



The Complete Expat Guide To

# COSTA DEL SOL

For **2023**



What if we said that you could find an affordable new home in a chic area with easygoing residents, fresh food, and sunny weather? Costa del Sol is a dream come true.

You've spent your life being careful with your money and saving for your future. Why not come live somewhere you can enjoy those hard-earned wages and enjoy life's simple pleasures?

*Costa del Sol is waiting!*

## Places To Live

You may be on the beach, but you're never far from civilization. The primary road, A7, goes throughout the entire southern coast, so it's a breeze to travel if you can manage to tear yourself away. Malaga International Airport is a convenient way to tempt your friends and family to come out and visit you.



## Malaga

Malaga is the epicenter of the Sun Coast, and you want to be right in the middle of it. Comparatively, Malaga is much more laid back and casual than most cities, and you'll never have to worry about being ground down by the daily grind. Still, there are plenty of fun activities to enjoy. Just remember that after you spend a long day exploring, you'll be able to come home to a glass of sangria to watch the last fingers of the setting sun dip over the horizon.

Obviously, you came to the Costa del Sol to enjoy time on the beach. La Malagueta is the closest beach to Malaga proper, but nothing is ever more than a 30-minute drive along the coast. If you find La Malagueta too crowded for your liking, it's an easy drive to one of the other fishing villages to see more lovely, pristine coastline.

It seems like every day is a party on the Costa del Sol, but maybe more so in Malaga. From the flamenco festival in late December (Fiesta Mayor de Verdiales) with traditional folk dancers in fantastic costumes to the largest religious celebration in Spain in July (Virgen del Carmen) when you can watch the fishing boat adorned with flowers in a procession, there's never a dull moment for the residents of Costa del Sol. Don't worry if you aren't religious yourself; everyone is thrilled to share their cultural traditions with newcomers and spread the joy of celebration with people regardless of affiliation.

## Casares

Living every day in a picturesque town with the ruins of an ancient castle and a backdrop of the vast ocean under the Mediterranean sun sounds like a fantasy, right? If you move to Casares, that could be your life!

Even if you've never lived in a small town before, you won't be sacrificing anything with Casares since it's only a few hours' drive from Malaga. The Plaza de Espana is the main square in Casares and the best place to spend long sunny days. There are adorable cafes where you can pull up a chair and share a drink with your neighbors. Many people love eating at Antiguo Bar Nuevo or going there for a cold Cerveza on a hot summer day. Wandering around the narrow streets, you'll see plenty of colorful flower pots standing out brightly against the white facades as you walk.

If you want to stretch your legs, there are plenty of places up by the castle's ruins and old churches to hike up to. We highly recommend taking your camera because you can see all the way to the Rock of Gibraltar over on the African coast on a clear day!





## Manilva

When you're searching for the perfect home along the southern Spanish coast, folks might recommend giving Manilva a thorough look-see, and for good reason. You're coming here to relax after a lifetime spent in the hustle and bustle of big cities. On the Costa del Sol, there are plenty of places where people live easier, but Manilva is a hidden gem among them.

If you've been used to the crowds of major cities, you'll adore the leisure of living in a place with just 17,000 full-time residents. Many residents work in the agricultural industry, specifically in growing grapes. That means fresh, sweet wines that are locally produced. Just imagine sitting down in the balmy evenings with a taste of something grown and made right in your backyard!

## Estepona

Located on the gorgeous Sun Coast of southern Spain, Estepona has never forgotten its roots, and the friendly people maintain a leisurely atmosphere in the modern age. One of the most elegant towns on the Costa del Sol, Estepona attracts people of all kinds year-round. Known as El Jardín de la Costa del Sol or the Garden of Costa del Sol, Estepona boasts luxurious white streets decked with blooming pots of colorful flowers.

Estepona's nickname as the Garden is well-deserved. The Orchidarium Estepona contains over 5,000 plants, including over 1,000 species of orchids from around the world. Talk about stopping to smell the roses!

## Marbella

Nowhere can you find a lovelier place to live than Marbella, where residents love to splash their cash and in the ocean. The glamorous town of Marbella is one of the favorites among frequent visitors as an enchanting seaside place facing a lovely bay. It has resided at the foot of the Sierra Blanca for centuries, never once losing its old-world charm.

Drop by the designer boutiques and interior design stores to make a splash like the rich and famous. Make sure that Avenida Ricardo Soriano and Avenida Ramon y Cajal are on your map since they're the streets with the top shops. Plus, if all that spending leaves you weary, you can stop in one of the cute cafes or restaurants peppering the streets.

The old quarter's tapas bars come to life after dark, as do other restaurants, discos, casinos, and even cinemas in the marina. Places on the beach that you saw as chiringuitos when the sun was up turn into chic restaurants by night.

If you're lucky, you can try the famous Olivia Valere nightclub in the Golden Mile. No need to splurge on drinks in fancy clubs; you can bring the party to the beach and dance on the sand with a drink in your hand! You should be ready to be up late since most clubs don't open before 11 PM or midnight.



## Benahavis

Benahavis is perfect for people looking for a serene, natural landscape for their dream home. Located near the western end of the Sun Coast, Benahavis is quite close to the villages of Marbella, San Pedro, and Estepona. It's near the mountains, so you aren't right on the ocean, but you're close enough to get there with a short drive.

Many people love hiking along the Guadalmina River because there are many picturesque spots to stop and jump in the crystal-clear water. There are beautiful waterfalls and plunge pools for people who are feeling particularly adventurous.

## Nueva Andalucia

During the daytime, there are plenty of fun things for you and your family to do, even when you aren't surfing or building sandcastles along the coast. The Sierra de Ronda mountain range is well within reach and offers incredible hiking trails. There are many golf courses in the area where you can practice your swing.

We recommend the local franchise Terra Sana if you want to eat out for breakfast. Or, if you're looking for something different, The Taj Mahal has the best Indian food on the coast. If you prefer to do your own cooking, the Saturday morning market in the Centro Plaza is a must-see for all of the fresh, locally-sourced ingredients.

After 10 PM, you'll undoubtedly notice the whole region coming awake, and the nightlife in Nueva Andalucia is famous enough to attract people from the nearby towns along the Costa del Sol. Don't worry about the noise, though. You're secluded, so the honking of traffic and the hustle and bustle of big cities is a thing of the past.



## Puerto Banus

Puerto Banus is renowned for being the suburb where the rich and famous live. Many clubs and designer boutiques surround the dazzlingly sandy beaches, which are perfect for people who want to make a splash during the long summer months. Plenty of well-known restaurants are right on the water, so you can watch the luxury yachts as they sail by with the sun setting in the background.

We recommend going out for dinner beforehand at one of Puerto Banus' quality restaurants so that you have enough energy to make it through the night. One of the best places to pass an evening in Puerto Banus has got to be La Habana de Hemingway, a combination cocktail bar and upbeat disco. You'll want to make sure you rest up for it, maybe take a siesta during the afternoon, because the bar doesn't open until 9 PM. You can also try the News Café, a super trendy bar where plenty of famous people like to hang out.

As a neighborhood in Marbella, you can rest assured that you're living in a safe environment with plenty of resources for the whole family. There are plenty of options for international schools that teach kids in English, Spanish, or a mixture of the two.



## La Cala de Mijas

Plenty of people love living in and visiting Mijas, an old Moorish town surrounding a mostly-ruined castle. There are many acres of golf courses and miles of lovely shoreline to go out and bask in the sun. People enjoy the oldest part of Mijas, a whitewashed village set into a mountainside with cobblestone streets, wrought-iron balconies on the houses, and gorgeous hanging flowerpots decorating the facades.

If you're on the hunt for the quirky and unique, Mijas' eccentric museum of miniatures is sure to do the trick! Founded by a magician named Juan Elegido Millian, the man traveled the world, collecting curios of all shapes and sizes, which are now housed in this quaint museum. There are some bizarre trinkets in the collection, including a bona fide shrunken head from the Shuar people of Ecuador and Peru.

## Fuengirola

Strolling down cobblestone streets while gazing at whitewashed buildings and bright spots of color from hanging flowerpots is just the beginning of life in Costa del Sol. The south of Spain is known for its beautiful beaches, cute towns, and designer shops that frequently attract the rich and famous. You don't have to be a celebrity to enjoy the sun-drenched leisure that Fuengirola can offer.

For people with large families and small children, there's no better place to go than the Bioparc Fuengirola to see rare and exotic animals. No more cramped or unethical cages; this place is roomy and spacious with excellent caretakers. Boasting over 200 species in spacious habitats that mimic their original homes, this zoo always has something interesting on the move no matter what time of day you visit.

Whether you prefer the sleepy Sumatran tigers or the adventurous orangutans, everyone will have a fun time. During the summer, the zoo is open until 1 AM, so you'll have plenty of opportunities to see the nocturnal predators roam!

# Making The Move

Between the vibrant Andalusian culture of its residents, the relaxed atmosphere, the hot summers and warm winters, the delicious tapas, and exciting festivals, there's something for everyone. Before you can enjoy the coast, you'll need to know a few things.



## Visas

Anyone planning to live on the Costa del Sol will need a visa. Citizens of the EU don't need visas for Spanish residence, but if you're coming from somewhere else, you will. Even people from the EU must join the Register for Citizens of the Union. For others, there are a few different types of visas available.

There are work and highly skilled visas for those who've had a job offer from a company in Spain. Freelancers can apply for the self-employed visa, but keep in mind that it's valid for one year and can only be renewed four times, meaning that you can't stay for longer than five years on it.

Others may find the golden visa a viable option if you invest a minimum of 500,000 euros in a property. You can also invest in a company, bank, or treasury bonds, but the minimum investment is much higher. The golden visa is the preferred way to gain long-term residence in Spain.





## Cost of Living

Spain is encouraging people worldwide to come to bask in their beautiful Andalusia region. The cost of living in Southern Spain is much lower than in most of Northern Europe. You'll be excited to find out how much more you can get for your money here! Opulent houses, designer clothes and accessories, and fantastic food are all available and surprisingly affordable. Lower property costs mean you can live in the home you've always wanted. Go ahead and splurge!

## Weather

Costa del Sol is quite literally the Sun Coast. Residents enjoy over 320 days of sunshine yearly; that's almost 11 months! Who needs to wait for the summer when the sun is always out? The average temperature of the Mediterranean climate is 18 degrees C, and you never go below 14 degrees C, even during the winter. There's a reason people have been living in the area for almost 3,000 years!

When the sun's rays shine, you've always got a good excuse to laze around the beach. Stretching from La Linea de la Concepcion to Nerja, with 160 km of coastline, you never have to worry about the crowds. There's plenty of space to lay out your towel, set up a chair, and sunbathe.

There is one downside of living in a place where the sun is always out: the dog days of summer. It can get over 40 degrees C in the summertime, so it's no wonder that Spanish people don't want to work too hard in the late afternoons. Many shops, restaurants, and other places of work will close around 2 or 3 in the afternoon and reopen later in the evening once everything has had a chance to cool off. When the sun is beating down on you, you might be inclined to go lay down for a siesta too!

# Shopping

Malaga is an open, welcoming, and cosmopolitan city with diverse options. If you are looking for shopping centers, Malaga and the Costa del Sol have the best. The wide range of shops, entertainment, and dining choices will make your summer shopping trip unforgettable.



## Plaza Mayor Shopping Centre

The Plaza Mayor is one of the largest shopping malls in Andalusia. It has dozens of shops, cinemas, recreation areas, supermarkets, cafes, and restaurants. In short, it has everything you need for a full day of shopping. It's only two kilometers from Malaga and close to the Malaga-Costa del Sol airport. One of the must-see places if you're shopping on the Costa del Sol.

## Miramar Shopping Centre

Miramar Shopping Centre opened in 2004 and is one of the largest shopping centers on the Costa del Sol. Its numerous shops, restaurants, and entertainment options make it a must-see for all visitors to Fuengirola. It has 12 very well-equipped cinemas, a kids' club, and a Go-kart track with a junior and a children's track where everyone can have a great time.

## La Canada Shopping Centre

The La Canada shopping center in Marbella spans over 100,000 square meters and houses the best national and international retailers in every department. Apple, Hugo Boss, Lacoste, Tous, and Inditex group brands are just a few of the retail options available at the center.

In addition, there is a cinema complex, plenty of free parking, and a diverse selection of leisure and restaurant services. Furthermore, a new and exclusive "personal shopper" service is available to assist customers in finding what they are looking for.

## Vialia Shopping Centre

This Malaga shopping center is strategically located in the AVE (high-speed train) station. It has a diverse range of fashion retail outlets and restaurants, a thirteen-screen cinema showing the latest box-office releases, and a hotel for all who fall in love with Malaga and enjoy the city's diverse range of culture and tourism.



## El Corte Ingles

The province of Malaga has three El Corte Inglés shopping centers. They're in Malaga, Marbella, and Mijas. In Malaga, the shopping center is next to the Historic Centre and is an emblematic shopping center in the city. If you head to the top floor, you can try El Atico, a restaurant serving delicious food while surveying the city below you.

In Marbella, El Corte Ingles is in Puerto Banus, an area known for its fantastic shopping opportunities. The third and final location is between Mijas and Fuengirola. It's a superb place to find designer brands for fashion, perfume, jewelry, and other luxury goods. You can go to La Vinoteca or Sabor a Malaga to taste fine wine and well-paired foods at this location. If you find something you like in the Tourist Gourmet Hall, you can purchase a few bottles to take home with you.

After a long day of shopping, it's nice to know you can sit down and watch the sun go down over the waves with a glass of something delicious.



## Restaurants

Everyone who's been to Spain constantly raves about the locally-sourced wine, the exquisite sangria where every restaurant has its own recipe, and the fantastically warm weather. Still, we want to talk to you about the heart of Andalusian culture: the food. Even the snobbiest foodie wouldn't turn up their nose at the chance to taste some of the exquisite cuisines in Costa del Sol.

Part of that is because of the fervor behind fresh ingredients. Whether you're running a restaurant or cooking for the family, everyone goes out to the market a few times a week to purchase homegrown produce, freshly caught fish, and everything else they need for their meals.

Malaga's province is known as Andalusia's culinary capital, with a whopping six Michelin-star restaurants. Seafood is always your best bet since you're right on the coast. If you want to cool down on a hot day, there are many types of cold soups to try, like gazpacho and ajoblanco.

There are many beach bars along the coast with a wide variety of drinks and foods. Everyone's favorite traditional chiringuitos serve locally-caught fish and other seafood.

Try a pitcher of everyone's house sangria. It's different everywhere you go. Whether you're looking for something sweet, fruity, or even spicy, you're sure to find someone who makes it just the way you like.

If you're coming from North America, you might notice that everyone in Spain sups much later than you're accustomed to. Don't plan on making reservations for 5 or 6 PM. Most sit-down restaurants won't open until at least 7:30 or 8.

Looking for an afternoon snack? You might be out of luck since everyone takes a siesta to avoid the sweltering afternoons. Most shops and restaurants are closed between 2-7 PM, so make sure you have a substantial lunch and something else to nosh on.

# Golf

Face it; nothing's as good as chatting with your buddies, enjoying the balmy sunshine, and working on your swing. With over 70 golf courses, you can pack your clubs for your move to Costa del Sol. That's the largest concentration of courses anywhere in Europe.

It's no coincidence that many people call it the Costa del Golf. Champions and amateurs alike jump at the chance to hone their skills in this sun-drenched paradise. Since Costa del Sol hosted the Ryder cup in 1997, the world's attention turned to the Andalucian region, and the sport's popularity skyrocketed.



## San Roque Golf Club

This club may cost you a pretty penny, but it's worth the cost if you're passionate about golf. It's comprised of the Old Course and New Course. With lush, manicured lawns and a lovely clubhouse, it's impossible to go wrong here.

## Sunshine Golf

The award-winning course boasts personalized service for all of its clients. Whether you show up in a group of 3 or 30, they're happy to cater to your needs and ensure that everyone has a great day. With the beach on one side and tons of cute bars and restaurants on the other, you can make a whole day out of it, even after you've gone through the holes.



## **Golf Torrequebrada**

Golf Torrequebrada opened in 1976, and people have loved the course ever since. It's very conveniently located just 20 minutes from Malaga Airport and the harbor of Benalmadena. There are plenty of breathtaking views and places to go for a drink after a rousing round of golf. You don't even have to leave the course; a beautiful bar/restaurant is on the club's property

## **Calanova Golf Club**

Located in Mijas, known as the New Golf Valley in Malaga, Calanova Golf Club provides exquisite views of the ocean and the mountains while giving players a challenging course that requires skill and precision to navigate. There's good food and coffee whether you want to nosh before you play or after.

## **Santana Golf**

If you're looking to ratchet up the difficulty and put your golfing skills to the test, you should give Santana Golf a second look. It's a Par 72 championship course and the perfect place to show off for your friends and coworkers. With gorgeous sea views of the Playa de la Cala and an upscale boardwalk to stroll along, you can spend your entire day just drinking in the warm sunshine.

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# Activities

Kite surfing is one of the most popular activities. Enthusiasts adore Los Alamos Beach when the wind is just right. There's a designated area for kitesurfing and other nautical sports between April and October. Windsurfing and paddle surfing are also immensely popular. Not sure what any of those are? Well, this is the perfect time to learn.



## Hiking

If you fancy a hike with mesmerizing coastal views, there is no better place than the Sierra de Mijas. Most of the hiking trails start in the village of Mijas Pueblo. However, the numerous trails vary in length, so you can choose anything from a one to seven-hour route, depending on your fitness level. Many trails are steep, so you may want to bring your knee brace or hiking poles if you're worried.

One of the most awe-inspiring places to walk around is the Nerja Caves. They're only a 10-minute drive from Nerja, and since it's entirely underground, you can take a break from the scorching summer sunlight. The caves extend over 5km, so there are plenty of nooks and crannies to explore. One chamber is used as a concert hall because of the fantastic acoustics.

## Waterparks

The largest and oldest waterpark in Malaga province, Aqualand Torremolinos, definitely won't disappoint. There are a whopping 15 waterslides for kids and ten just for thrill-seeking adults. With the enormous number of pools and watery areas, you're sure to find a good spot. There's even a separate area for people with younger kids who aren't up to the slides.

You'll even find Europe's tallest waterslide, clocking in at 22 meters high, known as the Kamikaze! When you've had your fill of water and need a break, there are multiple restaurants to choose from and a picnic place where you can bring your own food. If you go during the summertime, you can expect the crowds since Aqualand is so famous, but with Costa del Sol's nearly year-round sunshine, you can easily go in the offseason too.



## Treetop Adventure Park

Located near Malaga in the heart of the Sierra de los Camarolos, Pindongos marks a new trend: treetop adventure parks. Most people think of Costa del Sol as primarily a beach (since it's a coast), but the region is also quite mountainous, with plenty of strong trees growing along rivers. So, what is a treetop adventure park? It's a place for people of all ages who want to return to their ape ancestry and swing among the leaves.

There are hanging bridges, ziplines, swings, rock climbing, and more. Unlike more commercialized parks, you feel one with nature at Pindongos. There are three routes to choose from, depending on your group's fitness level and desire for a challenge. It's completely safe for kids and adults, so everyone can tap into their inner Tarzan and feel like the king of the jungle!





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