beers and phone.

The best thing about this event, and it is a thread that runs through much of Spanish life, is the complete lack of health and safety. There are no barriers to cordon off the part of old town where the action takes place; indeed, the action will go where the crowd decides to take it. There are no posters telling you what you can and can’t do. There are no police and no security to tell you that you can’t take glass bottles, alcohol or water into the event. There are no sixteen-year-old St John’s Ambulance volunteers huddled in a small corner of the plaza ready to rush you to hospital should you take a banger full in the face or have burnt your fingers to stubs because you decided to hold five fireworks in each hand in a drunken bet with your mates.

The Spanish authorities, God bless ‘em, have decided you are an adult and responsible for your own stupidity, for walking yourself and/or your family into this faux war zone when you had the option to stay at home with your feet up in front of the telly. Even if you are a resident, it is tough. A bit like moving into a new village and then complaining because the church bells disturb your lie-in on a Sunday morning, you should have done your homework first. Most residents in the affected areas fork out significant sums of money to have heavy duty plastic sheet tailor-made to fit the facades of their houses, tailor-made to the point where there is a zip-out access panel where the front door is.

I go as a spectator, but as an active participant there is one extra piece of equipment I would need. You may not have an uncle who is a test pilot or a Formula One racing car driver but you are likely to have a mother, aunt or grandma who owns a shopping trolley (de rigueur for market day shopping in all parts of Spain). Once acquired by whatever means fair or foul, the fabric bag is dispensed with and in its place, using your best woodworking skills, a two-compartment wooden box is made and securely mounted to the wheeled frame. One compartment is for alcohol and the other one is for the fireworks.

Did I say there is no health and safety? Well, there was a small element of common sense amongst the town council one particular week way back whenever. They decided, probably after several ‘incidents’ that alcohol and fireworks were not a good mix and so they passed a decree that all establishments serving alcohol should be closed for the lead up and the duration of the festival. And so, it is. To get around this infringement of the right to properly party, because no Spaniard would contemplate such a ridiculous situation in any other circumstances, your creative ‘pirotécnico’ came up with a clever plan to be able to carry his own supply with him.

These ‘carritos’ come in all shapes and sizes, but the veterans can be distinguished by the additional customisation of their carts: large diameter wheels for negotiating the spent cartridge cases strewn all over the ground; steel or asbestos-lined firework compartment with securable lid (carritos regularly catch fire when an unlucky squib gets in amongst the bangers); and drinking tubes to avoid the need to get into the box to extract bottles or cans of alcohol in the heat of the action.

The evening’s drinks menu is likely to have been discussed and



prepared in advance and seems to involve specially favoured concoctions being made to fill 5-litre carafes for group consumption, the flexible drinking tube long enough to reach the mouth when standing means you can, at the height of your powers, drink and hold five fireworks in each hand in order to properly ingratiate yourself with San Ildefonso for the coming year.

So, now properly attired and fully equipped, you head off to gather with your mates at bonfire points around the town to drink, dance and eat. The bonfires are all part of the fire festival. Like I said, the Spaniards do like to party, and at the heart of this is the pleasure of belonging – family, friends, neighbours, your community. If your town or village fiesta or family celebration happens in the summer, then it’s a no-brainer, outside it is. On the pavement, in the plaza or park, the beach or the picnic site, Spaniards will gather fully equipped with every essential from a gas cooker to ice. If your fiesta is in the winter, well in that case we are going to need a good bonfire. The wood for these fires accumulates over the days leading up to fiesta week and on this occasion, it looked like most families in the

neighbourhood had decided to re-vamp their house interiors.

The town council, in an effort to protect their investments, move in with trucks and diggers to deposit large piles of stone chipping at the known bonfire sites. These chippings are raked into a large thick circle to protect the road, pavement or plaza from the intense heat of the fire, which will be fed all night until the early hours of the morning.

And there’s the rub – no social gathering worth the effort will get going until at least midnight, and this year I made the rookie mistake of getting there at ten thirty. Nada... zilch... I had to go back to the van and wait another hour and a half for things to sound more interesting. With a beer in hand and one in each pocket I headed in. Everyone was dressed to party, slow burning fuses

tied to the trolley handles were being lit, last minute adjustments to goggles and tape were being made, if you needed to pee, forget it – in fact, best to hang on in case your trousers catch fire!

Mad-eyed lads sucking hard on drinks tubes walked unsteadily towards the fray. Here on the outskirts, occasional bangers come shooting out of dark alleys to catch the unwary in a fury of sparks, a hint at what you’re a walking into.

I headed to the main square. It sounded hellish, and I was excited. It was packed with drink-swilling carriage-toting, firework-posing human statues. I was in the right place. I flipped my visor down and walked into the heart of the mêlée. All around me fireworks were being lit and thrown; back hand, under hand or lobbed, men and women posed, mummified, arms outstretched holding whatever combination of fireworks they decided to chance their hands at, just so they could be photographed.

Continued on page 54 .....

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..... Continued from page 53

I just stood. In the occasional calm of the firestorm I would take my chance, flip up the visor and take a slug of beer, but you needed to be on your toes, quite literally. There's a little dance – you won't need any practice – I call it the Spanish jig, it's similar to Flamenco, maybe that's where it originated! Most fireworks are thrown with intent, wanging off walls or people before ending up zipping crazily around the floor in a torrent of sparks. To avoid one getting caught against your foot and burning through your boot, it is important to keep your feet moving. The firework mêlée has an ebb and flow and so every now and again there is a calm but always followed by a storm as suddenly forty of fifty burning cartridges are whizzing around your feet, time to perform your best Spanish jig. Regardless, I tried not to stand still for long.

The painted effigy of San Ildefonso is about a metre high and he rests mild-eyed and passive on his sturdy metal float in the centre of the square. The locals line up to shower him with sparks or to put a roaring candle on his float in his honour hoping, I imagine, to bring them good fortune in the coming year. I had nothing to offer, so from my position by the wall I just tipped him my can of Estrella and gave him a nod.

All of a sudden a group cry went up. Not a man down, but a man up! All hands to the 'Paso' and San Ildefonso. The Paso was lifted shoulder high and off we went, a drunken fire- and alcohol-fuelled procession, heading to the next plaza en route. Down a narrow, plastic-draped street we went, bangers and crackers smacking and ricocheting off the walls. The street funnelled us into a small plaza. It was in two sections: the end section was a courtyard set higher, ringed on three sides by houses, a low wall bounded the leading



edge of the courtyard – it gave the impression of a stage. A set of wide steps led up and onto this stage San Ildefonso was carried and sat to rest. Then all hell broke loose as the forty-odd pirotécnicos crammed into this courtyard and decided to vent their passion for him with pyromanical pleasures. The noise was incredible, with industrial-strength bangers and screechers slipped into the mix. Incredulously, at each of the upper floor windows of the courtyard houses stood the trapped residents, who smiled and waved at the crowd like low rank royalty.

At this point it was decided there was not enough danger and so the huge bonfire in the middle of the main part of the square was ignited. The old wardrobes, pallets, armchairs and kitchen units quickly took hold and within minutes a huge space had cleared around the fire as the heat drove us back into the plastic-draped house fronts.

The madness felt intensified by the smaller size of the square, and it became more of a risk to tip my visor up to take a swig of beer. I was now regularly getting thwacked by twanging bangers. A pall of smoke drifted across my face from somewhere to my left, getting into my nose and throat. Peering through the drifting smoke, I caught sight of an upended trolley, the wooden box spewing smoke from its gaping lid. I decided to move to the other side of the square. As I did so, I watched the desperate charioteer and his mates, like a kamikaze bomb squad, go in and rescue the firework stash.

There really wasn't much more to see or experience unless it was a trip to the hospital and, anyway, by now the stink of sulphur in this enclosed space was getting too much so I decided to head for home. Within twenty paces I was thankful to be breathing pure cold January air, with all my fingers and toes accounted for.

## Botifarra Amb Mongetes from Gerona



That fancy name is Catalan for Butifarra with Beans, or bangers and beans, if you like. Except that these beans don't come in a tomato sauce.

Botifarra amb mongetes is one of the most emblematic dishes of Catalan gastronomy, part of its identity, so they say.

Butifarra, the uncooked sausage made from minced pork and spices, was already documented in Catalonia in the Middle Ages. Some historians even go as far as saying that it goes back to Roman times.

As opposed to other sausages, the Catalan butifarra is made without any fat, just minced, lean pork, although sometimes a little bacon is added for flavour.

Nowadays, you can get both uncooked and cooked butifarra. In Catalonia, the uncooked butifarra is made into individual sausages, whereas the cooked version is produced in longer, hooped shapes. There are several different cooked butifarras, the most popular ones being butifarra Negra (black, made with pig's blood), and butifarra blanca (white, the plain version).

The beans in this dish are haricot beans (alubias blancas). They arrived in Europe after the discovery of the Americas and became popular in Catalonia in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The combination of butifarra and haricot beans in one dish is mentioned in recipes and culinary chronicles from the 19th century, especially as a typical dish in taverns and inns.

## ¡Buen Provecho!



Today it is still a popular standard, not only in the bars of Catalonia, but also in the more upmarket haute cuisine establishments.

The dish is especially associated with the Gerona province, whose uncooked butifarra is famous for its quality and flavour. The beans used nowadays, when you get 'the real deal', are called mongeta del ganxet, a sort native to Catalonia which is protected by the Denominación de Origen stamp.

To make botifarra amb mongetes, you use uncooked butifarra. The simple, original recipe uses the flavour from the sausage to lend taste to the whole dish. You fry the sausages until they are golden and cooked through, reserve them and then gently fry the cooked beans in the juices released by the sausages and serve.

However, many modern versions add herbs and/or spices for extra flavour.

Garlic and parsley are popular additions, and some (they are probably, like yours truly, lovers of fat) add diced bacon. Almost all use olive oil, which will make the sausages brown more evenly, and I've even seen recipes where finely chopped onion and smoked paprika are used.

So basically, the sky and your imagination are the only limitations, so put on your thinking cap and make your own, personalised botifarra amb mongetes.

Buen Provecho!

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## Spring's Near

March is such an unpredictable month! Sometimes it takes you right back to the coldest winter, sometimes you suddenly think summer's arrived – and rare times it behaves like it should, like the end of winter and beginning of spring.

So I've done you two wintery recipes, and two spring-summer recipes, and you can take them out and use them when it suits you and the weather. Or just use them whenever you fancy never mind the weather – that's what I always do!

Read, cook and enjoy!

### Coconut and Curry Soup

This extremely tasty soup is bound to become a favourite which you will repeat again and again.

It is easy to make, but why not make a large portion while you're at it and freeze some for another day?

If you want, you can add a little cooked chicken or some meatballs, but believe me, it is really not necessary!

Ingredients for four:

- 2 tsp curry powder
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 litre chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 onions, chopped
- 350g potatoes, diced
- 250g carrots, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1-2 tbsp fresh ginger, grated
- 1 jar cooked chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tin coconut milk
- 1-2 tsp sugar
- ½ lime, juice from
- Salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a soup pan and add the curry powder. Let it bubble for a minute, then add the onions, potatoes, and carrots. Mix well and let it bubble along for a couple of minutes.

Add the hot stock together with the garlic and ginger; bring it to the boil, add the chickpeas and when it boils again, cover, and leave to simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the coconut milk together with sugar and lime juice to taste.

Give it another quick boil, adjust the seasoning, and serve with pita or naan bread.

A perfect winter warmer!!

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Bacon Wrapped Frikadelles

The combination of flavours in this dish is out of this world and worthy of any occasion!

I had it just for me on an ordinary Saturday, but it would have been just as suitable for guests!

It may not be the prettiest of dishes, but what it lacks in beauty it more than makes up for in taste!

I call it 'bacon wrapped frikadelles' as I thought 'bacon rolls' (which is what, in reality, they are) sounded a bit like a bread roll with bacon in the middle; the filling of these 'rolls' is frikadelle mix, hence the name I chose.

Here goes!

Ingredients for two:

- 250g minced pork
- ½ onion, grated
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- Milk if necessary
- 6 rashers smoked streaky bacon
- 500g potatoes, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 leek, sliced
- 2 carrots, scrubbed and sliced
- 200ml cream
- Salt and pepper

Mix the first four ingredients and add a drop of milk if the mixture seems very dry. I didn't need any.

Leave the mixture to rest while you prepare the vegetables.

Combine them all, season to taste, and put them in a greased, ovenproof dish. Pour over the cream.

Cut the bacon rashers in half and place two halves next to each other. Weigh out ¼ of the mince mix, roll it to a sausage the length to fit on the two halves of bacon. Pull up the bacon to wrap around the mince and place half a slice of bacon on the joint. Turn the roll over and place it on top of the vegetables.

Repeat with the rest of the mince and bacon.

Stick the dish in the oven at 220°C for 50-60 minutes until the rolls are done and the vegetables taking a little colour.

Serve with a green vegetable and enjoy!



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## Luxury Bean Burger

Nowadays, bean and burger go together almost as easily as beef and burger.

I had my first ever bean burger in a Wimpy joint in Hull in 1988 and it was wonderful!

Ever since then I've tried to repeat the success, but in vain. Nowhere I've tried has a bean burger been able to match that first one. They do say that you never forget the first time, don't they!?

So now I've started trying to do my own in my long quest for the perfect bean burger, and with this one I'm very close to the goal!

The flavour is absolutely gorgeous, and the consistency is very close to where I want it to be, although I still think it could be a bit crunchier. I'm almost at the end of my quest, and think that maybe adding some finely chopped nuts would achieve the goal.

Or maybe I should just cut my losses and go back to Wimpy in Hull?

Ingredients for four burgers:

- 100ml tinned black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 clove of garlic, coarsely chopped
- 120g sunflower seeds
- 2 tbsp olive tapenade
- 100g grated cheddar
- 100g breadcrumbs
- 3 eggs
- Salt and pepper
- Oil for frying

Furthermore:

- 150ml good mayonnaise + 1 tsp sambal oelek, mixed for chili mayo
- 4 large aubergine slices, fried
- Lettuce
- Tomato slices
- Red onion slices
- 4 burger buns
- Gherkins

Place all the ingredients for the burgers (bar the oil) in a blender and blend them to an even mix; leave the mix to rest on the kitchen worktop for about 15 minutes.

Divide the mix into four and form it into four burgers. Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the burgers over a low heat for about 7 minutes on each side until they are done through.

Heat and split the buns and spread the chili mayo over the insides. Build the burgers in the order you wish and serve immediately.



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## Salmon Risotto

I reckon this recipe was created by the angels in Heaven!

I'm absolutely certain I heard a choir of angels singing as I took the first bite and the lovely flavours spread themselves in my mouth.

This is a true king among risottos – at least in my repertoire!!

Ingredients for two:

- 200g risotto rice
- 250g salmon filet cut into bite size pieces
- 800-100ml hot fish stock (I used stock cubes)
- 1 leek, finely sliced
- 100ml white wine
- 1 tbsp cream cheese
- 60g parmesan cheese, finely grated
- Olive oil, salt and pepper
- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Finely grated lemon rind

Rinse the rice thoroughly under the tap.

In a frying pan, gently poach the leek slices in a little oil. When they are soft, add the rice and stir until they are covered in oil. Turn up the heat, pour in the wine and let it bubble fiercely until the alcohol has evaporated.

Turn down the heat.

Once the wine has been absorbed by the rice, start adding the stock, one ladle at a time. Keep stirring gently after each addition until the stock is absorbed before adding the next.

When the rice is just done, add first the cream cheese and parmesan, stir until it's distributed, and then the salmon pieces. Stir to mix



everything for a few minutes, then turn off the heat.

Adjust the seasoning (careful with the salt!) and serve the risotto with the parsley and lemon rind on the side for each eater to add as they please.

Amazing!

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facing the rambla



# Make Your Fruit and Veg Last!

We are privileged here with the many markets where we can buy no end of fresh fruit and vegetables, and if you're anything like me, you often end up giving in to the temptation of buying something that was neither on your list nor in your cooking plans.

But don't despair, if you treat them right, they will keep until you need them.

For a start, keep ripe bananas, apples and tomatoes apart from other fruit and veg as they emit ethylene, which is a substance which speeds up the ripening process.

Do not put your bananas in the fridge, they lose flavour and get spotty. Keep them on the work top and wrap the stem tightly in plastic if you want them to keep longer.

Keep your apples outdoors, e.g. in a polystyrene box. They don't like high temperatures but are a hazard to your other fruit and veg in the fridge, so they should be banned.

Tomatoes lose flavour in the fridge and should be kept on the work top – well away from other fruit and veg. If they ripen too fast, do put them in the fridge, but at your own peril. Tomatoes that are just about to go off can be chopped and frozen to be used for cooking instead of tinned tomatoes.

If you buy fresh carrots, trim off the tops and discard them. They go



gooey and affect your carrots adversely. Put the carrots in a plastic bag and keep them in the fridge.

Celery keeps for up to 10 days in a jar of water on the worktop. Do however change the water regularly.

Onions and potatoes want to be kept in a dark and cool place, but not in the fridge. Keep them in a dark place in a newspaper lined box. But not together. Storing potatoes and onions together will drastically shorten their shelf life. The reason? Onions produce ethylene gas, a gas that causes potatoes to spoil prematurely. Conversely, potatoes' high moisture content can cause onions to turn brown and mushy.

If your lettuce goes limp, put it in a bowl of cold water for a while to liven it up – and in fact the same goes for radishes!

To keep your mushrooms as fresh as the day you bought them, cut off the root and wipe them as soon as you bring them home, or at least the same day. Then roll rows of three or four in a tea towel so that they don't have too much contact. Keep them in the fridge, and after a week they still feel completely fresh and non-slimy!

A lot of the vegetables that come with their stem, such as broccoli, lettuce, asparagus etc., will benefit from having a centimetre of the stem cut off and being wrapped in damp kitchen roll followed by aluminium foil. This will keep them fresh for days longer.

It is strawberry season now, and when you see these bright red jewels, they are hard to resist. When you get them home, place them in one layer on a tea towel – you can do several stories, as long as there's a tea towel between them. Cover with another tea towel or kitchen roll. Do not wash or prepare them in any way until just before you are ready to use them.

Avocados keep ripening after they have been picked. To keep avocados fresh, store them at room temperature until they ripen. Once they're ripe, you can extend their freshness by storing them in the refrigerator. If you have cut your avocado, cover the exposed surface with plastic wrap or store it in an airtight container with a little lemon or lime juice to prevent browning.

In these days of focus on food waste, it is as important as ever to make the very most of our purchases; the new brown containers are not an excuse for throwing out food!



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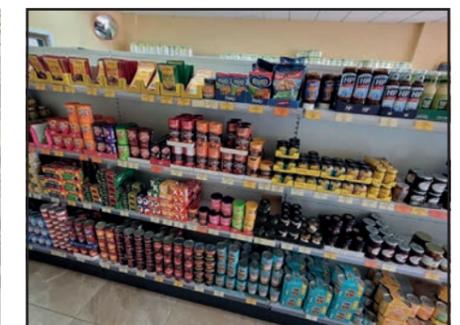


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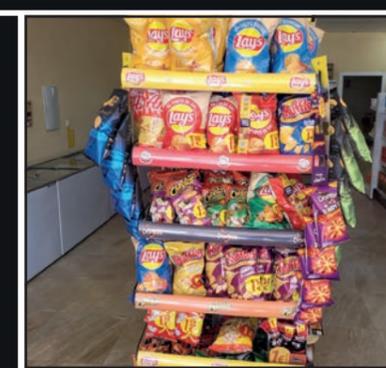
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# The History of Saffron, the Red Gold



Saffron is the world's most expensive spice. It is derived from the flower of *Crocus Sativus*, commonly known as the saffron crocus.

The history of Saffron is swathed in the mists of the past, but it is believed that the saffron crocus is a mutation of the crocus cartwrightianus, a wild species originating in Greece, which was selected and cultivated in Crete during the final part of the Bronze Age.

The Ancient Greeks used saffron for its flavour and for dyeing. Most Greeks at the time had dark hair, but blond hair was considered more attractive, so saffron was mixed with potassium water and used for dyeing dark hair yellow.

Also the Ancient Egyptians used saffron. The Pharaohs used it both for flavouring and as an aphrodisiac, and also for perfume for baths and temples. Also Cleopatra is known to have used saffron in her baths to create more pleasurable sensations during love making.

In Persia at around the 20th century BC the cultivating of saffron grew rapidly. It was grown in Derbena and Isfahan, and the saffron threads were woven into Persian rugs and funeral shrouds.

At around 500 BC Darius the Great instructed his governors to plant saffron crocuses all over the far northern regions of the Persian Empire (Caucasia).

Alexander the Great used large quantities of saffron, and he gave it to his armies during the Asian campaigns. The soldiers used it to flavour their tea and they made rice with saffron. Personally, Alexander the Great used it in his bath water as he believed it helped cure his wounds.

Towards 400 BC Persia had started exporting saffron to China along with cucumbers, onions, jasmine and vine ranks. And they also exported saffron in large quantities to the Roman Empire.

With the decline of the Roman Empire and the advent of the Moors in Spain, the cultivation of saffron crocuses started in Spain, France and the south of Italy.

In the 14th century the Black Death in Europe led to a sharp rise in the demand for saffron. It was thought to cure the disease; however, many of the saffron farmers fell victim to the disease as well, and the red gold had to be imported from the Mediterranean area.

As the Black Death slowly subsided,

Nurnberg in Germany became the centre for the saffron trade, and the Safranschou Code was introduced to try to curb the increasing problem of tampering and falsifying the valuable product. Breaking the code could lead to imprisonment and even execution.

England also became a saffron crocus cultivating country. It started in 1350 when some bulbs were smuggled in from the Middle East and were given to a monastery. The cultivation started in the monastery and the saffron was used for medicinal purposes.

Several decades later its cultivation became commercialised and it was centred in eastern England. By the 16th century Essex was an important saffron producer, and Saffron Walden in Essex owes its name to the many saffron plantations that existed around it back then. Its original name was Chepping Walden.

Saffron was introduced in America when immigrants from the Schwenkfelder Church took a load of bulbs with them to the New World. Soon saffron crocuses were being grown in eastern Dutch Pennsylvania.

Throughout the millennia saffron has been a pricey product as it takes about 200 flowers to make just one gram of the product.

Today, the price of saffron lies at about 5,000 euro per kilo in the market place. Obviously, nobody buys that amount of saffron, it is usually sold per gram at 9-10 euro/g.

Saffron is still widely used in cooking, in the Spanish cuisine in paellas, other rice dishes and stews to add its distinctive aroma, flavour and a beautiful golden colouring.

Many people are not sure how to bring out the best in their saffron and add it to their dishes with little or no effect. There are various ways of using it, some cooks recommend putting it in alu foil and toasting it, or leave it to soak in a drop of boiling water to bring out the flavour and colour.

An easy way of using it was elaborated by the Spanish restaurateur Manuel Seller who came up with this recipe for saffron essence: Place 100g white wine together with 3 or 4 grams of saffron in a pan and heat the liquid to 40°C. Put it in a blender and buzz it for a few seconds until it is uniform.

Put the condiment in a jar and keep it in the fridge. It will keep for weeks and provides an easy and tasty way of using saffron to add flavour and colour to your dishes.



## Is Your Water Filter Really Working?

*Why testing first could save you money – and protect your health*

If you live in Almería you'll know that local water can be hit-and-miss. Many British residents fit a water filter, believing that any filter will do the job. But as one of our recent customers discovered, that isn't always the case.

**“I only changed the filter cartridge two months ago — it's supposed to last a year!”**

He'd bought a ceramic filter from a popular local retailer and was puzzled when his water started tasting strange. We tested his water supply before and after the filter.

The results were startling - the filter wasn't removing any contaminants. The water going in was highly contaminated, and the filter he'd been sold simply wasn't capable of handling it and failed in under two months.

### Why a water test is essential

Every home's water supply in Almería is different — sometimes even between neighbours. Mains water can go through up to **30 separate treatment processes** before it reaches your tap. That can leave a chemical smell or taste, but the water may still be perfectly safe to drink. In those cases, a simple filter like our **Logica Aqua**, designed to remove chlorine and odour, is all that's needed.

Conversely, some water that tastes perfectly fine can hide contaminants such as nitrates, **heavy metals or pesticides** -

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none of which have any taste or smell. These invisible pollutants can cause long-term health issues, from kidney strain to cardiovascular problems.

The only way to know what's really in your water is to **test it**.

### How we can help

At Almería Pure Water, our **24-point water quality test** analyses your supply against official Spanish health standards. Once we know what's present, we recommend the right filtration solution - whether that's a **Reverse Osmosis system** for highly contaminated sources, a **carbon or sediment filter** for milder issues, or that you don't need a water filter at all!

**Bad taste doesn't always mean contamination — and clear water isn't always pure.**

### Book your free, no-obligation water test today

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On the morning of All Saints' Day, 1st November 1755, at approximately 09.40 local time, one of the greatest earthquakes ever to have hit our planet shook Portugal, the rest of the Iberian Peninsula and great parts of Africa. The shocks were felt all over Europe, including Scandinavia and Finland, and even in Greenland and the Caribbean.

It caused a huge tsunami which affected coasts as far away as Cornwall, Ireland and even Brazil and the Caribbean.

The epicentre of the earthquake is thought to have been in the Atlantic Ocean about 200 km west-southwest of Cape St. Vincent, the south-westernmost point of Portugal. And Lisbon was the worst hit city.

The shaking was said to have lasted between three and half and six minutes, and it caused fissures five metres wide in the city centre. People who had survived the actual earthquake ran to the open areas of the docks for safety and they were met by an amazing sight: The sea had receded and left the muddy sea bottom of the port open, revealing old ship wrecks and lost cargos.

40 minutes later the first tsunami hit the city and flooded the lower ground and downtown area. It was followed by two more.

Candles that had been lit in churches and homes to celebrate the saints fell over and started a fierce blaze that raged in the city for hours, asphyxiating people at distances of up to 30 metres.

Earth, water and fire devastated the city in a matter of hours, and it is thought that in Lisbon alone some 40,000 people lost their lives.

However, also in Spain the effects of the earthquake were keenly felt.

The Spanish King Ferdinand VI, who had experienced the earthquake first hand, was so affected by the sheer magnitude of the disaster that he ordered a report on its impact in Spain.

A questionnaire was sent out to the 'most sensible citizens' of the regional capitals and

larger towns. These were the questions:

1. Could you feel the earthquake?
2. What time?
3. How long did it last?
4. What movements were visible on floors, walls, buildings, springs and rivers?
5. What destruction or damage has been done to the factories?
6. Were any people or animals killed or injured?
7. Did anything else extraordinary happen?
8. Before the earthquake, were there any signs of it coming?

There were replies from 1,273 of the recipients of the questionnaire, some of them inaccurate, lacking in important information or exaggerated, but it is thought that about 5,300 souls lost their lives on Spanish soil in the earthquake.

Worst hit was Huelva, which was seriously affected by the tsunami. 1,000 people got killed in Ayamonte and 400 in Lepe, where over 80% if the fishing fleet was destroyed.



When the tsunami reached Cádiz, it had grown to a height of 20 metres, compared to the 5 metres it measured when it hit Lisbon. However, in spite of the massive walls around the city getting seriously damaged, they managed to save a large part of the population.

The Mayor's order to shut the large Puertas de Tierra, a bastion-monument that was part of the old defensive wall, stopped the larger amount of water from penetrating the city and saved many lives.

Seville was badly affected by the earthquake itself, and some 300 houses were swallowed by the earth and 5,000 were damaged. In spite of this, according to contemporary records, the city only registered nine deaths.

In Córdoba nobody got killed, but a girl was slightly injured in the St. Inés Convent when an effigy of the saint fell down and hit her.

There were reports from the rest of Spain as well, but hardest hit were the western regions of Andalucía and also Extremadura. In the city of Coria in Cáceres the earthquake made the roof of the cathedral cave in, burying many of the faithful who had come to the All Saints mass.

It also changed the course of the River Alagón which ran through Coria, rendering the stone bridge that had spanned the river for more than 200 years useless.

The Lisbon earthquake also caused death and destruction on the north coast of the African continent where the tsunami also reached a height of 20 metres, and the water also caused damages as far away as the islands of Barbados, Martinique and Antigua.

The Portuguese prime minister at the time, Sebastião José de Carvalho, was very active in the relief efforts in his country after the earthquake, and when asked what should be done, his reply was, 'Take care of the living and bury the dead'.

He furthermore devised a questionnaire to establish exactly what had happened, where and when, and the result of this led to the first scientific study of earthquakes and laid the foundation to modern seismology.

# Trades & Services

## Block Paving v Pattern Imprinted Concrete

Driveways, patios and courtyards all need a little TLC at times and there are a great deal of options on the market to help revamp and enhance the appearance of all these much used areas.

If you fancy something different from the standard tiling option, why not take a look at block paving or the more modern option of pattern imprinted concrete.

This article is based on the driveway - the focal point at the front of your home and offers advice about the two options available.

You don't just need to be thinking about moving house to reap the benefits of a brand-new driveway. The average car spends around 80% of its life parked at home, according to a report - and a tired or worn-out driveway with weeds or potholes can risk damaging yours.

Not only that, of course. A new driveway helps your home make a striking first impression with passers-by and visitors alike. So, has the time come to think about upgrading yours?

### Upgrading your driveway - your options

A concrete driveway can often provide the best value for money when upgrading. Not only does it tend to last longer compared to other materials such as tarmac, concrete is strong and simple to maintain. Once you've decided concrete is right for your new driveway, you'll have the choice of Concrete Block Paving (CBP) or Pattern Imprinted Concrete (PIC) to make.

But which one is right for your driveway?

### What is Concrete Block Paving?

Concrete block paving first became popular during the late 70s/early 80s. It was a time when customer choice was limited when it came to styles and colours - a few simple designs and a handful of colours was about as exciting as it got.

But the market for block paving has since grown significantly, while the manufacturing industry has advanced too. As a result, there's now more choice available to you - whether you'd like a traditional



or modern design, different textures, range of colours and even material options.

CBP is framed by an edge restraint and laid on top of a sub-base and sand course. These blocks interlock with one another to create a bond, which provides the strength your driveway needs.

### What is Pattern Imprinted Concrete?

Pattern imprinted concrete - or stamped concrete - driveways are a relative newcomer to the scene. Instead of using individual blocks to create your finished surface, a layer of concrete is poured on a suitable sub-base. A colour is then applied, as well as a colour hardener.

To create the desired finished effect, the wet concrete has a patterned mat

applied to it. You'll have a choice of designs - from Ashlar Stone to Brickwork and Textured Stone. The idea of PIC is to replicate another material, giving the concrete - and your drive - a more appealing finish.

### Concrete Block Paving or Pattern Imprinted Concrete?

To help you decide if CBP or PIC is the right option for your driveway, we've taken a look at the advantages and disadvantages of each. This way, you'll be able to make a fully informed choice.

### What are the advantages of Concrete Block Paving driveways?

- Attractive - The wide range of styles, colours and textures available with CBP means there are attractive, visually appealing options to suit every driveway.
- Long-Lasting - An extremely durable option, CBP driveways can last for many years with the right maintenance. You might never need to upgrade yours again!
- Adaptable/Adjustable - Laid your CBP driveway but need to uplift an area due to movement or to access a utility connection/pipe? CBP is easy to remove and reinstate with minimal fuss.
- Permeable

*Continued on page 68 .....*

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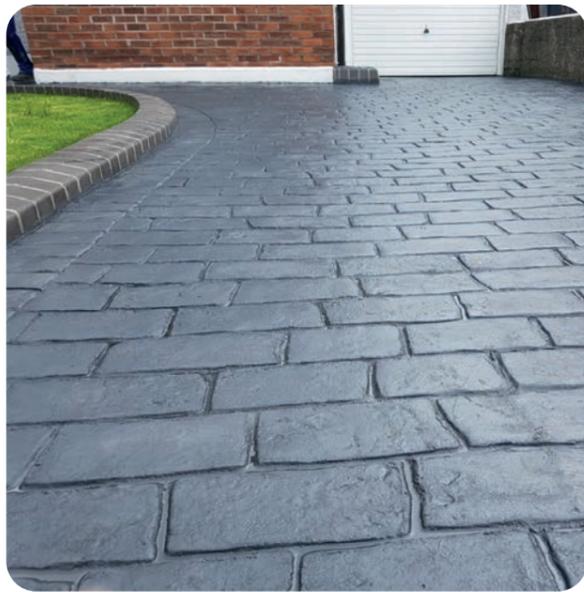
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..... Continued from page 67

**What are the disadvantages of Concrete Block Paving?**

- Sinking or movement - Poor installation or not using an appropriate sub-base when laying block paving could cause part(s) of a CBP drive to start sinking or moving – particularly under the weight of a car. It's not unusual to think sinking/movement is down to the product, but it can actually be due to what it's been laid on.
- Degradation - Not such an issue if your CBP driveway is looked after, but degradation and erosion of the pointing could cause individual blocks to spread apart or become loose.



**What are the advantages of Pattern Imprinted Concrete driveways?**

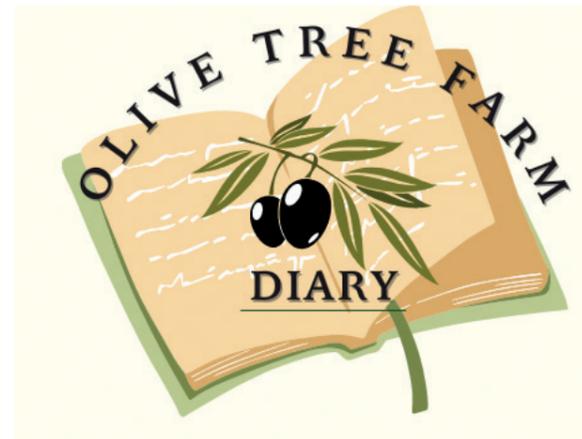
- Efficiency - The installation of patterned concrete driveways can be much more efficient than CBP driveways as the process allows you to cover larger areas quicker.
- Weed and moss - Unlike their CBP equivalents, PIC driveways offer fewer opportunities for weeds/moss to take hold. While this unwanted greenery can start appearing between crack control joints over time, you won't need to do nearly as much weed-killing as with block paving.
- Strength/Integrity - The solid fibre-mesh reinforced concrete base

that's laid on top of an appropriate sub-base means a PIC driveway is unlikely to suffer from any movement or sinking.

**What are the disadvantages of PIC driveways?**

- Less attractive? - It's understandably in the eye of the beholder, but the visual appeal of a PIC driveway can suffer where patterned mats are used and where the alignment isn't quite right.
- Cracking - It's not uncommon for cracks to start appearing in PIC drives. It can become an issue if those cracks become large and unsightly. While patch repair is possible, it can often require whole areas to be resurfaced. There's also no guarantee the repair will match the original installation.

- Drainage - Patterned concrete isn't permeable. This means it won't let surface water drain away. Without a proper drainage solution in place, a PIC drive doesn't comply with planning rules for front gardens.
- Resealing - To protect the colour of your driveway, imprinted concrete sealer must be applied and re-applied every two-to-four years – especially if there's a lot of wear and tear.
- Safety concerns - The sealant used on PIC driveways can be very slippery, particularly in winter when it ices over. This can pose a hazard to people walking on the surface



Well, we've certainly had a busy February here at Olive Tree Farm! Between the various storms shaking our skies and putting a dampener on any plans, and the ground quaking at our feet, it's certainly been a run against Mother Nature.

While battenning down the hatches, making quick work securing various enclosures and fences outside against the horrendous gales and waiting for it all to blow over, our sole female duck has been focused entirely on her own task.

Ben and I hadn't really thought we'd see any ducklings out of the sudden clutch of eggs we'd seen Mrs Duck sitting on, what with all the storms and fluctuations in air pressure – not to mention it being her first time – but she managed along enough to hatch out some young.

She did only manage to hatch three, which was still surprising and pleasing considering all things, and unfortunately, she did crush one of them. The other two we brought up to the house, as one had fallen onto its back and couldn't stand back up, which is suffocating for



them, and we didn't want to keep the young separated from each other at such a crucial age.

We also didn't want mum duck spending so much energy on so few babies, so with them taken care of it leaves her open and free to prepare her clean nesting box for another round.

It did take a little work on our part to get the duckling that fell back on its feet. We took it in turns between me, Ben and our eldest, Logan, keeping it warm in our hands, but in just over an hour, the siblings were reunited and preening each other, safe and snug in a fleece-lined dog bed we laid in front of the fireplace.

Continued on page 70 .....

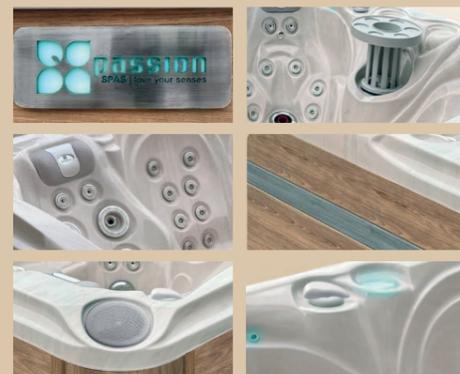
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.... Continued from page 69

Now, two weeks on, they are full of life and duckling curiosity! While they have still been spending nights inside, me and Ben wrestled our long rabbit cage down onto the patio from the farm. It's been out of use for a good few years now and had been cleaned out a

few months ago by Ben "just in case", and we have the perfect place to keep them within sight, but where they can safely be introduced to the Great Outdoors.

They've been soaking up the rays, as the wind finally died down towards the end of the month to take them outside, and it's been an absolute pleasure to watch them grow. It certainly is helping us through everything that happened at the end of last year, and now that the weather is clearing up, we're spending more time as a family up on the farm again, with our faithful dog Luna following us all around.

We do have a lot of cleaning up to be getting on with, so now the patio and ducks are set up, we'll be looking once more towards the garden and farm and try to get ahead while the days are bright and make a little sense out of the chaos these winds designed.



Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed the news of the month and join us again in the next for all our farm-life updates!

You can follow the progress of the family and farm on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/OliveTreeFarmSpain/](http://www.facebook.com/OliveTreeFarmSpain/)

You can also find our YouTube channel, just search for Olive Tree Farm! We will be adding new videos soon as we dig into some projects, so subscribe now so you don't miss any.

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### W.W.2 - The Wireless set no. 10. Advance in communications!

Looking at the D-day commemorations recently got me thinking about communications during that period. A fascination of mine. So, here we go.

One of the main issues during WW2 was communications. How command posts could reliably communicate with each other and how they could stay in touch with Churchill's various command bunkers that were dotted around coastlines. During the early part of the war, HF radio (like radio hams use today) and telephone lines were about all that were used. The problem with HF radio (Frequency range 2-50 Mega Hertz), is that anyone with a receiver could eavesdrop as this was not point-to-point, even with the best of directional aerials. Telephone lines and exchanges could be bombed, sabotaged and tapped in easily.

During the early '40s, two technologies were being developed which unintentionally but naturally complemented each other. One was the Magnetron. This is the device that we all have in our microwave oven. Basically, it is a valve which has the ability of generating a very high power, high frequency radio signal. It was initially designed to be used in Radar but it was soon realised that with the right antennae, a narrow beam transmission could be sent, line-of-sight. This made eavesdropping much harder as the signal did not radiate all over the place. Tests showed that you could send signals up to 50 miles away. As the frequency was much higher, you also had a bandwidth that was greater, allowing you to send more information.

A chap called Alec Reeves was working in Paris in the late '30s for IT&T, an American institution. He developed a technology called PCM, Pulse Code Modulation. Not enough space here to go into detail, but basically it allowed you to take 8 telephone lines, chop up the conversations into corresponding pulses whose amplitude (height) related to the energy of the words being sent. This signal would be sent into a filter, sent over radio, where the receiver would reconstruct the pulses into intelligible speech. Now, you could send 8 or more conversations over one link. This technology was far beyond its time. When the Germans invaded France, Alec came to the UK to continue his work.

The trick now was to combine the PCM signal, which was sort of digital, with the output of the Magnetron. Earlier radio systems tried using Frequency modulation (like our radios use today), but



by the nature of the way a magnetron works, its output frequency cannot be changed. However, its output power can be changed relatively easily. It was arranged that the PCM signal would modulate the power supply to the Magnetron. This resulted in short pulses of high frequency energy being generated relating perfectly to the PCM voice encoded signal. All this was sent into a Radar type dish. At the receiving end, radio equipment would detect the signal and by use of clever filtering techniques, reproduced the 8 different telephone channels. It was also realised that now there was a significant increase in radio bandwidth available (space),

by using accurate time shifting of the PCM signals, other groups of 8 channels could be sent at the same time.

At first the radio link was switched duplex, i.e. the conversation was one way at a time, over-and-out type. However, with the improvements in radio circuitry, two magnetrons could be set up at slightly different frequencies and could be received and transmitted separately at once. Now you have full duplex, as we have in modern day telephones. In mid '42, tests were carried out with systems installed and talking to each other at Horsham to Baker Street, London and Beachy Head to the Isle of Wight. Many modifications and variations were made and in '44, the go-ahead was given for full production.

Shortly after D-Day, Wireless set 10 trucks were being deployed and 2 were linked together in Cherbourg relaying crucial information back and forth for the military controllers. Early part of '45, the roll-out of these stations was considerable and a network of these, connected by telephone land lines, spread from Germany to London. The 21st Army Group led by Montgomery, highly praised the communications platform. It was said that the total outage time in that period was an hour. Internet, eat your heart out ah?

After the war and all the debriefing, The Germans said that they were able to eavesdrop and decode most of the communications the allied forces made. However, it was admitted that the Wireless 10 traffic baffled them as they thought it was some type of Radar signal. The PCM system was internationally adopted in both military and civilian operations. Like most things we see, War time development gives us technologies we would not have had.

Thanks for reading. Seth, Zeta Services, working hard for you.

# TECH, TV, GADGETS & GIZMOS

## The Great Digital Spring Clean

(Or: What Your Phone Has in Common with the Man Drawer)

Every home has one. In Britain, it's known affectionately as the "man drawer". In Spain, it may live in the kitchen, the hallway, or migrate heroically to the trastero. Mine used to be a pantry. Wherever it resides, it contains: Three unidentified keys, a charger for a Nokia 3310, assembly instructions for an IKEA wardrobe from 2015, a tape measure, batteries (in varying stages of decomposition & leakage). And a Scart lead.

It is not hoarding, you reassure yourself, it is possibility and forward planning. If we're honest, our phones have quietly become the digital equivalent.

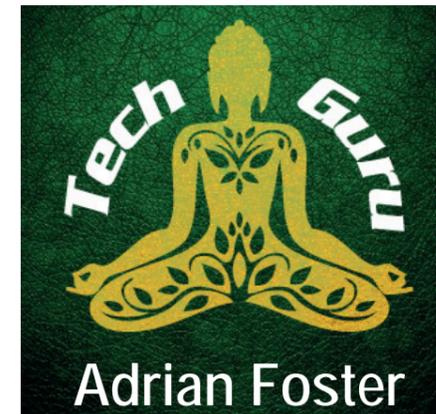
March in Almería has that in-between magic. The summer furnace hasn't yet switched on, the snow on the mountains recedes, windows are open, terraces are swept, and there's a collective urge to put things in order. Winter jackets are reassessed. The "just in case" pile is questioned. Meanwhile, in our pockets, the digital man drawer hums away; unopened emails, forgotten subscriptions, screenshots of recipes involving chickpeas and good intentions and an app to learn Albojense — because optimism is admirable.

Perhaps this is the year we tidy that drawer too. Not a dramatic renunciation of technology, no incense or tantric chanting, no vow to live off-grid in a Sierra Nevada Finca. Just a gentle reset.

### Step One: Email Amnesty

If your inbox is comfortably in double digits, congratulations. You are either Sheldon Cooper or living in blissful denial. For the rest of us, the unread counter may resemble Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's weekly legal bill.

Promotional emails multiply faster than flies around an unattended dinner plate. "Final hours!" they cry. "Last chance!" (It never is). Here's the civilised approach: unsubscribe from five. Not fifty, this is lifestyle maintenance, not an ICE raid... Five is enough to feel



victorious without requiring a sit-down by the pool with a refreshing cold beverage. Next, archive everything older than a few months. If you haven't opened it by now, it has fulfilled its destiny — which was largely to make you feel mildly discombobulated. Digital spring cleaning begins with self-forgiveness.

### Step Two: The Subscription Safari

Somewhere between your electricity bill and your café con leche habit, small monthly charges are quietly grazing; a streaming service you joined for one gripping drama, a premium weather app — in southern Spain, a meditation platform you used enthusiastically for nine days.

Make tea. Check your statements. Cancel at least one. It feels unexpectedly empowering — like discovering money in last year's summer shorts. Less financial background noise equals more mental space. And mental space is the real luxury.

### Step Three: The Camera Roll Confessional

Now we descend into archaeology. Scroll through your photos, past the tapas, past the suspiciously artistic sunset, past the takeaway menu you use a little too often, past the photo of the parking space

you took "just in case". Eventually you reach The Screenshots; a motivational quote you wholeheartedly meant to embody, a recipe requiring fourteen ingredients, Google translate and ambition... a boarding pass from Almería Airport in 2022 and a Wi-Fi password from two routers ago.

Continued on page 74 .....





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**Delete with kindness.**

Every screenshot represents a moment of intention. But intentions, like January fitness plans, are allowed to evolve and occasionally fly the nest. Keep the memories, release the clutter. And perhaps remove the seventeen accidental photos of your thumb.

**Step Four: The App Cull**

Look at your home screen and be honest! When did you last open that language-learning app? Are you now fluent, or simply fond of the idea of being fluent? Apps do not announce their redundancy, they simply sit there, like that mysterious screw in the man drawer, radiating future usefulness. If you haven't used it in three months, let it go. Your phone will not be offended, it does not require emotional reassurance.

Yet... Rearrange what remains; essentials first then distractions somewhere deliberate. Put temptation slightly out of reach.

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Technology shapes behaviour. Layout shapes technology and a small act of design can shift daily habits. Not only that but this act can have a positive effect on your phone. These forgotten apps will have been using valuable resources and the net result may well be a phone that runs faster and lasts longer between charges.

**Step Five: Curate and Protect**

Social media can feel like a perpetual fiesta you never consciously agreed to attend. Notifications pop, opinions arrive. Someone somewhere believes you urgently need to know what they had for lunch or what a fantastic time they are always having.

Spring in Spain is about pruning. Olive trees are trimmed so they grow stronger. Bougainvillea is cut back so it blooms brighter. Apply the same logic. Mute accounts that leave you faintly irritated, unfollow what drains you and instead follow what nourishes — local events, hiking routes, Spanish recipes you might genuinely cook.

Then take five extra minutes for something less glamorous but deeply sensible.

Update passwords. Turn on two-factor authentication. Use a password manager if needs be. It's the digital equivalent of locking your front door before an evening stroll. Not dramatic, not visible. Just wise. A spring clean isn't only about what you remove, it's about what you protect. The unexpected benefits can surprise you.

Here's the curious thing about de-cluttering your digital life: You don't just free up storage, you reduce background noise. Every unread email, unused app and unnecessary notification is a tiny tug on your attention, individually harmless but collectively exhausting. Silence a few of them and something shifts. You may check your phone less, you may feel less hurried. You may look up more often — at the stars or the blue sky you came here for, the mountains, the cat, your other half, the life happening beyond the screen.

And nothing catastrophic will happen.



This isn't about rejecting technology. We navigate Spanish roundabouts with it. We Face Time family back in the UK. We translate menus. We photograph sunsets that are absolutely better than yesterday's. Technology is useful, wonderful even but like the man drawer, it benefits from the occasional clear-out.

So this March, as you sweep the terrace and debate how many extension leads you actually need, spare a thought for the device in your pocket - open the drawer, sort the screws, release the fossilised elastic bands into the wilderness. And enjoy the satisfying click of closing it again — for the first time in ages.

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**WALK 4 LIFE, ARBOLEAS**

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 MARKET REPORT Where & When Is your local market listed? If not please let us know	<b>Monday</b> Antas, Huércal Overa	<b>Thursday</b> Cuevas del Almanzora, Olula Del Río
	<b>Tuesday</b> Albox, Los Gallardos, Cuevas del Almanzora	<b>Friday</b> Garrucha, Turre, Zurgena
	<b>Wednesday</b> Bédar, Mojácar, Lubrín Cantoria	<b>Saturday</b> Águilas, Arboleas, Vera
		<b>Sunday</b> Fines, Villaricos



**WHEELS**

MOTORING SECTION

**WORN TYRES, NOT INDICATING, NOT COMPLETELY STOPPING AT A STOP SIGN...**

**10 dangerous (and frequent) infractions**

When you change lanes, do you always turn on the correct indicator? On motorways, do you usually occupy the left lane? Have you checked your car tyres lately?

Whether due to forgetfulness or bad habit, every day we cause situations of great risk behind the wheel, without even being aware of it, and they are completely avoidable.

According to a report issued by Trafico, the following are some of the most dangerous frequent infractions and their corresponding fines.

**1. Check your tyres!**

Driving on worn tyres or with an incorrect inflation pressure on wet, snowy or icy roads causes a significant loss of adhesion.

Continued on page 78 .....



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<p><b>JEEP RENEGADE LIMITED</b> 1.5HYBRID 130cv 21.000km YEAR 2024 <b>20.500€</b></p>	<p><b>FORD PUMA TITANIUM</b> 1.0Petrol 125cv 51.000km YEAR 2023 <b>22.800€</b></p>	<p><b>AUDI Q3 SPORTBACK S-LINE</b> 2.0TDI 150cv 43.000km YEAR 2020 <b>34.800€</b></p>
<p><b>VOLKSWAGEN GOLF</b> 2.0TDI 115cv YEAR 2022 <b>21.900€</b></p>	<p><b>VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN</b> 2.0TDI 150cv YEAR 2016 <b>15.500€</b></p>	<p><b>BMW SERIE 1 116D</b> 1.5D 115cv YEAR 2023 <b>20.900€</b></p>
<p><b>CITROEN C1 CITY EDITION</b> 1.0Petrol 75cv 16.000km YEAR 2021 <b>10.300€</b></p>	<p><b>DS7 CROSSBACK PERFORMANCE LINE</b> 1.5BHDI 130cv YEAR 2021 <b>21.500€</b></p>	<p><b>KIA X-CEED ECO DYNAMIC TECH</b> 1.0Petrol 120cv YEAR 2021 <b>18.300€</b></p>
<p><b>PEUGEOT 208 ALLURE HYBRID</b> 100cv 16.000km YEAR 2024 <b>18.900€</b></p>	<p><b>PEUGEOT RIFTER ACTIVE PACK</b> 1.5HDI 75cv YEAR 2021 <b>15.300€</b></p>	<p><b>PEUGEOT 5008 ALLURE HYBRID</b> 145cv 18.000km 7 seats YEAR 2025 <b>27.500€</b></p>

\* prices are subject to minimum financing \*

<p><b>HONDA INSIGHT ELEGANCE</b> 1.3Hybrid 90cv YEAR 2009 <b>5.500€</b></p>	<p><b>NISSAN QASHQAI N-CONNECTA</b> 1.3Petrol 160cv YEAR 2024 <b>28.900€</b></p>	<p><b>SEAT IBIZA REFERENCE</b> 1.0Petrol 80cv YEAR 2021 <b>12.500€</b></p>
<p><b>RENAULT KANGOO EXPRESS</b> 1.5DCI 95cv YEAR 2021 <b>12.500€</b></p>	<p><b>PEUGEOT BOXER COMBI</b> 2.2BHDI 140cv 68.000km 9 seats YEAR 2020 <b>23.900€</b></p>	<p><b>SEAT ARONA ECOMOTIVE STYLE</b> 1.0Petrol 115cv YEAR 2020 <b>16.000€</b></p>
<p><b>PEUGEOT 3008 GT</b> 1.5BLUEHDI 130cv 37.600km YEAR 2023 <b>28.800€</b></p>	<p><b>PEUGEOT 208 ALLURE HYBRID</b> 100cv 15.000km YEAR 2024 <b>18.900€</b></p>	<p><b>RENAULT ARKANA ZEN</b> 1.3TCE 140cv 24.000km YEAR 2022 <b>21.800€</b></p>

English Speaking Staff

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No Deposit Finance Available  
\*Subject to status



..... Continued from page 77

A loss that is accentuated when the depth of the main grooves of the tread is less than 4 millimeters (remember, the minimum legal depth required for passenger cars is 1.6 millimeters).

Driving with a vehicle whose tyres do not have a tread or do not meet the minimum conditions of use is a serious infraction carrying a fine of €200 per tyre.

**2. Without lights!**

The headlights not only illuminate, they also place the vehicle on the road. Driving without lights when these are necessary, or with damaged or low lights, makes it difficult for other drivers to calculate the width and position of your vehicle.

Before getting into your car, check the lighting of your vehicle: driving without adequate lighting at times of poor visibility (sunset and sunrise, at night, with fog ...) is a risk that can be avoided and is considered a serious violation with a penalty of €200.

**3. Moderate your speed!**

When we approach pedestrian crossings without traffic lights, residential areas, schools and buses that are at their stops we must moderate the speed, or even stop the vehicle if necessary, to avoid accidents.

Violations of this rule for driving without caution or even negligently are considered serious when they cause danger and are sanctioned with up to a €260 fine.

**4. Use your indicator!**

You will surely know from your own experience that there are manoeuvres (a lane change, for example) that are signalled at short notice or not signalled at all, these can cause sudden and unexpected shocks and risks. Warning your manoeuvres to other users is mandatory and not doing so is a serious infraction with a penalty of €200.

**5. Stay in the correct lane!**

On motorways and highways it is common to see drivers occupying the centre and left lanes while the right is free.

According to the regulations, on interurban roads with more than one lane per direction, cars must always drive on the right. Failure to do so, hindering the driving of other drivers, is a serious infraction with a €200 fine.

**6. Stopping on a bus stop!**

Stopping and parking on bus stops is disrespectful to other road users



and dangerous particularly to the pedestrians who may have to walk into the road to get on the bus. That is why these are considered serious infractions and incur a €200 fine.

**7. Give way or Stop?**

Mandatory stop signs are usually located at crossroads where visibility is poor or zero. For this reason, you have to completely stop the vehicle to observe that there is no risk. The law establishes that to make another driver who has the right of way break or manoeuvre, or not stopping at a regulated intersection with the mandatory stop signal, is a serious infraction and is sanctioned with a fine of €200 and the loss of 4 points.

**8. Insecure cargo**

Vehicles with poorly held loads can lead to risky situations for the vehicles behind, especially on high speed roads. Driving a vehicle whose cargo has fallen onto the road due to poor strapping, creating

danger for other users is a very serious infraction with a €500 fine.

**9. Opening the car door**

After parking, we take off our belts and get out ... Be careful! Before opening the door, look in the rear view mirror, it can cause serious damage to a cyclist who passes by your vehicle at that precise moment. This type of negligent behaviour that causes danger to other users is considered a serious infraction and a fine of €260.

**10. Parking on the pavement**

When you park, occupying part or all of the pavement for whatever reason, you 'steal' a vital space from pedestrians, possibly 'pushing' them to dangerous situations when they walk on the road to get past the badly parked vehicle. Parking on pedestrian areas is a serious infraction and carries a fine of €200.



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 <p><b>23,500 €</b></p> <p>PEUGEOT RIFTER   1.5 DIESEL   2023   24,000</p>	 <p><b>17,850 €</b></p> <p>MINI COOPER   1.5 PETROL   2017   90,000</p>	 <p><b>13,500 €</b> PRICE DROP</p> <p>MINI COOPER S   1.6 PETROL   2012   140,000 KMS</p>	 <p><b>30,995 €</b></p> <p>KIA SPORTAGE   1.6 PETROL   HYBRID   2023   15,000</p>
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 <p><b>3,995 €</b></p> <p>PEUGEOT 307   1.6 PETROL   2006   155,000</p>	 <p><b>5,250 €</b></p> <p>FORD FIESTA   1.2 PETROL   2014   224,000</p>	 <p><b>13,995 €</b></p> <p>KIA SPORTAGE   1.7 DIESEL   2014   161,000</p>	 <p><b>27,500 €</b></p> <p>JEEP GRAN CHEROKEE   2016   3.0 DIESEL   189,000</p>
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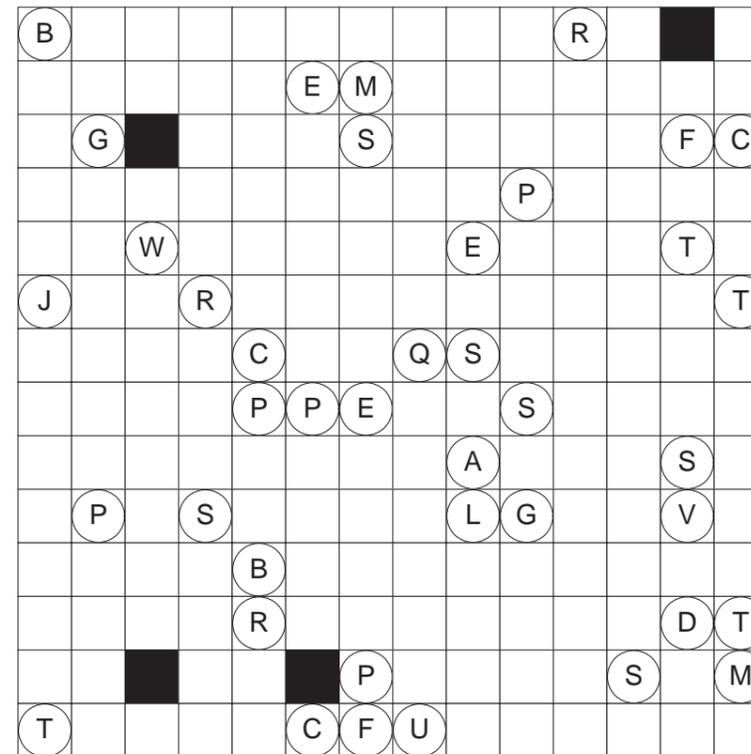
614 929 082 | Poligono Arboleas, next to Aldesur Bricolage

**WE HAVE MOVED**

## Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

### Reverse Word Search



Each of these circled letters is the first letter of one or more of the words on the given word list.

Your task is to fill in the grid completely using only the given words. No word will repeat itself. Words can be positioned the same as in a regular word search – horizontally, vertically or diagonally, reading frontwards or backwards.

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

- |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| Abridged | Gaiety   | Rolled   |
| Brook    | Galores  | Rungs    |
| Bulked   | Jackets  | Searing  |
| Bungled  | Jigged   | Shots    |
| Cartel   | Larger   | Snipes   |
| Cheep    | Levies   | Spine    |
| Cleft    | Misers   | Stallion |
| Crews    | Mossy    | Strut    |
| Crisp    | Papal    | Taste    |
| Derricks | Pedantry | Tears    |
| Easier   | Perished | Tonal    |
| Eerier   | Ploys    | Track    |
| Equities | Poets    | Undoing  |
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| Flies    | Rives    | Whalers  |

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FORD PUMA HYBRID AUTO. 1996MES	FORD PUMA HYBRID AUT 2022	FOCUS AUTO. DIESEL 11750€	FORD FIESTA AUTO. 11450€	FORD FOCUS PETROL 9750€	MIT PAJERO 7STR.AUT DID 9800€
MINI PETROL LIKE NEW 10850€	SEAT IBIZA DIESEL SUV Great Mpg 6650€	BMW X5 AUT 7STR 10750€ DIESEL	FIESTA DIESEL 6900€	VW GOLF DIESEL 9150€	PICK UP TOYOTA HILUX 14950€

T's & C's apply

# The Processionary Caterpillar

## Man's and Dog's Worst Enemy



As the winter cold subsides and spring comes it is time to be on the alert for the processionary caterpillar and make sure our kids, cats and dogs don't approach, let alone lick, them. And avoid touching them yourself too, as they can cause urticaria (hives) and allergic reactions in animals and people.

The processionary caterpillar, the pine processionary, or the thaumetopoea pityocampa, seems to be coming earlier every year and in ever increasing numbers. We have already received reports of the first sightings.

The official description sounds like something out of a horror film: 'Along its body each caterpillar has some 500,000 poisonous hairs, or trichomes, shaped like little darts or arrows. Their small size and also the fact that they break off easily mean that they constitute an important risk of urticaria, not only through physical contact, they also travel on the wind. People and animals that come into contact with the trichomes usually suffer skin reactions and sometimes eye and bronchial affectation and even severe anaphylaxis.'

The caterpillars start their lives in nests in pine trees. They descend

from their nests in spring in a one line procession (hence their name) usually led by a female, and after a while they transform into moths.

At the caterpillar stage they are extremely dangerous. And the risk comes not only from touching them. Just getting too near and making them feel threatened can cause them to launch some of their hundreds of thousands of little arrows, so it's important to keep our animals, children and ourselves at a safe distance from them.

If your dog does come into contact with one, take it straight to the vet. Children, and sometimes even adults, should go straight to A&E.

In the advent your animal tries to scratch its mouth or shakes its head excessively because it hurts, or seems nervous and restless this can be symptoms of it having been poisoned by processionary caterpillars. The most visible symptoms are inflammation of the tongue, lips and even the whole head. It may get a temperature and sometimes problems closing its mouth.

In case of poisoning you can try to gently wash its mouth with tepid water, but the most important thing is to get it directly to your vet, who can give it rapid action cortisone treatment.

Your dog may lose part of its tongue, but the important thing is to get it treatment before its larynx is affected as this can cause death from asphyxia.

If you see one or more nests in your pine trees, burn them straight away (the nests!), that is the only safe way of disposing of them. If the caterpillars have reached the ground before you spot them, spray them vigorously with cockroach spray which will kill them. But always beware of the risk of the 'arrows' and wear goggles and a mask before embarking on your caterpillar terminator quest.



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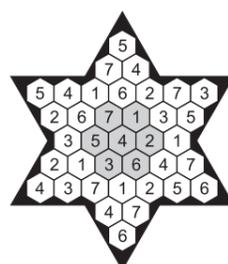
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A	X	U	T	K	O	I						
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G	R	A	N	D	J	U	N	C	T	I	O	
I	R	O	C	A	L	A	O	G				
A	S	Y	U	T	A	T	L	A	N	T	A	

### Puzzle Time Solutions



9	5	2	7	6	4	8	1	3
3	7	4	5	8	1	2	6	9
8	6	1	9	2	3	4	5	7
5	2	7	6	3	8	9	4	1
4	8	6	1	7	9	3	2	5
1	9	3	2	4	5	6	7	8
6	1	8	4	9	7	5	3	2
2	3	5	8	1	6	7	9	4
7	4	9	3	5	2	1	8	6

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R	E	I	R	E	E	M	I	S	E	R	S	E	K	
O	G	X	G	P	H	S	H	O	T	S	I	F	C	
O	A	G	S	E	S	L	S	N	P	T	L	L	A	
K	I	W	R	E	S	A	E	N	A	E	T	R		
J	E	H	R	H	R	O	U	E	P	E	T			
A	T	A	L	C	E	O	O	S	T	I	G	A	R	L
C	Y	L	N	P	E	L	T	S	E	R	A	L		
K	D	E	G	D	I	R	B	A	A	T	S	A		
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T	S	W	E	R	C	F	U	N	D	O	I	N	G	

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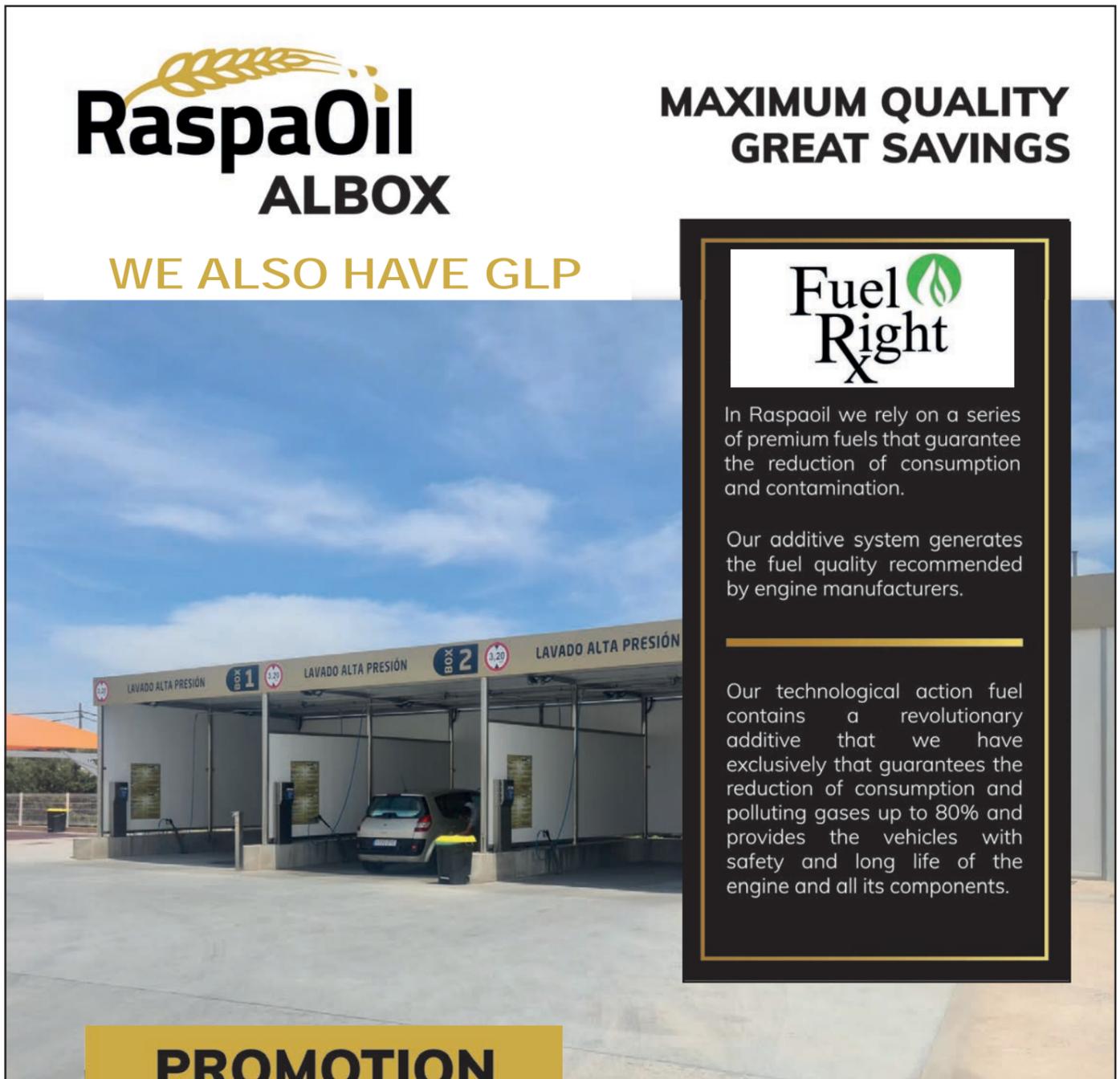
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**Mojácar**



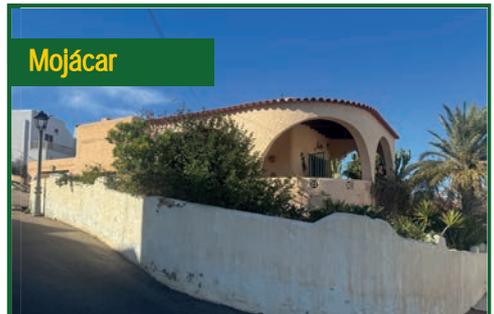
**Las Ventanicas:** Refurbished Villa. South-east Facing. State-of-the-art Glass Enclosure. 2/3 Bedrooms. 2 Bathrooms. Solarium. Solar for Water. Double Garage. AC/H. Alarm System.

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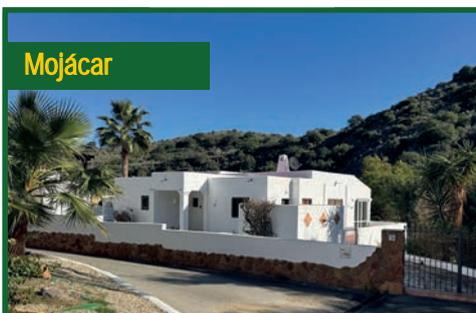


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