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Bora Bora
Magic in the Heart
of the Pacific

New York
Louis Armstrong
House Museum

Zamora
A Journey from Roma-
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Umbría
Flavors and Traditions of
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Welcome aboard

In every corner of the world, there's a story waiting to be told, and in this issue, we've decided to uncover some of the most fascinating places. We begin with an exclusive journey to the waters of Bora Bora, where time seems to stand still in the Pacific. From there, in design and architecture, we explore the Louis Armstrong House Museum in New York, a temple of musical history that breathes jazz.

Our journey continues in Ireland with a train ride from Derry to Coleraine, and for Christmas getaway enthusiasts, Berlin and Dresden open their doors during this magical season. In Ibiza, we discover the Mediterranean essence beyond the summer. In health tourism, we visit the Segura Spa in Teruel, and in industrial tourism, we explore the Mining Theme Park in Utrillas.

In history, art, and culture, we tour Zamora, from Romanesque to modernism, and in eco-destinations, we immerse ourselves in Lugano, a Swiss haven of peace and nature. Wine tourism takes us to the heart of Slovakia with Tokaj wine; and when it's time to relax, The Yeatman in Porto and Asia Gardens in Benidorm are luxury hotels for discerning travelers.

This Christmas, Madrid's plans offer immersive experiences, and through Marena's window, we discover Christmas in Hamburg. In gastronomy, we travel to Umbria to savor its traditions and flavors. We visit Bentorniz Wineries and explore high-quality products like the Iberian delicacies of Dehesa de Monteros in the Serranía de Ronda. Finally, we discover Finca de la Torre, the soul of Málaga's extra virgin olive oil.

And we can't leave without mentioning Valencia, that wonderful land waiting to be rediscovered once it overcomes the difficult time it's going through. Let's all work together to support this incredible Spanish province.

We hope these stories inspire you, and let's keep exploring the world together!



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COVER

Christmas market in
Berlin ©Archive



COVER

chocolate cake
©Despecho Madrid



Christmas in

Bora Bora

A Hidden Paradise in the Heart of the Pacific

Text and Photography: Larissa Rolley - LarissaRolley@outlook.com

Author's travels



Imagine arriving at a place where the sky merges with the sea in shades of blue impossible to describe, where vibrant vegetation flourishes and crystal-clear waters hide coral gardens teeming with marine life. Welcome to Bora Bora, a paradise nestled in French Polynesia, known as the jewel of the Pacific. This dream destination is famous for its white sandy beaches, overwater bungalows, and postcard-perfect landscapes with the majestic Mount Otemanu as a backdrop. But beyond the postcards, Bora Bora offers unique experiences that remain etched in memory forever.

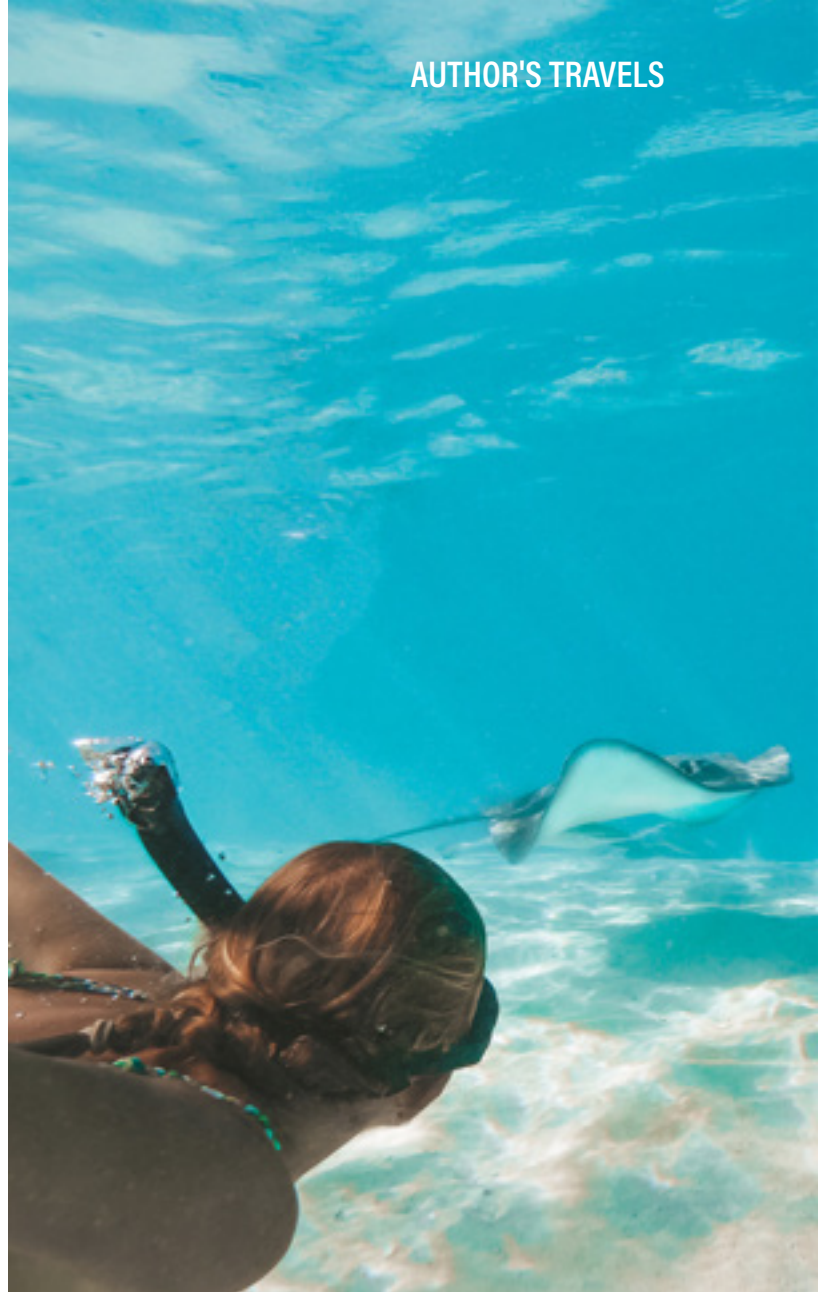
Arrival in Bora Bora: The Adventure Begins

Your journey to Bora Bora begins in Tahiti, the gateway to French Polynesia. Upon landing, you are greeted by the scent of tropical flowers and the warm welcome of the Tahitian people. While Tahiti is often just a stopover, it's worth taking the time to explore its culture and landscapes. From here, a short flight will take you to Bora Bora. This flight is the first hint of the adventure that awaits, as you can see the breathtaking view of Mount Otemanu rising from the turquoise waters surrounding the island through the window.

Bora Bora's airport is located on a small islet, and as soon as you land, you feel like you've entered another world. From there, most hotels offer speedboat transfers that take you directly to your accommodation, gliding over waters so clear and blue they seem unreal. This initial journey is just a preview of the serenity and luxury that define Bora Bora.

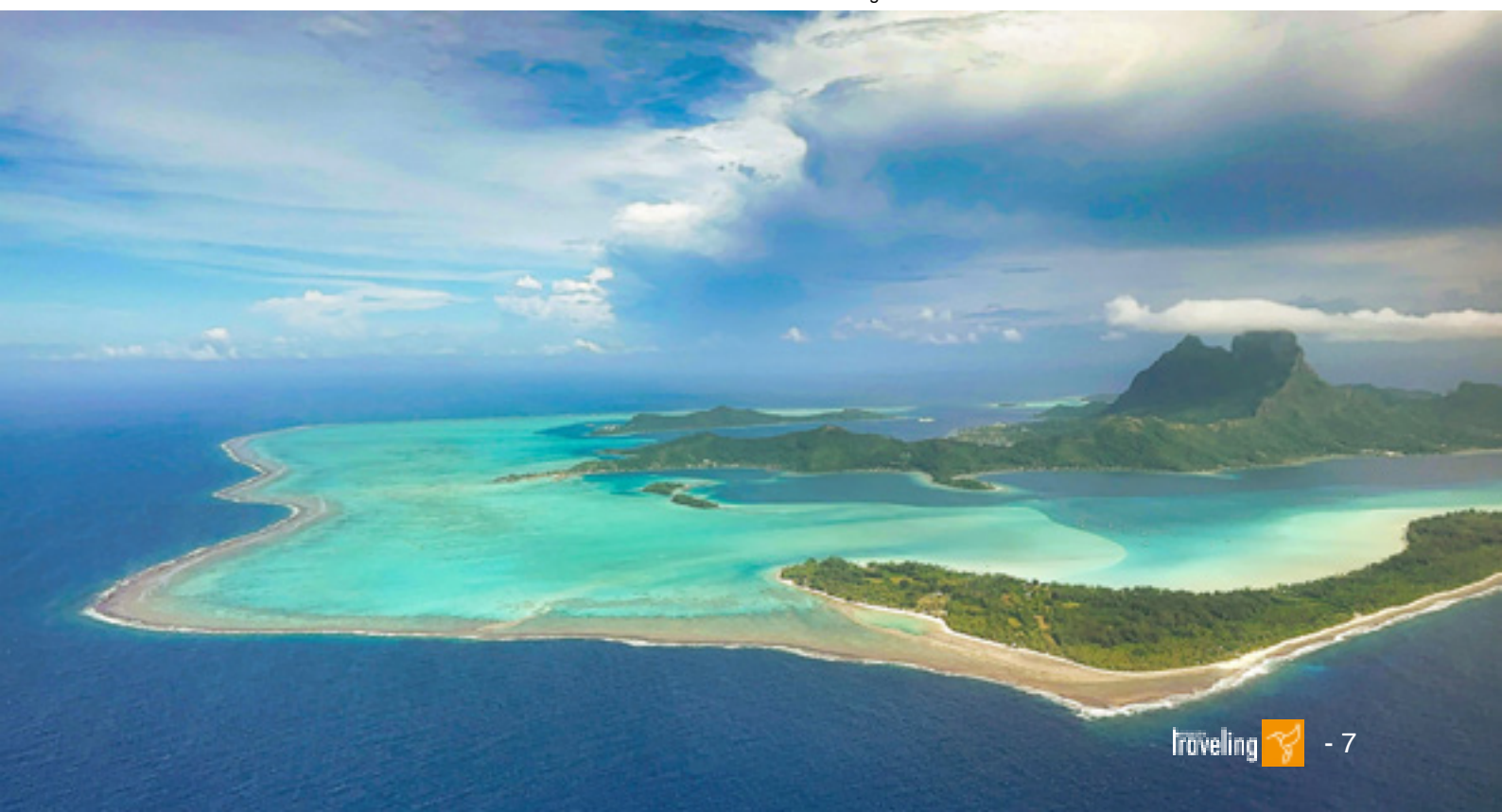
Why visit Bora Bora in December?

While Bora Bora is an attractive destination year-round, visiting in December has its perks. The atmosphere is quieter and more relaxed compared to the high season. Beaches and resorts are less crowded, offering a more intimate and serene experience. Prices also tend to be lower, although they may rise slightly during the Christmas holidays. Tropical rains are common in December, but they rarely last long and often give way to stunning sunsets and even more lush, colorful vegetation.



Diving with manta rays

Aerial view of the lagoon and Mt. Otemanu



9 Must-do activities on your trip to Bora Bora

1. Diving with Manta Rays

Swimming alongside majestic manta rays is an unforgettable experience. These graceful creatures seem to fly underwater, moving with mesmerizing elegance. Whether you're an experienced diver or a beginner snorkeler, the feeling of sharing the water with them is something you'll never forget.

2. Staying in Overwater Bungalows

For many, staying in an overwater bungalow is a dream come true. Sleeping under a starry sky, waking up to the gentle sound of waves, and having direct access to crystal-clear waters from your terrace is a unique experience. You can snorkel right from your deck or simply relax while taking in the stunning views of Mount Otemanu.

3. Hiking with Panoramic Views

If you're an adventure lover, exploring Bora Bora's trails is a must. While the island isn't large, it offers hikes for all skill levels. One of the most accessible trails is Mata Pupu Mountain, which provides breathtaking views of Mount Otemanu and the nearby island of Taha'a. In December, the landscapes transform with a burst of flowers and fruits, making hiking an even more rewarding experience.

4. Visiting a Black Pearl Farm

The black pearl is a symbol of French Polynesia, and Bora Bora is the perfect place to learn about its cultivation and deep cultural significance. Visiting a pearl farm not only allows you to discover the fascinating production process but also gives you the chance to purchase unique, handcrafted jewelry true treasures that will be a perfect memento of your unforgettable trip.

5. Touring the Island by Jeep

A fun way to explore Bora Bora is with a jeep tour. These excursions take you through various villages, beaches, and observation points around the island, including the historic cannons of Point Fitiu, used to defend the island during wartime. From here, you can enjoy spectacular views of the lagoon and neighboring islands.

6. Riding a Jet Ski Around the Lagoon

Exploring the lagoon on a jet ski is an adrenaline-filled experience that lets you discover hidden corners of the island. With Mount Otemanu always in the background, you can stop at secluded beaches for a swim or simply enjoy the thrill of skimming over crystal-clear waters.

7. Snorkeling in Coral Gardens

Beneath Bora Bora's waters lie coral gardens teeming with marine life. From vibrantly colored tropical fish to blacktip reef sharks and rays, every dive is a spectacle. Look for the "I LOVE BORA BORA" message written in the sand as you explore the underwater world.

8. Romantic Sunset Cruise

Sailing through the lagoon in a traditional Polynesian canoe is one of the most romantic experiences you can have in Bora Bora. The sunsets here are truly magical, painting the lagoon in shades of orange, pink, and purple as the sun dips below the horizon. Perfect for a romantic escape.

9. Island Hopping

One of the best ways to explore Bora Bora and its neighboring islands is by renting a catamaran. With an expert captain, you can visit secluded beaches accessible only by boat and explore nearby islands like Taha'a and Raiatea. Catamarans come equipped with everything you need, including kayaks, fishing gear, a kitchen, and a bathroom, so you can enjoy a relaxed and intimate experience.





Events and celebrations in December

Liquid Festival in Bora Bora:

December marks the beginning of the Liquid Festival, an event that celebrates water sports. Surfing, paddling, and kayaking competitions fill the island with energy, while live music from local and international artists creates a festive atmosphere you won't want to miss.

Christmas and New Year's in Bora Bora:

Celebrating the holidays in Bora Bora is a unique experience. On Christmas, local churches hold services in Tahitian and French, and hotels decorate Christmas trees using natural materials like seashells and palm leaves. New Year's Eve is celebrated with parties across the island and fireworks over the lagoon, creating a magical spectacle that can be enjoyed from almost anywhere.





Accommodation on the water

Aerial view of the lagoon



Accommodation: options for all tastes

Bora Bora is renowned for its luxurious overwater bungalows, but there are options to suit every preference. From luxury resorts located on small motus (islets) with views of Mount Otemanu to private villas like Noam Bora Bora, which blend refined architecture with nature, offering a peaceful retreat. If you prefer staying on the main island, there are charming hotels and guesthouses that provide easy access to local life, restaurants, and shops.

Flavors of Bora Bora

The flavors of Polynesia are a delightful blend of French influences and tropical tastes. You can't leave Bora Bora without trying poisson cru, a ceviche-style dish of fish marinated in coconut milk, served with fresh fruits like mango, papaya, and pineapple. Resorts offer culinary experiences ranging from private beachfront dinners to Polynesian-inspired buffets, where you can savor the full culinary richness of the island.



Bloody Mary's bar



Poisson cru, one of the most emblematic dishes of Bora Bora's gastronomy.

Bora Bora is a destination that goes beyond being a tourist destination; it is a sensory experience that combines the serenity of the ocean with the warmth of its people and the majesty of its landscapes. Travelling to Bora Bora in December is the perfect opportunity to enjoy the tranquillity, beauty and festive spirit of the island. Whether you're looking for adventure, romance or simply to disconnect from the world, this corner of the Pacific has something for everyone. So pack your sunglasses, your swimming costume and get ready to discover paradise on earth.

**Bora
Bora**





Louis Armstrong House Museum

The Jazz Haven in Queens, New York City

Text: Hernando Reyes Isaza - hreyes@altum.es
Photos: Altum and Louis Armstrong House Museum

New York holds unique treasures, and in the heart of Queens lies one of the most authentic: the Louis Armstrong House Museum. Beyond the skyscrapers and bustle of Manhattan, on a quiet street in Corona, this home preserves the soul of one of the greats of jazz. Here, Louis and his wife, Lucille, found peace and built a space of memories, music and simplicity. Today, visiting this house is like stepping into the life of a genius, connecting with its essence and history.

Moving away from the skyscrapers and the architectural spectacle of Manhattan, we arrive in the Queens neighborhood to re-connect with the essence of another era, the sounds of jazz, and the architectural simplicity of Corona—a Queens district where Louis Armstrong, the iconic jazz figure, left his mark on the world with his unmistakable music.

It was here, in a modest brick house, that he found something deeper: a home. In 1943, during the height of World War II, Lucille Armstrong, his wife, purchased this house, convinced that Louis needed a space to offer him peace, far from the constant touring and bustling stages.

Despite already being a jazz legend, Armstrong chose this modest, diverse community over the luxurious neighborhoods of the city. His decision surprised many, but for Louis, it was perfect. The neighbors treated him like one of their own, and he, a lover of simplicity, cherished the warmth of his community.

From the very first moment, this house became his refuge—a place where he could simply be “Louis” and re-connect with his roots.



A Jazz group in front of the façade of the LAHM Center.





A sanctuary of memories and Music

Upon crossing the threshold of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, you enter a world where every detail evokes the essence of the artist.

The hallways, adorned with photographs of friends and colleagues, are filled with memories that connect every corner to unforgettable moments in Armstrong's life. In the foyer, vibrant colors reflect the energy and spirit of jazz, while the bedroom and living room, decorated with black-and-white photos, evoke the music-filled nights in Harlem and his days of global tours.

In his study, which today preserves his tape recorders, reels, and sheet music, Louis spent hours reflecting and recording personal monologues. These tapes, still carefully preserved, reveal an intimate side of Armstrong, where he reflects on profound topics and shares anecdotes, creating a sincere and human portrait of the man behind the trumpet. Here, the genius of jazz found inspiration and left his legacy recorded for posterity.

A garden of peace

One of the most special places in the house is the garden, where Louis Armstrong spent long hours tending to plants and flowers.

This space, still lovingly cared for, retains the same vibrancy and color it had during Louis's time.



LAHM Center façade



Lucille often recalled how he devoted the same love and attention to his plants as he did to his music, meticulously nurturing every detail with care and patience.

Today, the garden is a tranquil retreat for visitors—a pocket of nature in the heart of Queens that reflects the more serene side of the artist, someone who found solace in gardening as a way to escape and connect with life's simple, beautiful moments.

The Kitchen: A Time Capsule

The kitchen in the house is a true time capsule, designed by Lucille in 1970 with a futuristic style for its era. Featuring stainless steel panels and modern appliances of the time, it reflects her passion for functionality and contemporary aesthetics.

Although Louis wasn't much of a cook, he enjoyed watching Lucille prepare New Orleans dishes like gumbo and jambalaya, which reminded him of his roots. Today, the kitchen remains perfectly preserved, transporting visitors back to the 1970s.

This space captures not only the style of the era but also Lucille's love for detail and her dedication to making their home a truly special place. The cupboard hinges, crafted from the lids of various pianos, are a subtle detail that almost no one notices yet speaks volumes about the thoughtfulness and creativity woven into their home.



Photos of the Louis Armstrong Museum



Different rooms of the house

Expanding the Legacy

Across from the house museum stands the Louis Armstrong Center, inaugurated in 2022. This space complements the museum experience, offering a broader view of Armstrong's legacy. The center houses the Louis Armstrong Archives Collection, which includes personal recordings, photographs, letters, and documents carefully preserved by Armstrong himself throughout his life.

Among the treasures in this collection are audio tapes where Louis reflects on profound topics and shares anecdotes that reveal his humor and perspective on life. The center also features interactive exhibits on the evolution of jazz and Armstrong's role as a trailblazer. Visitors can attend workshops, live concerts, and talks, making this space a cultural hub for the Queens neighborhood and New York City at large.

Louis Armstrong's Footprint in New York

The Louis Armstrong House Museum is not just a tribute to a jazz legend but a symbol of his enduring legacy in New York and his impact on the culture of Queens. The Corona community has embraced this place as a cornerstone of its identity, and for many visitors, the house museum is more than just a tourist stop. It's a connection to the man behind the music, someone who maintained his humility and warmth despite his fame.





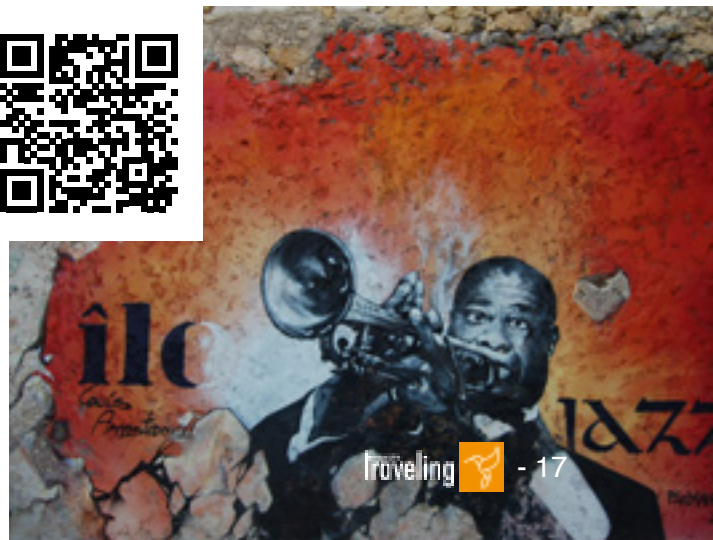
Louis Armstrong's office
One of his trumpets in the museum

Each year, the museum welcomes hundreds of musicians and jazz enthusiasts seeking to understand Armstrong's spirit within the context of his daily life. For New York, this site is a reminder that the greatest stories aren't always found on the brightest stages but in the simple spaces where authenticity thrives. Walking through his home, one comes to understand that jazz, like Armstrong himself, is a celebration of life, community, and humility.

Immersing Yourself in the Life of a Legend

A visit to the Louis Armstrong House Museum is more than just a tour; it's an immersive experience that invites you to explore the simpler side of one of the greatest geniuses of the 20th century. Here, visitors can feel the rhythm of the city through Armstrong's eyes, connect with his story, and understand how the city and its people shaped his life and music.

This museum is a hidden gem of New York, preserving the warmth and humility of Louis Armstrong and offering a glimpse into a world where jazz, simplicity, and community exist in perfect harmony. Upon leaving, visitors take away not just a piece of jazz history but also a profound connection to the essence of an indomitable city, where life and music resonate in every corner.





Derry-Coleraine

One of the world's most beautiful train journeys

Text: Clara Serrano Vega
Photos: Archive and Visit Ireland



Derry City Walls

The train ride from Derry-Londonderry to Coleraine is more than just a trip; it's a visual experience that captures the essence of Ireland's northern coast. This route, celebrated as one of the most scenic in the world, follows the course of the River Foyle and reveals rolling green landscapes that eventually meet the Atlantic Ocean.

Over 40 minutes, the train traverses the Causeway Coastal Route, famed for its geological formations, dramatic cliffs, and pristine beaches. Described by Michael Palin as "one of the most beautiful train journeys in the world," this ride has become an icon of railway tourism.

History and Culture of Derry-Londonderry

Derry-Londonderry, often called "The Walled City," boasts a fascinating history that dates back to the 6th century, when it was founded as a monastic settlement by Saint Columba. Originally known as Doire, meaning "oak" in Irish, the city has been the backdrop for numerous historical events that have deeply shaped its identity.

In the 17th century, Derry became a focal point during the Ulster Plantation, a plan initiated by King James I to settle English and Scottish Protestant colonists in northern Ireland. This transformative period led to the construction of the city's iconic walls between 1613 and 1618.

Stretching approximately 1.5 kilometers (about 1 mile), these walls were designed to protect the settlers from potential attacks. They remain the only city walls in Ireland never to have been breached, earning Derry the nickname "The Maiden City."



The Siege of Derry and 'The Derry Apprentices'.

The Siege of Derry in 1689 was a pivotal moment in the city's history and the Williamite War in Ireland. When Jacobite forces loyal to King James II approached the city, 13 young apprentices made the bold decision to close the gates and block their entry, initiating a siege that lasted 105 days. Despite harsh conditions, the defenders held their ground until relief ships broke the blockade, ensuring Derry's survival. This act of courage is commemorated annually by the Apprentice Boys, a fraternity dedicated to preserving the memory of those events.

In more recent history, Derry became a focal point during The Troubles, a sociopolitical conflict that divided Northern Ireland between the 1960s and 1990s. In 1969, the city was the site of the Battle of the Bogside, a series of riots that marked the beginning of a prolonged period of conflict. The most tragic event occurred in 1972 with Bloody Sunday, when British soldiers opened fire on unarmed demonstrators during a civil rights march, resulting in the deaths of 13 people.

Heritage and tourism

Hoy, Derry-Londonderry es una ciudad que ha encontrado la paz. Derry-Lon-

donderry has reinvented itself as a tourist destination rich in history and culture. Visitors can walk along its ancient walls, exploring the seven historic gates and restored cannons, including the famous "Roaring Meg," which offer a tangible connection to the city's martial past. Other landmarks include St. Columb's Cathedral, the oldest of its kind in Ireland, built in 1633, and the Guildhall, a majestic building featuring stunning stained glass windows that narrate the city's story.

Derry is also renowned for its vibrant cultural life, with highlights such as the Halloween Festival,



Peace Bridge of Derry

celebrated as one of the best in the world. Additionally, the Peace Bridge, inaugurated in 2011, symbolizes reconciliation between the city's nationalist and unionist communities, standing as a testament to the progress made toward peace.

The history of Derry-Londonderry is a powerful reminder of resilience and transformation, offering a blend of a turbulent past and a hopeful present that continues to attract visitors from around the world.

Route to Coleraine and natural wonders

The journey continues along the River Foyle, heading north until it reaches the coast. As the train moves forward, passengers are treated to panoramic views of the Inishowen Peninsula and Lough Foyle Bay, where rolling green fields meet the deep blue of the ocean.

Derry Cathedral





The Temple of Mussenden
The Giant's Causeway

From Londonderry, the train gently winds along the River Foyle, unveiling landscapes that seem lifted from a painting, where each curve reveals another glimpse of the majestic beauty of Northern Ireland



Coleraine, the final destination, is a historic town located in County Londonderry in Northern Ireland. Strategically positioned on the banks of the River Bann, it is renowned for its ancient heritage, Georgian architecture, and proximity to some of the region's most iconic tourist destinations. Coleraine has been a hub of human activity for thousands of years, making it one of Ireland's oldest settlements, with archaeological evidence dating back to the Stone Age.

History and development

The history of Coleraine stretches back more than 7,000 years, to when the first Neolithic settlements were established near the River Bann. Its name derives from the Irish Cúil Raithin, meaning "nook of the ferns," reflecting the natural landscape that surrounds the town. For centuries, Coleraine has been an important trading hub, thanks to its strategic location near the sea and its river connection, which facilitated the transport of goods and economic development.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Coleraine experienced significant growth, particularly in the textile and linen industries. The expansion of railway connections and the modernization of its port further fueled its development, transforming it into a vibrant commercial center. Today, the town remains an important crossroads for commerce and education, bolstered by the presence of the University of Ulster, which attracts students from across Ireland and beyond.

What can't you miss?

Coleraine is an excellent starting point for exploring the Causeway Coastal Route, which features natural wonders such as the Giant's Causeway, a unique geological formation and UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its hexagonal basalt columns. The town is also close to other prominent attractions, including the **Carriack-a-Rede Rope Bridge**, **Dunluce Castle**, and the pristine beaches of **Portrush** and **Portstewart**.

The town center of Coleraine offers a peaceful and picturesque setting, with streets lined by historic buildings, local shops, and cozy cafés. Visitors can enjoy leisurely walks along the banks of the River Bann, providing a serene atmosphere to explore the more relaxed side of Northern Ireland.

Coleraine's proximity to the coast makes it a strategic base for exploring iconic attractions along the Causeway Coastal Route, such as the renowned Giant's Causeway. This remarkable site, with its hexagonal basalt formations, was created by volcanic eruptions over 60 million years ago.

Castlerock and Its Attractions

Along the journey, a notable stop is **Castlerock**, offering access to the stunning **Mussenden Temple**. Built in 1785 as a library inspired by the Temple of Vesta in Rome, the temple sits precariously close to the edge of a cliff, providing breathtaking views. This iconic building, set against the backdrop of Benone Strand, creates one of the most photogenic scenes in Northern Ireland. The train passes so close to the beach that passengers can feel the sea breeze as they travel.

The train also provides easy connections to other key locations along the Causeway Coastal Route. From Coleraine, visitors can reach **Bushmills**, home to the world's oldest licensed whiskey distillery, and the **Carriack-a-Rede Rope Bridge**, an exhilarating experience that lets you cross a narrow bridge suspended high above the sea. Additionally, the region offers views of distant islands, towering cliffs, and charming coastal villages that invite exploration.

This journey is undoubtedly a window into the heart of Northern Ireland's north coast, showcasing its history, culture, and natural beauty in a uniquely accessible way.



The clock tower of Coleraine town hall



A Getaway to the Christmas Markets of Berlín y Dresde

Text: Rosario Alonso **Photos:** Jose A- Muñoz

The European history of Christmas markets is deeply rooted in the medieval era. It dates back to 1296 with Vienna's Dezembermarkt, originally established as a place for people to stock up on essentials to survive the harsh winter months.

By 1348, in Saxony, Germany, this type of market began to take on a more Christmas-oriented character, offering products associated with the holiday season. Over time, carols and dances were introduced, adding a more festive atmosphere.

Indeed, it is Germany, and more specifically Dresden, that is considered the birthplace of the historic Christmas markets. German history itself, particularly Lutheran Protestantism, played a significant role in fostering these traditions. They were also utilized for propaganda purposes during the Nazi era (in 1933, the Nuremberg Christmas Market was revived to promote German patriotism and social unity) and later by East Germany as a way to meet public needs.

By the 1980s and 1990s, Christmas markets began to spread beyond German borders. Interestingly, they adapted their culture to new locations, replicating their genuine traditions, including culinary specialties.

Today, Christmas markets transform Europe's most prominent cities for an entire month each year. They are no longer confined to iconic squares but can be found in a variety of settings. Beyond selling handcrafted goods, often locally or regionally sourced, they now include all kinds of entertainment and seasonal attractions.

Now, let us delve into two German cities, separated by just 200 kilometers, that are renowned for their Christmas markets. These cities are worth visiting not only for their festive markets but also for their captivating history and rich cultural heritage.



Berlin

Berlin transforms into a true fairy tale during the Christmas season, as its iconic Christmas markets adorn the city's squares and parks. With its blend of tradition and innovation, Berlin has become one of the top destinations for enjoying this magical experience.

Berlin's Christmas markets are inspired by ancient German traditions, combining local commerce, craftsmanship, and a festive atmosphere. One of the oldest markets, the Spandau Christmas Market, stands out as one of the largest and most traditional fairs in the city. While many markets have embraced modernity, some preserve their medieval roots, such as the Berliner Weihnachtszeit, which recreates a historic Old Berlin village with a mix of culture and traditional festivities.

In 2024, Berlin's Christmas markets will once again offer a variety of unique settings that blend culture, history, and entertainment. Here are some of the highlights:

Weihnachtszauber in Gendarmenmarkt (Bebelplatz)

Traditionally located in Gendarmenmarkt, this Christmas market has been temporarily moved to Bebelplatz due to restoration work. The Weihnachtszauber is renowned for its elegant atmosphere and focus on fine craftsmanship and high-quality gastronomy. What makes this market so special is its blend of traditional stalls and live performances, featuring choirs, acrobats, and musicians. Set against the stunning backdrop of the State Opera, this popular and exclusive Berlin Christmas market attracts over 600,000 visitors each year.

Gourmet Food: This market stands out for its heated tents, where visitors can enjoy gourmet cuisine in a festive setting. From traditional German dishes to international options, the culinary offerings are one of its highlights.

Family-Friendly Atmosphere: While it's one of the busiest markets, it's recommended to visit during weekdays when it's less crowded. Additionally, admission is free for children under 12, and just €2 for everyone else, making it an excellent choice for families.

Dates: From 25th November to 31st December 2024. The market remains open until 11:00 pm on Fridays and Saturdays.



Charlottenburg Palace Market

Set against the majestic backdrop of Charlottenburg Palace, this market offers a truly unique experience thanks to its stunning historical setting. Wooden chalets and festive lights make this one of the most romantic Christmas markets in Berlin. Following in the footsteps of the Hohenzollern family, the palace's former residents, special tours are offered during the Christmas market to provide insight into this illustrious dynasty.

Attractions for Children: Beyond the artisanal and food stalls, this market features two small carousels and a miniature Ferris wheel, delighting younger visitors.

Handcrafted Items: This market specialises in handmade Christmas items, including intricately carved wooden ornaments and unique decorations, making it an ideal spot for finding one-of-a-kind gifts.

Dates: From 27th November to 31st December, with extended hours until 10:00 pm.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS IN BERLIN AND DRESDEN



Alexanderplatz Market

If there's a market that perfectly blends tradition with modernity, it's the one at Alexanderplatz. With the TV Tower as its backdrop, this market is one of the most iconic stops for anyone visiting Berlin during Christmas. Wooden stalls adorned with lights transform the square into a winter village, filled with the scent of roasted chestnuts, mulled wine, and Thuringian sausages.

Ice Rink: A standout feature of this market is its large ice

rink, which encircles the market's centre. Another highlight is its giant Christmas pyramid (Erzgebirge), illuminated by over 5,000 lights.

Fun for All: With attractions like carousels and slides, this market is perfect for families and young visitors. On weekends, live music performances add to the festive atmosphere.

Dates: From 25th November to 26th December, with free entry.



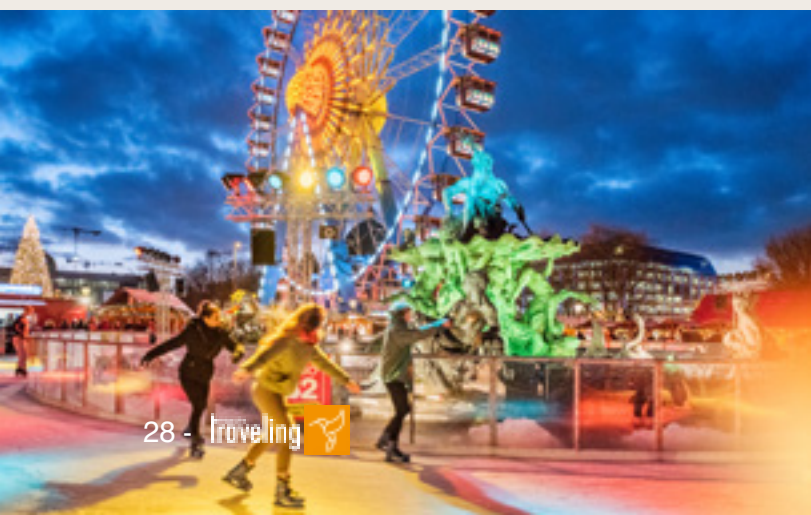
Berliner Weihnachtszeit en el Rotes Rathaus

Este mercado se encuentra entre el Ayuntamiento Rojo y la Iglesia St. Marienkirche y es conocido por su recreación de fachadas y casas berlinesas de 1900, siendo ideal para los amantes de la nostalgia. Berliner Weihnachtszeit combina la historia de Berlín con la modernidad; un mercado medieval alrededor de la mencionada iglesia con puestos que sirven pan "de espuma" medieval e hidromiel caliente en jarras de barro, ofrecen al visitante una experiencia que recuerda a los mercados navideños de antaño.

Noria Gigante: Uno de los principales atractivos es la noria de 50 metros, desde la que se pueden obtener vistas panorámicas de la ciudad, incluida la Puerta de Brandeburgo y una pista de hielo circular.

Actividades para Niños: Este mercado cuenta con un tren que recorre un "bosque encantado" y con la visita diaria de Papá Noel, quien sobrevuela el mercado en su trineo tres veces al día.

Fechas: Desde el 25 de noviembre hasta el 30 de diciembre de 2024.



Market in Spandau Old Town

This market is one of the largest and most traditional in Berlin. Situated in Spandau Old Town, its medieval atmosphere and extensive range of stalls make it the perfect choice for those seeking a more authentic and less touristy experience.

Wednesdays are family days, with Santa Claus's visit and a variety of special offers being the main highlights.

Medieval Market: Around St. Nicholas Church, this market features a recreation of a medieval marketplace complete with artisan stalls and live entertainment.

Dates: From 25th November to 22nd December 2024.



Otras Opciones y Novedades en 2024

In addition to its more well-known markets, Berlin boasts a variety of smaller and alternative options that offer unique experiences:

Lucia Christmas Market: Located in the Kulturbrauerei, this market has a Scandinavian focus, featuring specialties from Finland and Sweden, along with traditional Christmas carols. It's the perfect choice for those looking for a different kind of market.

Heissa Holzmarkt: An alternative market in the creative Holzmarkt district, renowned for its bohemian atmosphere and innovative food options. Established in 2012, it's a creative market with various stalls set along the banks of the River Spree.

Christmas Garden: A spectacular light show at the Botanical Garden, offering a magical walk through breathtaking illuminations and light sculptures.

Lucia Christmas Market - © Gill





Dresden

Dresden, renowned for its rich history and stunning Baroque architecture, transforms into a magical setting during the Christmas season thanks to its iconic markets. With a tradition spanning over 500 years, these markets offer a unique festive experience, blending culture, gastronomy, and entertainment.

Strolling through its streets feels like stepping into a winter fairy tale, with the air filled with the scent of mulled wine and spiced sweets. Local artisans proudly display their creations, from handmade Christmas ornaments to intricately carved wooden toys, while traditional music and warm lights wrap visitors in an atmosphere of pure Christmas enchantment.

Striezelmarkt: Germany's Oldest Christmas Market

The Striezelmarkt is undoubtedly the star among Dresden's Christmas markets and one of the oldest in Germany, with a history dating back to 1434. This market takes its name from the "Striezel," a variation of Dresden's famous Christmas cake, the Stollen, and is located in the historic Altmarkt square.

Dates: From 27th November to 24th December 2024.

Opening Hours: 10:00 am to 9:00 pm, with reduced hours of 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on the 24th.

Main Attractions: The Striezelmarkt is renowned for its impressive 14.6-metre-tall Christmas pyramid, the tallest in the world, and its giant candle arch (Schwibbogen), a hallmark of the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) region. Visitors can also enjoy a historic Ferris wheel, live performances, and a wide range of traditional regional products.

This market stands out for its blend of Saxon traditions, craftsmanship, and a charming atmosphere, making it an unmissable destination during the Christmas season.



Neumarkt and th Frauenkirche Frauenkirche Christmas Market

Another major highlight of Dresden is the Christmas market at Neumarkt square, located next to the iconic Frauenkirche, one of the city's most important landmarks. This market offers a more intimate and traditional atmosphere compared to the Striezelmarkt, providing a calmer yet equally captivating experience.

Dates: From 27th November 2024 to 5th January 2025.

Features: This market focuses on traditional crafts and Christmas decorations. The wooden stalls showcase local products such as hand-carved toys, blown glass ornaments, and handcrafted candles. Additionally, Santa Claus makes an appearance every afternoon around 4:00 pm to delight the little ones.

Fun Fact: The market features a large nativity scene, and if you're lucky, you might catch spontaneous live music performances.



Medieval Market at Stallhof Castle

For history enthusiasts, the medieval Christmas market at Stallhof Castle is an absolute must. Set within the former royal stables, this market offers a unique experience, transporting visitors back to the Middle Ages with minimal electric lighting and no plastics, creating an authentic atmosphere.

Features: The market hosts over 50 artisans showcasing their products made using traditional techniques. Offerings include tools, medieval clothing, and decorative items from that era.

Fun Fact: Unlike other markets, stalls here are illuminated with candles and torches, providing a truly immersive experience.

Augustusmarkt: The International Market

Located along Hauptstraße, on the opposite side of the River Elbe, the Augustusmarkt is Dresden's second-largest Christmas market and is celebrated for its international flair. Here, visitors can discover products from various cultures, ranging from Swedish cuisine to Finnish handicrafts.

Dates: From 27th November 2024 to 5th January 2025.

Attractions: In addition to its international culinary offerings, the Augustusmarkt features a large Ferris wheel, providing panoramic views of the city.

Fun Fact: This market is known for being less crowded than the more central ones, making it an excellent choice for those seeking a more relaxed experience.

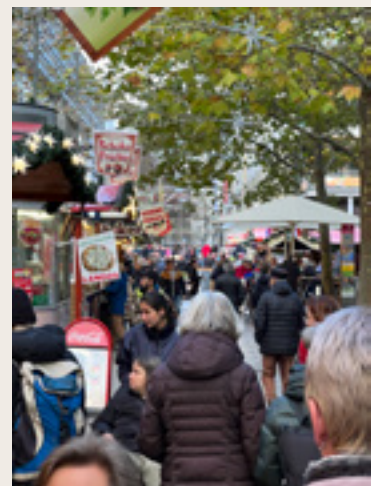
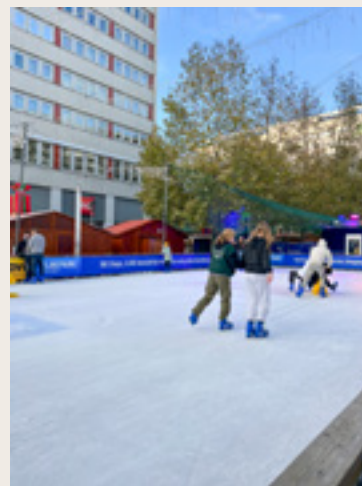


The Winter Light Market in Winter Light Market in Prager Strasse

In the city's commercial centre, Prager Strasse hosts the Winter Lights Market, renowned for its towering 15-metre Christmas tree and a focus on illuminated decorations. This market is particularly popular with tourists due to its proximity to Dresden's main shopping areas.

Dates: From 28th November to 23rd December 2024.

Features: In addition to its lights and decorations, the market includes an ice skating rink, two historic carousels, and a wide variety of shopping and dining options.



Special Events and Traditions

Dresden is not only famous for its Christmas markets but also for the festivities that accompany them. One of the most notable events is the Stollenfest, celebrated on 9th December at the Striezelmarkt in honour of the famous Stollen cake. During this festival, a giant Stollen measuring several metres is paraded through the city before being shared among visitors.

Many of the markets also feature live performances and concerts, perfect for the whole family. For instance, the Striezelmarkt offers a rich daily programme that includes Christmas choirs, puppet theatre, and activities for children.



CHRISTMAS MARKETS IN BERLIN AND DRESDEN



Christmas Garden Dresden-Christmas Garden Dresden

In the stunning grounds of Pillnitz Castle, a vast circular trail, imaginatively and artistically designed, offers visitors the chance to enjoy magical light displays accompanied by the most delightful musical ballads. Running from 21st November 2024 to 12th January 2025, this enchanting experience promises a captivating couple of hours for all who attend.



Tips for Maximum Enjoyment

To make the most of your visit to the Christmas markets in Berlin and Dresden, keep the following tips in mind:

Avoid the Crowds: Visit the markets during the week and in the early opening hours to enjoy a more relaxed atmosphere.

Try the Local Cuisine: Don't miss out on tasting Glühwein (spiced mulled wine), Bratwurst (German sausage), or festive treats like Lebkuchen (gingerbread).

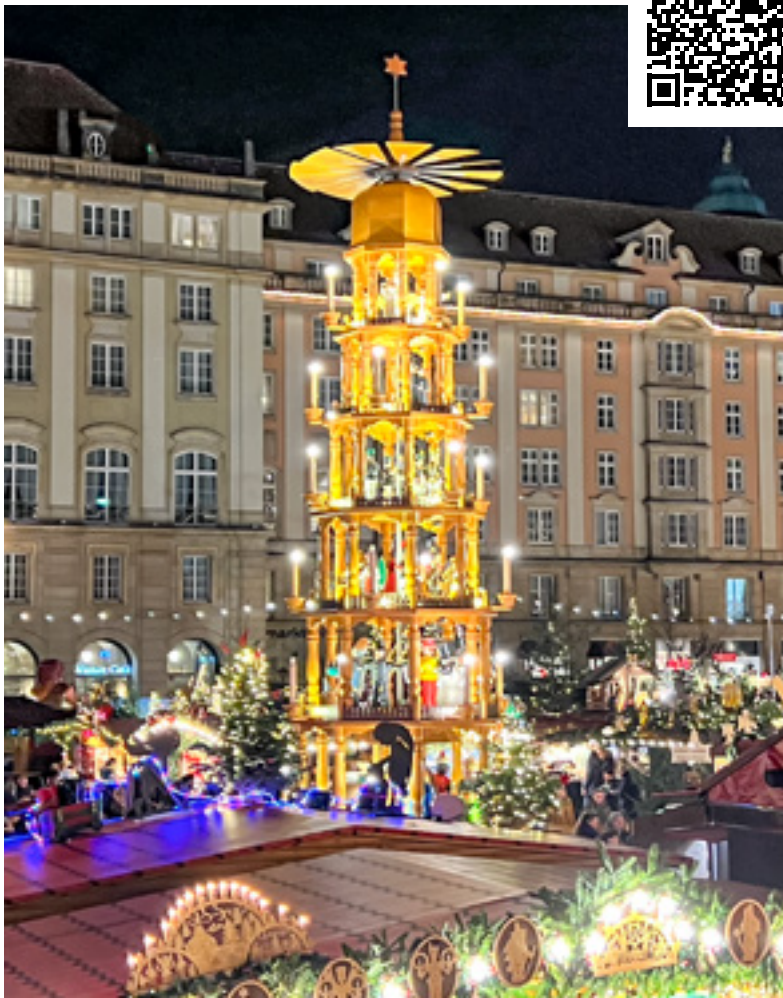
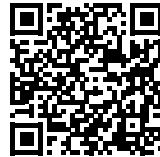
Dress Appropriately: December in Berlin can be extremely cold, so make sure to bundle up. A warm coat, gloves, and a hat are essential for a comfortable experience.

Use Public Transport: It's advisable to use the tram and bus systems to travel between markets, especially during peak hours, as parking is limited.



Visit Berlin

Visit Dresden



Curiosities and What's new in 2024

This year, Berlin's Christmas markets have adapted to the new environmental realities. Organisers have introduced various sustainability measures, such as reducing energy consumption—a significant step in an era of increasing environmental awareness.

Meanwhile, the popularity of LGBTIQ+ events remains strong at Christmas Avenue, a market that celebrates diversity and inclusion in Berlin's iconic Nollendorfplatz.



Ibiza, Mediterranean Essence beyond summer

Text and photos: Joaquín del Palacio - joaquinigeografo@gmail.com

La The term White Island was first attributed to Ibiza by the painter Santiago Rusiñol in 1912, during his first visit. Approximately two millennia earlier, the Greeks had encountered a more natural and verdant island, naming it and Formentera the Pityuses, due to the abundance of pine trees covering their landscapes.

But beyond these, Ibiza offers an endless palette of colours and shades: punk singer Nina Hagen famously celebrated her wedding on Benirrás Beach with a three-day party; ageing hippies who arrived in the '60s still live on the island, flowers in their hair; countless wealthy and famous individuals own mansions here; and internationally renowned musicians come seeking its charm to inspire their creativity. A heterogeneous, vibrant, and captivating island

Discreet, except for pirates

Ibiza covers just 220 square miles, but its island charm will embed itself in your soul, from its seafloors adorned with posidonia meadows teeming with fish to the endless vistas from its highest peak, Sa Talaia, which rises to a modest 1,558 feet. Its spatial scale may be small, and its appearance understated, but its magic is immeasurable. Walking through a pine forest in the interior feels like entering an infinite woodland, yet no point on the island is more than 5.6 miles from the sea.

The Route of the White Churches reveals much of its history. Many peoples and settlers arrived on its shores, beginning with the Carthaginians, who founded the capital in 654 BC.

And everyone, until 1958, when the first plane full of tourists arrived, had reached the island by crossing the Mediterranean, just as the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs had done centuries earlier... and, of course, the pirates. It was from these pirates that people sought refuge within the fortified white churches. Some, like the Church of San Jorge, remain crowned with battlements, while the Church of Santa Eulalia del Río (the only river in the Balearic Islands) is perched atop the Puig de Missa, standing like a fortress on guard against potential landings marked by black flags.

By the seashore

Ibiza's coastline holds most of the charms that captivate the world. Few places so small have fascinated so many. Beaches and cliffs, coves and rocky outcrops, islets and caves create a stunningly diverse shore that shines with beauty, even at sunset or under the moonlight. For those who wish to enjoy the sunrise year-round, there is always a coastal hotel perfectly positioned so the sun can wake you as it reaches your pillow.

Much of the immense walls ordered by Philip II to defend Dalt Vila, the old quarter of the capital, were built using materials from the western

coast, specifically from Sa Pedrera, a unique spot also known as Atlantis. This massive quarry transformed the shoreline into peculiar stone pools, best accessed from the sea—ideally aboard a llaüt, the traditional Ibizan boat.

Sailing along the northern cliffs provides access to the Can Marçà Cave. Ibiza holds secrets even underground. This beautiful grotto still reveals storage areas and the markings smugglers painted to navigate the subterranean labyrinth.

Each day, sunset is a spectacle from the western beaches, where crowds seem to gather to watch the sun play hide-and-seek with the silhouette of Es Vedrà, the mystical vertical islet. Many also gather at Cala Conta to marvel as the shadows of rocky outcrops stretch into the evening, while lobster fishermen return to port among a flurry of selfies, videos, and admiration.

Lobster fishing





Church of Ntra. Sra. del Carmen

Coastal paths



Vineyards

Local heritage

Nature and history have blessed the island with many treasures, some of which were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1999: Dalt Vila, the Phoenician settlement of Sa Caleta, the Puig des Molins necropolis, and the underwater posidonia meadows, also found in the marine section of the Ses Salines Natural Park. This park, shared with Formentera, also includes the Roman-origin salt flats in its terrestrial section.

In addition to producing highly prized salt, Ibiza boasts impeccable taste. It serves as a workshop of rich gastronomic products that grace tables with a variety of delicacies: desserts like flaó or greixonera, enjoyed with a café caleta; grilled sobrasada; or excellent and diverse rice dishes perfectly paired with local wines. Among the fish, the raor (pearly razorfish) stands out—a maritime delicacy available for only a few weeks at the end of summer.

Those who arrived five or six decades ago to live in communes sometimes settled in places without specific addresses. To send or receive mail from their families, Bar Anita installed mailboxes for them. Some say this very bar inspired members of Pink Floyd to compose the song "Ibiza Bar." And continuing with bars and art, Bar Costa offers its famous sandwiches alongside a curious art collection, as the painter Andrés Monreal sometimes paid his bills there with paintings.

World-renowned are Ibiza's endless parties on beaches and in nightclubs. Some are spectacularly grand, while others offer an authentic trip back in time. At Las Dalias, which began as a genuine hippie market, you can now shop, eat, dance, and travel to the past by attending sixties-style music concerts around a bonfire, surrounded by long-haired, flower-adorned dancers illuminated by the flames. Small it may be, but Ibiza holds it all.



Handbag stall at the Dalias Market



Ses Salines, Ibiza



Segura Balneario

A Refuge of Tranquility and Wellness in Teruel

Text: Rosario Alonso - Photography: Jose A. Muñoz

Jacuzzi overlooking the outdoor terrace



Nestled deep in the province of Teruel, Segura Balneario is a haven of tranquility and wellness, surrounded by a unique natural environment and a history that dates back centuries. This destination combines high-quality thermal treatments with an atmosphere that invites complete relaxation amidst mountainous landscapes and the serene flow of the Aguasvivas River.

Perfect for those seeking to relieve tension and rejuvenate body and mind, the spa offers a wide range of services: from thermal baths and therapeutic massages to specialised skin care treatments. The decor and facilities, inspired by an ethnic style, add a distinctive touch that enhances the relaxation experience.



One of the treatment rooms



Ethnic details in the hotel lobby and underneath one of the hotel rooms

Located in the charming municipality of Segura de Baños, in the province of Teruel, Segura Balneario is one of those places where time seems to stand still. Surrounded by a unique natural environment and steeped in history, this spa is the perfect destination for those seeking rest and wellness in a serene and beautiful setting.

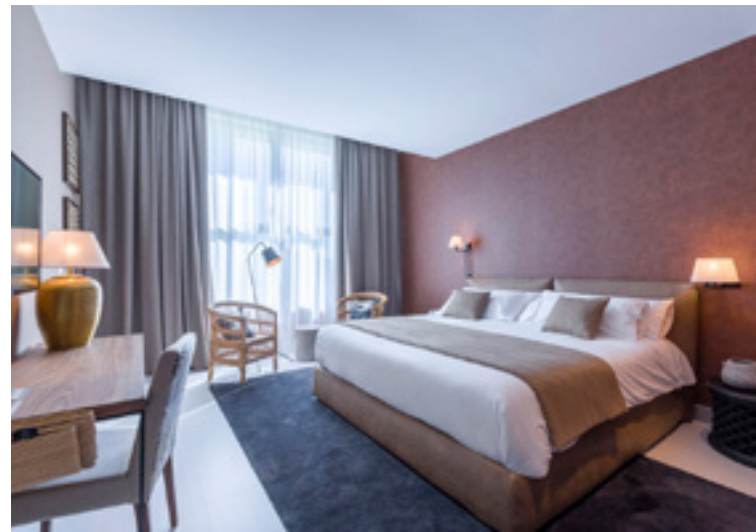
An Exceptional Natural Setting

Situated in the Cuencas Mineras region, between the San Just and Cucalón mountain ranges, this spa is approximately 50 miles from Teruel and 62 miles from Zaragoza, making it an accessible retreat for residents of Aragón and beyond. Located in the valley of the Aguasvivas River, it is surrounded by mountains and nature that encourage hiking, bird-watching, and a complete escape from urban noise. The area's dry and mild climate makes it an ideal refuge year-round, particularly in spring and autumn, when the landscape bursts into vibrant or earthy hues.

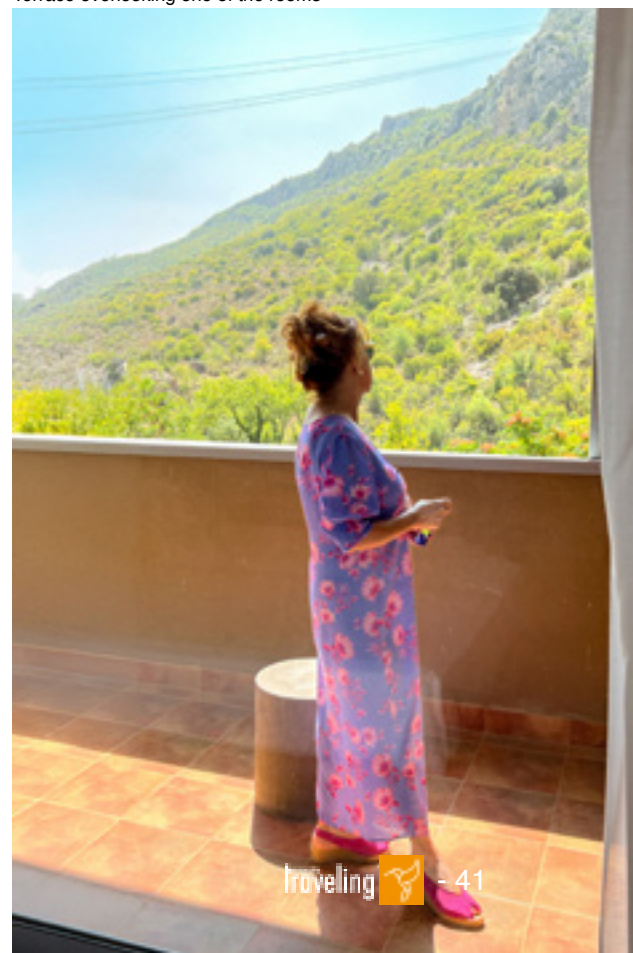
The Healing Properties of Thermal Waters

The spa's greatest treasure is its thermal waters, which emerge from underground at a constant temperature of 73°F. These low-mineralised waters, characterised by their sulfurous and bicarbonate-rich composition, are abundant in minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and sodium. This makes them ideal for hydrotherapy treatments.

These waters boast anti-inflammatory, relaxing, and regenerative properties, recommended for addressing respiratory, muscular, and joint issues, including rheumatism and arthritis.



Terrace overlooking one of the rooms



Additionally, the high sulfur content in the waters has a toning effect on the skin and improves circulation, making it perfect for wellness and rejuvenation treatments.

Facilities and Services

Balneario Segura offers a wide range of services focused on the well-being of its visitors. Among its facilities are thermal water pools, saunas, steam baths, and a variety of hydrotherapy treatments, including:

Thermal Baths: Immersion in the thermal pools provides deep relaxation, easing tension and soothing muscles.

High-Pressure Jets: These high-pressure water jets help alleviate muscle contractions and improve circulation, making them ideal for those with physical ailments.

Therapeutic Massages: A team of specialised physiotherapists offers massages that complement the effects of the thermal waters, helping to reduce stress and release tension.

Parafango Wraps: This thermal mud treatment has purifying and detoxifying properties, perfect for improving skin elasticity and eliminating toxins.

Facial and Body Treatments: From exfoliation to wraps, the spa's beauty treatments leverage the minerals in the water to revitalise the skin.

A Place with History

The history of the spa dates back centuries. In 1716, a sanctuary dedicated to San Ramón was built, followed by the addition of the Casa de Rincón next to the hermitage. The first thermal spa was not established until the construction of the Casa de la Fuente, which featured four baths and a guesthouse.

The current building, renovated in 2017, preserves its historic charm while incorporating all modern comforts. The decor, inspired by authentic African crafts, adds an exotic touch that transports visitors, enriching their experience in a unique and incomparable historical setting.

Surroundings and Tourist Activities

The area surrounding the spa is ideal for nature lovers and active tourism enthusiasts. Recommended activities include hiking, cycling routes, and exploring the

local flora and fauna. Additionally, nearby cultural and historical landmarks offer further opportunities for discovery:

Cuevas de Cañart: A charming medieval village known for its architecture, declared a Site of Cultural Interest.

Old Town of Belchite: A town left in ruins since the Spanish Civil War, offering a unique experience for history enthusiasts.

Escucha Mining Museum: A one-of-a-kind experience where visitors descend into a coal mine and explore its tunnels 656 feet (200 metres) underground.

Aliaga Geological Park: A site of great geological value, allowing visitors to learn about Earth's history through its unique rock formations.

Ruta del Silencio: Perfect for those seeking absolute peace, this route passes through nearly deserted villages and offers pure, unspoiled nature.

Local Gastronomy: The spa's culinary offering is rooted in traditional Aragonese cuisine, featuring fresh, locally sourced ingredients. At its restaurant, guests can savour typical dishes such as ternasco de Aragón (roast lamb), trout, local cured meats, and traditional migas aragonesas.

The chef blends traditional techniques with modern touches, adapting the menu to the seasons to make the most of fresh ingredients. The restaurant also boasts a selection of regional wines and a seven-course tasting menu that changes with the seasons.

Charming lodging

The spa offers 46 rooms decorated in an ethnic style, perfectly aligned with the aesthetic of the common areas, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. Each room is equipped with modern amenities, including a television, Wi-Fi, heating, and air conditioning, ensuring a comfortable stay regardless of the season. Accommodation options include spacious standard rooms and elegant suites with private terraces, offering breathtaking views of the surrounding natural beauty and the tranquil valley. Guests can unwind in a serene environment where every detail has been designed to enhance their relaxation and connection with nature.



Spa relaxation room

The lobby of the spa and hotel



For those seeking to escape urban stress and immerse themselves in the tranquillity of nature, **Balneario Segura** is the perfect destination. With its healing thermal waters, privileged natural surroundings, and a full range of wellness-oriented services, the spa guarantees a rejuvenating and restful experience. Surrounded by mountainous landscapes and fresh air, visitors can enjoy personalised treatments and activities designed to harmonise body and mind. Ideal for a romantic getaway or a solo retreat, the spa invites guests to recharge their energy in an atmosphere of absolute serenity.

Segura
Balneario





Utrillas Mining Theme Park

Text: Rosario Alonso **Photography:** Jose A. Muñoz and Utrillas Mining Theme Park



- ▲ Aerial view of the Santa Barbara shaft and surrounding buildings; showers, generators and station.
- ◀ Entrance to the Museum, the old miners' hospital

The Utrillas Mining Theme Park was established as a project to preserve the mining heritage, an activity that served as the economic engine of the region for over a century. Nestled at the foot of the Sierra de Sant Just and the geological zone of Aliaga, the land hides a wealth of minerals that have been exploited for centuries. Records show that as early as 1607, surface deposits of jet were being mined, and a few years later, coal became the main source of wealth in this mountainous region.

Initially, the extraction of these resources was extremely costly due to the lack of tools and techniques. However, this began to change in

the early 20th century with the establishment of the Minas y Ferrocarriles de Utrillas (M.F.U.) company and the construction of a railway line connecting Utrillas with Zaragoza for coal transport. The area's economic growth was exponential, with new businesses settling in the region, until profitability began to decline, leading to the gradual closure of mines and power plants, with the Escucha Thermal Power Plant being the last to cease operations in 2012.

With the closure of many mines in the second half of the 20th century, the need arose to preserve this history and raise awareness of the hard work undertaken by miners. This led to the idea of creating a theme park that would not only commemorate this vital activity but also help re-

talise tourism in the region, creating new economic and cultural opportunities.

Inaugurated in 2000, the park is now one of the most important tourist destinations in the province of Teruel, attracting families, students, and industrial history enthusiasts. Two hundred and twenty years of mining transformed the urban and social landscape of Utrillas.

From the moment you enter the park, you are immersed in an authentic mining atmosphere with faithful reconstructions of mines and galleries, machinery, tools, models, and demonstrations of the various techniques used during the region's mining boom.

UTRILLAS MINING THEME PARK



1.- Theme Park Train to the Santa Bárbara Mine

2.- Diesel Locomotive Previously Used to Extract Coal from the Mine

3.- Mine Headframe with the Shower Building in the Background

The park includes:

The Miner's Train Ride: One of the most exciting experiences is the ride on the miner's train, which travels the route from the Science and Mining Archaeology Museum to the historic Santa Bárbara Mine. The legendary Hulla No. 1 steam locomotive from 1903 powers the convoy along 1.8 miles (3 km) of restored tracks, following the original route used by the Utrillas mining train to connect the Santa Bárbara Mine with the Coal Washing Plant, just as it did in the early 20th century. This 20-minute journey takes visitors deep into the earth.

Santa Bárbara Mine: Located in one of the oldest and most emblematic mines operated by the M.F.U. society, the Santa Bárbara Mine has seen its historic buildings and several structures linked to mining restored, including the impressive extraction tower. Visitors can explore facilities such as the Babcock & Wilcox boiler,

the engine room, the gunpowder magazine, the hoppers, as well as the dressing room and shower building. Inside, there is also the Museum of Mining Tools, which features signage, clothing, tools, and a unique collection of mining lamps in Europe, some dating back to Roman times. Additionally, the Paleontology Room highlights Utrillas' significance, as the first fossilised dinosaur bones in the Iberian Peninsula were discovered here.

Science and Mining Archaeology Museum: This museum is housed in one of the restored buildings of the M.F.U. company, dating back to 1920, specifically the mining hospital run by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul until the mining complex closed in 1993–1994. The museum spans over 10,700 square feet (1,000 square metres) across three floors, connected by the hospital's original staircase.

Inside, visitors can explore various rooms showcasing different aspects of regional mining. Notable exhi-

bits include two impressive models: one of a full-scale steam locomotive with a wagon and another of the Utrillas-Zaragoza railway route for coal transport. This route spanned approximately 81 miles (130 km) and took around eight hours to complete. Another fascinating exhibit is the simulation of a mine, complete with workers, original machinery, and tools used in the region's mining operations. From mine carts to helmets and gas lamps, these artefacts offer visitors an in-depth understanding of how mines operated and the technology used during that era.

Upper Floors: The two upper floors feature new interactive models of the Santa Bárbara Mine and the Escucha Thermal Power Plant. They also display machinery, lamps, tools, various artefacts, and documents from the M.F.U. company archives. Lastly, there is a geological exhibit showcasing fossils and minerals discovered in the mines. What was truly fascinating were the explanations and stories shared by Juan Manuel



Mining Museum; reproduction of one of the mine's galleries.

Our magnificent guide, who was not only incredibly knowledgeable but also a retired miner, added an invaluable perspective to the experience. As a living witness to Utrillas' mining history, he recounted that during the peak of mining activity, approximately 1,600 people worked in various roles at the mine, in a town with a registered population of around 7,000. He also shared the tragic story of the worst mining accident, which occurred on 29th August 1959, when a dynamite explosion claimed the lives of 13 miners.

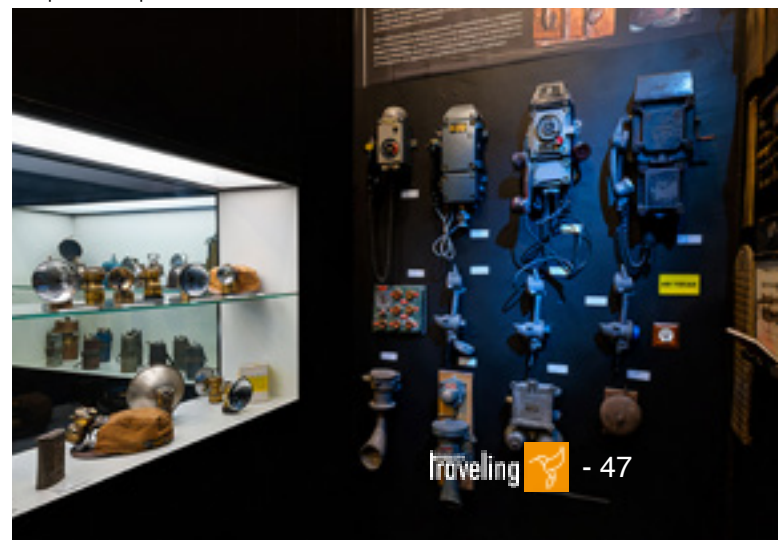
He explained that an average of 8,000 tonnes of coal were extracted daily to meet the demands of the Escucha and Andorra power plants, and fascinatingly, there is still enough coal beneath Utrillas to last for another 150 years.

He also shared intriguing details about how mules were once used to pull coal carts. These animals were assigned a financial value, worked regular hours, and even had designated rest periods in the "mule stables," where they were well cared for.

Another fascinating aspect was his account of how the school for miners' children operated. Located in a two-storey annex building, boys were taught on the ground floor by teachers hired by the mining company, whose salaries were more generous than those of public school teachers.



Lamps and telephones: one of the museum's most extensive collections



UTRILLAS MINING THEME PARK



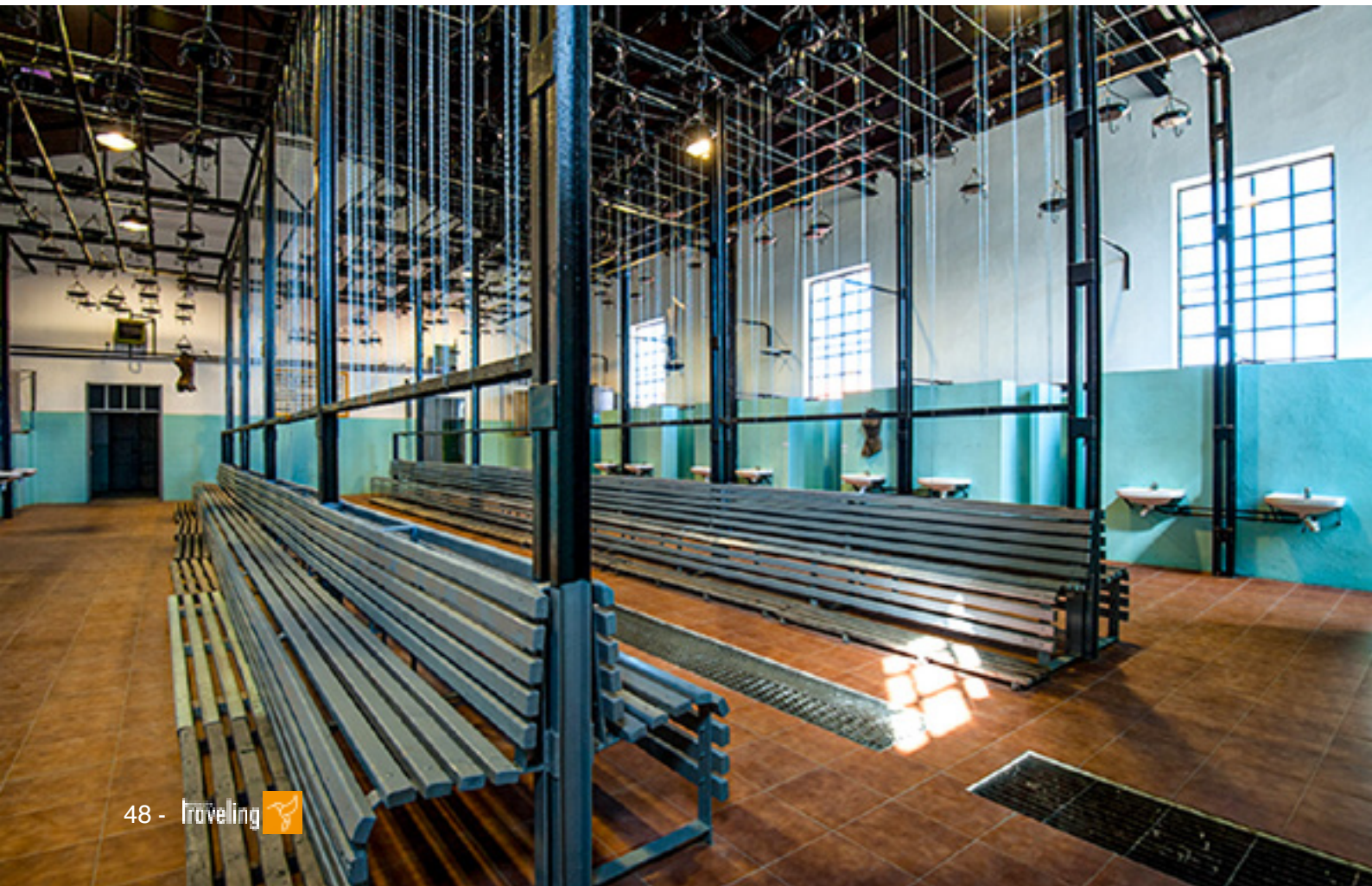
Old motorcycles used by workers and financed by the company

The girls occupied the second floor, and their teachers were nuns, nurses, or professional educators. Additionally, miners who wished to pursue further education could do so for two hours daily after their work shift, with the company covering the costs. Religious education was provided by the priest, and on the last school day in June, children would receive an end-of-term "gift" from the company.

Juan Manuel shared how the mining company acted as a financial institution for its workers, offering interest-free loans. These loans catered to any request from employees—a gesture to compensate for the harshness of the job. Additionally, the company strategically believed that as long as miners were repaying their loans, they would be less likely to leave their jobs.

One of the most astonishing stories was about the so-called "Penitentiary Detachment." Prisoners who worked in the Utrillas mines earned a salary, from which deductions were made to cover their upkeep and that of their guards, who also worked underground. Both common and political prisoners could reduce their sentences through their labour, with one day of work equating to two days deducted from their sentence. Remarkably, many of these prisoners chose to stay on as full-fledged miners after serving their time, and today, there are families in Utrillas who are descendants of these miner-prisoners.

Showers building





Generator building, which provided power inside the mine

The Utrillas Music Band was the first in Spain composed entirely of miners. The company purchased the instruments, and the miners would later settle the costs with their employer.

Finally, even local sports were connected to the region's mining history. One popular activity was known as "changing the track." Held at the local football field, it involved teams of two laying down sleepers and rails. Miners from all over Spain would participate, and the winner was the team that completed the task the fastest. The work was timed and tested by rolling a mine cart over the rails to ensure the task was done correctly.

Another fascinating point that caught our attention was the well-executed industrial restructuring carried out in Utrillas. Alongside early retirement schemes, the simultaneous establishment of alternative industries, such as industrial foundries and meat processing plants, during the closure of the mines successfully averted a major economic crisis and the secondary effect of depopulation.

It's worth highlighting that this is truly a "people's museum," where the exhibits have been donated or contributed by miners and their descendants. This reflects the pride of Utrillas' inhabitants in their mining heritage, which they are deeply committed to preserving.



**Utrillas Mining
Theme Park**





Zamora

Zamora, situated on the banks of the River Duero, is known as the "City of Romanesque Art" due to its remarkable concentration of churches and medieval monuments. However, Zamora is much more than its Romanesque heritage; it is a city where different styles and eras converge, from medieval art to the modernist architecture of the early 20th century. A journey through its streets unveils a rich and nuanced history, a character shaped by time, and architecture that seamlessly blends tradition with modernity.

Text: Rosario Alonso - **Photos:** Jose A. Muñoz
Photography: New Town Hall



Church of San Juan Bautista

The Romanesque legacy: the heart of Zamora

Zamora is home to one of the richest and best-preserved collections of Romanesque architecture in all of Europe. This style, which flourished during the Middle Ages, is characterised by its sobriety and the strength of its constructions, designed for both religious devotion and endurance through time. The city boasts 23 Romanesque churches from the 12th and 13th centuries, each a witness to centuries of history and the traditions of the era. This late Romanesque heritage, heavily influenced by Eastern elements, is not only an artistic legacy almost unique to Spain but also a symbol of Zamora's identity and its role in the history of Castilla y León.

Among these architectural treasures, the Cathedral of Zamora is undoubtedly the most emblematic monument. Built between 1151 and 1174, this cathedral is renowned for its majestic dome (cimborrio), a domed structure adorned with stone scales that gives the city skyline its distinctive profile. This cimborrio is considered one of the most beautiful and original examples of medieval architecture in Spain, notable for both its unique design and the technical skill required for its construction.

Little is known about its builder, although it is believed he may have been Norman, influenced by Eastern trends. This Eastern influence, a hallmark of Zamora's Romanesque style, is the result of several factors: the

French repopulation of the area, royal marital alliances, and the employment of Syrian stonemasons and quarry workers, enslaved by the French during the Crusades. These elements come together in the cathedral's oldest façade, located next to the Bishop's Gate (Puerta del Obispo), which is considered a Romanesque façade unique in the world. The original cathedral, built over a mosque, is also oriented toward Mecca.

Beyond the cathedral, other Romanesque churches in Zamora offer equally impressive experiences. The Church of San Pedro or San Ildefonso, with its imposing vaults and thick stone walls, is one of the city's oldest temples and a prominent example of Romanesque architecture with Eastern influence.

The Church of San Juan Bautista, located in the Plaza Mayor, is another fine example of Zamora's Romanesque style. Its simplicity and sturdiness stand out in the heart of the city, with its walls reflecting the austerity characteristic of Romanesque design. The church features a beautiful portal adorned with arches and geometric motifs, showcasing the skill of the stonemasons of the era.

Another striking feature is the whitish colour of the city's stone, sourced from local Zamoran quarries. Known as pudinga, this sandstone is highly erosion-prone yet has remained almost pristine due to the absence of pollution and humidity.



Viriato Square

The city is filled with corners and landmarks that recall its history: the Plaza de Viriato, featuring a mid-19th-century bronze statue of the renowned shepherd-warrior celebrated for his battles against the Romans (2nd century BC) and the origin of Zamora's *Seña Bermeja* emblem; the Puerta de la Traición, now renamed the Gate of Loyalty (Puerta de La Lealtad), which provides historical context for the famous saying, "Zamora wasn't won in an hour"; and the Casa del Cid, located beside the Cathedral.

Zamora's churches not only reflect the faith and devotion of medieval Zamora but also narrate the story of a city that was the stage for key historical events, such as the Reconquest and the consolidation of the Kingdom of León. They also embody the transition from an era of wars and tensions to one of stability and construction.

La transición al gótico y el Renacimiento

During the Gothic period, which emerged after the Romanesque, some of Zamora's temples incorporated more refined and stylised decorative elements, creating a stark contrast with the characteristic austerity of Romanesque architecture. This shift is evident in the use of rose windows and pointed portals, which bring a sense of lightness and allow for greater illumination inside the temples, fostering a brighter and more solemn spiritual atmosphere.

Zamora Castle



A notable example of this stylistic transition is the Church of Santiago del Burgo, where Gothic elements enrich the original Romanesque structure. In this church, Gothic design does not dominate but rather complements Romanesque features, offering a visual bridge between two architectural eras. The windows and rose windows admit light in a way that enhances the sacred space's serenity and luminosity.

In addition to Gothic, the Renaissance also left a significant imprint on Zamora. Beginning in the 16th century, this style, characterised by a return to classical values of symmetry and proportion, brought sophistication and elegance to the city. It blended seamlessly with medieval art, further enriching Zamora's heritage. Renaissance influences are visible in civil palaces and in the architectural details of some church interiors, where ribbed vaults and pointed arches gave way to Doric columns and more geometric, orderly decorations.

One of the finest examples of Renaissance architecture in Zamora is the Palacio de los Condes de Alba y Aliste (now a Parador). This magnificent building embodies the elegance of the period, with its central courtyard surrounded by galleries, its columns, and its ornate details. The palace reflects the Italian influence that defined Renaissance art throughout Europe. This style



The Cid house

facade of the Cathedral



not only transformed aesthetics but also introduced a new approach to space and functionality, adapting to the needs of the nobility.

Over time, this coexistence of styles—Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance—turned Zamora into a true open-air museum, where every building and street tells a story of transformation and adaptation. The city's architectural evolution allows us to understand how each era left its distinct mark on Zamora.

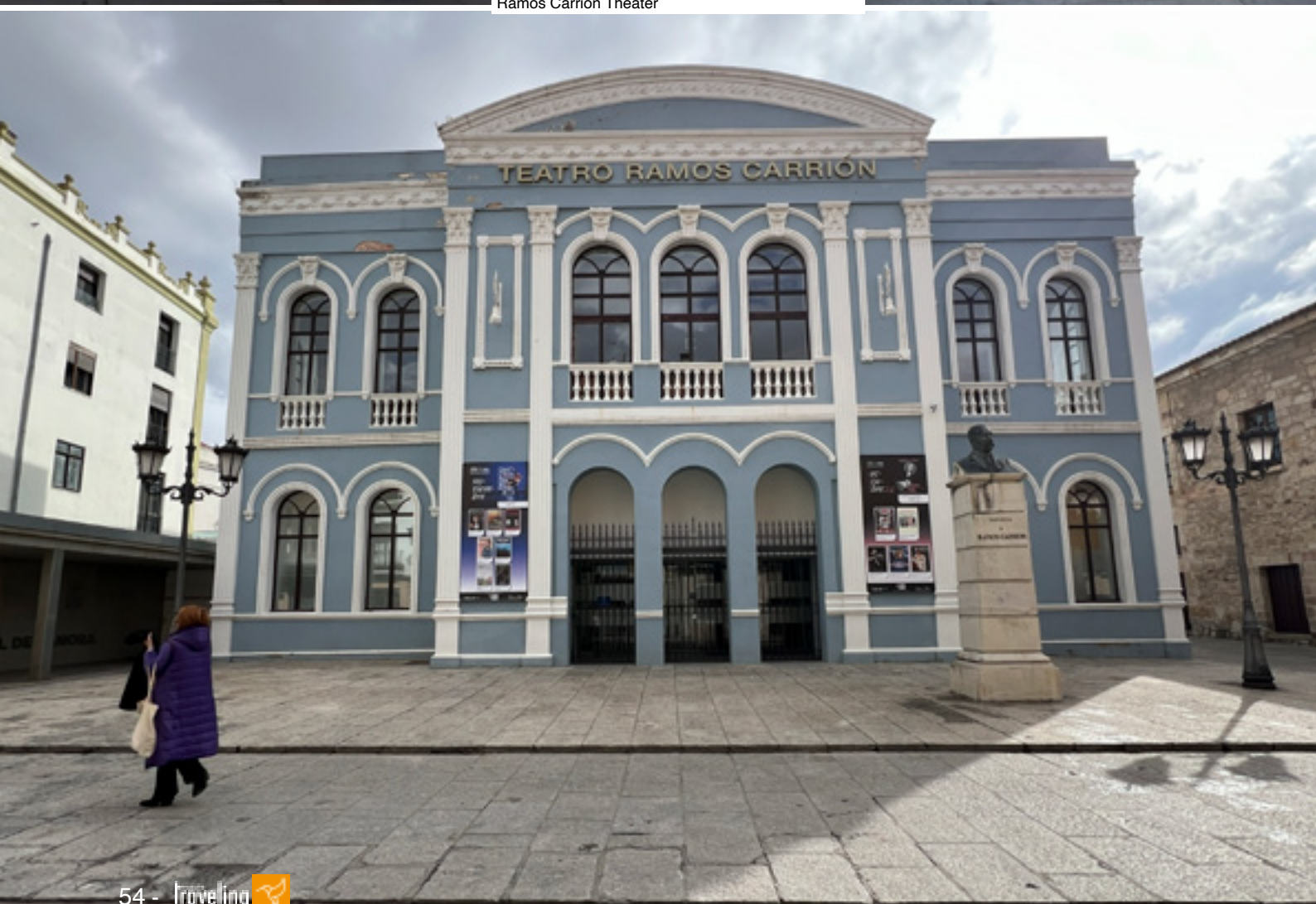
El Modernismo en Zamora

At the beginning of the 20th century, modernism transformed the city. During an era of industrialisation and social change, modernism arrived in Zamora through innovative architects who introduced a new aesthetic vision. Strolling through the historic centre, one encounters elegant buildings adorned with floral motifs, wrought-iron details, and colourful façades that break away from the austerity of Romanesque architecture.

ZAMORA



Modernist buildings in the old quarter of Zamora
Ramos Carrión Theater



One of the most prominent modernist buildings in Zamora is the Palacio de los Momos (now the Palace of Justice), whose façade combines Renaissance elements with modernist touches. Another highlight is the Bank of Spain Building, an elegant and symmetrical structure that reflects the era's appreciation for geometry and balance. The Casa de los Ramos, with its façade adorned with balconies and intricately decorated windows, is another gem of Zamora's modernist heritage that commands attention.

This modernist movement in Zamora showcases how the city embraced the European trends of the time, adapting them to its own context and enhancing them with local character. The influence of architects like Francisco Ferrer and other visionaries, such as Arribas and Sánchez Blanco, transformed Zamora into a beacon of innovation and beauty in the heart of Castilla y León.

Tradition and Vanguard

The coexistence of Romanesque and modernist styles makes Zamora a city of contrasts, where visitors can travel between eras simply by crossing the street. Modernism is not the only artistic avant-garde in Zamora; in the 1990s, a new artistic initiative emerged called Zamora Variopinta. This mural route, featuring some stunning trompe-l'œil works, aims to revitalise numerous crumbling façades. Today, funded by the city council, which commissions graffiti artists, the initiative has become a great success, with around 60 murals now adorning the city.

This contrast is further enriched by Zamora's culture and traditions, particularly its Holy Week, declared an International Tourist Interest event in 1986 and a Cultural

An example of "Zamora variopinta".



Allegorical statue of "El Merlú".

Heritage Site in 2015. The processions, winding through the city's streets, mirror the spirit of its Romanesque churches with their solemn and austere yet profoundly emotional and spiritual displays. Seventeen brotherhoods and 51 sculptural groups depicting the Passion make Zamora's Holy Week unique in Spain. The Merlú, whose dissonant and piercing sound wakes the brotherhood members on Good Friday outside the Church of San Juan Bautista in the Plaza Mayor, is the emblem of Zamora's Holy Week.

Zamora is a top-tier cultural destination in Castilla y León, perfect for those eager to delve into history, architecture, and art. The city also offers thematic guided tours that allow visitors to thoroughly explore its Romanesque and modernist heritage. Its streets are lined with small shops, bars, and restaurants offering local gastronomy. Alongside its renowned pinchos and tapas (tiberios, perdices, and more), Zamora's traditional dishes include arroz a la zamorana, roast lamb (lechazo), and Zamorano sheep's cheese.

Zamora boasts numerous Protected Geographical Indications, including Fuentesauco chickpeas, Los Valles peppers, Aliste beef, and Zamora chorizo—crowned in 2023 as the world's best chorizo. The local quality label Exquisiteza, endorsed by the provincial government, guarantees the excellence of other Zamoran products such as chocolate, frog legs from Carbellino de Sayago, honey, olive oil, and wines from the Sierra de la Culebra.

Its wines deserve special mention, with three Denominations of Origin: Toro, Arribes, and Tierra del Vino (geographically aligned with the Silver Route Vía de la Plata).



eco destinations

Lugano

Text: Kiara Hurtado - kiara.hurtado.prensa@gmail.com - **Instagram:** [kiarah.99](https://www.instagram.com/kiarah.99)

Photos: Archive - **Photography:** Fireworks in Lugano

In the heart of the Swiss Alps, the Ticino region and its crown jewel, Lugano, offer a Christmas experience like no other. This unique destination invites visitors to celebrate the holidays amidst the charm of illuminated markets and the splendour of alpine landscapes. What truly sets this festive experience apart, however, is its commitment to sustainability: local markets promote artisanal and locally sourced products, supporting small farmers and craftspeople, while the city champions environmentally conscious tourism. With electric transport and eco-friendly hotels that blend luxury with environmental awareness, Lugano is the perfect destination for those seeking an authentic and responsible holiday season.

In the grand alpine landscape of Switzerland, the southern region of Ticino and its main city, Lugano, radiate splendour. Strategically located just two hours by train from Switzerland's capital, Zurich, and an hour from the Italian hub of Milan, Lugano offers a Christmas of true luxury.

In Ticino, Italian and Swiss cultures intertwine and coexist, a reflection of their geographical proximity and shared history. Italian is the primary language here, one of Switzerland's four official languages. While summer attracts visitors with its sunny charm, Lugano's allure shines year-round. During the festive season, the magical adventure begins with a stroll along Lake Lugano, where the city's views merge seamlessly with the surrounding mountains and sky, making it feel as though the heavens are within reach.

This compact city is easy to explore, as most attractions are centred around its main square, Piazza della Riforma. Despite its small size, Lugano offers a wealth of tourism opportunities. At Christmas, visitors can enjoy an ice-skating rink in the heart of the city and boat rides on Lake Lugano, taking in the illuminated pano-

ramic surroundings. For art enthusiasts, Lugano boasts a variety of museums and galleries that host special exhibitions during this period, with the renowned LAC (Lugano Arte e Cultura) leading the cultural offerings.

In addition to iconic Swiss products like chocolate and cheese, the country's gastronomy showcases a blend of French, Italian, and German cultural influences, with fondue and raclette standing out as the most celebrated dishes. In Ticino, the cuisine leans towards Italian flavours, featuring specialties such as risotto, polenta, artisanal cured meats, and local wines that capture the essence of the region's culinary heritage.

The Contribution of Christmas Markets

What would Christmas be without the red and white charm of winter markets? Across the Ticino region, major towns transform into magical settings filled with colour, scents, and local products that reflect the region's unique identity. In towns like Locarno, Bellinzona, Lugano, Mendrisio, and Ascona, these markets showcase handmade crafts, workshops, and traditional dishes, giving visitors the chance to discover the creations of local producers.





Airolo-Pesciüm ski resort

Lake Lugano jetty



Beyond their festive charm, the true merit of these markets lies in their commitment to sustainability, promoting the work of small farmers and artisans. This approach is highly valued in the region, as it not only strengthens the local economy but also reduces the ecological footprint. By supporting local commerce, Ticino preserves its authenticity and deep connection to the surrounding environment.

In addition to twinkling lights and garlands, the region and its towns host a variety of events and performances throughout the Christmas season, including concerts, children's activities, workshops, and shows.

Visiting the nearest nearest mountains

Switzerland is renowned for its majestic snow-covered peaks, attracting tourists from around the globe eager to kick off the ski season. Near Lugano, several ski resorts are less than an hour's drive away. Airolo-Pesciüm, located in the Leventina Valley, is the largest ski resort in Ticino, offering excellent slopes and alpine landscapes that reach altitudes of up to 7,382 feet. Nara, in the Blenio Valley, is ideal for families and beginners, with skiing and sledding activities. Bosco Gurin, the highest village in Ticino, stands out for its picturesque charm and slopes catering to all skill levels. Cari and Campo Blenio also provide a family-friendly atmosphere and great conditions for enjoying the mountains.

You don't need to be a skier to visit the mountains, as they are known for their family-friendly and re-



laxed vibe. Making snow angels and building snowmen are always fun alternatives. For those looking to enjoy some snow without skiing, Monte Brè and Monte San Salvatore offer moderate hiking trails with panoramic views of the lake and the Alps.

Lugano and its ecological footprint

In recent years, Lugano has taken significant steps to promote sustainable tourism and preserve its natural environment. The city has implemented waste management policies and an electric public transport system, featuring electric buses and bikes that allow visitors to travel in an eco-friendly manner. Additionally, Lake Lugano's boats operate with energy-efficient technology to reduce their carbon footprint, providing an environmentally respectful experience.

Lugano offers a wide range of eco-friendly hotels. These establishments practice energy and water conservation, using local and organic products wherever possible. For those seeking a deeper connection with nature, options include agritourism and ecolodges. With Swiss guests demanding sustainability, all accommodations adhere to high environmental standards, blending nature with luxury.

Among the most renowned hotels is the Hotel Splendide Royal, a lakeside gem boasting a gourmet restaurant and classic decor that showcases the country's elegance. Further up the hill is Villa Principe Leopoldo, a haven featuring a Michelin two-key-awarded fine-dining restaurant and a spa perfect for relaxation. Perched at the highest point of the city, The View Lugano is a boutique hotel famous for its wellness spa and spectacular panoramic views of the region.

They say that the small bottle is the good stuff, and that is precisely what Lugano represents, a city small in size but immeasurably rich. Christmas lovers will find this destination an ideal place to enjoy the snow, the markets and the magic of the festivities.

VISIT
SWITZERLAND



SLOVAKIA, THE UNKNOWN TOKAJ



SLOVAKIA, THE UNKNOWN TOKAJ

Text y Photos: Luis y Alejandro Paadin - alejandro@paadin.es



For wine enthusiasts, Tokaj is a name that sparks excitement and ignites the imagination. Once described by Louis XIV as “the wine of kings, the king of wines,” its legend and mystique are deeply rooted in a land shaped by the violent tides of modern European history, where Mongols, Ottomans, and Soviets have left their mark over the centuries. The Tokaj vineyards have borne witness to humanity's barbarity across countless armed conflicts, but without these turbulent times, we might never have discovered— or at least not so early—one of the world's greatest sweet wines: botrytised wines.

with all legendary wines, reality and myth intertwine to create the epic narrative that endures to this day. Such is the case with the Aszú grapes, which are partially or fully dehydrated through the action of the fungus *botrytis cinerea*.

In the 17th century, the Tokaj region became the backdrop to numerous wars, including the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and relentless struggles against the Ottoman Empire. The constant battles often forced men to leave their homes to join the military, leading to delays in their return and, consequently, leaving the grapes on the vines for weeks without harvest. During this time, the mists from the river that gives the region its name, Tokaj, along with its main tributaries, Bodrog and Hernád, created the perfect humidity for the development of the fungus.



The unique configuration of the valley allows the cold northern winds (Északi Szél) and warm southern winds (Déli Szél) to clear the mists and dry the air, halting the spread of the fungus while keeping its activity latent. This delicate balance facilitates a gradual and precise dehydration process. It is a true Sword of Damocles, enabling the production of one of the world's most complex and long-lasting wines: with the right level of botrytis action, the prized "noble rot" (*Botrytis cinerea*) is achieved, but excessive proliferation can result in the dreaded "grey rot."

While regional viticulture has been documented since the 12th century, and likely predates that, it wasn't until 1570 that Aszú grapes were first mentioned in an inventory by the Garai family. However, Maté Sepsi Laczko is often cited as the more iconic reference; in 1631,

he gifted a selection of Tokaj Aszú to Zuzana Lóránffy, marking a pivotal moment in the wine's storied history. con motivo de su 15º aniversario de bodas con Juraj I Rákoczi). Since then, sweet wines have steadily taken over regional wine production for centuries, reaching their peak in the early 20th century

TOKAJ SLOVAKIAN

Although the region remained unified for centuries, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the signing of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 divided Tokaj into two territories, with Hungary taking the larger share and Czechoslovakia the remainder. Throughout the 20th century, both countries underwent significant political changes that influenced their relations.

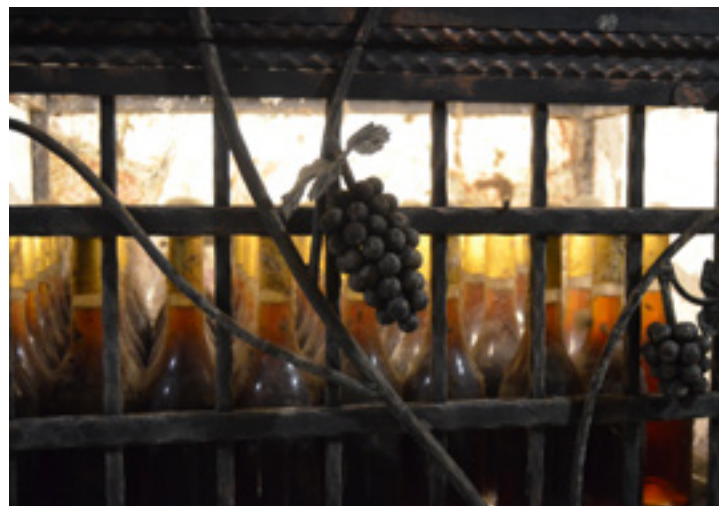
The conflict between the two sides began in 1964 over the use of the Tokaj brand in international markets, (particularly in Vienna), The dispute reignited in the 1990s with the fall of the Iron Curtain but was resolved in 2013 by the European Union, allowing the term Tokaj to be legally used by both countries within their traditionally defined regions. Nevertheless, the legislation in each area differs significantly, as do the winemaking styles of the wineries.

The Tokaj region in Slovakia spans just over 2,200 acres (900 hectares) in the eastern part of the country, primarily in the towns of Viničky, Malá and Veľká Trňa, and Slovenské Nové Mesto. While much smaller than its Hungarian counterpart, which covers 13,590 acres (5,500 hectares), this area boasts its own unique history and character.

Today, Slovak Tokaj is home to only about ten wineries producing a wide range of wines by blending traditional techniques with modern approaches. While it hasn't seen the same level of foreign investment as Hungary did in the 1990s, Slovak wineries have adapted well to international markets. By preserving a purist style in their traditional classifications, such as Sádorodný wines or the Puttonyos system, they also experiment with sparkling wines, beers, and even cocktails like the Spritz.

Unique conditions: geology and climate

The geology and climate of Slovak Tokaj are strikingly similar to those of Tokaj in Hungary. The soil is predominantly volcanic, with the renowned "tuff" (compacted volcanic ash) taking centre stage. The surrounding hills shield the vineyards from cold winds, while the Bodrog River, which flows across both sides of the border, creates an ideal microclimate that encourages the development of noble rot (*Botrytis cinerea*).





The climate here is also slightly cooler, resulting in wines with greater freshness compared to Hungarian Tokaji. This vibrancy is a key characteristic that sets Slovak Tokaj apart, typically producing lighter and fresher wines that enhance citrus fruit flavors, honey, and a hint of minerality.

Winemaking practices also define the Slovak style, with a more oxidative and traditional profile that places significant emphasis on other fungi, such as *Penicillium* spp. and *Cladosporium cellare*.

These cellar fungi cover the entirety of the underground galleries where the most classic and iconic Tokaj wines are aged, creating a perfect symbiosis between fungus, wine, and humans. The wine in the barrels experiences an annual evaporation loss of 4%, which serves as sustenance for the local fungal biota.

This fungal layer, in turn, regulates ambient humidity (97–99%), prevents the proliferation of other harmful fungi and pathogens, and imparts part of its unique identity to the resulting wine. Depending on the age of the fungi, the galleries may be cloaked in a white layer (young), grey (mature), or black (old and of higher quality). Recent studies suggest that the mold may communicate throughout the cellar, functioning similarly to a complex coral system.

Grape varieties and styles of wine

The main grape varieties cultivated in Slovak Tokaj are virtually the same as those in Hungary: Furmint, Lipovina (Hárslevelű), and Muškát žltý (Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains). Each contributes distinctive





qualities to Tokaj wines. Furmint provides the acidity and structure that form the backbone of the wine, while Lipovina adds floral notes and complexity, and Muškát žltý offers fresh grape aromas and an exotic touch.

In terms of styles, Slovak producers create wines very similar to Hungarian Tokaji, including the renowned Tokaj Aszú. These sweet wines, influenced by botrytis, concentrate sugars as the grapes dehydrate on the vine. The puttonyos system is used to measure sweetness levels, based on the amount of dehydrated grapes, with a scale ranging from 3 to 6, where higher numbers indicate greater sweetness. At the pinnacle of this scale lies Eszencia, a pure nectar made entirely from Aszú grapes. This wine can take several years to ferment to just 3–4% alcohol, resulting in syrupy wines with over 500 grams of sugar per litre, often exceeding 700 grams.

These wines, however, cannot be produced every year, as botrytis development varies significantly between vintages.

The traditional Sádmodrný wines (formerly known as fõbor) reflect the vineyard's natural state. Translating to "as it comes" in Polish, these wines are made from a mix of grapes with varying degrees of noble rot. They come in both sweet versions (approaching the Aszú scale) and dry versions (featuring a flor yeast development, similar to Jura's Vin Jaune or Jerez's Finos).

Beyond these traditional styles, more and more wineries are producing white and sparkling wines aimed

at modern consumers and less traditional markets. In some cases, these account for over 50% of their production volume.

Exploring Slovak Tokaj: Gastronomy and Culture

A visit to the Slovak Tokaj region offers much more than wine. In the area's wine villages, visitors can experience a unique blend of local gastronomy and culture. Traditional culinary highlights include bravčové koleno (roast pork knuckle), aged local cheeses, and desserts made with honey and nuts, all of which pair perfectly with Tokaj wines.

The region also features historic wine cellars carved into volcanic rock, many of which date back centuries and are open to the public. These cellars not only maintain an ideal temperature for wine aging but also create an immersive atmosphere that transports visitors back in time.

While Slovak Tokaj is still less well-known than its Hungarian counterpart, it is gaining recognition among wine connoisseurs. Local producers have successfully leveraged the similarities with Hungarian Tokaj while carving out their own identity, focusing on freshness and vibrant acidity.

With its rich history, culture, and unique character, Slovak Tokaj has established itself as a must-visit destination on Central Europe's wine routes. For those seeking something unique and soulful, Slovak Tokaj is not just an option but an adventure that offers a glimpse into the heart of a lesser-explored region.

Places of interest

Tokaj Macik

The first certified organic winery in Slovak Tokaj, it belongs to an old lineage of local winemakers. The estate features a hotel complex where guests can stay in large wooden barrels nestled among the vineyards. If you're visiting the area, you can also enjoy some of their creations at their own Wine Bar, including traditional styles such as an exceptional dry Sádmorodný and their unique in-house beer.

Medzipivničná 174 076 82 Malá Třňa
Tf.: +421 905 313 352



Penzi3n Aqua Maria

A charming small hotel, ideal for family trips, offering a wellness centre with a pool, hot tub, saunas, and both sports and children's play areas. It also features a camping section with cabins and a simple restaurant where you can savour local cuisine. Much of the produce used comes directly from their own Hajenka farm. – Salaš M3ria.

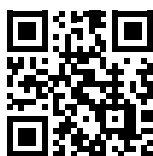
Hlavn3 252/36, 076 15 Veľaty
Tf.: +421 948 027 212



Tokaj&Co

An iconic winery boasting the largest underground gallery in the area, spanning over 1.5 miles (2.5 km) and housing more than 1,500 barrels, many of which are traditional Szerednye and G3nz barrels made from Hungarian and Slovak oak. It features several tasting rooms where visitors can enjoy its extensive Tokaj wine portfolio, including one of the best value-for-money Tokaj Asz3 6 Puttonyos on the market.

Medzipivničná 228/21. 076 82 Mal3 Třňa
Tf.: +421 918 386 348

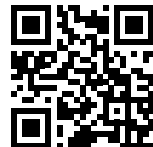
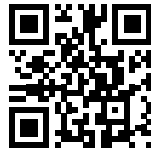


Chateau Grand Bari

This young and dynamic winery boasts luxurious facilities. Alongside its production cellars, it features a hotel and restaurant nestled in the heart of the historic Tokaj vineyard. The restaurant menu blends traditional dishes with refined creations and meticulous presentation.

In addition to the classic Tokaj wines, Grand Bari has ventured into more innovative offerings, such as wine-based cocktails like Spritz, available in canned formats and a variety of flavours.

Poštová 8, 040 01 Košice
Tf.: +421 905 234 169



Mea Grati

In addition to producing the traditional Tokaj wines, this winery boasts an extensive vineyard in the bordering Tokaj territory, enabling them to craft wines from other varieties such as Pinot Noir and Syrah, outside the Tokaj Designation of Origin (Tokajská vinohradnícka oblasť). They have specialized in rosé and red wines, and their facilities in Ladmovce feature a spacious area for tastings, samplings, and events, complemented by local delicacies, cheeses, and cured meats.

Ladmovce 186, 076 34 Ladmovce
Tf.: +421 915 333 707

Torre de observación de Malá Třňa

Beyond the region's wineries, restaurants, and hotels, it's worth wandering along the winding paths and roads of the area to reach this iconic observation point. Shaped like a giant barrel, the rooftop of this monument offers sweeping views of the vast Tokaj Valley. Our recommendation: enjoy a glass of Tokaj wine at the top while taking in the very vineyards from which it originates.

Košický kraj, okres Trebišov, Malá Třňa
GPS: N48°26'37" E21°41'21"





Royal Site of San Ildefonso

Photos and Text: Miguel Ángel Muñoz Romero - www.comorencasaencualquierlugar.com

A majestic Royal Palace and Versailles-inspired gardens set in a historic environment, where nature and history intertwine to recreate the splendour of the former Spanish monarchy.

One of Spain's most outstanding historical and monumental sites features a magnificent Royal Palace and Versailles-style gardens set in a privileged natural environment. Originally, this land belonged to the Hieronymite monks and served as a hunting reserve before being ceded by the Catholic Monarchs. King Philip V, the first Bourbon monarch of Spain, was captivated by the area's natural beauty and abundant water supply. After abdicating in 1724, he chose this location for his retreat.

Inspired by the Palace of Versailles, Philip V commissioned the construction of a palace that took several decades to complete and was modified by subsequent monarchs over time. Today, the interior houses Flemish tapestries and period furniture displayed in various rooms open to the public.

SEQUENCES OF A JOURNEY

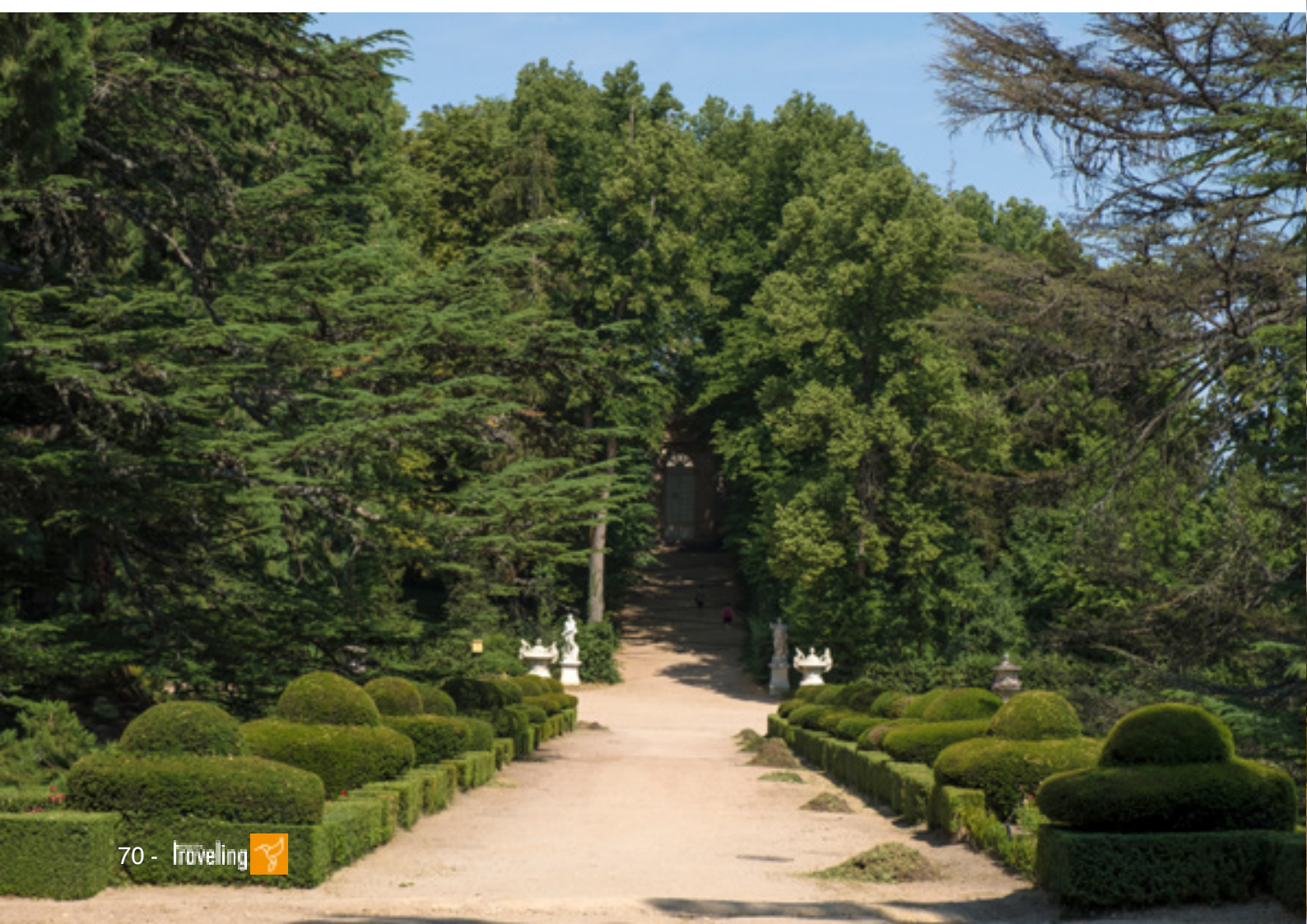
The history of this palace is defined by its role as the setting for significant events, including the wedding of Charles IV and María Luisa of Parma, the signing of the Treaties of San Ildefonso in 1777, 1796, and 1800, the repeal of the Salic Law through the enactment of the Pragmatic Sanction of 1789, the uprising of the palace garrison's sergeants in 1836, and the birth of Don Juan de Borbón within its walls.

A special mention goes to the imposing Baroque garden, designed in the French style and featuring remarkable hydraulic engineering for its time. The garden boasts numerous ornamental fountains fed by the streams and reservoirs of the Segovian countryside.

Walking through the garden's wide avenues, pausing by its fountains, and admiring its lush vegetation offers a genuine journey into the past.



ROYAL SITE OF SAN ILDEFONSO







Text: Jose A. Muñoz **Photos:** Jose A Muñoz y The Yeatman Porto

The Yeatman Hotel, located in Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal, is more than just a luxury accommodation; it is an immersive experience celebrating the wine culture of the region. With breathtaking views of the Douro River and the city of Porto, this hotel has earned international acclaim for its sophistication, wine-centric theme, and world-class gastronomy. Whether for a romantic getaway or a leisure trip, The Yeatman offers its guests an unparalleled blend of comfort, history, and flavor.



Views of the pool, gardens and Oporto from the hotel lounges

History and location

Perched on a hill in Vila Nova de Gaia, The Yeatman Hotel is surrounded by the historic Port wine cellars. Its location is no coincidence; the hotel celebrates the winemaking tradition that has made this region renowned for centuries. In fact, its design and décor are inspired by this heritage, offering guests a direct connection to the wine culture. Just a few minutes' walk from the majestic Douro River, the hotel provides an ideal strategic position for exploring both the iconic cellars and the city of Porto. There are no better views of the city than those from the hotel's terraces.

Accommodation and design

The hotel offers a variety of luxurious accommodations that blend classic elegance with contemporary touches, the result of the vision of renowned architect David Downey and interior designer Dick White.

This creative team has successfully harmonized traditional Portuguese elements with a modern and sophisticated style. Featuring 109 rooms and suites, each boasts private terraces or balconies offering breathtaking views of the city of Porto and the Douro River, creating ideal spaces for relaxation and unwinding.

Each room celebrates Portugal's rich winemaking heritage, incorporating decorative details inspired by local wine cellars. Some suites stand out for their originality, featuring beds crafted from wine barrels, adding a rustic yet refined touch, while all maintain a distinctive English charm, reflecting the region's historic wine trade connections.

Suites like the Bacchus and Taylor's elevate the luxury experience with separate living areas, spacious walk-in wardrobes, and meticulously curated decor, making them perfect for enjoying the panoramic views from their exclusive private terraces.



Experiencia gastronómica

The Yeatman's restaurant, awarded two Michelin stars, is a true culinary gem in Porto. Under the guidance of Chef Ricardo Costa, the restaurant offers tasting menus that blend innovative techniques with the traditional flavors of Portuguese cuisine. The menu is available in two options: a six-course selection and a more elaborate ten-course experience that represents the pinnacle of gastronomic delight. Standout dishes include seafood creations such as cuttlefish with fried yeast and smoked eel, or lobster paired with kimuchi and galangal.

This culinary journey is perfectly complemented by an extraordinary wine selection. The restaurant boasts a cellar housing over 27,000 bottles, featuring labels from every wine-producing region in Portugal. Wine pairings are integral to the experience, allowing diners to explore and savor wines that enhance the flavors of each course.

The restaurant's ambiance is bright and elegant, with spectacular views that are particularly enchanting during the summer months. This refined atmosphere, combined with Chef Costa's dedication to preserving and reimagining local gastronomy, makes dining at The Yeatman an unforgettable experience.

Spa y Bienestar

The Wine Spa at The Yeatman is another highlight of the hotel. Inspired by vinotherapy, the spa uses products derived from the beneficial properties of grapes and wine, featuring exclusive treatments with products from the renowned Caudalie brand. From relaxing massages to facial and body treatments, the spa offers a range of experiences designed to rejuvenate both body and mind, perfectly complementing the luxury of your stay



- 1.- Superior Deluxe Room
- 2.- Restaurant
- 3.- Jacuzzi with Views in the Spa



Views of Porto from the terrace of one of the Executive Rooms

.Actividades y atracciones cercanas

Besides its luxurious facilities, The Yeatman Hotel offers guests the opportunity to immerse themselves in the vibrant wine culture and local attractions of the region. The hotel organizes wine tastings and guided tours of nearby cellars in Vila Nova de Gaia, where visitors can learn about the production of Port wine and sample a variety of styles. Notable among these is Taylor's, just steps from the hotel and part of the same group, offering exclusive guided visits and immersive experiences that delve into the history and traditions of this iconic beverage.

For those wishing to explore the city, the hotel is conveniently located near iconic landmarks. Just a short walk away lies the **WOW (World of Wine)**, a cultural district featuring seven themed museums dedicated to wine, cork, and the region's history, along with a diverse selection of

restaurants and shops showcasing the essence of local gastronomy and craftsmanship. Guests can also enjoy boat cruises along the Douro River, offering spectacular views of the city and the vineyards of the valley, creating a unique visual and sensory experience that complements the land-based explorations.

Crossing the river leads to Porto's historic center, where highlights include the famous **bookshop Lello**, renowned for its majestic architecture and Gothic influences, or climbing **The Clérigos Tower** for panoramic views of the city. The tour through the center also features stops at the **Palace of da Bolsa** with its stunningly decorated halls, the **São Bento** train station adorned with hand-painted blue-and-white tiles, and the iconic **Luís I Bridge**, which links Porto and Vila Nova de Gaia, offering a unique perspective of the city and its defining riverside charm.

The Yeatman Hotel seamlessly blends luxury, history, and an unwavering passion for wine. With its prime location, top-tier services, and an ambiance that celebrates Portugal's rich winemaking tradition, it has become an unparalleled choice for those seeking a holistic travel experience. From its breathtaking views to its exquisite culinary offerings and soothing spa, The Yeatman is more than just a hotel: it is a destination in its own right, encapsulating the luxury and charm of the Port wine culture.





Hotel lobby

ASIA GARDENS HOTEL & THAI SPA

Text: Jose A. Muñoz **Photos:** Asia Gardens Hotel



The Asia Gardens Hotel & Thai Spa, located on the slopes of Sierra Cortina near Benidorm, has been named "Best Hotel in Spain 2024" by the World Travel Awards. This prestigious accolade highlights the excellence and quality of its services, cementing the establishment as a benchmark in the national hospitality sector.

Situated approximately 1.2 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and about a 30 minutes drive from Alicante Airport, Asia Gardens offers panoramic sea views and is surrounded by lush tropical gardens that capture the essence of Southeast Asia. Its Asian inspired architectural design and unique gardens, featuring over 3,000 species brought from Asia, create an atmosphere of serenity and exclusivity.

The hotel offers various room categories, all decorated in a modern Balinese style and equipped with the amenities expected of a five-star establishment. Accommodation options include:

Deluxe Room: Spacious 377 sq. ft rooms with views of tropical gardens, pools, or mountains. They feature a private terrace and are equipped with all necessary comforts for a pleasant stay.

Deluxe Suite: These suites provide additional space and panoramic views from large terraces. Some suites include a hot tub on the terrace, offering an exclusive retreat for relaxation.

Presidential Suite: The most luxurious option at the hotel, covering 1,507 sq. ft, featuring expansive spaces, spectacular views, and exclusive services for an unparalleled experience.

Asian Flavors with a Mediterranean Soul

Asia Gardens boasts a diverse culinary offering that blends Asian and Mediterranean flavors, spread across nine restaurants:

Udaipur Restaurant: Offers a buffet with a wide selection of international and local dishes, perfect for sampling a variety of flavors in one setting.

Koh Samui Restaurant: Specializing in Indonesian cuisine, it serves delicious curries and other traditional dishes from Southeast Asia.

In Black Restaurant: Delivers a fusion culinary experience in an exclusive setting, ideal for those seeking a sophisticated dining experience.

Palapa Restaurant: Located by the pool, it offers light and refreshing dishes, perfect for daytime enjoyment.

In addition, the hotel features several bars and lounges where guests can enjoy a wide selection of drinks and cocktails in a relaxed atmosphere.

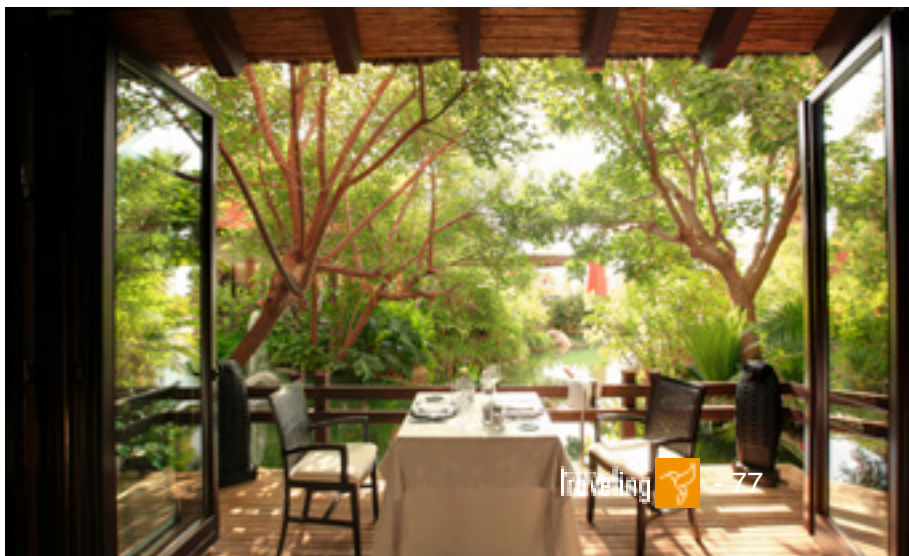


Langkawi Suite

Entrance of the Kok Samui restaurant



In Black Restaurant



Spa and Wellness

Inspired by Thai tradition, this space is adorned with natural elements and surrounded by tropical gardens, featuring a heated pool and a hot tub that create a serene environment for guests. Among the standout treatments are the **Traditional Thai Massage**, which combines stretches and pressure techniques to relieve tension, and aromatic massages with essential oils to relax and nourish the skin.

To ensure the highest quality, the spa uses products from **Elemis and Natura Bissé**, luxury brands renowned for their effectiveness in skincare. These treatments include rejuvenating facials, body wraps, and firming massages, all designed to enhance both skin appearance and overall well-being.

The spa also offers personalized wellness experiences and couples' **rituals**, **alongside yoga** classes and **hydrotherapy sessions**, fostering an atmosphere of balance and relaxation. With a focus on customization and excellence, the Thai Spa guarantees that each visit is a transformative experience of peace and renewal



Spa and relaxation areas



Yoga practice by the pond in the hotel's gardens



Facilities and services

The hotel boasts nine outdoor pools, five of which are heated, including the **Langkawi infinity pool** and the **Caras de Angkor pool**, which is exclusively for adults.

The lush **tropical gardens**, filled with the scent of hibiscus and winding lakes teeming with a variety of Koi fish, create an idyllic setting for strolling and unwinding.

For younger guests, the hotel features a **Miniclub** open most of the day, offering supervised activities to entertain children while allowing parents to relax and enjoy the hotel's amenities.

In addition, Asia Gardens provides facilities for **tennis and paddle tennis**, with exclusive courts that overlook the sea, delivering a truly unique sporting experience.

Events and meetings

The hotel features a 37,675 sq. ft. convention center, comprising two large halls that can be divided into up to nine separate spaces, with capacities ranging from **30 to 1,000 guests**. These facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art technology, making them perfect for hosting corporate events, conferences, and high-level meetings.

Commitment to excellence

The recognition as the "**Best Hotel in Spain 2024**" highlights Asia Gardens Hotel & Thai Spa's commitment to service excellence and guest satisfaction. Its membership in the "Leading Hotels of The World" ensures standards of quality and luxury, positioning it as a top destination for couples seeking tranquility and families looking to enjoy an unforgettable vacation.

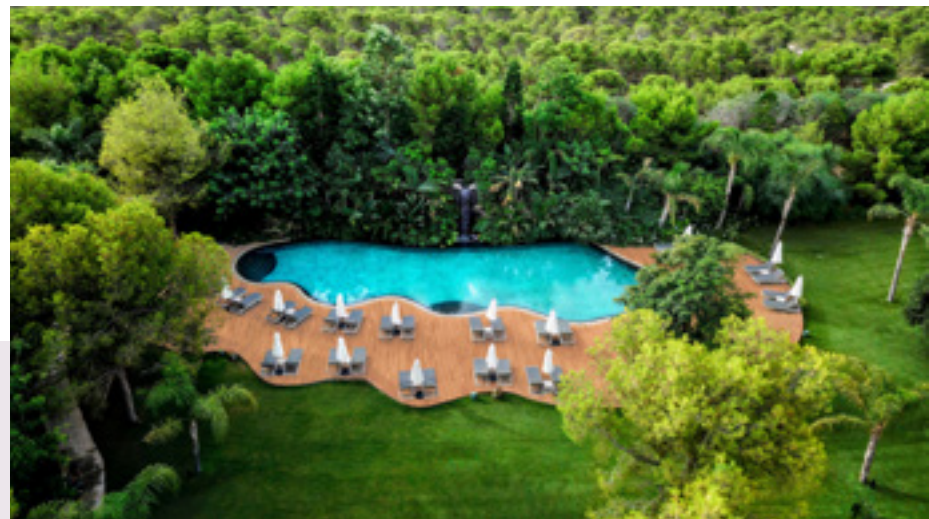
Asia Gardens Hotel & Thai Spa seamlessly blends the serenity and exotic allure of Southeast Asia with the warmth of the Mediterranean, offering a truly unique experience that has gained recognition both nationally and internationally. Its luxurious accommodations, diverse culinary offerings, wellness facilities, and unwavering commitment to quality make it a standout choice for those seeking a luxurious stay in Spain.



Bomsay Bar, views of the gardens and Benidorm on the horizon



Angkor Faces Pool



ASIA GARDENS
HOTEL & THAI SPA



NAHIA LAIZ



Nahia Laiz

By: Julián Sacristán - comunicacion@wfm.es

Nahia Laiz stars in *The Book*, the new horror film that will have you glued to the screen.

For Nahia, acting is her top priority, and theater is her passion, her school, and her foundation. In her own words, "I started doing theater at the age of 12 with a wonderful man, Ramón Barea." She also writes, produces, and directs short films a true 100% creator.

And speaking of *The Book*, tell us something about your work as a writer.

I wrote *Vudú*, a comedy that an NGO requested from us, as well as the short film *Los Hijos*, which is currently touring the world and has won 30 awards. I've also written a children's book called *Te daré la tierra* (I Will Give You the Earth).

Have you often balanced theater, film, and TV series?

Yes, having a foundation in theater is essential, and transitioning to audiovisual work is much easier with it. Each medium is incredibly rewarding, and it depends on the moment—I feel the need to nourish myself with either theater or fiction.

How did this rather... unsettling film come about?

By chance. I had never done anything like this before, although when I was 18 and moved to Madrid, I worked in a haunted house attraction, which was my only experience in this genre. A co-star in the film, Hwda, suggested to the producers that they check out my work, and I must have made a good impression because they quickly sent me the full script.

How did you prepare for such a pivotal role where your character is the anchor of the film?

It's true—I'm in almost every minute of the movie. I prepared by exploring the solitude of Verónica, the character, and trying to understand why a journalist and mother would embark on such a journey. I didn't approach it as if I were making a horror film—just as when I do comedy, I don't think about making people laugh.

Your theatrical background is evident.

It's essential. Moreover, this character has many moments of silence, and in theater, you learn to work with silence and fill it with authenticity.

Where was it filmed?

In an abandoned house in Lorca, the atmosphere was incredibly cold, and the shoot took place at night, with the house itself playing a major role. I think it conveys a lot since it's a natural setting.

The shoot involved you spending a lot of time alone with the technical team.

It was wonderful because we became like a family and understood each other very well, even though we didn't know each other beforehand. I believe teamwork is essential. Plus, the director is an extraordinary person—he had so much fun, and everything around us felt like an amusement park. There was this sense of play, which made everything much easier.

How would you define The Book?

A thriller that aims to shed light on the voices of women silenced throughout history, some of whom were burned as witches.

What can you tell us about your character in The Book?

Verónica... she's a woman who follows her instincts.

Let's get to know you a little more. On television, you've worked on major series, even daily ones.

Which character has left a mark on you?

África, because of the subtle way the issues were portrayed. It was a character that had a big impact, and I think it helped open many windows of awareness.

How did the short film Los Hijos come about, where you are the director, writer, producer, and actress?

It came from a need to do things my way. I tackled a subject that I think is very important—the mental health of a woman who is both an artist and a mother.

Is it a reflection on mental health, motherhood, or sometimes how issues are resolved with medication?

Motherhood influences many aspects of life, including my profession.

How does the experience of being both a director and an actress work?

It all depends on having a great team around you. That's absolutely fundamental.

Do you have many new projects in the works?

I'm currently preparing another short film, this time focusing on the topic of childhood abuse. I've definitely caught the directing bug—I've directed some commercial work, but mainly as a tool to bring my own projects to life.

Tell us about your children's book, Te dará la tierra.

What I do is connect the sensory world with elements of nature to help parents. I'd love to adapt it into a theatrical play.

Nahia is a restless and brave creator who, as an actress in *The Book*, delivers a performance so compelling that you find yourself following her almost without blinking. It's a story with much more than meets the eye, where books will never be the same again.





This Christmas the immersive experiences are shows that immerse us in fascinating environments such as Tomorrowland and Nature illuminated Live.

Tomorrowland

Get ready with family or friends to step into the magical world of Tomorrowland and discover a new way to explore some of the most iconic themes in its history. Designed for audiences of all ages, the immersive Tomorrowland experience offers visitors an unforgettable 45-minute journey powered by cutting-edge technology.

Starting with a walk down memory lane through 20 years of Tomorrowland's history, visitors will get to know one of the largest and most iconic festivals in the world.

Next, several digital installations allow attendees to explore key features, values, and iconic objects of Tomorrowland, offering a sneak peek before stepping into the mythical realms of Tomorrowland for a unique and unprecedented virtual reality experience at the WiZink Center (the crystal room).



Nature illuminated Live

From November 26 to January 6.

Returning to Madrid after its dazzling showcase at the New York Botanical Garden —where The Nightmare Before Christmas experience is selling out fast— this edition of **Naturaleza Encendida in Madrid** is a tribute to life, the natural world, and the importance of preserving the Biosphere. The experience takes visitors on a journey through three major natural realms: aquatic, terrestrial, and aerial.

Upon entering, guests are welcomed by a stunning display of lights before diving into a fantastical underwater world straight out of Jules Verne's imagination. Marvel at **giant whales, octopuses, jellyfish**, and even creatures from the mysterious abyssal depths.

Emerging to the surface, visitors venture into the terrestrial realm, encountering wild animals and exotic insects that transport them to other worlds. The journey concludes as they take flight into the aerial realm, heightening their senses and discovering that even the smallest flutter can create an unforgettable sensation.

All this magic awaits at **Tierno Galván Park**.





Manena's window

Traveling Anecdotes

Photos and text: Manena Munar manena.munar@gmail.com

'It is those little things... as Joan Manuel Serrat would sing, which after a trip remain in the memory and when you remember them you smile, cry or laugh out loud. I would like to take some of them out of the boot of my memories and share them with you.

Charming Christmas markets, the many faces of Santa Claus, and the Beatles as the soundtrack were the stars of an unforgettable Christmas in Hamburg.

The very name of Hamburg evokes tender and joyful childhood memories for me. My father often traveled to the Baltic city for work. It was a time when anything from abroad seemed like a luxury, and he always returned laden with gifts: chocolates of every flavor, German sausages, 33-rpm records to play on the turntable that the Three Kings had just brought us, and that multicolored wool beret with a black pompom, which I still treasure to this day.

The music he brought was from German singers with deep, resonant voices that we imagined performing while clinking ceramic mugs adorned with hunting motifs. My father even brought one of those mugs home, though I never dared to pour my little Mahou beer into it.

The boys from Liverpool

In those days, the Beatles were everything. The four young men from Liverpool with their "long" hair—though now I chuckle at what was then considered a "mop-top"—had burst onto the European scene, pushing aside the French and Italian music that had been all the rage. Who would have thought that years later, on a press trip, I would meet the biggest Beatles fan in Hamburg? The very city where the now world-famous band got their start, back when hardly anyone knew them, and where English pop was already being thoroughly enjoyed..

Santa Claus wears sunglasses

It was the eve of Christmas. The city was adorned, and Christmas markets with different themes could be found in every neighborhood. We had already visited quite a few, including the surreal Santa Pauli in St. Pauli, the Reeperbahn red-light district of Hamburg, where my expression soured at the sight of a sign that read, "Women Not Allowed"; luckily, it was an old relic! This was also the neighborhood where the Beatles held their first concerts.

There, a sunglass-wearing Santa Claus, ready to head off to Florida in a red convertible, flew above the market decorated with irreverent Christmas items. A cheeky nod that brought Christmas back to its essence at the Rathausmarkt, the Christmas market in the Town Hall Square. I loved it.

It fulfilled all my childhood – and adult – expectations of the magic of a Christmas market, decorated just like the tales of the Brothers Grimm. As is typical of me, I felt an impatient urge to see everything, buy everything, and eat everything. I decided to calm myself with a cup of traditional mulled wine, Glühwein, and proceeded to enjoy the market at a slower pace. Strolling among the delightful stalls of food, clothing, and Christmas decorations, another side of Santa Claus appeared, flying over the market, not in a convertible, but in a classic sleigh pulled by four reindeer, with Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, leading the way, as it should be...

From the Ferris wheel

The air smelled of gingerbread cookies, and a vintage Ferris wheel spun at the Binnenalter, offering views of Lake Alster, crowned by a giant Christmas tree. I didn't hesitate to hop on, using the excuse of taking panoramic photos. Each turn of the wheel gave me a new shot: lakeside installations painted with fairy tale scenes where children learned to make Christmas treats, the many stalls offering a bit of everything, and, above all, the people. They were dressed for winter in scarves, gloves, and coats—many wearing reindeer antlers or the quintessential red Santa hat. That Santa Claus, dressed by Coca-Cola, bore little resemblance to the true Saint Nicholas—regal, with no belly and certainly not dressed in soda colors. Ah, well...

On whether to buy a drum...

Before continuing with the protagonist of this story, the Beatles fan, I can't help but mention how, during a visit to the great Günter Grass museum in the nearby town of Lübeck, references to his magnificent work *The Tin Drum* were everywhere. Both the book and the film left a lasting impression on me—the story of little Oskar, who decided not to grow and continuously played his tin drum with red and white diamonds as a symbol of protest. I couldn't resist buying a similar drum for my beloved Teito.

My travel companions thought it was the worst idea, imagining young and sensitive parents enduring the constant serenade of a child pounding relentlessly on a drum. Still, I brought it home, and when unpacking, my then-baby climbed into the suitcase and found the controversial drum, which remains part of his childhood treasures to this day.



The places where the boys from Liverpool started to play



Christmas market in the Town Hall Square



Christmas Parades in Hamburg



Typical Christmas mulled wine Glühwein



Stephanie Hempel and wide smile

Stephanie's Tour

Stephanie Hempel welcomed us at the Feistrasse metro station, near the port, with a beaming smile, singing "All you need is love...". She kicked off her tour by sharing how she grew up in East Germany, the DDR, where the Beatles were her musical heroes from a young age. Her uncle used to bring her cassettes from the other side of the wall, which she would listen to over and over, singing their songs with passion and a keen ear—she learned them all by heart. After the wall fell, Stephanie didn't forget her dream, turning it into a way of life by specializing in the Beatles' early days in Hamburg through her tour, hempels-musictour.de. Stephanie explained that when the Beatles first arrived in Hamburg, the band from Liverpool included John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and occasionally Pete Best and Stuart Sutcliffe. Later, the famous and incomparable Ringo Starr joined the group, already making his mark and rising in Hamburg's vibrant music scene. Stephanie showed us the places where the Beatles played and lived in Hamburg, including the hair salon where the band came up with their iconic Moptop haircut. This style, which sparked a fashion revolution, was inspired by the French bob of photographer Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe's girlfriend at the time. Before his untimely death, Sutcliffe had been part of the Beatles during those formative Hamburg years.

And so, with a tin drum, the lingering sweetness of gingerbread cookies, and humming "Yesterday", we bid farewell to the enchanting city of Hamburg at Christmastime.

Hamburg's Alster Lake, decked with Christmas decorations



traveling

gourmets



UMBRÍA

Flavors and traditions
of authentic Italy

FINCA LA TORRE

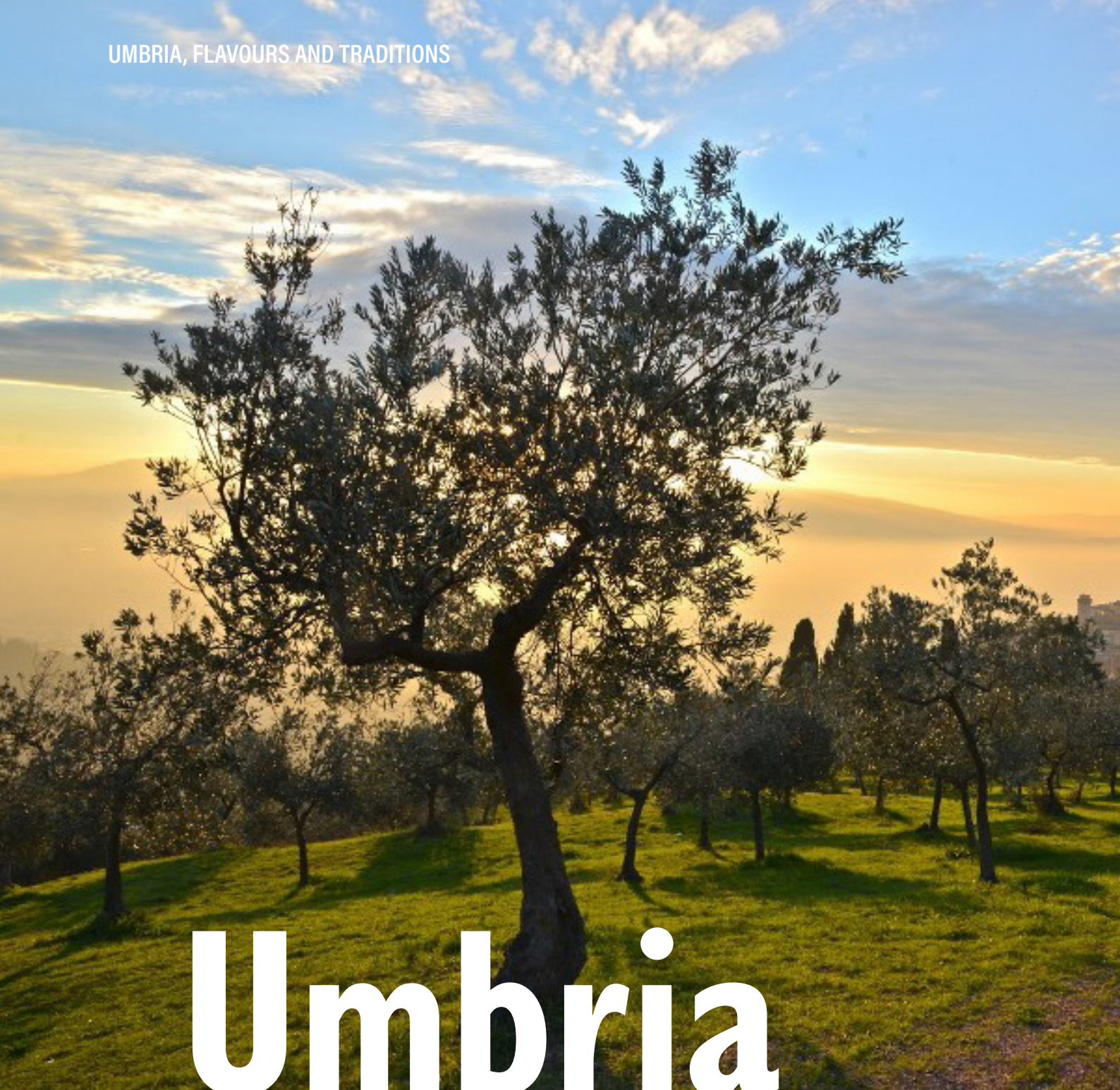
The Soul of
Malaga's EVOO

WINERIES BENTOMIZ

Tradition and excellence

DESPECHO MADRID

Passion, Flavor, and Music



Umbria



**A journey through the
flavors and traditions of
the most authentic Italy**

Text: Editorial Staff - **Photography:** Umbriatourism and archive

Stage 1 - An ancient encounter between man and nature

The itinerary begins in the "Fascia Olivata," a picturesque Umbrian landscape marked by centuries-old olive groves stretching over 25 miles between Assisi and Spoleto. This route, which also includes the towns of Spello, Foligno, Trevi, and Campello sul Clitunno, exemplifies the harmony between humans and nature. Along the way, you'll find historical and architectural treasures, such as hermitages and Benedictine abbeys, many tied to the figure of Saint Francis.

The olive-growing tradition in Umbria dates back to the Etruscans, as evidenced by olive pits found in tombs from the 7th century BC. One of the major attractions is the olive tree of Sant'Emiliano in Trevi, considered one of the oldest in Italy. It boasts a trunk 30 feet in circumference, stands 16 feet tall, and has an impressive history spanning over 1,800 years.

Renowned for its DOP extra virgin olive oil, Umbria produces oil with a robust and fruity flavor, ranking among the most prized in Italy. Local mills process olives harvested in autumn to create the "green gold" that enhances everything from traditional bruschetta to more elaborate dishes. The primary olive variety is Moraiolo, known for its resilience and suitability for mountainous terrain, making up at least 60% of the oil, balanced with Leccino and Frantoio varieties for a perfect blend of flavors.

Each year, from mid-October to mid-November, the Frantoi Aperti event celebrates Umbria's DOP olive oil, making it the star of regional cuisine. During this event, you can savor traditional recipes like bruschetta with fresh olive oil and garlic, or enhanced with a touch of truffle—an ideal pairing for pasta dishes such as strangozzi.

To delve deeper into olive culture, visit the Museum of the Olive Civilization in Trevi, which features a historical collection of tools documenting the production and preservation of olive oil. Additionally, the terraced olive groves of Campello Alto, where the hills meet the Apennine Mountains, and the wineries of Montefalco and Bevagna offer unique tasting experiences.



Olive grove, and in the background the village of Trevi

Umbria offers a unique gastronomic and cultural experience, featuring authentic products such as extra virgin olive oil, black truffles, cheeses, and cured meats. This Italian region blends history and nature, making every corner and every dish an invitation to discovery



Preparation of Saffron Pasta ©Umbriatourism

Stage 2 - The Red Gold of Cascia

Continuing towards Valnerina, you reach Cascia, a place renowned for the cultivation of saffron, a spice of Eastern origin introduced to Italy by the Phoenicians. During the Middle Ages, saffron trade flourished, prized not only in cooking but also for dyeing fabrics, as well as in medicine and cosmetics. Historical figures such as Alexander the Great, who used it to dye his hair, and Cleopatra, who mixed it with honey in her creams, took advantage of its properties. Even the painter Pietro Vannucci (Perugino) used saffron stigmas to add color to his works in the year 1500.

The Municipal Statutes of Cascia from the 14th century severely penalized anyone who damaged saffron crops, while in Perugia during the 13th century, its cultivation was restricted to local residents. In Spoleto, records document saffron thefts, and in certain areas, it was used as currency. In the 18th century, Cascia's "crociari" traveled to the Kingdom of Sicily, exchanging saffron for gold, silver, and precious stones.

Saffron is also known as the "spice of good cheer" because safranal, the compound responsible for its aroma, has relaxing properties. Its harvest is a meticulous process: from each purple flower, three bright red stigmas are manually extracted, and it takes over 200 flowers to produce a single gram of these prized culinary threads.

Today, after a period of neglect, saffron cultivation has been revitalized by local farmers. Its distinctive aroma enhances traditional dishes such as legume soups, pasta, gnocchi, or polenta, as well as main courses of meat or fish. In Cascia, you can find unique creations like saffron-infused beers, whose amber tones are intensified by the spice, or cheeses like pecorino and caciotta, which take on a distinctive flavor. Saffron Tozzetti, cookies made with almonds or hazelnuts, are an ideal pairing with a glass of Sagrantino di Montefalco Passito DOCG or Vin Santo di Trevi.

Each year, between October and November, the Saffron Market Exhibition in Cascia offers an opportunity to explore its many culinary uses and benefits. Additionally, the Zafferiamo

event, held in Città della Pieve, highlights another key region for producing this cherished spice.

Stage 3 - Norcia: Norcineria and What Lies Beneath the Ground

The journey continues in Norcia, renowned for its tradition of norcineria, the ancient art of processing pork. Local shops produce some of Italy's most prized cured meats, such as Norcia PGI ham, lombo, capocollo, and sanguinaccio, each crafted with unique methods of preparation and preservation. The role of the norcino (pork butcher) became an established profession between the 12th and 17th centuries, expanding to cities like Rome, Florence, and Bologna, where corporations and guilds emerged.

In addition to their skills as butchers, the norcini were also known as surgeons during the Middle Ages. The school of surgery at the Abbey of Sant'Eutizio in Preci was famous across Europe, and in 1588, a surgeon from Preci performed cataract surgery on Queen Elizabeth I of England.



Black truffle from Norcia



White truffle against the backdrop of Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera in the City of Castello ©umbriatourism

This tradition is so significant that the slaughter of a pig was sculpted into the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia. por los hermanos Pisano.

One of the most popular dishes in the region is pasta alla norcina, made with fresh sheep's milk ricotta and sausage. This recipe, which makes use of leftover pork, has variations that include ingredients like aged pecorino, guanciale, and black truffle. Norcia is also a prominent area for truffle harvesting, with truffles taking center stage at the **NERO NORCIA** event, a truffle fair held between February and March.



Guanciale o barbozzo ©umbriatourism

Truffles, especially the **Trifola variety**, are highly prized and harvested year-round. The **National Exhibition of Fine White Truffles**, held in November, provides a unique opportunity to savor dishes that highlight the truffle's exquisite aroma. Historical figures like Lord Byron appreciated the truffle's intense fragrance for inspiration, and since the Renaissance, it has been a revered product among chefs worldwide.

During this exhibition, visitors can taste the **picatoste briaco**, one of the region's oldest desserts, made with stale bread, chocolate, almonds, and alchermes. This dessert pairs perfectly with a glass of Cannaiola, the young wine, or the smoked Vin Santo from Città di Castello, a delicacy recognized by Slow Food.

Sausage dryer in Norcia (norcineria)



Norcia's cured meats pair beautifully with local cheeses, such as pecorino di Norcia, made on local farms. Many restaurants offer platters of cured meats and cheeses served with honey or preserves, paired with wines like Sagrantino di Montefalco or Rosso di Torgiano, which enhance their flavors.

Norcia stands as a guardian of the art of butchery and a hub of a gastronomic culture deeply rooted in the region, offering endless culinary treasures to discover.



Castelluccio di Norcia in the mist
Castelluccio lentils, a PGI product since 1997



Queso ricotta





Colourful fields in bloom in Castelluccio di Norcia

Stage 4 - Its fields are a spectacle of colours

Finally, we arrive at Castelluccio di Norcia, renowned for its IGP lentils and the breathtaking spring bloom of its plains. This small village, located at 4,764 feet above sea level, is celebrated both for the quality of its legumes and its stunning landscapes.

The lentils of Castelluccio, registered as an IGP product in 1997, stand out for their organoleptic properties and do not require soaking before cooking. Historically known as “the poor man’s meat,” they are prized for their high content of iron, proteins, and minerals. These lentils are small and colorful, requiring around 35 to make up just one gram.

Recently, these lentils have even been used in brewing, lending the beer a delicate profile and a unique legume aroma. Another noteworthy legume in the region is the roveja, similar to a pea with hues ranging from brown to red and green. Recognized as a Slow Food Presidium since 2006, it is commonly used in soups and minestrone.

A hearty lentil or roveja soup, made with fresh ingredients and a generous drizzle of olive oil, captures the authentic flavors of the region. The area’s nearly untouched pastures also enhance the taste of its cheeses, especially the salted and aged ricotta. Known for its pear-like shape and versatility in the kitchen, this ricotta is a standout, whether seasoned with oil and pepper or grated over dishes.

This dairy product has its roots in a time when the breeding of sheep and goats was essential to the economy of the Upper Nera Valley, where shepherds needed to preserve and transport dairy products during the transhumance at the end of summer.

To experience the most flavorful dishes and recipes of the region, all you need to do is follow the gastronomic route: the aromas, textures, and nuances of authentic Umbria will captivate you. Discover traditional dishes made with fresh, local ingredients, from homemade pastas to exquisite cured meats and regional wines. An experience that will delight your senses and allow you to immerse yourself in the rich culinary culture of Umbria.

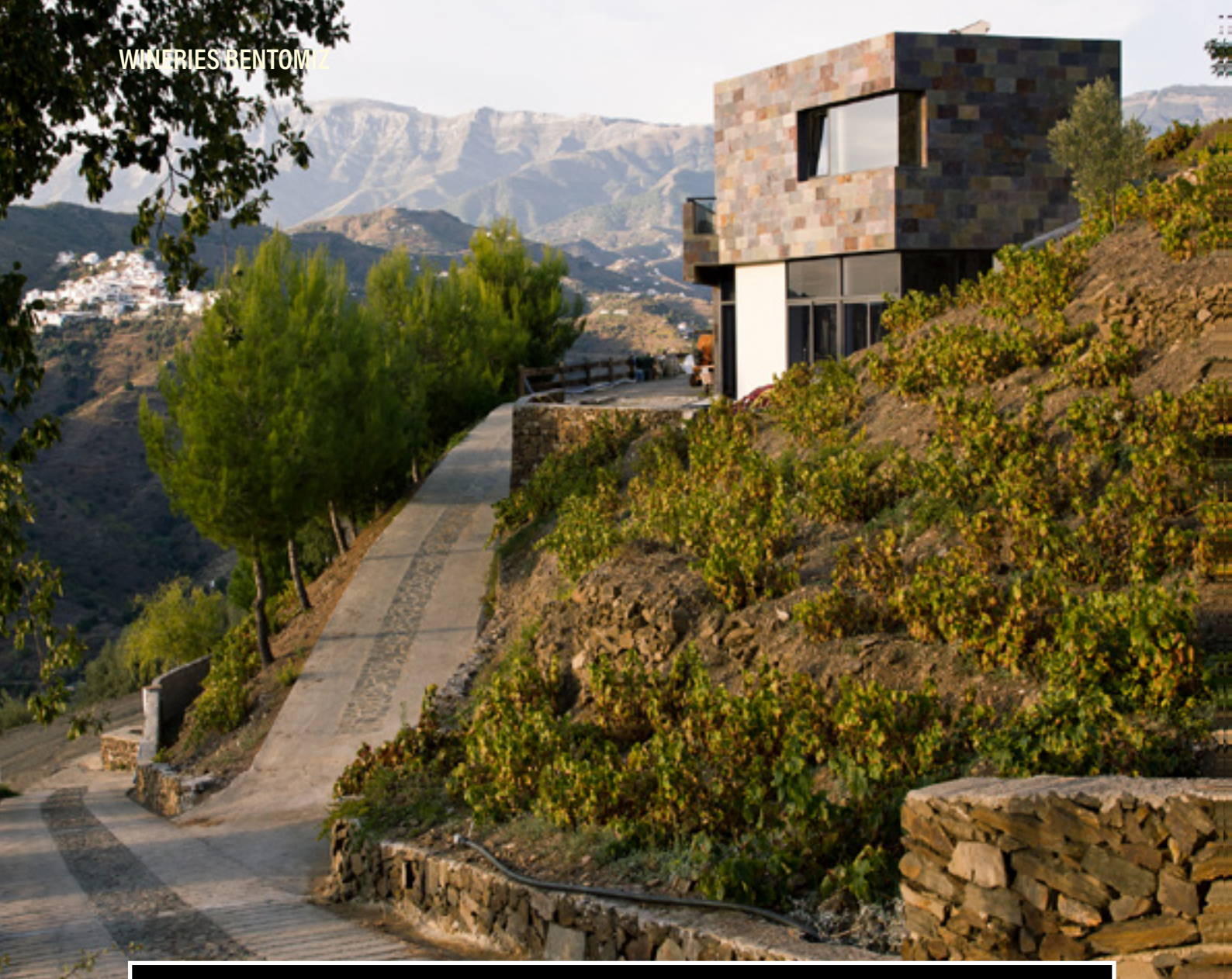
Let yourself be surprised!

Discover much more about Italian cuisine



Umbriatourism

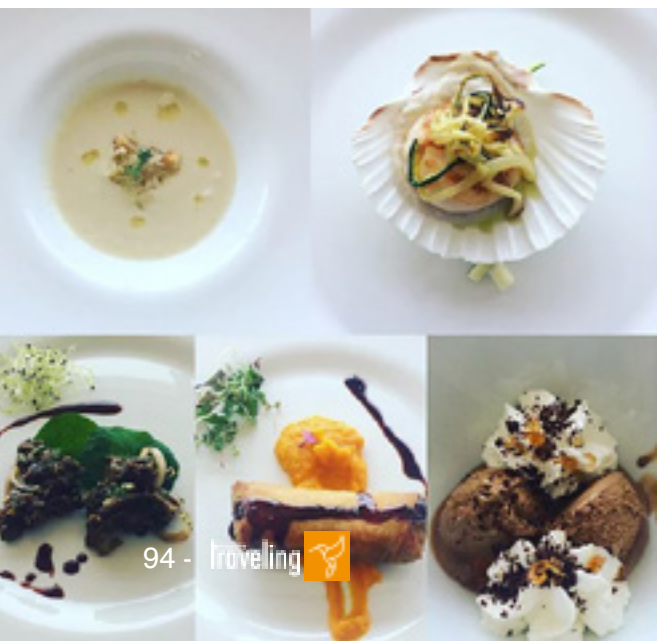




Wineries Bentomiz

Tradition, winemaking excellence, and gastronomy in la Axarquía

Text: Editorial staff Photography: Wineries Bentomiz



In the heart of La Axarquía in Málaga, nestled among mountains and centuries-old vineyards, stands Bodegas Bentomiz, a passionate project that blends tradition and modernity. Founded by Clara Verheij and André Both in 2004, this winery has become a benchmark for artisanal and sustainable viticulture in the region. From its naturally sweet wines to its gastronomic enotours, Bentomiz offers an experience that goes beyond wine, capturing the essence of the land and the commitment of its creators. Discover the history, flavors, and spirit that make Bentomiz a gem in Andalusia's oenology.

In 1995, Clara Verheij and André Both arrived in Sayalonga, a village in Málaga's Axarquía, with the intention of starting a new life. Captivated by the region's winemaking heritage, they acquired a small estate with old vines and began producing wines in an artisanal way. What began as a hobby quickly turned into a passion, and in 2004 they founded Bodegas Bentomiz with the goal of elevating the quality of their wines and sharing their love for wine with others.

A Winery in Harmony with Its Surroundings

Designed by architect Henk van der Woude in collaboration with André Both, Bodegas Bentomiz naturally integrates into the landscape of Sayalonga. This architectural harmony reflects the founders' commitment to sustainability and respect for the environment. Clara, a self-taught winemaker, oversees the production of every wine, while André manages the winery's restaurant, creating pairings that enhance the unique qualities of the wines.

Unique wines: The search for subtlety and elegance

From the beginning, Clara has had the vision of producing wines with their own identity, characterized by subtlety, freshness, and elegance. Bodegas Bentomiz produces both dry and sweet wines, following a philosophy of respect for the grape and its surroundings. Their main varieties are the native Moscatel de Alejandría and Romé, along with Tempranillo, Merlot, and Pedro Ximénez, all sourced from nearby vineyards.

The harvest is done manually, with a strict selection to ensure the best quality grapes. The musts ferment in stainless steel tanks at controlled temperatures, producing wines of high purity and expression.



Clara Verheij and André Both



"In my life, I enjoy creating beautiful things for people. With quality, local products, I prepare dishes that harmonize with our wines"



Clara Verheij during the reception and weighing of the grapes

In dry white and rosé wines, aging on fine lees adds complexity without losing freshness. In reds, prolonged barrel aging is avoided to preserve the characteristics of the grape, always aiming for balance in the final product.

Speciality: naturally sweet wines sweet

One of the hallmarks of Bodegas Bentomiz is its "naturally sweet wines," made using the traditional drying method, where the grapes are sun-dried on the historic drying racks of the Axarquía. This process concentrates the sugars and aromas of the fruit. When they reach the optimal point, the musts ferment under controlled conditions, and the fermentation is halted by cooling the tanks, preventing the addition of alcohol and preserving the freshness and elegance of the wine.

Commitment to the land and the heritage of the Axarquía

Located in the eastern part of the Axarquía, Bodegas Bentomiz takes full advantage of the region's unique features: proximity to the Mediterranean, high-altitude vineyards, and slate soils with white quartz. These conditions, coupled with a favorable climate, enable the production of wines with exceptional quality and character.

The winery is dedicated to capturing the essence of this land, focusing primarily on native grape varieties and practicing heroic viticulture. Due to the rugged terrain, its mission includes preserving and reviving rare grape varieties while supporting local growers who contribute high-quality grapes, keeping the tradition of ancient vineyards alive.

A project based on people, land and dedication

The winery's philosophy is rooted in respect and care for every stage of the winemaking process. A dedicated team oversees each step, from the arrival of the grapes to bottling, ensuring the quality that defines Bodegas Bentomiz. For Clara and André, this project is more than a business: it is a way of life and a legacy they hope to share with everyone who tastes their wines. Looking to the future, Bodegas Bentomiz sets new goals with the same passion that has driven them from the start, striving to continue crafting high-quality, long-lasting wines to be enjoyed both now and in the years to come.

Wine tourism in wineries Bentomiz

Since 2015, the winery has offered an immersive wine and gastronomy experience, combining the exploration of its ancient vineyards and winemaking techniques with a gourmet culinary offering, designed for both individual visitors and organized groups.

The average age of the vineyards is 80–100 years, with very low yields of approximately 3.3 lbs per vine. The shallow slate soils, combined with the sea breezes, contribute to the wines' minerality and salinity

André Both at the cooker



WINERIES WITH SOUL

Wine Tasting and Tour: The experience begins with a guided tour of the vineyards and production facilities, where visitors get an up-close look at native grape varieties like Moscatel de Alejandría and Romé, as well as the winemaking techniques that distinguish the winery's offerings. The tour includes a tasting session in the elegant tasting room, allowing guests to explore the nuances of the Axarquía terroir through the Ariyanas wine collection.

Gourmet Lunch: Following the tasting, the tour concludes with a gourmet lunch starting at 2:00 PM in a relaxed and elegant setting. The winery's restaurant offers three-, five-, or ten-course menus specifically designed to pair with its wines. These menus accommodate all dietary restrictions, ensuring an inclusive experience for all visitors.

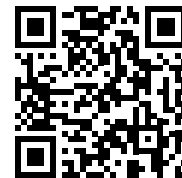
Hours and Reservations: The winery welcomes wine tourism from Wednesday to Sunday year-round, providing flexibility for those seeking this unique experience. Advance booking is highly recommended due to high demand and the personalized service, ensuring visitors make the most of their visit.



Wine tourism and haute cuisine in the heart of nature



Breathtaking views from the winery



**Wineries
Bentomiz**

Finca El Almendro



wines tasted

This dry white wine, crafted from Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel de Alejandría, merges the optimal characteristics of the albariza soils of Moriles Altos with the slate of the Axarquía. Fermented at low temperatures and aged for 4 months on fine lees, it boasts 13% alcohol and a fresh, youthful profile with citrus and floral notes, complemented by a hint of minerality.

PiXel 2023



This dry white wine, made from 100% Moscatel de Alejandría, originates from vineyards on the slopes of the Axarquía, with slate soils and strong Mediterranean influence. Hand-harvested and spontaneously fermented in stainless steel, the wine is aged on its fine lees for 8 months, enhancing its complexity and freshness. With 12.5% alcohol, it delivers a distinctive dry and mineral profile.

Ariyanas Seco Sobre Lías Finas 2023



This modern-style red wine blends Merlot, Tempranillo, and Romé, the latter being the native red grape variety of Málaga's Axarquía region. After a manual harvest and separate fermentation for each variety, the wine is aged for 6 months in French oak barrels, achieving a complex and structured profile with 14% alcohol.

Ariyanas Tinto 2020



This naturally sweet wine, made from 100% Moscatel de Alejandría, begins with a manual harvest in 33 lb crates. The grapes are carefully transported to the drying beds, where each cluster is laid out under the sun. Once the desired sugar level is achieved, the grapes are collected and taken to the winery. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks at controlled temperatures until reaching 7 °Be and 13% ABV, at which point fermentation is halted by chilling to (26/25°F).

Ariyanas Naturalmente Dulce 2022



This naturally sweet white wine, made from 100% Moscatel de Alejandría, originates from century-old vineyards in the Axarquía, grown on slate and quartz soils. Following careful sun-drying in traditional drying beds and controlled fermentation, the wine matures for 11 months in French oak barrels, achieving a sweet and elegant profile with 13% ABV.

Ariyanas Terruño Pizarroso 2021



This 100% naturally sweet Merlot is truly unique, standing out for its meticulous sun-drying process and four months of aging in French oak. With manual harvesting and cold maceration, its aromas and color are carefully preserved. Fermentation is halted to maintain its natural sweetness, resulting in a complex wine with 13.5% ABV and remarkable aromatic richness.

Ariyanas David Tinto Dulce 2023



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DEHESA MONTEROS

Passion, Perseverance, and Excellence in the Ronda Mountains

Text: Jose A. Muñoz **Photos:** Jose A. Muñoz y Dehesa Monteros

Nestled in the picturesque Genal Valley in Málaga province, Dehesa Monteros is a brand of premium Iberian hams that has achieved international acclaim in just a few years. Behind this success story is Chelo Gámez, a woman with a unique history of perseverance and a commitment to quality that has made a lasting impact on the livestock industry. This is the journey of a woman who, after years in teaching, chose to take a different path, driven by passion and the ambition to create an authentic and exceptional product.

From the University Chair to the Countryside: The First Steps

Chelo Gámez, a professor of Economic Theory at the University of Málaga, devoted over thirty years to teaching, shaping generations of economists and earning the respect and admiration of her students and colleagues. However, her life took an unexpected turn when she opted for early retirement to care for her husband, whose health was fragile. Following his passing, Chelo entered a period of introspection, searching for a new purpose. Inspired by her love for rural life and nature, she decided to pursue a long-held dream.

In 2004, she purchased an estate in the stunning Genal Valley, captivated by the area's unmatched natural beauty and the potential of the land. Initially, she considered creating a charming rural hotel near the river but eventually shifted her focus to a more productive venture: extensive livestock farming. The estate, which she named Pujerra, became the foundation for her new passion—raising Iberian pigs in a pristine natural setting and producing high-quality foods with a distinctive and authentic Málaga identity.

The Beginnings: Innovation and Tradition

Chelo's journey into livestock farming began in 2005 with a modest herd of 50 purebred Iberian pigs. Just a few years later, in 2008, the brand La Dehesa de los Monteros was born, created with the goal of bringing exceptional quality products to the market. Combining traditional methods with innovative techniques, the brand reflects Chelo's deep love for her land and its traditions.

Today, the company operates across 14 breeding estates spanning approximately 4,430 acres, with slopes of up to 45%, requiring nearly 1,000 pigs to undertake extra exercise as they traverse the terrain. This unique feature is one of the distinguishing factors of Dehesa Monteros' hams and cured meats. Another is their diet: the pigs are raised freely and fed with native chestnuts from the Valle del Genal during the premontanera phase, before moving on to the traditional acorn-based montanera phase.

This practice, unparalleled in its kind, imbues the products with a distinctive flavor and aroma, highlighting the uniqueness of the pigs' natural environment. This approach has been pivotal in setting Dehesa Monteros apart in the market, enabling it to compete on equal footing with other leading brands in the industry.



Chelo Gamez, founder of Dehesa Monteros

Iberian Pig in the Pre-Montanera Season Eating Chestnuts





Iberian pigs live freely in the countryside.

Compromiso con la raza autóctona y la biodiversidad

Chelo's commitment goes beyond the quality of the final product; it also extends to the preservation of local biodiversity. In 2015, Dehesa Monteros joined a project in collaboration with the University of Córdoba and the Finca La Algaba to recover the Rubio Dorado breed, an indigenous Iberian pig variety native to the Serranía de Ronda and the province of Cádiz, which was on the brink of extinction. This breed, particularly well-adapted to the local environment and its diet, helps maintain ecological balance and ensures a product with unique characteristics, further strengthening Chelo's dedication to authenticity and sustainability.

Conquering International Markets

The quality of Dehesa Monteros' hams and cured meats quickly caught the attention of consumers and experts both nationally and internationally. Starting in 2017, the brand began exporting to demanding markets like Asia, marking a significant step in its expansion. Through collaborations with specialized distributors and participation in international gastronomic events, Dehesa Monteros has successfully established itself in a highly competitive global market. In Spain, its products are available at the Gourmet Club of El Corte Inglés, a milestone that highlights the recognition and trust in their exceptional quality.





Chelo & Chelo, mother and daughter with one of the herds in the field

The Philosophy: Quality and Care

From the very beginning, Chelo and Dehesa Monteros' philosophy has been to produce with quality and without shortcuts. Every ham and every piece of cured meat carries a story of dedication and love for the product and its surroundings. The commitment to natural feeding and free-range farming reflects their focus on excellence, allowing consumers to enjoy a product that goes beyond commercial appeal: it is a tribute to the land, tradition, and the values Chelo Gámez has championed throughout her life.

Dehesa Monteros remains true to this philosophy, maintaining a limited production that prioritizes quality over quantity. This commitment has positioned the brand as a benchmark in artisanal Iberian ham production, attracting customers who value authenticity and sustainability in the products they choose.

Iberian pork loin



Dehesa Monteros is not just a brand of Iberian ham; it is the embodiment of a life dedicated to excellence, innovation, and respect for the environment. The company has successfully positioned itself as a benchmark in the market, proving that tradition and modernity can be combined to create unique, high-quality products. The story of Chelo and Dehesa Monteros will continue to inspire future generations of entrepreneurs and gastronomy enthusiasts, reminding them that with effort and passion, extraordinary goals can be achieved.

DEHESA
MONTEROS





Located just minutes from Antequera, Finca La Torre is more than just an olive oil mill—it's a place where tradition and innovation come together to create an exceptional extra virgin olive oil. With a history dating back to Roman times and an unwavering commitment to excellence, this Malaga estate has established itself as a global benchmark in the olive oil sector, captivating palates and earning awards both in Spain and abroad

FINCA LA TORRE, THE SOUL OF EVOO IN THE HEART OF MÁLAGA

Text: Jose A. Muñoz - **Photos:** Jose A. Muñoz and Finca la Torre



A historical legacy

The history of Finca La Torre is as rich as its oils. This historic site has borne witness to centuries of olive cultivation, starting when the Romans installed the first stone mill on the estate over 2,000 years ago. Its imposing watchtower, built in 1260, still dominates the landscape, serving as a reminder of its illustrious past. For centuries, the mill fell into disuse, but in the 20th century, a German community revived agricultural activities using biodynamic farming practices. Initially a small-scale effort intended mainly for personal consumption, an unexpected turn in the 21st century restored Finca La Torre to its former glory.

In a business transaction, Swiss entrepreneur Daniel S. Aegerter acquired the estate almost by chance. Although unfamiliar with the world of olive cultivation, Aegerter recognized the potential of this remarkable location and decided to invest in its development, hiring top professionals to realize this ambitious vision.

The philosophy of signature oil

The recent history of Finca La Torre began in 2011, when agronomist Víctor Pérez joined the management team. Pérez brought a vision centered on 100% autonomous,

eco-sustainable, and biodynamic production, where every step of the process respects the environment and brings out the best in each olive. For Víctor, producing the world's best extra virgin olive oil is not just a job—it's a passion and a mission. His commitment to organic and biodynamic farming ensures that the fruit is handled with the utmost care, avoiding pesticides and chemicals and adhering to the moon's natural cycles, just as our ancestors did.

Under Pérez's supervision, Finca La Torre has achieved an unprecedented level of excellence, maintaining a consistent organoleptic profile in all its oils year after year, a feat unmatched in the olive oil industry. This dedication has been rewarded with some of the world's most prestigious accolades, including the Spanish Food Award for Best Extra Virgin Olive Oil for five consecutive campaigns and the maximum rating of 100 points in Flos Olei magazine on three occasions.

A Collection of Signature EVOOs

Finca La Torre produces four monovarietal extra virgin olive oils: Hojiblanca, Arbequina, Picudo, and Cornicabra. Each of these EVOOs is a masterpiece in its own right, crafted to showcase the unique character and aromatic profile of the olive variety from which it is derived. These

FINCA LA TORRE

oils are available in gourmet stores and on their website, where they can be purchased in various formats.

Finca La Torre Hojiblanca: Considered the flagship oil of the house, Hojiblanca comes from century-old olive trees and offers a unique complexity. Its aroma is intensely fruity, with notes of freshly cut grass and olive leaves. On the palate, it presents a balanced flavor with hints of green almond and a progressive spiciness.

Finca La Torre Arbequina: Featuring a milder profile, Arbequina is characterized by medium fruitiness and aromas of freshly cut grass and banana. It has a sweet and smooth entry on the palate, with a balanced and slightly spicy flavor.

Finca La Torre Picudo: This oil boasts an intense fruitiness, with aromas of tomato plant and green banana. On the palate, it stands out for its chlorophyll flavor, moderate bitterness, and persistent spiciness, ideal for those seeking an oil with a strong character.

Finca La Torre Cornicabra: True to its variety, Cornicabra offers a sweet entry on the palate that quickly turns

into pronounced bitterness and spiciness—a profile that delights lovers of intense flavors.

In addition to these monovarietals, Finca La Torre offers the exclusive "One" collection, including One Organic Hojiblanca and One Organic Arbequina. These oils are produced with a rigorous selection of the best olives harvested on the first day of the season, resulting in an exceptionally fruity and fresh juice. The One collection is a limited edition, presented in an elegant case containing two 200 ml bottles, perfect for lovers of high-quality extra virgin olive oil.

Innovation and environmental friendliness

The expanse of Finca La Torre is remarkable: 939 acres encompassing pastures, pine forests, and 593 acres of olive groves with 48,000 olive trees. About one-third of these are centuries-old trees, while the rest were planted in 2019 as part of a project to renew traditional olive farming.

Finca La Torre combines traditional techniques with modern practices to ensure the highest quality oil in every drop. Early olive harvesting, beginning in early October, results in a fruitier and greener oil, while cold extraction preserves the fruit's aromatic compounds to the fullest. According to Víctor Pérez, one of the secrets to Finca La Torre's success lies in its quick and carefully managed milling process: only the olives that can be processed the same day are harvested, ensuring each batch retains its freshness and flavor.

An Unmatched Track Record

The oils from Finca La Torre have garnered an impressive array of awards in recent years. From the Hall of Fame in Flos Olei 2024 to the highest score in the IberOleum guide and a gold medal at the New York Olive Oil Times, the products of this Málaga-based mill have cap-

Borja Adrián



Early harvest green virgin olive oil



Hojiblanca Virgin olive oil Bio





At Finca La Torre, every drop of oil is a testament to love for the olive tree and Mediterranean tradition. It is the result of an unwavering commitment to producing the best extra virgin olive oil in the world—a dedication evident not only in its taste but also in the respect for the land and the passion for craftsmanship

 finca
la torre



tivated experts worldwide. These accolades highlight Finca La Torre's commitment to quality and innovation in the olive oil sector, reaffirming its status as one of the world's top producers of extra virgin olive oil. In the New York Olive Oil Times, the products of this Malagueña mill have captivated experts from all over the world. These recognitions reflect the commitment of Finca La Torre to quality and innovation in the olive oil sector, reaffirming its position as one of the best producers of AOVE in the world.

A sensory journey

Visiting Finca La Torre offers a truly immersive experience, connecting visitors to the essence of the land and the art of olive oil production. Strolling among centuries-old olive trees, savoring the aroma of freshly produced oils, and discovering the meticulous production process is a genuine sensory journey. Additionally, the estate provides an opportunity to explore its biodynamic methods, where ancestral knowledge meets the latest in sustainable farming techniques.





View of the "Apartment"

VelascoAbellà

A Gastronomic Experience in the Heart of Chamartín (Madrid)

Text: redacción - **Photos:** Restaurante VelascoAbellà

Montse Abellà and Óscar Velasco





View of the Dining Room

In the world of haute cuisine, where formality and tradition often define the experience, VelascoAbellà emerges as a breath of fresh air in Madrid's culinary scene. Located in the Chamartín district, this restaurant is the deeply personal project of Óscar Velasco and Montse Abellà, a duo who have left an indelible mark on Spain's gastronomic landscape. After two decades leading the legendary Santceloni, Velasco and Abellà have embarked on their own journey—one where every dish, every corner, and every gesture reflects their life philosophy: excellence without pretension and fine dining without formality.

Their journey speaks for itself. As disciples of the unforgettable Santi Santamaría, they earned two Michelin stars and three Repsol Suns at Santceloni, elevating fine dining to iconic status in Madrid. However, Santceloni's closure in 2020 left them at a crossroads that, three years later, has blossomed into a project that transcends the concept of a restaurant—it is an extension of their home.

Located on Víctor Andrés Belaúnde Street, VelascoAbellà is more than just a place to dine; it is a sanctuary where cuisine sheds its labels, where the only rule is to enjoy, and where every guest is welcomed as a friend.

A market-driven, seasonal cuisine with recognizable flavors and refined technique.

The culinary offering at VelascoAbellà is a living, ever-changing menu grounded in respect for ingredients and seasonality. *"We wanted to create a space where the product and its essence take center stage,"* explains Óscar. Their menu consists of approximately 15 savory dishes and 4 or 5 desserts, with options that shift based on market availability. This is complemented by an array of off-menu suggestions, allowing Óscar and Montse to experiment and propose new combinations in tune with the seasons.

Among the savory highlights is the roasted eggplant salad with basil, hazelnut, and black truffle, a dish that honors each ingredient while playing with textures and flavors. Another standout is the garlic shrimp with fried egg and potatoes, a nod to traditional Spanish cuisine elevated by a sophisticated twist.

The flavors are complemented by a minimalist yet meticulous presentation, embodying the essence of VelascoAbellà: simplicity, purity, and authenticity.

Other dishes on the menu include the hake loin with zucchini, onion soup, and smoked cheese, celebrated for its balance and depth of flavors, and the oven-roasted Iberian pork shoulder with avocado, red onion, mint, and cilantro—a fusion of tradition and innovation.

Montse Abellà takes charge of the desserts, maintaining the same philosophy of recognizable ingredients with a modern twist. Her dark chocolate mousse with olive oil, hazelnut, and brandy pays homage to her childhood in Cambrils, blending nostalgia with refined technique. Other standout desserts include citrus with rosemary biscuit and cheese-honey ice cream, and the chocolate soup with passion fruit, olive, and curry, where contrasts intertwine for a delicate and surprising experience.

The Space: An Intimate Refuge with Timeless Design

Entering VelascoAbellà feels like stepping into a minimalist Mediterranean home. The decor, designed by Aitana Miñambres from the Novomueble studio, embraces warm tones and natural materials that evoke simplicity and purity. Stone, wood, and linen take center stage in a

space that balances Mediterranean warmth with a touch of Nordic design, creating a serene and welcoming atmosphere. Every detail of the restaurant reflects Óscar and Montse's philosophy: authenticity and closeness.

The kitchen is the heart of the restaurant, fully visible to all diners, connected to the dining area through a large glass partition that allows every movement of Óscar and his team to be observed. Additionally, VelascoAbellà features a small stone bar with seating for 4 or 5 people, offering guests the opportunity to enjoy the menu in a more intimate and personal setting. This layout aims to break down barriers between the kitchen and the diner, reinforcing the restaurant's commitment to transparency.

Perhaps the most special space in VelascoAbellà is "El Apartamento," a private downstairs area with its own kitchen and seating for up to 20 guests, designed for exclusive events. *"We wanted to offer more than just a table. We wanted a space where people could experience something personalized and unique,"* explains Montse. In "El Apartamento," guests can host events, tastings, presentations, or private dinners in a cozy and intimate atmosphere.

A top-tier wine cellar to elevate the dining experience.

The culinary experience at VelascoAbellà is rounded out by a wine cellar boasting 220 carefully curated labels, including an exquisite selection of champagnes and both national and international wines. Óscar and Montse have worked to provide a variety that caters to all tastes, also offering wines by the glass, an ideal option for those wishing to explore different pairings without committing to a full bottle. The evolving selection reflects the same respect for quality and seasonality that defines the restaurant's cuisine.

The VelascoAbellà philosophy: freedom, simplicity and closeness

What makes VelascoAbellà truly unique is not just the quality of its cuisine but the philosophy behind every dish and gesture. Óscar and Montse have created a space where diners are free from the conventions of fine dining. Here, there are no rigid rules or oppressive formalities; instead, there's a relaxed approach where one can sit at the bar and enjoy half portions if desired or indulge in a six-course tasting menu with two desserts and petits fours.





Veal shank

Chicken wings with lobster and spinach



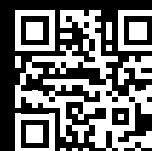
TESTED RESTAURANTS

Smoked spring onions, octopus, grapefruit and almonds

Since its opening in June 2023, VelascoAbellà has established itself on Madrid's culinary scene, not just for its food but for the unique experience it offers. This restaurant is a reflection of its creators—a place where creativity, freedom, and respect for the product lead the way. For Óscar and Montse, true luxury lies in authenticity and the ability to connect with diners, offering them not just a meal but a memorable experience.

Thus, VelascoAbellà becomes a must-visit destination for those seeking more than just a good meal in Madrid. It is an invitation to experience the most intimate side of haute cuisine, to discover the perfect balance between tradition and innovation, and, above all, to be captivated by the taste of authenticity.

VELASCOABELLÀ





In Madrid's ever-evolving nightlife scene, a groundbreaking concept has emerged, blending gastronomy, music, and celebration: **Despecho Madrid**. This establishment serves as a haven for those looking to transform heartbreak into an unforgettable festive experience. Inspired by Mexican clubs and heavily influenced by Latin culture, Despecho offers more than just a meal—it invites guests to dive into a night filled with surprises, flavors, and rhythms that carry on until dawn.

A unique concept for overcoming heartbreak

Located on Hernani Street, in the heart of the Azca district, Despecho Madrid is designed as a meeting point where breakups become the perfect excuse to celebrate. From the moment you step inside, the atmosphere invites you to leave heartbreak behind and immerse yourself in a space brimming with positive energy.

The walls resonate with classic heartbreak songs, while screens play music videos of Spanish hits with subtitles, encouraging everyone to join in a collective karaoke session that both liberates and unites its guests. Here, music becomes a therapeutic tool, helping to mend broken hearts.

Usuzukuri of Yellowtail with Ponzu Sauce and Togarashi



DESPECHO Madrid

**Where Heartbreak
Transforms into
Celebration and
Gastronomy**

Text: Redacción

Photos: Despecho Madrid

Soul-Soothing Gastronomy

Despecho's culinary offering is carefully crafted to cater to a wide range of tastes and budgets without compromising quality. Under the direction of chefs Joaquín Serrano and Jorge Velasco, through their culinary consultancy Salvist, the restaurant presents four set menus that reflect a fusion of traditional flavors with contemporary twists.

"Pa' Olvidar" Menu: Perfect for those seeking an accessible experience, this menu features dishes like the Despecho Ensaladilla, Morimoto-style Falsa Pizza de Atún, and Arranchera Quesadilla with Gouda cheese, guacamole, and mango pico de gallo.

"Dolido" Menu: For those craving more intense flavors, this option includes Fried Corn Tostada with Red Tuna and Egg Yolk, Cochinita Pibil Taco with pickled onion and pico de gallo, and Brioche filled with Oxtail.

"Despechado" Menu: Designed for discerning palates, this menu highlights the XXL Scallop with Leche de Tigre, Usuzukuri of Amberjack with Ponzu Sauce and Togarashi, and a decadent Foie and Truffle Burger.

"Empoderado" Menu: The most exclusive option begins with a welcoming glass of Gosset Grande Reserve Brut champagne, followed by creations such as a Natural Oyster with Bloody Mary, Brioche with Steak Tartare and Comté Cheese, and culminating in the impressive XXL Rib with Tortillas.



Crispy Fried Corn Toast with Red Tuna and Egg Yolk

View of the Dining Room



DESPECHO - MADRID

Each menu includes two hours of unlimited drinks featuring a selection of exclusive wines, such as Marqués de Murrieta 2019, Pazito white wine, or Gran Vino Pazo de Barrantes 2021, as well as beers and sangria.

Desserts like the creamy chocolate cake, the "Heart of Heartbreak," and the Galician Tart provide the perfect sweet finale to the dining experience. The beverage offering is rounded out with a menu of 10 classic cocktails and three signature creations, crafted to perfectly complement the evening.

A night full of surprises surprises and fun

The experience at Despecho goes beyond gastronomy. During dinner, diners are surprised by the arrival of mariachis performing songs dedicated to heartbroken souls, encouraging everyone to release their emotions through music. Additionally, the "Heartache Kit" makes an appearance, offering the signature cocktail "La Olvidona," a special concoction designed to chase away sorrow and lift the spirit.

Starting at 1:30 a.m., the restaurant transforms into a nightclub where the party continues until six in the morning. The tables disappear, the lights dim, and the dance floor comes alive with energy, allowing guests to dance and revel until dawn. This seamless transition from restaurant to nightclub eliminates the need to move elsewhere, offering a complete experience in one place.

Despecho's cocktail bar



Burger with foie and truffle

A space to celebrate life

Despecho Madrid has quickly established itself as a go-to destination for those seeking an experience that combines great food, music, and fun in an atmosphere that celebrates life and personal growth. It's a place where heartbreak turns into laughter, tears become songs, and goodbyes transform into new stories. A space that invites you to leave the past behind and embrace the present with intensity and joy.

For those looking to immerse themselves in this experience, it's recommended to book in advance, as Despecho sells out every weekend. Reservations can be made through their official website or by contacting the restaurant directly.



Oxtail Brioche

Chocolate Cake



Despecho Madrid is not just a restaurant; it's a sanctuary for those looking to turn heartbreak into anecdotes and nights into unforgettable memories. Here, every corner and every dish tells a story, and every toast is an opportunity to reconcile with life itself. Because, in the end, shedding heartbreak is just the first step toward opening your heart to new experiences and celebrating the fact that, at the end of the road, there is always a reason to smile.

And remember, just when you think the night couldn't get any better, Despecho transforms. After dinner, from 1:30 a.m., the tables vanish, and the restaurant turns into a nightclub where the party continues until six in the morning.

DESPECHO MADRID





View of the Tablao

Flamenco

Text: Editorial staff - **Photos:** Flamenco de Leones

de Leones



Madrid has established itself as one of the epicenters of European gastronomy, offering a diverse and dynamic array of options that attract both locals and visitors from around the globe. Among this variety, one of the most unique and recent additions is Flamenco de Leones. This venue provides an immersive experience that transcends food, blending haute cuisine, live performance, and culture in an innovative setting. Striking a balance between tradition and modernity, Flamenco de Leones positions itself as a benchmark in the capital's gastronomic scene, captivating those who seek a complete sensory journey.

A unique concept of cultural and gastronomic fusion

Flamenco de Leones owes its name to a fusion of cultural references: flamenco, evoking the spirit of Spanish music and dance, and the renowned Plaza de los Leones near Plaza de Cibeles. This symbolic interplay reflects the venue's identity, offering a fusion concept where Spanish culinary tradition meets innovative and cosmopolitan elements.

The vision of this restaurant is clear: to create a space where food and art meet and complement each other.

Flamenco de Leones is designed to offer visitors a multisensory experience. From the elegant main dining room to the reserved and exclusive performance area, every corner is crafted to enhance the experience of those who step through its doors. The décor follows a modern aesthetic with classic touches, paying homage to both history and contemporary style. This exclusive atmosphere immerses diners in a unique world where gastronomy and performance seamlessly intertwine.

The Menu: A Tribute to Spanish Cuisine with a Contemporary Touch

Flamenco de Leones' menu is a carefully curated selection of dishes that honor Spanish culinary traditions while presenting them with a modern and sophisticated twist. Among its standout offerings are reinterpretations of classics such as confit suckling pig, a potato tortilla with a hint of truffle, and grilled octopus, renowned for its precise cooking technique. Each dish draws inspiration from traditional recipes, but innovative cooking methods and high-quality ingredients elevate them into a refined culinary experience.

In addition to these reimagined classics, the menu features signature creations that blend local flavors with

international influences, striking a harmonious balance between familiarity and innovation. The presentation of each dish plays a key role, with every plate crafted as a visual masterpiece, meticulously detailed. This focus on visual and sensory dining aligns with the restaurant's philosophy: to make every dish a spectacle that complements the artistic experience of the evening.

To enhance the gastronomic offerings, Flamenco de Leones boasts a carefully selected wine cellar emphasizing Spanish wines, from renowned labels to unique finds from small producers. This collection is thoughtfully curated to pair perfectly with the menu, enriching the culinary journey. Additionally, the restaurant offers a selection of signature cocktails that fuse traditional Spanish ingredients with contemporary mixology techniques, resulting in unique and exclusive beverages.

Espectáculos en vivo: flamenco en su máxima expresión

One of the distinguishing features of Flamenco de Leones is the inclusion of live flamenco performances. The venue boasts a stage where, on select days of the week, flamenco artists perform in an intimate and exclusive setting.

These performances are curated with a focus on artistic excellence, ensuring that each show reflects the richness and intensity of this quintessential Spanish tradition.

The Grand Hall



FLAMENCO DE LEONES

For diners, these performances blend seamlessly with the culinary experience, adding a cultural dimension that transforms dinner into an unforgettable evening.

The decision to include flamenco in the restaurant is not merely decorative but a fundamental part of Flamenco de Leones' philosophy: to create a space where gastronomy and the arts converge. For many guests, particularly tourists, this opportunity to experience flamenco in an exclusive and contemporary setting offers an authentic glimpse into Spanish culture, making it one of the key reasons why Flamenco de Leones has gained such popularity.

Un espacio versátil y abierto a diferentes experiencias

Flamenco de Leones is more than just a restaurant; it's a multifaceted venue that caters to a variety of tastes and client profiles. Those seeking a quiet, food-focused dining experience can opt for more private areas, while guests looking for a lively evening filled with energy and entertainment can choose seating near the stage, fully immersing themselves in the flamenco performances.

The versatility of Flamenco de Leones extends to its private event offerings. The restaurant allows reservations for special celebrations, group dinners, and corporate events. Its infrastructure and the professionalism of its team make it the ideal venue for hosting unforgettable experiences. Whether for family gatherings or business dinners, Flamenco de Leones ensures a level of service that upholds the high standards of its culinary proposal.

In essence, Flamenco de Leones offers more than a traditional dinner. With a combination of fine dining, quality wines and cocktails, and live flamenco performances, this restaurant has crafted a space that encapsulates the spirit of Spanish culture in all its forms.

FLAMENCO DE LEONES



Señorito's Lounge





Douro Region Full-Day Trip



Free Walking Tour of Porto



LA VENTANA DE MANENA

Six Bridges Cruise



Guimarães & Braga Day Trip



Aveiro and Costa Nova Day Trip + Boat Trip



Cálem Wine Cellars Guided Tour

Book activities in Porto



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