



**SPANISH TOURIST OFFICE  
NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2011**

**TOURISM STATISTICS**

**Spain's latest tourism stats show increased growth from the UK**

October has been another great month for tourism from the UK to Spain with monthly visitor arrivals up more than 12% year on year. Cumulatively from January to October, Spain has welcomed in excess of 12.4 million UK tourism arrivals, up 9, 5% year on year.

**CULTURAL TOURISM**

**Cadiz to celebrate the bicentenary of "La Pepa" in 2012**

Cadiz gets set to host numerous cultural events throughout 2012 to celebrate the passing of the first Liberal Constitution in Europe in 1812, known fondly as 'La Pepa'. To mark this important bicentenary, Cadiz will host a number of celebrations throughout the year, including shows, parades, historical recreations, congresses, concerts, boat rallies, fashion shows and food tasting events.

[www.cadiz2012.es](http://www.cadiz2012.es)

**CULINARY TOURISM**

**Madrid reinforces its culinary heritage with the 2012 'Gastrofestival'**

The city of Madrid is delighted to present this year's Gastrofestival, a citywide, two-week event that celebrates the cuisine of the capital city, in line with the 10th anniversary of the MadridFusion summit. The festival which takes place from 23<sup>rd</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> February brings together over 300 participating outlets and offers visitors the chance to taste the cooking of Michelin-starred chefs from around the globe, as well as take part in a range of cultural activities that illustrate the links between gastronomy and other forms of art. A range of participating restaurants will also be offering one off set-menus in top restaurants, priced between 25-40 Euros,

For further details or information on Gastrofestival packages, please visit

[www.esmadrid.com/gastrofestival](http://www.esmadrid.com/gastrofestival)

**Basque Country enlists the support of top chefs for marketing campaign**

Heston Blumenthal from the world-famous Fat Duck restaurant, Rene Redzepi head chef at the best restaurant in the world Noma (Copenhagen), and the Basque country's Andoni Luis Aduriz from Mugaritz restaurant in Renteria (third in the world rankings) have come together to front a marketing campaign spearheaded by the Basque Government. The recorded campaign features the eroded sea cliffs of Zumaia, a *txakolineria* (local wine vineyard) in Getaria, the Balenciaga museum and the Elkano restaurant also in Getaria.

<http://tourism.euskadi.net/en/>



**Enjoy tapas with Paco Roncero, onboard the MSC Fantasia**

MSC Cruises have launched a new 10 day cruise programme, allowing cruise guests to savour the taste of the Mediterranean, through the culinary creations of renowned international chefs.

The first departure which set sail in late November from Barcelona, welcomed Madrid chef Paco Roncero from *La Terraza del Casino*, holder of two Michelin stars.

The gastronomic cruise offers endless treats for food lovers, with wine tastings, degustación menus and cookery classes.

[http://www.msccruises.co.uk/uk\\_en/homepage.aspx](http://www.msccruises.co.uk/uk_en/homepage.aspx)

**New tasting studio for San Sebastián**

Jon Warren, culinary creator and owner of gastro experience company San Sebastián Food has launched a new tasting studio in the heart of the old town of San Sebastián.

For more information, please visit [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info) or contact [spain@lotus-uk.co.uk](mailto:spain@lotus-uk.co.uk)

The tasting studio 'The Culture of Cuisine'; officially opened its doors this autumn and offers a unique opportunity to sample the region's famous ingredients with experts on hand to explain the unique characteristics. Guests can enjoy anything from a master class in Rioja wine led by wine guru Jenny Siddall to a two hour session learning how to cut a whole leg of cured Iberian ham from scratch!  
[www.sansebastianfood.com](http://www.sansebastianfood.com)

### **Renfe improves its culinary offering**

The Spanish train company Renfe has announced that it is working with the Royal Academy of Gastronomy on a project to improve the on board culinary offering. The Academy will assist and advise on the development of menus, the selection of locally sourced produce, themed dishes and nutrition. The objective of the project is to increase the variety of local and regional Spanish ingredients on the trains. To achieve this Renfe has collaborated with chef Mario Sandoval, sommelier Maria Jose Huertas and Maître d' Abel Valverde.  
<http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/index.html>

## **HOTELS**

### **Luxury Sunborn yacht hotel, opening spring 2012 in Barcelona's Port Forum**

Husa Hotels will be launching the five star Sunborn yacht hotel in the exclusive Port Forum marina, Barcelona in spring 2012. The yacht will comprise of over 180 rooms, 27 of which will be suites. Onboard amenities include; a fine dining restaurant, infinity pool and day spa, as well as extensive conference and banqueting facilities. The yacht hotel will offer guests an exceptional hotel experience with panoramic views of the Mediterranean and Barcelona skyline. This opening is expected to directly generate 200 new local jobs.  
<http://www.sunborn.com/s200-sunborn-barcelona/>

### **Hostal El Laurel becomes a hotel dedicated to toys**

The Hostal El Laurel which has been in operation since 1939 has carried out a series of renovations and reopened as the *Hotel del Juguete* (Toy Hotel) The hotel is located in Ibi, Alicante province, an area that has a long history in this sector given the tens of factories and toy companies in the area. The new 4-star hotel with 21 spacious rooms is decorated in bright colours with carefully selected materials that reflect the toy theme. The resulting ambience is lively, different and fun providing a wonderful option for families.  
<http://www.hoteldeljuguete.com/>

### **Relais & Châteaux 2012: three new Spanish entrants**

The Relais & Chateaux guide for 2012 which already features 518 establishments across five continents has included 45 new entrants in its 2012 edition, three of which are Spanish properties: Castillo de Arteaga in Vizcaya, Neri Hotel & Restaurant in Barcelona and Ramón Freixa Restaurant in Madrid.

- Ramón Freixa Restaurant is located in the centre of Madrid and offers a "techno-emotional cuisine" with a philosophy based on quality ingredients.
- Castillo de Arteaga is a part of European history with a tower that was restored in 1856 by Napoleon III. Its 10 rooms and 3 suites maintain its original features in keeping with the history of the castle.
- Neri Hotel and Restaurant is in the heart of the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. The building is a result of the unification of two magnificent palaces that were fully refurbished when the hotel was created.



[www.relaischateaux.com](http://www.relaischateaux.com)

### **Mercure Hotels expands in Spain with two new hotels**

As part of a large scale growth programme, Mercure Hotels has announced two new hotels for the brand in Spain, one on the Mediterranean coast and the other in the high plateau of the North.

- Located in Burgos and housing 50 rooms, the Mercure Burgos Rice offers classic British decor and all the modern comfort of a 4-star hotel. The hotel's location and facilities are ideal for hosting events and meetings and an excellent choice for business travellers.
- The Mercure Thalasia Costa de Murcia has just opened its doors on the shores of the Mediterranean. The 4-star establishment, which is a franchised hotel, is located in the heart of San Pedro del Pinatar Nature Park. In addition to its 211 rooms, two restaurants, three bars, an outdoor swimming pool and solarium, the hotel boasts 1,000 square metres of meeting space and one of Spain's most modern, eco-friendly seawater therapy centres.

[www.mercure.com](http://www.mercure.com)

#### **Hotel Cantur in Las Palmas joins Best Western PLUS**

The Best Western Hotel Cantur in Las Palmas has been designated a Best Western PLUS hotel through the segmentation exercise carried out by Best Western to better differentiate its hotel portfolio. Best Western PLUS hotels offer a little something extra such as upgraded bath amenities, breakfast, in-room mini fridge, fitness room, free Wi-Fi and free local calls. The Hotel Cantur located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is a four-star beachfront hotel that joined the chain in 2008 following a complete refurbishment. Best Western introduced the segmentation exercise in the first half of 2011 to improve the visibility of independent hotels, to better service the needs of individual guests and to increase loyalty.

<http://www.bestwestern.com/hotel-types/best-western-plus-hotels.asp>

#### **Mandarin Oriental Barcelona to add new rooms**

The five-star Mandarin Oriental Barcelona has announced that it will increase the number of rooms in the hotel by creating an annex to the current building. The development will see the addition of 22 new rooms and suites to the existing emblematic hotel. The new rooms are expected to be fully operational in 2013. The development will take the total number of rooms in the hotel on Paseo de Gracia, Barcelona, to 120 rooms and suites.

<http://www.mandarinoriental.com/barcelona/>

#### **AC Hotels names the AC Palacio del Carmen as part of its Autograph Collection**

The international hotel chain AC Hotels by Marriott has announced that the five-star AC Palacio del Carmen in Santiago de Compostela has been added to the company's Autograph Collection. The 74-roomed hotel, which was launched in 2001, is housed in the *Convent of the Oblatas de Santiago de Compostela*. The Autograph Collection is an ensemble of original and independent hotels that are selected for their distinctiveness.

<http://www.marriott.co.uk/autograph-collection-hotel/travel.mi#/Autograph>

#### **Electric car sharing scheme comes to NH Hoteles**

Cochele, the leading electric car-sharing company in Spain, and the multi-national hotel chain NH Hoteles have joined forces to enable guests accommodated in participating NH hotels to enjoy the benefits of this sustainable transportation service. Clients in participating hotels can make use of electric cars that are parked outside the hotel, assisting with transportation for business or leisure purposes.

[www.nh-hotels.com](http://www.nh-hotels.com)

#### **Ayre Hoteles to open new boutique Madrid property in 2012**

For 2012, Ayre Hoteles (part of Fiesta Hotel Group) has announced a brand new boutique Madrid property, scheduled to open in winter 2012. Located in the heart of Madrid's city centre on Calle Barquillo, the new four star property will feature 70 bedrooms and will be located in an old 19th century Spanish palace, previously owned by the Marchioness Viuda de Aldama.

[www.ayrehoteles.com](http://www.ayrehoteles.com)

#### **ME by Meliá offers complimentary use of eco-friendly scooters.**

ME by Meliá, the contemporary brand of the Meliá group is now offering guests of the ME Barcelona suites, complimentary use of eco-friendly scooters.

The initiative which launched in December 2011 is just one of the added value elements of the innovative ME Barcelona property.

Me Barcelona is also home to the renowned Michelin-starred Dos Cielos Restaurant, offering 360° views of the city and run by two of the world's culinary elite, Javier and Segio Torres. The property also boasts a

rooftop bar pool and terrace and the SKY Food restaurant and lounge, offering market gastronomy by day and a cocktail lounge by night.

[www.mebymelia.com](http://www.mebymelia.com)

## **AIR AND CRUISE**

### **BMibaby adds new summer routes**

BMibaby has announced the launch of two new summer routes for 2012 and increased frequencies to some of its most popular summer destinations. Flights from Belfast City Airport to Mahon, Menorca, will run from June 15, up to twice a week on Mondays and Fridays, until September 24. Meanwhile, frequencies are being increased on flights from Belfast to Palma and Alicante. The airline will also increase the number of flights from East Midlands Airport to Barcelona and Murcia during the summer season.

[www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com)

### **Two new Ryanair routes for East Midlands**

Ryanair has announced that it will add two new routes from East Midlands Airport from summer 2012. The new routes will fly to Almeria (Tuesday and Saturday) and to Barcelona (daily). The services will start in April 2012 and went on sale in December. To promote the new routes Ryanair has launched a seat sale throughout December and January of 1 million seats priced at £9.99 each way.

[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

### **New Ryanair route between Valencia and Manchester scheduled to launch April 2012**

Valencia looks forward to the launch of a new Ryanair route from Manchester Airport. The new route will run twice weekly and will begin operations next April to coincide with the start of summer 2012. This new flight route has come at an important time in the history of the Valencia Tourism Foundation as it celebrates its 20th anniversary. In 1991 a strategic plan was developed in order to promote tourism and visitors to Valencia and since that year, 20 million tourists have visited the city.

[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

### **MSC Cruises successfully increases its operations in Spain**

The cruise company MSC Cruises has increased the number of embarkation points and ports of call throughout Spain to great success. The number of embarkation points used in Spain has been expanded to include Bilbao and A Coruña. The company has also increased the ports of call to include Cartagena, Ceuta, Mahon and Palamos.

MSC Cruises has positive forecasts for the future with several of its new cruises from Spain, including the new winter 2011-2012 Mediterranean cruise aboard MSC Splendida of eight days departing Barcelona weekly, and the MSC Fantasia ship which has 12-day cruises departing Barcelona throughout the winter until March 2012.

[www.msccruises.co.uk](http://www.msccruises.co.uk)

## **MICE**

### **Barcelona and Madrid secure their places in top 10 for MICE destinations**

Barcelona and Madrid are becoming more competitive in the world ranking of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) having secured second and sixth place respectively. Over the past year, Barcelona has played host to 148 ICCA validated events and Madrid broke the 100 event barrier for the first time hosting 114 international conferences.

With a total of 451 international conferences in 2011, Spain is in third place in the country rankings as an events destination.

<http://www.iccaworld.com/>

### **New Auditorium Cartagena**

The city of Cartagena is delighted to unveil its brand new auditorium and convention centre which has a capacity of up to 2,800 people. The new facility, designed by Jose Selgas and opened on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011 has nine meeting rooms, the largest of which is the main auditorium that accommodates 1,400 delegates.

<http://www.cartagena.es/>

### **Norman Foster's Leaf-Inspired Valencia Conference Centre Set to Grow**

Valencia Tourism continues to celebrate its success as a leading destination for international events with the expansion of its cutting edge conference centre, designed by esteemed UK architect, Norman Foster. The conference centre's expansion is aptly 'growing' from having one leaf shaped building to two. The architects at Foster & Partners, led by Norman Foster have also proposed a 'stem' connecting the two buildings and acting as glass passage.

The extension which is set to be completed in 2014 will provide an ideal setting for new events and offer a flexible open plan space over two floors. Rooms will accommodate up to 2,500 people with an additional 20 rooms providing multiple capacities.

<http://www.palcongres-vlc.com/ampliaciond.php>

### **ACCOLADES**

#### **Vitoria-Gasteiz European 'Green Capital' 2012**

Spanish regional capital Vitoria-Gasteiz has been named as European Green Capital 2012. The award was presented by EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik at a ceremony in Stockholm, European Green Capital for 2010.

Vitoria-Gasteiz is the capital of the Basque Country in northern Spain. The city has successfully put in place numerous measures to assist and increase biodiversity and support the local ecosystem. Flora and fauna are regularly monitored and any damage to the local habitat is kept to a bare minimum.

The city is successfully coping with water scarcity and has steadily decreased its water consumption over the last decade. Considerable water related investments have been made to improve water supply and quality, reduce water loss and work towards sustainable consumption.

<http://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org>

#### **Madrid declared the second best shopping destination in Europe**

The city of Madrid has achieved second place in the list of best European cities for shopping, compiled by *The Globe Shopper City Index – Europe*. The Spanish capital tied with Barcelona as the second best place for shopping; both cities are just half a point short of the winning city, London, and ahead of Paris, Rome and Berlin.

*The Globe Shopper City Index – Europe* measures the attractiveness of the 33 biggest European cities for international shopping trips. Each city was awarded points across five categories: shops, affordability, convenience, hotels & transport, and culture & climate. Madrid obtained consistent results in all categories, providing great attractions for shoppers, including good food, convenience and reduced prices on big brands.

<http://www.esmadrid.com/en/shopping-madrid>

#### **Tenerife Tourism Corporation receives the "AITO Affiliates Green Award 2011"**

The Tenerife Tourism Corporation has received the "AITO Affiliates Green Award 2011", in recognition of its efforts in sustainable tourism, at the AITO Anniversary and Awards on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011. This latest award further cements Tenerife's position as a leading destination in sustainability and responsible tourism.

Tenerife has developed a number of initiatives over the years to improve the sustainability of this island that is rich in natural fauna and flora. With around half of Tenerife being covered in national parkland, the island's government has introduced a series of new trails in natural areas, including the new accessible "Path of Senses" in the Anaga Rural Park and new volcano-themed routes set to launch in 2012.

Resource use is under scrutiny as Tenerife hopes to generate more than half of the island's energy through natural energy resources.

<http://www.webtenerifeuk.co.uk/index.htm?Lang=en>

### **Winning hotels in Conde Nast Johansens**

Four Spanish hotels have been awarded prizes in the 2012 Condé Nast Johansens prize-giving ceremony in London. Of the nineteen awards handed out in the Europe & Mediterranean, and MICE categories, four went to Spanish establishments. These were:

- Gran Hotel Bahia del Duque Resort in Tenerife – Excellence Award for Best European Hotel
- Gran Hotel Atlantis Bahia Real, Fuerteventura – Best Riverside Hotel
- SHA Wellness Clinic, Alicante - Excellence Award for Best European Destination Spa
- Dolce Sitges Hotelganó, Sitges - MICE Excellence Award for Venues and Hotels that Accommodate Groups of Over 100.

<http://www.johansens.com/news/2012-awards-for-excellence-the-winners>

### **Jet2Holidays awarded Best Tour Operator to Spain**

The tour operator Jet2Holidays has been named the 'Best British tour operator with services from UK to Spain and its islands' at the British Travel Awards. These prestigious awards recognise the work carried out between Jet2Holidays and Spain and the strengthening of relations between both parties.

Throughout 2012 the Jet2 airline will operate 18 routes between the Balearic Islands and the United Kingdom (4 to Mahon, 6 to Ibiza and 8 to Palma de Mallorca) equating to over 700,000 seats - a 6% increase on 2011.

[www.jet2holidays.com](http://www.jet2holidays.com)

### **National Geographic Traveler names Costa Brava as 'must-visit' destination for 2012**

National Geographic Traveler Magazine has revealed its '*Best of the World 2012*' destinations, naming Spain's Costa Brava region among its 20 recommendations of must-visit places for next year.

In its November/December issue, Traveler recognises 'The Creative Coast of Spain' as the birthplace of 'one of art's greatest eccentrics', Salvador Dalí, and a charming coastal region that 'overflows with creativity during its annual spring flower festival, the Temps de Flors.

[www.costabrava.org](http://www.costabrava.org)

## **OTHER**

### **Pinguinos 2012 International Winter Motorbike Rally**

The dates for the most important motorbike rally draw ever closer. Pinguinos International Winter Rally is due to take place in Valladolid from 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2012. In its 31<sup>st</sup> year, thousands of bikers from all corners of Europe will head off on a motorbike adventure braving the inclement weather. The rally takes place in a pine forest near to the capital of Castilla y Leon, Valladolid. Visitors can spend a few days or a few hours at the rally taking part in tastings, tours, parades, shows, exhibitions and fireworks.

Last year's Pinguinos rally attracted over 30,000 bikers. To take part in the 2012 edition, visitors must register in advance.

[http://62.193.193.75/prog\\_i.htm](http://62.193.193.75/prog_i.htm)

### **PortAventura announces an exciting new roller-coaster for 2012**

PortAventura, the theme park resort near Barcelona, has announced that 2012 will see the unveiling of a new 25 million euro rollercoaster in the theme park. The new rollercoaster which will rise to 76 metres then drop 78 metres to become Europe's highest rollercoaster. It will take visitors to huge altitudes, terrifying descents and on a journey through dark tunnels and mountain lakes.

[www.portaventura.com](http://www.portaventura.com)

### **Madrid bus system: use of technology services on the rise**

Madrid's EMT information systems which allow travellers to plan journeys, check arrival and departure times, check transport problems and check waiting times via text message has seen a large year-on-year increase in usage. Between January and August 2011 the use of the EMT information systems by Madrid's bus users reached nearly 4,000,000 enquiries. This represents an increase of 49% on the same period in 2010. To improve the customer experience, Madrid is also installing 352 Variable Messaging Panels at the main bus stops throughout the city that advise of waiting times, delays and reported problems.

<http://www.esmadrid.com/en/transport-madrid>