

# Mediterranean Coast



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Front Cover: El Castillo lookout point, Benidorm.  
 Back cover: Tosa de Mar, Girona.

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## INTRODUCTION

Come and discover one of the best coastlines in Europe and take a dip in the incredible crystalline waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The fantastic climate and wide range of destinations will provide you with a unique experience in every port, beach and town you visit.

Feel the sea breeze as you walk amongst Roman remains in the coastal areas of Catalonia. The **Costa Brava** has surprising hidden coves with turquoise waters, ideal for snorkelling. The **Costa Blanca**, in the Alicante region, has kilometres of beaches flanked by palms and fruit trees.

For a few days rest and relaxation there's nothing like the warm waters of the **Costa Cálida** in Murcia where the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean meet to create a coastline of extraordinary cliffs interspersed with solitary white sandy

beaches. If you're looking for over 300 days of sunshine a year, the **Costa del Sol** is just the place for you. You'll love the beauty of Málaga and the surrounding natural landscapes.

The variety of the **natural areas** along this coast provides an outstanding setting for anyone with an adventurous spirit and lovers of active tourism. Gliding, climbing, cycling, sailing and exploring the fascinating world beneath the waves.

The **interplay of cultures and civilisations over thousands of years** has left its mark all around the Mediterranean. Empúries, Tarragona, Sagunto, Cartagena and Málaga preserve this legacy in magnificent archaeological sites. Discover why Spain is the country with the fifth largest number of **UNESCO World Heritage sites** in the world.

## MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Experience first-hand ancestral **festivals** like the fire ritual on the night of San Juan, the colourful celebration of Santa Tecla with its *castells* (human towers), UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the re-creation of battles between Moors and Christians. Come and enjoy the magnificent atmosphere in an incomparable destination.

Savour Spain's traditional and modern cuisine. The **Mediterranean diet** is not only delicious, it's really healthy. Try typical traditional dishes like *paella* or skewered grilled sardines and enjoy fresh local produce. Visit gastronomic

markets, avant-garde restaurants and accompany the experience with one of our excellent wines or cavas.

You'll find all this and so much more along the Mediterranean coast in Spain. Come with us as we take a look at its main attractions, and let yourself be charmed by the friendliness of its people

▼ SAGUNTO  
VALENCIA





# MAIN MEDITERRANEAN COASTS

▲ CADAQUÉS  
GIRONA

## COSTA BRAVA

A mild climate, fine golden sand, covers hidden away amongst green pinewoods, medieval towns and beautiful fishing villages with a true Mediterranean flavour. From **Portbou** to **Blanes**, the **Girona** coastline is a favourite destination for lovers of nature, sunshine and good food. You can enjoy tranquillity and entertainment in equal measure, as well as some of the most beautiful coastal landscapes in mainland Spain. Landscapes that inspired the extraordinary artist Salvador Dalí who was born and spent part of his life in this beautiful environment, where you can follow his footsteps.

Enjoy hiking along circular routes, coastal pathways, and explore beaches and villages with an intense seafaring flavour, like **Cadaqués** and its incomparable

surroundings. This picturesque little town with white-washed houses and narrow streets decorated with flowers is located in the heart of the **Cabo de Creus Nature Reserve**. The rugged cliffs hide natural gems like **Cala Portaló**, a small nudist beach in breathtaking surroundings, ideal for snorkelling.

If you prefer beaches which are more accessible and family-friendly, the coastline along the Golfo de Roses is the perfect destination. With calm, transparent waters and fine white sand, the **Playa de la Almadraba** is just a short distance from the lively town of **Roses**.

At the other end of the bay, the **Playa del Portitxol** in **L'Escala** is another great option. At sunset, it's well worth climbing up the wooden steps leading to the



▲ PLAYA DE AIGUABLAVA  
BEGUR, GIRONA

amazing lookout point with fantastic views over the **Bay of Roses** and the town of L'Escala. Very near the beach you'll also find the **Greco-Roman ruins of Empúries**, one of the most important archaeological sites in Spain.

The **Gola del Ter** sandbank, opposite the Medas Isles, is a beautiful protected area. Located at the mouth of the Ter River, it is one of the most isolated and unspoiled beaches in **Torroella de Montgrí**. While you're there you should visit medieval towns like **Peratallada**, one of the most beautiful in Catalonia. The maze of cobbled streets, the fairytale castle and the moss-covered walls of the old stone houses will take you right back to the Middle Ages.

Further south, in the heart of the Costa Brava, you come to the **Begur** coastline where there a number of coves to suit all tastes. If you're looking for a mountainous environment with lots of vegetation, shallow waters and fine sand, your best option is **Playa de Aiguablava**. There, overlooking a bay full of pleasure boats, you'll find the Aiguablava Parador Hotel which has magnificent views of the Mediterranean.

For calm waters you have **Sa Tuna**, which features colourful fishing boats. If you're looking for some natural shade, on the right-hand side you'll find a cave called the **Cova de Sant Pau** which is spacious enough to protect you from the sun's rays. The **Cove of Sa Riera**, still

in the Begur district, is one of the most attractive sandy beaches in the area, because it is well-equipped and directly accessible from the seafront promenade.

In towns like **Calella de Palafrugell** you'll love the amazing contrast between the white-washed buildings and the bright blue sea. The **Playa de Port Bou**, with pretty, arched fishing cottages by the sea, is one of those picturesque little places that shouldn't be missed. In July there is an annual festival of *habaneras*, popular songs with a deep-rooted tradition in the region.

In the area around the lovely town of **Tossa de Mar** and its iconic medieval castle, we can recommend two very special beaches for those looking for peace and tranquillity. First there's **Cala Pola**, an out-of-the-way beach of great beauty. Then there's the **Cala del Senyor Ramón**, in Santa Cristina de Aro, surrounded by cliffs, with turquoise waters and an extraordinary seabed. Take a trip on a glass-bottom boat and enjoy the delightful Mediterranean undersea flora and fauna as you sail towards Tossa de Mar or to **Cala Giverola**.

① **Further information:**  
[costabrava.org/](http://costabrava.org/)



TOSSA DE MAR  
GIRONA

## DISCOVER THE COSTA DAURADA

To the south of the Costa Brava, in the province of Tarragona, the **Costa Daurada** has one of those beaches where it is a delight to surrender to the pleasures of the sand, the sea and the sunshine. **Cala Forn**, in **L'Ametlla de Mar**, is a picturesque beach surrounded by nature. Just enjoy the sound of the waves crashing onto the rocks and forget about the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

In **Tamarit**, next to a magnificent medieval fortress, you'll find **Cala Fonda**, a naturist space, also known as Waikiki Beach in honour of the best beaches in Hawaii. This picture-postcard retreat, one of the most beautiful along the Tarragona coast, is surrounded by the **forest of La Marquesa**. The green vegetation, turquoise-blue waters and golden sand blend together to create an earthly paradise.

① *Further information: [costadaurada.info](http://costadaurada.info)*

## COSTA BLANCA

You'll love the Alicante coast with its mild climate and calm, crystal-clear waters. The Costa Blanca, so-called because of the white colour of the fine sandy beaches, has a great variety of beaches and idyllic coves, with extensive dunes or surrounded by cliffs. Wherever you go, the quality of the services and cleanliness of the water is guaranteed, since Alicante is one of the provinces awarded most blue flags in Europe. If you're looking for somewhere to go diving and enjoy water sports you've come

to the right place. Not only that, in the main towns along this coast **there are numerous entertainment options and festivals to suit all tastes.**

The landscape in the Costa Blanca changes as you go from the north, greener and more rugged, to the south, where you'll find warm, tranquil bays with extensive dunes. From **Denia** to **Pilar de la Horadada**, all across the province of Alicante, there are an endless number of delightful little towns with beaches where you can leave stress behind.

The coves of **Denia**, **Jávea** and **Calpe**, the long, sandy urban beaches in the city of Alicante, those nestling between the Sierra Helada in Benidorm and the Sierra de Carabassí in Elche... It's really hard to choose, so here is a selection of some of the finest.

In Jávea, near the cape of La Nao and opposite the isle of El Descubridor, you'll find a natural paradise called **Cala Ambolo**. This is a naturist beach. To reach the crystal-clear waters you need to go down a long, stone stairway.

The urban beach of **Racó de l'Albir**, in l'Alfàs del Pí, has waters which are ideal for diving amongst octopuses, fish and meadows of *posidonia oceanica* sea-grass. It is located next to the seafront promenade, mostly enjoyed by families, with plenty of nearby hotels and restaurants where you can find accommodation and enjoy traditional Alicante cuisine.



A little to the south, after walking along natural pathways near Villajoyosa, you'll come to **Cala Racó del Conill**, surrounded by pine trees, shrubs and cliffs. This is a small naturist cove with turquoise waters and said to be one of the prettiest along the Alicante coast.

If you're looking for more developed surroundings with all kinds of services, then you have the long, white sandy

beaches of **San Juan** and **Muchavista** in the municipalities of Alicante and El Campello, respectively. They are both next to the seafront promenade and have a good selection of bars and restaurants serving all kinds of *paellas* and with play and exercise areas for both children and adults.

① **Further information:**  
[costablanca.org/](http://costablanca.org/)



## DISCOVER SOME OF THE OTHER NEARBY COASTAL AREAS

On the **Costa de Valencia**, very near **Sagunto** and the remains of its Roman theatre, you'll find the municipal district of **Canet de Berenguer**. After crossing a chain of dunes, you reach the **Playa de Racó de Mar**, with golden sands and clear, shallow waters. If you like water sports, in summer you can take part in windsurfing and light sailing courses here in the yacht marina.

Meanwhile, on the **Costa del Azahar**, in **Peñíscola** (Castellón) there are numerous attractions. One of these must be the kilometre-long **Playa Norte**, the closest to the historical old town. From the white, sandy beach you get a great view of Peñíscola Castle, one of the locations for the **Game of Thrones** series. Here you could hire a jet ski or a kayak and enjoy the coast and the surrounding area from a different perspective.

## COSTA CÁLIDA

In the Region of Murcia you'll find the warmest water in the Mediterranean, as well as a great variety of extraordinary landscapes. You can enjoy two seas along a single stretch of coast, the Mar Menor and the Mediterranean, with magnificent cliffs interspersed with solitary, white sandy beaches, vibrant ports and unspoiled coves. The whole area is bathed by clear, turquoise waters ideal for taking a dip and enjoying all sorts of nautical activities. The microclimate in this area ensures mild temperatures and calm waters for most of the year.

Here you'll find picturesque fishing villages like **Cabo de Palos**, ports like **Mazarrón** where you can enjoy an evening's entertainment after a day on the beach and one of the most comprehensive tourist resorts on the Levante coast, **La Manga del Mar Menor**, with magnificent hotel facilities. If you're looking for rest and relaxation, the whole area is also renowned for its numerous spas.

In **Los Alcázares**, the urban beach of **Las Palmeras** holds the "Q for Quality" certificate acknowledging its excellent services and clean waters. There are showers, sunbeds for hire and numerous bars and restaurants so you have everything you need to spend a pleasant day on the beach.

Out past the Cabo de Palos and its marine reserve, you'll find one of the best beaches in Murcia. This is **Calblanque** which lies within the **Calblanque Regional Park**. We recommend you go early in the morning or late in the afternoon because visitors are restricted, a necessary requirement for environmental protection. If you like physical exercise, a good way to get there and enjoy the natural environment is hiking or by mountain bike.

After over an hour's walk from the regional park you can take a dip in the **Cala de las Mulas**, in Cartagena, an unspoiled, rustic beach which is ideal for diving.



MEDITERRANEAN COAST

And on the outskirts of Cartagena you have **Cala Cortina** which is very suitable for families. This small, horseshoe-shaped beach with golden sand is near the port and district of Santa Lucía. There is a children's play park and a restaurant which is popular with the local people who come to enjoy the fresh fish.

In the heart of the **Sierra de la Muela** natural area, surrounded by rocky hills and cliffs, you'll find the crystal-clear waters of the **Playa de El Portús**. It is very rustic, but even so there is a beach bar where you can take a drink as the sun goes down.



On the other side of the **Cabo Tiñoso** you'll find the delightful little fishing village of **La Azohía**. The beach is ideal for families, with palm trees and plenty of services, so there's everything you need.

If you're looking for solitary beaches and coves where you can forget about the hustle and bustle and enjoy unspoiled nature, then you're in luck: the **Playa de Percheles**, in Mazarrón, and the **Cala de los Cocedores del Hornillo**, in Águilas, are as good as it gets. The former is renowned for its dunes, rocks and sparse vegetation, while the latter features shallow, turquoise waters and numerous caves in the rocky surroundings.

Also in Águilas, but in the town, you'll find the Playa de **Poniente**, one of the most popular along the Murcia coastline. It is excellent for family leisure and entertainment and the water is very shallow so it's ideal for children. It's next to the town's most important pedestrian promenade, with numerous bars, cafeterias and ice-cream shops.

On the outskirts of Águilas, as a tribute to the Costa Cálida, you can bathe in the warm waters of **La Carolina**, a beach from where you have a great view of the town's castle. Protected from the wind by the surrounding rocks and dunes, this beach, also known as the Playa de los Ingleses, is very popular with divers.

📍 **Further information:**  
[turismoregiondemurcia.es/](http://turismoregiondemurcia.es/)



## COSTA DEL SOL

If you're looking to enjoy a few unforgettable days in the Mediterranean, the Málaga coast is just the place with so many fantastic beaches and an average temperature of around 20°C. You can play golf by the sea or spend the day exploring the incredible natural surroundings. At night you'll love the contagious festive atmosphere that prevails in the province of Málaga.

The great variety of beaches is one of the main attractions of a coast with so many picturesque towns and unspoiled coves like those in **Nerja** and **Mijas**, urban sandy beaches like those in the city of **Málaga** and tourist resorts like **Benalmádena** and **Fuengirola**.

**Marbella** and **Puerto Banús** have a touch of exclusivity which attracts the most demanding travellers. Another great incentive is the extraordinary number of golf courses throughout the region making it a paradise for lovers of this sport.

To the east of the Málaga coast, in the district of Nerja, you'll find the **Maro Cliffs-Cerro Gordo Nature Space**, which also includes part of Almuñecar (Granada). Here you can enjoy marvelous landscapes and discover delightful beaches like the **Caleta de Maro**. You can spend the day enjoying the turquoise waters, but you'd better take something to eat and drink as there are no bars or restaurants in the vicinity.

Beneath the **Balcón de Europa**, a square overlooking the sea which has become the icon of Nerja, you can go for a swim



▲ BALCÓN DE EUROPA  
NERJA, MÁLAGA

in the **Playa de Calahonda**. It is a shingle and grey sandy beach with comprehensive services and it is very near the town centre. Nearby, and more popular with families, there's the **Playa de Burriana**, a splendid, sandy beach bathed by the Mediterranean.

PLAYA DE LA MALAGUETA  
MÁLAGA

We also recommend its bars and restaurants, especially at dusk, when you can enjoy an unforgettable sunset

Burriana Beach is also great for having some fun and enjoying your favourite sports, as there are beach volleyball courts, large towable floats, pedalos and kayaks for hire so you get to see the Maro cliffs from a different perspective.

If you're visiting Málaga, the capital of the Costa del Sol, apart from the museums and fantastic nightlife, you can also enjoy the city's urban beaches. The **La Malagueta** beach, the one nearest the historical old town, has a very young and friendly atmosphere, with plenty of bars and restaurants as well as excellent services.

A little further along, there's the **Playa de Pedregalejo**, located in the oldest fishing quarter in Málaga. You really have to try the renowned skewered sardines in one of the beach bars.

To the south, surrounded by huge palm trees and a Moorish-style castle, you have the wonderful **Playa de Bil-Bil** in Benalmádena. It lies next to the seafront promenade, has exceptional views and all the amenities you require.

If you prefer a little peace and quiet in natural surroundings, we recommend the **Playa de Artola** (Marbella), which stands in the Artola Dunes. You can feel free and strongly connected to nature while surrounded by amazing dunes. Nearby, you'll find the Torre Ladrones, a defensive tower of Roman origin.

📍 **Further information:**  
[www.visitacostadelosol.com](http://www.visitacostadelosol.com)

## DISCOVER SOME OF THE OTHER NEARBY COASTAL AREAS

Between the Costa Cálida and the Costa del Sol, if you get the chance you really shouldn't miss the **Cabo de Gata-Níjar Nature Reserve** (Almería) and its beautiful beaches. These include the **Playa de los Genoveses** and the **Playa de los Muertos** which are two of the best in Andalusia. They are unspoiled sandy beaches with no nearby restaurants, so you need to be well-prepared before spending an amazing day on the beach in extraordinarily beautiful natural surroundings.

The part of the coast of the province of Cádiz bathed by the Mediterranean features two unique places. The **Playa de la Alcaidesa** (La Linea de la Concepción), from where you'll have splendid views of the Rock of Gibraltar. And then there's the **Laguna de Torreguadiaro** Nature Reserve which has a route with walkways through this amazing wetland which is ideal for birdwatchers. You could take a dip in **Cala Sardinia** (San Roque), enjoy the exclusive atmosphere in the **Port of Sotogrande** or take a boat trip to watch whales.

▼ PLAYA DE LOS MUERTOS  
ALMERÍA



# THERE'S MUCH MORE THAN JUST BEACHES

## THE ARTS

All along the Mediterranean coast and in the nearby towns, apart from beaches and fantastic weather, there are great opportunities to explore the history, culture and art of Spain. Historical town centres, traditional festivals and museums and monuments will help you discover the true essence of the Mediterranean. Here are a few suggestions to help you enjoy your stay.



▲ DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM FIGUERES

## THE DALÍ TRIANGLE

There are three places in Girona (Catalonia) where you can explore much of the artistic production and the intimate side of this genius of Surrealism. The triangle consists of the towns of **Púbol**, **Cadaqués** and **Figueres** where you'll find the key elements that make up the Dalí universe: the museums, the landscape, the light, the architecture, the customs, the legends, the gastronomy... All essential elements for under-

standing the life and work of Salvador Dalí.

In the **Dalí Theatre-Museum** in Figueres you'll see it raining inside a car, walk around a room shaped like Mae West's face and see amazing jewels in the form of an elephant. A dream, an illusion, or the largest surrealist object in the world? All this and much more is waiting for you when you get inside.



▲ DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM  
FIGUERES

In the beautiful area surrounding Cadaqués you'll find the little fishing village of Portlligat where you can visit the **Dalí House-Museum**, a fisherman's cottage where the artist spent large parts of his life. You can see the workshop with the tools he used and an outdoor area with numerous Surrealist references.

And then there's the **Gala Dalí Castle in Púbol**, an extraordinary medieval building where Dalí made such an overwhelming creative effort with just one person in mind, Gala, his muse and his companion.

## BARCELONA

In Catalonia's capital, Roman remains and medieval neighbourhoods stand in harmony with modern and avant-garde buildings. You'll discover a city that's open to the world: venue for international events and promoter of the latest trends.

In the heart of Barcelona stands the **Basilica of La Sagrada Família**, the icon of the city and its greatest exponent of Modernism. It is the work of the genius architect **Antoni Gaudí**, its most spectacular feature being the spires. You can climb to the top of some of them and get a beautiful panoramic view of Barcelona from high up.

▼ THE SAGRADA FAMÍLIA  
BARCELONA





▲ PARK GÜELL  
BARCELONA

Explore the city's historical past in the **Gothic Quarter**. The narrow streets and medieval buildings will take you back in time. Visit the palaces which are now the **Town Hall** and the **Generalitat** or Regional Government, as well as **Barcelona Cathedral** and the Gothic Basilica of **Santa María del Pi**.

To discover the Modernist buildings in the city you can take a tour which includes the **Modernist Complex of Sant Pau**, World Heritage Site, which has colourful stained-glass windows and golden domes. Gaudí's legacy is alive and well in places like the surprising **Park Güell**, also World Heritage Site, where you'll feel like you're in a fairy tale. The curious shapes and bold colour combinations together with the vegetation create a magical world where you can wander to your heart's content.

There are also extraordinary apartment buildings designed by Gaudí, World Heritage Site, the most renowned being the **Casa Batlló** and **La Pedrera-Casa Milà**, where light, colour and organic shapes blend together with wood, ironwork, glass and stoneware.

### SITGES LGBTQI+ PRIDE

*Sitges Pride* (Barcelona) has become a standard for Gay Pride Festivals in Spain. There are numerous performances and theme parties in the city's clubs and a great protest parade. You'll really enjoy the colourful, festive atmosphere in the city during these days in June.



LGBTQI+ PRIDE  
SITGES



▲ ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE  
TARRAGONA

## TARRAGONA

Discover the goddess who protected the gladiators in the city's Archaeological Museum and feel the sea breeze as you look out from the Balcón del Mediterráneo viewpoint and enjoy a stroll through the streets and alleyways of the historical old town. In Tarragona there is so much to choose from.

In the streets, squares and buildings of what was Tarraco during the Roman Empire you'll find some of the best-preserved remains of ancient Rome in mainland Spain. Take the **Archaeological Walk** where you can visit the incredible **amphitheatre** with splendid views of the sea, and the ancient **Tarraco Circus** which nowadays stands in the historical centre of the city.

Another attraction not to be missed in Tarragona is the **Cathedral of Santa Tecla** and its enormous rose window, one of the city's icons. In the interior there is a beautiful gardened cloister and you should climb up to the bell tower where you'll have magnificent views of the city.

If you visit Tarragona during the second fortnight in September you'll be there for the **Festivity of Santa Tecla** and be able to enjoy some of Catalonia's most iconic festive customs like the **Correfoc**, with firecrackers and firework displays, and the famous competitions of **castellers**, human towers which can reach up to nine stories, a tradition awarded the Intangible Cultural Heritage designation.



▲ VALENCIA CATHEDRAL  
VALENCIA

## VALENCIA

Here you will find one of Europe's largest centres devoted to science and the arts: the **City of Arts and Sciences**. You will be amazed by the avant-garde architecture of the stunning **Hemisfèric** building, in the shape of an eye, and by the **Oceanogràfic**, the largest aquarium in Europe. By contrast, in the streets of the old town centre, known as **Ciutat Vella**, you'll find extraordinary World Heritage Sites like the **Lonja de la Seda silk exchange** which has fascinating features such as the **Salón de Columnas** and the **Patio de los Naranjos**.

Nearby you'll find the **El Miguelete**, as the bell tower of Valencia Cathedral is known. From the top, 50 metres up, you get an incredible panoramic view of the city.



▲ LAS FALLAS BONFIRE FESTIVAL  
VALENCIA

Valencia's biggest festival takes place in March: the **Fallas** bonfire festival. Hundreds of enormous figures, of a strongly satirical and critical nature, fill the streets in this festival declared to be Intangible Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO. The **cremà** is the most popular moment: all the figures that are displayed in the streets are burnt on the night of 19-20 March. This is the highlight of the festivities when the smell of gunpowder from the **masquetàs** (fire-cracker shows) is everywhere, along with bands playing music and regional costume parades.



Photo: mayvoristas123412341.com

▲ MOORS AND CHRISTIANS  
ALCOY, ALICANTE

## MOORS AND CHRISTIANS

There are flamboyant parades to commemorate the confrontation between Moors and Christians for the control of Spain in the 13th century. This is one of the most popular festive traditions in Spain, but especially in Valencia and Alicante where they are deep-rooted.

The most spectacular, and therefore the most renowned, take place in **Alcoy** (Alicante) where they celebrate the "Festive Trilogy". Over the course of three days there are magnificent parades and processions which come to a head on the so-called Day of El Araldo or the Battle of Arcabucería, when both sides fight to take the city's castle, with blunderbusses and gunpowder creating a deafening spectacle in the town centre of Alcoy.

## CARTAGENA

Due to its strategic location, what was **Carthago Nova** in Roman times has been occupied by a number of different cultures which have left an important artistic legacy in the Cartagena of today. A tour of the city and its museums will show you a city with strong links to the sea.

You can walk amongst the grandstands of the **Roman Theatre** in Cartagena, built in the 1st century BC. Access is via the **Roman Theatre Museum** where exhibits are displayed of objects found during the different excavations that have taken place since its discovery in 1988.

You'll find further evidence of the Roman past of the whole area in the **Murcia National Underwater Archaeology Museum**, with collections of objects from marine excavations in the region. You'll be especially surprised by two of the discoveries: elephant tusks with Phoenician inscriptions and the remains of ships found in Mazarrón, and objects found in Roman shipwrecks in the Escombreras Islands.

Cartagena is completely transformed during **Easter Week**. You'll love the magnificent floral decorations adorning

the religious statues. The Nazarenos (members of different brotherhoods taking part in the Easter processions) are also very unusual: most of them are children and they distribute mementos of the different brotherhoods and sweets amongst the crowd.

One of the most moving moments takes place right at the door of the **Church of Santa María de Gracia**, at the conclusion of the processions with the arrival of the Virgin Mary, when thousands of people sing the *Salve Popular Cartagenera*, a religious song.

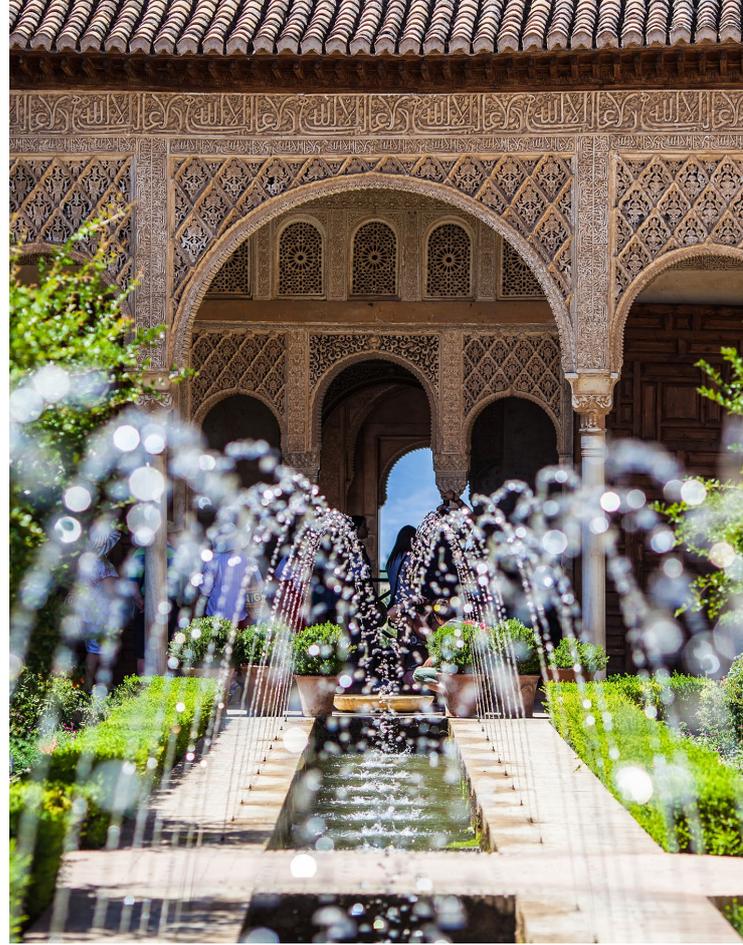
▼ ROMAN THEATRE,  
CARTAGENA



## GRANADA

Just a few kilometres from the Costa Tropical and the beaches of Salobreña and Almuñécar, it's so easy to visit this city with both an extraordinary al-Andalus legacy and wonderful architectural gems from the Renaissance. Fountains, lookout points and **Cármenes** (houses surrounded by gardens which are typical of this city) create delightful, unforgettable neighbourhoods.

The essential monument to visit on any trip to Granada is **La Alhambra**, a palace, a citadel and a fortress in successive eras and now one of the most important artistic legacies in all Spain.



▲ GENERALIFE GARDENS, ALHAMBRA  
GRANADA

Stroll around the gardened enclosure listening to the sound of the water in the fountains and pools, admire its richly decorated Nasrid past and soak up its sublime beauty.

The **Alhambra** is divided into four areas, all well worth visiting: the Palaces, the Alcazaba citadel, the city or Medina and the Generalife Gardens. It also includes prominent buildings from different periods, like the Renaissance **Palace of Carlos V** which houses the Alhambra Museum, and the Fine Arts Museum.

To fully appreciate the architectural values and the landscape of this UNESCO World Heritage site you should climb up to the **San Nicolás lookout point** in the Albaicín neighbourhood or to **Sacromonte**. From there you'll be able to discern the spectacular relationship between the Alhambra, the surrounding territory and the city of Granada.



SAN NICOLÁS LOOKOUT POINT  
GRANADA

## MÁLAGA

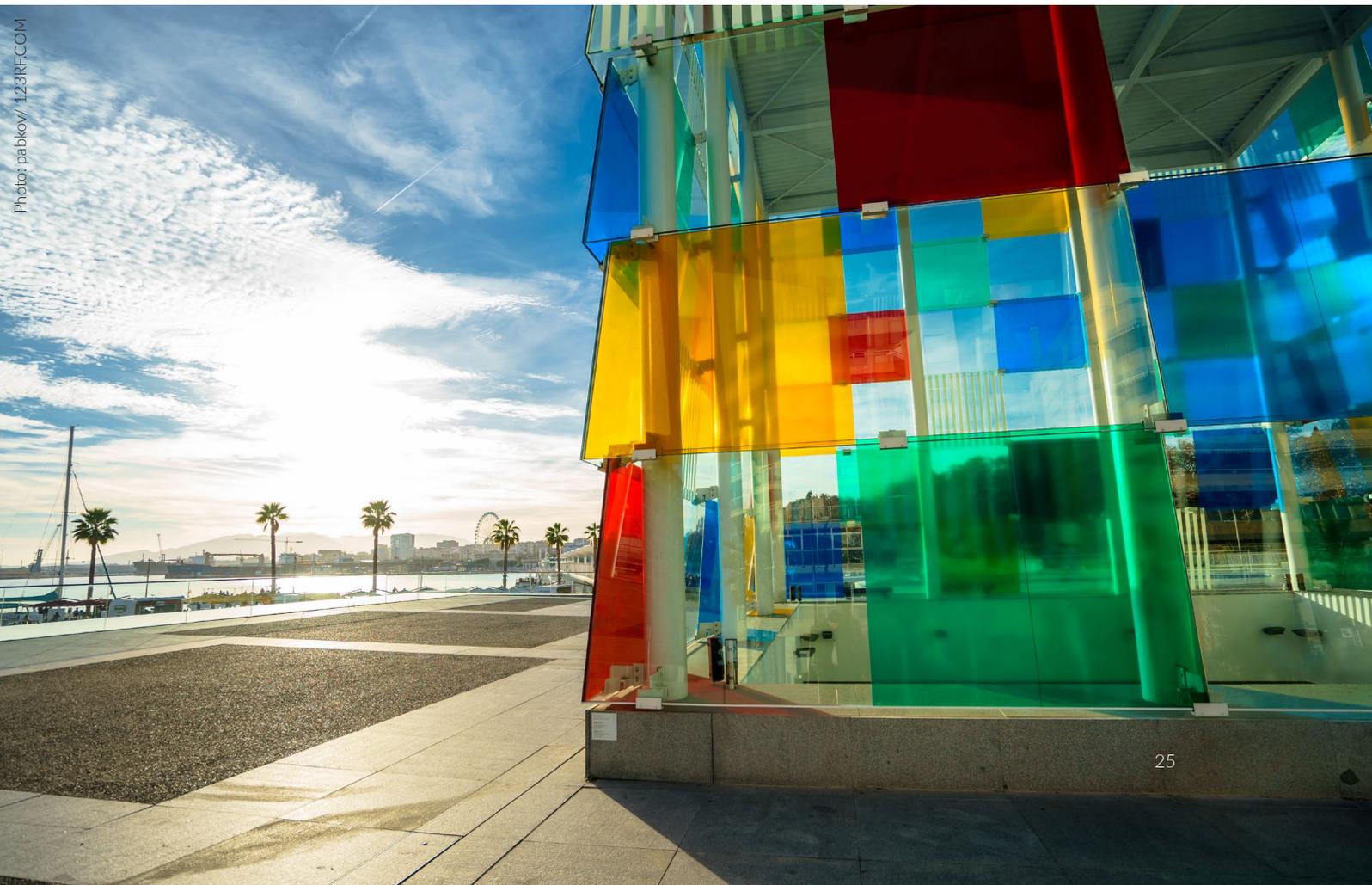
The Costa del Sol is renowned world-wide for its wonderful climate, fine sandy beaches and its yacht marinas. But apart from these irresistible attractions, the city also has a broad catalogue of cultural institutions for art lovers.

There are around 40 museums in Málaga, so you have plenty to choose from. Looking for some surprising modern art? Then you really shouldn't miss the **Pompidou Centre** and its multicoloured cube. Here you'll find some of the best art from the 20th and 21st centuries, with major works from the Pompidou permanent collection in Paris. It's a living museum, with programmes in constant evolution and multidisciplinary experiences.

If you're looking for a more classical gallery, then try the **Carmen Thyssen Museum** where you'll find the most comprehensive collection of 19th century Andalusian art. Or visit the **Málaga Picasso Museum**, dedicated to one of the 20th century's most influential artists and who was born in the city in 1881. The **St Petersburg Russian Museum Collection**, in the old Royal Tobacco Factory, is an essential part of any cultural tour of the city.

Málaga's museums include those dedicated to wine, archaeology, Flamenco and air transport.

▼ POMPIDOU CENTRE  
MÁLAGA



## FESTIVALS TO SUIT ALL TASTES

Especially in spring with the arrival of the summer sun, the whole Mediterranean coast comes alive to the sound and rhythm of music festivals. From the Costa Brava to the beaches of Tarifa there is an incredible variety, from hip-hop to electronic music and established Spanish and international pop-rock artists.

The great events not to be missed include: **Primavera Sound** in Barcelona, and **FIB** in Benicàssim (Castellón). These are two of the most important musical events in Europe, attracting thousands of fans and some of the greatest international names.

There are so many festivals and so many different styles. Ground-breaking electronic music is the theme for **Sónar** (Barcelona), whilst you'll find the top DJs on the international circuit in **Dreambeach Villaricos** (Cuevas de Almanzora, Almería) and **Arenal Sound** (Burriana, Castellón). The **La Mar de**

**Músicas** Festival, which also has its literary, artistic and film side, showcases a wide variety of *world music* in Cartagena (Murcia).

Meanwhile, the **Vida Festival** is particularly proud of its programme, above all Spanish and international Indie bands, in the incredible surroundings of the sea and the forest in Vilanova i la Geltrú (Barcelona). The **Low Festival** (Benidorm, Alicante) is along the same lines, with extensive grassy areas, plenty of shade to offset the heat of the summer and swimming pools available for those with VIP tickets.

There are two boutique festivals where both the venue and the programme are a luxury, with great international stars of past and present: **Starlite Marbella** (Málaga) and the **Cap Roig Festival** (Calella de Palafrugell, Girona).

The La Cantera Auditorium in Marbella and the gardens in Cap Roig provide a natural context which is ideal for enjoying an unforgettable experience.



Every imaginable style is represented at **Weekend Beach** in Torre del Mar (Málaga). There is something for everyone: legendary rock bands, the latest in hip-hop, electronic and alternative music, all in a venue right next to the Mediterranean.

And you can't miss the Sitges Zombie Walk, a stroll amongst the living dead in the centre of in this coastal town near Barcelona.

If you're a fan of horror, get ready for the terrifying experiences on offer each year at the **Sitges Film Festival**, one of the most important in the horror film genre in the world.

## SHOPPING

If you love shopping, or just want to give yourself a treat, then Spain is the destination for you. Here you'll find the best fashion labels, outlets selling top brands, and designer stores. There are also numerous traditional markets and antique shops.

You'll find the most exclusive boutiques in the **Eixample** district in Barcelona, near the **Passeig de Gracia** and the **Avinguda Diagonal**. For alternative shopping you have the shops in **El Born** and the **Gothic Quarter**. To discover the best street markets, then head for **Las Ramblas** or the **Plaza de Les Glories Catalanes**.



For shopping in Valencia go to **La Seu**, the oldest district in the city. Most of the shops are to be found on the streets of **La Paz** and **Poeta Querol**, or in the **Plaza del Ayuntamiento**. If you're looking for something a little different, then try **Ruzafa**, Valencia's Soho, a multi-cultural neighbourhood that is very fashionable. It abounds with delightful, modern little shops with personality, where you can leave the chain stores behind and discover amazing little treasures. If you like crafts, one of the best places in Valencia is the traditional market in the **Plaza Redonda**, in the La Xerea neighbourhood.

A visit to **Marbella** on the Costa del Sol is an excuse to soak up the *glamour* in a select and exclusive atmosphere

that's perfect for your luxury purchases. Make a note of the Avenues of **Ricardo Soriano**, **Ramón y Cajal**, and the **Boulevard Príncipe Alfonso Hohenlohe**. You'll feel like a star as you browse in shops selling the most prestigious brands of fashion, jewellery and design.

In **Puerto Banús** you'll find the latest fashions at the most important international fashion shows.

The **Calle Larios** and the surrounding area, in the historical town centre of Málaga, are ideal for a day's shopping. The city's main shopping centre, where the main shops selling fashion and accessories can be found, reaches as far as the semicircle made up of the **Guadalmedina riverside** and the streets of **Carretería**, **Álamos** and **Alcazabilla**.

▼ CALLE LARIOS  
MÁLAGA

You'll be assisted by highly-qualified personnel or Personal Shoppers who will accompany you while you do your shopping.





## NATURE

From Girona to Cádiz along the Mediterranean coastline there are countless natural attractions and so many different activities available in protected areas. There are extraordinary landscapes and exotic gardens for you to discover on foot, by bike and by boat.

▲ EBRO DELTA  
TARRAGONA

### AIGÜESTORTES I ESTANY IN SANT MAURICI

Water is the distinctive feature of this beautiful National Park in the heart of the Catalan Pyrenees, home to the red deer and one of the last European refuges for the endangered lammergeier. Here you'll find over 200 mountain lakes as well as endless crystal-clear streams and waterfalls. Discover the network of historical trails which make ideal routes for hiking through lovely villages, valleys and mountain passes.

### EBRO DELTA

The largest wetland in Catalonia, located in the province of Tarragona, harbours a wealth of natural treasures, as well as picture-postcard landscapes and idyllic beaches. Take a walk amongst the rice fields at sunset, explore the estuary island of Buda by bicycle or take a kayak to discover what such a magical place has to offer.

## LA ALBUFERA IN VALENCIA

The Albufera Nature Reserve is a navigable wetland with great biodiversity. Explore the amazing Don Juan Cave, in Jalance, with stalactites and stalagmites in underground spaces that have such evocative names as Lake of Desires and the Devil's Grotto. Or enjoy the beautiful colours at sunset in the Albufera from one of the tour boats available in the area.

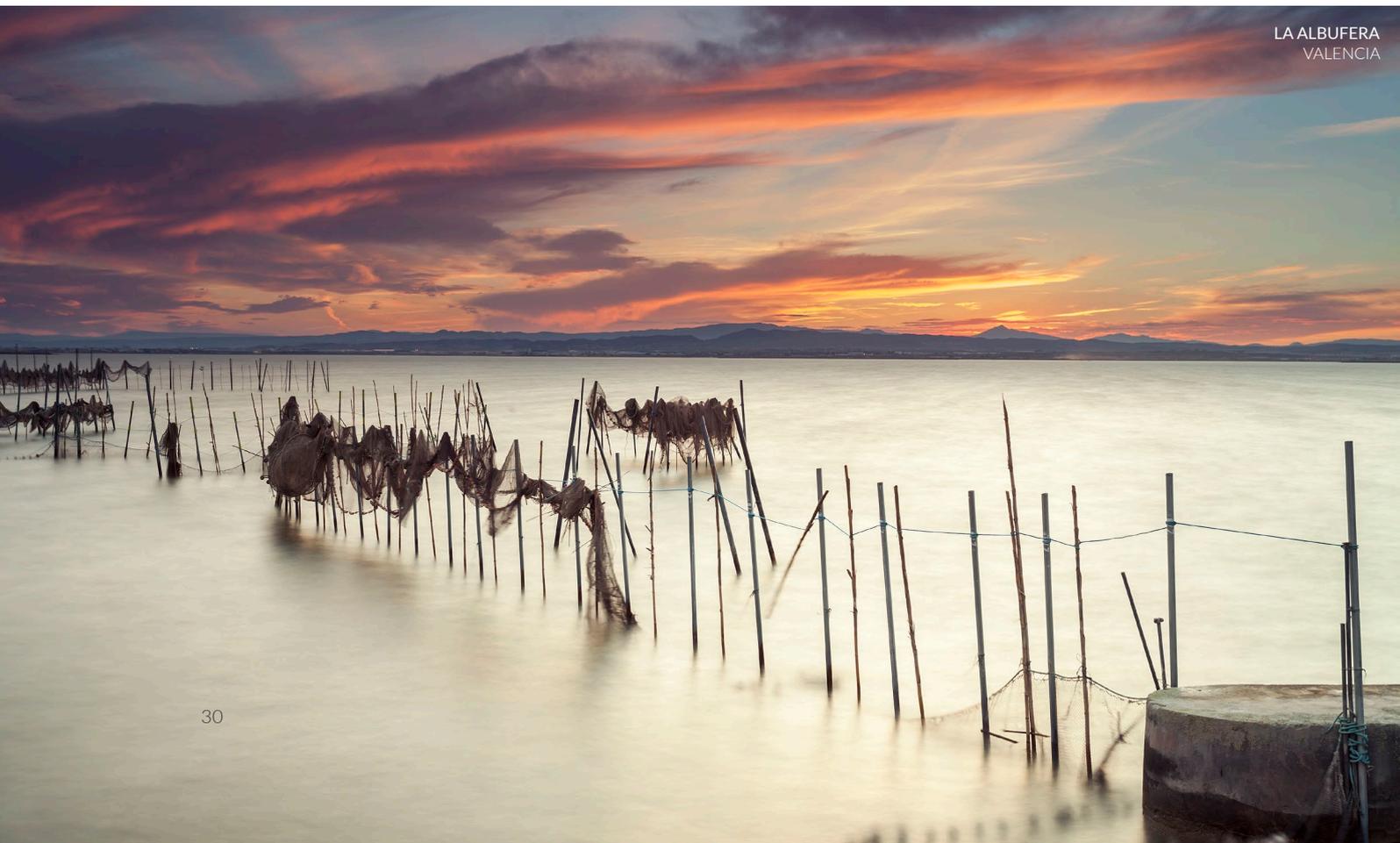
## THE PALMERAL AND HUERTO DEL CURA, ELCHE (ALICANTE)

The largest grove of date palms in Europe will make you feel like you're in the far east. Taking a stroll through this UNESCO world heritage site is an unforgettable experience thanks to its well-preserved, extraordinary traditional irrigation system. The palm grove

extends to various parts of the city like the Municipal Park, with unique Moorish Revival buildings, and the Jardín Huerto del Cura, an exotic garden with nearly 500 palm trees, including an example of a true botanical rarity, the so-called "imperial palm tree".

## SANDS AND SALT PANS OF SAN PEDRO

This is the most important wetland in the Murcia region and it is ideal for bird watching. At the end of June, thousands of flamingos gather here and create a spectacular pink landscape. A short tour as the sun comes up over the salt pans, hiking along the well-signposted trails and a therapeutic mud bath are just some of the incredible experiences you can enjoy in these peaceful, privileged surroundings.



LA ALBUFERA  
VALENCIA



▲ CABO DE GATA NATURE RESERVE  
ALMERÍA

## CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURE RESERVE

Visit an open-air museum scattered with lunar landscapes and unspoiled beaches in the volcanic mountains of Cabo de Gata-Níjar, in Almería. As the sun falls, follow in the footsteps of the film makers. You're in one of the greatest film locations in the world, used by directors like Spielberg, Leone and Almodóvar. You'll love the unique surroundings with cliffs, coves and volcanic rock formations.

Apart from taking a dip while you enjoy the incredible beaches, you should visit the El Cabo lighthouse and the reef at Arrecife de las Sirenas. Diving is another of this area's great attractions, with extraordinary sea beds and crystal-clear waters.



CALÇOTS

## ENJOY THE DELICIOUS MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Find out why the Mediterranean diet has been declared Intangible Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO. It is varied, tasty and good for your health. It's much more than a **healthy diet**, it's a **way of life**. Try the wide variety of **virgin olive oils**, one of its key ingredients. The Mediterranean coast offers a host of incredible flavours to delight your palate. Here are just some of the essential dishes.

**Calçots** are sweet, white, flame-grilled spring onions. This is one of the traditional products you won't be able to resist on a visit to Catalonia, especially the Tarragona area.



Be prepared to get your hands dirty for a **calçotada**, a gastronomic ritual with these as the main ingredient from November to April. The traditional menu for this event includes salad, tomato bread and cold meats, calçots (soft, long onions) with romesco (a hazelnut, almond and red pepper-based sauce) and locally produced meat. All accompanied by good wine and finished off with a homemade **crema catalana** for dessert (egg custard topped with caramelised sugar).

And you really must try **paella**, one of the icons of Spanish cuisine. It originated in the Valencia Region, where you'll be able to enjoy some of the best versions. This delicious rice dish is cooked in a *paellera*, a special shallow pan with two handles, and there are a number of varieties depending on the ingredients used.

The most traditional recipe uses chicken, rabbit and vegetables and the rice should be nice and loose and full of flavour. There are other popular versions like **paella mixta** (with meat and seafood) and **paella marinera**, made with fish and seafood. It's really best if you eat it straight out of the pan, accompanied by a young red or rosé wine.

The Murcia Region maintains its agricultural traditions with a recipe book full of market-garden flavours. A typical dish is **zarangollo murciano**, scrambled eggs with courgettes, onions and sometimes with potatoes. It can be eaten as a tapa or with meat and fish. You'll always find this dish served at the stalls set up all around the city of Murcia during the Spring Festivities.

Another of the great gastronomic attractions in the south of Spain is what they call "**fish from the bay**". It can be cooked in many different ways and is an essential part of coastal cuisine, prepared right by the beach with simple ingredients. On the Costa del Sol, **skewered sardines** are the star of the show. This is a speciality in Málaga and consists of fish skewered on a cane and grilled over the embers. You can skewer other types of fish or meat, the result is just as delicious.

▼ SKEWERED FISH

MUCH MORE THAN JUST A BEACH



## ENJOY THE NIGHTLIFE

After nightfall the towns and cities along the coast are full of life and places where you can go out for a drink, listen to music and dance. In all of them there is at least one neighbourhood or specific area which has all the attractions for fantastic nightlife. The best nightlife destinations are the big cities like Barcelona, Valencia and Alicante, but there's also plenty of action around the beaches on the Costa del Sol.



For example, in **Barcelona** there are districts like the **Eixample** and **Sant Gervasi-Santaló** which are renowned world wide for their clubs specialising in electronic music. **Poblenou**, **Port Olímpic** and **El Born** are some of the city's most fashionable districts offering truly sophisticated attractions.

Take a stroll around the streets in the oldest part of **Valencia**, in **El Carmen**, and you're bound to find a lively bar or a nice terrace where you can sit and talk. If you're looking for an alternative vibe, then **Ruzafa** is the district for you. The **Marina Real** (Royal Marina) has the most *chic* atmosphere. Bars and clubs with a feeling of luxury where you can relax next to the sea.

The best place to enjoy the nightlife in **Alicante** is **El Barrio**, in the historical town centre. There are more pubs, terraces and night clubs in the **Levante wharf** in the yacht marina and the area around the Playa de San Juan **golf club**.

In the centre of **Málaga** there is a blend of modern and classic nightlife which creates an atmosphere which suits all ages and tastes. The tapas bars in the **Plaza de Uncibay** and around the Cathedral are an ideal place to start the night. The big clubs and the most exclusive pubs are in the **La Malagueta** district.

The night life in **Marbella** is really exciting. There's plenty of entertainment and good music in the numerous beach bars. The best bars are to be found in the **historical old town**, the **yacht marina** and the surrounding area. You'll find the most international, glamorous atmosphere in the *beach clubs* and night clubs in **Puerto Banús**.





## HOW TO GET THERE

Photo: TEA / 123rf.com

▲ BARCELONA-EL PRAT AIRPORT

### AIRPORT

In most Spanish airports there are airline companies offering connections to major cities all over the world. The airports offering the greatest number of international connections are **Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas**, **Josep Tarradellas Barcelona-El Prat**, **Palma de Mallorca**, **Málaga-Costa del Sol**, **Valencia**, **Alicante-Elche Miguel Hernández** and **Gran Canaria**.

### ROAD

The **Mediterranean Motorway** or **AP-7** runs all along the Mediterranean coast from the French border to Algeciras (Cádiz), mostly in toll sections but some are free. This motorway is part of the E-15 on the International E-road Network which runs from the United Kingdom to Spain passing through France.

The main **vehicle rental** companies operate throughout the country. You'll find numerous companies renting motorbikes, cars and minibuses in any destination you choose.

## TRAIN

The **Spanish National Railway Network (RENFE)** links all the country's main cities and regions. The unquestionable stars of the system are the **AVE high-speed trains** which serve more than 30 tourist destinations, with Madrid as their main hub. You can travel from Madrid to Valencia in less than two hours from Madrid to Málaga in less than three hours or from Madrid to Barcelona in about two and a half hours.

The **Renfe Spain Pass**, valid on all the long- and medium-distance routes (including AVE and Avant), is highly recommended as it gives you so much

mobility. You can choose 4, 6, 8 or 10 journeys. The high-speed network is connected with the rest of Europe via the **Renfe-SNCF** service.

## BOAT

Spain is the gateway to the Mediterranean and the second European country in cruise traffic. In addition to the stopovers in various places of interest, another popular option is cruise packages that combine stays on land. **Barcelona, Mallorca and Málaga** are three of the destinations preferred by travellers for spending a few days before going back on board, or after completing their cruise.

There are also other points on the Mediterranean coast of Spain that are common stopover places on cruise routes: **Ibiza, Menorca and Valencia**.





# HOW TO GET AROUND IN THE CITIES

## BUS

Most of the cities along the east coast of Spain have a network of local buses which makes it easy for you to get around. If you're thinking of staying in the same place for a few days, it may be worth your while buying a combined ticket for several trips or a renewable card which can be used for a combination of public transport systems (bus, underground and suburban railways).

## BICYCLE

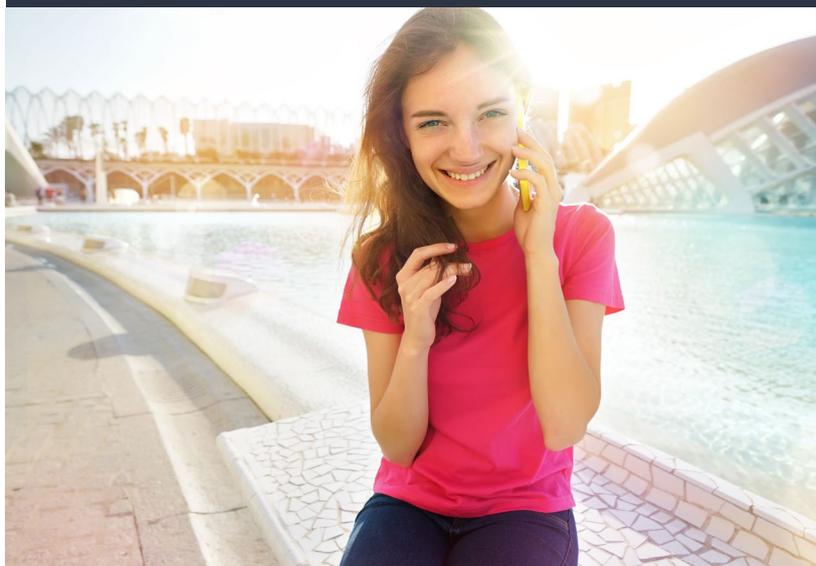
This healthy means of transport does is zero emissions and is becoming more and more popular in our cities. Many of them have a municipal rental service at affordable prices, as well as bike lanes connecting the different neighbourhoods, so a bicycle is a quick and safe option.

## FERRY

All along the Mediterranean coast there are numerous tourist ferry services so you can discover nearby areas and travel to other towns by sea.

## MOTORCYCLE

This is an ideal way to travel around and enjoy the beautiful countryside along the Mediterranean coast. It's also great for getting around the cities and delightful towns easily and you can forget about parking problems. They're cheaper to rent than cars and in most towns there is plenty of availability.



## CO-OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

### ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Castilian Spanish, the official language of the Spanish State, shares its status with other co-official languages in some areas along the Mediterranean coast. In the Autonomous Region of Catalonia, it shares its status with Catalan, which is the official language in this region. And in the Autonomous Region of Valencia, it shares its status with Valenciano, the official language in this region. Most notices and signs are in Catalan or Valenciano with the Spanish translation underneath.

### 📍 Further information:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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