

Cádiz Province



As you travel these southernmost reaches of the Spanish (and European) mainland, you may have to remind yourself that you haven't been whisked off to some completely distinct and distant region. It's hard to fathom how an area little more than 100km from north to south or east to west can encompass such variety. Take the three main cities – cosmopolitan, cultured, fun-loving Cádiz can seem a world away from nearby Jerez de la Frontera, where aristocratic, sherry-quaffing, equestrian elegance rubs shoulders with poor quarters that have nurtured some of the great flamenco artists; and neither seems to have anything in common with the unromantic industrial port of Algeciras.

This rich diversity continues as the colourful, bustling towns of the 'sherry triangle' give way to the long, sandy beaches of the Atlantic coast and the hip international surf scene of Tarifa. Inland, the majestic cork forests of Los Alcornocales yield to the rugged peaks and pristine white villages of the Sierra de Grazalema. Active travellers in Cádiz can enjoy Europe's best windsurfing, hike dramatic mountains, trek the countryside on horseback or train their binoculars on some of Spain's most spectacular birds. Meanwhile, the province's fascinatingly diverse history is ever-present in the shape of thrillingly sited hilltop castles, beautiful churches, medieval mosques and much more. This is a place that never lets the senses doze.

HIGHLIGHTS

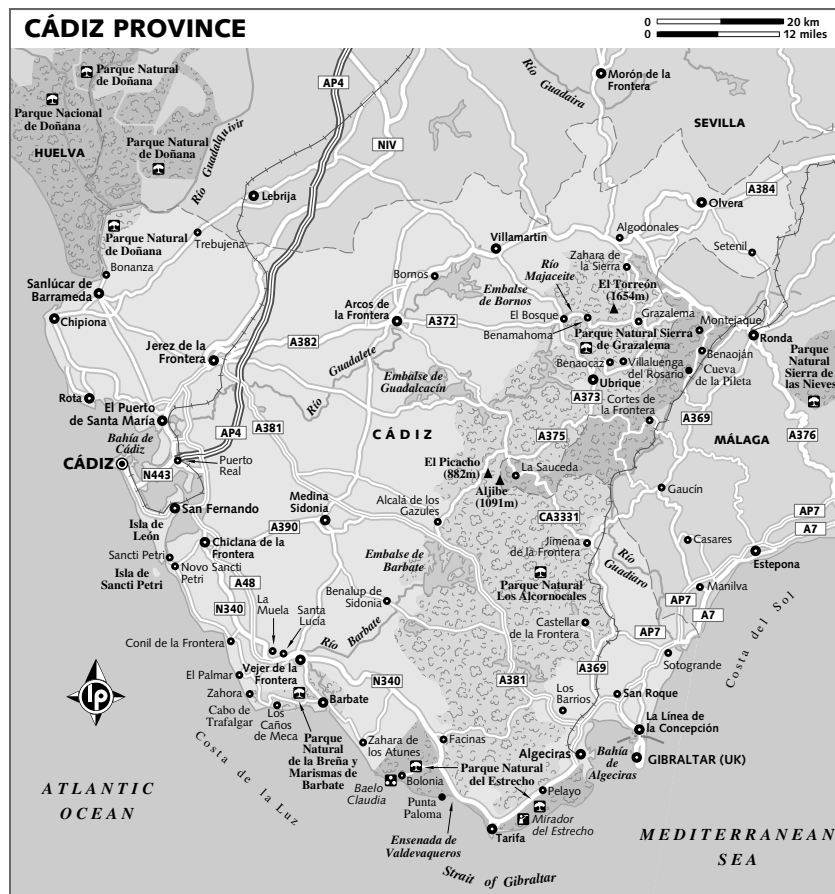
- Savour the windsurfing, kitesurfing beach scene at **Tarifa** (p215)
- Enjoy the festive but cultured and historic port city of **Cádiz** (p174), scene of Spain's wildest **Carnaval** (p179)
- Visit multifaceted **Jerez de la Frontera** (p191), home of sherry, horses, flamenco and festivals
- Explore the white villages, craggy mountains and vulture-inhabited gorges of the **Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema** (p203)
- Unwind on the **Costa de la Luz** (p208) – long sandy beaches and laid-back coastal villages
- Discover the winding streets and Renaissance palaces of **Arcos de la Frontera** (p200), with its thrilling cliff-top setting



■ POPULATION: 1.18 MILLION

■ CÁDIZ AV DAILY HIGH:
JAN/AUG 15°/30°C

■ ALTITUDE RANGE:
0M–1654M



CÁDIZ

pop 132,000

Spain's most densely populated city, Cádiz (pronounced *cad-i*) is crammed onto the head of a long promontory like some huge, crowded, ocean-going ship, where the tang of salty air and open ocean vistas are never far away. Once past the coastal marshes and industrial sprawl, you emerge into an elegant, civilised port city of largely 18th- and 19th-century construction. Cádiz has a long and fascinating history, plenty of absorbing monuments and museums, a limitless supply of great bars, some memorable restaurants and a lively nightlife – yet it's the

gaditanos (people of Cádiz) themselves who make their city truly special. Warm, open, cultured and independently minded, most *gaditanos* are above all concerned with making the most of life – whether simply enjoying good company over a drink, staying out late to soak up the cool in the sweltering summer months, or indulging in Spain's most riotous carnival in late winter.

HISTORY

Cádiz may be the oldest city in Europe. It was founded under the name Gadir, at least as early as the 8th century BC, by the Phoenicians, who came here to trade Baltic amber and British tin for Spanish silver. Later, it became a naval base for the Ro-

mans, who heaped praise on its culinary, sexual and musical delights.

Cádiz began to boom again with the discovery of the Americas in 1492. Columbus sailed from here on his second and fourth voyages of exploration, returning with vast quantities of precious metals and treasure. Cádiz attracted Spain's enemies too: in 1587 England's Sir Francis Drake 'singled the king of Spain's beard' with a raid on the harbour, delaying the imminent Spanish Armada. In 1596 Anglo-Dutch attackers burnt almost the entire city.

Cádiz's golden age was the 18th century, when it enjoyed 75% of Spanish trade with the Americas. It grew into the richest and most cosmopolitan city in Spain and gave birth to the country's first progressive, liberal middle class.

During the Spanish War of Independence (part of the Napoleonic Wars) Cádiz underwent a two-year French siege during which the Cortes de Cádiz (the Spanish national parliament) convened here. In 1812 this lopsidedly liberal gathering adopted Spain's first constitution (known as La Pepa), proclaiming sovereignty of the people.

But Spain's loss of its American colonies in the 19th century plunged Cádiz into a slump from which it is still emerging. The city's population has actually shrunk by 25,000 since 1991, partly because of unemployment resulting from a decline in shipbuilding and fishing, and partly because there is no new land left to build on. Tourism is a key to recovery, with more monuments being opened to the public and an admirable renovation programme restoring the old city's splendour.

ORIENTATION

Breathing space between the old city's huddled streets is provided by numerous attractive squares. The four key ones for initial orientation are Plaza San Juan de Dios, Plaza de la Catedral and Plaza de Topete in an arc in the southeast, and Plaza de Mina in the north. Pedestrianised Calle San Francisco runs most of the way between Plaza San Juan de Dios and Plaza de Mina.

The train station is just east of the old city, off Plaza de Sevilla, with the main bus station (of the Comes line) 900m to its north on Plaza de la Hispanidad. The main harbour lies between the two.

The 18th-century Puerta de Tierra (Land Gate) marks the eastern boundary of the old city. Modern Cádiz extends back along the peninsula towards the town of San Fernando.

INFORMATION

You'll find plenty of banks and ATMs along Calle San Francisco and the parallel Avenida Ramón de Carranza.

Bookstores

QiQ (☎ 956 20 57 66; Calle San Francisco 31; ☎ 9.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm & 5.30-9pm Sat) Sells guidebooks in several languages, and local-interest books.

Emergency

Hospital Puerta del Mar (☎ 956 00 21 00; Avenida Ana de Viya 21) Cádiz's large, modern, main general hospital, 2.25km southeast of the Puerta de Tierra.

Medical Emergency (☎ 061)

Policía Nacional (National Police; ☎ 091, 956 28 61 11; Avenida de Andalucía 28) Located 500m southeast of the Puerta de Tierra.

Internet Access

Enred@2 (cnr Calles Isabel La Católica & Antonio López; internet per hr €1.50; ☎ 11am-2pm, 5-10pm)

Lu@r (☎ 956 21 42 05; Plaza de Mina 4; internet per hr €1.50; ☎ 10am-11.30pm) Also has inexpensive telephone booths.

Post

Post office (Plaza de Topete; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

Tourist Information

Municipal tourist office main office (☎ 956 24 10 01; Plaza San Juan de Dios 11; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep–mid-Jun, 9am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun–mid-Sep); information kiosk (Plaza San Juan de Dios; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays mid-Sep–mid-Jun, 10am-2pm & 5-7.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays mid-Jun–mid-Sep)

Regional tourist office (☎ 956 25 86 46; Avenida Ramón de Carranza s/n; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, Sun & holidays)

SIGHTS

Cádiz's sights are scattered around the old city but four main squares – Plaza San Juan de Dios, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza de Topete and Plaza de Mina – provide focal points for your explorations.

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TO CASTLE OF SAN SEBASTIAN (600m)

TO DISCO BARS (100m); EL MALECÓN (200m)

TO POLKRA NACIONAL (350m); S/C (800m); PLAYA DE LA VICTORIA (1.3km); HOTEL REGIO (1.8km); HOSPITAL PUERTA DEL MAR (2km); HOTEL TRYB LA CALETA (2.1km); ARANA RESTAURANTE (2.2km); ARTE SERRANO (2.3km); BARBASS (2.4km); YUNQUE (2.4km); HOTEL PLAYA VICTORIA (2.5km); EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARIA (22km); JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA (35km); TÁRIFA (95km)

ATLANTIC OCEAN

TO DISCO BARS (100m); EL MALECÓN (200m)

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Plaza San Juan de Dios & Barrio del Pópulo

The broad Plaza San Juan de Dios is surrounded by cafés and dominated by the imposing neoclassical **ayuntamiento** (city hall), built around 1800. Behind the *ayuntamiento*, the Barrio del Pópulo neighbourhood was once the kernel of medieval Cádiz, a fortified enclosure wrecked by the Anglo-Dutch raiders in 1596. Its boundaries are still marked by three 13th-century gate arches, the **Arco de los Blancos**, **Arco de la Rosa** and **Arco del Pópulo**. The once-shabby Barrio del Pópulo has been a focus of the city's restoration programme and its now clean, attractive and pedestrianised streets sport several craft shops, galleries and tapas bars.

On the seaward edge of the Barrio del Pópulo, drop into the excavated **Teatro Romano** (Roman Theatre; ☎ 956 21 22 81; Campo del Sur s/n; admission free; 🕒 10am-2pm), where you can walk along the gallery beneath the tiers of seating. The remains of the ancient stage are still buried beneath the adjacent buildings.

Cathedral & Around

Cádiz's yellow-domed **cathedral** (☎ 956 28 61 54; Plaza de la Catedral; adult/child €4/2.50; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) fronts a handsome, broad, palm-lined plaza. The decision to construct a large and imposing cathedral here was taken in 1716 on the strength of the imminent transfer from Seville to Cádiz of the Casa de la Contratación, which controlled Spanish trade with the Americas. But the cathedral wasn't actually finished till 1838, by which time the funds had run short, forcing cutbacks in size and quality, and neoclassical elements (including the dome, towers and main façade) had diluted architect Vicente Acero's original baroque plan. But the cathedral is nonetheless a magnificent construction, seen to best effect when floodlit at night. Inside, don't miss the large, circular underground crypt, built of stone excavated from the sea bed. Cádiz-born composer Manuel de Falla is among those buried here.

From a separate entrance on Plaza de la Catedral you can climb up inside the cathedral's **Torre de Poniente** (☎ Western Tower; 956 25 17 88; adult/child/senior €3.50/2.50/2.50;

CÁDIZ PROVINCE

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CÁDIZ COASTAL WALK

This circuit takes you right around the Cádiz seaboard from Plaza de Mina to the cathedral – a breezy 4.5km walk that could last anything from 1¼ hours upward. Go one block north from Plaza de Mina to the city's northern seafront, with views across the Bahía de Cádiz to El Puerto de Santa María, then head northwest along the jungly **Alameda** (with two truly gigantic rubber trees) to the **Baluarte de la Candelaria** bastion (occasionally housing art exhibitions). Here turn southwest to the **Parque del Genovés**, with itsquirkily clipped trees. You might stop for refreshments at the **Parador Hotel Atlántico** (p180) at the southwest end of the park. Continue to the star-shaped **Castillo de Santa Catalina** (☎ 956 22 63 33; admission free; 🕒 10.30am–6pm, approx to 8pm May–Aug), built to defend the city after the Anglo-Dutch sacking of 1596: inside are an historical exhibit on Cádiz and the sea, and a gallery for temporary exhibitions. Sandy **Playa de la Caleta** (very crowded in summer) separates Santa Catalina from another fort, the 18th-century **Castillo de San Sebastián**. You can't enter San Sebastián but do walk along the airy 750m causeway to its gate. At low tide you can poke around the rock pools along the way. You might like to turn inland here to the Barrio de la Viña, the old fishermen's district, for tapas at El Faro (p181) or Casa Manteca (p181) before finally following the broad promenade east along **Campo del Sur** to the yellow-domed cathedral.

🕒 10am–6pm, to 8pm 15 Jun–15 Sep) for marvelous views over the old city. From here you will see the many watchtowers built in the 18th century so citizens could keep an eye on shipping movements without stepping outside their front doors. Back then, Cádiz had no less than 160 of these watchtowers: 127 still stand and many are now desirable properties, popular with weekenders from Seville.

The cathedral ticket also admits you to the nearby **Museo Catedralicio** (Cathedral Museum; ☎ 956 25 98 12; Plaza Fray Félix; 🕒 10am–1.30pm & 4.30–7pm Tue–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat), with an excavated medieval street and material on the Anglo-Dutch sacking of 1596 alongside cathedral treasures and assorted art.

Plaza de Topete & Around

A short walk northwest from the cathedral, this square is one of Cádiz's liveliest, bright with flower stalls and still widely known by its old name, Plaza de las Flores (Square of the Flowers). It adjoins the large, animated **Mercado Central** (Central Market; 🕒 9.30am–2pm Mon–Sat), built in 1837, the oldest covered market in Spain. A few blocks further northwest, the **Torre Tavira** (☎ 956 21 29 10; www.torretavira.com; Calle Marqués del Real Tesoro 10; admission €3.50; 🕒 10am–6pm, to 8pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep) is the highest of the city's old watchtowers, with a dramatic panorama of Cádiz. It has a camera obscura that projects live, moving images of the city onto a screen (sessions start every half-hour).

The nearby **Hospital de Mujeres** (☎ 956 22 36 47; Calle Hospital de Mujeres 26; admission €0.80; 🕒 10am–1.30pm Mon–Sat) is an 18th-century women's hospital whose chapel is one of the most profusely decorated churches from Cádiz's golden century and contains El Greco's *Extasis de San Francisco* (Ecstasy of St Francis).

A little further northwest you'll find the **Museo de las Cortes de Cádiz** (☎ 956 22 17 88; Calle Santa Inés 9; admission free; 🕒 9am–1pm & 4–7pm Tue–Fri Oct–May, 9am–1pm & 5–7pm Tue–Fri Jun–Sep, 9am–1pm Sat & Sun), full of memorabilia of the 1812 Cádiz parliament, with pride of place belonging to a large, marvellously detailed model of 18th-century Cádiz, made in mahogany and ivory in the 1770s for Carlos III. Within the museum and open during the same hours is **Cádiz Virtual Siglo XVIII** (Virtual Cádiz 18th Century; ☎ 956 27 20 62; www.cadiz-virtual.com; admission €6) where you don a '3D stereoscopic' helmet to take interactive tours of 18th-century Cádiz – gimmicky but quite fun. Along the street is the baroque church where the parliament actually met, the **Oratorio de San Felipe Neri** (☎ 956 21 16 12; Plaza de San Felipe Neri; admission €2; 🕒 10am–1.30pm Mon–Sat). This has an unusual and beautiful oval dome, and a masterly Murillo *Inmaculada* of 1680 in its main retablo.

Plaza de Mina & Around

Plaza de Mina, one of Cádiz's largest and leafiest squares, is home to the city's ex-

cellent major museum, the **Museo de Cádiz** (☎ 956 21 22 81; EU/non-EU citizen free/€1.50; 🕒 2.30–8.30pm Tue, 9am–8.30pm Wed–Sat, 9.30am–2.30pm Sun). Information here is in Spanish only, but they do have explanatory leaflets in other languages. The stars of the ground-floor archaeology section are two Phoenician marble sarcophagi carved in human likeness. There's also some beautiful Phoenician jewellery and Roman glassware, and lots of headless Roman statues, plus Emperor Trajan, with head, from the ruins of Baelo Claudia (see p214). The fine arts collection, upstairs, features a group of 18 superb canvases of saints, angels and monks by Francisco de Zurbarán, mostly painted in 1638–39 for La Cartuja de Jerez. Also here is the painting that cost Murillo his life, the beautifully composed altarpiece from the chapel of Cádiz's Convento de Capuchinas: the artist died in 1682 from injuries received in a fall from the scaffolding.

The **Oratorio de la Santa Cueva** (☎ 956 22 22 62; Calle Rosario 10; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am–1pm & 4.30–7.30pm Tue–Fri mid-Sep–mid-Jun, 10am–1pm & 5–8pm Tue–Fri mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am–1pm Sat & Sun), just a short distance southeast of Plaza de Mina, is a 1780s neoclassical church whose richly decorated oval-shaped Capilla Alta (Upper Chapel) contains three impressive paintings by the inimitable Francisco de Goya.

Beaches

Old Cádiz has one short curve of beach, Playa de la Caleta (see Cádiz Coastal Walk, opposite), but the newer part of the city is fronted by a superb, wide ocean beach of fine Atlantic sand, **Playa de la Victoria**, beginning about 1.5km beyond the Puerta de Tierra and stretching about 4km back along the peninsula. The beach earns a blue flag for its water quality and facilities, and on summer weekends almost the whole city seems to be out here. Where the city ends, the beach continues under the name **Playa de la Cortadura**, also blue-flagged. Bus 1 'Plaza España–Cortadura' from Plaza de España will get you to both beaches (€0.90).

COURSES

Cádiz's attractions are making it an increasingly popular place to study Spanish lan-

guage and culture. Recommended schools offering these types of courses include the following:

Gadir Escuela Internacional de Español (☎ /fax 956 26 05 57; www.gadir.net; Calle Pérgolas 5) Well-established school a couple of blocks southeast of the Puerta de Tierra.

Melkart Centro Internacional de Idiomas (☎ /fax 956 22 22 13; www.centromelkart.com; Calle General Menacho 7) In the old city.

SIC (☎ 956 25 27 24; www.spanishincadiz.com; Calle Condesa Villafuente Bermeja 7) About 1km southeast of the Puerta de Tierra, near the beach.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

No other Spanish city celebrates **Carnaval** (www.carnavaldecadiz.com in Spanish) with the verve, dedication and humour of Cádiz, where it turns into a 10-day singing, dancing and drinking fancy-dress party spanning two weekends (15 to 25 February 2007, 31 January to 10 February 2008). The fun, abetted by huge quantities of alcohol, is irresistible. Costumed groups called *murgas* tour the city on foot or on floats, dancing, singing satirical ditties or performing sketches (unfortunately most of their famed verbal wit will be lost on all but fluent Spanish speakers). In addition to the 300 or so officially recognised *murgas*, who are judged by a panel in the Gran Teatro Falla, there are also the *ilegales* – any group that fancies taking to the streets and trying to play or sing.

Some of the liveliest and most drunken scenes are in the working-class Barrio de la Viña, between the Mercado Central and Playa de la Caleta, and along Calle Ancha and around Plaza de Topete, where *ilegales* tend to congregate. Wear strong footwear as the streets will be carpeted with discarded bottles.

Rooms in Cádiz are all booked months in advance for Carnaval. If you haven't managed to snatch a room, you can still, like many other people, just go to Cádiz for the night from anywhere within striking distance.

SLEEPING

Room rates given here can almost double during the festivities of Carnaval. They also rise in some places in August, but often go down about 20% to 25% outside the summer season.

Budget

A reasonable number of budget places can be found in the old city.

Casa Caracol (☎ 956 26 11 66; www.caracolcasa.com; Calle Suárez de Salazar 4; dm/d incl breakfast €15/28; ☑) Friendly and crowded, Casa Caracol is a true backpacker hostel and easily the best option if you're on a budget. It has bunk dorms for four and eight, a sociable communal kitchen, free internet, and a roof terrace with a few hammocks where you can sleep the night under the stars (€10). There's no sign outside: look for the blue door.

Hostal San Francisco (☎ 956 22 18 42; Calle San Francisco 12; d €49, s/d with shared bathroom €24/38) Well situated in the old city, the San Francisco has well kept but moderately sized rooms with pine-veneer furnishings. Some have little natural light. Bicycles can be rented for €10 a day.

Hostal Centro Sol (☎ /fax 956 28 31 03; www.hostalcentrosolcadiz.com; Calle Manzanares 7; s/d €45/54) This efficient, well-kept *hostal*, in an attractive 19th-century house, has plain and smallish rooms, with TV and wooden furniture of assorted vintage. Breakfast is available, and the owners speak French.

Hostal Fantoni (☎ 956 28 27 04; www.hostalfantoni.net; Calle Flamenco 5; s/d €45/60, with shared bathroom €35/40; ☑) The recently renovated, friendly Fantoni is in an 18th-century house with a dozen attractive, spotless rooms in cool blue-and-white tones. The roof terrace has fantastic views and catches a breeze in summer.

Midrange

Hostal Canalejas (☎ /fax 956 26 41 13; Calle Cristóbal Colón 5; s/d €48/66; ☑) An excellent new *hostal* in the old city with neat, comfortable rooms each with pine furniture, a small bathtub, and one or two single beds.

Hostal Bahía (☎ 956 25 90 61; hostalbahia@terra.es; Calle Plocia 5; s/d €56/70; ☑) Handily placed just off Plaza San Juan de Dios, the Hostal Bahía's 21 rooms, all with an exterior outlook, are neat and spotless, with phone and TV. This is the best value you'll find for this sort of price – so book ahead to ensure a room.

Hotel Francia y París (☎ 956 21 23 19; www.hotelfrancia.com in Spanish; Plaza San Francisco 6; s/d €66/82; ☑) Well placed on an old-city plaza, this bigger hotel (57 rooms) has perfectly

comfortable rooms but little atmosphere. Breakfast is available.

Hotel Regio (☎ 956 27 93 31; www.hotelregiocadiz.com in Spanish; Avenida Ana de Viya 11; s/d incl breakfast €59/97; ☑) A short stroll from Playa de la Victoria, the Regio has comfy and inviting rooms with balconies, and a decent café.

Hospedería Las Cortes de Cádiz (☎ 956 21 26 68; www.hotellascortes.com in Spanish; Calle San Francisco 9; s/d incl breakfast €70/102; ☑) This excellent old-city hotel occupies a remodelled 1850s mansion centred on an elegant four-storey atrium. The 36 stylish rooms, each dedicated to a figure or place associated with the Cortes de Cádiz, have attractive period-style furnishings and plenty of modern comforts. Three singles are adapted for travellers with disabilities and the hotel also has a roof terrace, gym and Jacuzzi.

Top End

Parador Hotel Atlántico (☎ 956 22 69 05; www.parador.es; Avenida Duque de Nájera 9; s/d €103/129; ☑) Cádiz's Parador is an ugly mud-brown concrete building but inside it's as comfortable, spacious and attractive as you'd expect from this luxury chain. All rooms have a private terrace with sea view of some sort (best at the front), and the pool, encircled by lawn, overlooks the ocean.

Hotel Tryp La Caleta (☎ 956 27 94 11; www.solmelia.com; Avenida Amílcar Barca 47; r €144; ☑) Half the 143 luxurious rooms face Playa de la Victoria, 2.2km from the Puerta de Tierra. Check for weekend deals.

Hotel Playa Victoria (☎ 956 20 51 00; www.palafoxhoteles.com; Glorieta Ingeniero La Cierva 4; s/d from €125/156, with ocean views from €145/176; ☑) The stylish Playa Victoria is the best of Cádiz's beach hotels, fronting directly onto the sands 2.6km from the Puerta de Tierra. The 188 elegant rooms have balconies shaped like ocean waves. If you're paying this much, go for an oceanfront room (one-third of the rooms face inland). Outside peak seasons there are sometimes good weekend discounts.

EATING

Old Cádiz may have Spain's densest concentration of tapas bars: there seem to be a couple on almost every block. There's also

an increasing number of good restaurants for more sedate dining.

Around Plaza San Juan de Dios

La Cigüeña (☎ 956 25 01 79; Calle Plocia 2; mains €13-16; ☑) A few steps off the plaza, 'The Stork' has a Dutch chef who prepares adventurous and delicious food, and friendly and relaxed service.

Around Plaza de Mina & Plaza San Antonio

La Gorda Te Da De Comer (Calle General Luque 1; tapas €1.60, raciones €5; ☑) 9-11.30pm Mon, 1.30-4pm & 9-11.30pm Tue-Sat) Incredibly tasty food at incredibly low prices amid cool pop-art design. No wonder competition for the half-dozen tables is fierce: get there at least 10 minutes before opening to avoid a long wait. Try the curried chicken strips with Marie-Rose sauce, the deep-fried aubergines with honey or a dozen other mouth-watering concoctions.

Mesón Cumbres Mayores (☎ 956 21 32 70; Calle Zorrilla 4; tapas €1.50-2, mains €7-17) This ever-busy place, dangling with hams and garlic, has an excellent tapas bar in the front and a small restaurant in the back, both serving delicious fare at reasonable prices. In the bar it's hard to beat the ham and cheese *montaditos* (open sandwiches). In the restaurant, there are great salads, seafood, barbecued meats and *guisos* (stews).

Around Plaza de Topete & Plaza de la Catedral

Freiduría Las Flores (☎ 956 22 61 12; Plaza de Topete 4; seafood per 250g €2.50-8) Cádiz is addicted to fried fish, and Las Flores, a kind of self-respecting fish and chip shop, is one of the best places to sample it. You order by weight. To try an assortment of things together, have a *surtido* (a mixed fry-up).

Bar Zapata (Plaza Candelaria; montaditos €1.50-2, raciones €6-10) The crowd often spills out of the door at this highly popular but very narrow street-corner tapas joint. The scrumptious *montaditos* are the house speciality, and the jazz/rock/blues soundtrack adds to the enjoyment.

El Terraza (Bar Pelayo; ☎ 956 28 26 05; Plaza de la Catedral 3; raciones €8-18) Easily the most long-standing and best spot on the cathedral square, this place serves up top fresh seafood and meat from the Andalusian hills.

Barrio de la Viña

Casa Manteca (☎ 956 21 36 03; Calle Corralón de los Carros 66; tapas €1.20-1.60; ☑) closed Sun evening & Mon) Set on the corner that is the hub of La Viña's carnival fun, and with almost every inch of wall covered in colourful flamenco, bullfighting and carnival memorabilia, Casa Manteca is inevitably one of the barrio's (neighbourhood) liveliest bars. Ask the amiable bar staff for a tapa of *chicharrones* – pressed pork dressed with a squeeze of lemon, served on a paper napkin and amazingly delicious.

El Faro (☎ 956 22 99 16; Calle San Félix 15; raciones & mains €6-22) Over in the old La Viña fishermen's district near Playa de la Caleta, El Faro is Cádiz's most famous seafood eatery. Sit in the restaurant decorated with pretty ceramics, or squeeze up to the adjoining tapas bar among the locals. The fare is great in both parts but the bar offerings are less pricey.

Playa de la Victoria

There's heaps of choice along the beachfront of Paseo Marítimo. Both the following top choices are between the hotels Playa Victoria and Tryp La Caleta, with *terrazas* (terraces) out front.

Arana Restaurant (☎ 956 20 50 90; Paseo Marítimo 1; mains €9-16) Arana serves quality Andalusian meat and seafood (entrecôte in sweet Pedro Ximénez wine, monkfish in white-wine sauce) in stylish, modern surroundings.

Arte Serrano (☎ 956 27 72 58; Paseo Marítimo 2; mains €9-18) Specialises in meat from the Andalusian hill country.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

El Aljibe (☎ 956 26 66 56; www.pablogrosso.com; Calle Plocia 25; tapas €2.50-4, mains €10-15) Refined restaurant upstairs and civilised tapas bar downstairs, El Aljibe is one of the best bets in town for either mode of eating. The cuisine developed by *gaditano* chef Pablo Grosso is a delicious combination of the traditional and the adventurous – *solomillo ibérico* (Iberian pork sirloin) stuffed with Emmental cheese, ham and piquant peppers; couscous with raisins and wine; seafood-stuffed halibut in puff pastry...

DRINKING

Cádiz has intriguing bars round every corner. They range from old tile-walled joints with a few locals chinwagging over a *vino tinto* (red wine) to chic music bars with a cool young clientele. The area around Plazas San Francisco, España and Mina is the hub of the old city's late-night bar scene. Things get going around 11pm or midnight at these places but can be quiet in the first half of the week.

Medussa (cnr Calles Manuel Rancés & Beato Diego de Cádiz) Number-one nocturnal magnet for an alternative/studenty crowd, with red walls and banks of lime-green fluorescent lighting to set the tone. Varied DJs and occasional live music – from garage and rock-groove to punk, ska and reggae – get the bodies moving.

Cambalache (Calle José del Toro 20; ☎ closed Sun) This long, dim, jazz and blues bar often hosts live music on Thursdays around 10.30pm.

Woodstock Bar (☎ 956 21 21 63; cnr Calles Sagasta & Cánovas del Castillo) This bar has a good range of on-tap and bottled international beers and plenty of rock music on the TVs.

Café Poniente (☎ 956 21 26 97; Calle Beato Diego de Cádiz 18; ☎ closed Sun & Mon) A popular bar that draws a mixed/gay crowd with its line up of house-music, waiters in vest tops (or no tops), and drag shows on Thursdays.

Yambalaya (Calle Sagasta 3; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 4pm-midnight Sat & Sun) A high-ceilinged café-bar with assorted ethnic artefacts, Yambalaya is a nice spot for any kind of drink any time of day. It has internet facilities for €1 per 25 minutes.

La Morería (Calle San Pedro 5; ☎ 4pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 4pm-3am Fri & Sat) If your preferred beverage is tea, drop into this cool Moroccan tearoom serving all manner of infusions in silver pots.

The second hot spot is down by the beach around the Hotel Playa Victoria, with lively music bars along Paseo Marítimo and nearby Calle General Muñoz Arenillas. This area comes into its own in summer. The hippest bars include **Barabass** (☎ 856 07 90 26; www.barabasscadiz.com; Calle General Muñoz Arenillas 4-6; admission incl 1 drink €8; ☎ 4pm-6am), with a shiny chillout lounge and different DJs nightly, and **Yunque** (Calle General Muñoz Arenillas 5; ☎ 10pm-late), a gathering ground of *'gente guapa'* (beautiful people). A taxi from the old city costs about €5.

ENTERTAINMENT

Cádiz has a lively entertainment scene: pick up one of the several what's-on mags from a tourist office.

Peña Flamenca La Perla (☎ 956 25 91 01; Calle Carlos Ollero s/n; admission free) Cádiz is one of the true homes of flamenco. This atmospheric, cavernlike den of a club hosts flamenco nights at 10pm many Fridays in spring and summer.

Gran Teatro Falla (☎ 956 22 08 34; Plaza de Falla) The city's main theatre, a fine neo-Islamic building in pink brick, stages a busy, varied and impressive programme of theatre, dance and music.

Central Lechera (☎ 956 22 06 28; Plaza de Argüelles) A smaller venue playing host to more adventurous and experimental music, dance and theatre.

Café-Teatro Pay-Pay (☎ 956 25 25 43; Calle Silencio 1; admission free; ☎ 10.30 or 11pm Wed-Sat) This café/bar in the Barrio del Pópulo hosts flamenco, singer-songwriters, storytellers and other performers.

Taberna Marqués de Cádiz (☎ 956 25 42 88; Calle Marqués de Cádiz 3; admission free) Stone-walled grotto with flamenco nights starting at 10pm every Friday.

Dance till dawn? Head out towards Punta de San Felipe (also known as La Punta) on the northern side of the harbour. A long line of disco bars here rocks from around 3am to 6am Thursday to Saturday (well, Friday to Sunday, to be pedantic). To try out your salsa turns, head to **El Malecón** (☎ 956 22 45 51; www.elmalecon.net; Paseo Pascual Pery; ☎ midnight-6am Thu-Sat), at the far end of the line of disco bars – but don't leave it too late on Saturday night, when the music switches to more commercial stuff around 3am.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

The catamaran ferry to El Puerto de Santa María leaves from the Muelle (Jetty) Reina Victoria near the train station; the less frequent *El Vapor* sails from the Estación Marítima near the Comes bus station. See p188 for schedules and fares.

Bus

Most buses are run by **Comes** (☎ 956 80 70 59, 902 19 92 08; Plaza de la Hispanidad). Destinations include the following:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Algeciras	€10	2½hr	10
Arcos de la Frontera	€5.50	1¼hr	6
Barbate	€5.50	1½-2hr	14
Córdoba	€20	4hr	1-2
El Puerto de Santa María	€1.70	30-40min	23
Granada	€28	5hr	4
Jerez de la Frontera	€2.70	40min	20
Los Caños de Meca via El Palmar	€5	1¼hr	2 daily Mon-Fri
Málaga via Marbella	€20	4hr	6
Ronda	€13	3hr	3
Seville	€10.50	1¾hr	12
Tarifa	€8	2hr	5
Vejer de la Frontera	€4.50	1hr	8
Zahara de los Atunes	€6.50	2hr	2-3

Frequency of some services is reduced on Saturday and Sunday.

Los Amarillos also runs buses from its stop by the southern end of Avenida Ramón de Carranza. Tickets and information are available at **Viajes Socialtur** (☎ 956 28 58 52; Avenida Ramón de Carranza 31). Buses run to the following destinations:

Arcos de la Frontera (€4.50, 1¼ hours) Four daily

Monday to Friday, two daily on Saturday and Sunday.

El Bosque (€7, two hours) Four daily Monday to Friday, two daily on Saturday and Sunday.

El Puerto de Santa María (€1.70, 40 minutes) Eleven daily Monday to Friday, five daily Saturday and Sunday.

Sanlúcar de Barrameda (€3, 1¼ hours) Eleven daily Monday to Friday, five daily Saturday and Sunday.

Ubrique (€8, 2½ hours) Four daily Monday to Friday, two daily Saturday and Sunday.

Buses M050 and M051, run by the **Consorcio de Transportes Bahía de Cádiz** (☎ 956 01 21 00; www.cmtbc.com), travel from Jerez de la Frontera airport to Cádiz's Comes bus station (€2.60, one to 1¼ hours), via Jerez city and El Puerto de Santa María, 12 times a day Monday to Friday and six times on Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

Car & Motorcycle

The AP4 motorway from Seville to Puerto Real, on the eastern side of the Bahía de Cádiz, carries a toll of €5.50. From Puerto Real, a bridge crosses the neck of the bay to join the A48/N340 entering Cádiz from the south.

Train

From the **train station** (☎ 956 25 43 01; Plaza de Sevilla), up to 37 trains run daily to/from El Puerto de Santa María (from €2.70, 30 to 35 minutes) and Jerez de la Frontera (from €3.40, 35 to 50 minutes), 11 or more to/from Seville (€9 to €30, two hours), and two or three to/from Córdoba (€33 to €52, three hours).

GETTING AROUND

The old city is best explored on foot, and its narrow, winding streets are no fun to drive around anyway, so if you have a vehicle it's best to leave it in a car park. Twenty-four-hour car parks in the old city include the following:

Underground car park (Campo del Sur; per 24hr €12)

Underground car park (Paseo de Canalejas; per 24hr €8)

THE SHERRY TRIANGLE

North of Cádiz, the towns of Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María are best known as the homes of that unique, smooth Andalusian wine, sherry. But the 'sherry triangle' also offers a rich mixture of additional attractions: beaches, music, horses, trips into the Parque Nacional de Doñana, and a fascinating history.

EL PUERTO DE SANTA MARÍA

pop 82,000

El Puerto, 10km northeast of Cádiz across the Bahía de Cádiz (22km by road), is easily and enjoyably reached by ferry – a fitting way to arrive at a town with such a rich seagoing history. Christopher Columbus was a guest of the knights of El Puerto from 1483 to 1486: it was here that he met Juan de la Cosa, the owner of his 1492 flagship, the *Santa María*. From the 16th to 18th centuries El Puerto was the base of the Spanish royal galleys. Its heyday came in the 18th century, when it flourished on American trade and earned the name Ciudad de los Cien Palacios (City of the Hundred Palaces). Today its fabulous beaches, sherry bodegas, restaurants, tapas bars and vibrant nightlife make it a favourite outing for *gaditanos*, *jerezanos* and others looking for a change of scenery. In summer, El Puerto comes alive.

Orientation & Information

The heart of the town is on the northwest bank of the Río Guadalete, just upstream from its mouth, though development spreads along the beaches to the east and west. The ferry *El Vapor* arrives dead centre at the Muelle del Vapor on Plaza de las Galeras Reales. Calle Luna, one of the main streets, runs straight inland from Plaza de las Galeras Reales. The train station is a 10-minute walk northeast of the centre, beside the Jerez road. Some buses stop at the train station, others at the Plaza de Toros (Bullring), five blocks south of Calle Luna.

Ciberbahía (Avenida Aramburu de Mora 21; internet per hr €2; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, 3-10pm Sat & Sun) Also a *locutorio* (telephone call centre) for cheap calls worldwide.

Post office (Avenida Aramburu de Mora)

Tourist office (☎ 956 54 24 13; www.turismoelpuerto.com; Calle Luna 22; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-8pm May-Sep, 10am-2pm & 5.30-7.30pm Oct-Apr) Excellent, with plenty of information about water sports, bodega visits and flamenco events.

Sights & Activities

The historic, four-spouted **Fuente de las Galeras Reales** (Fountain of the Royal Galleys; Plaza de las Galeras Reales), by the riverfront, is a good place to start your explorations. America-bound ships drew their water here.

Two blocks southwest, then a block inland, stands the **Castillo San Marcos** (☎ 627 56 93 35; Plaza Alfonso El Sabio 3; admission €2; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue). Heavily restored in the 20th century, the fine castle was built over a Muslim mosque by Alfonso X of Castile after he took the town in 1260. The castle's decorated battlements are beautiful but the old mosque inside, now converted to a church, is the highlight. The building was closed at the time of writing; visits are normally by half-hour guided tour.

Three blocks further inland, the **Fundación Rafael Alberti** (☎ 956 85 07 11; Calle Santo Domingo 25; admission €3; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun) displays interesting exhibits on one of El Puerto's most famous sons, Rafael Alberti (1902-99). A poet, painter and communist politician of the Generation of '27 (see p47), Alberti lived in this house as a child.

Nearby, the little **Museo Municipal** (☎ 956 54 27 05; Calle Pagador 1; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10.45am-2pm Sat & Sun) has an elegant patio and interesting archaeological and fine art sections, including paintings by Rafael

Alberti. Just across from the museum, the impressive sandstone **Iglesia Mayor Prioral** (☎ 956 85 17 16; ☎ 8.30am-12.45pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat & Sun) dominates Plaza de España. Built between the 15th and 18th centuries, it boasts a lavish plateresque/baroque portal, the Puerta del Sol, facing the plaza, and a huge 17th-century Mexican-made silver retablo in the Capilla del Sagrario (to the right of the main altar).

Four blocks southwest from Plaza de España is El Puerto's grand 19th-century **Plaza de Toros** (Plaza Elias Ahuja; admission free; ☎ 11am-1.30pm & 6-7.30pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 11am-1.30pm & 5.30-7pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr), one of Andalucía's most beautiful and important bullrings, with room for 15,000 spectators. It's closed on days before and after bullfights. Entry to the bullring is on the Calle Valdes side of Plaza de España.

A short walk northeast from Plaza de España is the **Casa de los Leones** (House of the Lions; ☎ 956 87 52 77; Calle La Placilla 2; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-8pm), one of the finest of the many baroque mansions that were built in El Puerto's 18th-century heyday. Most impressive is its façade but there are also interesting information panels in the interior patio. You can stay in its holiday apartments.

SHERRY BODEGAS

Several of the sherry wineries are in the breezy area between the Plaza de Toros and the riverfront. They boast extensive gardens and tall palm trees. Tours are in Spanish with English translations if necessary (or all in English if only English-speakers are present). Phone ahead to visit **Bodegas Osborne** (☎ 956 86 91 00; Calle los Moros 7; €5; ☎ tours 10.30am & 1pm Mon-Fri). You can visit three other sherry houses without booking:

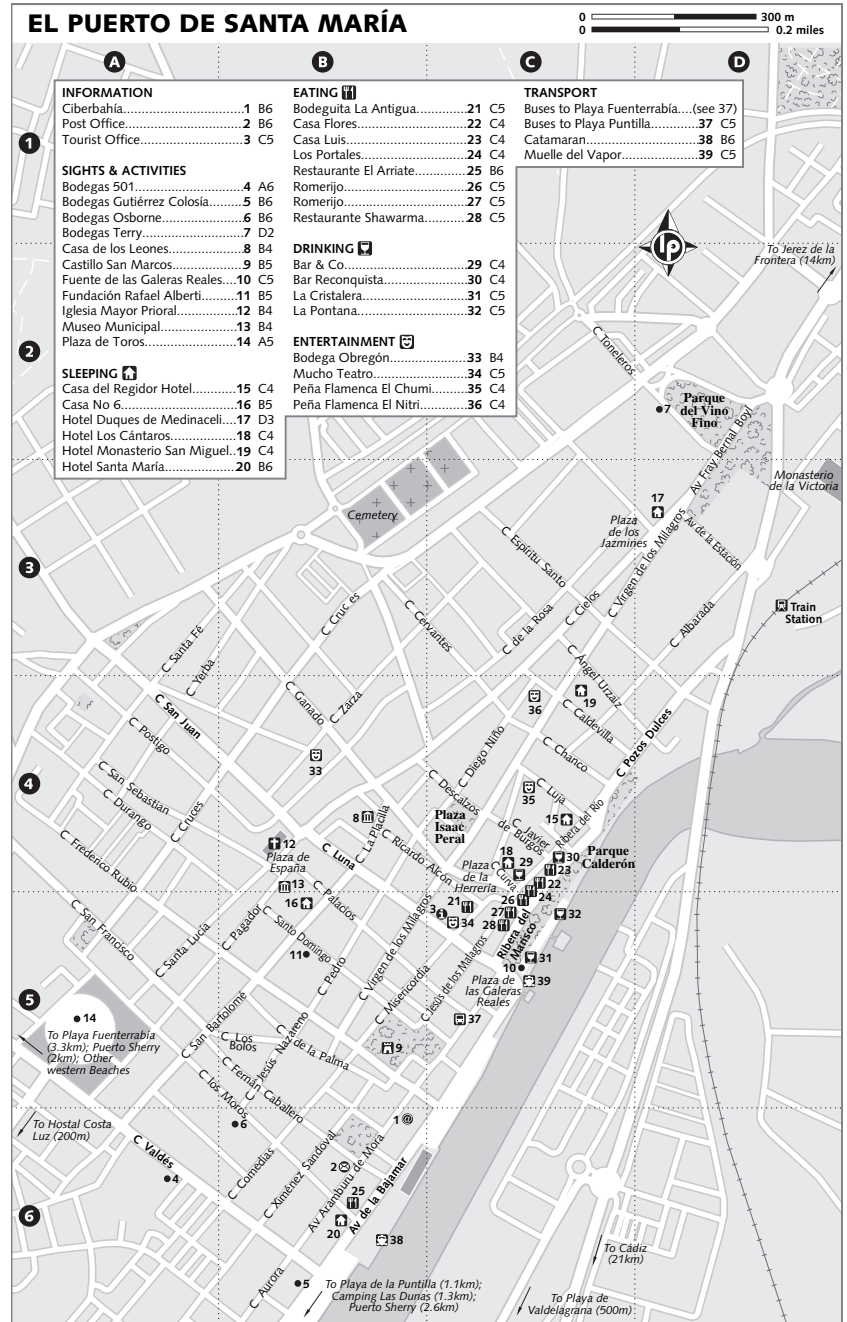
Bodegas 501 (☎ 956 85 55 11; Calle Valdés 9; admission €4; ☎ tours noon Mon-Fri)

Bodegas Gutiérrez Colosía (☎ 956 85 28 52; Avenida de la Bajamar; admission €3; ☎ tours 1.30pm Sat)

Bodegas Terry (☎ 956 85 77 00; Calle Tonereros s/n; tour €6.50; ☎ 10am & noon Mon-Fri). Hosts shows in the summer, including horse spectacles and more (see p188).

BEACHES

When you've finished sightseeing, sample El Puerto's fabulous white, sandy beaches. You can canoe, windsurf and more (pick up the tourist office's activities leaflet for



SACRED BULLS

As you roam the highways of Spain, every now and then you catch sight of the silhouette of a truly gigantic black bull on the horizon. When you get closer to the creature you'll realise it's made of metal and held up by bits of scaffolding. These are the *toros de Osborne*, silent and unlettered advertisements for the Osborne sherry and brandy company of El Puerto de Santa María. At the last count there were 92 Osborne bulls, each weighing up to four tonnes, looming beside roads all over Spain.

details). In high summer, the whole string of beaches is chock-a-block, but those furthest from the centre are least hectic.

The closest to town is pine-flanked **Playa de la Puntilla**, a half-hour walk southwest (or take bus 26, €0.80, heading southwest on Avenida Aramburu de Mora). A couple of kilometres further west is a swish marina development called, of course, **Puerto Sherry**, with a hotel, yacht club and a few restaurants, bars and cafés. Beyond Puerto Sherry is picturesque **Playa de la Muralla**, and the 3km **Playa de Santa Catalina**, with beach bars open in summer. Surfers head for the waves at Playa de la Muralla and halfway along Playa de Santa Catalina at **Playa las Redes**.

Bus 35 (€0.80) from the centre runs out to **Playa Fuenterrabía**, at the far end of Playa de Santa Catalina, stopping at the residential areas and some of the beaches en route. If you're driving, take the 'Rota' and 'Playas' road west from the roundabout at the northwest end of Calle Valdés.

On the eastern side of the Río Guadelete is **Playa de Valdelagrana**, a fine beach backed by high-rise hotels and apartments and a strip of bars and restaurants. Bus 35 (€0.80) also runs there.

Tours

Free guided walking tours of the town set off from the tourist office at 11am Saturday (and Tuesday from July to September; in Spanish and English). **El Vapor** (☎ 629 46 80 14; www.vapordeelpuerto.com) conducts 1½-hour night cruises (€6) around the bay at 9.45pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 1 July to 9 September.

Festivals & Events

Feria de Primavera y Fiestas del Vino Fino (Spring Fair) This four-day fiesta is deeply influenced by sherry, with around 200,000 half-bottles being drunk; late April/early May.

Campeonato del Mundo de Motociclismo de Jerez An unofficial motorbike fiesta takes over central El Puerto for the weekend in early May of the Jerez Grand Prix event of the World Motorcycle Championship (see p199).

Festividad Virgen del Carmen Fisherfolk Andalucía-wide pay homage to their patroness on the evening of 16 July; in El Puerto the virgin's image is paraded along the Río Guadelete followed by a flotilla.

Sleeping

El Puerto offers plenty of choice to suit all pockets, but especially in the upper bracket. Book ahead for July and August. Prices drop noticeably out of season.

Camping Las Dunas (☎ 956 87 22 10; www.lasdunascamping.com; adult/tent/car €4.50/4.50/3.90, bungalow for 2 incl 1 vehicle €55-84; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) The town's well-equipped and shady camping ground, with room for 1200 people, is just behind Playa de la Puntilla.

Hostal Costa Luz (☎ 956 05 47 01; www.hostalcostaluz.com; Calle Niño del Matadero 2; s/d €40/63; ☎ ☑ ☒) The friendly and young English-speaking Spanish owners have carefully designed and fitted out this modern *hostal* in the vicinity of the Plaza de Toros. The 11 medium-sized rooms have attractive wooden furniture and appealing bathrooms. Breakfast is available in the cosy dining room and you can relax on the roof terrace.

Casa No 6 (☎ 956 87 70 84; www.casano6.com; Calle San Bartolomé 14; r/f incl breakfast €70/120, 4-person apt €130; ☎) This is an early-19th-century house beautifully renovated by its welcoming Spanish-English owners. It provides charming, spacious and spotless rooms with high, wood-beamed ceilings, comfy beds and old-fashioned tiling, all around a lovely pillared patio open to the sky. Very central!

Casa del Regidor Hotel (☎ 956 87 73 33; www.hotelcasadelregidor.com; Ribera del Río 30; s/d €64/91; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) A converted 17th-century palace on two levels with an original patio. The excellent rooms have all the mod cons: two have a private terrace and three enjoy views. Water is solar-heated and there's a lift which arrives right outside the room adapted for wheelchair users.

Hotel Santa María (☎ 956 87 32 11; www.hotel santamaria.es; Avenida de la Bajamar s/n; s/d €87/106; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) The very comfortable, 100-room Santa María has a commanding position overlooking the Río Guadelete and expansive views from its rooftop pool area – probably the best reason to stay here.

Hotel Los Cántaros (☎ 956 54 02 40; www.hotelloscantaros.com; Calle Curva 6; s/d €98/115; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) A classy hotel (named after the 17th-century water jugs found by archaeologists beneath it) with 39 comfortable, well-equipped rooms, all with new furniture and some with balconies. Its restaurant looks out to a small garden.

Hotel Monasterio San Miguel (☎ 956 54 04 40; www.jale.com/monasterio; Calle Virgen de los Milagros 27; s/d from €140/184; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) This stylish and luxurious hotel occupies a converted 18th-century monastery, now home to a tropical garden, pool, valuable artworks and a gourmet restaurant.

Hotel Duques de Medinaceli (☎ 956 86 07 77; www.jale.com/dmedinaceli; Plaza de los Jazmines 2; s/d €165/206; ☎ ☑ ☒ ☓) Converted from an 18th-century mansion, this elegant hotel dripping with antiques provides 28 gorgeous rooms equipped with every comfort, including four-poster beds in some. This is the former home of the Terry Irish sherry family; beautiful manicured gardens separate it from the Terry winery.

For hotels and apartments out at the beaches, consult the tourist office website.

Eating

El Puerto is justly known for its outstanding seafood, fine restaurants and terrific tapas bars. Try the local speciality *urta roteña* (sea bream cooked in white wine, tomatoes, peppers and thyme), and don't forget the local wines!

Romerijo (☎ 956 54 12 54; Ribera del Marisco s/n; seafood per 250g from €4) This is a huge El Puerto institution, with crowds flocking to its two facing buildings. One building boils the seafood, the other fries it, and you buy portions in paper cones to take away or eat at the many tables. Everything's on display (boggle at the 18 types of fresh seafood) and you just take your pick and buy by the quarter-kilogram: for example, €4 for chunks of fried *cazón* (dogfish), €12 for a mixed fish/seafood fry-up, or €6 to €13 for various types of boiled prawns.

Restaurante Shawarma (☎ 956 87 64 23; Ribera del Marisco 11; falafel roll €3.50, mains €9; ☎) Vegetarians will just love this small, simple restaurant next to the large Romerijo. The food, authentic Lebanese-Greek, provides a welcome change. The falafel is unbeatable, as are the little spinach-and-feta filo pastries. Meat options include kebabs and moussaka.

Bodeguita La Antigua (☎ 956 67 68 56; Calle Misericordia 8; tapas €3, media-rationes from €4) Calle Misericordia sports half-a-dozen tapas bars dishing up some of the tastiest morsels in the region. La Antigua helpfully provides tapas menus in English and French as well as in Spanish. The *serranito*, a bread roll with pork, fried green pepper and a few chips (€3), makes people happy.

Casa Luis (☎ 956 87 20 09; Ribera del Marisco s/n; tapas/rationes €3/8; ☎ 1.30-4pm & 9-11pm Tue-Sat, 1.30-4pm Sun) This is a tightly packed little den with just a few tables inside and out, and a bar you can only elbow towards. They come for amiable Luis' innovative tapas, such as *paté de cabracho* (scorpion fish pâté) or *hojaldres* (puff pastries) with prawn, or cheese and anchovy filling.

Restaurante El Arriate (☎ 956 85 28 33; Calle los Moros 4; mains €9-15; ☎ closed Mon) German-Spanish owned, this local favourite serves up a broad Mediterranean cuisine. Unusual dishes (for Spain) are salmon lasagne, sole in an orange sauce, and potatoes *au gratin*.

Los Portales (☎ 956 54 21 16; Ribera del Río 13; mains €15-18) It's hard to go wrong with the grilled fish and seafood here. Specialities include *lenguado al crema de langosto*, sole in a creamy sauce with prawns, and *parrillada de pescado y mariscos*, a two-person platter of grilled fish and seafood.

Casa Flores (☎ 956 54 35 12; Ribera del Río 9; raciones €7.50-12, mains €13-34) A favourite of both locals and visitors, this restaurant offers an enticing array of appetisers including a tasty shellfish cocktail. The fish mains come with various sauces such as hake with mushrooms, and bream with seafood and ham. Meat eaters might like to choose the roast lamb (€26).

Drinking

Youthful music bars cluster around the centre and on the eastern side of town at Playa de Valdelagrana.

La Pontana (Parque Calderón; ☎ from 3.30pm) Get the real maritime feel at this bar floating on the river just north of Plaza de las Galeras Reales. Best late.

La Cristalera (Plaza de las Galeras s/n; ☎ from 4.30pm) Big glass windows capture the river views and light. You can sip a tea, or something stronger, inside or out.

Bar Reconquista (Calle Javier de Burgos 2) The quirky medieval décor here is inspired by a mix of Islamic and Christian themes.

Bar & Co (Plaza de la Herrería; ☎ from 9.30pm) A local favourite, based in the 16th-century building where seafarers once paid their taxes.

Entertainment

El Puerto has a pulsating night scene with some funky themed clubs. One of the best is **Mucho Teatro** (www.mucho teatro.com; Calle Misericordia 12; ☎ closed Mon), a glitzy recreation of an old-style movie house, with a dance floor and often live music.

Flamenco happens (at least) every Friday at 9.30pm at **Peña Flamenca El Nitri** (☎ 956 54 32 37; Calle Diego Niño 1) and **Peña Flamenca El Chumi** (☎ 956 54 00 03; Calle Lujá 15). **Bodega Obregón** (Calle Zarza 51), the oldest bar in town, has flamenco on Sunday from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. There are more flamenco performances in July and August.

Top matadors fight every Sunday in July and August at El Puerto's **Plaza de Toros** (☎ 956 54 15 78; www.justo-ojeda.com; Plaza Elías Ahuja; sun €15-25, shade €21-60). Tickets can be purchased at the bullring.

Bodegas Terry (see p184) puts on horse spectaculars, flamenco shows and tapas tastings during the summer.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

The small passenger ferry *Adriano III*, better known as *El Vapor* or *El Vaporcito* (The Little Steamship; ☎ 956 85 59 06; www.vapordeelpuerto.com in Spanish) sets sail for El Puerto (€3, 40 minutes) from Cádiz's Estación Marítima at 10.15am, 12.15pm, 2.15pm, 4.45pm and 6.45pm daily from 3 February to 9 December (except nonholiday Mondays from 1 October to 30 May), with an extra trip at 8.45pm from 1 June to 30 September. Trips from El Puerto to Cádiz leave one hour earlier than the above times from the Muelle del Vapor. The *Adriano III* and its predecessors *Adriano I* and *Adriano II* have

provided this vital link between the two cities since 1929.

The faster catamaran (€1.80, 25 minutes), run by the public **Línea Metropolitana/Consorcio de Transportes Bahía de Cádiz** (☎ 956 01 21 00; www.cmbc.com), sails between Cádiz and El Puerto 13 times a day Monday to Friday, six times on Saturday and three on Sunday. The boat docks on the river in front of the Hotel Santa María.

BUS

There are regular bus services connecting El Puerto de Santa María to the following destinations:

Cádiz (€1.70, 30 to 40 minutes) Buses depart Monday to Friday between 6.45am to 10pm about half-hourly from the Plaza de Toros, and at least seven times from the train station. Weekend services are about half as frequent.

Chipiona (€2.30, 30 minutes) Five to 11 buses go daily from the Plaza de Toros.

Jerez de la Frontera (€1, 20 minutes) Nine to 16 buses depart daily from the train station and 11 from the Plaza de Toros Monday to Friday (but only two on Saturday and Sunday).

Sanlúcar de Barrameda (€1.60, 30 minutes) Five to 11 buses go daily from the Plaza de Toros.

Seville (€8.50, 1½ hours) Three buses go daily from the train station.

TRAIN

Up to 37 trains travel daily to/from Jerez de la Frontera (from €1.30, 12 minutes) and Cádiz (from €2.20, 30 to 35 minutes), and 10 or more daily to/from Seville (€6 to €18, one to 1½ hours).

Getting Around

Traffic is thick in the centre. There's plenty of parking along the riverfront, especially south of Plaza de las Galeras Reales. Most of it is free, but the supervised area next to the plaza costs €1.60 for 24 hours. You can park for free outside the Plaza de Toros.

SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA

pop 63,000

The northern tip of the sherry triangle and a thriving summer resort, Sanlúcar is 23km northwest of El Puerto de Santa María. It has a likable, mellow atmosphere and a sublime location on the Guadalquivir estuary looking across to the Parque Nacional de Doñana. The Atlantic waters here provide the freshest of succulent seafood – Sanlú-

car prawns carry a high price tag – and the town's bodegas produce a distinctive sherry-like wine, manzanilla, the perfect complement to the ocean's offerings. Sanlúcar also lays on the fabulous and unusual spectacle of its unique August horse races when sleek horses, bearing colourfully clad jockeys, thunder along the sands beside the estuary.

Sanlúcar's nautical history is proud. Columbus sailed from Sanlúcar in 1498 on his third voyage to the Caribbean, as did the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan in 1519, seeking – like Columbus – a westerly route to the Asian Spice Islands. Magellan succeeded by making the first known voyage around the bottom of South America but was killed in a battle in the Philippines. His Basque pilot Juan Sebastián Elcano completed the first circumnavigation of the globe by returning to Sanlúcar with just one of the expedition's five ships, the *Victoria*.

Orientation & Information

Sanlúcar stretches along the southeast side of the Guadalquivir estuary. Calzada del Ejército (often just called La Calzada), running 600m inland from the seafront Paseo Marítimo, is the main avenue and it has underground parking. A block beyond its inland end is Plaza del Cabildo, the central square. The old town spreads around and uphill from here. The bus station is on Avenida de la Estación, 100m southwest of the middle of La Calzada.

The old fishing quarter, Bajo de Guía, site of Sanlúcar's best restaurants and boat departures to Doñana, is 750m northeast along the riverfront from La Calzada. There are banks on Calle San Juan, which runs southwest off Plaza del Cabildo.

Centro de Visitantes Bajo de Guía (☎ 956 38 09 22; Bajo de Guía s/n; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun & 4-6pm holidays & Oct-May, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) Run by the Junta de Andalucía, this visitors centre has info on the Parque Natural de Doñana (distinct from the Parque Nacional – for the difference, see p154) and other natural spaces in Andalucía.

Centro de Visitantes Fábrica de Hielo (☎ 956 38 16 35; www.parquenacionaldonana.es; Bajo de Guía s/n; ☎ 9am-7pm or 8pm) This, the original visitors centre, is run by the national parks folk, with interesting displays and information on the Parque Nacional de Doñana and related topics.

CyberGuadalquivir (Calle Infanta Beatriz 11; internet per hr €2; ☎ 10am-11.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-11.30pm Sun)

Tourist office (☎ 956 36 61 10; www.turismosanlucar.com; Calzada del Ejército s/n; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar, 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Mon-Sat April-May & Oct, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep) Helpful staff with plenty of printed info.

Sights & Activities

The old town's sights are clustered on the hill above Plaza del Cabildo. On your way up, admire the elaborate Gothic façade of **Las Covachas** (Cuesta de Belén), a set of 15th-century wine cellars in an outer wall of the Palacio de los Duques de Medina Sidonia (see below). The brightly painted **Palacio de Orleans y Borbon** (cnr Cuesta de Belén & Calle Caballero; admission free; ☎ 10am-1.30pm Mon-Fri) is a beautiful neo-Mudejar palace built as a summer home for the aristocratic Montpensier family in the 19th century. Its creation stimulated Sanlúcar's growth as a resort. Today the palace is Sanlúcar's *ayuntamiento* (town hall). It has a ritzy restored patio with glass roof.

Beyond the town hall along Calle Caballero is the 15th-century **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la O** (Plaza de la Paz; ☎ mass 7.30pm Mon-Fri & Sun, 9am & noon Sun), with a Mudejar façade and ceiling. Next door is the **Palacio de los Duques de Medina Sidonia** (☎ 956 36 01 61; www.fcmedinasidonia.com; Plaza Condes de Niebla 1; admission €3; ☎ tours 11am & noon Sun by appointment), a rambling stately home that dates all the way back to Guzmán El Bueno, the 13th-century ancestor of the Duques de Medina Sidonia (see p216 for more on Guzmán). This powerful aristocratic family once owned more of Spain than anyone else. The current incumbent, Luisa Isabel Álvarez de Toledo, has fought long and hard to keep the priceless Medina Sidonia archive in Sanlúcar. The house is bursting with antique furniture, paintings by famous Spanish artists, even Goya and Zurbarán, and other wonderful decorations. To really soak up the olde worlde vibe, you might treat yourself to afternoon tea at the café (p191), or, better still, enjoy a night of luxury (p190).

Along the street is the 15th-century **Castillo de Santiago** (Plaza del Castillo), amid the buildings of Sanlúcar's biggest sherry company, Barbadillo. After many years of restoration, the castle was set to open to the public in summer 2006. By June, it still had not. You can expect to enjoy stunning views from its towers. A cultural centre, concert space, restaurant and shops are planned.

BEACH

Sanlúcar's good sandy beach runs all along the riverfront and for several kilometres beyond to the southwest.

BODEGAS

Of the town's six or so bodegas, at least three give tours for which you don't need to book ahead. Tours are principally in Spanish, but they can be adapted for the group.

Barbadillo (☎ 956 38 55 00; Calle Luis de Eguilaz 11; tour €3, museum free; 🗓️ tours noon & 1pm Mon-Sat, in English 11am Tue-Sat, Museo de Manzanilla 11am-3pm Mon-Sat) The museum, in a 19th-century building, traces the 200-year history of Sanlúcar's unique manzanilla wine and the history of the Barbadillo family, the first to bottle manzanilla. It also outlines the production process from start to finish.

Bodegas Hidalgo-La Gitana (☎ 956 38 53 04; Calle Banda Playa; tour €5; 🗓️ tours noon Wed, Fri & Sat)

La Cigarrera (☎ 956 38 12 85; Plaza Madre de Dios; tour €2.50; 🗓️ 10am-2pm Mon-Sat)

Tours

Both these outings to the Parque Nacional de Doñana start from Bajo de Guía. You will need mosquito protection, except in winter.

Real Fernando (Centro de Visitantes Fábrica de Hielo; ☎ 956 36 38 13; www.visitadonana.com; 3½-hr trips adult/under 15yr/under 13yr €15.50/11.20/7.80; 🗓️ 10am Nov-Feb, 10am & 4pm Mar-May & Oct, 10am & 5pm Jun-Sep) Despite stops in the national park and Parque Natural de Doñana, these Guadalquivir boat trips offer a leisurely tour of the park's fringes but are not designed for serious nature enthusiasts. Book two or three days ahead, and a week or more ahead in summer and during holiday periods.

Viajes Doñana (☎ 956 36 25 40; Calle San Juan 20; 3½-hr tour per person €36; 🗓️ 8.30am & 4.30pm Tue & Fri May-mid-Sep, 8.30am & 2.30pm Tue & Fri mid-Sep-Apr) These fun tours in 4WD vehicles holding about 20 people go deep into the national park: after the river crossing, they visit much the same spots as the tours from El Acebuche (see p155). Great for kids! Book well in advance.

Festivals & Events

Feria de la Manzanilla The Sanlúcar summer begins with a big fair devoted to Sanlúcar's unique wine, manzanilla; held late May/early June.

Romería del Rocío (Pentecost) Though this festival centres on El Rocío on the far side of the Parque Nacional de Doñana (see p157), Sanlúcar is inextricably involved as many pilgrims and covered wagons set out for El Rocío from here; 7th weekend after Easter.

Music Festivals Summer revs up in July and August with jazz, flamenco and classical music festivals, and one-off concerts by top Spanish bands. Check out www.turismo.sanlucar.com to find out the latest information on upcoming festivals.

Carreras de Caballos (www.carrerassanlucar.com) Two horse-race meetings of three or four days every August: exciting thoroughbred races on the sands beside the Guadalquivir estuary, held almost every year since 1845.

Sleeping

Book well ahead for a room at holiday times. Budget accommodation is scarce.

Hostal Blanca Paloma (☎ 956 36 36 44; hostal.blancapaloma@msn.co; Plaza San Roque 15; s/d/tr €18/30/45) This *hostal* maintains the same prices all year and is a good warm-weather option. The best of the 10 simple, clean rooms is a triple with French doors to a little balcony.

Hostal La Bohemia (☎ 956 36 95 99; Calle Don Claudio 5; s/d €25/40) Pretty, folksy-painted chairs dot the corridors of this little *hostal* in a tranquil street off Calle Ancha, 300m northeast of Plaza del Cabildo. Rooms are neat and clean and the service is friendly.

Hotel Los Helechos (956 36 13 49; www.hoteloshelechos.com; Plaza Madre de Dios 9; s/d €47/62; 📞) Los Helechos, off Calle San Juan in the lower section of the old town, is an attractive former mansion with brightly decorated rooms mainly set around two plant-filled patios with fountains.

Hospedería Duques de Medina Sidonia (☎ 956 36 01 61; www.ruralduquemedinasidonia.com; Plaza Condes de Niebla 1; r €65-105; 📞) Enjoy top-end luxury and views in an aristocrat's palace (see p189) in the upper part of the old town. Olde-worlde Spain unfolds before your eyes – the place has 800 years of history and is brimming with swish furnishings and decorations.

Hotel Guadalquivir (☎ 956 36 07 42; www.hotelguadalquivir.com in Spanish; Calzada del Ejército 20; s/d incl breakfast €82/103; 📞) Opposite the tourist office, the modern, 12-storey Guadalquivir is freshly refurbished and has plenty of spacious communal areas, including a 12th-floor bar with panoramic views. Rates halve in winter.

Hotel Posada de Palacio (☎ 956 36 48 40; www.posadadepalacio.com; Calle Caballeros 11; s/d incl €85/105/149; 📞) Nestled in the upper part of the old town, this 18th-century mansion is one of Sanlúcar's most charming lodg-

ings. It has 27 rooms, a couple of pretty patios and a roof terrace and is adorned with heavy, old-style furniture. The hotel is quite sumptuous (not appropriate for kids).

Hotel Tartaneros (☎ 956 36 20 44; hoteltartaneros@telefonica.net; Calle Tartaneros 8; s/d €104/128, ste €300-360; 📞) At the inland end of Calzada del Ejército you'll find this century-old industrialist's mansion with 22 solidly comfortable but slightly over-priced rooms.

Eating

The line of seafood restaurants overlooking the river at Bajo de Guía are reason enough for visiting Sanlúcar. It's idyllic watching the sun go down over the Guadalquivir while tucking into the succulent fresh fare and washing it down with a drop of manzanilla. Lunchtime is great here too! Just wander along and pick a restaurant that suits your pocket. Lots of cafés, bars, and restaurants, many serving manzanilla from the barrel, also surround bustling Plaza del Cabildo.

Casa Balbino (Plaza del Cabildo 11; tapas/raciones €1.50/9) Sit out at a table here to enjoy an array of wonderful snacks such as *tortillas de camarones* (crisp shrimp fritters) or the local favourite *coctel de bogavante* (giant-prawn cocktail, €6).

Palacio de los Duques de Medina Sidonia (☎ 956 36 01 61; www.ruralduquemedinasidonia.com; Plaza Condes de Niebla 1; 🗓️ 9am-2pm & 3.30-10pm, closed Sat am) Feel like an aristocrat at the café of Sanlúcar's Palacio de los Duques de Medina Sidonia, where you'll find sumptuous décor, classical music, coffee, tea and cakes.

Casa Bigote (☎ 956 36 26 96; Bajo de Guía; fish mains €7-14; 🗓️ closed Sun) This place gets excellent reviews from everyone and is usually packed, even in the downstairs dining room without views. Find the entrance down a little lane towards the end of the Bajo de Guía strip. Try the house speciality – *hamburguesas de bacalao con salsa*, codburgers with sauce (€8.50).

Restaurante Virgen del Carmen (☎ 956 38 22 72; Bajo de Guía; fish €9-36, menú €15) This restaurant with a large terrace is good but not too expensive. Decide whether you want your fish *plancha* (grilled) or *frito* (fried), and don't skip the starters: *langostinos* (king prawns) and the juicy *coquinas al ajillo* (clams in garlic), both €9, are specialities. A half-bottle of manzanilla costs €6.

Bar Joselito Huertas (☎ 956 36 26 94; Bajo de Guía; fried fish €10, fresh wholefish €13-36) At the far end of the strip. Dine outside here, drinking in the pure air and watching the returning fishing fleet, with Doñana as backdrop. Waiters helpfully decide whether or not you'll need a *ración* or *media-ración* of your chosen dish.

Drinking

Two excellent places to relax from sightseeing over a tea or coffee are the Hotel Tartaneros (see opposite) and the Palacio de los Duques de Medina Sidonia (left).

Entertainment

There are some lively music bars on and around Calzada del Ejército and Plaza del Cabildo. Many concerts are held here during the summer. The tourist office's website www.turismosanlucar.com regularly updates events.

Bodegón de Arte (☎ 653 07 10 99; Calle San Miguel 5) Flamenco and flamenco/jazz fusion performances happen at 11.30pm Friday and Saturday year-round. Admission is from €6 to €12 depending on the performance.

Getting There & Away**BOAT**

Though you can visit Sanlúcar on day-trip boats from Seville (see p113), you can't take a one-way ride upriver from Sanlúcar to Seville.

BUS

Buses leave from the bus station on Avenida de la Estación. **Los Amarillos** (☎ 956 38 50 60) runs five to 10 buses daily to/from El Puerto de Santa María (€1.60, 30 minutes) and Cádiz (€3, 1½ hours) and six to 12 to/from Seville (€7, 1½ hours). **Linesur** (☎ 956 34 10 63) has seven to 15 buses daily to/from Jerez de la Frontera (€1.60, 30 minutes). Change in Jerez for buses to Arcos de la Frontera and El Bosque.

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

pop 196,000 / elevation 55m

Jerez beguiles with its eclectic mix of sherry, horses and flamenco. Spread over a low rise in the rolling countryside 36km northeast of Cádiz, Jerez (heh-*reth* or, in the Andalusian accent, just heh-*reh*) is world-famous for its wine – sherry – made from grapes

grown on the chalky soil surrounding the town. Many people come here to visit its bodegas, but Jerez is also Andalucía's horse capital and, alongside its affluent upper-crust society, is home to a *gitano* (Roma) community that is a hotbed of flamenco.

The Muslims originally called the town 'Schers', from which the words 'Jerez' and

'sherry' are both derived. 'De la Frontera', a commonly used suffix in Cádiz province, dates back to the days of the Reconquista (Christian reconquest) when this whole region was a *frontera* (frontier) of Christian territory.

Sherry was already famed in England in Shakespeare's time, and British money

developed the wineries from the 1830s. Today, Jerez high society is a mixture of Andalusian and British, as the families of wine traders have intermarried over the past 150 years. Since the 1980s most of the wineries, previously owned by about 15 families, have been bought out by multinational companies.

Jerez is dripping with money, with fancy shops, well-heeled residents, and old mansions and beautiful churches in its old quarter, now the subject of ambitious revitalisation projects. The city stages fantastic fiestas with sleek horses, beautiful people and flamenco.

Orientation & Information

The centre of Jerez is between the Alameda Cristina and the revamped Plaza del Arenal, which are connected by the north-south Calle Larga and Calle Lancería (both pedestrianised). The old quarter extends west and southeast of Calle Larga.

There are plenty of banks and ATMs on and around Calle Larga.

Ciberjerez (Calle Santa María 3, internet per hr €2; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-11pm Sun) Also offers cheap phone rates worldwide.

Dyno Informática (Calle Bodegas s/n; internet per hr €1.75; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Mon-Thu, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat, 3-10pm Sun)

Post office (☎ 902 19 71 97; cnr Calles Cerrón & Medina)

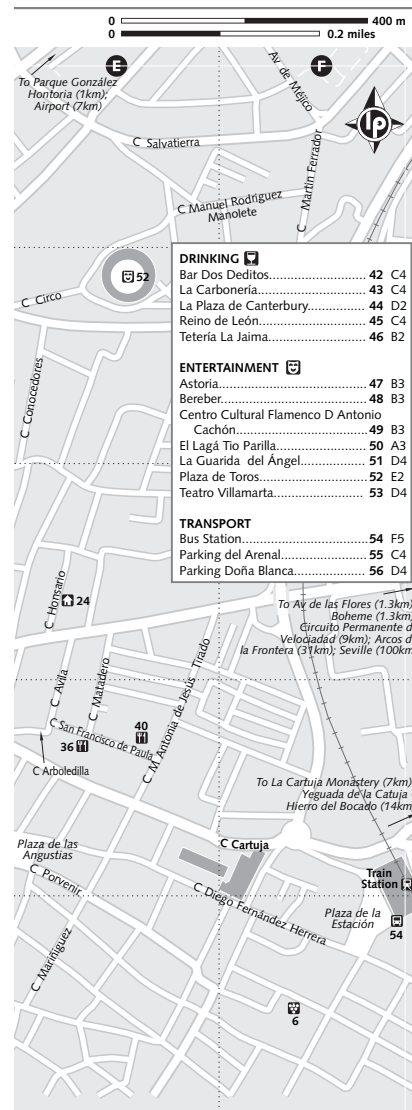
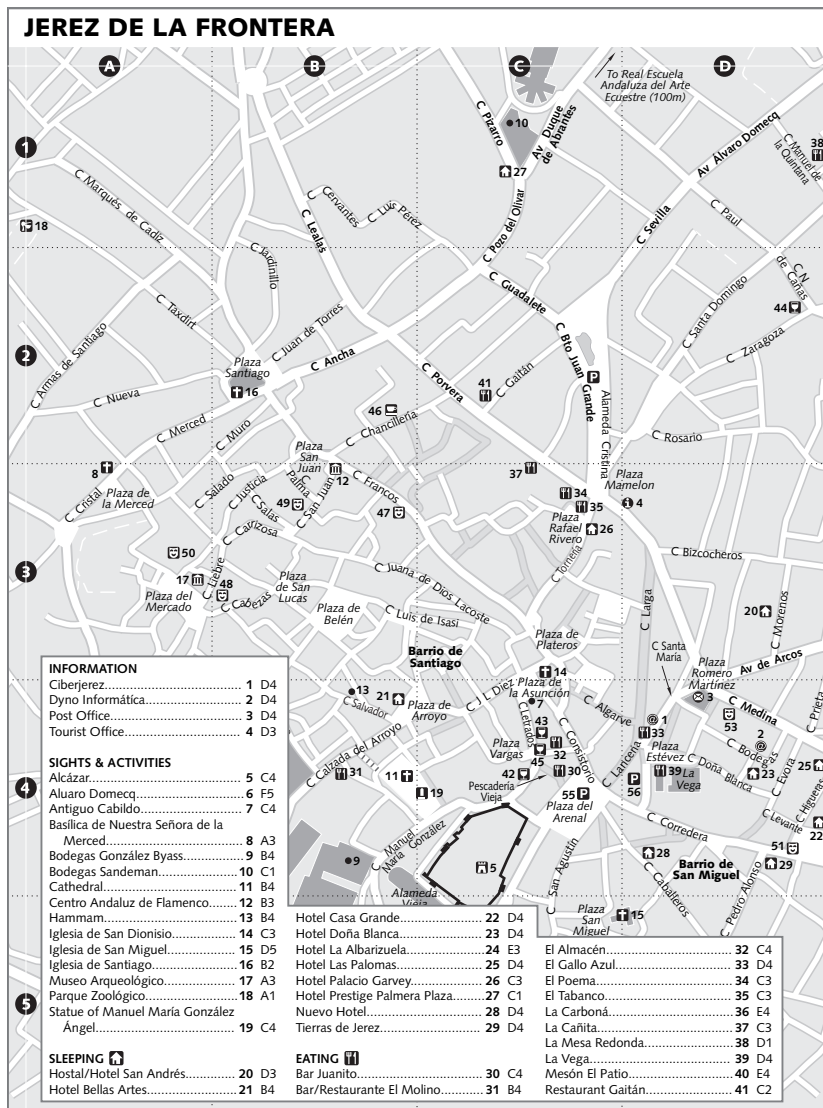
Tourist office (☎ 956 32 47 47; www.turismojerez.com; Alameda Cristina; ☎ 10am-3pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2.30pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9.30am-3pm & 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2.30pm Sat & Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) Expert multilingual staff have mountains of information on offer.

Sights & Activities

OLD QUARTER

The obvious place to start a tour of the old town, parts of whose walls survive, is the impressive 11th- and 12th-century Islamic fortress southwest of Plaza del Arenal, the **Alcázar** (☎ 956 32 69 23; Alameda Vieja; admission incl/excl camera obscura €5.40/3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun May-mid-Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun mid-Sep-Apr). Inside the Alcázar are a beautiful **mezquita** (mosque), converted to a chapel by Alfonso X in 1264, an impressive set of **Baños Árabes** (Arab Baths) and the 18th-century **Palacio Villavicencio**, built over the ruins of the old Islamic palace. Don't miss the gardens, which recreate the ambience of Islamic times with their geometrical plant beds and tinkling fountains. You'll want to linger here! Top off your visit with a bird's-eye view of Jerez: a **camera obscura** in the palace's tower provides a picturesque live panorama of Jerez accompanied by an interesting 15-minute commentary

CÁDIZ PROVINCE



CÁDIZ PROVINCE

in Spanish, English, French and German. Sessions begin every half-hour until 30 minutes before closing time.

In the foreground of the Alcázar's westward vista stands a large **statue of Manuel María González Ángel** (1812–87), the founder of Bodegas González Byass (right). It was this man's uncle, José Ángel, who gave his name to González Byass' famous dry sherry Tío Pepe (*tío* meaning uncle and Pepe being a nickname for José). Behind Señor González is Jerez's mainly 18th-century **cathedral** (admission free; ☎ 11am–1pm Mon–Fri, mass 7.30pm daily), which has Gothic, baroque and neoclassical features, and was built on the site of the Islamic town's main mosque. The 15th-century Mudejar-Gothic belfry is set slightly apart.

A couple of blocks northeast of the cathedral is Plaza de la Asunción, with the handsome 16th-century **Antiguo Cabildo** (Old Town Hall) and the lovely 15th-century Mudejar **Iglesia de San Dionisio**, named after the town's patron saint – Jerez fell to the Christians on 9 October 1264, San Dionisio's feast day.

North and west of here is the **Barrio de Santiago**, a quarter with a sizable *gitano* population and one of the centres of flamenco. Here you'll also find the excellent **Museo Arqueológico** (Archaeological Museum; ☎ 956 32 63 36; www.museoarqueologico.webjerez.com; Plaza del Mercado; admission €3; ☎ 10am–2.30pm Tue–Sun mid-Jun–Aug, 10am–2pm & 4–7pm Tue–Fri, 10am–2.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays Sep–mid-Jun). The pride of the museum's collection is a 7th-century-BC Greek helmet found in the Río Guadalete. Also noteworthy are two cylindrical idols with big circular eyes and facial tattoo lines, possibly associated with worship of the Copper Age earth goddess. The museum was closed for refurbishing in 2006.

Also in this area is the **Centro Andaluz de Flamenco** (Andalucian Flamenco Centre; ☎ 956 34 92 65; http://caf.cica.es; Plaza de San Juan 1; ☎ 9am–2pm Mon–Fri). Jerez is at the heart of the Seville–Cádiz axis where flamenco began and where its heartland remains today. This centre is a museum and school dedicated to the flamenco arts, with print and music libraries holding thousands of works. Flamenco videos are screened every morning.

Jerez's ambitious Ciudad de Flamenco (Flamenco City) project, intended to revitalise the old quarter and to celebrate and

promote flamenco, is well underway. The site, Plaza de Belén, between the flamenco districts – Barrio de Santiago and Barrio de San Miguel – was the heart of Islamic Jerez. The 'city' will have an auditorium, a library, a flamenco school and a museum.

Southeast of Plaza del Arenal is one of Jerez's loveliest churches, the 16th-century **Iglesia de San Miguel** (Plaza San Miguel; ☎ mass 8pm Mon–Sat, 9am, noon & 8pm Sun), built in Isabelline Gothic style but with a baroque main façade. It features superb stone carving, beautiful stained-glass windows, an elaborate retable by Juan Martínez Montañés, and a distinctive blue-and-white-tiled steeple.

SHERRY BODEGAS

Jerez has at least 20 sherry producers, including famous names like González Byass, Williams & Humbert, Sandeman, Pedro Domecq, Garvey and Harveys. Most bodegas require you to book your visit, though a few offer tours where you can just turn up. Confirm arrangements and hours with the wineries or with the tourist office, which has full details on bodega visits. Tours are in Spanish and English, often in German, and sometimes in French.

Wineries where you can turn up without booking include these two:

Bodegas González Byass (☎ 956 35 70 16; www.bodegastiopepe.com; Calle Manuel María González 12; tour €8.50, with tapas €13.50; ☎ tours in English 11.30am, 12.30am, 1.30pm, 2pm year-round & 3.30pm, 4.30pm & 5.30pm Mon–Sat Oct–Apr) One of the biggest sherry houses, just west of the Alcázar.

Bodegas Sandeman (☎ 956 15 17 11; www.sandeman.com; Calle Pizarro 10; tour in English €6, tapas €5.50; ☎ 11.30am–1.30pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10.30am–2pm Tue & Thu, 11.30am–2pm Sat) Sandeman sheries carry the black-caped 'Don' logo. Regular visits include an audio-visual presentation and a tasting of three sherries.

If you're interested in visiting a smaller bodega, try **Álvaro Domecq** (☎ 956 33 96 34; www.alvarodomecq.com; Calle Madre de Dios s/n; tour €6; ☎ 10am–2pm Mon–Fri). The excellent tour is broken by a short video and winds up with a small sherry tasting. Phone ahead.

REAL ESCUELA ANDALUZA DEL ARTE ECUESTRE

The **Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre** (Royal Andalucian School of Equestrian Art; ☎ 956 31 80 08; www.realescuela.org; Avenida Duque de Abrantes), in

THE SOLERA PROCESS

How you get your bottle of sherry is intriguing. Once sherry grapes have been harvested, they are pressed and the resulting must is left to ferment. Within a few months a frothy veil of *flor* (yeast) appears on the surface. The wine is then transferred to the bodegas (wineries) in big barrels of American oak.

Wine enters the *solera* process when it is a year old. The barrels, about five-sixths full, are lined up in rows at least three barrels high. The barrels on the bottom layer, called the *solera* (from *suelo*, meaning floor), contain the oldest wine. From these, around three times a year, 10% of the wine is drawn off. This is replaced with the same amount from the barrels in the layer above, which is in turn replaced from the next layer. The wines age for between three and seven years. A small amount of brandy is added to stabilise the wine before bottling, bringing the alcohol content to 16% to 18%, which stops fermentation.

A sherry tour will take you through the cellars where the wine is stored and aged, inform you about the process and the history of the sherry producers, and give you a tasting. You can buy sherry at the bodegas too – or in any supermarket.

See p83 for an explanation of the various types of sherry. Jerez *coñac* (brandy), widely drunk in Spain, is also a profitable, locally made product – 63 million bottles are produced annually.

the north of town, is a top Jerez attraction. This famous school trains horses and riders in dressage and you can watch them being put through their paces in **training sessions** (adult/child €8/5; ☎ 11am–2pm Mon, Wed & Fri Sep–Jul, 11am–2pm Mon & Wed Aug). There's an official **espectáculo** (show; adult/child €23/14; ☎ noon Tue & Thu Sep–Jul, noon Tue, Thu & Fri Aug), where the handsome white horses show off their tricks to classical music. Tickets entitle you to tour the grounds, facilities and two museums.

PARQUE ZOOLOGICO

A couple of kilometres west of the centre, the **Parque Zoológico** (Jerez Zoo; ☎ 956 15 31 64; www.zoobotanicojerez.com in Spanish; Calle Taxdirt s/n; adult/child €6.50/4.50; ☎ 10am–8pm Jun–Sep, 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Oct–May) has over 1300 animals, well-established gardens, a recuperation centre for wild animals and a breeding programme for the Iberian lynx.

Festivals & Events

Festival de Jerez (www.festivaldejerez.com) This two-week event in late February/early March is dedicated to music and dance, particularly flamenco; a good opportunity to see big flamenco names in action. The Teatro Villamarta (p198) is the main venue.

Feria del Caballo One week in the first half of May, Jerez's Horse Fair is one of Andalucía's biggest festivals, with music, dancing and bullfights, as well as all kinds of horse competitions. Colourful parades of horses pass through the Parque González Hontoria fairgrounds in the north of town, the aristocratic-looking male riders decked out in flat-topped hats, frilly white shirts, black trousers

and leather chaps, their female *crupera* (sideways pillion) partners in long, frilly, spotted dresses. Jerez's motorcycle Grand Prix race of the World Motorcycle Championship (see p199) sometimes coincides with the Feria del Caballo.

Fiestas de Otoño The 'Autumn Fiestas', celebrating the grape harvest for two weeks or so in September, range from flamenco and horse events to the traditional treading of the first grapes on Plaza de la Asunción. The fiestas conclude with a massive parade of horses, riders and horse-drawn carriages.

Sleeping

Jerez has plenty of accommodation but prices go sky-high during the Feria del Caballo, for which you need to book well ahead.

Most budget and midrange accommodation clusters around the eastern part of the centre. Jerez's top hotels are in the north of town along Avenida Álvaro Domecq and the parallel Avenida Duque de Abrantes, good locations for the horse fair. Some sleek options are cropping up in the centre.

Hostal/Hotel San Andrés (☎ 956 34 09 83; www.hotelsanandres.org; Calle Morenos 12; s/d €24/38, with shared bathroom €20/28; ☎ ☎) The friendly San Andrés' plant-filled and tiled entrance patio is one of the prettiest and most traditional that you'll see in Jerez. The clean and fairly comfy hotel rooms have TV and winter heating. The 18 *hostal* rooms are more basic, though with heaters in winter.

Hostal Las Palomas (☎ 956 34 37 73; www.hostal-las-palomas.com; Calle Higuera 17; s/d €30/45, with shared bathroom €25/40) New youthful management

JEREZ'S HAMMAM

Live like a sultan or Muslim princess and pamper yourself at Jerez's new **hammam** (Arabic baths; ☎ 956 34 90 66; www.hammamandalusi.com; Calle Salvador 6; baths €15, plus 15 min massage €25, plus full-body massage €40) or *baños Árabes*. You can loll about in one of three pools – hot, tepid, or cold – moving from one to the other as your body dictates, or add a massage and/or a variety of beauty treatments (2½ hours, €70-80). Whichever package you opt for, the sensuous hammam experience is a perfect complement to travelling. Numbers per session are limited to 15 people, so be sure to reserve beforehand.

The hammam's design and décor aim to recreate the ambience of Al-Andalus (medieval Muslim Spain). This begins from the minute you step through the wooden front door into the entrance foyer where you are greeted by an intoxicating aroma, a blend of essential oils and incense. Staff explain the routine, and hand over a soft towel, thin rubber slippers (for hygiene purposes), and a bikini or swimming trunks if you don't have these with you.

You move on to the changing rooms and shower. Moroccan grapefruit body gel and natural shampoos are provided, even more welcome at the end of the experience if you've had a massage where Moroccan argane oil (similar to olive oil) is used. The changing rooms have power showers, lockers and hairdryers.

From here, you pass into a dimly-lit area where to your right is a square-shaped pool with fairly shallow, tepid water. Straight ahead is a rectangular hot pool, while to the left is the cold pool, small but deep like a plunge pool, only for the very fit or very crazy in mid-winter.

With one hour and 15 minutes to luxuriate in the pools, you can unwind to the sound of classical Arabic music drifting through the Arabic arches and decoratively tiled walls, as lights under the water and on the high ceiling move slowly through the colour spectrum.

When your time is almost up, you are brought a pot of sweetened herbal tea. Then, if you're having a massage or beauty treatment, you are guided into another room. The 15-minute massage is for the shoulders, back and legs. For the front, face, arms and feet, you need to take the half-hour option. Exfoliation, mud bath or aloe vera bath are additional options.

Now, completely rejuvenated, you head back to the changing rooms and prepare to face the world. A radiant smile comes easily.

and lots of mood-enhancing yellow paint, new floor tiles throughout, and colourful, decorative Andalusian tiles have transformed a plain *hostal* into an appealing budget option. Many rooms are set around a glass-roofed patio and you'll like the sweeping views from the roof terrace.

Hotel La Albarizueta (☎ 956 34 68 62; www.hotelalbarizueta.com; Calle Honsario 6; r €66; (P) (♿)) An ultra-modern place, an easy walk east of the centre. A celeste-with-grey-trim colour scheme complements clean-cut lines. Five of the 17 good-sized rooms have a private patio – no views though. There's a cafeteria with buffet breakfast (€7). The youthful desk staff have the low-down on the local nightlife.

Nuevo Hotel (☎ 956 33 16 00; www.nuevohotel.com; Calle Caballeros 23; s/d €45/74; (♿) (♿)) In a modernised 19th-century mansion, this popular, family-run hotel provides 27 rooms (nine singles and 18 spacious doubles) all with TV and winter heating. Rates halve

outside peak periods. A buffet breakfast (€6) is served in the bright dining room. Reservations are essential.

Tierras de Jerez (☎ 956 34 64 00; www.intergroup hoteles.com; Calle Corredera 58; s/d €62/96; (P) (♿) (♿)) This is a first-rate, though somewhat bland, midrange choice with all you need, right on the spot for shopping, restaurants and nightlife. The 30 rooms are reasonably attractive, though singles are typically small. The hotel has on-site parking (€12 per day) via a quirky steep entrance.

Hotel Casa Grande (☎ 956 34 50 70; www.casagrande.com.es; Plaza de las Angustias 3; s/d €70/91, ste €164; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) This brilliant hotel occupies a carefully restored and strikingly decorated 1920s mansion. Rooms are on three floors and set around a patio, or beside the roof terrace, which has views of Jerez's attractive roofline and tall palm trees out front. All is overseen by the congenial Monika Schroeder who is a mine of information about Jerez.

Hotel Doña Blanca (☎ 956 34 87 61; www.hotel donablanca.com in Spanish; Calle Bodegas 11; s/d €77/96; (P) (♿) (♿)) On a quiet side street, this is an excellent 30-room hotel with parquet floors, soothing light-blue paintwork, decent bathrooms with funky tiling, satellite TV and safety boxes. Staff are friendly and efficient.

Hotel Bellas Artes (☎ 956 34 84 30; www.hotel bellasartes.com; Plaza de Arroyo 45; s/d €107/128, ste from €160; (P) (♿) (♿)) A top-notch palace conversion, the Bellas Artes overlooks the Jerez cathedral from its main terrace and suites. An exquisite carved stone corner pillar graces the sand-coloured neoclassical exterior. Strong interior colours contrast with white marble floors. Free-standing bath tubs contribute to an olde-worlde ambience, though the rooms are decked out with all the mod cons.

Hotel Prestige Palmera Plaza (☎ 956 03 15 00; www.palmeraplaza.com; Calle Pizarro 1; s/d from €215/246; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) This top luxury option incorporates the buildings and extensive grounds of a 19th-century bodega. There's plenty of space and light, and elegant, modern furnishings complement stylish design features throughout. The suites, with Jacuzzi, are sumptuous, and the restaurant highly praised. Fitness enthusiasts will enjoy the facilities.

Hotel Palacio Garvey (☎ 956 32 67 00; www.sferahoteles-net; Calle Tornería 24; s/d €226/292; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) The Garvey is a sensational 19th-century neoclassical palace conversion, with part of the ancient city wall visible from the lift and more of it in the gardens. The public areas sport animal prints, large, colourful paintings and Japanese-inspired bowls on low-slung tables, while subtle colours and luxurious leather furniture feature in the 16 individually decorated rooms. The restaurant's lacquered red chairs and excellent food are all talking points.

Eating

Jerez food combines an Islamic heritage and maritime influences with English and French touches. Not surprisingly, sherry flavours many local dishes such as *riñones al jerez* (kidneys braised in sherry) and *rabo de toro* (oxtail stew). Don't miss Jerez's central market, which has a fantastic selection of meats, fish and seafood, fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs.

RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

Bar/Restaurante El Molino (☎ 956 33 71 86; Plaza Domecq 16; mains €7-10, menú €7; (♿) closed Sun night) A neighbourhood kind of place preparing local dishes, with tables outside on the street below the cathedral as well as a dining room. The stuffed eggplants with béchamel sauce are a good choice, or try the house speciality, *revueltos* (scrambled eggs) with salmon and prawns.

La Vega (Plaza Estévez s/n; mains €7.50-12) Get a good glimpse of local life at this bustling café beside the market, a fine though noisy spot for breakfast, or a break at any time of day. There's something to please everyone including *churros* (long thin doughnuts with sugar) to be eaten with a coffee or hot chocolate, all the usual meat and fish dishes, and a selection of pastries and cakes.

Mesón El Patio (☎ 956 34 07 36; Calle San Francisco de Paula 7; fish raciones €6-10, meats €5-18; (♿) closed Sun evening & Mon) This place combines a touch of refinement with local conviviality. It has lofty ceilings, warm tones, carved wooden chairs, Islamic-style tilework and a collection of old radios. Above all, the food is terrific and there's a huge choice.

Restaurant Gaitán (☎ 956 34 58 59; Calle Gaitán 3; starters €10-21, mains €14-17; (♿) closed Sun evening) With a fancy décor of antlers and photos of past clients, Gaitán tempts with dishes like *rape mozárabe con pasas de corinto* (Mozarabic-style monkfish prepared in a sauce, with currants) and *cordero con miel y coñac* (lamb in a honey and brandy sauce). The *menú turístico* (tourist menu) at €16 is easier on the pocket.

La Mesa Redonda (☎ 956 34 00 69; Calle Manuel de la Quintana 3; mains €12-19) An intimate restaurant at the bottom of a Soviet-style block of flats. Décor and waitstaff attire are old-fashioned, soft music plays and excellent food prepared in an adventurous manner arrives at the tables. Wild duck, ox tail, wild boar and rabbit all appear on the menu, though portions are small.

La Carboná (☎ 956 34 74 75; Calle San Francisco de Paula 2; mains €9-28; (♿) closed Tue; (V)) This popular, cavernous restaurant with an eccentric menu occupies an old bodega. Sit next to the hanging fireplace in winter! Specialities include grilled meats and fresh fish and the quirky quail with foie gras and rose petals! Cantabrian anchovies make the *ensalada de siempre* (everyday salad) rock.

TAPAS BARS

El Gallo Azul (Calle Larga 2; tapas €1.80) This beautiful, circular, historic building has a bar downstairs and restaurant upstairs. Street level is the perfect place for people watching, quaffing a fino and sampling innovative tapas of local ingredients. The *timbal de huevo relleno con langostino* (eggs stuffed with prawns in a mould) is a work of art.

Bar Juanito (☎ 956 33 48 38; www.bar-juanito.com; Pescadería Vieja 8-10; tapas €2, media-rationes €4-6) Superb place to sample tasty tapas with a sherry. You can sit or stand at the bar, sit at the tables outside, or take to the folksy dining room out back and eat larger portions. Pescadería Vieja, which runs off Plaza del Arenal, catches a refreshing breeze on a hot day.

El Almacén (Calle Ferros 8; tapas €2-3.50) Get a table in El Almacén's bodega-like back room, put together a *tabla* (selection of tapas) of pâtés and cheeses or hams and sausages, and soak up the atmosphere. The *patatas bravas* (spicy fried potatoes) are a must.

La Cañita (Calle Porvera 11; tapas €1-2) The best of another string of tapas spots just a short walk from Plaza Rafael Rivero – if you've still got room! The *montaditos* (small open sandwiches) are small but delicious: try brie and anchovies.

Further brilliant tapas bars surround quiet little Plaza Rafael Rivero, about 500m north of Plaza del Arenal, with tables out under the sky. Head here after 9.30pm or late Sunday morning and don't miss the inspired *montaditos* or *panes* (larger open sandwiches; €1.80 to €5) at El Poema. Then move a couple of tables away for a bite of ham at El Tabanco.

Drinking

Tetería La Jaima (Calle Chancillería 10; tea €2-3; ☎ 4.30pm-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 4.30pm-2am Sat & Sun) This youthful tea drinker's haven has Moroccan décor, including carpets and cushions on the floor and tiled tables of various heights. Sip from an extensive list of teas.

A small cluster of bars in the narrow streets north of Plaza del Arenal can get lively with a 20-ish crowd late in the evening: try **Bar Dos Deditos** (Plaza Vargas 1), **Reino de León** (Calle Ferros) or **La Carbonería** (Calle letrados 7). Northeast of the centre, **La Plaza**

de Canterbury (Calle N de Cañas), with lots of bars around a central courtyard, attracts a similar crowd.

For music bars and dancing, head a little further northeast to Avenida de Méjico. The crowd is young but not as young as the hundreds of teenagers who hang out and drink on the street after midnight around here.

A new leisure zone is emerging a couple of kilometres east of the centre around Avenida de las Flores (€4 by taxi). **Boheme** (Avenida de las Flores 13) is one of several café/bars, which also has a dance floor upstairs.

Entertainment

To find out what's on in Jerez check www.turismojerez.com, watch for posters and look in the newspapers *Diario de Jerez* and *Jerez Información*.

THEATRE

The busy **Teatro Villamarta** (☎ 956 32 71 00; www.villamarta.com; Plaza Romero Martínez) puts out a seasonal programme.

LIVE MUSIC

A hip venue for live music (Latin and other) is **La Guarida del Ángel** (☎ 956 34 96 98; Calle Porvenir 1; ☎ 8pm-late). Varied music happens at **Astoria** (Calle Francos), an outdoor concert area, and concerts are sometimes held in the Plaza de Toros.

CLUBS

Bereber (☎ 956 34 00 16; Calle Cabezas 10; ☎ from 4.30pm-late), an amazing reformed palace in the Barrio de Santiago, is – as its name (Berber) suggests – more like something out of Morocco than Spain, with exotic foliage planted in front of the old city walls that remain here. Roman-style murals recall another epoch. Much of the premises are open-air and cater for a mixed-age crowd but the soundproofed disco in the middle is where the young ones head to dance away the night.

FLAMENCO

There are several active *peñas flamencas* (flamenco clubs) in the Barrio de Santiago and elsewhere. They usually welcome genuinely interested visitors: ask at the tourist office about upcoming events (it has a list of 16 *peñas flamencas*).

Centro Cultural Flamenco D Antonio Cachón (☎ 956 34 74 72; Calle Salas 12) The Centro hosts authentic flamenco nights. It's often open on weekends, when you might be lucky enough to experience some impromptu flamenco.

El Lagá Tio Parrilla (☎ 956 33 83 34; Plaza del Mercado; admission €18) The flamenco performances here, held at 10.30pm and 12.30am Monday to Saturday, are more tourist-oriented but can still be pretty gutsy.

The Viernes Flamencos season sees open-air flamenco performances on August Friday nights at the Astoria (opposite): the season culminates in the Fiesta de la Bulería, a festival of flamenco song and dance held in the Plaza de Toros, one Saturday in September.

SPORT

Jerez's **Circuito Permanente de Velocidad** (☎ 956 15 11 00; www.circuitodejerez.com; Carretera de Arcos Km 10), on the A382 10km east of town, hosts several motorcycle and car racing events through the year including – in March, April or May – one of the Grand Prix races of the **World Motorcycle Championship**. Held in Jerez since 1987, this is one of Spain's biggest sporting events, with around 150,000 spectators, and Jerez and other nearby towns are swamped by fans and their bikes.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Jerez **airport** (☎ 956 15 00 00; www.aena.es), the only one serving Cádiz province, is 7km northeast of town on the NIV. Budget airline **Ryanair** (☎ 956 15 01 52; www.ryanair.com) flies here from London Stansted at least twice daily. **Thomas Cook Airlines Belgium** (www.thomascookairlines.com) flies from Brussels, and several airlines fly from major German airports including **Hapagfly** (☎ 902 48 05 00; www.hapagfly.com) and **Air-Berlin** (☎ 956 15 01 20; www.airberlin.com) – for more details see p443. **Iberia** (☎ 956 15 00 10; www.iberia.com) has at least two direct flights daily to/from Madrid and one daily to/from Barcelona.

BUS

The **bus station** (☎ 956 33 96 66; Plaza de la Estación) is 1.3km southeast of the centre. **Comes** (☎ 956 34 21 74) runs buses to the following destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Frequency
Algeciras	€8.50	2½hr	1 daily
Arcos de la Frontera	€2.30	45min	n/a
Barbate	€7	2hr	1 daily Mon-Fri
Cádiz	€2.60	40min	11-21 daily
El Puerto de Santa María	€1	20min	Up to 25 daily
Los Caños de Meca	€7	1¾hr	Jun-Sep only
Ronda	€10	3hr	Up to 7 daily
Seville	€7	1¾hr	Up to 9 daily
Tarifa	€8.50	2hr	1 daily

Linesur (☎ 956 34 10 63) runs plenty of buses to Seville (€7, 1¼ hours), as well as to both Sanlúcar de Barrameda (€1.60-2.20, 30 minutes) and Algeciras (€8.50, 2½ hours) at least seven times daily. For Málaga (€16; four hours) there are two buses daily.

Los Amarillos (☎ 956 32 93 47) has more frequent buses to Arcos and also runs two to six times daily to El Bosque (€5.50, 1½ hours) and Ubrique (€7.50, 1¾ hours).

TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 956 34 23 19; Plaza de la Estación) is beside the bus station (€3 by taxi from the centre). Jerez is on the Cádiz–El Puerto de Santa María–Seville line with trains to Seville (€6.50 to €21, one to 1¼ hours, up to 15 daily), El Puerto de Santa María (€1.50 to €15, 12 minutes, up to 37 daily) and Cádiz (from €3.40, 40 to 50 minutes, up to 37 daily).

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

A taxi costs €12.50, more late at night and on weekends. The local airport buses M050 and M051 (€0.90, 30 minutes) also run 12 times daily Monday to Friday and six times daily on weekends, roughly between 6am and 10pm (to 8 or 9pm on weekends). From Jerez this service continues to El Puerto de Santa María and Cádiz.

CAR

Jerez is not too difficult to get around by car but, to avoid city centre congestion, you're best off parking and walking, or taking buses to the slightly more distant sights.

The two most central underground car parks are **Parking Doña Blanca** (cnr Plaza Estévez & Calle Doña Blanca; per 24hr €13), and **Parking Plaza del Arenal**, beneath Plaza del Arenal.

AROUND JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

The much-prized Spanish thoroughbred horse, also called the Cartujano or Andalus, is particularly admired for its grace, strength, and gentle temperament. This horse features in Jerez's major festivals and is as much a symbol of the town as are sherry and flamenco. It dates back at least to Carthaginian times. Two places inextricably linked with this wonderful animal and worth visiting are southeast of Jerez on and near the A381 towards Medina Sidonia.

La Cartuja monastery (☎ 956 15 64 65; Carretera Jerez-Algeciras; ☞ gardens 9.30-11.15am & 12.45-6.30pm Mon-Sat, mass 8am Tue & Sat, 5.30pm Mon) is an architectural gem founded in the 15th century, set amid lovely gardens beside the A381, 9km from central Jerez. The early Carthusian monks here are credited with breeding the Cartujano at a time when the horse's popularity had declined. You can look around the gardens and admire the church's impressive baroque façade but you can only peep inside during mass.

Yeguada de la Cartuja – Hierro del Bocado (☎ 956 16 28 09; www.yeguadacartuja.com; Finca Fuente del Suero; adult/child €15/9; ☞ 11am-1pm Sat) is a stud farm dedicated to improving the Cartujano stock, on land that once belonged to La Cartuja monastery. You can take a look around, followed by a spectacular show consisting of free-running colts, demonstrations by a string of mares, and dressage. Book ahead. To get here, turn off the A381 at the 'La Yeguada' sign 5km after La Cartuja, and follow the side road for 1.6km to the entrance.

ARCOS & THE SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA

The Sierra de Grazalema in northeastern Cádiz province is one of Andalucía's most beautiful and greenest mountain areas, great for active pursuits like canyoning and caving as well as more sedate strolling. En route to the mountains from the coast stands the spectacular cliff-top town, Arcos de la Frontera.

ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA

pop 29,000 / elevation 185m

Thirty kilometres east of Jerez past rolling wheat and sunflower fields, vineyards and orchards, Arcos' old town could not

be more thrillingly sited: it perches on a high, unassailable ridge with sheer precipices plummeting away on both sides. This strategic location has been prized since time immemorial. During the 11th century Arcos was an independent Berber-ruled kingdom before being absorbed by Seville, then taken over by Christian Alfonso X in 1255. When the last Duque de Arcos died heirless in 1780, his cousin, the Duquesa de Benavente, took over his estates. With her help, agriculture around Arcos diversified and more-profitable cereals, olives, vines and horse breeding replaced sheep farming.

Arcos' charm today lies in exploring the old, mazelike, upper town with its Renaissance palaces, beautiful Gothic churches, whitewashed houses and uniquely spectacular setting. The best places to stay have fantastic cliff-top locations.

Orientation & Information

The newer, lower parts of town extend west, northwest and southeast from the high, sheer-sided ridge where the old town sits. From the bus station on Calle Corregidores, it's 1.5km eastward and uphill to the old town, via leafy Paseo de Andalucía from which Paseo de los Boliches and Calle Debajo del Corral (becoming Calle Corredera) both head up towards the old town's main square, Plaza del Cabildo. You'll find several banks and ATMs on these two streets.

Post office (Paseo de los Boliches 24; ☞ 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

Tourist information kiosk (Paseo de Andalucía; ☞ 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 956 70 22 64; Plaza del Cabildo; ☞ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat mid-Mar–mid-Oct, 10am-2pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Oct–mid-Mar) Helpful office on the main square.

Sights & Activities

Plaza del Cabildo is surrounded by fine old buildings and has a wonderful but vertiginous **mirador** (lookout) with panoramic views of the river and countryside. On the plaza's west side the large, strongly fortified **Castillo de los Duques**, dating from at least the 11th century, is a private residence of the Marqués de Tamarón and firmly closed to the public. On the northern side of the plaza, the **Basílica-Parroquia de Santa María** (admission

€1.50; ☞ 10am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) was begun on the site of a mosque in the 13th century but not completed until the 18th century. Its western façade is in Gothic style but the landmark tower, built later, is baroque. Inside are beautiful 1731 choir stalls carved in stone and exotic woods, and lovely Isabelline ceiling tracery. On the eastern side of the square, the **Parador Casa del Corregidor** is a 1960s reconstruction of a 16th-century magistrate's residence. Drop in for a drink to enjoy the superb vistas from the terrace or spend the night here in luxury (p202).

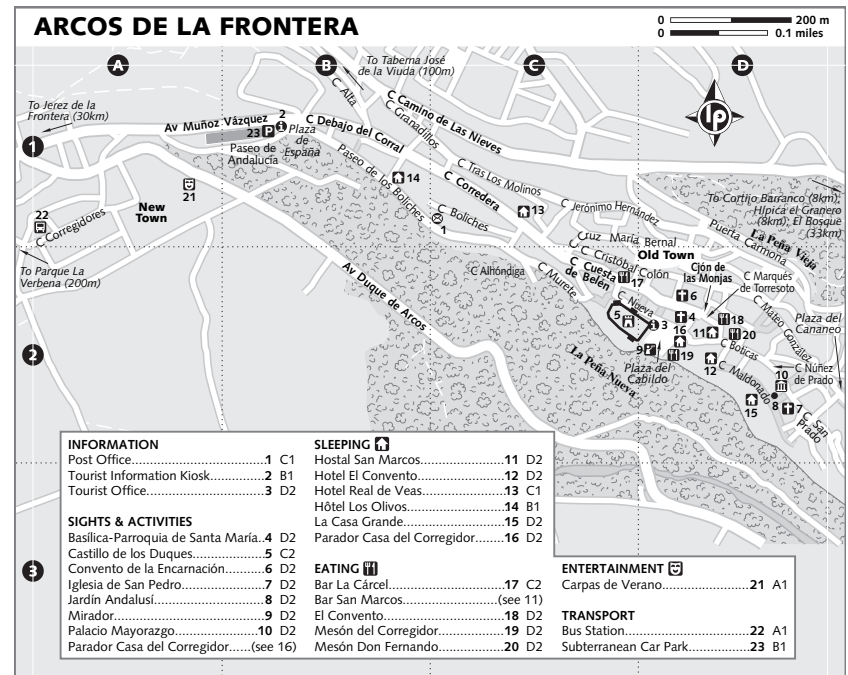
Heading east, you'll pass by lovely buildings such as the early-16th-century **Convento de la Encarnación** (Calle Marqués de Torresoto), with its Gothic façade, and the **Iglesia de San Pedro** (Calle Núñez de Prado; admission €1; ☞ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun), in 15th-century Gothic style but with an impressive 18th-century baroque façade and bell tower. Nearby, the 17th-century **Palacio Mayorazgo** (Calle Núñez de Prado; admission free; ☞ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), with a Renaissance façade and pretty

patios, is now a community building. Its rear patio, which is entered independently, has been transformed into a soothing little medieval-Islamic-style garden, the **Jardín Andalusi** (Calle Tallista Morales; admission free; ☞ 10am-2pm daily, plus 5-8pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep–mid-Jun, 8-11pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep).

Hípica El Granero (☎ 607 374160; www.caballosandaluces.net; Cortijo Barranco; rides per 1/2/4hr €20/35/60, classes per hr €35) offers horse rides through lovely countryside, riding classes and even courses of up to a week. It's 8km from Arcos on a farm, which also has excellent guest accommodation – see Cortijo Barranco (p202).

Tours

Guided walking tours (€5, one hour) of the old town's monuments start from the tourist office at 10.30am Monday to Friday. Tours of Arcos' pretty patios, which you wouldn't otherwise get to see, go at noon Monday to Friday. Early evening and Saturday morning tours also happen but you need to book ahead for these. The tours are in Spanish and English.



Festivals & Events

Semana Santa (Holy Week) These dramatic Easter processions held in March or April weave through the town's narrow streets; on Easter Sunday there's a hair-raising running of the bulls.

Feria de San Miguel Arcos celebrates its patron saint with a four-day fair; held around 29 September.

Sleeping

Arcos has some charming midrange and top-end places to stay but there's very limited budget accommodation up in the old town.

Hotel Real de Veas (☎ 956 71 73 70; www.hotelrealdeveas.com; Calle Corredera 12; s €45, d €55-65; 🏠 📺) Friendly folk run this converted traditional home on the edge of the old town. It has a glass-covered patio and a roof terrace with 360-degree views. Rustic wooden furniture, wrought-iron fittings and gentle colours make for agreeable rooms, and breakfast is available.

Hotel Los Olivos (☎ 956 70 08 11; http://losolivos.profesionales.org; Paseo de los Boliches 30; s/d incl breakfast €45/70; 🏠 📺 📺) With helpful staff, neat and cosy rooms, and plenty of space to sit around including a pretty patio, this friendly, small hotel is one of the best deals in town.

Hotel El Convento (☎ 956 70 23 33; www.webdearcos.com/elconvento; Calle Maldonado 2; s/d €55/70, d with terrace €85; 🏠 📺 📺) Set in a beautiful 17th-century convent just east of Plaza del Cabildo, welcoming El Convento has 13 tasteful, varied rooms with marble floors and period prints and sculptures. All but one of the rooms enjoy great views, six have their own terraces, and there's a large communal terrace on the cliff edge.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

La Casa Grande (☎ 956 70 39 30; www.lacasagrande.net; Calle Maldonado 10; r €75-95, ste €88-135; 🏠 📺 📺) A gorgeous, rambling, cliffside mansion, the Casa Grande once belonged to the great flamenco dancer Antonio Ruiz Soler. With each of the seven rooms done in different but always tasteful styles, it feels more like a home-cum-artist's retreat than a hotel. Great breakfasts are served (€8.50), there's a good library to browse, and the roof terrace feels like it's in the sky. Massage and yoga available too.

Cortijo Barranco (☎ 956 23 14 02; www.cortijobarranco.com; Carretera Arcos-El Bosque Km 5.7; s/d €57/75, apt or casita €95-140; 🏠 📺 📺) Set amid unspoiled countryside 8km from Arcos, Cortijo Barranco is also a working 4.5-sq-km agricultural estate. The rooms are in appealing rustic style, set around a lovely arcaded courtyard, with an atmospheric dining room and salon in an 18th-century olive mill along one side. There's a beautiful big swimming pool in the gardens. Five apartments and *casitas* (small houses) sleep up to six. Breakfast (€4.50), lunch and dinner (€27) are available. Also here is Hípica El Granero (p201) for horse-riding adventures. To find Cortijo Barranco, take the A372 El Bosque road from Arcos as far as Km 5.7, where a sign indicates the start of the 3km driveway.

Parador Casa del Corregidor (☎ 956 70 05 00; www.parador.es; Plaza del Cabildo; s/d €116/145; 🏠 📺) This rebuilt 16th-century magistrate's residence combines typical parador luxury with another magnificent cliffside setting. Eight of the 24 rooms have balconies with cliff views.

Also recommended:

Hostal San Marcos (☎ 956 70 07 21; Calle Marqués de Torresoto 6; s/d/tr €25/35/45; 🏠 📺) Simple old-town *hostal* with four pretty little rooms and a roof terrace.

Eating & Drinking

Recommendable restaurants are fairly thin on the ground, but tapas bars compensate.

Bar San Marcos (☎ 956 70 07 21; Calle Marqués de Torresoto 6; tapas & montaditos €1.50-2.50, platos combinados €3.50-6) San Marcos is a friendly and reliable little old-town place. The dressed-carrot tapas are original and the *platos combinados* (mixed plates) are good value. The owner enjoys flamenco music.

Bar La Cárcel (☎ 956 70 04 10; Calle Deán Espinosa 18; tapas & montaditos €2, raciones €7-12; 🏠 📺 8am-noon Mon, 8am-late Tue-Sun) A fine snacking spot up in the old town, with sensational *pinchitos de langostino con béicon* (prawns wrapped in bacon)!

Taberna José de la Viuda (☎ 956 70 12 09; Plaza Rafael Pérez del Álamo 13; tapas/raciones €2/8; 🏠 📺 11.30am-late) Venture into the new town to find this temple of all that's *típico andaluz*, hung with hams and sausages, stacked with wines and cheeses and swaying to flamenco rhythms. Whatever you select from the lengthy tapas menu, amiable owner

Alfonso will probably suggest you choose something else, maybe the local goat cheese or his spicy *pincho moruno* (small lamb kebab). Take his advice.

El Convento (☎ 956 70 32 22; Calle Marqués de Torresoto 7; mains €8-15, menú €24; 🏠 📺 closed 7-21 Jan) In the pillared patio of a 17th-century palace, Arcos' finest restaurant turns out country specialities such as herbed lamb and partridge in almond sauce.

Mesón Don Fernando (☎ 956 71 73 26; Calle Botica 5; raciones €6-15, mains €9-20; 🏠 📺 closed Mon) The best of several bars-cum-eateries along the old town's Calle Botica, Don Fernando has a lively Spanish atmosphere and flamenco soundtrack. Good *montaditos* and *raciones* are served in the vaulted bar while the small restaurant focuses on meaty main dishes and tempting desserts.

There are plenty more places to get a snack and drink around lively Paseo de Andalucía.

Entertainment

Arcos bursts into song in July and August. The Jueves Flamencos are a series of weekly flamenco nights on Thursday at 10.30pm throughout the two months, at various old-town locations including the small, atmospheric Plaza del Cananeo. Also in July and August, free world music and jazz gigs are staged in Parque La Verbena, west of the bus station, and live pop, salsa, rock and the like can be heard on Friday nights at the Carpas de Verano, an open-air entertainment area on Avenida Duque de Arcos.

Getting There & Away

Departures from the bus station (☎ 956 70 49 77), by Los Amarillos and/or Comes, include the following buses:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Cádiz	€4.50-5.50	1¼hr	15
El Bosque	€2.50	1hr	11
Jerez	€2.30	45min	18
Málaga	€14	4hr	1
Ronda	€7.50	2hr	4
Seville	€7	2hr	2

Frequency on some routes is reduced at weekends.

Getting Around

You can park on Plaza del Cabildo in the old town and under Paseo de Andalucía in the subterranean car park. A local minibus (€0.90) runs up from the bus station to Paseo de Andalucía and Plaza del Cabildo every half-hour from 7.45am to 9.45pm Monday to Friday and 9.15am to 9.15pm Saturday.

PARQUE NATURAL SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA

The Cordillera Bética – the band of rugged mountain ranges that stretches across much of Andalucía – has beautiful beginnings in the Sierra de Grazalema in northeastern Cádiz province. This is one of the greenest parts of Andalucía (Grazalema village has the highest rainfall in Spain at an average 2153mm a year) and yields some of its most stunning landscapes, from pastoral river valleys and white villages to precipitous gorges and rocky summits. Much of the area is covered in beautiful Mediterranean woodland, and snow is common on the mountains in late winter.

This is excellent walking country (see the boxed text, p205) and it's also great for many other adrenaline-pumping adventure activities from canyoning, caving and climbing to paragliding, kayaking and bungee jumping. Experienced adventure tourism outfits are based in Grazalema village and Zahara de la Sierra.

The 517-sq-km Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema protects the area, also extending into northwestern Málaga province, where it includes the Cueva de la Pileta (p284). The whole park is within easy reach of Ronda (p277).

Getting There & Around

Los Amarillos (☎ 902 21 03 17) runs buses to El Bosque, in the west of the park, from Jerez (€5.50, two hours, six daily), Cádiz (€7, two hours, four daily), Arcos de la Frontera (€2.50, one hour, 11 daily) and Seville (Prado de San Sebastián bus station; €7, 2¼ hours, two daily). On Saturday and Sunday some frequencies are reduced. From El Bosque, buses leave for Grazalema (€2, 30 minutes) at 3.30pm Monday to Saturday. Grazalema-El Bosque buses depart at 5.30am Monday to Friday and 7pm Friday.

Los Amarillos also runs twice daily from Málaga to Ronda, Grazalema, Villaluenga del Rosario, Benaocaz and Ubrique, and vice-versa. Grazalema is 45 minutes from Ronda (€2.10) and 2¾ hours from Málaga (€10). There are connections in Ronda for Seville, Jerez and Cádiz.

Comes (☎ 902 19 92 08) operates two buses each way Monday to Friday between Ronda and Zahara de la Sierra (€3.50, one hour), via Algodonales. Departures from Ronda are at 7am and 1pm. There's no bus service between Zahara and Grazalema.

El Bosque

pop 2000 / elevation 385m

El Bosque, 33km east of Arcos across rolling countryside, is prettily situated below the wooded Sierra de Albarraçin. Grazalema park's main information office and a selection of decent-value places to stay can be found here.

INFORMATION

The natural park's **Centro de Visitantes El Bosque** (☎ 956 72 70 29; Avenida de la Diputación s/n; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm & 6-8pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm & 4-6pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun Oct-Mar), with limited displays and information on the park, is off the A372 at the western end of town (turn opposite Hotel Las Truchas).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Jardín Botánico El Castillejo** (☎ 956 71 61 34; Avenida El Castillejo s/n; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Jun-Aug, 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct, 10am-2pm & 3.30-6.30pm Nov-Mar) contains a pretty good selection of the region's trees, shrubs, herbs and wildflowers – including a mini-*pinsapar* (forest of Spanish fir). It takes around half an hour to stroll round the garden.

A nice walk from El Bosque follows the Río Majaceite (also called the Río El Bosque) upstream for 4km to Benamahoma (see opposite), starting by the bridge outside the El Bosque youth hostel.

SLEEPING & EATING

Instalación Juvenil El Bosque (☎ 956 71 62 12; Molino de Enmedio s/n; per person incl breakfast under 26yr €9.50-15, over 26yr €13-19; ☎ (☎)) El Bosque's modernised 131-capacity youth hostel is pleasantly sited in a wooded area by the Río Majaceite. Accommodation is in double,

triple and quadruple rooms, nearly all with private bathroom.

Hotel Enrique Calvillo (☎ 956 71 61 05; Avenida Diputación 5; s/d €25/45; ☎ (☎)) The 19 attractive rooms here, near the park information office, have wood-beam ceilings, stained-wood furniture and nicely tiled bathrooms, and there's a comfy lounge with internet.

Hotel El Tabanco (☎ 956 71 60 81; Calle La Fuente 3; s/d incl breakfast €30/50; ☎ closed 7-12 Jan & 2nd half Jun; ☎) Up in the village centre, this almost-new hotel provides spotless rooms with tasteful wooden furniture, comfy beds, tile floors and bathtubs. And it adjoins the Mesón El Tabanco, the best eatery in town.

Hotel Las Truchas (☎ 956 71 60 61; www.tugasa.com/index2.htm; Avenida Diputación s/n; s/d €36/59; ☎ (☎)) El Bosque's largest hotel (27 rooms) has been going since 1970 and though a mite stodgy in style, it still offers comfortable, well-equipped rooms, spacious public areas and an outdoor pool. Meals are also available (€8 to €15).

Mesón El Tabanco (☎ 956 71 60 81; Calle Huelva 1; mains €9-15; ☎ 9.30am-1.30am Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30am Sat, Sun & holidays, closed 7-12 Jan & 2nd half Jun) El Tabanco serves excellent meat and *revueltos* in two sky-lit dining rooms. Don't pass up the *queso fresco* salad, with superb local soft goat cheese. Good tapas are available in the popular adjoining bar.

Grazalema

pop 2200 / elevation 825m

The most popular travellers' base in the sierra, Grazalema is a picture-postcard, red-tile-roofed village tucked into a corner of beautiful mountain country beneath the rock-climbers' crag Peñón Grande. It has a broad selection of places to stay and some good country-style eateries. Local products include pure wool blankets and rugs, whose production follows centuries-old traditions.

INFORMATION

The village centre is the pretty Plaza de España, where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 956 13 20 73; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-9pm), with an upstairs shop selling local wool products and other crafts (blankets and rugs start around €55). Two banks on Plaza de España have ATMs.

GRAZALEMA WALKS

The Sierra de Grazalema's beautiful scenery makes for great walking, especially in May, June, September and October, when climatic conditions are best. Equip yourself with a good walking guide such as *Walking in Andalucía* by Guy Hunter-Watts or *Eight Walks from Grazalema* by RE Bradshaw, and the best map you can get: Editorial Alpina's *Sierra de Grazalema* (1:25,000), with a walking-guide booklet in English and Spanish, is the pick. Some of these are sold locally, but also look for them before you come.

The natural park's three major highlight walks – El Torreón, the Pinsapar and the Garganta Verde – are all within its 38-sq-km reserve area, and for these you need a free permit from the visitors centre in El Bosque (opposite). You can telephone or visit the visitors centre up to 15 days in advance for this, and they can fax permits to be collected at the Zahara de la Sierra information office or Grazalema tourist office. Staff at any of these offices may or may not speak languages other than Spanish. It's advisable to book 10 to 15 days ahead for weekends or public holidays; otherwise, it's usually OK to make arrangements the same day or day before. For the Pinsapar walk in July, August and September, when fire risk is high, it's obligatory to go with a guide from an authorised local company such as Horizon (p206), Al-qutun (p207) or Zahara Catur (p207). The Torreón route is closed in these months.

El Torreón

El Torreón (1654m) is the highest peak in Cádiz province and from the summit on a clear day you can see Gibraltar, the Sierra Nevada and the Rif Mountains of Morocco. The usual route starts 100m east of the Km 40 marker on the Grazalema–Benamahoma road, about 8km from Grazalema. It takes about 2½ hours of walking to reach the summit and 1½ hours back down.

The Pinsapar

The dark green Spanish fir (*pinsapo* in Spanish) is a rare and beautiful relic of the great Mediterranean fir forests of the Tertiary period. Today it survives in significant numbers only in pockets of southwest Andalucía and northern Morocco, and the largest pocket in Andalucía (about 3 sq km) is the Pinsapar on the northern slopes of Sierra del Pinar between Grazalema and Benamahoma. The 14km walk between the two villages via the Pinsapar takes around six hours: you start by walking about 40 minutes up from Grazalema to a point on the Zahara road where a footpath heads off westward. After an ascent of 300m, this path sticks close to the 1300m contour.

Garganta Verde

The path into this lushly vegetated ravine, more than 100m deep, starts 3.5km from Zahara de la Sierra on the Grazalema road. It passes a large colony of enormous griffon vultures before the 300m descent to the bottom of the gorge. Then you come back up! It's a beautiful walk. Allow three to four hours' walking if you drive to the start.

Other Walks

These excellent walks are outside the reserve area and require no permit. You'll need a guide (human or printed) for the Salto del Cabrero and Casa del Dornajo routes, which can be combined in one full day's circuit starting from Grazalema.

Casa del Dornajo This ruined farmstead in a beautiful high-level valley is about two hours' walk southwest from Grazalema, or 1½ hours north from Benaocaz. There are good chances of seeing ibex on the walk.

Llanos del Republicano This 4km (each way) route starts from the A374 at Villaluenga del Rosario. The track leads through native oak woods and down to the lonesome Llanos del Republicano plains where the entrance to the Sema del Republicano, one of Andalucía's deepest caves, is found.

Salto del Cabrero About two hours' walk southwest from Grazalema, or 1¼ hours north from Benaocaz, the 'Goatherd's Leap' is a dramatic fissure in the earth, 100m deep and 500m long.

DETOUR: ALCALÁ DE LOS GAZULES TO UBRIQUE

This alternative route to the Sierra de Grazalema takes you across the beautiful northern woodlands of the Parque Natural Los Alcornocales, the Grazalema park's southern neighbour. In early summer the roadside wild flowers are unbelievable. You also have the opportunity (bureaucracy permitting) to stop off and climb one of Los Alcornocales' most prominent peaks, El Picacho (882m) or Aljibe (1091m).

Make first for Alcalá de los Gazules, just off the A381 in the centre of Cádiz province. On Plaza San Jorge at the top of the town is the office of the **Consejería de Medio Ambiente** (☎ 956 41 33 07; fax 956 42 05 11; ☹ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri), which issues the permit needed for climbing Aljibe or El Picacho. Regulations on permits change from time to time and you should ring the office at least 10 days in advance to find out the current situation.

Leave Alcalá northeast along the A375. After about 8km, the rocky sandstone El Picacho appears ahead of you, and 11km from Alcalá is the joint start of the trails up **El Picacho** and **Aljibe**, opposite the entrance to the Área Recreativa El Picacho picnic area. The Picacho walk (about 3km each way; 500m ascent) takes approximately five hours there and back. Aljibe (6km each way; 700m ascent) is about seven hours there and back.

Continuing the drive, head on along the A375 towards Ubrique, ignoring turn-offs to other places. The road winds up and down through thick woodlands of cork oak, wild olive and other native trees, with some wonderful long-distance panoramas. After 30km, at the Puerto de Mogón de la Vibora pass, turn left down the A373 for the 9km to **Ubrique**, a white splash against the dramatic backdrop of the Sierra de Grazalema. If you need a smart leather bag, briefcase, wallet, jacket or belt, in any colour you fancy, take a stroll along Ubrique's main street, Avenida Solís Pascual, which is lined with shops selling these goods, all made locally.

From Ubrique it's a further 26km to Grazalema village via Benaocaz and Villaluenga del Rosario (p208).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

A chief pleasure of Grazalema is simply enjoying the mountain vistas and exploring the cobbled, sloping streets lined by their sturdy white houses with black grilles, flowery window boxes and carved stone portals around solid, nail-studded doors. The **Salto del Cabrero** and **Casa del Dornajo walks** (see p205) can both be done from here, and RE Bradshaw's *Eight Walks from Grazalema* details more options.

Horizon (☎/fax 956 13 23 63; www.horizonaventura.com; Calle Corrales Terceros 29), a block off Plaza de España, is a highly experienced adventure firm that will take you climbing, bungee jumping, canyoning, caving, paragliding or walking, with English-speaking guides. Prices per person range from around €14 for a half-day walk to over €60 for the 4km underground wetsuit adventure from the Cueva del Huididero near Montejaque to the Cueva del Gato near Benaoján. Minimum group sizes apply for some activities.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The **Fiestas del Carmen** take over Grazalema for several days and nights in mid-July,

with lots of late-night music and dancing, and a bull-running through the streets on the final Monday.

SLEEPING

Camping Tajo Rodillo (☎ 956 13 24 18, 651 91 09 72; www.campingtajorodillo.com in Spanish; Carretera El Bosque-Grazalema Km 47; adult/tent €4.50/4.50, 4-person cabin €95; ☹ closed Dec & Jan; (P) (♿) (♿)) Though small, this camping ground at the top of the village is well equipped with restaurant, pool and comfy cabins with kitchen, bathroom and TV.

Casa de las Piedras (☎/fax 956 13 20 14; www.casadelaspiedras.net; Calle Las Piedras 32; s/d €37/45, with shared bathroom €10/20; (♿) (♿)) Casa de las Piedras is a friendly, good-value *hostal* occupying a fine old village house with a couple of pleasant patios and a log fire in winter. The 32 rooms are of assorted sizes and facilities, but all with winter heating. The restaurant serves hearty meals (€6 to €11), and the *hostal* also runs some comfy apartments nearby.

Hotel Peñón Grande (☎ 956 13 24 34; www.hostelgrazalema.com; Plaza Pequeña 7; s/d €36/53; (♿)) This small, friendly hotel just off Plaza de España

has an attractively rustic style, with comfortable, well-equipped, good-sized rooms. One of the best bets in town.

La Mejorana (☎ 956 13 23 27, 649 61 32 72; www.lamejorana.net; Calle Santa Clara 6; r incl breakfast €50; ♿) A lovely house towards the upper end of the village, hospitable La Mejorana has just five rooms with beautiful wrought-iron bedsteads, plus a large lounge and kitchen, all in fetching country styles – and a leafy garden that even manages to fit in a pool. A great find!

Hotel Puerta de la Villa (☎ 956 13 23 76; www.grazalemahotel.com in Spanish; Plaza Pequeña 8; s/d €103/129; (P) (♿) (♿)) A centrally located top-end hotel with tasteful, good-sized rooms plus a gym, crafts shop, and classy restaurant (mains €10 to €16). Prices drop significantly outside the high seasons (mid-July to mid-September and early December to early January).

EATING

Mesón El Simancón (☎ 956 13 24 21; Plaza Asomaderos; mains €7-12, menú €13; ☹ closed Tue) Set by the main car park, this is one of the best places to eat. Well-prepared local dishes – ham, beef, quail, venison, wild boar, *revueltos* – are served at tables outside or in a dining room adorned with deer heads.

There are several places to eat and drink on pedestrian Calle Agua, between Plaza de España and the main car park:

Bar La Posadilla (☎ 956 13 20 51; Calle Agua 19; platos combinados €2-6; ☹ closed Thu) Excellent-value budget eating.

Restaurant El Torreón (☎ 956 13 23 13; Calle Agua 44; mains €7-11; ☹ closed Wed) Reliable upstairs restaurant with a long menu.

Zahara de la Sierra

pop 1500 / elevation 550m

Clinging to the sides of a crag topped by a ruined castle, Zahara is the most dramatically sited of the Grazalema villages – impossibly picturesque when seen from the north across the Embalse de Zahara reservoir. The 18km drive from Grazalema via the vertiginous 1331m Puerto de los Palomas (Doves' Pass, but with more vultures than doves) is even more spectacular, and quite otherworldly if there's heavy mist along the way. Zahara is a lovely place to stay a night or two and a convenient base for the Garganta Verde walk.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The village centres on Calle San Juan, with a church at each end. Near one end is the natural park's helpful **Punto de Información Zahara de la Sierra** (☎/fax 956 12 31 14; Plaza del Rey 3; ☹ 9am-2pm & 4-7pm), with displays on the park, and local cheese, honey and other products on sale. There's a car park 150m uphill from here.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Zahara's steep, winding streets invite investigation, with vistas framed by tall palms, hot-pink bougainvillea or fruited orange trees. To climb up to the remains of the 13th-century Muslim-built **castle**, take the path almost opposite the Hotel Arco de la Villa – a steady 10- to 15-minute climb. The castle fell to the Christians in 1407: its brief recapture by Abu al-Hasan of Granada in a daring night raid in 1481 provoked the Catholic Monarchs to launch the last phase of the Reconquista of Andalucía, leading to the fall of Granada in 1492.

Adventure-tourism firm **Al-qutun** (☎ 956 13 78 82; www.al-qutun.com), in Algodonales, 7km north of Zahara, organises canyoning in the Garganta Verde, guided walks in the natural park's reserve area, kayaking on Zahara's reservoir, paragliding, caving, climbing and bungee jumping, with beginners welcome. Get in touch for the schedule. **Zahara Catur** (☎ 956 12 31 14; www.zaharacatur.com; Plaza del Rey 3), at the Zahara information office, rents two-person canoes for €10/18 per one/two hours, and offers guided walks, canyoning and caving for groups of six to 10.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

For **Corpus Christi** (7 June 2007, 22 May 2008), Zahara de la Sierra dresses its main streets in a mantle of green vegetation and aromatic flowers and herbs for a festive religious procession that dates back to Reconquista times.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hostal Marqués de Zahara (☎/fax 956 12 30 61; www.marquesdezahara.com; Calle San Juan 3; s/d €32/42; (♿)) This converted mansion right in the village centre has 10 cosy rooms with winter heating, friendly service, plus a restaurant and a bookcase full of good local reference material. Rooms with balcony cost a few euros extra.

Hotel Arco de la Villa (☎ 956 12 32 30; www.tugasa.com/index2.htm; Paseo Nazari s/n; s/d €36/59; 📍 📞) The Arco de la Villa is a sparkling-clean, modern hotel with a spectacular cliff-top setting opposite the foot of the castle path. All 17 rooms and the restaurant are endowed with jaw-dropping views.

Restaurante Los Naranjos (☎ 956 12 33 14; Calle San Juan 15; mains €7-12; 🕒 9am-11pm) Calle San Juan is strung with bars, most serving food of some kind, but the best eats are at Los Naranjos, serving hearty hill-country platefuls both indoors and outside under the orange trees.

Villaluenga del Rosario

pop 450 / elevation 900m

Villaluenga huddles at the foot of the cliffs of the Sierra del Caillo, 13km south of Grazalema. The village is a popular destination for cavers thanks to the proximity of several of Andalucía's deepest and longest cave systems. Noncavers can easily walk to the entrance of the 250m-long **Sima de Villaluenga** by a balustraded walkway across the fields at the bottom of the village. An enjoyable longer hike starting beside the abandoned Hostal Villaluenga on the A374 takes you to the entrance of the 222m-deep **Sima del Republicano** cave – see p205.

The excellent little **Hotel La Posada** (☎ 956 12 61 19; www.tugasa.com/index2.htm; Calle Torre 1; s/d €36/59; 📍 📞), in a thick-stone-walled 18th-century building, features wrought-iron bedsteads and bathrooms with bathtubs, and a quality restaurant serving hill-country meat, game and egg dishes (mains €6 to €12). Also good for similar fare is the surprisingly elegant **La Canela** (☎ 956 46 37 79; Calle Doctor Vázquez 24; mains €7-12), with a balcony overlooking the valley.

COSTA DE LA LUZ

The 90km coast between Cádiz and Tarifa can be windy, and its Atlantic waters are a shade cooler than those of the Mediterranean. But these are small prices to pay for an unspoiled, often wild shore, strung with long, clean, white-sand beaches and just a few small towns and villages. (It has been christened the Costa de la Luz – Coast of Light – due to the brightness that results

from many hours of sunlight hitting the white sandy beaches.) Andalusians are well aware of its attractions and they flock down here in their thousands during July and August, bringing a vibrant fiesta atmosphere to the normally quiet coastal settlements. Be sure to book ahead for rooms in these months.

From before Roman times until the advent of 20th-century tourism, this coast was mainly devoted to tuna fishing. Shoals of big tuna, some weighing 300kg, are still intercepted by mazes of *almadraba* (net) several kilometres long as the fish head in from the Atlantic towards their Mediterranean spawning grounds in spring, and again as they head out in July and August. Barbate has the main tuna fleet today.

VEJER DE LA FRONTERA

pop 12,000 / elevation 190m

This old-fashioned white town looms mysteriously atop a rocky hill above the busy A48, 50km southeast from Cádiz. It's well worth investigating. Like much of the Costa de la Luz, Vejer is experiencing a foreign influx. Hip boutiques and charming places to stay are proliferating. Vejer has long been popular with Spanish artists and alternative types so, not surprisingly, there's a vital art-and-crafts scene here. Vejer is a good base for activities too.

Orientation

The oldest area of town, still partly walled and lined with narrow winding streets clearly signifying its Islamic origins, spreads over the highest part of the hill. Just below is the small Plazuela, more or less the heart of town, with the Hotel Convento de San Francisco. About 800m east of the Plazuela (a 10-minute stroll along Calle Marqués de Tamarón) is Plaza de España, around which are several places to stay and eat.

Information

Bookend English Bookshop (☎ 625 870255; Avenida Juan Relinque 45) New and secondhand books in English; some secondhand books in German.

Post office (Calle Juan Bueno 10)

Tourist office (☎ 956 45 17 36; www.turismovejer.com; Avenida de los Remedios; 🕒 10am-2pm Mon-Sat mid-Sep-May, 10am-2pm & 6-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun Jun-mid-Sep) You can arrange local tours here.

Sights & Activities

Vejer's walls date from the 15th century. Four gateways and three towers survive. Within the 40,000-sq-metre walled area, seek out the **Iglesia del Divino Salvador** (☎ 956 45 00 56; 🕒 11am-1pm daily, plus 5-7pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat), whose interior is Mudejar at the altar end and Gothic at the other. The much-reworked **castle** (🕒 10am-2pm & 5.30-8.30pm Jul & Aug), with great views from its battlements, has a small museum that preserves one of the black cloaks that Vejer women wore, covering everything but the eyes, until just a couple of decades ago. Don't miss pretty palm-filled **Plaza de España** with its attractive Seville-tiled fountain and the town hall on its south side.

You can rent good mountain bikes (€12 per day) at **Nature Explorer** (☎ 956 45 14 19; www.natureexplorer.com; Avenida de los Remedios 43), opposite the bus stop. They also run walking, mountain biking and diving trips (€25 to €55 per person) for four people or more in the beautiful surrounding area.

Festivals & Events

Easter Sunday There's a Toro Embolao (running of the bull, with bandaged horns) at noon and 4pm.

Feria Music and dancing nightly in Plaza de España, with one night devoted entirely to flamenco; 10 to 24 August.

Sleeping

Camping Los Molinos (☎ 956 45 09 88; www.campinglosmolinosvejer.com; Pago de Santa Lucía; adult/tent/car €5.50/5/4; 📍 📞) This wooded camp site with a supermarket and good facilities is a few kilometres north of Vejer.

Hostal La Janda (☎ 956 45 01 42; Calle Machado s/n; s/d €25/50; 📍 📞) A friendly place across town from the old walled area. The 36 rooms sprawl over a large property; some have interior patio views, others town vistas. Décor is simple but pretty.

Hotel Convento de San Francisco (☎ 956 45 10 01; www.tugasa.com/index2/htm; Plazuela s/n; s/d €48/70; 📍 📞) This restored 17th-century convent has 25 simple but charming rooms, and helpful reception staff. Its café is a central meeting place.

DETOUR: SANCTI PETRI & MEDINA SIDONIA

If you're driving up or down the A48 between Cádiz and Vejer de la Frontera with half a day to spare, two contrasting but equally attractive detours can be made from the Chiclana de la Frontera junction where the A48 meets the A390, 22km southeast of Cádiz.

Sancti Petri

Head west towards the coast from the A48/A390 junction: the road skirts the southern edge of Chiclana. Follow 'Puerto Deportivo' signs, which will lead you to Sancti Petri, a small, historically intriguing fishing village, no longer inhabited but still with fishing boats and a marina. The village has a nautical and water-sports centre and is a fine windsurfing spot. An offshore island, Isla de Sancti Petri, has a ruined, mainly 19th-century **castle**, beneath which are the remains of a Roman temple dedicated to Hercules. You can visit the island daily from 1 July to 15 September with **Cruceros Sancti Petri** (☎ 617 378894; Playa de Sancti Petri; 1hr trip per person €10).

Medina Sidonia

If you head east along the A390, a 19km drive brings you to the interesting hill-top town of Medina Sidonia, whose long and turbulent history goes at least as far back as Phoenician times. Later it fell into the hands of invaders as diverse as the Byzantines and the Normans. After the Christians reconquered the town from the Muslims in 1264, it became a bone of contention between the Castilian monarchy and the powerful Guzmán family (see p215), changing hands repeatedly until 1445 when King Juan II ceded it to Juan Alfonso Guzmán III. Guzmán thus became the Duque de Medina Sidonia, the first of a long and very powerful aristocratic line.

On arrival head up to the top of the hill to the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 956 41 24 04; Plaza de la Iglesia Mayor; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-6pm Sep-Jul, 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Jul-Sep), then make for the main monuments nearby – the remains of the 12th- to 15th-century **castle**, the 16th-century **Iglesia de Santa María La Coronada** and the **Conjunto Romano** (well-preserved sections of Roman streets and Roman drains).

Hostal la Botica (☎ 902 07 51 30; www.laboticadevejer.com; Calle Canalejas 15; s/d incl breakfast from €55/65; 🍷) A former pharmacy, Hostal la Botica offers appealing rooms set around a patio where breakfast is served. There's a roof terrace with rural views.

Hotel La Casa del Califa (☎ 956 44 77 30; www.grupocalifa.com; Plaza de España 16; s incl breakfast €63-94, d incl breakfast €69-112; 🍷) This great place fronting Plaza de España rambles over several floors of what were previously five houses. Twisting corridors and little staircases lead to peaceful, comfortable rooms, each with individual proportions and décor, though an Islamic theme predominates. There's a sun terrace.

No 1 Tripería (☎ 956 44 77 30; www.grupocalifa.com; Calle Tripería 1; r €99-150; 🍷) This charming luxury hotel with Islamic features occupies a large townhouse near Plaza de España. It's the only place in Vejer with a swimming pool, and the underfloor heating makes it cosy in winter. Most rooms enjoy views across town and to the countryside.

Eating & Drinking

You're spoilt for choice when it comes to eating out in Vejer, not only in the town but also in the villages that dot the surrounding region, known as La Janda – head to Santa Lucía and La Muela, both north of the A48, or wander further into the hinterland and seek out the *ventas* (roadside inns).

Pastelería Galvin (Calle Altozano 1; cake €2) This is a terrific tea, coffee and cakes haunt just around the corner from the Plazuela.

La Bodeguita (☎ 956 45 15 82; Calle Marqués de Tamarón 9; tapas & montaditos €1; 🍷 from 4.30pm) A plain but tastefully decked-out bar, La Bodeguita has good vibes, breakfast (in summer), excellent tapas and snacks, and an extensive music collection. It's just beside the Arco de la Segur arch.

Bar Joplín (Calle Marqués de Tamarón; beer €2.50) Opposite La Bodeguita, this laid-back drinking haunt lives up to its namesake. It's best late on the weekends.

Restaurante Trafalgar (☎ 956 44 76 38; Plaza de España 31; mains €10-19) The Trafalgar offers semiformal dining on the town's happening plaza. Typical Cádiz province fish, seafood and meat are prepared with a flourish.

El Jardín del Califa (☎ 956 44 77 30; Plaza de España 16; mains €7.50-18; 🍷 closed Tue morning Nov-Easter; 🍷) Hotel La Casa del Califa's restaurant,

extending out into the garden, is Vejer's coolest eatery. Food and décor are Arabic: Moroccan-tiled tables under tall trees, the scent of jasmine, and walls with ancient brickwork set the mood. Choose from vegetable or meat couscous and tagine dishes or, in the evenings, barbecued meats and fish.

Getting There & Away

The small office of **Comes** (☎ 902 19 92 08; Plazuela) has bus information; tickets can be purchased here or on the bus. Buses to/from Cádiz (€4.50, 50 minutes) and Barbate (€1.10, 10 minutes) stop on Avenida de los Remedios, the road up from the A48, about 500m below the Plazuela up to 10 times a day. More buses for the same places, plus Tarifa (€3.80, 50 minutes, about 10 daily), La Línea de la Concepción (€7, 1½ to two hours, seven daily), Málaga (€16, 2¾ hours, two daily) and Seville (€14, three hours, five daily), stop at La Barca de Vejer, on the A48 at the bottom of the hill. By road it's 4km uphill from La Barca to the town; on foot, there's an obvious 15-minute short cut.

EL PALMAR

pop 850

Sleepy El Palmar, 10km southwest of Vejer de la Frontera, has a lovely 4.8km sweep of white sandy beach, which is good for body surfing, and for board surfing from October to May. Green fields with crops or grazing cows surround the hamlet, but 'sleepy' probably won't describe it for much longer as development plans include two new hotels, at the Conil end of the beach.

El Palmar has at least two surf schools and private individuals giving surf lessons. **El Palmar Surf School** (☎ 956 23 21 37; www.elpalmarurf.com; Dehesa El Palmar 43; board rental per hr/half-day/full day €10/25/30, 5hr beginner course €100) is a popular choice, offering board hire and instruction in Spanish or English.

Camping El Palmar (☎ 956 23 21 61; www.pogoland.com/elpalmar; adult/tent/car €5.50/4.50/3.80; 🍷) is a well-equipped camp site 900m from the beach down a dirt track.

There are several *hostales* right in front of the beach but most close in winter. **Hostal Casa Francisco** (☎ 956 23 22 49; d incl breakfast €90, with sea view €120) has reasonable, if bare, rooms and a good restaurant (*menú* €20). Prices dip by more than a third outside peak periods.

La Chanca (☎ 659 977420; mains €14-20; 🍷 closed Feb-mid-Mar) occupies an old tuna preparation factory at the southeastern end of the beach. It has a garden dining area overlooking the ocean and is popular for its tasty meat and fresh fish dishes.

Cortijo El Cartero (☎ 956 23 26 24) is a distinctive purple-and-orange bar-restaurant with a thatched roof, which is firmly fixed on the Cádiz gig circuit. Expect live music on weekend nights year-round.

Two buses run to/from Cádiz Monday to Friday (€4.50, one hour).

LOS CAÑOS DE MECA

pop 300

Los Caños, once a hippy hideaway, straggles along a series of gorgeous sandy coves beneath a pine-clad hill about 7km south-east of El Palmar and 12km west of Barbate. It maintains its laid-back, off-beat air even during the height of summer when it gets very busy. The informal architecture around here is an eclectic mix of Moroccan, Andalusian, beachside and alternative.

Orientation & Information

Coming from El Palmar or Vejer, you pass through the separate settlement of Zahora, a couple of kilometres short of Los Caños. The road from Barbate comes out on Los Caños' main street, Avenida Trafalgar, towards the eastern end of town. The Barbate tourist office (p213) can provide information for the whole area. There's an ATM on the main road in front of the camp site at Zahora.

Sights & Activities

At the western end of Los Caños, a side road leads out to a lighthouse on a low spit of land, the famous **Cabo de Trafalgar**. It was off this cape that Spanish naval power was terminated in a few hours one day in 1805 by a British fleet under Admiral Nelson. A plaque commemorating those who died in the battle was erected at Trafalgar on the bicentennial in October 2005.

Wonderful **beaches** stretch either side of Cabo de Trafalgar. A marine wind park is planned 18km out to sea from Cabo de Trafalgar, but opposition is significant.

The main beach is straight in front of Avenida Trafalgar's junction with the Barbate road. Nudist beachgoers head to the

small headland at its eastern end where there are more secluded beaches, including Playa de las Cortinas. The western end is the best windsurfing zone and has surfable waves in winter.

The coast between Los Caños and Barbate is mostly cliffs up to 100m high. The road between the two places runs inland through captivating umbrella pine forest. These cliffs and forest, along with wetlands east and north of Barbate, form the **Parque Natural de la Breña y Marismas de Barbate**. A walking path leads from the road to the **Torre del Tajo**, a 16th-century cliff-top lookout tower. Another tower, the 18th-century **Torre de Meca** on the hill behind Los Caños, can be reached from this road, and you can also walk up to it from Los Caños.

Activities in and around Los Caños such as horse riding, surfing and mountain biking can be organised through the Hostal Madreselva.

Sleeping

Prices at most places dip significantly outside the high season.

Camping Camaleón (☎ 956 43 71 54; Avenida Trafalgar s/n; adult/tent/car €5.50/5.50/5.50; 🍷 Apr-Sep) Los Caños has three medium-sized camping grounds, which tend to get pretty crowded and rowdy in high summer. The Camaleón has shady sites and is nearest the centre, 1km west from the Barbate road corner.

Hostal Minigolf (☎ 956 43 70 83; Avenida de Trafalgar 251; s/d €45/50; 🍷) This good little budget place opposite the Cabo de Trafalgar turning has fresh, clean rooms, with TV and winter heating, around a simple, very Spanish patio. Hearty breakfasts are served in the restaurant next door.

Hostal Mar de Frente (☎ 956 43 70 25; www.hostalmardefrente.com; Avenida Trafalgar 3; s/d incl breakfast €48/77, r with sea view €102; 🍷 closed Dec-Feb; 🍷) The charming Mar de Frente, on several levels right on the cliff edge above the eastern end of the main beach, has a youthful management and bright, comfy rooms with satellite TV and terrace.

Sajoramibeach (☎ 956 43 74 24; www.sajoramibeach.com; r €80) For plum beach location and unique architecture, try this place at Playa Zahora.

Hostal Madreselva (☎ 956 43 72 55; www.madreselva.com/canos; Avenida Trafalgar 102; s/d incl breakfast €68/84, ste €155; 🍷 27 Mar-30 Sep; 🍷)

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Casas Karen (☎ 956 43 70 67, last-minute bookings 649 780834; www.casaskaren.com; Fuente del Madroño 6; r €92-99, q €118-132, 2-person traditional hut per week €555; (P)) This eccentric gem is owned by warm, vibrant Karen Abrahams, who settled here around 20 years ago. Her large, pretty, mimosa-covered plot has seven or so eclectic buildings, all with kitchen, bathroom, lounge and outdoor sitting areas: they range from a converted farmhouse to exotic, thatched *chozas* (traditional huts) built of local materials. Décor is casual Andalusian-Moroccan with a sensitive use of colour. Massage is available. Casas Karen is accessed from the main road 500m east of the Cabo de Trafalgar turning. Turn off at the wall with 'Apartamentos y Bungalows' tiled into it and go 500m. Turn right at the 'Fuente de Madroño' sign and you'll see Casas Karen's wooden ranch-style fence.

This place was artistically transformed a few years back by the owner of the Hurricane Hotel near Tarifa. The 18 rooms, run by a friendly management, are set around a plant-filled patio and have small gardens at the rear and exotic design features. Mountain biking, horse riding and surfing can be arranged.

Casa Meca (☎ 639 613402; www.casameca.com; Avenida Trafalgar s/n; studio d per week €475, 2-bedroom apt per week €660; (P)) An attractive house with pretty garden and grounds, Casa Meca is 100m east of the Cabo de Trafalgar turning. It comprises three bright apartments with kitchen, lounge, views and outdoor sitting areas. Double-glazed windows and central heating make it a good year-round choice.

Eating

Bar Saboy (Carril de Mangueta, Zahora; tagines €9, menú €10) Sit under a yucca palm and watch bulls grazing in fields opposite while birds twitter in nearby trees. The Saboy, 200m from the main road with a thatched roof and fireplace, offers good snacks and meals, including a delicious gently spiced Moroccan lentil soup.

Bar-Restaurante El Caña (☎ 956 43 73 98; Avenida Trafalgar s/n; mains €13; ☞ Apr-Sep) Super position atop the small cliff above the beach a short distance east of the Barbate road corner. Very hectic in summer.

Restaurante Trafalgar (☎ 956 43 71 21; Avenida Trafalgar 86; www.elfatalgar.com; mains €12-17.50; menú €12; ☞ Apr-Sep) This excellent restaurant, with a summer patio, serves up creative Mediterranean cuisine. You can expect a few unusual flavours and the freshest of food here. *Arroz marinero* (seafood rice) is recommended. Internet out back.

More good eateries:

Sajorami (☎ 956 43 70 72; Playa Zahora; mains €10-16; (V)) Unbeatable sea views, stylish building and excellent Spanish cuisine with international, vegetarian and Moroccan additions.

El Jazmín (Avenida Trafalgar s/n; mains €9-20; (V)) Fish, seafood and Moroccan and Mexican dishes.

Drinking & Entertainment

Las Dunas (Carril El Faro; ☞ 10.30am-late) An attractive stone building with *choza*-style (traditional hut) roofing and impressive stone fireplace. You can come here for snacks, fresh fruit juices and late breakfasts but it's really a late-night place with a pool table.

La Pequeña Lulu (www.lapequenallulu.com; Avenida Trafalgar s/n; ☞ open daily year-round) At the far eastern end of the village backing on to the natural park, this cosy French-run café/bar with funky décor often has live music, even some jammin'.

Bar Saboy (Carril de Mangueta, Zahora) Also has regular live music (see left).

In the main tourist season, good bars include the cool Los Castillejos at the eastern end of the village, and Café-Bar Ketama across the street from El Pirata.

Getting There & Away

From Monday to Friday, three buses run to/from Barbate (€1, 15 minutes) and two to/from Cádiz (€5, 1½ hours). Extra buses may run from Seville or Cádiz from mid-June to early September.

BARBATE

pop 22,000

A fishing and canning town with a long sandy beach and a big harbour, Barbate is mostly a drab place though it becomes a fairly lively resort in summer, and there are

signs that it may just be slowly moving a little upmarket. The town rocks from 12 to 16 July during its annual fair, which culminates in the maritime procession in honour of the Virgen del Carmen.

Orientation & Information

The Comes bus station is more than 1km back from the beach at the northern end of the long main street, Avenida del Generalísimo, where it intersects with Avenida José Antonio. Barbate's **tourist office** (☎ 956 43 39 62; www.barbate.es; Avenida José Antonio 23; ☞ 8am-2.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat), the only one in the Los Caños-Barbate-Zahara area, is 1.5km along Avenida José Antonio from the bus station in the direction of the beach. Banks are on Avenida del Generalísimo.

Sleeping

Hotel Nuro (☎ 956 43 02 54; Avenida José Antonio s/n; d €35-55; (P) ☞ ☞) This is a simple but comfy hotel with winter heating and TV in the rooms, 100m from the bus station. Improvements include new beds and a cafeteria.

Hotel Galia (☎ 956 43 33 76; Calle Doctor Valencia 5; s/d €45/70; ☞ Apr-Sep; (P) ☞ ☞) A few blocks towards the sea from the bus station, the Galia is friendly and the rooms are fine.

Hotel Chili (☎ 956 45 40 33, 696 281760; www.elchilihotel.com; cnr Calle Real & Avenida José Antonio; s incl breakfast €69, d incl breakfast €80-95; (P) ☞ ☞) Set up by the owners of Tarifa's Hurricane Hotel, the Chili then passed into the hands of an Austrian who's lived in Cuba. Rooms are stylishly simple and decorated in subdued colours. It's 1km from the bus station.

Eating & Drinking

Stop by the excellent market on Avenida de Andalucía and the port to goggle at the day's fish catch. There are plenty of seafood eateries preparing local specialities on Paseo Marítimo.

Café-Bar Estrella Polar (Avenida del Generalísimo 106; salads from €4.50, mains €9-14) About 50m back from the beach, this café-bar offers good portions at fair prices. Try the swordfish or the excellent *chocos* (cuttlefish) or *calamares* (squid).

El Capitán (Puerto de la Albufera; tapas €1.30-2, raciones & mains €7-17) This appealing, two-storey,

wooden construction with wide verandahs looks down over the port. On the ground floor is a café-bar with tables surrounding a huge crustacean-filled tank. More formal dining is available upstairs. Cuisine is regional with some creative touches.

El Campero (☎ 956 43 23 00; Avenida de la Constitución 5C; mains €14-21) Head to ever-popular El Campero if you feel like a splurge. Fish is the house speciality: try the *urta a la roteña* (bream cooked in white wine with tomatoes, peppers and thyme) or the tasty local speciality *atún encebollado* (tuna stewed with onions and tomatoes).

Getting There & Away

From the **Comes bus station** (☎ 956 43 05 94; Avenida del Generalísimo) buses run to/from the following destinations:

Algeciras (€6, 1¼ hours) One daily.

Cádiz (€5.50, 1 hour) Up to 13 daily.

La Barca de Vejer (€1.10, 10 minutes) Near Vejer de la Frontera; see p210.

Tarifa (€4.50, 50 minutes) One daily.

Vejer de la Frontera (€1.10, 10 minutes) Up to 10 daily.

Zahara de los Atunes (€1, 15 minutes) Two to three times daily.

ZAHARA DE LOS ATUNES

pop 1000

Plonked in the middle of nothing except a broad, 12km-long, west-facing sandy beach, Zahara is elemental. At the heart of the village stand the crumbling walls of the old Almadra, once a depot and refuge for the local tuna fishers, who were an infamously rugged lot. Miguel de Cervantes, in *La Ilustre Fregona*, wrote that no-one deserved the name *picaro* (low-life scoundrel) unless they had spent two seasons at Zahara fishing for tuna. Records state that in 1541 no fewer than 140,000 tuna were brought into Zahara's Almadra. Today the tuna industry has disappeared but Zahara is an increasingly popular and fashionable Spanish summer resort. With a little old-fashioned core of narrow streets, it's a super spot to let the sun, sea, wind and, in summer, a lively nightlife batter your senses.

Nature lovers will be delighted by the pristine beaches and walking trails of the Sierra de la Plata between Zahara and Boleña. Head past Zahara's southern extension, Atlanterra, to get there.

Information

A tourist information kiosk opens for July and August on the sands near the Almadraba. ATMs are on Calle María Luisa, opposite Plaza de Tamarón.

Sleeping

Camping Bahía de la Plata (☎ 956 43 90 40; Avenida de las Palmeras; adult/ten/car €6.50/5.50/4, 4-person bungalow €95) This is a good treed camping ground fronting the beach at the southern end of Zahara.

Hostal Monte Mar (☎ 956 43 90 47; Calle Bullón 17; s/d €33/53; (P)) A congenial place right on the sands at the northern tip of the village. It may not have the best beds in town but at least it may have a room when everywhere else is full in July and August.

Hotel Almadraba (☎ 956 43 92 74; www.hotelesalmadraba.com; Calle María Luisa 13; s/d €45/73; ☹ closed Nov; (P) ☹) This friendly hotel has just 11 simple but attractive rooms with TV, bathroom, winter heating and a popular restaurant.

Hotel Gran Sol (☎ 956 43 93 09; www.gransolhotel.com; Avenida de la Playa s/n; s/d incl breakfast €102/116, d with sea view incl breakfast €121; (P) ☹) The Gran Sol occupies the prime beach spot right by the sands, facing the old Almadraba walls on one side and the ocean on the other. The large, comfortable rooms have all the trims, and the terrace restaurant enjoys stupendous views.

Hotel Doña Lola (☎ 956 43 90 09; Plaza Thompson 1; s €100, d €130-150; (P) ☹) Near the entrance to Zahara, but only two minutes from the beach, this is a modern place in lovely large grounds, with good rooms in attractive old-fashioned style.

Eating

Restaurants can be found on the seafront or near Plaza de Tamarón behind Hotel Doña Lola. While many offer similar lists of fish, seafood, salads, meats and sometimes pizzas, new possibilities are starting to appear.

Casa Juanita (Calle Sagasta; fish dishes €9.50-11; ☹ closed Jan) Off the main drag on a little pedestrian street facing Plaza de Tamarón, this good place has a long tapas list with lots of fishy things. Garlic prawns and monkfish brochette are heartier choices.

Restaurante Ropiti (☎ 956 43 94 01; Calle María Luisa 6; mains from €12; ☹ closed Dec-Feb) The Ropiti

impresses the locals with its range of well-prepared fish and seafood.

Restaurante La Jabega (☎ 956 43 04 92; Calle Tomollo 7; raciones €7-8, mains €12-25) Fronting the sands, the Jabega is acclaimed for its fish-balls and its rice dish with giant *carabineros* prawns. It also does fancier fish and seafood dishes.

Hotel Gran Sol (Avenida de la Playa s/n; mains €10-36) From the terrace restaurant, gaze out to sea or check out the old Almadraba on the sands while you sample an exotic seafood or fresh vegetable starter. To follow, share a paella (€25 for two) or try a whole baked fish encrusted with salt.

Drinking & Entertainment

In July and August a line of tents and make-shift shacks along the beach south of the Almadraba serves as bars, discos and *tererías* (Arabian-style tearooms). They rock after midnight, especially those with music.

Getting There & Away

Comes runs up to five buses daily to/from Barbate (€1, 15 minutes), up to four to/from Cádiz (€6.50, two hours) via Barbate, and one daily Monday to Friday to/from Tarifa (€3.50, 45 minutes). These bus services run more frequently from mid-June to September.

BOLONIA

pop 125

This tiny village, 10km down the coast from Zahara de los Atunes and about 20km northwest of Tarifa, has a gorgeous white-sand beach (good for windsurfing), several restaurants and small *hostales*, lots of cockerels, and the impressive ruins of Roman **Baelo Claudia** (☎ 956 68 85 30; EU/non-EU citizen free/€1.50; ☹ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat Mar-May & Oct, 10am-8pm Tue-Sat Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Tue-Sat Nov-Feb, 10am-2pm Sun year-round). The ruins include the substantial remains of a theatre, a paved forum surrounded by the remains of temples and other buildings, and the remains of the workshops that turned out the products that made Baelo Claudia famous in the Roman world: salted fish and *garum* paste (a spicy seasoning derived from fish). The place particularly flourished in the time of Emperor Claudius (AD 41 to 54) but declined after an earthquake in the 2nd century.

West beyond the ruins is a big dune that you can climb and there are other good walks here (see right). The sandstone crag San Bartolo (or San Bartolomé) looming just east of Bolonia is the biggest magnet for rock climbers in the area.

A couple of years back Bolonia began to show minor signs of growing prosperity – part of the main street was paved, street lights were erected and a few palms were planted. Things haven't moved on much since.

Sleeping

The following places are open year-round. There are 13 places in total, some are only seasonal.

Hostal Lola (☎ 956 68 85 36; www.hostallola.com; El Lenticil 26; with shared/private bathroom €45/55; (P)) The amiable Lola keeps 16 simple but attractive and well-kept rooms. There's cheerful paintwork throughout and a Moroccan-inspired sitting area and a pretty flower-filled garden to enjoy. The shared-bathroom area has designer washbasins. Follow the signs on giant surfboards beyond Hostal Miramar.

Apartamentos Ana (☎ 956 68 85 50; 2-6-person apt €60-70; (P)) Ana's provides new, well-fitted, good-value one- and two-bedroom apartments, though they're not oriented towards the ocean. Look for a little cul-de-sac just beyond the Hostal Lola turning.

Apartamentos Isabel (☎ 956 68 85 69; El Lenticil 5; apt €75; (P)) These apartments are similar to the Apartamentos Ana, but are positioned right on the beach.

La Hormiga Voladora (☎ 956 68 85 62; El Lenticil 15; d €57-69, 2-/3-/4-person apt €85/95/105; (P)) Extending back from the seafront, the 'Flying Ant' is a warren of carefully decorated and comfortable rooms and apartments set around various courtyards.

Eating

In summer there are five or so open-air restaurants on the beach, mainly at the eastern end, and more by the ruins. **Los Caracoles** (☎ 654 096251; El Lenticil 1; paella €8, grilled fish & seafood platter €18) at the far eastern end is excellent and opens year-round at least for lunch, weather permitting. Live music in summer and paella cooked on a fireplace make it well worth a visit. On the main drag in the village, try the seafood at **Restaurante**

Marisma (mains €6-12; ☹ daily Semana Santa-Oct, weekends year-round), with tables outside, or at the slightly more upmarket **Bar Restaurante Las Rejas** (salad €6, paella €11; ☹ year-round), where the ever-helpful waitstaff will suggest the day's tastiest options.

Getting There & Away

The only road to Bolonia heads west off the N340, 15km north of Tarifa. In July and August there's usually some sort of bus service between Tarifa and Bolonia (see p223 for details). Otherwise, without wheels, it's a 7km hilly walk from the main road. You can walk 8km along the coast from Enseñada de Valdevaqueros (p218) via Punta Paloma, and there's a path west from Bolonia through the woods of the lower Sierra de la Plata to Torre de Cabo de Gracia, from where you can walk along the beach to Atlanterra, the southern end of Zahara de los Atunes.

TARIFA

pop 17,000

Tarifa is an attractive, laid-back town even during the summer frenzy, although this could change as glitzy shop fronts proliferate and steady development continues. Relatively unknown a couple of decades ago, Tarifa is now a mecca for windsurfers and kitesurfers, and a hip international scene. An eclectic bunch of restaurants, bars, lodgings and shops has grown up around the surf crowd. The town has a thriving art scene stimulated by the natural beauty and the crazy population mix.

Tarifa may be as old as Phoenician Cádiz and was definitely a Roman settlement, but it takes its name from Tarif ibn Malik, who led a Muslim raid in AD 710, the year before the main Islamic invasion of the peninsula. The town's attractive old centre has narrow streets, a striking castle, white-washed houses and flowers cascading from balconies with fancy ironwork and window boxes. The Tarifa beaches have clean, white sand and good waves, and the country inland is green and rolling (though it can be chilly and wet in winter).

A big negative – though not for surfers or the hundreds of modern windmills on the hilltops inland – is the wind on which Tarifa's new-found prosperity is based. For much of the year, either the *levanté*

(easterly) or *poniente* (westerly) is blowing, which is ruinous for relaxing on the beach – even if Tarifa's famous winds do seem to have moderated some over the last couple of years. The windmill operation, originally a mainly EU-funded experiment feeding power into Spain's national grid, has expanded into a huge private business.

A major factor affecting the area's immediate future is the imminent construction of the local section of the new A48 *autovía*, which as yet runs from just north of Chiclana de la Frontera to Vejer de la Frontera.

Orientation

Two roads lead into Tarifa from the N340. The one from the northwest becomes Calle Batalla del Salado, which ends at east–west Avenida de Andalucía, where the Puerta de Jerez leads through the walls into the old town. The one from the east becomes Calle Amador de los Ríos, which also meets Avenida de Andalucía at the Puerta de Jerez.

The main street of the old town is Calle Sancho IV El Bravo, with the Iglesia de San Mateo at its eastern end.

To the southwest of the town protrudes the Isla de las Palomas, a military-occupied promontory that is the southernmost point of continental Europe, with the Strait of Gibraltar to the south and east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Africa is only 14km across the strait.

Information

Banks and ATMs are on Calle Sancho IV El Bravo and Calle Batalla del Salado, the main shopping street. Useful information for visitors can be found at www.tarifa.net and www.tarifacostasur.com. The glossy magazine *Vida* has interesting local articles.

Al Sur (Calle Batalla del Salado) International newspapers and a good range of surfing and snowboarding mags in Spanish and English.

Centro de Salud (Health Centre; ☎ 956 68 15 15/35; Calle Amador de los Ríos)

El Navegante (Calle General Copons 1; internet per hr €2) Also cheap phone calls.

Lavandería Acuario (Laundrette; Calle Colón 14; 4kg wash €4, 4kg wash, dry & fold €7-8; ☎ 10.30-2pm & 6-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat)

Pandora's Papelería (Calle Sancho IV El Bravo; internet per hr €3; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm)

Policía Local (Local Police; ☎ 956 61 41 86; Plaza de Santa María)

Post office (☎ 956 68 42 37; Calle Coronel Moscardó 9)

Tourist office (☎ 956 68 09 93; www.tarifaweb.com in Spanish; ☎ 10.30am-2pm & 4-6pm mid-Sep–May, 10.30am-2pm & 6-8pm Jun–mid-Sep) Near the top end of the palm-lined Paseo de la Alameda.

Sights & Activities

Tarifa is easy to enjoy. Stroll through the tangled streets of the old town to the castle walls, check out the castle, stop in at the busy port and sample the beaches.

The Mudejar **Puerta de Jerez** was built after the Reconquista. Look in at the bustling, neo-Mudejar **market** (Calle Colón) before winding your way to the heart of the old town and the mainly 15th-century **Iglesia de San Mateo**. The streets south of the church are little-changed since Islamic times. Climb the stairs at the end of Calle Coronel Moscardó and go left on Calle Aljaranda to reach the **Mirador El Estrecho** atop part of the castle walls, with spectacular views across to Africa.

The **Castillo de Guzmán** (Calle Guzmán) extends west from here with an entrance at its far end on Calle Guzmán. At the time of writing, the castle was closed for refurbishment until June 2007 (so check with the tourist office for opening hours thereafter), but until then it's still worth walking about the exterior of this imposing fortress. The Castillo was originally built in AD 960 under the orders of the Cordoban caliph, Abd ar-Rahman III, as fortification against Norse and African raids. Christian forces took Tarifa in 1292 but it was not secure until Algeciras was won in 1344. But the castle is named after the Reconquista hero Guzmán El Bueno: in 1294 Merenid attackers from Morocco kidnapped Guzmán's son and threatened to kill him unless Guzmán relinquished the castle. Refusing to comply, Guzmán threw down his own dagger for his son to be killed, a supreme gesture of defiance and sacrifice. Guzmán's descendants became the Duques de Medina Sidonia, who ran much of Cádiz province as a private fiefdom for a long period.

You can walk along the castle's parapets and stand atop the 13th-century Torre de Guzmán El Bueno (which houses the town museum) for 360-degree views.

TARIFA

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SURFERS' PARADISE

What better way to start the day than slipping on a wet suit, grabbing your board and hitting the waves for a day in the elements. No need for alternative therapies. This is the therapy. Age is really no barrier, although this is a big scene for the young and beautiful. Then there's the après-surf...

The Atlantic coast of Cádiz province provides Spain's, and arguably Europe's, finest conditions for windsurfing and kitesurfing. Most of the action is around Tarifa, which has a cool international scene to go with it, but there are other spots too.

Windsurfing

The most popular strip is along the coast between Tarifa and Punta Paloma, 10km to the northwest. The best spots depend on wind and tide conditions. El Porro, on the bay Ensenada de Valdevaqueros, is one of the most popular, as it has easy parking and plenty of space to set up. Other popular take-off points are the Río Jara, about 3km northwest from Tarifa, and Arte-Vida, Hurricane, and Hostal Valdevaqueros, in front of the respective hotels out of town on the N340 (see p220).

Slalom is the more common form of sailboarding here, but wave riders get their chance when the *poniente* (west wind from the Atlantic) is blowing, especially in spring and autumn and during full moon. The best waves for wave-riding are actually found up the coast at Los Caños de Meca (p211), though winds are less reliable there.

You can buy new and secondhand windsurfing gear in Tarifa at the surf shops along Calle Batalla del Salado. For board rental and classes, head to places up the coast such as **Club Mistral** (☎ 956 68 90 90, at Hostal Valdevaqueros 619 340913; www.clubmistral.com) or **Spin Out** (☎ 956 23 63 52; www.tarifaspinout.com), which is on the beach in front of ex-Camping Torre de la Peña II, near El Porro. At Spin Out, board, sail and wetsuit rental costs €35/73 per hour/day, and a six-hour beginner's course is €150.

Competitions are held year-round; for other spots with good winds, see p74.

Kitesurfing

This exciting and colourful sport has taken the Tarifa coast by storm, but kites give way to sails when the wind really gets up. Kitesurf rental is available from the same places as windsurfing gear. This is a sport where beginners definitely need instruction: Spin Out charges €50 for a two-hour introduction to kitesurfing and €150 for three two-hour sessions. Tarifa has hosted international kitesurfing competitions including in September 2006.

Surfing

There's a low-key board-riding scene in Tarifa but it's better for bodyboarding. Between October and May there can be surfable waves at Los Caños de Meca (p211) and – usually better – El Palmar (p210).

For introductory information about these sports, see p73.

BEACHES

The popular town beach is the sheltered but small **Playa Chica**, on the isthmus leading out to the Isla de las Palomas. From here **Playa de los Lances** stretches 10km northwest to the huge sand dune at **Ensenada de Valdevaqueros**. A new walkway has been built along part of Playa de los Lances towards the outskirts of town, where the Marriott hotel chain is to build a luxury hotel.

DIVING

For general information on diving in Andalucía, see p74. Diving is generally done from boats around the Isla de las Palomas. Shipwrecks, corals, dolphins, octopuses and more await you. There are a few dive companies in Tarifa – try **Aventura Marina** (☎ 956 05 46 26; www.aventuramarina.com in Spanish; Avenida de Andalucía 1), which offers Discover Scuba Diving courses (€72, three hours).

One-tank dives with equipment rental and guide cost €50.

HORSE RIDING

Both these stables, based out of town at hotels on Playa de los Lances, rent horses with excellent English-speaking guides. An hour's ride along the beach costs €30. Three-hour beach or inland rides cost around €70.

Aventura Ecuestre (☎ 956 23 66 32; www.aventuraecuestre.com) At Hotel Dos Mares (p221).

Club Hípica (☎ 956 68 90 92) At Hurricane Hotel (p221).

WHALE-WATCHING

This is great fun! At least three groups run two- to three-hour biologist-led boat trips to track and watch dolphins and whales. Most trips cost around €30/20/10 for an adult/child under 14/child under six. In all but the Turmares boat, expect to get wet if the sea is rough.

FIRMM (Foundation for Information & Research on Marine Mammals; ☎ 956 62 70 08, 619 459441; www.firrm.org; Calle Pedro Cortés 4) Uses every trip to record data.

Turmares (☎ 956 68 07 41, 696 448349; www.turmares.com; Avenida Alcalde Juan Núñez 3; dolphin- & whale-watching adult/under 14yr €27/14, killer whale-watching €40/20) Has the largest boat (with a glass bottom).

Whale Watch España (☎ 956 62 70 18, 639 476544; www.whalewatchtarifa.org in Spanish; Avenida de la Constitución 6)

ROCK CLIMBING, TREKKING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

Girasol Outdoor Company (☎ 615 456506; www.girasol-adventure.com; Calle Colón 12; orientation rock climb €29, 6hr trek €38, bike trips €25-42) Orientation, courses at all levels and climbs on San Bartolo, near Bolonia.

Tarifa Bike (☎ 696 973656; Apartamentos Las Flores, Carretera N340 Km 77.1; 2hr/day €9/18) Good mountain-bike rental and guided tours (in English).

Festivals & Events

Reggae Festival International and Spanish reggae acts delight the crowds in Tarifa's humble bullring, one night in August.

Feria de la Virgen de la Luz The town fair in honour of its patroness mixes religious processions, featuring the area's beautiful horses, with all the usual singing, dancing, eating and fair rides. Held during the first week in September.

Sleeping

You can stay in the old town or on and around Calle Batalla del Salado. Plenty more places to stay are dotted along the beach and the inland side of the N340 within 10km northwest of Tarifa, but none are particularly cheap. Rooms are tight on long weekends, at Easter, from May to September, and when there are windsurfing and kitesurfing competitions. The prices listed here are for August: expect reductions of 25% to 40% at most places for much of the rest of the year. For a range of self-catering apartments and villas, try www.tarifadirect.com.

IN TOWN

Pensión Correo (☎ 956 68 02 06; Calle Coronel Mascardó 8; per person €20) This good budget choice in the old post office has amiable Italian-Spanish owners and a bright new foyer. The cheerfully painted rooms, some with bathroom, remain much the same – they're not flash, but comfy enough. The top-floor double room sports gorgeous views and its own little terrace.

Hostal Villanueva (☎ 956 68 41 49; Avenida de Andalucía 11; s/d €28/45) Built into the old city walls a few doors west of the Puerta de Jerez, this *hostal* has no-nonsense rooms, some with TV and some with views of the castle. There's a terrace and the genial owner speaks French.

Hostal Africa (☎ 956 68 02 20, 606 914294; hostal_africa@hotmail.com; Calle María Antonia Toledo 12; s/d €40/60, with shared bathroom €30/40) This revamped old house close to the market is conveniently located and run by hospitable, well-travelled owners who know what travellers need. Rooms are bright and attractive and an expansive roof terrace with an exotic cabana and views of Africa can be enjoyed. Storage for boards and bicycles is available.

Hostal Facundo I & II (☎ 956 68 42 98; hotel facundo@terra.es; Calle Batalla del Salado 47; dm €10, r with private/shared bathroom €70/58; (P)) The Facundo is gradually getting a makeover. It's long been geared to windsurfers with a storage place for boards, and is popular for its prices, which nose-dive out of peak season. The 52 rooms vary: the best open right on to the street. There's also a communal kitchen and lounge with TV. Dormitories contain eight beds.

Hostal Alameda (☎ 956 68 11 81; www.hostalalameda.com; Paseo de la Alameda 4; s/d €60/70; 🏠) This good-value place is on the edge of the old town in front of the port. Rooms are cosy, with winter heating and satellite TV; beds could be more comfy. Some rooms have sea views, while others look out over the Alameda or Tarifa's undulating roof line.

Posada Vagamundos (☎ 956 68 13 13; www.posadavagamundos.com; Calle San Francisco 18; s/d incl breakfast €60/80, ste €85; 🏠) A new enterprise right in the centre occupying a carefully restored old building. The eleven double rooms are oriented towards the light and have attractive bathrooms and double-glazed windows. Old local floor tiles mix with furniture and decorations from Morocco, Indonesia and Mexico. There's an attached cafeteria.

Misiana (☎ 956 62 70 83; www.misiana.com in Spanish; Calle Sancho IV El Bravo; s/d incl breakfast €97/112) This place has seen a few incarnations. The current comfortable hotel is mod, almost futuristic, in its design, colours and funky details. Rooms on one floor are painted lilac and silver, while others are red and turquoise; rooms with big views are available too. All have fan and satellite TV.

Posada La Sacristía (☎ 956 68 17 59; www.lasacristia.net; San Donato 8; r incl breakfast €115-135) Tarifa's most elegant central accommodation is in a beautifully renovated 17th-century town house with rooftop views. Attention to detail is impeccable. The eight rooms, on several levels around a central courtyard, are painted a fresh white and furnishings are mainly neutral. Beds are large.

ALONG THE COAST

There are five year-round **camping grounds** (www.campingsdetarifa.com) with room for more than 4000 campers, on or near the beach between Tarifa and Punta Paloma, 10km northwest from Tarifa along the N340. They charge around €20 for two people with a tent and car. Four of the sites also have bungalows. Camping Tarifa and Camping Torre de la Peña I are the more modern.

All the following places are on, or just off, the N340, northwest of Tarifa. The owners of the Hurricane Hotel are the creative energy behind the refitting of several hotels along this road.

OTB (☎ 661 030446; www.otb-tarifa.com; N340 Km 81; dm €12, r per person €15; 🏠 Mar-Nov; 🏠 🏠 🏠) This Italian-run place, geared to backpackers, offers dorm accommodation, doubles and quads, along with kitchen use, TV, and laundry facilities. It's 2km out of town towards Cádiz.

Hostal Oasis (☎ 956 68 50 65; s/d €35/40, 2-/4-person bungalow €60/€100; 🏠) The Oasis is in substantial grounds about 8km out of Tarifa, and its 11 clean bungalows, set around the large lawn, have equipped kitchens. They're better than the rooms in the main block.

Molino El Mastral (☎ 679 193503; www.mastral.com; Carretera Santuario de la Luz; apt d/q €70/90, small house q €120; 🏠 🏠) Fancy something far from the madding crowd and yet still within easy reach of the beach and Tarifa? Then this rural retreat is for you. It's a working stud and cattle farm but the farm buildings have been converted into cheerfully decorated apartments. There's plenty of space and

shade in the grounds and pool area, and horse riding is available

Hotel Tres Mares (☎ 956 68 06 65; www.tresmareshotel.com in Spanish; N340 Km 76; d incl breakfast €107; 🏠 Mar-Nov; 🏠 🏠) This has the same owners as the Hotel Dos Mares but it's a few kilometres further out of Tarifa. The designer rooms have sea views and are on two levels of a plain '70s-style brown-painted block. What's really distinctive here is the extensive grounds with wooden oriental furniture, a wooden elephant, a Moroccan tent, hammocks and a bar-restaurant. There is certainly room to chill.

Hotel Arte-Vida (☎ 956 68 52 46; www.artevidahotel.com; N340 Km 79.3; s/d incl breakfast €110/130; 🏠) The Arte-Vida, 5km from the town centre, has a garden with lawn opening onto the beach, an excellent restaurant with stunning views, and attractive, medium-sized rooms. Décor is oriental minimalist (lots of white, cane and bamboo) with a later addition of blue, black and red paintings by a Russian artist.

Hotel Dos Mares (☎ 956 68 40 35; www.dosmareshotel.com in Spanish; d incl breakfast from €141, 2-person-bungalow incl breakfast from €135; 🏠 🏠 🏠) This excellent choice is right on the beach about 4.5km from Tarifa. Its eclectic architecture has a mainly Islamic theme. You can stay in the main building (seven rooms), or go for one of 29 bungalows in the gardens or on the beachfront. The bar, with tremendous views out to Africa, is a popular hang-out. The hotel has its own well-run stables, too (see p219).

Hotel Punta Sur (☎ 956 68 43 26; www.puntasurhotel.com; N340 Km 77; s/d €117/166; 🏠 🏠 🏠) With a logo of a surfer riding a wave, the Punta Sur, near the pharmacy on the N340, is another Hurricane Hotel project: here the team has waved its magic wand and worked miracles on what was an ordinary roadside hotel. A restaurant, the reception and a billiard table are in a huge open space that has been decorated with flights of fantasy combining modern, futuristic, Gaudiesque and Moroccan influences. The comfortable, eccentrically decorated rooms are set in big gardens with a tennis court. Most recently, the gardens and the front of the hotel have been totally remodelled.

Hurricane Hotel (☎ 956 68 49 19; www.hotelhurricane.com; r incl breakfast land/ocean side €149/166; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Six kilometres out of Tarifa, this

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hostal Valdevaqueros (☎ 956 23 67 05; www.hotelhurricane.com; N340, Km 75; r incl breakfast €107, 3-/4-person apt incl breakfast €134; 🏠 Mar-Nov; 🏠) This attractive old farmhouse, 20m from the beach at Valdevaqueros, is owned by the Hurricane Hotel folk. It has a few trademark features such as careful and creative renovation and decoration using natural and ethnic materials, plus a beautiful garden. The bar area, featuring mosaic work, extends outside to covered areas with loads of plants and Moroccan lamps. To find it, look for the metallic sign with a horse and a cow head that arches over the beginning of the longish track to the hostel from the N340, opposite 100% Fun.

hip Moroccan-style hotel is the place to go if you're feeling flush. Set in semitropical beachside gardens, it has around 30 large, comfy, refurbished rooms, two pools, two restaurants and a health club. It also has the famous Club Mistral windsurfing and kite-surfing school with board rental next door, and Club Hípica, a horse-riding school (see p219). The scrumptious buffet breakfast has all manner of homemade goodies.

Eating

Tarifa brims with eateries. International residents and visitors guarantee plenty of variety.

IN TOWN

Calle Sancho IV El Bravo is good for take-aways, and the streets around it for tapas.

Ali Baba (Calle Sancho IV El Bravo; falafel €3, kebab €3.50) The popular Ali Baba, with benches and stand-up tables outside, serves cheap, filling and tasty Arabic food made with lovely fresh ingredients. Vegetarians can enjoy excellent falafel while carnivores might like to tuck into the tasty kebabs.

Surf Kebab (Calle Batalla de Salado 40; falafel €3, kebab €3.50) This place prepares similar fare to Ali Baba, though with less salad, and is convenient if you're shopping.

Café Central (Calle Sancho IV El Bravo 8; breakfast €2.80-4.50) This café is the prime location for people-watching, delicious *churros con chocolate* (fingers of doughnut dipped into a cup of hot chocolate) and a large range of breakfasts and teas.

HIGH-FLIERS OVER THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR

Keen bird-watchers mustn't miss the Strait of Gibraltar, a key point of passage for migrating birds between Africa and Europe. In general, northward migrations occur between mid-February and early June, and southbound flights between late July and early November. When a westerly wind is blowing, Gibraltar itself is usually a good spot for seeing the birds. When the wind is calm or easterly, the Tarifa area (including the Mirador del Estrecho lookout 7km east of the town) is usually better. Also, you can visit the **Centro Ornitológico Cigüëña** (☎ 639 859350; http://cocn.tarifaifo.com; N340 Km 78.5; 🕒 5-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), 4km out of Tarifa, a bird-watching station staffed by volunteers who collect data and produce information leaflets.

Soaring birds such as raptors, black-and-white storks and vultures cross at the Strait of Gibraltar because they rely on thermals and updraughts, which don't happen over wider expanses of water. White storks sometimes congregate in flocks of up to 5000 to cross the strait (January and February northbound, July and August southbound). There are just two places where the seas are narrow enough for the stork to get into Europe by this method. One is the Bosphorus (the strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara); the other is right here at the Strait of Gibraltar.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Café Azul Bar (Calle Batalla del Salado; breakfast €3.50-5; ☎ 9am-9pm, closed Wed in winter) This eccentric place with eye-catching décor has been energised by its new Italian owners who prepare the best breakfasts in town. Don't miss the large muesli, fruit salad and yoghurt. There's good coffee, excellent juices, *bocadillos* (sandwiches), healthy cakes, and sometimes Thai or Italian fare in the evening.

Cafe Zumo (Calle Sancho IV El Bravo; sandwiches €2.50-5; ☎ 9am-9pm) This convivial little place near the castle is popular for its juices, light meals, and soups. Magazines and books add to the attraction.

La Trattoria (☎ 956 68 22 25; Paseo de la Alameda; pasta & pizza €6.50-10, mains €10.50-15) Italian restaurants are proliferating in Tarifa. A good location, generally great food and always top-rate service make this one of the best.

Rosso Pomodoro (☎ 956 68 20 30; Avenida de Andalucía 24; pizza & pasta €6-7, fish mains €10-15) Another local Italian favourite, this place serves up authentic Italian cuisine.

Souk (☎ 956 62 70 65; Calle Mar Tirreno 46; entrées €4-6, mains €10-14; ☎) In a new location on Tarifa's outskirts, the expanded Souk still drips with Moroccan decorations and serves terrific Moroccan- and Asian-inspired food. *Thai amarillor de verduras* (Thai vegetables in coconut) goes down well after the *hojaldre de espinacas* (spicy spinach and feta pastry). There are tagines and couscous too.

Mandrágora (☎ 956 68 12 91; Calle Independencia 3; mains €9-16; ☎) dinner only, closed Sun & 2 weeks in Feb; ☎) Behind Iglesia San Mateo, this intimate place serves Andalusian-Arabic food. Delicious options include lamb with plums and almonds, and prawns with *nora* (Andalusian sweet pepper) sauce.

ALONG THE COAST

Most of the hotels and *hostales* up here have restaurants.

Chiringuito Tangana (mains €4-7.50; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm) Next to Spin Out on the beach, this place serves up pies, lasagne, savoury pastries and *bocadillos* (sandwiches). Chill to the beat on the grass or relax on the Moroccan carpets on the floor of the glassed-in patio.

Terrace Restaurant (☎ 956 68 49 19; www.hotelhurricane.com; lunch mains €8; fresh juices €2.50) This

casual beachfront restaurant at the Hurricane Hotel is good for an economical lunch (various salads, hamburgers, chicken, local fish, steaks). In the evenings the hotel's interior restaurant, with candle-lit tables by the pool in summer, prepares creative meals, including very good salads (€6 to €8; try the Italian salad), and main dishes such as lamb chops with garlic and rosemary (€12).

Hostal Valdevaqueros (☎ 956 23 67 05; www.hurricanehotel.com; mains €8-11; ☎) Mar-Nov) The Hotel Hurricane's relative, this place fills windsurfer stomachs with large plates of chicken, hamburgers, exotic salads, bread and condiments.

Miramar (☎ 956 68 52 46; www.artevidahotel.com; N340 Km 79.3; mains €8-17) Hotel Arte-Vida's restaurant lives up to its name with expansive ocean views looking out to Africa. The chefs here whip up a range of pastas and some international meat dishes plus fresh local seafood. Try the pasta Miramar – with seafood, parsley and chilli.

Drinking

Soul Café (Calle Santísima Trinidad 9) This hip, popular bar is run by travel-loving Italians. You may hear guest DJs from Milan spin their favourites. Stop by after 11pm, but not in winter when the owners are travelling.

Bodega de Casa Amarilla (Calle Sancho IV El Bravo 9) A convivial *típico* bar-restaurant run by the Café Central.

Bar Obainano (Calle Braille 27) No longer in the old town, this place still serves up fresh juices and exotic cocktails to a cheerful background beat. It's popular with French travellers.

Misiana (☎ 956 62 70 83; Calle Sancho IV El Bravo; 9pm-2am) This cool, loungey place at the Misiana hotel is one of the places to be seen in Tarifa. Its décor is always eye-catching – now orange, black and gold in the bar and swirling pink in the lounge area. Come for juices, cocktails and shakes, and creative tapas.

Café Continental (Paseo de la Alameda) This good tapas, drinks and coffee stop is popular for its central position on the Paseo de Alameda.

Entertainment

Tanakas (Plaza de San Hiscio) A central disco that keeps the neighbours awake all night. An upstairs bar with tapas draws an older crowd.

La Jaima (Playa de los Lancas) In summer, this Moroccan tent arrangement pops up on the

beach near the edge of town. From 7pm to 10pm it's an Islamic-style tearoom but, come midnight, disco sounds take over.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

FRS (☎ 956 68 18 30; www.frs.es; Avenida de Andalucía in Morocco (€27/75/25 per passenger/car/motorcycle, 35 minutes one-way) up to five times daily, with possibly more sailings in July and August. There are sailings from Tarifa at 9am, noon, 3pm, 4pm and 9pm (Spanish time) and from Tangier at 9.30am, 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm and 9.30pm (Moroccan time). Get details of the service at the port, or FRS. All passengers need a passport.

BUS

From its base near the petrol station at the north end of Calle Batalla del Salado. **Comes** (☎ 902 19 92 08, 956 68 40 38; Calle Batalla del Salado) runs five or more buses daily to the following destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Algeciras	€1.70	30min	7-13
Barbate	€4	50min	1
Cádiz	€8	1¾hr	up to 7
Jerez de la Frontera	€8.50	2½hr	1
La Línea de la Concepción	€3.50	45min	8
Málaga	€12.50	2hr	2
Seville	€15	3hr	3
Zahara de los Atunes	€3.50	45min	1 (Mon-Fri)

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Stop at the Mirador del Estrecho, about 7km out of Tarifa on the N340 towards Algeciras, to take in magnificent views of the Strait of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and two continents. Beware of the frequent police speed trap in the 50km/h zone at Pelayo, a few kilometres further east.

Getting Around

In July and August buses run every 90 minutes from Tarifa up the west coast to Punta Paloma. Some go on to Bolonia. There's a stop at the bottom of the Paseo de la Alameda. The main stop is at the bus station where a

timetable and prices should be posted. Taxis line up on Avenida de Andalucía near the Puerta de Jerez. For bicycle hire see p219.

THE SOUTHEAST

PARQUE NATURAL LOS ALCORNOCALES

This large (1700 sq km) and beautiful natural park stretches 75km north almost from the Strait of Gibraltar to the border of the Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema. It's a spectacular jumble of sometimes rolling, sometimes rugged hills of medium height, much of it covered in Spain's most extensive *alcornocales* (cork-oak woodlands).

Los Alcornocales is rich in archaeological, historical and natural interest, but it's well off the beaten track and sparsely populated. There are plenty of walks and opportunities for other activities in the park, but you need your own wheels to make the most of it (see the boxed text, p206, for a driving detour). The park has several visitors centres and information offices, including the following:

Centro de Visitantes Cortes de la Frontera (☎ 952 15 45 99; Avenida de la Democracia s/n, Cortes de la Frontera; ☎) 10am-2pm Thu year-round, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Fri-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Fri-Sun Oct-Mar)

Centro de Visitantes Huerta Grande (☎ 956 67 91 61; N340 Km 96, Pelayo; ☎) 10am-2pm Thu year-round, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Fri-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Fri-Sun Oct-Mar) On the Tarifa-Algeciras road.

Punto de Información Castillo de Castellor (☎ 956 23 66 24; Taraguilla, Castellar de la Frontera; ☎) 11.30am-2pm & 5-7.30pm Wed-Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm & 3-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Apr)

Punto de Información Jimena de la Frontera (☎ 956 23 68 82; Calle Misericordia s/n, Jimena de la Frontera; ☎) 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun)

One good base is **Jimena de la Frontera**, a small town on the A369 Algeciras-Ronda road on the park's eastern boundary. It's crowned by a fine Islamic castle, has a handful of *hostales* and hotels and many *casas rurales* (country properties for rent) and is served by train and bus from Algeciras and Ronda.

The CA3331 heading northwest leads to **La Saucedá**, an abandoned village that's now the site of a recreational area and field education centre. The La Saucedá area is beautiful country that was once a den of bandits

and smugglers, and even guerrillas during the Spanish Civil War (when the village was bombed by Francisco Franco's planes). It's the starting point for an alternative route up Aljibe, the park's highest peak (see p206).

ALGECIRAS

pop 111,000

Algeciras, the major port linking Spain with Africa, is also an industrial town, a big fishing port and a drug smuggling centre. Though it's unattractive and polluted, it's not without interest. Proximity to Africa gives the port an air of excitement and the continuing gentrification of the town centre makes it quite pleasant to walk around. A few pretty old buildings with wrought-iron balconies remain and there are some good restaurants and shops. In summer the port is hectic with hundreds of thousands of Moroccans who have been working in Europe and are on the way home for summer holidays.

Algeciras was an important Roman port. Alfonso XI of Castilla wrested it from the Merenids of Morocco in 1344 but later Mohammed V of Granada razed it to the ground. In 1704 Algeciras was repopulated by the many who left Gibraltar after it was overtaken by the British. During the Franco era, the town's extensive industry was developed.

Orientation

Algeciras is on the western side of the Bahía de Algeciras, opposite Gibraltar. Avenida Virgen del Carmen runs north to south along the seafront, becoming Avenida de la Marina around the entrance to the port. From here Calle Juan de la Cierva (becoming Calle San Bernardo) runs inland beside a disused rail track to the bus station (350m) and the train station (400m). The central square, Plaza Alta, is a couple of blocks inland from Avenida Virgen del Carmen. Plaza Palma, with a bustling daily market (except Sunday), is one block west of Avenida de la Marina.

Information

Exchange rates for buying dirham (the Moroccan currency) are better at the banks than at travel agencies. There are banks and ATMs on Avenida Virgen del Carmen and around Plaza Alta, plus a couple of ATMs inside the port.

In the port, luggage storage (€3) is available from 7am to 9.30pm. If you have valu-

ables there are lockers nearby (€3). The bus station also has luggage storage.

Hospital Punta de Europa (☎ 956 02 50 50; Carretera de Getares s/n) Three kilometres west of the centre.

Policía Nacional (☎ 956 66 04 00; Avenida de las Fuerzas Armadas 6) Next to Parque de María Cristina, northwest of the town centre.

Post office (☎ 956 58 74 05; Calle José Antonio) Just south of Plaza Alta.

Tourist office (☎ 956 57 26 36; Calle Juan de la Cierva s/n; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Sat, plus 3.30-7pm Tue-Fri) A block inland from Avenida de la Marina. Friendly English-speaking staff.

Dangers & Annoyances

Be alert in the port, bus terminal and market in the evening. If you want to leave your vehicle in Algeciras, your most secure bet is the multistorey car park inside the port (€15 per 24 hours).

Sights & Activities

Wander up to the palm-fringed Plaza Alta, which is home to a lovely tiled fountain. On the plaza's western side sits the 18th-century **Iglesia Nuestra Señora de la Palma** and on its eastern side the 17th-century **Santuario Nuestra Señora Virgen de Europa**, both worth a look. A few houses dotted along the streets around the plaza are fetchingly tumbledown.

Leafy **Parque de María Cristina**, a few blocks to the north, provides a change from the hustle and bustle of the port. The **Museo Municipal** (☎ 956 57 06 72; Calle Nicaragua; admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri Jul-Sep, 9am-3pm & 5-7pm Oct-Jun), just south of the main tourist office, is reasonably interesting. If you've got your own wheels, check out the town's two beaches – **Playa Getares** (to the south) and **Playa del Rinconcillo** (to the north), which are kept quite clean.

Festivals & Events

Feria The town's nine-day fair, complete with bull fights, held 17 to 25 June.

Fiesta del Virgen de la Palma The town honours its patroness with a maritime pilgrimage on 15 August.

Sleeping

There's loads of budget accommodation in the streets behind Avenida de la Marina, but some of it's grim and market traffic in the small hours makes sleep difficult.

Hostal Marrakech (☎ 956 57 34 74; Calle Juan de la Cierva 5; s/d €20/30) This clean, secure place is run by a helpful Moroccan family. It has

thoughtfully decorated rooms and an exotic communal lounge with TV.

Hostal Nuestra Señora de la Palma (☎ 956 63 24 81; Plaza Palma 12; s/d €25/35; ☎) Fronting the market, this friendly *hostal* has 26 comfortable rooms with TV. It's in earplug zone, though.

Hotel Marina Victoria (☎ 956 63 28 65; Avenida de la Marina 7; s/d €32/50; ☎) A solid choice with good rooms in a high-rise with excellent views over the port.

Hotel Al-Mar (☎ 956 65 46 61; Avenida de la Marina 2-3; s/d €51/100; P ☎) Two oversized Moroccan lamps decorate the foyer of this comfortable midrange place, which is handy for the port. There are 192 rooms, some with sea views and a good restaurant.

Hotel Reina Cristina (☎ 956 60 26 22; www.reina.cristina.com in Spanish; Paseo de la Conferencia s/n; s/d €72/107; P ☎) This colonial-style hotel, just south of the port, has 188 olde-worlde rooms, and swimming pools set amid tropical gardens. Tales of it being a spy haunt in WWII intrigue: apparently they observed sea traffic in the Strait of Gibraltar from here.

Hotel Octavio (☎ 956 65 27 00; www.husa.es; Calle San Bernardo 1; s/d incl breakfast €107/123; P ☎)

Public spaces at the Octavio are a little shabby. But the 74 spacious rooms, with carpets, bright floral bedspreads, satellite TV and hairdryer, are a huge step up from most other places to stay in town.

Eating

Restaurante Montes (☎ 956 65 42 07; Calle Juan Morrión 27; menú €8, mains €8-18) Several blocks northwest of the tourist office, the slightly flashy Montes has a hugely popular lunch *menú* and a long list of delicious dishes such as *rape a la cazuela* (monkfish baked in a clay pot). Bar Montes on pedestrianised Calle Emilio Castelar is excellent for tapas.

Restaurante Casa María (☎ 956 65 47 02; Calle Emilio Castelar 53; menú €8, mains €10-18) Diagonally opposite Bar Montes, this is another popular lunch place. À la carte fish dishes come with various sauces and there are steaks. The *menú* looks especially good.

Restaurante Hotel Al-Mar (☎ 956 65 46 61; Avenida de la Marina 2-3; breakfast/lunch buffets €6/11, mains €14-22) Top-floor hotel restaurant with big glass windows and sweeping views of the port. This slightly refined restaurant offers



daily specials as well as regional dishes. Good for coffee and pastries too.

The city **market** (Plaza Palma) has a wonderful array of fresh fruit, vegetables, hams and cheese, and a cheerful ambience. Nearby, **Pastelería-Café La Dificultosa** (Calle José Santacana; breakfast €8) is good for breakfast. Plaza Alta also has a couple of sidewalk cafés and restaurants. Try **Café Mercedes** (Plaza Alta; tapas €1.20) on the north side.

Entertainment

In the summer, flamenco, rock and classical music concerts are held at Parque de María Cristina and the Plaza de Toros. The tourist office has a list of events.

Getting There & Away

The daily paper *Europa Sur* has up-to-date transport arrival and departure details.

BOAT

The little office of **Information Puerto Algeciras** (☎ 956 58 54 63) in the port has all sailings information.

Trasmediterránea (☎ 956 58 75 06, 902 45 46 45; www.trasmediterranea.es), **Euroferrys** (☎ 956 65 23 24; www.euroferrys.com) and other companies operate frequent passenger and vehicle ferries to/from Tangier and Ceuta, the Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast. Usually at least 14 daily sailings go to each place. From mid-June to September ferries operate almost around the clock to cater for the Moroccan migration – you may have to queue for up to three hours. Buy your ticket in the port or at the agencies on Avenida de la Marina; prices are the same everywhere.

To Tangier, on a ferry taking 2½ hours, one-way fares for passenger/car/motorcycle over 500cc are €27/91/34. On a fast ferry (1¼ hours) one-way fares for passenger/car/motorcycle are €32/89/31.

To Ceuta, a fast ferry takes 35 minutes. One-way fares for passenger/car/motorcycle over 500cc are €25/81/19. **Buquebus** (☎ 902 41 42 42) also does Algeciras–Ceuta in 35 minutes for almost the same price, a little more for motorcycles.

BUS

Most buses leave from the bus station on Calle San Bernardo. **Comes** (☎ 956 65 34 56) buses go to La Línea (€1.80, 30 minutes) every half-hour (every 45 minutes on week-

ends) from 8.45am to 11.15pm. Other daily buses include the following:

Cádiz (€9.80, 2½ hours) Up to 10 daily.

Barbate (€5.50, 1¼ hours) One daily Monday to Friday.

Jimena de la Frontera (€3.60, 30 minutes) Three daily Monday to Friday, one daily Saturday.

Ronda (€9, 1½ hours) One daily Monday to Friday.

Seville (€15, 3½ hours) Up to four daily.

Tarifa (€1.70, 30 minutes) Up to 13 daily.

Zahara de los Atunes (€5, 1 hour) One daily Monday to Friday.

Daibus (☎ 956 65 34 56; www.daibus.es in Spanish) runs four daily buses to Madrid (€26, eight to nine hours) starting at the port then stopping at the Comes station.

Portillo (☎ 902 14 31 44; www.ctsa.portillo.com) operates at least 11 direct buses daily to Málaga (€10, 1¼ hours), four to Granada (€19, 3½ hours) and two to Jaén (€25, five hours). Several more services to Málaga (€10.50, three hours) stop at towns en route.

Bacoma/Alsa/Enatar (☎ 902 42 22 42; www.alsa.es), inside the port, runs five services daily to Murcia, Alicante, Valencia and Barcelona. This company also runs daily buses to Portugal and thrice-weekly buses to France, Germany and Holland.

TRAIN

From the **station** (☎ 956 63 02 02), adjacent to Calle San Bernardo, two direct trains run daily to/from Madrid (€38 to €57, six or 11 hours) and three to/from Granada (€17, 4½ hours). All trains pass through Ronda (€6.50 to €17, 1¼ hours) and Bobadilla (€10.50 to €21, 2¾ hours) taking in some spectacular scenery en route. At Bobadilla you can change for Málaga, Córdoba and Seville plus more trains to Granada and Madrid.

GETTING AROUND

If driving in Algeciras, you're best to follow signs to the port, park and then walk as most places of interest are in the old centre or near the port.

LA LÍNEA DE LA CONCEPCIÓN

pop 63,000

La Línea, 20km east of Algeciras around the bay, is the unavoidable stepping stone to Gibraltar. The city was built in 1870 in response to the British expansion around the rock of Gibraltar. The increasing pedestrianisation of the centre is a huge improvement.

Orientation & Information

A left turn as you exit La Línea's bus station will bring you out on Avenida 20 de Abril, which runs the 300m between the town's main square, Plaza de la Constitución, and the Gibraltar border.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 956 17 19 98; Avenida Príncipe Felipe s/n; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat) Facing the frontier.

Regional tourist office (☎ 956 76 99 50; ☎ 9am–3pm & 4–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun) On the corner of Plaza de la Constitución.

Sights & Activities

La Línea's city centre has a couple of museums worth visiting. The **Museo del Istmo** (Plaza de la Constitución; admission free; ☎ 10am–2pm Tue–Sat plus 5–9pm Tue–Fri) has archaeological finds, paintings, sculptures and changing exhibitions. **Museo Cruz Herrera** (Calle Doctor Villar; admission free; ☎ 10am–2pm Tue–Sat, 5–9pm Tue–Fri), on palm-lined Plaza Fariñas, exhibits the work of José Cruz Herrera, a successful early-20th-century painter from La Línea. His subjects were often beautiful Andalusian women and he lived and worked for a time in Morocco, which is reflected in his paintings.

You can also visit **WWII bunkers** opposite Gibraltar, which face the frontier to the east and south of the Plaza de la Constitución; the tourist office has leaflets detailing the routes.

Sleeping & Eating

La Línea has around four midrange to top-end options. Cheaper rooms are around Plaza de la Constitución.

Hostal La Campana (☎ 956 17 30 59; Calle Carboneros 3; s/d €42/48) This super-friendly *hostal* just off the western side of Plaza de la Constitución has decent rooms with fan and TV. Its restaurant does a three-course *menú* (€7.50).

Hostal Carlos II (☎ 956 76 13 03; Calle Méndez Núñez 12; s/d €42/48; 🚿) Another *hostal* with decent rooms, and this time with satellite TV. From the main plaza, walk to the end of pedestrianised Calle Real, which meets Plaza La Iglesia. Calle Méndez Núñez is off the southwest corner of this plaza.

AC La Línea (☎ 956 17 55 66; www.ac-hoteles.com; Calle Los Cairoles 2; r with pool view €77; 📞 📺 📺 📺) For more luxury, stop at this stylish hotel a block back from the seafront and the main

drag, just a kilometre or so before the town centre.

La Pesquera (☎ 956 69 21 20; Avenida 20 de Abril; salads €4.50, mains around €9) You can sit here and look at Gibraltar, with the restaurant's palms and fountains in the foreground. A fabulous choice from a creative menu is the grilled salmon which is served on a stack of delicious vegetables. This place is best on a quiet weeknight.

Bar La Parada (☎ 956 12 16 69; Calle Duque 2; raciones €10) Head here for some excellent fried fish tapas and *raciones*. In fine weather you can sit outside under the dappled shade of the mature oak trees.

In the evening, check out Plaza del Pintor Cruz Herrera, with a pretty tiled fountain, orange trees, and places to drink.

Getting There & Away BUS

Comes (☎ 956 17 00 93) runs buses about every 30 minutes (every 45 minutes on weekends) from 7.45am to 11.15pm to/from Algeciras (€1.80, 30 minutes). Buses also run to the following destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Cádiz	€12	2½hr	4
Granada	€19	5hr	2
Seville	€19	4hr	4
Tarifa	€3.50	45min	8

Portillo also runs a bus service to Málaga (€10.50, 2½ hours, three to five daily) and Estepona (€3.50, one hour 20 minutes, eight daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Owing to the usually long vehicle queues at the Gibraltar border, many visitors to Gibraltar opt to park in La Línea and then walk across the border. Parking meters in La Línea cost €1 for one hour or €5 for six hours and are free from 8pm until 9am Monday to Friday and from 2pm Saturday until 9am Monday. Meters are plentiful on Avenida Príncipe Felipe opposite the frontier. The underground Parking Fo Cona, just off Avenida 20 de Abril, charges €1.90/14 per hour/day. Parking on the street in La Línea is fine but do not leave any items visible.

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