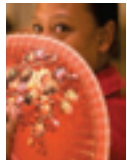


15 HOT REASONS TO VISIT A COOL CITY

(and you're never far from the beach)



Málaga oozes culture, history and Spanish style. SARAH LEE, left, visits the capital of

the Costa del Sol and becomes a real fan, while photographer VIC PARIS captures the city's magic.



01: Spanish style... It may be the architecture – ironwork balconies replete with potted bougainvillea, the attractive squares lined with palm trees, such as Plaza de la Constitución, above – or the suntrap beaches of La Farola, and Pedregalejo. But wherever you look, Málaga embodies so much that is Spain. Swap fish and chips for tapas, lager and lime for sweet wine, and learn a little Español to get ahead. ¡Salud!



02: Bloomin' marvellous... From bustling food markets with tantalising fresh fruit to flower stalls and weekly flea markets bursting with colour, Málaga has it all, and a new central market is being built in the city.



03: Shop till you drop... Fashionistas should head to Calle Marques de Larios, above, for high street trends. But don't miss great boutiques hidden in the small, winding streets near the cathedral, such as Albero, in Calle Cister. Then hot foot it to Avenida de Andalucía for Spain's favourite department store, El Corte Inglés.



04: Food for thought... Food is an art in Málaga, and the humble cod is king. Tapas is beautifully served in contemporary style at La Barra, in Calle Bolsa, or in the rustic setting of Lo Güeno, in Calle Marín García, pictured above, where porra, a type of gazpacho, and Málaga salad made with cod, potato, orange and olives, are a must.



05: Strong stuff... Forget frothy cappuccinos and milky lattés, the city's locals – Málagaños – like their coffee with coffee. And nowhere is it more revered than at Café Central, Plaza de la Constitución. The family-owned café, pictured above, has a coffee heritage dating to 1895. Freshly ground coffee is served in a glass and customers can choose from a menu of different strengths from solo (black) to mitad (a medium cup) through to sombra – just a shadow of coffee in your milk. It's a place to sit and watch the world go by, while bow tie clad waiters serve at tables that have been there since 1932.



06: Very Moorish... Started in the 8th century by the Moors, the Alcazaba, top and above, was not completed until the 11th century. The fortification was built on the foundations of a Roman fort and housed the city's governors. The Roman influence is still evident at the entrance where a 2nd century amphitheatre is being restored. Málaga's Alcazaba is one of the best preserved in Spain and features many aspects of Moorish architecture, from double walls and defensive towers, to stunning archways and gardens. Skip the challenging uphill walk and take a bus from the Alcazaba to the Gibralfaro castle for spectacular views of the city.



07: From the soul... Fiery flamenco courses through the veins of many a Málagaño. It is learned and performed across the city. Susana Lupiáñez, 35, teaches young dancers each week at La Lupi Flamenco, main picture. She said: "I have danced flamenco since I was three and still love it. It comes from our very souls. You can't learn flamenco in a few weeks, it can take years to perfect. But the important thing is to find a connection between the music and the form." Colourful, passionate performances shouldn't be missed. Susana, pictured far right, added: "Flamenco is very accessible, even when you see it for the first time."



08: Baroque beauty... Málaga's Ayuntamiento, or City Hall, above, faces Paseo del Parque, which is full of tropical plants and beautiful purple flowering jacaranda. Its neo-baroque exteriors make it worthy of a visit outside of local government business.



09: A fan of Málaga... Can you spot the difference between a Málaga fan from one made in Valencia? A visit to Miramar, on Calle Nueva, above, will help. Owner Gerardo Ruiz said: "The fashion in Málaga is for fans to be painted on both sides, while Valencian fans are plain on one side and patterned on the other." Buy a fan at Miramar and you'll be taking home a work of art as all are hand-painted by local artists.



10: People watching... Find a café, order a coffee and watch the world go by in Plaza de la Constitución, Plaza de la Merced, or along the promenade at Pedregalejo beach, top. These areas are great for a relaxed afternoon and local buskers are always keen to entertain for a few euros. Alternatively, see if you can spot some famous faces and head to La Posada de Antonio restaurant, in Calle Granada. Málaga is the birthplace of Hollywood actor Antonio Banderas who owns the restaurant. He's even been known to serve behind the bar and entertain some famous friends there.



11: Málaga masterpiece... Few could argue with Málaga's claims to artistic renown. The city's most famous son, Pablo Picasso, was one of the founding fathers of cubism. His birthplace, in Plaza de la Merced, above, now houses an exhibition of his works. Picasso's impact on the art world and city is testament to the fact that the Museo Picasso Málaga lies at the heart of Málaga, in Calle San Agustín. Building redevelopment programmes are also sheathed in screens portraying his most famous works. Though Picasso's influence is obvious, this isn't where the city's art scene ends – Málaga buzzes with creative excitement and the Centre of Contemporary Art features a host of challenging modern works.



12: Tropical varieties... The spectacular botanical gardens of La Concepción were created in 1857 for an aristocratic family. More than 800 tropical and subtropical plants including 100 types of palm tree thrive in the gardens' Mediterranean climate.



13: Take to the stage... Be it a play, ballet or concert, Málaga's Teatro Cervantes, above, always entertains. The theatre, in Calle Ramos Marín, dates back to 1870 and the beautiful painted ceilings of its auditorium afford it a certain grandeur. It houses the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra and is regularly full of cultured Málagaños taking in anything from a historical play to a Nick Cave concert.



14: Oh so sweet... Sweet wine is a Málaga speciality, and nowhere is this more respected than at Antigua de Casa Guardia, in Alameda Principal, above. It has been serving the best Moscatel and Pedro Ximen wines and sherries since 1840. Shuffling sawdust underfoot at the bar you can sense its history as you mix wine with raw seafood while the price is chalked up before you.

15: Glorious grandeur...

Málaga's stunning cathedral, built between 1528 and 1782, is known as La Manquita – the one armed woman – as it's the only cathedral in the world with one tower. The other tower was never completed due to a shortage of funds. But this has not affected the grandeur inside. The spectacular interior reflects both baroque and Renaissance styles. Plaza del Obispo, in which the cathedral sits, is a popular place to meet friends for food and drinks.

your **exchange** holiday

RCI has **44** affiliated resorts in the **Málaga** region



Weeks members: Exchange your week



Points members: Accommodation from 16,500 points



Fly to **Málaga**
from **£99** per person



Avis car hire in **Málaga**
from **£109** per week

See Page 6 for terms and conditions

Call 0870 60 90 141

Click rci.com

Holiday would like to thank the following for their help with this feature: Avro, Avis, Spain Tourism, Turismo Andaluz, Málaga Film Office and José Luis Bernabé.