

June 2026

Issue 158

# Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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## RESIDENCE TAX REMINDER

Many people have already filed their 2025 tax return but this is a gentle reminder to those who have not yet done so. Time is running out to submit before the deadline of the end of June. Late submission will result in a fine so hesitate no longer.

If you require assistance with this then the team at C.A.T. Services are here to help.

### TIE RENEWALS - ALMERIA UPDATE

At the time of going to print fingerprint appointments for all TIE renewals, visa applications (new & renewals) and residencia exchange have become very difficult to obtain.

Since September 2025, there have been a steady stream of appointments available and this has resulted in a significant reduction in the backlog from last summer and enabled us to get right up-to-date.

With the introduction of the amnesty for vulnerable persons, most Foreign Office resources have been redirected to this area to try and achieve solutions for the many 1000s applying for residencia under the 3 month scheme.

We will continue to try on a regular basis to obtain any appointment that becomes available and always prioritise the needs of the expiry dates.

If you would like to be included on our list or indeed discuss your situation and needs, do not hesitate in getting in touch with the team at C.A.T. Services in La Alfoquia.



Harmony has now been established for over 10 years and during that time we have raised a lot of funds and been able to help individuals, families and the community in so many ways.

Our charity shop in the village of La Alfoquia continues to be our main source for fundraising. This is run by a great group of helpers, who are always on hand to assist.

The shop has an amazing reputation and people come from far and wide to grab a bargain or two. If you haven't visited us before please do pop in and say hello.

In fact, if you have a few spare hours why not join the team. We need some more energetic volunteers who would be prepared to sort donations, iron and price clothing, and generally help out on a regular basis. Find out more in the shop.

Our library, which can be found in the same building as C.A.T. Services, is well stocked with current and classic fiction and, like the shop, is very well looked after by Carol.

In general those we help are numerous and all is confidential however, Harmony are very pleased to have helped the AMPA CEIP La Alfoquia, the Parents Association of the local school, by donating two much needed benches and seats for the childrens playground area at the school in La Alfoquia.



Harmony Treasurer Lin Bennett was pleased to meet with

the school director, Vanesa Coca Rodriguez and the president of the AMPA, Rosa Segura Galera, to see the benches in situ. Harmony will continue to liaise with the school and the Parents Association to help where possible.

During April, Harmony received a visit from some representatives of the Masons, Albox, who kindly gave us a substantial donation to help us continue our efforts in helping the local community.

As always, we are very grateful for all the support we receive and it is a privilege to be able to use the funds to help so many.



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# Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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Welcome to the June 2026 issue of Almeria Living - the first really warm one of the year!!

There is so much excitement and activity in my courtyard at the moment. It has become home to a couple of naive swallows who I'm convinced have finally managed to construct their first little nest on a beam in the shed. Following the big build came the indecision about what to do next. Finally, the plan came together and now there is a feeding frenzy as the youngsters have hatched. I want to build them a safety hammock as room in the nest is already becoming sparse!

Please don't forget to put water out for our feathered friends as the weather has warmed significantly and water becomes hard for them to find.

In this bumper issue .....

We show our support for the RBL who are celebrating Armed Forces weekend on Sunday 28th June. Find out more on page 67.

The magazine wouldn't be the same without the penmanship of my scribes. Some have been writing for many years and for others it has become a new hobby. It is always a pleasure to receive and print their passion.

Many thanks, as always, to our 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 Almeria Living.

Take care and stay safe. It is particularly important to keep an eye on our young visitors, especially around the pool.

Talk again in July.

Karen (Ed)

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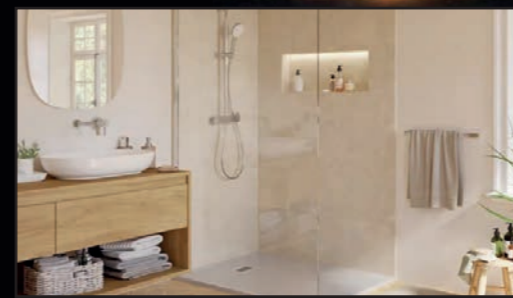
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# De-registering from the Spanish System

There comes a time for some people to decide that Spain is no longer the country they want to live in. Many return to their home country, whilst others take the plunge for new lands and adventures.

Whatever the reason and wherever you go it is important that you de-register from the Spanish system.

Some of this information will not apply to you as it depends what type of resident you have been.

## Vehicle

If you are taking a Spanish registered vehicle out of the country then it is very important to notify Trafico (DGT) of the exportation so they can remove the vehicle from their database and not charge you the annual road tax.

It doesn't seem that important but over time the costs mount up and if you still have assets in Spain then you could receive an embargo for non-payment.

## Padron

The padron is the official register that each townhall has to keep a record of the number of people living in its municipality. Therefore, if you are leaving Spain and giving up your residencia it is very important to get your name removed from this list. Some townhalls require proof of plane/ferry tickets in order to carry out the process. In return you will be issued with a certificate that confirms this has happened.

Many of the smaller townhalls are reluctant to provide this document, but the 'baja' document is required by both Tax Office



and Foreigner's Office as part of their processes.

## Tax

The Hacienda need to know that you are no longer a resident of Spain. They will require a copy of your Padron deregistration and completion of form 030. They also require a document from HMRC in the UK confirming that you are now formally a UK tax resident. Remember that if you have been a resident for more than 6 months you should complete a Resident Fiscal Tax return the following year.

## Residencia

It is necessary to notify the Oficina de Extranjero that you will no longer be living in Spain and hand over your original residencia document or card. This is particularly important for 'permanente' residents and those with the A4 or credit card

size green paper ones.

If your temporary card is about to expire then this step could be avoided so long as you have come off the Padron and advised the Tax Office.

Complete the EX20, EX21, EX17 or EX18 form, as appropriate, just as you did when you first registered as a resident and select the 'Baja' box. With this form, in duplicate, original Residencia Certificate or TIE card, original passport (or certified copy if someone is acting on your behalf) and the de-registered padron certificate you are set to go!

In return you will receive a stamped copy of the application form for your records.

## Medical

If you are returning to your own country and have been in the Spanish medical system, you should hand in your medical cards to the main Centro de Salud for your area.

Make sure that any forthcoming hospital appointments have also been cancelled to free the space for someone else.

If you are moving to another country (not your homeland), besides carrying out the actions above, you should consider getting a certificate from the Social Security office that confirms Spain will not be responsible for your medical cover. Having had first hand experience of this, when someone moved to France and found that it was not so easy to do if you are not close by or able to converse with the office.

UK Nationals resident under the Withdrawal Agreement who are moving to another EU country also require a certificate from the Spanish Foreigner's Office/National Police.

As always if you would like any further advice or assistance with any of the above you can call or visit the offices of C.A.T. Services in La Alfoquia.

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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 May we journeyed to Guadalajara and now our next of Spain's provincial Capitals takes us into the Basque region .....



## San Sebastián in Guipúzcoa

Guipúzcoa (or Gipuzkoa, as it is spelled in Basque language) is one of the three provinces that make up the autonomous region of País Vasco, the Basque Country. It is also Spain's smallest province, covering a surface of only 1997 m2. With its 726,712 inhabitants, the province of Guipúzcoa has the fourth highest population density in Spain.

It is situated in the easternmost corner of the Cantabrian Sea and borders on France, Navarra, Vizcaya, Álava and the Bay of Biscay. The highest point in Guipúzcoa is in the Sierra de Aizkorri which reaches a height of 1,528 MASL.

Guipúzcoa's intense green countryside is an emblematic trait; this is a product of the province's oceanic climate with its very limited thermal range and abundant precipitations, especially in autumn and early winter. The annual rainfall amounts to between 1,200 and 1,700 mm.

This is one of the few Spanish provinces whose history has not been touched by the Al Andalus realm, and the Romans only made it to the very eastern part with a settlement in the city which is today known as Irún.

The province boasts probably the world's most stunning example of a geological phenomenon known as flysch. Flysch is a sequence of sedimentary rock layers—alternating hard (limestone/sandstone) and soft (shale/marl) strata—deposited in deep marine basins during mountain-building.

However, you do not need to know how it is formed to appreciate the wild beauty of these phenomena, or the fact that they present the evolution over 50–60 million years. The flysch trail along the coast of Guipúzcoa is over 20 kilometres long, best enjoyed on foot.

There are many beautiful and idyllic villages in Guipúzcoa, both on the coast and inland. With the province being so small, there is not far between them and they are easy to visit. Amongst the most outstanding places are Hondarribia with its city wall and well maintained historic quarter, Tolosa, which boasts an unusual pillared river front, and Pasaia, nudged in between the Pasaia river and the Jaizquibel Mountain.



The capital of Guipúzcoa is San Sebastian, which is home to 189.866 Guipuzcoanos.

The city was founded in 1180 by the Navarran king Sancho el Sabio (Sancho the Wise) near a large monastery devoted to San Sebastian, and it took its name from this. Being known all over the world and the rest of Spain as San Sebastian, the city does actually have a completely different official name in Euskara: Donostia.

But this again has the same origin. San Sebastian in old Euskara was 'Done Sebastián' which through the centuries and various ways of speaking (Donasa astiai, Donasastia, Donastia) has finally become Donostia.

San Sebastian had its 'Belle Époque' at the end of the 19th century

and the beginning of the 20th. When King Alfonso XII died in 1885, his widow, Queen María Cristina, who acted as regent until her son was old enough to rule, moved the court to San Sebastian every summer, to the Palacio de Miramar.

Queen María Cristina's summer courts in San Sebastian did the city a world of good. The modern architectural development that took place there in those years, plus the construction of a casino in 1887 and the city's stunning La Concha beach were all factors that helped attract visitors from all over Europe long before any other areas of Spain turned into tourist destinations.

*Continued on page 8 .....*



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..... Continued from page 7

Indeed, when the First World War broke out in 1914, San Sebastian turned into one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Europe with the names of the day such as Mata Hari, Leon Trotsky, Maurice Ravel and the like holding court there. There were performances by the French Operetta Company, the Russian Ballet and stars from the international opera scene.

Queen María Cristina spent all her summers in San Sebastian from 1885 until 1928, the year before she died, and the council made her an Honourable Mayoress in gratitude for all she had done for the

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city.

Early on in the Spanish civil war, San Sebastian fell into the hands of the Falangists, and afterwards the city acquired a central role in Franco's government. Just like Queen María Cristina, the Generalissimo spent every summer there until his death in 1975, turning San Sebastian into the Summer Capital of Spain.

In the Bay of La Concha is a small islet called Isla de Santa Clara. It is really just a small bump in the water, the surface is a mere 5.1 hectares. However, the highest point is 48 metres above the sea, and the islet is lined with steep cliffs. There is a small uninhabited lighthouse in the middle of the islet.

Against all odds, Isla de Santa Clara has become a popular tourist destination with a small boat crossing regularly to ferry people to and fro. When the tide is out, a small beach emerges, and this is what attracts the tourists. Thanks to the number of visitors, the beach boasts a jetty and a bar, and even a lifeguard service!

San Sebastian has more Michelin stars per square kilometre than any other city in the world! It is also known as Spain's gastronomic capital.

The cuisine of the city enjoys world-wide recognition for its very high quality based on local products in season, fresh fish from the Cantabrian Sea and a unique fusion between Basque tradition and culinary vanguard.

When we who live in southern Spain hear about pinchos, we think of the little wooden skewers with pieces of pork or chicken cooked over an open fire or on the 'plancha'.

In Donostia, the name pintxos (as it is spelt there) covers a large variety of small aperitifs and finger foods – it is their name for tapas, and pintxos are usually served speared to a piece of bread with a toothpick or a small wooden or metal skewer.

The city is world famous for its pintxos, and several tourist guides offer guided tours along what they call the Pintxo Trail.

Modern day San Sebastian is still an extremely popular tourist destination, and the La Concha Beach was recently voted the best in Europe and the sixth best in the world. This, combined with international events such as the International San Sebastian Cinema Festival, the San Sebastian Jazz Festival and the Quincena Musical, a classical music festival that is the world's oldest music festival, all have contributed to making the city a magnet for beach lovers and cultural tourists alike.

# Txangurro a la Donostiarra from Guipúzcoa



With the setting of this month's province on the edge of the Cantabrian Sea and the Bay of Biscay, I felt we should do seafood. Bacalao – cod – is a superstar in Guipúzcoa and would have been the natural choice, but after thorough research, I fell in love with this crab dish and decided to share it.

Known as Txangurro a la Donostiarra, this dish is one of the most emblematic in the world famous and celebrated cuisine of San Sebastian.

Txangurro is the word in Basque language (Euskara) for the European spider crab, a much-valued crustacean, especially in northern Spain. Due to it being quite pricey nowadays (35-45€/kilo whole), it is sometimes substituted by the less tasty and coarser textured brown crab, but the result is not quite the same.

It is one of the few – if not the only – of the recipes in Basque cuisine that does not have its roots in traditional, popular cooking, but in 'haute cuisine'.

The dish was developed by the Basque chef Félix Ibaruren, 'Shishito' (Xixito in Basque,) at the beginning of the 20th century. He based it on an American lobster recipe, but he made it with the more modest spider crab and even with the much humbler brown crab.

He wanted to lift these two crustaceans out of the 'common' kitchen and bring them into the 'haute cuisine' category.

# ¡Buen Provecho!

Today, Txangurro a la Donostiarra is cooked and served both in restaurants and private homes. It is best enjoyed in the colder months, which is when the quality of these crustaceans is at its best. It is particularly popular around Christmas and New Year, often as a starter.

To cook Txangurro a la Donostiarra, you boil spider crabs in generously salted water, ten minutes a piece.

Once they have cooled down, pick out the meat – both from the arms, the pincers and the body. Put it in a bowl, then proceed to open the head over the bowl to gather up the tasty liquid inside.

Gently fry chopped onion in olive oil until it is golden. Add whole cloves of garlic and chopped tomato, cook for five minutes, then add the crab meat and cook a bit more.

Stir in a few breadcrumbs and a good slug of brandy and flambé the lot. Adjust the seasoning, but be careful with salt as saltwater fish is naturally salty.

Clean out the shells thoroughly and put the crab mixture inside. Cover with breadcrumbs and a blob of butter and cook in the oven at 190°C for ten minutes until the breadcrumbs are golden.

Does it not sound delicious?

Buen Provecho!

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## Magic June

June is my birthday month, and my favourite of all the months of the year – closely followed by December, of course!

The magic of my childhood birthdays has followed me throughout my life, and that feeling never fails to arrive at the beginning of June.

That inner magic is a gift from my parents that has enabled me to enjoy my birthday celebration equally whether I'm surrounded by people or alone at home. I have not yet decided on my birthday menu for this year; it could easily be any of this month's recipes, they are all rather nice (in my opinion).

I'm treating you to pork ribs, stuffed pasta, chicken in cream mustard sauce and lovely prawns!

Read, cook and enjoy!

### Red Pepper Sauce with Prawns

What do you call it when you make a recipe? Do you invent it? Discover it? Compose it?

Whatever the correct word is, my sister did that with this one. Not the prawns, mind, she's not a great prawn fan, she did hers with chicken.

However, to me it sounded like a great way to cook prawns, so I substituted them for the chicken. I also added spinach, seeing as I had some, and it came out a treat!

Ingredients for one:

- 125g prawns, peeled
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ red onion, chopped
- 1 small red pepper, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 100ml tomato frito
- 100ml fish or chicken stock
- 1 slug cream
- Salt and pepper
- 1 handful spinach

Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion and pepper until the onion is transparent. Add the garlic and the smoked paprika and stir until the garlic becomes aromatic.

Stir in the tomato frito followed by the stock and the cream.

Let it bubble gently, covered, for about 20 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, and maybe a little more smoked paprika, then turn in the spinach and prawns.

Cook for a couple of minutes until the prawns have turned pink and are done.

Serve with rice or couscous and a glass of chilled white wine.

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**Chicken with Spinach and Mustard**

I adore mustard sauce, and whenever I see a recipe which involves that particular delight, I just have to try it!

As you know, most recipes you see are for four eaters, and although I only made one chicken leg, I did do more than a quarter of the sauce – you can probably guess why. I can't remember the exact amounts I did, so I'll give you the recipe for four, then you can adjust it to however many eaters you want.

Ingredients for four:

- 4 chicken legs
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 25g butter
- 500g leeks, thinly sliced
- 1 lemon, juice and grated rind
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 150ml white wine
- 250ml chicken stock
- 100ml cream
- 500g spinach leaves
- 2-3 tsp wholegrain Dijon mustard (or more, to taste)

Melt the butter in a large casserole dish and pour in the olive oil. When it turns golden, brown the chicken legs all over, season with salt and pepper and set aside.

Gently fry the leeks in the same fat until they are soft, then add lemon rind and garlic. Stir briefly and turn up the heat. Quickly add the white wine and let it bubble until the alcohol evaporates. Pour in the stock and cream and bring to the boil.



Return the chicken to the pan and let them cook for about 40 minutes until they are done.

Stir in the mustard, adjust the seasoning and add lemon juice to taste.

Turn in the spinach leaves and leave them until they start to wilt.

Serve with boiled potatoes or rice and a vegetable of your choice.

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## Stuffed Pasta

I made this only last night but didn't make any notes, so thought I'd better write it down straight away while it's still fresh in my mind.

I'd meant to stick in a handful of spinach that I had left, but I forgot!! But even though it does not appear in the photo, I'll include it in the recipe – and then hope you, at least, will remember.



Ingredients for one:

- 125g stuffed, fresh pasta (I had pasta stuffed with boletus and truffle, my favourite) cooked
- ½ red onion, finely chopped
- ½ red pepper, finely cubed
- Olive oil
- 30-40g soft cheese, such as camembert or brie
- 100ml cream
- 1 handful fresh spinach, chopped
- Oregano

Gently fry the onion and pepper in the olive oil until soft.

Add the cheese, and keep cooking gently until it has melted.

Pour in the cream, add the oregano and mix well. Leave to bubble for about 5 minutes, season to taste with salt and pepper, then turn in the drained pasta and heat it through.

Finally, stir in the spinach and cook for a minute until it wilts, then turn the whole into a bowl.

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## Chicken Ribs

I've decided that if you can have buffalo wings, you can also have chicken ribs. At least chicken do have ribs, whereas I'm yet to see a buffalo with wings!

The reason for the name is that I cooked some pork ribs in a way that I had hitherto only done with chicken legs.

They obviously needed a bit longer, but that certainly did not do the potatoes a disservice!

And the corn I had with it was out of this world!

Ingredients for one:

- 500g pork ribs
- 300g potatoes cut into chunks
- 4-6 cloves garlic, skin left on
- 100-150ml white wine
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Oregano
- 1 ear corn
- Butter, softened



Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and throw in the ribs. Brown them thoroughly on all sides, season with salt and pepper and set aside in an ovenproof dish.

Fry the potatoes and garlic cloves in the same pan until the potatoes take a little colour.

Pour in 100ml of the wine, and let it bubble until the alcohol has evaporated. Season with salt and pepper and arrange the potatoes and garlic around the chicken. Sprinkle generously with oregano.

Cover the dish with alu foil and stick it in the oven at 200°C for about 50 minutes, checking from time to time whether you need to add more wine. (I had run out of white wine and had to use rosé, hence the pretty colour in the photos!)

In the meanwhile, spread butter all over your corn, sprinkle with salt and wrap it in alu foil. Cook it in the oven with the chicken ribs for the last 25 minutes or so.

Serve with a green vegetable or a salad.

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## Jason's Meat Free Recipe: Apple Crumble Pie!

An admission straight off the bat, I'm not a desserts person, hence why this is the first time I've offered a recipe for one. I wouldn't normally order one if eating out and would always choose savoury over sweet. But I've been 'encouraged' by some, and so I hope you think this is OK.

It's based on a couple of desserts people I've been with have had when out in Murcia and Cartagena, and then some frantic web searching to find something similar. While making it, I wasn't convinced, but the end result was a lovely surprise. It's easy-ish, probably all the more so if you're used to making pastry! It's a little bigger than the usual 'serves 2' but it works well both warm and cold.

### Ingredients

#### For the pastry

- 400g white flour
- 260g butter (cold and cut into small cubes)
- 130g sugar
- 1 egg yolk

#### For the filling

- 4 large Granny Simth's apples (you can use others)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence (or 1 1/2 tsp of vanilla sugar)

### Method

Start with the pastry – which can actually be made the day before to save time.

Put the flour and sugar into a large mixing bowl, then added the cubed butter and rub it into the flour with your fingertips until it becomes all crumbly (you could probably use a food processor for this...but I don't know how to work mine!). Add the egg yolk and mix with a spoon until it all comes together.

Mould into a block and then wrap in clingfilm and put in the fridge for at least an hour.

While that's chilling, peel and core the apples and cut them into cubes, some bigger than others. Then put them into a saucepan with



the brown sugar, lemon juice cinnamon and vanilla and cook over a medium heat with the lid on for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally to make sure it doesn't catch. Turn off the heat and take off the lid.

Preheat your oven to 175°C (gas 4 or a 'medium' setting, depending on your oven). Then line a 25x32cm baking tray with baking paper. If you use a smaller tray, you'll end up with left over pastry, so get creative. Get the pastry out the fridge, portion 2/3 of the pastry and roll it out around 5mm thick. Press that into the base of the baking tray and trim off any overlapping edges. Add the apple mixture and spread evenly over the base. Finally get the remaining pastry, rip into little bits and spread evenly over the top of the apple mixture. Put it in the oven and bake for around 20-25 minutes, checking occasionally, until the pastry is golden brown.

At this point you can turn off the oven, take it out, and sprinkle with a little more brown sugar if you like. It's not necessary, just up to you. Allow it to cool slightly, before carefully sliding it out (use the paper to pull it) onto a plate or chopping board. Trim off the edges (chef's perk) and cut to serving sizes.

Great hot or cold, served with ice cream, cream, custard, whatever your preference!



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# Sweet, Crisp and Healthy Cherries

The cherry season is upon us and as with all other vegetables and fruits, the best time to eat them is while they are in season.

Both the benefits and the pleasure of eating these tempting rubies are at their highest just now.

But before we go any further, a word of warning: Diabetics always have to watch what they eat, and cherries are no exception – you can have too much of a good thing! Diabetics should have no more than a handful of cherries a day as they do have a fairly high (natural) sugar content.

If you take that into account, cherries are beneficial even for diabetics, as they are chock-a-block with fibre, and a large fibre intake is an important part of the diabetic diet.

Cherries are also high in potassium, and this essential mineral is good for your heart. It helps lower your blood pressure and prevent cardiovascular disease; the high fibre content is also good to help lower your cholesterol.

If you struggle to fall asleep at night, cherries might be able to help you. Have a glass of cherry juice before you turn in; the melatonin found in cherries regulates the night and day cycles or sleep-wake cycles.

Do you suffer from joint pains or even gout? Again, cherries are your man. They help eliminate the uric acid from your blood and thus reduce the pain. However, American studies show that you

need a minimum of 45 cherries for them to have any real effect.

Like so many other fruits, cherries have anti-inflammatory qualities, and their antioxidants help slowing down the ageing process and can help prevent diseases such as Alzheimer's and cancer.

When you buy cherries, look for bright green stems, which are signs of freshness. The cherries should be firm, plump, and dense, with shiny skins. Avoid bruised or wrinkled cherries.



When you have brought your cherries home, put them directly in the fridge without washing nor covering them. This way they should keep for approximately two weeks.

If you know that you won't have time to eat them while they are fresh, stick them in a freezer bag or plastic container with plenty of space without closing. Once the cherries are frozen, put them in a freezer bag, press out surplus air and close tightly. They will keep in the freezer for up to a year.

Cherries are not only lovely eaten fresh; try frying them with honey and apple juice and serve them with savoury food, use them for a hot salsa or in a salad.

Or for some of the no end of irresistible desserts and sweets you find in cookbooks, food mags and on the internet.



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## Are You Making These Common Water-Filter Mistakes?

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In Spain, fitting a water filter is common. Hard water, high total dissolved solids, and chemical tastes are common in Almería. But don't assume that "a filter is a filter," - the wrong choice can leave you with worse water than you started with.

Here are the most common mistakes we see and how to avoid them.

### Not testing your water before choosing a filter

This is the biggest and most expensive mistake. Water filters are **not one-size-fits-all**. For instance, a carbon filter improves taste and odour, but it **cannot cope with highly contaminated water**, high sediment or solids. Many ceramic filters have the same limitation: they do well only if the water is already relatively clean.

If your water comes from a community tank, or private well, you may need a better solution. In areas with high contamination, a **reverse osmosis (RO) system** is the safest and most effective option.

But without a proper test, you're guessing, and getting it wrong can mean drinking water that's not safe.

### Believing the advertised lifespan of filter cartridges

Many filters are advertised to last six or twelve months. However, these figures are based on **average** water conditions. In Almería, conditions are anything but average.

We have seen "12-month cartridges" last **less than four weeks**

because the water was too contaminated or full of sediment for that type of filter.

A good filter should **monitor cartridge exhaustion**. Our systems use LED indicators to alert when the cartridge needs changing, and some **automatically shut off** the water when the filter exhausts.

Filter cartridges that aren't changed begin **dumping the contaminants they previously trapped back into your drinking water**. We have tested homes where the filtered water was far worse than the raw supply, simply because the filter was exhausted.

### Installing the filter directly into the main kitchen cold feed

A common 'rookie' mistake. If your entire cold-water supply is filtered, you'll waste filtered water on mopping floors, washing dishes, and running appliances. Filters clog faster, cartridges exhaust sooner, and you end up spending more money.

A proper installation should use a separate drinking-water tap or a 3-way tap, ensuring only the water you actually drink or cook with passes through the filter.

### Be in the Know

Choosing the right system, and keeping it maintained, can save you money, and ensure you enjoy truly clean, safe drinking water. A **professional water test** is the place to start.

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# Garlic

## Loved and Hated

Spain is Europe's largest producer of garlic, and the fourth largest in the world.

Garlic, whose Latin name is *Allium Sativum*, comes from the same family as onions, chives, shallots, and leeks. It differs in that it has hardly any flowers and no stem, so the leaves grow directly from the the underground bulb. A head of garlic consists of 8-12 bulbs, which are known as cloves.

The first garlic was cultivated several centuries ago in central Asia. It quickly spread from there to India and the Mediterranean Sea to Greece where it was used for preventing typhus and cholera. They also gave garlic to their athletes before the Olympic Games to give them strength.

However, the first examples of garlic being used for medical purposes come from Ancient Egypt. The Ancient Egyptians took its curative qualities as a sign of magic powers, and they gave their slaves garlic to keep them strong and healthy. It got to be considered a divine icon, and when a sacred oath was given, garlic was invoked as divinity. Heads of garlic have been found in tombs; it is thought that they were included for keeping evil spirits at bay.

During the Roman Empire, garlic started forming part of people's everyday diet. The Romans also noticed its strong antiseptic powers and it was given to the combat soldiers. The soldiers referred to garlic as 'malodorous roses'.

From the Roman Empire garlic spread to the rest of Europe and soon became an integral part of the staple European diet.



However, garlic has not always been unequivocally loved; the Spanish Queen Isabel La Católica prohibited its use at court, and in the 14th century King Alfonso of Castile hated the smell so much that any knight who had ingested garlic was not allowed to his court for a month.

Today garlic is an integral part of our diet, and those that do not like garlic are few and far between. This is partly because of the different ways garlic can be used; you can add garlic to a dish without anybody noticing a particularly garlicky smell or taste, you can give your dish a whiff or garlic, or you can let it dominate completely.

The finer you chop your raw garlic, the stronger the flavour gets.

Crushed or grated garlic gives you the strongest flavour and is used for example in garlic butter, salad dressings and aioli.

If you give your clove of garlic a bash, leave the skin on and stick it in a bottle of olive oil together with a twig of rosemary or thyme, you get a divine garlic oil.

For stews, whole cloves of garlic with the skin left on add flavour without exaggerating the garlic aspect; those that enjoy the flavour of garlic can slide the garlic out of its skin and eat the creamy clove; it is delicious!

If you cook whole, peeled cloves of garlic in, for example soups or mashed potato, you get a sublime garlic flavour without the sharpness of the crushed or grated garlic.

Garlic is good for you. Researchers have found that garlic can help prevent heart and artery disease, and even certain cancers.

It has also often been said to help against common cold; this, however, is purely preventative. Studies show that people who eat garlic regularly generally have a lower frequency of common cold, but once the symptoms have set in, garlic will not help relieve them.

Raw garlic has always been considered more medically efficient than cooked garlic, but research shows that it is the overall intake of *allium sativum* that counts.

And for those who want to reap the benefits of garlic but just cannot stand it, there's always garlic capsules...



# Trades & Services

## Above Ground Vs. Below Ground Hot Tubs

### Which Is Right for Me?

Installing an outdoor hot tub can be an incredibly rewarding experience. There's no doubt that any time of the year you'll enjoy the relaxing, stress-reducing benefits a hot tub provides, whether it be in the cold winter or the dog days of summer. Still, there are a few things you'll need to consider before you get carried away with daydreaming about those relaxing soaks in your new tub, most important of which is whether you prefer the price point and convenience of an above-ground hot tub or the aesthetic appeal of a below-ground model.



### Above-Ground Hot Tub

Generally speaking, most people who choose an above-ground spa do so for one of several important reasons, such as portability, ease of installation and lower costs. Still, it's important to look at all the pros and cons of this type of hot tub to see whether it's right for you.

#### Advantages

- Lower costs, both for purchasing the unit and to operate it
  - Easy to install, as most units can be plugged directly into a 240-volt outlet
  - Portable and fairly easy to transport, meaning you can take it with you if you move
  - Simple to cover and can be equipped with an integrated cover for added convenience
  - Usually feature between 30 and 100 jets, ensuring everyone can enjoy a relaxing hydro massage.
  - Low maintenance and easy to access mechanics, which are also protected from the weather for enhanced durability
- #### Disadvantages
- Not as aesthetically pleasing
  - Can be more difficult to get in and out of, especially for the elderly or anyone with disabilities
  - Not as many options for size or shape
  - More limited options for interior surface materials

### In-Ground Hot Tubs

The improved aesthetic look and more customizable options are what leads most people to choose this style of hot tub. That being said, in-ground spas also have their own drawbacks.

#### Advantages

- Nearly unlimited potential to choose whatever shape or size you wish
- Can be installed fully submerged or partially exposed above ground
- Ability to integrate whatever features you wish, such as speakers, lights and

even fountains or waterfalls

Numerous material choices available, ranging from stone and concrete to acrylic, tiles, vinyl and much more

#### Disadvantages

- More expensive to install and maintain
- Most contain only 5 to 20 jets
- May be difficult or expensive to find a custom cover for any large or odd-shaped tub
- Usually only contain bench seating instead of the range of seating options available with portable models, meaning short people could find themselves over their heads

#### Design Ideas

No matter which style of hot tub you end up choosing, there are a number of ways to ensure that it fits with your outdoor space. For instance, you can use skirting to build up the area around the hot tub to create an outdoor patio and seating area, allowing even those who don't want to get in the water to still enjoy the party. Another popular option is to build a simple gazebo-type structure around the tub, which gives you the added benefits of extra privacy and protection from the elements.

At the end of the day, you really can't go wrong with either style of hot tub. Both above-ground and in-ground models will still provide all the same benefits to your health, happiness and overall well-being, making the decision to buy a hot tub one of the most rewarding decisions you'll ever make.



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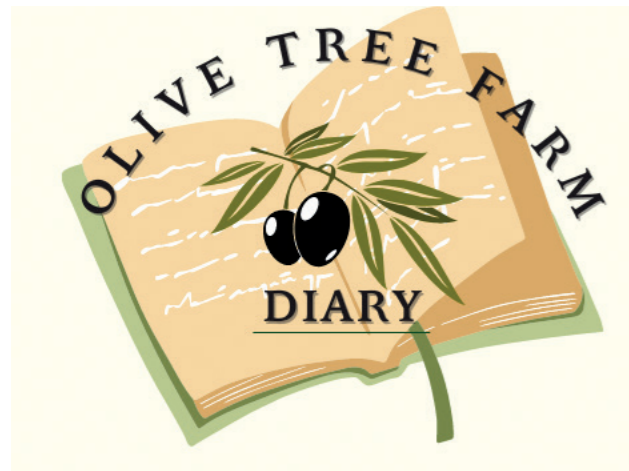
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May greeted us with an early-dive into summer here at Olive Tree Farm, and we have been extra busy outside and in to prepare our home for an invasion of 11-year-olds to celebrate our eldest son's birthday.

That meant preparing the farm and gathering the last of the litter and debris that has been blowing in over these last few windy months, a lot of weeding in the garden, and general maintenance around the farmhouse itself since the damp and humidity within the walls finally bade us farewell.

The animals, exotic and farm alike, were at their best behaviour for our visitors, and certainly received a lot of love and attention, whether they were cuddly birds, kittens or reptiles.

We had a lot of compliments regarding the chaotic and beautiful world we have built here, with some parents calling it heaven on earth, while we softly reminded them of the work it takes us on the daily to keep everything running smoothly. We are rarely



anything less than bone tired once the sun sets over the farmhouse, its departure usually the only thing that slows us down with all the odd jobs and projects we tend to keep on rotation out here, but to us the endless work is worth it, although we certainly appreciate that it isn't everyone's cup of tea.

With the success of the party behind us, and the animals experiencing the weird silence that follows the departure of many excited children, we've had a few days of gentle pottering about while we gear up for our next bigger jobs.

The hot days have also brought some new animals into our nature-friendly garden, as frog songs have filled our various ponds, geckos are enjoying the shade of the pergola, the hoopoes have been swooping down enjoying the abundance of insects, and the odd goldfinch or two have been sighted nesting around our trees. Every day someone shouts, "Mum, come look at this!" and I love it – there is always something new to find and learn about.

Ben has also started mapping out the next pond, which will help with our growing collection of yellow-bellied slider turtles. We rescue or rehome several per year due to people unable to keep or care for them any longer, and our deep corner turtle pond is starting to get a little crowded.

This will be doubly useful, as we've had a pair of curious critters spending a lot of time in there too, enough so that a few times now Ben and I have accidentally slipped and called it a duck pond.

The pair of ducklings we plucked out of the aviary during the worst of the storms at the start of the year have grown on immensely, and are really enjoying full use of the garden and patio. Although almost fully grown, Ben and I still call them kids, and the pair of them



have certainly made themselves very visibly here. Our visitors are greeted as if they were a pair of puppies, the world offered a gentle preening if you're brave enough to stroke the biggest so-called babies you've ever seen.

As you may probably know, the security of the farm is still very much on the to-do list, and our enclosure options in the garden just aren't spacious enough to house a growing flock. In the end we decided to trim the wings of our loveable pair – a process that is simple and pain-free, more akin to a trimmed haircut than the torture many people seem to associate it with.

We just clip around an inch off the tips of their feathers, which have no nerve-endings, giving them still a good pair of full wings to stretch and balance and remain buoyant, but not enough that they can catch the wind enough to support their body-weight. Muscovys aren't particularly great as long-distant fliers, but they can get themselves wherever their fancy may take them. It is vital to their safety from outside predators for them to stay within our fences, and it certainly saves us from an extra daily job of trying to round up naughty ducks from the bottom of the rambla.

In other duck news, mum is doing fantastically well with her nine offspring in the aviary, all



of whom are growing rapidly, which means soon we can reintroduce dad duck safely to his family. We do prefer to separate him during the first few vital weeks after hatching occurs, mainly for the safety of the young and to care for the stress-levels of mum. A calmer environment to grow is always beneficial for all.

So with lots done and as always, a lot of things to do, I leave you this month with positive steps and a success with the next generation of animals growing into their own.

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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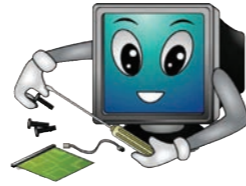
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### Radio 4, HOME Service...The end!

I have written about some important topics in my time. This however towers over global warming, asteroid hits, Global Economy, Covid, Spanish power outage, price of beer. BUT this, the end of BBC Radio 4 long wave! This has far reaching implications as will be discussed now. I am horrified. The BBC have stated that as at June 27th this year, the Home Service AKA Radio 4 will start to be decommissioned.



In the '20's the BBC had set up two styles of broadcasting stations; National and Regional. The National Service broadcasted general material to keep Britain in check, quality character building stuff (bit like it is failing to do at the moment). The 6 Regional services transmitted material tailored for that region, complete with local dialects in case the listeners couldn't understand English; Geordies, Brummies, strange Scottish folk and so on. At the outbreak of WW2, it was decided to combine these stations into one, and was called the Home Service. One reason for this was to limit the number of radio transmitters around the UK, whos' signals could be used as triangulation points for those nasty German bombers. It made broadcasting to the populous much simpler and controlling!

After WW2, the BBC reinstated its regional stations and established three National stations. The "Light program". This was aimed at those who liked popular music and light hearted material, dance band, comedy etc. The "Third program" was aimed at Doctors, the Upper Class, Bank Managers and alike who liked classical music. Then the "Home Service" to broadcast serious stuff for grown-ups, schools and weather forecasts for our shipping fleet, oh, and afternoon plays. The "Home Service" transmitter moved from Chelmsford to a new site in Droitwich, Midlands in the late '20s. When you are driving on the motorways around the area, you will see the 700 foot arrays of long wire aerials. Transmitting originally at 200kHz, 1500mtrs wavelength. The aerial system has largely remained unchanged, apart from maintenance. Because of the low frequency of the signal, it's very high radiated power (some 500,000 watts) and aerial design, the signal covers a good 4/5th of the UK and beyond. Brilliant. However, the problem now is down to the devices used to power the aerial systems which are a couple of very large substantial valves. These were originally hand-made and standing 4 foot tall. Over the years, the stock of these valves has been depleted and we are now

down to the last few sets. The operating life time of these valves is around 2-6 years. The BBC has bought up the last remaining stocks from around the globe. The cost of making replacement valves would run into quite a few shillings as would the redesign and building of a new long wave transmitter antenna array to cater for different devices. Lesser quality valves could be used, but the associated risk of a high voltage flash-overs, common at the high-power rating required, could render the aerial system useless. So, the days are now numbered.

So, why is it so important the Long wave Radio 4 (Home Service renamed in '67) service continues? Well, several reasons; a) The Westminster and Parliament programs, without which, Britain would lose its identity and dissolve into anarchy, worse than it is at time of writing. b) Test match Cricket, without this, gentlemen would not have a reason to drink warm beer and the breweries would go out of business. c) Listen With Mother, Musical Movement, with this gone, children would leave home at the age of 4 and start mugging people. d) Now the Shipping Forecast, along with all those great names; Dogger, German Bite... If our fisherman couldn't hear the sea conditions, they would sink and or would be bumping into those nasty French fishermen and rubber dinghies. Bang goes our fish and chips. More importantly, the forecast sign off tune "Sailing by" composed by Ronald Binge would never be heard again. Have a listen, it's a lovely simple waltz (if you listen 2/3rds of the way through, the bass player plays a wrong note and then misses the next bar!). A lot of equipment, clocks and time keeping systems (well, they used to, rely on the Radio 4 frequency of 198kHz as a reference signal. If this goes missing, half the UK will be late for work, employees will get sacked and the unemployment rate will be through the roof. Also, what you don't realize, is that the Greenwich Mean Time "pips" will no longer be accurate. These are generated by an atomic clock system and broadcast by radio in real-time., over radio waves. With no radio, you will hear these via the interweb, so can be seconds out-of-date.

So, joking aside, it will be a sad day when the Home Service goes quiet. If you have some 4 foot transmitting valves in your shed, let me know and I'll do you a jolly good deal. Take care and be aware... Seth Pittham. Zeta Services. Working hard, for you.

So, joking aside, it will be a sad day when the Home Service goes quiet. If you have some 4 foot transmitting valves in your shed, let me know and I'll do you a jolly good deal. Take care and be aware... Seth Pittham. Zeta Services. Working hard, for you.

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Seth Pittham  
(a.k.a. Vintageampdoctor)

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## The Great Spanish Secret: How They Saved The Planet

“We live in a society that can only be sustained with infinite growth. There is no way to achieve Sustainable Development with the current socio-economic structure.”

I came across this quote on my travels and it struck a chord (a minor 5th). I try to avoid the constant barrage of adverts that seem to fill themselves with more importance than the content you’re trying to watch (hence why I watch YouTube videos on Brave Browser).

Sooner-or-later things are going to run out unless we take action but I’m not talking about the vanity projects that politicians seem to favour.

We should take a leaf out of our Spanish elder’s book...

By the time 2pm arrives in southern Spain, sensible people have already made their arrangements with the sun. Shutters are closed. Curtains drawn. Streets fall quiet beneath a white glare intense enough to make tourists question both their life choices and internal organ temperatures.

Somewhere in the distance, an air-conditioning unit groans like an exhausted donkey while your neighbour, Paco waters a tomato plant with the concentration of a heart surgeon.



This, naturally, is where Europe has decided to build part of its green-energy future.

Across Andalucía and southern Spain, solar farms now spread across hillsides once occupied by olives, almonds, and elderly men leaning thoughtfully on sticks.

Wind turbines turn authoritatively above dry sierras. Politicians speak enthusiastically about renewable infrastructure, carbon neutrality, hydrogen corridors, and the energy transition. Blah blah blah...

And yet, long before “sustainable living” became fashionable, Spanish grandmothers were already rinsing plastic bags for reuse with the quiet authority of military logisticians.

The longer you spend in southern Spain, the more it appears that the country solved large parts of the sustainability problem decades ago, mostly by refusing to waste perfectly good things.

I lived for several years in a two-hundred-year-old cottage in southern Spain. It had thick stone walls, tiled floors, small windows, shutters solid enough to survive a siege, and absolutely no air conditioning whatsoever. It was cooler than most modern apartments (in more ways than one).

This was not technological wizardry, no vegan focus groups or Pritzker-winning architects involved. Nobody had installed geothermal cooling systems or Scandinavian eco-ventilation units controlled by a smartphone app or house elf. The house simply understood where it had been built.

For centuries, people in southern Spain constructed homes designed not to defeat the climate, but to survive alongside it. Walls were thick because thick walls keep heat out. Streets were narrow because narrow streets create shade (and no-one had cars). Courtyards circulated air. Whitewashed walls reflected sunlight.

Daily life shifted around the temperature rather than pretending human beings could simply overpower the sun through determination, imported machinery or Gin.

There is something faintly heroic about northern Europeans arriving in Andalucía and attempting to live exactly as they did in Milton Keynes, despite the small complication that the local climate occasionally resembles the inside of a pizza oven. Entire apartment complexes now spend July and August consuming industrial quantities of electricity simply to maintain indoor temperatures compatible with the continued survival of visiting Scots.

Meanwhile, in older villages nearby, shutters close at two and open again when sensible with the calm rhythm of centuries of accumulated experience. Traditional Spanish life, particularly in the south, often appears strangely aligned with modern environmental thinking, although usually for reasons having very little to do with saving the planet.

### Stuff costs money.

This is perhaps the great unspoken secret behind much Mediterranean sustainability. Northern Europeans tend to approach environmentalism as a moral imperative. Southern Europeans often approach it as a utility bill. Clothes are dried outside because there is a giant free nuclear reactor in the sky. Food is not wasted because somebody paid for it. Furniture is repaired repeatedly because it still functions perfectly well despite having been constructed during the

Franco era. Nothing truly leaves circulation. It is simply reincarnated. A good towel becomes an older towel, then a cleaning cloth, then something used in the garage. Eventually, somewhere near retirement, it may be entrusted with wiping bicycle chains or absorbing mysterious liquids beneath the sink. Plastic containers achieve near-immortality.

Spanish grandmothers remain deeply suspicious of throwing away anything that may one day prove useful. Entire government sustainability campaigns now essentially recommend behaviours elderly women in Andalucía have been enforcing since approximately 1964: Use less water, consume less electricity, repair instead of replace, avoid waste and keep the heat outside.

All of this is now presented in glossy environmental reports accompanied by photographs of smiling people holding recycled vegan coffee cups. Meanwhile, somewhere in Fuente Mojon, an eighty-two-year-old woman quietly wonders why the rest of Europe needed a climate summit to discover basic common sense.

This is not to romanticise poverty or pretend the past was some ecological paradise. Southern Spain can be gloriously wasteful in its own ways. Golf courses bloom in semi-desert climates with an optimism bordering on rapturous delusion. Plastic greenhouses in Almería are visible from space. Coastal overdevelopment has consumed large parts of the Mediterranean shoreline with the determination of a stag party attacking a buffet.

Nor are Spaniards somehow magically immune to modern consumption. Air-conditioning units now cling to apartment walls across the south like metallic barnacles. Summer heatwaves increasingly push temperatures into territory previously associated with nuclear bomb tests. Water shortages are becoming more severe. Modern Spain faces very modern environmental problems.

But there remains an interesting contrast between traditional adaptation and modern technological dependence. Older southern Spanish architecture assumed heat was unavoidable. Modern designs often behave as though heat were an administrative error that can be corrected through sufficient electricity consumption and the use of costly technology.

One approach works with reality. The other attempts to change it. The irony, of course, is that southern Spain may genuinely become one of Europe’s renewable-energy powerhouses precisely because the climate is becoming so brutally hot.

Andalucía possesses sunlight in quantities best described as excessive. Vast solar projects now cover parts of the countryside, transforming sunlight into electricity for millions of homes (but not without controversy). There is a strange poetry in this. For centuries, people in southern Spain protected themselves from the sun wherever possible. Now Europe wants to plug directly into it. The region increasingly resembles a laboratory for the continent’s future. Extreme heat, water scarcity, energy adaptation, drought-resistant living — southern Spain is confronting problems much of Europe may soon face more regularly itself.

And perhaps this explains why some older Spanish habits suddenly

appear less quaint and more intelligent. The afternoon pause no longer looks lazy when temperatures reach forty-two degrees. Small shaded windows begin to seem wiser than fashionable glass facades.

Walking slowly (in the shade) starts to resemble advanced climate adaptation rather than a lack of ambition. Even the famous siesta, long mocked by productivity enthusiasts from colder countries, reveals itself as a surprisingly logical response to attempting physical existence beneath a hostile star. Human beings are, after all, not laptops. Continuous operation in extreme heat produces disappointing results.

There is also something oddly reassuring in the fact that many solutions to modern environmental problems may not require futuristic technology so much as rediscovering tried-and-trusted forms of common sense.

Not every answer needs an app. Sometimes the solution is a shutter. Or a ceiling fan.

This is not the sort of message likely to excite Silicon Valley investors. “Ancient Stone Buildings Continue Performing Adequately” lacks the glamour of disruptive innovation. Venture capitalists rarely become emotional about cross-ventilation, yet there is wisdom embedded in places shaped slowly by climate and necessity. It’s called evolution and nature has been doing it for billions of years – because it works. Patience is a virtue.

Southern Spain did not become environmentally efficient because of international conferences or fashionable activism. Much of it emerged through generations of people learning how to live comfortably in a hot, dry landscape without wasting scarce resources or bankrupting themselves in the process.

My old cottage never attempted to dominate nature. It merely respected it. During summer afternoons, the shutters remained closed against the blazing inferno outside. Indoors, the air stayed cool enough to remain comfortable. Life slowed slightly. Activity resumed later in the evening once the sun had retreated behind the hills.

As Europe races toward its renewable-energy future, covering hillsides with solar panels and debating carbon targets, southern Spain may still have something useful to teach the rest of the continent.

Not merely how to generate energy from sunlight.

But how to live with sunlight in the first place.

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# Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 90

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.

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

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

**Samurai Sudoku**

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

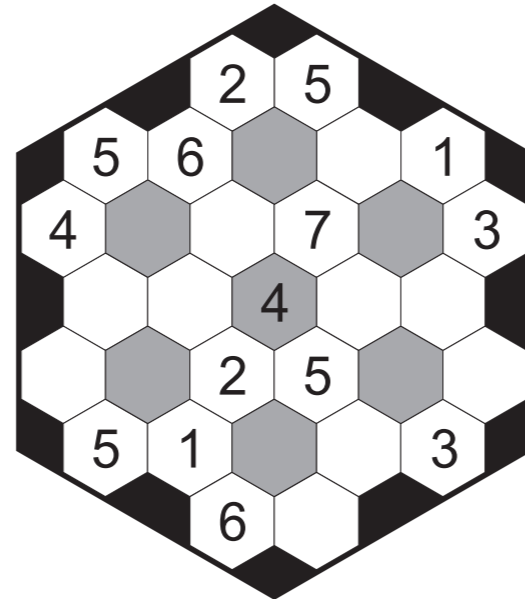
  

6	5		3	9		4	3	5		3	4	1		
8	9		1	2		3	6	9	5	1	4	2		6
			6	7	9						7			2
5		2						7			4	5		2
	3			5		1			1	4		2		8
9	8		4	2				8	2		1	3	4	
		8	7			9		6	3	1	8	7		9
3		9	6		4	2	7	8	5		3			7
	1	7	5	9	4		8	3	7			5	8	1

## Rosetta

A Rosetta is made up of a centre coloured hexagon encircled by 6 white hexagons. To complete the puzzle, fill in all 7 Rosettas with each number between 1 and 7 in no particular order while ensuring that:

1. No number is repeated in a horizontal row
2. Each number from 1 to 7 is represented in the 7 grey hexagon cells



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23<sup>rd</sup> June

From

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**NEW**






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**NEW**

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**Malaga  
Christmas Lights**



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

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4\* Hotel Soho Boutique Equitativa

Central to lights

**Price Includes:**

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

**Pick-Ups Possible From:**

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**Benidorm  
Christmas**

4 Nights  
\*470€  
per person

Self-drive Option  
also available

**NEW**



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

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wine and water  
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\* Price based on 2 people sharing  
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Single supplement  
upon request



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Christmas**

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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



**Granada**

2 Nights  
\*238€  
per person

**NEW**



15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2027

Staying at:

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

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


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**Albacete**

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\*tbc€  
per person



19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2027

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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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per person



10<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> May 2027

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Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4  
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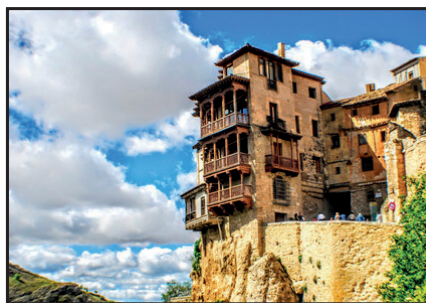
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# HOMES & GARDENS

## A Brief History of Spain...part 10 By Mike Woolnough

As you will recall, in late May 1588, the "Great and Most Fortunate Navy" had set sail from A Coruña and was headed for England. In Britain, it is known as The Spanish Armada. This armada was thought by the Spanish to be invincible. In terms of gun power, it was vastly superior to the British fleet, but the British ships were greater in number, faster, more maneuverable and were armed with guns that had a longer range than the Spanish guns.

There was also the matter of commander. The Armada was under the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia (the 8th Duke to be precise). He had a long and distinguished military career...on land. Fighting a battle at sea was a vastly different proposition. It did not help that he was almost permanently sea-sick (though Nelson had the same problem and it didn't seem to impair his ability!). The British fleet was under the command of Lord Howard of Effingham. His Vice-Admiral was Sir Francis Drake. Drake was much more experienced than Howard and much of the decision making was delegated to Drake.

The original plan was for the 55,000 troops stationed in The Netherlands to be loaded onto barges and escorted by The Armada to a point not too distant from London and thence invade. Queen Elizabeth I got wind of this and sent envoys to negotiate a peace treaty with their commander, the Duke of Parma. Although these discussions failed it had the effect of delaying the Duke's preparations.

Meanwhile, The Armada was having difficulties in the Bay of Biscay. Severe storms caused six or seven ships to either turn back or head for France for repairs. The Armada was sighted off The Lizard on 19th July, the English fleet was at anchor in Plymouth harbour and was prevented from leaving by the incoming tide. The Spanish held a council of war where it was suggested that they sink the English fleet at their moorings, invade from there and move Parma's army over at a later date. Medina Sidonia vetoed this plan as it had been expressly forbidden by Philip II. Had they carried it out it is likely that both Spanish and English history would be vastly different!

In the event, The Armada sailed on heading for The Solent. As the tide changed the English fleet chased them and with their superior



speed caught up with them the following day. A long range battle ensued but little damage was caused to either side except that two Spanish ships collided. At nightfall, Drake turned back to loot the stricken ships, ostensibly for their supplies of gunpowder but finding plenty of gold on board he was not going to look a gift-horse in the mouth! There turned out to be a small flaw in Drake's plan. He had been using a mast-head lantern to guide his ships, but so as not to give his position away to the Spanish he had extinguished it; whilst he had been successful the rest of his fleet were scattered and in complete disarray by morning. By the time Drake had rounded them all up again, The Armada had managed to gain a day's grace. Battle was engaged again off Portland on the 23rd, the Spanish had the wind in their favour but once again the maneuverability of the English ships prevented them from exploiting their advantage.

*Continued on page 36 .....*

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..... Continued from page 35

The Armada headed for The Solent, the intention being to wait there for word from Parma that he was ready to join them. At the last moment, Medina Sidonia became worried about running aground on The Owers Shoals off Selsey Bill and ordered his fleet back into open water. He had now lost the opportunity to rest up in the last sheltered harbour on the English side of The Channel. He chose to make for Calais and seek word from Parma about the state of his army. The word was not good. Disease had reduced his army from 55 down to 16,000 men. They had not been able to secure sufficient transport for their voyage to England despite their depleted numbers and it would be six days before they managed to do so.

The Armada lay at anchor in Calais in a defensive arc. Parma attempted to make his way down the coast to join him but was thwarted by Dutch rebels under the command of Lieutenant-Admiral Justinus of Nassau who blockaded the port of Dunkirk. The waters were too shallow to allow the Spanish to come to his aid. Whilst all this was giving Medina Sidonia a headache the wind turned in Drake's favour. He took eight of his ships out of commission, loaded them with brimstone, tar, pitch and some gunpowder. He set them alight and cast them downwind into the Spanish fleet.

The Spanish had suffered fireships before and were terrified. Although they managed to tow two of them away the others caused havoc. Although the flagship and some of the major galleons held their position the major portion of the Spanish fleet set sail as quickly



as they could, many cutting the anchor ropes rather than spend time winching them up, an action that they would come to regret.

No Spanish ships were damaged by the fireships but they were now scattered and disorganised, their strong defensive position gone. The English closed in for the kill. The battle took place off Gravelines (which is opposite the ferry port at Dunkirk). Drake had learned a lot about the Spanish fleet during their earlier skirmishes; he calculated that he needed to be 100yards(91m) from the Spanish ships to be able to breach the ship's sides whilst still staying outside the range of their guns.

He had also discovered (from the two ships he had captured earlier) that the layout of the gun decks made it very difficult for the Spaniards to reload their big guns quickly, relying on firing once and then engaging in hand to hand fighting. That was not how Drake planned to fight.

Although only five Spanish ships were sunk many more were damaged. By about 4.00pm the English were running out of cannonballs and were reduced to loading anything suitable, e.g. chains. Drake withdrew and allowed a defeated Spanish fleet to limp away. The English navy continued to harry the Spaniards as far as the Firth of Forth as it still posed a threat although there was no way Parma and his army would be able to attack England.

Eventually, the remains of The Armada made their way around Scotland and down towards Ireland where once again the weather turned against them. Many were forced to go on because having left their anchors at Calais they had no way of riding the storms out. Many ships were driven aground onto Irish shores where English forces killed an estimated 5,000 men. Eventually, 67 ships and less than 10,000 men made it back to Spain where many died as a result of disease. Philip II declared, when he heard the news, "I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves"

The following year Elizabeth sent her own armada against the Spanish, it was a catastrophic disaster! The Spanish sent two more armadas in 1596 and 1597 but both of these were victims of the weather. The conflict lingered on until 1604 when it was formally ended by the Treaty of London.

Although the English see the defeat of The Armada as one of the major points of their prowess as a seafaring nation it did nothing to stem Spain's dominance as a world power, a position it would hold for several decades to come.

*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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# The Chameleon



The common chameleon (chamaeleo chamaeleon) is a reptile endemic to the south of Cádiz and Málaga, the coast of Granada and the south and east of Almería. Single specimens or small populations can also be found in Huelva, Córdoba and Seville provinces.

This reptile has an arched body with long, slim limbs that end in strong hands with claws, excellent for gripping. The head is hard and pointed towards the back, the eyes prominent and able to look at different places at the same time (stereoscopic vision). It has no external ears, and the nostrils are very small.

The tail is prehensile and usually measures between 50 and 75% of the length of the body. The chameleon cannot lose its tail to confuse predators like lizards can, and if it loses its tail by accident it will

never grow back.

The chameleon's tongue is kept folded inside a special cavity in its mouth, and it can be as long as the whole of the rest of the animal, up to 25-30 cm. It uses its tongue for catching its prey by shooting it out at dizzying speed, and because the tip is sticky, the victim has no chance of escape once hit.

The colour of the chameleon is variable according to its mood, its surroundings and its status amongst its peers. It can be green, yellow, brown and even bluish or completely black. No matter the prevalent colour, the chameleon always has spots of a different colour on its body.

The pointed back of the head is more prominent in males than in females, and the males' tails are proportionally longer. However, the females are of superior size overall and they are much more robust than the males. When they have been impregnated they boast a number of yellow spots on a blue or black background to let the males know of their condition.

The mating period goes from July to September, and during those months the males get very aggressive with one another, especially in the presence of a female. When they copulate, the male holds the female in place by biting her back or stomach, however without drawing blood.

The female digs a deep hole for laying between 6 and 24 eggs after a gestation period of 20-30 days. The eggs hatch after 6-9 months and the new born chameleon babies measure 5-7 cm.



The chameleon's staple diet is any insect that will fit in its mouth, except those who have an exceptionally hard shell. Large chameleons can even eat the newly hatched chicks of certain bird species.

Chameleons are strictly daytime animals and they spend all their time on branches in trees except when the females go onto the ground to dig holes for their eggs. When they move on the ground they walk extremely slowly with their tails in the air.

Their preferred habitat are dry areas close to the coast, obviously always wooded, which are sadly becoming few and far between as humans encroach upon the same areas for building holiday villages and urbanizations.



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# Cathartic

Cathartic is the random word chosen for our 500 word offering this month, and it's a word I love. The second syllable can be elongated into a lazy, relaxing sound that insists you stretch out and do things that will make you feel better soon.

This random choice of a subject word is very helpful for me when I'm stuck for inspiration. Just a word can take the brain in all manner of directions, for instance hot on the heels of cathartic another word comes to me, this one imbued with the promise of energy and that the word is 'bottoming'.

This is what my mother used to call a thorough, grade 1 house clean and I have to say, all these years later, I can't fault its cathartic properties. With me, this 'bottoming' usually only occurs when house guests are imminent. I need that impetus to get me going, but once started, there's no holding me back. It also takes me back to my own childhood, arriving home from school, always on a Friday, to the smell of furniture polish, and an energetic mother, cleaning windows and washing net curtains. My job was to make up a whitening paste and spread it over the tiles of the sitting room fireplace. When dry and polished off, this would leave the ceramic tiles sparkling and the grouting very white again.

Of course, these days and especially here in Spain, we don't have ceramic tiled fireplaces, so my own modus operandi is firstly to take all ornaments to the kitchen and those sturdy enough stacked into the dishwasher, others more delicate are put to one side to be immersed in hot soapy water later. The silver cleaning cloth is eventually located, after much time wasted searching for it and an old and rather battered EPNS tea service is subjected to a rigorous polish.



Next all beds are stripped, windows opened, mattresses vacuumed, rugs taken outdoors to be shaken or beaten. All soft furnishings, curtains, sofas, armchairs are also vacuumed then wiped with a wash leather. Just writing this down makes me feel better! By now I'm pretty tired and need a strong coffee to revive me, so I make one and take it out to the terrace to enjoy and contemplate what I've achieved so far.

Now, with that pleasant glow that good coffee and catharsis bring, my thoughts are turning to my manuscript, and courtesy of the increased melatonin or whatever other feel-good chemical catharsis affords, I have sudden inspiration for a particularly sticky piece in the chapter I'm writing. Of course, I must write it down immediately so off I go with the remnants of my coffee to my desk and start writing.

## cathartic

adjective [kuh-thahr-tik]

of or relating to the purging of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions, especially through certain kinds of art, as tragedy or music.

By Aileen Cleave

The writing flows and goes on flowing and I am totally immersed. Eventually I come up for air, check how many words I've written and sit back with satisfaction. Gosh, I'm really tired now, tired but happy.

That is until I take a look around the house. It's chaos, there is still so much to do and so little energy or enthusiasm for doing it. With difficulty I bring to

mind our imminent and very welcome guests and close my Ipad, square my shoulders and make ready to enter into the housecleaning fray again, this time armed with a feeling of wellbeing brought about more, I think, by the 800 words I've written than the shining silver tea set!



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# On the UNESCO World Heritage Trail

## El Escorial

Just over forty kilometres northwest of Madrid, nesting in the mountains at some 900m altitude you will find the small town of El Escorial, home of just over 15,000 inhabitants.

It was also the political centre of Spain under Felipe II, and the place where he decided to build a big basilica and monastery in 1557 to thank God after winning the battle of St Quintin. The complex also includes a library and a pantheon.

El Escorial is an amazing example of Spanish renaissance architecture and much more than just a mausoleum for the monarchs, which is probably what it is most famous for.

The whole complex has an astonishing 2,673 windows 1,000 doors, and in the basilica there are 43 altars.

The basilica contains two large tombs, one either side of the principal altar. One is for Felipe II, the founder of El Escorial, the other for his father Carlos I. They are accompanied by various relatives.

The crypt of the complex, El Panteón de los Reyes, comprises a circular chapel decorated with marble and golden bronze. This is where all the kings and queens from Carlos I onwards rest with the exception of Felipe V and Fernando VI, who were buried in other churches.

Other members of the royal family lie in the Pantheón de los Infantes. The Royal Apartment is where Felipe lived when he stayed at the



monastery. The king's chambers are quite modest quarters, and next to the bed there is a window overlooking the altar so that Felipe could follow the mass even when he was bed bound by gout.

The monastery is still functioning, and public access to this area is limited.

There are other buildings on the grounds, the most famous of which are la Casita del Príncipe and la Casita del Infante.

La Casita del Príncipe was designed for the crown prince, Carlos IV to be, by the architect Juan de Villanueva, who is probably most famous for the Prado Museum in Madrid, with which the building does have certain similarities.

La Casita del Infante was designed by the same architect in 1771 for Gabriel de Borbón, son of Carlos III. It is a small 'villa' with Italian style gardens and one of the best views of the monastery.

El Escorial is well worth a visit, but you do need to be fairly fit as there is a lot of walking involved.



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# GOING GREEN

By Jason Lowther

## Climate centre-stage again

I haven't written about climate change for a while, but a few things have prompted me to revisit it. I suppose first and foremost is that, unless you're a committed tin-foil hat wearer, it remains an ever-present existential crisis for us to try and adapt to and mitigate. Otherwise, there have been some landmark moments at international and European level, which have the potential to move the dial in the right direction. As well, we are projected to be in an El Niño year, with the potential for significant 'weather' as a result. Taken together, it would seem a good time to reflect on what's going on.

On 21st May, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a landmark resolution strengthening the idea that protecting the planet is not simply a political ambition, but a legal responsibility. UN Secretary-General António Guterres described the decision as "a powerful affirmation" of international law, climate justice, and scientific evidence, saying it sends a clear message that governments are responsible for protecting their citizens from the worsening climate crisis. This is an outcome that was not entirely unexpected, given that courts around the world have been moving in that general direction. In Europe, for example, cases have been successfully brought in the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Switzerland and the UK amongst others. These have taken the form of class actions on behalf of children, policy challenges by NGO's, and in the case of Switzerland, by a group of pensioner women noting that summer heatwaves tend to affect older people disproportionately.

The UNGA resolution was introduced by Vanuatu and a coalition of

other countries, which share the status of either being small island states or those especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather. Following debate and the proposal of amendments, the General Assembly adopted it with overwhelming support: 141 countries voted in favour, 28 abstained and eight, Belarus, Iran, Israel, Liberia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the US and Yemen, voted against it. Unfortunately, this is (yet) another case of those countries with vested interests in fossil fuels, or their geo-political hangers-on, acting as a block to positive action that would see more positive outcomes benefiting all of us. Clearly the recent flight to the other side of the moon and the pictures of earth, hanging alone in the reachable cosmos, didn't have the same humanity-galvanizing effect that the Apollo missions in the 1960s had.

The reasoning behind the proposed resolution was based on a historic advisory opinion issued in July 2025 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The Court declared that countries have an obligation under international law to protect the environment from greenhouse gas emissions. It also stated that governments that fail to meet these obligations could be held legally responsible and may be required to stop harmful actions, prevent future damage, and provide reparations where appropriate.

Although advisory opinions from the ICJ are not legally binding, they carry enormous legal and moral influence. In the past, for example, an advisory opinion effectively meant the end of atmospheric nuclear testing. By formally adopting this new resolution, the General Assembly has effectively reinforced the Court's message:

that climate action is no longer framed merely as voluntary cooperation or political preference, but increasingly as a duty rooted in international law.

The resolution calls on all UN Member States to take every possible measure to avoid causing serious environmental and climate harm. It urges governments to honour their existing commitments under the Paris Agreement and to work together in good faith to address climate change collectively. It also emphasises that climate policies must protect fundamental human rights, including the rights to life, health, and an adequate standard of living, which were the basis of national various claims noted above.

Of course, not everyone is blessed with living in relatively well-governed, stable, affluent countries, where the ability to respond to the worst impacts at least exists. Secretary-General Guterres noted this and stressed the injustice at the heart of the climate crisis: those who contributed least to global warming are often suffering its worst consequences. He argued that achieving climate justice requires a rapid and fair transition away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy sources, which he described as both the cheapest and most secure form of energy available today. Perhaps ambitiously, he maintained that the international goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, set by the Paris Agreement is still achievable, but only if countries act decisively



and collectively.

As for the ICJ's 2025 advisory opinion, it marked one of the most consequential developments in international environmental law for decades. It was the outcome of a request by the United Nations General Assembly itself, as well as Pacific island states led by Vanuatu. The intention was to make clear what duties countries already owe under international law in responding to climate change, and what legal consequences may follow when those obligations are breached.

*Continued on page 44 .....*

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..... Continued from page 43

The Court framed climate change as an “urgent and existential threat” to humanity and to the global environment. Importantly, it rejected the idea that climate obligations arise solely from climate treaties such as the Paris Agreement. Instead, the ICJ treated climate protection as embedded across multiple areas of international law: environmental law, human rights law, the law of the sea (the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea had previously determined greenhouse gasses to be pollutants according to the main international law that regulates the oceans), and customary international law. The opinion emphasised that states have duties not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also to prevent significant transboundary environmental harm, and to regulate private actors (companies for example) within their jurisdiction, cooperate internationally, and protect vulnerable populations and future generations. The Court stopped short of creating a direct global liability regime, but it unmistakably strengthened the legal basis for future climate litigation. If the direction of travel so far is anything to go by, there will undoubtedly be more successful cases brought, with the result that governments and corporations will be driven to behave differently. If nothing else to make sure that they remain outside with insurers, as some climate risks, including the risk of litigation are becoming uninsurable. Would you rush to offer cover against flooding in Bangladesh, or, increasingly, fire risks in California, Australia – or even Greece, France or Spain?

Perhaps more obviously, the ICJ also connected climate change to human rights in unusually strong terms. It endorsed the view that access to a “clean, healthy, and sustainable environment”, which in itself was an UNGA resolution passed in 2022, is closely tied to internationally protected human rights. This means that climate harms are increasingly understood not simply as policy failures but as violations affecting life, health, housing, food security, culture, and self-determination. Small island developing states received particular attention because of the fact that risks posed by sea-level rise and extreme weather events literally risk their existence

More locally, Europe is having an ‘unseasonable heatwave’, which seems to be becoming more and more seasonal as the years pass. The UK will be as hot as Andalucia over the late bank holiday weekend, and across Europe the heatwave warnings are already starting, in May. Spain is one of the most climate affected, and threatened, countries in Europe, and this month the Aemet, the State Meteorological Agency noted, in issuing extreme heat warning for parts of the country, that “the temperatures expected for the last week



of May will be typical of mid-summer: this is a very intense warm episode for the time of year. Furthermore, it will be lasting". It also reflected on the extended period of colder wetter weather, which has preceded where we are now, and reflect that the summer has now eaten into the spring, such that there’s not the usual seasonal transition.

What to do? In the UK a House of Lords’ Environment and Climate Change Committee report towards the end of May this year noted, amongst other things that the UK is ill prepared for shocks to its water supply system. It concluded that unless significant rainfall capture and storage infrastructure is developed then the country will be in significant water deficit with a few decades. In the UK we all know it rains, a lot, but currently that resource is being lost. In the Netherlands, water storage is high on the development agenda with storage systems for rainwater being made a part of new-build housing specifications. A novel approach has been the use of storage ‘fences’, essentially hollow walls enabling the capture of rainwater, which are effective at preventing large scale run-off which can lead to flooding and/or soil erosion, while at the same time keeping back water for, say, garden usage when necessary.

The practicalities of adaptation to a changing, climate-impacted world are likely to become increasingly important for us all to embrace. The inertia and, in some cases, the downright wrongheaded self-interest of some countries, continues to imperil the majority. It’s small comfort but at least every European country (with the exception of the Czech Republic, which abstained) voted for the UN resolution. While sometimes, evidence on the ground might seem a little sparse, there is momentum to do the right thing for us all and most importantly, the planet.



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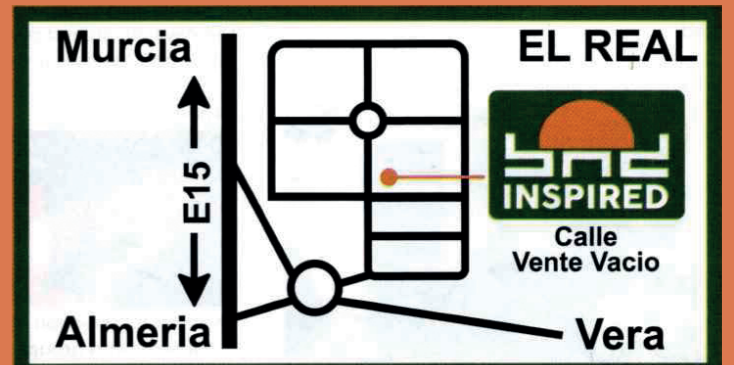
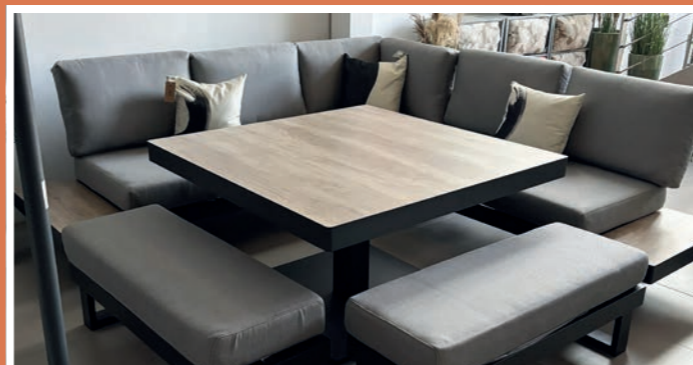




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# San Juan and the Cavall Menorquí

The fiesta of San Juan – Summer Solstice – is celebrated every year all over Spain.

One of the most emblematic celebrations takes place in Ciudadela on the island of Menorca in the Balearics.

The main character of this annual celebration is the horse – more accurately the Menorquí horse, Cavall Menorquí

On the morning of San Juan the riders, all dressed in black and white, ride their horses through the streets of the city until they all congregate when Mass is over to start the traditional celebration, known as ‘el jaleo’.

They ride into the main square, which is crowded with revellers, and show off their horsemanship making their horses jump to the rhythm of the traditional music which is always played by a local band.

The boisterous crowd make the horses rear as a symbol of their power and grandeur.

This happens for two days running at the Fiesta de San Juan, and once the ‘jaleo’ is over, the authorities serve free drinks and the horses enter the square for one final time, rear and show off their nobleness before they take their final bow.

The music and celebrations continue long into the night, and the drinks flow freely – mainly in the shape of Menorca gin and lemonade, the traditional drink of the fiesta.

Apart from being the main character at the Fiesta de San Juan, the Menorquí horse is



one of the most famous symbols of the island.

It is a native breed to Menorca which has been bred there since time immemorial. Genetic studies show that its forefathers came from southern Spain, and it is a close cousin to the Mallorquí and the (now extinct) Catalá breeds.

Thanks to the annual Fiesta de San Juan in Menorca, the Menorquí horse, which was originally used for work in the fields, is now famous far beyond the borders of Spain. And it is a unique breed indeed.

The Menorquí is a very calm and obedient horse, which is furthermore strong and stalwart. All the specimens are black, they have a low tail and medium size ears.

They are ideal for riding and suit any kind of rider – they even have patience for the inexperienced tourist riders who wish to experience the island from horseback.

They are well suited for classic dressage but also have their own school, the Menorcan school of dressage.

This school differs from classic dressage with certain different movements, and the fact that the rider holds both reins in one hand.

The Menorquí horse was recognised as a separate breed in 1988 and today there are more than 3,000 specimens of the breed registered by the Association of Breeders and Owners of Menorquí Horses.





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# Carnation Milk

When you read this you'll think to yourself 'Jos must have invented that! Really? Whoever is going to believe it?'

You'd be wrong, this is the absolute truth.

Take yourself back to around about September 6th 1866, as this is the date when Carnation Milk, then known as Carnation Sterilized Cream, hit the shops.

I don't know how it came about, but bosses of Carnation Milk, made in Kent (no, the one near Washington) decided what they needed was a catchy slogan.

So they put an announcement out for a catchy memorable slogan to be used in their advertisements. For the winning slogan, the prize was for 5000\$, but it had to start with the words 'Carnation Milk is best of all'

A granny living in North Carolina took a look at the ad. She chewed her lip with the teeth she still had and thought 'H'm. I've been farming all my life, and there isn't much about cows and milking that I don't know. I'll have a go.'

And she did. She sat and thought and came up with this absolute gem:

- Carnation Milk is best of all,
- No tits to pull
- No hay to haul
- No shit to pitch
- Just poke a hole



By Jos Biggs

In the Son-\*\*\*\*\*

She posted her entry, and a week later a big black limousine pulled up at her gate. Two very important looking men in suits got out, cautiously scoured round the farmyard to find her and eventually tracked her down among the chickens.

'Mrs Errrr?' they weren't sure of her name. 'We are here about your entry in the slogan competition.'

'Yup.' She snapped, pulling a strand of hay out of her hair.

'We want to tell you how we loved your slogan.' Man #1 began.

She let the silence hang. 'So?'

Man #2 took up the baton. 'Unfortunately we won't be able to use it in advertisements.'

She surveyed them critically. She wasn't sure where this was going. 'So?'

Both men shuffled, She was unnerving them, and the chickens weren't helping.

Man#2 spoke to his shoes, once so clean, now so farmyardey. 'As I said we can't use it for publicity, but the management loved it so much that we are awarding you 1.000\$.'

He held out an envelope. I expect she counted it on the spot, but I don't know. Neither have I been able to find any record of her name, nor whether they all had tea and cookies afterwards!

# Legends of the Irish Werewolf

By Tom Fynes

Wolves, (Faolchúinna) and Wild Dogs (Madraí Fiáine) though now extinct in Ireland, were once numerous. The Irish were said to be plagued by wolves and bred a special type of dog, the Irish Wolfhound, to hunt them. Irish literature throughout the medieval ages, associated warriors with wolves. They invoked a combination of ferocity, frenzied behaviour, and an unpredictable savage sexual potency combined with martial prowess.

Laignech Fáelad is described as one of these warriors who could "shapeshift into a wolf," and whose descendants inherited the same ability. He and his offspring were said to shapeshift and raid herds after the custom of wolves, which is why he bore the epithet Fáelad (from the old Irish word fáel, "wolf").

The Normans under Strong Bow, (who was a Norman invader long before he evolved into a well-liked English Cider), wrote about the werewolves in the Kingdom of Ossory. Descendants of Laignech Fáelad, the original mythical Irish werewolf.

In Irish minds, wolves were closely linked with the practices of the warrior bands, who lived in the wilds, and were considered able to harness supernatural shapeshifting forces. Warriors were frequently portrayed as wolves, hunting both animals and men and may have given rise to Irish legends of werewolves. We also see the importance of dogs to the Irish, that they had an influence on Irish names. We see names such as Conn, that derive from the word Cú/con meaning "hound."



hero) and his favourite dog Bran. Described as full of wisdom, a beautiful and fierce dog, mostly white with purple haunches, a crimson tail, and blue feet. He was as tall as Finn's shoulder, had the eyes of a dragon, the claws of a wolf, the vigour of a lion, and the venom of a serpent.

The birth of both Bran and his sister Sceoling, (another Finn McCool hound,) falls under the term shapeshifting. Both were born to a pregnant Queen, who'd been transformed into a dog by a sorceress, and who then gave birth to Bran & Sceoling, while in this dog form. Brann was very loyal and affectionate to Finn and never left his side.

Bran and Sceoling were involved in many of the amazing stories of the Fenian cycle, such as the hunt for the enchanted deer Sadhbh, who became Finn's wife, and the mother of his son Oisín; the pursuit of the half-black and half-

white doe in Thrush Glen, where Sceoling died; and the encounter with the Fairy Queen Cailte, who offered Finn a choice, between her love, and his dogs. Finn chose the dogs.

So, Finn turned down the love of a beautiful Fairy Queen for his dogs and then married an enchanted deer. You could not make it up. And then again, maybe they did. Anyway, good for him. They certainly lived in interesting and magical times, in Ireland, back in the day.



The Irish hero Cúchulainn earned his name, when arriving late one night to a dinner he had been invited to, by the smith Culann. He was attacked by Culann's ferocious hound who was guarding his master's house. Cuchulainn promptly killed the hound. And then, as a punishment, he was forced to remain in place, guarding the house until another hound could be trained to replace him. It was then, Setanta, as he was then called, became the legendary superhero, Cuchulainn (The Hound of Culann.)

Irish legends also tell us of Finn McCool, (yet another Irish super-

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# The Potential of Pots

By Jeff Goundrill

Growing plants in pots and containers is the one activity most of us over here share. It doesn't matter if your garden is large or small, patio or soil, we can all use them. No empty space is wasted and any opportunity to brighten up an area should be taken.

## Choosing Containers

It is possible to use anything that holds any amount of soil, so long as it has drainage holes. You gain the best effect from suiting a container to its site and the job it must do.

In a past life we ran a garden centre at a prison I worked in. As a feature, I built a flower pot man using old plastic flower pots of varying sizes, larger for the body and head, getting smaller for arms, legs and feet. I used threaded metal bar with nuts and washers to shape the features.

He was about 6 feet tall. I attached his hands to a wheelbarrow, shaping arms and legs to assume a pushing position. When he was in position, we filled the barrow with soil and planted it up with a bright selection of bedding plants.

I did make sure the barrow had drainage holes first. This became a great feature for children visiting the centre and was a good use for old pots.

On another occasion, as a feature for one of our gardens at the Chelsea flower show, we built a seating area with a central metal frame in the shape of an umbrella. All the spines of the central frame had a hook.

We attached hanging baskets to each hook, all at different levels. We threaded plastic tubing along the spines, letting us connect to a watering system. The bright array of bedding plants from the baskets gave a massive hit of colour and was quite a talking point. I think our idea was adopted by manufacturers, unfortunately didn't get any patenting rights!

You do not need to spend a fortune on suitable pots. Sometimes just look around your garden or shed, it is surprising what you have laying around. The second-hand shops are a great place to find things. Look with an open mind, with a lick of paint, its surprising of the effect you can make. The garden centres have a vast range of pots and they are not overly expensive, just look around for best buys.

If you are feeling creative, inexpensive plastic containers are easily transformed with a coat of matt-finish acrylic paint to give a splash of colour. If the plant you intend to grow in the container is flowery, decorate the pot more discreetly with sponging. If you want to go all out, you could use stencilling.

Sponging: - Put on the base coat of paint and allow it to dry completely. Dip a sponge into the second colour you want to use and dab the pot to give an even light covering.

Stencilling: - Cut out a simple repeated



motif from card. Tape it in place and paint over the holes. Remove the card carefully to avoid smears.

## Plants most suited to different types of containers

Movable containers such as an old wheelbarrow could have *Argyranthemum frutescens*, pink pelargoniums, brilliant yellow *caccolaria* and trails of ivy foliage to set off the display.

Suitable for old sinks, or similar containers could be Alpines or other dwarf plants. These would be lost elsewhere in the garden. Set among fern fronds of *Dryopteris*, *Aquilegia bertolonii* and *Iris graminea*.

More elegant containers such as a stone urn can look amazing with the simplest of planting. Variegated ivy appears almost golden in the sunshine, maintaining its good looks throughout the year with almost no attention or effort on your part. (Sounds like me!!)

On a personal note, I have very little soil in the garden, mainly tiles and gravel.

To give the planting different heights and interest, I have raised some pots on old railway sleepers, putting climbing plants towards the back to climb up the fence.

Then more colourful plants such as geraniums and *sorbus reducta* interspersed with different coloured grasses. Grouping them like this helps to stop them drying out too much and gives a bit more interest around the back of the pool.

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## HOLA!

Liz wishes she could say she hadn't heard a thing. She also wishes she hadn't been there at all.

But she had been there - and worse still, Liz heard most of it.

She had been dozing on her balcony, basking in the quiet satisfaction of a life that, in her opinion, had turned out rather well. Early retirement suited her. It fitted like a comfortable pair of slippers - practical, a little indulgent, and entirely deserved.

Moving to Spain had been a bold decision. Some might say impulsive. Others - namely certain relatives still shivering in Glasgow - had described it as downright barmy. Though, if honest she had always suspected a trace of envy behind their raised eyebrows. Sun, sea, sand... it did have a certain appeal.

That afternoon was particularly perfect. Even the neighbour's ferocious-looking dogs had fallen inexplicably silent. The air was warm, the sky a cloudless blue, and somewhere in the branches of a nearby lemon tree, a small bird chirped with irritating cheerfulness.

Liz was just drifting into that delicious half-sleep - where thoughts blur and time stretches - when a voice shattered the calm.

It was a man's voice. Gruff. Urgent. Agitated.

It seemed to come from directly below her balcony.

She froze.

It sounded like her newest neighbour, Pedro. They had exchanged nothing more than a cautious Hola since he moved in, and Liz had the distinct impression that suited him perfectly.

Now, her Spanish - despite quite a few classes - is what might generously be described as "developing." But even with her limitations, the tone of the conversation was unmistakable.

Tense. Irritated. Serious.

Heart quickening, Liz discreetly adjusted her new hearing aid and leaned forward, straining to catch every word.

Was that barco? A boat?

And... medianoche? Midnight?

He was meeting someone - Antonio? - at the puerto, the harbour?

Liz felt a prickle run down her spine.

Then she was certain she heard it.

Drogas.

Drugs.

And - surely not -

Una pistola.

A gun.

Liz sat bolt upright.

Could she possibly have heard correctly? Was something criminal unfolding beneath her very balcony? Here, in her peaceful slice of Mediterranean paradise?

Her mind raced. Should she call the Guardia Civil? Would they take her seriously? Or would she be dismissed as a nosy retiree with too much time and an unreliable grasp of Spanish?

Unable to bear the suspense, Liz sprang up from her lounge and crept to the edge of the balcony, peering cautiously over.

There he was.

Pedro.

Reclining elegantly on his sun lounge, looking annoyingly handsome, eyes closed, utterly relaxed. One hand rested lazily on a



small ginger kitten curled against his chest.

Beside him sat a battered transistor radio - blaring at full volume.

A dramatic Spanish voice poured out of it, rising and falling with theatrical intensity. Music swelled. A woman gasped. A man was shouting something about midnight, a boat, drugs, and - yes - a pistol.

Liz stood there for a moment, then let out a long, slow breath.

Of course.

A radio drama.

She retreated to her lounge, feeling both relieved and faintly ridiculous.

The bird continued its chirping. The sun still warmed her face. Peace, once again, settled over the afternoon.

However...

Perhaps it was time she and Pedro progressed beyond that ubiquitous Hola.

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The festival of San Juan is celebrated on June 23rd during the shortest night of the year; marking the summer solstice. A magical night that welcomes the summer season.

It is a celebration that usually involves roaring bonfires, fireworks, music, drinks, food and friends. Legends, tradition and magical rituals are connected by the common elements: fire and water.

Some mystical people believe that on this night paranormal events can occur because ancient pagan gods get closer to humans. For this reason many magical rituals are celebrated. Young people jump over fires which according to legend, gives more strength to the sun, which loses hours of light during the summer.

Pagan and Religious tradition meet in these awesome celebrations. They all share some things in common, yet each also has its own peculiarity.

It is a night full of Superstition. If you want to be lucky for the next 12 months you may want to:

Jump over a bonfire three times to be cleansed and purified.

Burn a piece of paper with your lovers name on it.

Burn something old and personal to leave behind bad spirits from the past and start a new phase.

Swim in the sea after midnight to purify the soul and body.



## La Noche De San Juan



In cities and towns, particularly those close to the sea, the celebration is very important. Lalín, in Galicia, celebrates O Corpiño, during which people touch an image to botar fora o meigallo, to take out bad things. In Alicante's Fogueres de Sant Joan, two hundreds bonfires burn all over the city during the night. In Palamós and Roses (Girona), fireworks and bonfires are made on the beach, while in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the people build bonfires of waste products, and after the burn, bathe in the sea, which they have filled with fruits and flowers.

Another tradition, especially for women, requires the women of the house to prepare perfumed water combining the scents of seven plants - among them rosemary, roses and laurel - and to bathe or wash their faces in the water, again to purify themselves for the new season.

Depending where you experience San Juan, you might find yourself almost entranced by the spectacle. The smell of smoke permeates the air and there is a feeling of camaraderie that crosses age, culture, and

background.

So welcome to the magical night of San Juan. San Juan is about changes. It is about night to day; it is about fire to water. Fire purifies and water recuperates, refreshes, and rejuvenates.

# Alcalá del Júcar

Having been declared a Cultural-Historical Site in 1984, and being a member of the exclusive club 'Los Pueblos Más Bonitos de España' (Spain's Prettiest Villages), Alcalá del Júcar is considered one of the most picturesque villages in the province of Albacete, and it is a must for lovers of rural tourism.

As its name indicates, it is set on the Júcar River, on its final stage in Castilla la Mancha, before it flows through Valencia and into the Mediterranean.

Overlooking the village is the castle of the same name, set high on the steep hill that falls away down to the meandering river below. The village covers the hillside between the castle and the river, and the majority of the houses in its historical centre are cave houses, although you wouldn't think so because most of their façades look like those of normal houses.

The original cave houses consisted of just one room which served for both cooking, living and sleeping, and right to the back of the cave the livestock was kept. There was always a fireplace which served both for cooking, heating and giving a little light.

The site of the village has been of strategic importance since time immemorial, because it is overlooking a place of easy crossing of the river.

The castle is thought to be of Islamic origin, and taking advantage of the natural conditions, it sits high and unassailable on its cliff-top, controlling the river crossing below. Both the castle and the town were built to withstand the challenges facing the inhabitants of a strategically important site in the Middle Ages.

Like most medieval castles, Alcalá del Júcar has its own well.



Normally, these wells depended on rainwater to get filled, but in this case the well could not be filled naturally, as its base coincides with the floor of the platform, so it was necessary to use pack animals to carry water up from the Júcar River.

Continued on page 60 .....

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.... Continued from page 59

The medieval fortress encloses a small space in the rocky outcrop, through a series of constructions and an artificial moat. Especially noteworthy is the keep, which was the centre of the defence of the castle and a symbol of feudal power.

Like, it almost seems, the majority of Spanish villages, towns and cities set on a river, Alcalá del Júcar has a Roman bridge. This one is different though – it was not built by the Romans. It was constructed in 1771, and its name has simply come about because it was constructed in the same way as the Romans constructed their bridges.

Next to the bridge is a small area on the riverbank which is ideal for swimming in summer and picnics in winter. It is known as La Playeta (the little beach) and it is one of the most visited places in summer, where you can enjoy the stunning surroundings while keeping cool in the water.

Crossing the Roman Bridge to the other side of the river, you come upon a footpath which is called 'La Ruta del Agua'. It is a short, easy walk, some 20 minutes, and it follows the river all the way around the village.

One of Alcalá del Júcar's star attractions is La Cueva del Diablo, the

Devil's Cave. Don't let the name scare you off, it is simply named after its owner who has taken the name Juan del Diablo.

The cave was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century, and it was used for stables for livestock. It goes right through the mountain from one side to the other. On the exit side there is a viewing platform with spectacular views.

Cueva del Diablo is a kind of museum or exposition of everyday objects in the village from years gone by. As you walk along the passages with their galleries, nooks and crannies, you can see furniture, photographs, crockery, farming tools and implements and no end of other household items.

From the Cueva del Diablo you can access the Moorish caves of Rey Garadé, the two caves are interconnected. The Cueva de Garadé was used as an inn and a post for his soldiers.

At the end of your trip through this treasure trove, Juan del Diablo has thoughtfully installed a bar where you can have a hot or cold drink (included in the entrance fee of 4€), and there is also food for those who feel so inclined.

As you exit the cave, you are close to the castle, so this is the ideal way to approach the top part of the village.

As well as visiting the castle, take the opportunity to take a stroll around the narrow streets lined with white houses, where every so often you will discover a new and different view of the surrounding mountains and the meandering river below.



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# A WALK THROUGH THE DALÍ MUSEUM



The Dalí Museum in Figueras, Gerona, is the late artist's greatest work of art, and anybody finding themselves in the general vicinity of this marvel would cheat themselves of an amazing experience were they not to take the opportunity to visit.

It all started in the early '60s when Ramón Guardiola, the mayor of Figueras, Dalí's place of birth, asked him to donate a work to the town's Museu de l'Empordà; Dalí's reply was immediate: He was not just going to donate a work, he would donate a whole museum. In his own words:

"Where, if not in my own town, should the most extravagant and

solid of my work endure, where if not here? The Municipal Theatre, or what remained of it, struck me as very appropriate, and for three reasons: first, because I am an eminently theatrical painter; second, because the theatre stands right opposite the church where I was baptised; and third, because it was precisely in the hall of the vestibule of the theatre where I hosted my first exhibition."

The Municipal Theatre had been destroyed by a fire at the end of the Civil War, and had since then been left in ruins without any attempts of reconstruction. Until Salvador Dalí arrived on the scene and changed the building's, and indeed the town's, fate.

From the early 70's onwards, Dalí devoted almost all of his time to the creation of his museum, and it was officially inaugurated on 28th September 1974.

The Dalí Museum is not just an exhibition of the artist's work, it is a work of art in itself.

In Dalí's own words, entry was 'prohibited to art critics and experts' – meaning that the museum was intended to be experienced by each visitor on their own premises without being told how to interpret or understand what they saw. Indeed, Dalí didn't particularly want anybody to 'understand' his work.



When you enter the Dalí Museum the first area you get to is the patio, which was the main floor of the old theatre. There you are welcomed by an audience of Oscar statuette-like figures set into the walls; in the middle is what is probably one of Dalí's most monumental works of surrealism: A Cadillac with a sculpture representing Queen Esther on the bonnet; a pillar made from tyres on top of which Dalí's own sailing boat rests; and if you stick a euro in the slot next to the car, it will start raining in its interior, soaking the occupants and the escargots they are enjoying.

Next, you get to The Stage, which is crowned by a huge multi faceted cupola, not unlike the inside of a fly's eye; and that is often what we need in order to appreciate the works of Dalí: a compound vision like that of a fly.

Especially worth mentioning in this area is a theatre curtain, covered in a painting representing 'Gala, naked, looking at the sea', and a tapestry with a double image, The Hallucinogenic Toreador: Behind multiple silhouettes of Venus de Milo you can make out the face of Manolete, a famous bull fighter.

Hanging on one side is a reconstruction of President Lincoln's face which changes when you look at it through a lens, and also on the stage you will find a slab without a name: Dalí's final resting place, right in the centre of his greatest creation.

The Mae West Room is probably the most famous part of the Dalí

Theatre. The actress' face is made up by the components of a lounge. Two pictures constitute the eyes, a double fireplace the nose and a sofa is her lips. And of course, to complete the room, a fully fitted bathroom hangs upside down from the ceiling.

In order for you to see the room in two dimensions like Dalí's own picture that inspired it, you go up a set of steps where, looking through a lens mounted on a camel you will see the elements reorganized to make the room look like the picture.

Passing through a humble little door you reach the Treasure Room, a room covered in red velvet like the inside of a jewellery box.

This is where the most precious of Dalí's pictures can be found, cubist and impressionist paintings from the twenties side by side with surrealist masterpieces and oil paintings from his more classic period. It is a highly charged 'free for all' presided over by his magnificent painting 'Basket of Bread' and several renderings of Gala, his wife. Intimacy rules in this space.

The 'Fishmongers' area is situated in what was the fish market adjacent to the Teatro Municipal when this was still functioning. Here you will find valuable pictures of large dimensions running in time from a young, very 'Picassoesque' and 'Matisseque' Salvador Dalí, to the mature artist who made paintings of sculptures by Michelangelo.

The Palace of the Wind is situated in the old theatre's rest room, where the town's social interactions took place between acts. On its ceiling there is a giant painting dedicated to the 'Tramontana' winds that beat the region of Emporda.

The dizzying perspective of Gala and Dalí seen from underneath is stunning. The room on the right, with its vintage furniture, reconstructs a bedroom, and the one on the left an artist's studio. At the bottom of the room, a corridor with lithographs turns into an art gallery.

Upstairs, on the top floor, the visitor discovers the importance to Dalí of his art collection. Works by Bouguereau, Cuchamp, El Greco, Fortuny, Urgell etc. cover the walls and intermingle with Dalí's own oil paintings. Simultaneously, a homage to other artists and a recognition of the inspiration they gave him.



An adjacent building houses a collection of jewellery, 37 magnificent pieces that belonged to the American Owen Cheatham family, all designed by Dalí. They were acquired by the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in 1999, and their value is incalculable. Precious stones transform into fantastic designs; a beating heart, an eye that measures time and a mouth with the lips made from rubies and teeth from pearls.

Of Russian origin, Elena Ivanova Diakanova has become known to



history as Gala: Dalí's wife, muse, administrator, friend, lover and confidante. A special love affair which started in 1929 and lasted until the end of their lives. By way of his museum, Dalí remembers and reveres her constantly, both artistically and as a source of inspiration. How many times do we see Gala? Uncountable!

The Dalí Museum in Figueras was Dalí's last and greatest work of art. It is a place where content and 'container' become one, and one does not make sense without the other. It is an extension of Dalí's personality and a generous gift to all who visit this unique masterpiece.

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# Alfonso I of Aragon and I of Pamplona, the Battler

Alfonso I, the Battler, was born in 1073, younger brother of the heir to the throne of Aragon and Pamplona, Pedro I.

When Pedro I was king he did father a son and a daughter, but his son died on 1st February 1104, just ten months before Pedro's own demise in December of the same year, obliging him to leave the throne to his brother Alfonso who became Alfonso I of Aragon and Pamplona.

Immediately upon his ascension to the throne, Alfonso I, who was already a battle hardened soldier, deeply religious and without any apparent interest in women, went on a campaign, his first of many, to help the 'Reconquista', the battle to expel the Moors from the Peninsula and spread the Christian word.

He conquered three important Aragonese cities in 1105 and helped the Count of Urgell win back Balaguer in Lérida, which forged to a lifelong friendship between the two.

After five years on the rampage, Alfonso I married Urraca, Queen of Castile, León and Galicia in 1109. Both shared the same great grandfather. It was her second marriage; she had a son, Alfonso VII, by her first husband, Raimundo de Borgoña, who had died in 1107.

It was a political union which served to bring both kingdoms under one crown, and it was strongly opposed by various clerics and aristocrats; but the plan, originally a brain child of Alfonso VI the Brave, Urraca's deceased father, to unite the two powerful kingdoms, went ahead and the monarchs prevailed.

During the first few months, Urraca and Alfonso fought each with their own army on the same side; but soon marital and political difficulties took their toll, and the marriage was an unending succession of separations and reconciliations. Urraca, 29 years old, passionate and jealous, was an unsuitable match for the Battler, who was happy amongst his soldiers, spending his life on a holy crusade.

So in spite of the inherent political advantages of the match, the failure of the couple to produce an heir and their opposing political ambitions eventually led Alfonso I to accept a papal resolution to annul the marriage on the grounds of their family connection.

The marriage was dissolved in 1114, and Alfonso became once again the King of Aragón and Navarra exclusively, although he did keep certain areas of Castile.

Having left the time consuming and demanding political wrangling of Castile and León behind, Alfonso now dedicated all his resources to the re-conquest of Zaragoza. He obtained the promise of help of French troops who joined him as did Gallic, Castilian, Catalan and Basque armies.

The siege of Zaragoza started in 1114 following the conquest of places such as Gurrea, Tudela, Belchite and Sariñena. It lasted until the city finally surrendered on 18th December 1118.

The Battler battled on and worked his way south from the White City, as Zaragoza was then called, conquering everything in his way. At one point a Muslim army marched on Zaragoza in an attempt to

win it back, but they were stopped and defeated by Alfonso's troops near Teruel.

Alfonso was encouraged to go even further afield by a message from Spanish-Roman citizens, residents of Granada, that they would help from within if the Battler were to try to conquer the city.

In 1125 he started his most famous campaign which took him to Valencia, Murcia and Andalucía. Although he only managed a couple of important conquests, the expedition was a great success, because of the psychological impact on the Muslim population as well as the enormous loot and the no less than 14,000 Spanish-Roman citizens that followed him back and allowed him to repopulate the conquered areas south of Zaragoza.

Queen Urraca of Castile died in 1126 and her son, Alfonso VII, took the reins. His ambition was to win back the areas of Castile that Alfonso I had held on to after the dissolution of his marriage to Urraca.

For once, the Battler let diplomats take care of the matter rather than solving the problem with armed conflict, and the Pact of Tamara was signed in 1127, under which Alfonso I gave his remaining lands in Castile back to his stepson.



In 1130 Alfonso set his sights north to France where his faithful subject, Gaston de Bearn, who had negotiated the Pact of Tamara, was involved in a dispute about lands in the French Basque Country. He surrounded the city of Bayonne and kept it under siege until Gaston de Bearn suddenly died in 1131, at which time he withdrew and returned to Aragon.

In 1133 he laid siege on Fraga in Huesca, which was a strategic city with very strong defence works. However, the Muslim Almoravid army came to the rescue of the city, and Alfonso was forced to battle

on two fronts: Against the city's defending forces that were fighting from within and against the Muslim army that were coming to the rescue from behind.

Eventually, he was forced to beat retreat; the withdrawal was a disaster, and Alfonso was seriously wounded. Nonetheless, during the retreat the indefatigable Battler laid siege on Liziana in 1134.

However, his wounds were severe and feeling unable to fight in battle, he retired to Almuniente where he died on 7th September 1134.

A few days before his death, Alfonso I the Battler changed his will and left his kingdom to the Military Order of the Temple and the Knights Hospitaller. However, the will was in conflict with Navarro-Aragonese law and it created an extremely serious judicial and successional problem, so nobody was prepared to honour it.


Thus, the kingdom of Aragon and Navarra was split into two and each chose their own king.

The Navarrans chose García Ramírez, grandson of Cid Campeador. The Aragonese elected Alfonso I's brother, Ramiro II the Monk, whom we portrayed shortly last year in our article on the famous painting 'The Bell of Huesca'.



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# The Verracos

Before heading off on a trip to Salamanca a couple of years ago I had done some research and became fascinated by the misshapen stone sculptures known as verracos - the photos show the ones I found on my travels.

The verracos (Spanish: verraco; Portuguese: berrão) are granite megalithic monuments, sculptures of animals that are to be found in western Iberian in the Spanish provinces of Ávila, Salamanca, Zamora, and Cáceres, but also in the north of Portugal and Galicia. Over 400 have been identified.

The Spanish word verraco normally refers to boars and the sculptures are sometimes called verracos de piedra (pigs of stone).

Most are quite deformed due to the passage of time but they have various shapes, which predominately represent the bull, pig, boar and less frequently the bear.

Some have been identified as bulls, and the village of El Oso, Ávila, named for "the Bear", has a verraco which supposedly represents a bear. Their dates range from the mid 4th to 1st centuries BC.

There are several theories about their meaning. On the one hand it is believed they marked land devoted to grazing and on the other to one that could have a mystical or religious significance, namely the cult of the dead and funeral rites (this is because some have recorded Latin funerary inscriptions from Roman times) or even the cult of fertility.

There are some similar zoomorphic monuments to be found in Poland from the same period or older.




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# La Saca de las Yeguas - Fetching the Mares

Spain's many fiestas attract visitors from near and far; some of them have become big, international events, while others have a more local and traditional feel.

One of the most emblematic of these traditional fiestas takes place in the Doñana Natural Park in western Andalucía, and it incites general interest because of its remote origins that date back more than 500 years.

The fiesta is called 'la Saca de las Yeguas' (Fetching the Mares), and the first written referral to this event dates back to 1504. It is a tradition which connects the town of Almonte in the Huelva province with the Doñana territory through livestock farming.

Every year, preceding the annual San Pedro fair which starts at the end of June, the citizens of Almonte have an important historic rendezvous with some of the inhabitants of the natural park.

The protagonists of the event are the mares and their foals that live in semi freedom in Doñana. Groups of 'yegüerizos' (men and women dedicated to the care of mares and their offspring) enter the national park where they round up the animals that live there all year.

On 26th June, these 'cowboys', for want of a better word, drive more than a thousand heads of livestock from the Doñana Natural Park past the Shrine of San Rocío, (which, in its own right, is the destination of a large, annual pilgrimage), through pine covered



sandy tracks to the town of Almonte.

As the evening draws in, the horses are led through the streets of the town in a great, constantly moving and changing flock.

When they reach the other side of town, they are taken to the town's livestock enclosure, and the cleaning process starts. The horses have their manes and tails cut, and they are wormed and shod.

The day after, the livestock fair starts, and dealers and breeders look at the specimens and bid on those they find interesting. Deals are sealed in the most traditional way. With a simple handshake. A couple of days later, those mares and foals that were not sold are returned to their natural habitat, the marshlands of the Doñana Natural Park.

This breed of horse is known in Spain under the name 'marismeña' which translates as 'marshlander'. It stems from primitive horses that lived in the marshlands of the Guadalquivir river. Over the ages they have been crossed with other breeds, mainly those proceeding from Northern Africa.

Some historians believe that the Marshlander was the horse that the explorers took along on their search of the western route to India and thus the ancestor of the 'native' American horse breeds such as the mustang and the appaloosa.

Over the last few years, Fetching the Mares has become a great tourist attraction which has helped making people from all over the world aware of the beautiful natural space of Doñana and the wonders it offers.

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# IN CELEBRATION OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION & ARMED FORCES WEEK

Armed Forces Weekend 2026 will take place on Saturday 27th/28th June, marking a national opportunity to recognise and celebrate the dedication, courage, and sacrifice of the entire Armed Forces community. From serving personnel and reservists to veterans, cadets, and military families, the day honours all those who contribute to protecting the UK and supporting communities both at home and abroad.

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The celebrations form part of Armed Forces Week, beginning on Monday 22nd June, with communities across the country and world coming together to show their appreciation and support. The week also includes Reserves Day on 24th June, highlighting the important role played by Reserve Forces who balance civilian life alongside military service.

Across the UK and abroad, local events, parades, community gatherings, and family activities will take place to celebrate the Armed Forces and the invaluable work they carry out around the world — from peacekeeping and humanitarian aid to national security and emergency support.

Armed Forces Day is also an opportunity to recognise the wider military community. Veterans continue to play an important role within society after their service, while cadet organisations provide thousands of young people with valuable life skills, confidence, and leadership opportunities. Behind every serving member of the Armed Forces are families and friends whose support is equally important and deserving of recognition.

Although Armed Forces Day itself is not a fundraising event, many celebrations also support military charities and organisations that provide assistance to serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

Supporting our Armed Forces is not limited to one day each year. Through the Armed Forces Covenant, businesses, councils, organisations, and communities across the globe all show their commitment to supporting those who serve, or who have served, in the Armed Forces.

*The Zurgena & District Royal British Legion Branch serves the area from Albox to Mojácar and all surrounding communities. The branch holds regular monthly meetings and events throughout the year in these areas.*

*Each year, the money raised from the local Poppy Appeal & Branch fundraising efforts provide vital support to British veterans and their families across Spain*

*You can find us on Facebook under "Zurgena & District RBL" or contact the secretary at [zurgena.secretary@RBL.community](mailto:zurgena.secretary@RBL.community) for membership enquiries and further information.*

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## Local Author, Felicity Ratcliffe

Felicity Radcliffe, originally from Cambridgeshire in the UK, has now made Mojácar her permanent home after several years of splitting her time between the UK and Spain. Whilst in the UK, Felicity wrote a trilogy of books based on the canal system in the UK. The books in the trilogy are Union Clues, Broken Lock, and Grand Stand. The fourth donated book is an anthology of short stories, also written by Felicity. All books are now in the Recent Acquisitions' section to the right of the New Books stand.

After meeting Felicity in a bar - yes, that really happens - I told her about the Library. She immediately joined and offered to donate her books. So far, I have read the first one, Union Clues, and loved it. Whilst categorised as a mystery, and there's certainly a death, this is slightly different to the norm. The details about narrow boats is impressive, and after talking to Felicity I understood why - been there, done that!

Union Clues - This book is told in three different female voices, and whilst it takes time for the three to meet, it's worth the wait. Come back tomorrow for more details.

Broken Lock - Some familiar faces appear in the second book in the series, along with some new ones, as more happens on England's canal network.

Grand Stand - Follows on from the other two books, using familiar and unfamiliar faces, but still based on England's canals.

Ice Magic - Is a compilation of short stories which gives you the time it takes to read each story. Tailor your reading to the time available.

Felicity tells me she's working on another book away from the canals, which is set partly in the 12th century and partly in 2030. I can't wait to read it. Felicity also runs a creative writing group in



Library volunteer Susan Nielson receives a donation of 4 books from local author Felicity Radcliffe

Mojácar called the Mojácar Writers Group. The group meets in the back room at Scotty's El Tropicico on the Playa on the third Thursday of every month at 11am. She assures me that everyone is welcome, from complete beginners to experienced authors.

The Mojácar Community Library is based in the Multi-Use Centre next to the bar, between the Playa and the Pueblo. It is run by volunteers, and new books arrive monthly as well as donated books. For just 12 euros a year, members can borrow up to 8 books, including 1 new one, every 3 weeks. Find us on Facebook.

## Pets Corner

### Heatstroke in pets: how to prevent it and recognize the signs

As the first warm temperatures of the season begin, Clínica Veterinaria FaunaVet would like to remind pet owners about the importance of protecting their animals from heatstroke, a serious condition that can quickly become life-threatening.

Dogs and cats are especially sensitive to heat because they do not regulate body temperature the same way humans do. Dogs mainly release heat by panting, which means high temperatures can affect them very rapidly, especially during the warmer months.

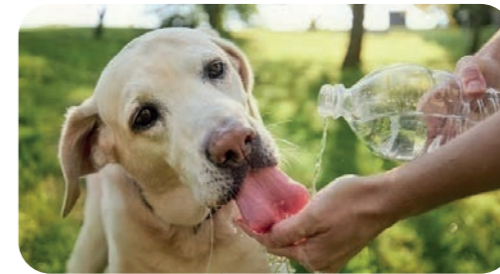
#### What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke occurs when an animal's body temperature rises excessively and the body is unable to cool itself properly. This can cause severe damage to internal organs and may even be fatal if not treated quickly.

#### Common signs and symptoms

It is very important to recognize the warning signs early:

- Excessive or rapid panting
- Heavy drooling
- Weakness or extreme tiredness
- Very red or bluish gums
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Disorientation or difficulty walking
- Tremors or seizures



- Loss of consciousness

If your pet shows any of these symptoms, seek veterinary attention immediately.

#### How can it be prevented?

Prevention is the best way to avoid dangerous situations:

- Never leave a pet inside a car, even for a few minutes

- Avoid walks and exercise during the hottest hours of the day
- Always provide access to fresh, clean water
- Ensure there is shade and good ventilation
- Avoid very hot surfaces such as asphalt
- Pay special attention to puppies, senior pets, and brachycephalic breeds (Bulldogs, Pugs, Boxers, etc.)

#### What should you do if you suspect heatstroke?

- While heading to the veterinarian:
- Move the animal to a cool, ventilated area
- Wet the paws, abdomen, and neck with cool (not icy) water
- Offer small amounts of water
- Do not cover the animal with wet towels or apply ice directly
- Quick action can make all the difference.

At **Clínica Veterinaria FaunaVet**, we encourage all pet owners to take extra precautions during the warmer season and to contact their veterinarian whenever in doubt. Protecting them from the heat is also part of caring for them.

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# Healthy Snacking

Do you love your dog?

'What kind of question is that!' you will say, 'of course I do!'

So, how do you show it?

Many dog owners dote on their pets and cannot do enough to make them happy. However, remember that dog happiness is not always achieved in the same way as human happiness.

Dog owners often tend to think that by giving their dogs snacks they make them happier and create a stronger bond.

Many people do not realise how great a quantity of snacks they give their dog. The owner of an overweight dog will say, 'But I don't overfeed him. He just has a sausage when we've finished dinner, that's all.' But if the dog weighs 10 kilos and his owner weighs 70, that would be the equivalent of the owner 'just having' seven sausages after dinner.

You do not need to bribe your pet with snacks. The amount of love and loyalty a dog feels for his owner is not directly proportional to how many snacks he gives him.

Bonding is created by spending time with your dog, training, playing, grooming and walking. If you have mobility problems, think of how much you can manage and adjust the activities to your abilities.

Hide favourite toys indoors or out and ask him to find them. Sit on a chair and throw a ball or toy for him to retrieve, that keeps some dogs happy for hours.

Of course, he should be rewarded for being good when you are doing things together, but some dog owners give their pets snacks for no reason and often without even being asked.



Just like with humans, obesity, often resulting in diabetes, is a growing problem in the dog population. Overweight people know how uncomfortable and restricting their condition is. If you truly love your dog, don't put him in that situation.

One way of avoiding obesity is weighing your dog's daily food ration and then take his snacks and rewards from the ration, giving him whatever is left for that day at dinner time.

Having said that, there is room for snacks in most dogs' lives, and they can be healthy if you choose the proper varieties and remember to use them sparingly.

Please also remember that dog snacks are made and marketed for humans – the best adverts or the most attractive packaging does not necessarily mean a snack that your dog will prefer over others.

The best snacks are made from 100% meat, fish or vegetables, and they can act as a supplement to your dog's daily diet; however, they should not constitute more than 10% of this.

They should only be given for a purpose such as training, activating or mouth hygiene.

When you choose your dog's snacks, keep the following in mind:

Choose natural meat- and fish products: Dried snacks such as salmon skin or cows' ears. These are rich in protein and often free from additives.

Vegetables and fruit: Lots of dogs love carrots and cucumbers. They are low fat, cheap and bursting with vitamins and fibre.

Natural chew bones: Bones should be gnawed, not chewed, so always keep an eye on your dog when he has a bone. Used properly, a bone gives your dog hours of enjoyment while at the same time cleaning his teeth and preventing plaque. Beware, though, as some bones have a very high calorie content. Stay well clear of these.

When buying snacks, always check the ingredients and avoid



products with unnecessary fillers, e-numbers, salt and sugar. Many processed biscuits and grain snacks contain too much starch.

Of course, the best way of ensuring that your dog ingests only what you want him to, is making your own snacks. This doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. In fact, you can use ingredients that you probably have in your kitchen already, such as carrots, bananas or oats.

*Continued on page 72 .....*

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..... Continued from page 71

When you make your own snacks, you can take into account your dog's special needs, e.g. if he suffers from allergies or has a sensitive tummy.

There are certain ingredients that we use and tolerate that can be bad for your dog, so do keep this in mind when making homemade snacks.

It's commonly known that chocolate is bad for dogs. Chocolate, and also coffee, contain theobromine, which is dangerous for dogs.

Onions and garlic can damage your dog's red blood cells.

Grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure.

Avocado contains persin, which can be poisonous for dogs.

Choose good quality ingredients and avoid additives and artificial flavours. Whole, unprocessed foods such as carrots and pumpkins are good choices as are oats, as they all contain essential nutrients.

Choose lean, fat free meat such as chicken, turkey or beef – all an excellent source of protein.

Carrots, sweet potatoes, apples



(cored) and blue berries contain vitamins that boost your dog's immune system.

Oats and brown rice give energy and are easily digested by your dog.

Eggs are full of protein and healthy fats which maintain healthy skin and fur.

Greek yoghurt is good for your dog's digestion, but make sure you choose one without sugar or added flavours.

Search the internet for recipes that appeal to you, and if there are any ingredients you are in doubt of, do some research, or leave them out and substitute them by something you are sure of.



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# Look Good - Feel Great Hay Fever and Allergic Eye Reactions

Spring is the worst time of year for hay fever as the air is full of pollen. But it can occur any time of year as there are other allergens as well, such as dust, animal shedding and mould.

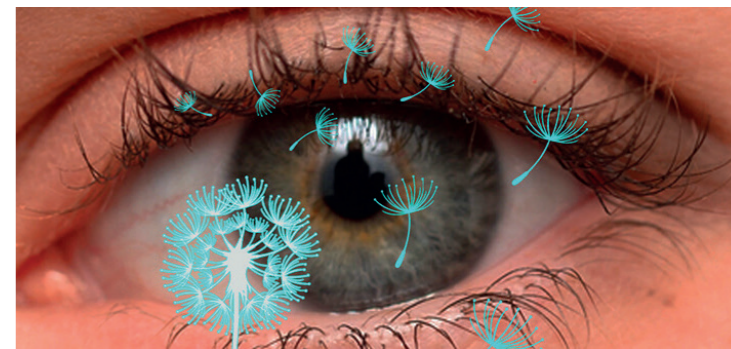
Pollen is miniscule particles which contain spermatic cells. It is produced by plants' and flowers' male reproduction parts and is used for transporting the spermatic cells to the plants' feminine reproduction parts to fertilize them.

One single plant can produce thousands of pollen particles which look like yellow powder while still in the flower; but once they are airborne they cannot be seen by the human eye. Pollen is not to be confused with seed fairies which are the white visible seeds from dandelions and other plants which float on the air to sow themselves elsewhere.

Lots of people believe they are allergic to seed fairies, but these do not produce allergy; it will have been caused by the invisible pollen which is at large at the same time.

People who are allergic to pollen have an adverse reaction when they come into contact with it, which provokes a reaction from the immune system. The body then defends itself by liberating a number of chemical substances; one of these is histamine, which produces sneezing and runny eyes.

Grasses are the most responsible for pollen allergy in Spain and the rest of Europe. Their pollen is highly allergenic and present virtually everywhere. And the period of time that we are affected by grass pollen is quite extensive as the different specimens flower at



different times.

Other highly allergenic pollens are those that come from shade trees, olive trees and palm trees amongst others. In Andalucía alone there are more than 300 million olive trees.

Pollen allergy affects both your breathing and your eyes; the most common symptoms are rhinitis, also known as hay fever.

When hay fever affects your eyes it manifests itself with itching and reddening which then irritates and enlarges the tiny capillary vessels of the conjunctiva; this on its part then causes the sensation of a foreign body in the eye and ocular inflammation. The eyes start running because the glands in the conjunctiva produce more tears than normal.

Continued on page 74 .....



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..... Continued from page 73

When your eyes are affected by allergy you should wash them with saline solution and rinse your eyes to flush out the allergens. Artificial tears help relieve dryness and prevent the ocular irritation provoked by the inflammatory reaction caused by the allergy.

The optician can help those that suffer from hay fever by explaining the correct ocular hygiene; opticians also recommend that you do not go outside without a good pair of sunglasses. Contact lens users should limit the use of the lenses and use prescription glasses instead as much as they can; if they do use the lenses they should combine their use with the use of artificial tears.

Contact lens users are the worst affected by this problem and they should exercise maximum caution in spring. Opticians recommend disposable contact lenses for allergy sufferers; by using new lenses every day they minimize the risk of complications such as conjunctivitis. Also, they should use the lenses as little as possible, always with sunglasses and avoid open areas where pollen is rife.

Here is some advice for looking after your eyes in periods with a high pollen count.

1. If you use contact lenses try to limit their use if you have conjunctivitis, to keep it from getting worse. It also helps to use them only in the evening, which is when the pollen level is at its lowest.
2. Try to stay away from the countryside and parks, where you find the highest concentration of pollen.
3. When you travel by car, keep the windows closed.
4. Use sunglasses to protect your eyes from pollen and other particles that float in the air.
5. Avoid exposing yourself to dusty environments, domestic



6. At home, keep the pollen level down indoors by shutting your windows and wiping the surfaces with a damp cloth.
7. If you use humidifiers and/or air conditioning, make sure they have special pollen filters fitted.
8. Maximise your personal hygiene. When you get home, shower and change your clothes; pollen sticks to your hair and clothes.
9. Wash your hands frequently.
10. Avoid rubbing your eyes.

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## Use A Teaspoon To Prevent Sunburn This Summer



(3ml) to each arm, the face and neck. A full teaspoon (6ml) should then be applied to each leg, and the front and back of the body.

Author of the report Anthony Young, Professor of Experimental Photobiology at KCL, said that an average-sized woman wearing a bikini in the sun should be applying sunscreen at least three times a day. As a result, she should be going through one 100ml bottle of lotion per day.

'Most people who use an SPF 20 sunscreen will actually be getting something like SPF 4 because they aren't applying enough,' claims Professor Young. 'They overestimate the protection they are getting and they stay out in the sun too long and get burned.'

Professor Young also suggested that as people don't use sunscreen in the same way they're tested by manufacturers, people should use 'a much higher SPF than they think is necessary'.

The scientists' study involved separating 16 volunteers into two groups of eight. The first cohort were exposed to ultra violet radiation to simulate sunlight over one day, while wearing sunscreen of varying thickness. The second group received exposure over five days to mimic sunbathing conditions on holiday.

Researchers found sunburn was reduced by 40 per cent when cream was applied correctly. Skin biopsies also showed that proper sun cream application lowered sun damage 7.5 times compared to using no sun protection.

So, when it comes to applying sunscreen this summer, it's not just about what SPF you're applying, but how much and how often.

According to a new study from King's College London, sunbathers are risking skin cancer by failing to put on enough sunscreen and should be using the 'teaspoon method' to ensure adequate protection and to save you from painful burns, tan lines and skin cancer.

Scientists have found that people are actually getting less than half the sun protection they think from their sunscreen because they apply such a thin layer.

So, how much cream are we meant to be applying?

Well, the Telegraph reports sunscreen manufacturers calculate SPF protection layers based on 2mg of cream per cm<sup>2</sup> of skin. However, the majority of people use just 0.8mg for the same area which is equal to 40 per cent of what they should be using.

As a result, scientists suggest we should apply at least half a teaspoon

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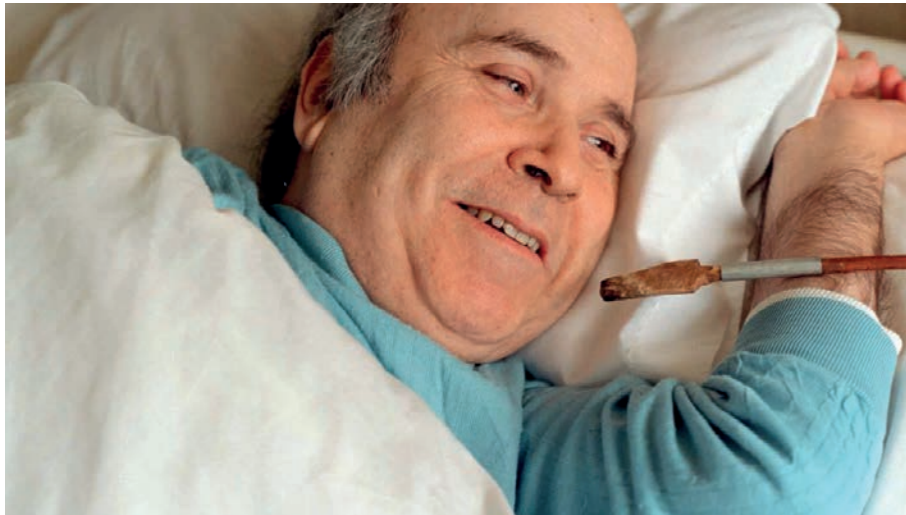
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# Ramón Sampedro - a Fighter for the Right to Die



Ramón Sampedro Cameán, Spanish sailor and writer, 5th January 1943 to 12th January 1998.

Born in the Galician town of Porto do Son, Ramón went to sea at the age of 22 working on a Norwegian ship. On his travels he visited 49 ports around the world.

On 23rd August 1968, at the age of 25, he head-dived into the sea off a rock on the As Furnas beach not far from his birthplace; the sea was rough with unpredictable currents, and the young sailor suffered a bad accident fracturing his seventh cervical vertebra which left him quadriplegic.

Some three months later he faced reality and realised that there was

no 'going back' to the life he had once known. He went to live in his parents' house where his family looked after him.

In 1993 he started his fight for the right to a dignified death and asked the courts of first instance in Barcelona and Noya (where he now lived) for permission to refuse the tubes that were used for feeding and medicating him. This was denied and he went to the Constitutional Court, where his wish was also turned down. He even went to the European Commission and the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, but to no avail.

In May of 1996 Sampedro met, through a mutual friend, Ramona Maneiro from his native Galicia. By the time he met her, Sampedro had realised that he would never be able to commit assisted suicide in a legal manner, and he came up with a plan. He left his

family, some of whom were opposed to his wish to die, got himself set up in a flat in Boiro, 25 kilometres from his native town, and selected eleven friends to help him, one of them Ramona Maneiro. He provided each one of them with a key and then chose cyanide as his method of death. He knew that the Christmas of 1997 would be his last.

He gave each of his eleven friends separate instructions, each with an action which on its own did not constitute a crime.

One was to buy the cyanide. Another to analyse it. The third to measure out the correct amount. The fourth to move it from one place to the other where the fifth collected it. The sixth mixed the



poison and the seventh poured it into a glass. The eighth put a straw into the glass and the ninth put the glass within his reach. The tenth collected his farewell letter, and the eleventh collaborator was to record his last living moments on video.

On Sunday 11th January 1998, Ramona Maneiro left his apartment at nightfall and the next morning her sister, Lupe, entered to find Ramón dead. The day before this, he had recorded a video tape

where he announced his intention and wish to die and 'that he was completely aware of what he did, that he had wished to die since he was 29 and that nobody was to be held accountable for his actions'. Moments after pronouncing his last words, he drank the glass of cyanide which put an end to his suffering. He died in Boiro on 12th January 1998, and his death was televised on 4th March although the viewers were spared and were shown just 20 seconds of his final agony.

The person closest to Sampedro, Ramona Maneiro, was arrested and accused of assisting a person in committing suicide. Her house was searched and the investigators watched several of her videotapes showing family scenes from Christmas and a recording of her next to Sampedro's bed reading aloud two poems. She was released due to lack of evidence.

Sampedro turned his wish to die into a fight for the defence of individual freedom and euthanasia. For years he corresponded with several people, many of them in the same situation as himself. These letters are collected in his book called 'Letters from Hell' together with poems and personal thoughts that he wrote down during his confinement in bed. He criticised those who were against his wish to die, both family and friends, and especially mentioned the legal and religious authorities who are repeatedly attacked in the book.

Ramón Sampedro eventually had to take the law into his own hands to be liberated from the confines of his body. But his fight was not in vain, he helped bring awareness and information about a widespread problem which has been increasingly debated for the last thirty years, both in religious, political and medical circles.

On June 25th 2021 a new law came into force in Spain permitting assisted suicide as long as it is done in accordance with the rules of the same law.

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# Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 90

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

Easy

## Regular Sudoku

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

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

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

Medium

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8										9		
10		11			12							
13								14				
15				16				17				18
19				20							21	
22								23				

### Across

- 1 Outdo
- 5 Besmirch
- 8 Pizza topping
- 9 Music genre
- 10 Dodge
- 12 Submarine mine
- 13 Latest odds offered by bookies (8,5)
- 15 Eternal
- 17 Used a broom
- 19 Chopper
- 20 Draw
- 22 Petrol unit
- 23 Genuine

### Down

- 1 Slick
- 2 Groove
- 3 Extremely old
- 4 Meteors (8,5)
- 5 Direct
- 6 Swearword
- 7 Scold
- 11 Alleviation
- 13 Ocean embankment (3,4)
- 14 Back door
- 16 Come after
- 18 Motif
- 21 Amazement

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## Hot weather & the effect on Blood Pressure

High temperatures and high humidity are two factors that can cause serious health consequences, especially for those with high blood pressure and/or heart disease.

• As the body tries to cool itself, more blood flows to the skin, causing the heart to beat faster while circulating twice as much blood per minute as usual.

• Sweating can reduce blood volume and lead to dehydration, which may also create strain on the heart.

• Humidity higher than 70% is a risk, especially for those who are overweight, or have heart, lung or kidney conditions.

• High blood pressure/heart medications, combined with heat exposure can cause a sudden, dangerous drop in blood pressure.

Warning signs that your body is

struggling or overheating include:

- Cold, clammy skin
- Confusion, Dizziness and/or Disorientation
- Fainting, Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle cramps or Spasms
- Nausea
- Swelling in your arms or legs

\*If you are exhibiting more than one or two of these symptoms, do seek medical intervention immediately.\*

### TIPS

- Stay Hydrated
- Stand up slowly to avoid sudden drops in blood pressure
- Seek shade or air-conditioned environments
- Limit outdoor activity during peak sun hours

**\*\*DO NOT stop taking any medication without first consulting your doctor\*\***

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## Dance is Good for Fitness

If you're bored of gym workouts or can't face another long run, try dancing yourself fit - here's how to get started.

Getting fit does not have to be the chore it's often perceived to be. Instead, as people all around the globe are finding out each day, dancing is one of the best fitness workouts there is. Dancing offers upbeat and inventive exercise, that promotes a more healthy and active lifestyle.

Sociable, energizing and life-affirming, dance has a whole host of body benefits, from aiding joint flexibility through to boosting mental wellbeing.

Here are some top reasons why dance is such a great fitness activity.

**Building Muscular Endurance** - Tired of feeling... tired? Still exhausted when you wake up in the morning? Then dancing could provide the answer. Regular dance exercise improves the endurance of body muscles, allowing them to work harder for longer periods of time without feeling tired. Dancing also raises the body's heart rate to heighten stamina. You'll be jumping out of bed each morning in no time.

**Dancing Improves the Body's Flexibility** - A healthy body needs joints and muscles to be flexible; something that dance can really help with. Most dance styles involve a great range of motion and movement, allowing major muscle groups to be flexed and properly worked out. As a result, the dancer's body should soon become more nimble.

**Dancing Yourself to A Happier Mind** - As well as making your body feel fitter and healthier, regular dancing exercise will also reduce mental tension and lead you on the path to a stress-free mind.



Dance stimulates happiness endorphins in the brain to alleviate day-to-day worries and concerns. If nothing else, dance is cheaper than hiring a shrink.

**Hate Being A Social Leper? Try Dancing** - Dance classes offer great ways of meeting new people, allowing you to make friends and improve your social skills. Whether you're already a vivacious party machine, or a perennial social leper, dancing could soon entail better self-confidence and new social opportunities.

**Dance Away the Calories** - Whether you're salsa dancing, gliding across a ballroom floor or tapping your toes to some two-step rock, dance exercise offers an easy and enjoyable way to burn off unwanted calories.

Continued on page 82 .....

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and bone structure, dancing also boosts stabilising core muscles to balance the body and make muscles and tendons less susceptible to injury. Coordination and reflexes are also strengthened through regular dancing workouts.

**Dancing Creates Better Blood** - Fact: Dancing exercise controls cholesterol levels in the blood, as well as helping to set blood sugar levels. If you suffer from high blood pressure then dancing could well be the prime exercise for you.

The beauty of dance fitness classes is that they really are inclusive, and in most cases, they can be easily modified. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the different styles of dance workouts before trying them out. It's also important to understand that some classes are more adventurous (or even risqué) than others—and purposely so. Here's what you need to know about the different types of dance fitness classes so you can choose a style that's best for you.

**Barre Workouts** - Barre are ballet-inspired routines that incorporate elements of yoga, Pilates, and strength training with light weights. Posture and proper form are a primary focus as instructors lead students through moves that challenge balance, stability, and core strength.

High repetitions, small, isolating "pulses," and slow movements contribute to the often-cited "muscle shakes" and "burnout" associated with the routines. The workouts are generally low-impact and moderate-intensity, offering a modest cardiovascular benefit. Where they really shine is in their focus on flexibility and core strength, making them an excellent cross-training option for runners, cyclists, and heavy lifters.

**Mind-Body Dance** - typically incorporates elements of yoga, tai chi, or martial arts into a flowing routine. These workouts offer combined benefits ranging from improved cardiovascular health to enhanced flexibility and reduced stress. Classes are typically low-impact and low to moderate-intensity, perfect for beginners looking for a way to ease into exercise.

.... Continued from page 81

A half hour of dancing can burn between 200 and 400 calories so why not run away from that miserable treadmill training and dance along to the fitness beat?

**Get Stronger Bones** - If you want to protect and improve your bone density, then dance could hold the answer. Dancing can help with the prevention of bone problems such as osteoporosis, with dancing exercise allowing more calcium to be absorbed into the body's bones.

**It's Good for Your Mental Health** - If you find yourself slumping into middle-aged malaise, forgetting how many children you have and where you last left them, dancing could be the solution to make your mind feel younger and more alert. Dance improves the memory, as it forces participants to recall steps, patterns and elaborate routines to offer a mental workout for the mind.

**Balancing the Body** - As well as improving the body's flexibility

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Is your local market listed?  
 If not please let us know



# WHEELS

## MOTORING SECTION

### Safe Journey, Pet!

We've all long been used to travelling short and long distances with our pets in the car, but it is only in the last decade or two that it has become the norm rather than the exception for our Spanish fellow citizens.

Pet friendly hotels are popping up all over the place in Spain (and the rest of Europe), and it is becoming increasingly common to take your pet with you on holiday.

This has led to a strict policy on how our little and large loved ones should be transported; both for their own safety, for ours, and for the traffic safety in general. Not complying can lead to heavy fines.

The Spanish Law on Traffic and Road Safety establishes that the driver of a vehicle must have a free field of vision and complete freedom of movement in order to minimize the risk of accidents and injury. This means that objects and animals must be transported without interfering with these two requirements.

Cats and other small pets are always best transported in a transport box with plenty of space to move on long journeys. The transport



box must be safely fixed on the back seat or, for even greater safety for both man and beast, on the floor behind the front seats.

This method of travel is also acceptable with small dogs.

Continued on page 86 .....

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..... Continued from page 85

Another way of transporting small and medium dogs is on a safety harness clipped into the safety belt socket or fastened around the seat belt. The harness should ideally have two straps attached to two different sockets or seat belts to maximise safety.

When you buy the harness, remember to take the length of the straps into consideration. The dog must not be able to reach the front of the car.

The straps should be fastened to your dogs back rather than to his neck.

If you have a minivan or an estate car, a wire grid separating the back from the seating is a good solution for all sizes of dog. This way your dog has his own travelling space which does not interfere with yours.

The grate is best mounted from the ceiling of the vehicle to the bottom and comply with DIN 75410-2 standards.

The disadvantage of this system is that your dog can get badly injured in case of an accident. If he is loose in the back and the car crashes he will get thrown against the grid at high speed.

So the ideal solution for medium and large dogs is a transport cage placed in a transversal position in the back behind and as close to the wire grid as possible.

As mentioned earlier, it is important that the enclosure is of adequate size. The dog must be able to stand, sit, lie down, and turn in the cage. Make sure that there are no loose articles about that can hurt the animal in case of an emergency brake.

It is recommended that you avoid feeding your pet just before going off on or indeed during a journey. At least two hours should pass between the last feeding and the start of the journey.



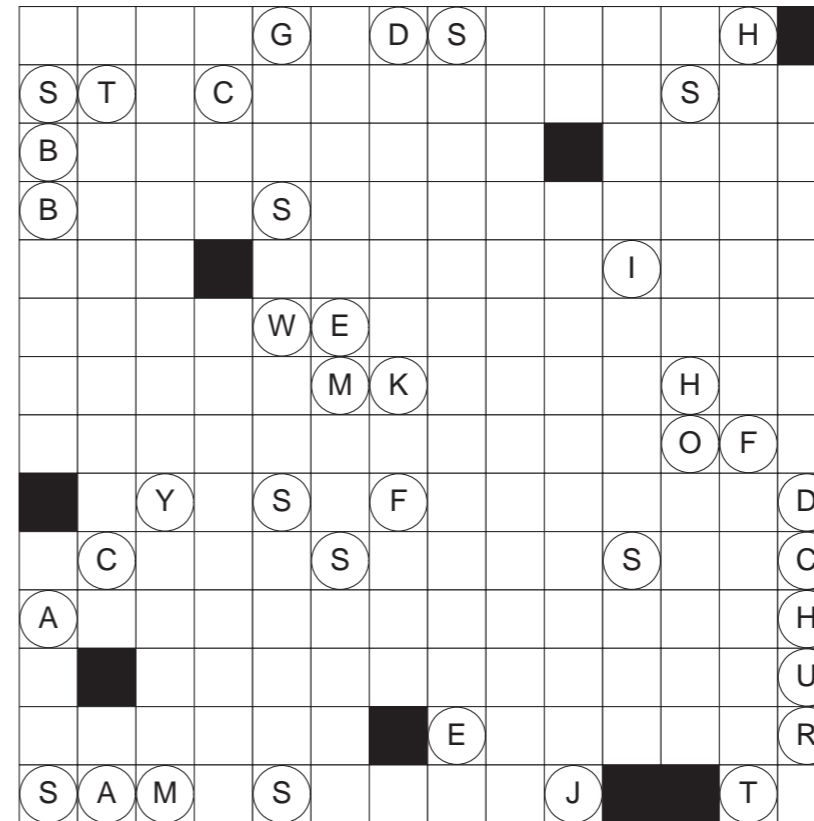
Plan your stops in advance. Your dog should be allowed a chance to get out, have some fresh air, stretch his legs, do his business, and drink without hurry. When you make a stop, do not leave your pet in the car – especially not in summer!

If you are going abroad, remember your pet's passport. The animal must be microchipped and be vaccinated against rabies. Check each country you are going to visit to see if they require any special vaccines that your dog may not have had yet.

# Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 90

## 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!

- |               |           |         |
|---------------|-----------|---------|
| Acquaintances | Grime     | Sneer   |
| Areas         | Hitting   | Spikes  |
| Beefs         | Horrible  | Spout   |
| Broil         | Housewife | Starts  |
| Bucks         | Input     | Steak   |
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| Cleavages     | Keynote   | Stuck   |
| Cults         | Metes     | Sullen  |
| Debris        | Miserly   | Torso   |
| Drizzled      | Overlong  | Treaty  |
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<p><b>3,995 €</b></p>  <p>PEUGEOT 307   1.6 PETROL   2006   155,000</p>	<p><b>33,000 €</b></p>  <p>MERC E-CLASS AMG 16.3 PETROL   2007   140,000</p>	<p><b>13,500 €</b> PRICE DROP</p>  <p>KIA SPORTAGE   1.7 DIESEL   2014   161,000</p>	<p><b>11,850 €</b></p>  <p>PEUGEOT 2008   1.2 PETROL   2015   98,200</p>

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## What Colour?



Did you know that all drivers contemplating buying a new car instinctively choose three colours?

People's choice of car colour depends on their personality, the climate they live in, present trends, and even their religion.

Which colour would you choose if you were buying a new car?

For many years, white has been Europe's most favoured car colour – 33% of car buyers go for this colour. It is the most practical colour in that small bumps and scratches are harder to spot the lighter the colour, and also, they absorb less heat.

Just like black clothes, black cars tend to heat up much more than light colours, especially in summer. Therefore, those that live in cooler climates appreciate the pre-heating on a cold day, whereas people in our part of Spain suffer from this effect.

As opposed to the whole of Europe, the Spanish have white as only their second choice at 18.37%. Here, the favourite is grey, which is the choice of 33% of car owners in Spain. Other popular colours are black at 11.58%, Green at 8.29% and red at only 7.5%.

Statistics show that maroon is chosen by 3.26% of car buyers, yellow 1.02% and beige 0.79%. At the bottom of the scale are brown – 0.61%, Corinth (dark, reddish purple) – 0.1%, and purple 0.06%.

The colour of the Spanish car fleet follows the variations in society and culture a study shows, and often the owner's personality steers him towards a particular colour.

It is considered that grey cars appeal to practical people, blue indicate elegance, and white is an expression of joy. Insurance companies have done their own statistics about drivers of red cars, the exact details of which we shall not reveal here; suffice it to say that red cars are often considered a larger risk than other colours.

But of course, nothing is written in stone, and there is always room for innovation. Apart from the classic colours, there are now new, challenging and more irreverent colours.

PPG Industries, world leader in car finish products, offer four palettes with 64 colours to car producers. The palettes go by the names The Retreat, The Commoner, Dream Weaver and The Brave. These have been developed to respond to the new demands.

The Retreat uses earthy browns, stone grey tones, blue and even yellows to suggest inwardness, concern with spiritual or philosophical matters rather than externalities.

Continued on page 90 .....

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 <p>VOLKSWAGEN GOLF 2.0TDI 115cv YEAR 2022 <b>21.900€</b></p>	 <p>CITROEN BERLINGO LIVE PACK 1.5BHD 100cv YEAR 2023 <b>15.900€</b></p>	 <p>BMW SERIE 1 116D 1.5D 116cv YEAR 2023 <b>20.800€</b></p>
 <p>CITROEN C1 CITY EDITION 1.0Petrol 75cv 16.000km YEAR 2021 <b>9.900€</b></p>	 <p>FIAT 500 DOLCEVITA 1.0HYBRID 70cv YEAR 2022 <b>12.000€</b></p>	 <p>NISSAN JUKE N-CONNECTA 1.0Petrol 115cv 20.000km YEAR 2024 <b>21.900€</b></p>
 <p>PEUGEOT 208 ACTIVE 1.5BHD 100cv 10.800km YEAR 2021 <b>13.900€</b></p>	 <p>PEUGEOT 5008 GTLINE 1.2Petrol 130cv YEAR 2019 <b>14.500€</b></p>	 <p>PEUGEOT EXPERT ACCESS 2.0HD 100cv 9 seats YEAR 2015 <b>12.800€</b></p>

\* prices are subject to minimum financing \*

 <p>HYUNDAI TUCSON 1.6CRDI 115cv YEAR 2020 <b>17.500€</b></p>	 <p>NISSAN QASHQAI N-CONNECTA 1.2Petrol 115cv YEAR 2016 <b>13.500€</b></p>	 <p>SEAT IBIZA REFERENCE 1.0Petrol 80cv YEAR 2021 <b>12.500€</b></p>
 <p>RENAULT KANGOO EXPRESS 1.5DCI 95cv 67.000km YEAR 2021 <b>12.500€</b></p>	 <p>PEUGEOT BOXER COMBI 2.2BHD 140cv 68.000km 9 seats YEAR 2020 <b>23.900€</b></p>	 <p>SEAT ARONA ECOMOTIVE STYLE 1.0Petrol 115cv YEAR 2020 <b>15.800€</b></p>
 <p>PEUGEOT 3008 GT 1.5BLUEHDI 130cv 37.600km YEAR 2023 <b>23.800€</b></p>	 <p>PEUGEOT 208 ALLURE HYBRID 100cv 15.000km YEAR 2024 <b>18.900€</b></p>	 <p>RENAULT ARKANA ZEN 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 89

The Commoner offers a mix of almost-primary colours, basic white, red and blue mixed with earthy browns and greens to create a basic and unpretentious spirit.

Dream Weaver uses red colours that tend towards pinks, as well as intense red and green colours.

The Brave offers brooding and edgy moods; jewel tones, elegant browns, and military grey.

These new ranges have led to a transformation of the way we choose colours, and each car buyer can now find a colour which exactly reflects his personality – or the personality he would like to project. The colour has become a major consideration in the choice of a new car.

On a practical front, the visibility of a car is also dependent on its colour. The distance at which a car can be perceived by other vehicles is as follows:

Black: 70m in the morning, 130m at midday and 30m in the evening.

Grey is a bit more visible. It can be seen at 120m, 220m and 100m respectively.



White is the star in this context: 140m in the morning, 230m at midday and 90m in the evening.

When a car has the lights on it can be seen at 240m regardless of its colour.

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