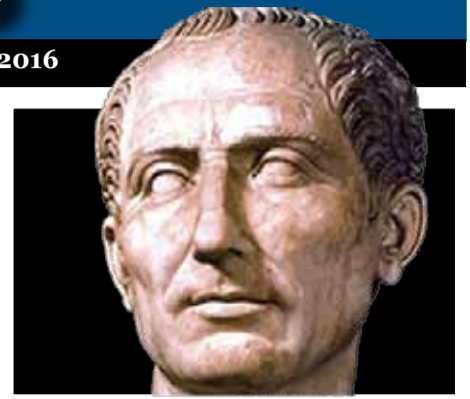




All about Casares



Roman oasis



Casares may be famous for its bread but with its amazing beach, breathtaking countryside and enchanting white village, you've got butter and jam on top, writes Iona Napier

THE picture-perfect hilltop town of Casares has come a long way since neighbouring Gaucin coined the ditty: 'In Casares buy bread and don't hang around' ('En Casares compra pan y no te pares').

And given that Brad Pitt, Axl Rose and Peter Andre all had to ignore that advice, modern Casarenos have the last laugh. And then there is Julius Caesar, after whom the town got its name, when he dropped in for a dip in its healing waters a few centuries back.

The Roman emperor is said to have taken to the healing, sulfurous waters of La Hedionda, currently under renovation (and sometimes falsely attributed to Manilva), below the town.

Alleged to have been suffering from something of an itch, after a couple of days it is said to have cleared up and Caesar gave the tiny settlement his royal Roman seal of approval.

It led to the town inheriting the name Caesaria, from which Casares eventually emerged, and for the spot to become sometimes known as the Roman oasis, not to be confused with the same name restaurant nearby.

La Hedionda - which means foul smelling - is set in a beautifully lush valley, through which a footpath takes the more adventurous on a lovely hour or two hike up to the white village above.

One of the Costa del Sol's most stunning walks it criss-crosses rivers, takes in ruined mills and offers up some of the best scenery of karst rocks and distant mountains.

Plan it well and you can take in one of the town's fantastic restaurants for lunch, or alternatively take in one of the many other well signposted walks (there are 200kms of them in total) around the village.

Wherever you head, you will inevitably see vultures, eagles, kestrels and other majestic birds of prey soaring over the vertiginous village.

The village itself is well worth a poke around, with its



IDYLLIC: Classic view of the village, while (top, right) bust of its most famous visitor Julius Caesar

Continues on Page 27

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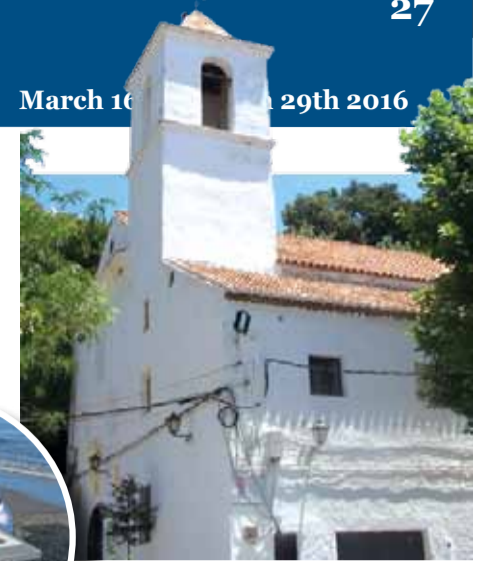
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FORTRESS: Overlooking Casares beach



STUNNING: View to Africa



From Page 25

charming white streets and handful of shops and restaurants. It is one of the most photographed of Andalucía's celebrated *pueblo blancos* and is topped by a ruined castle and church. Such is its fame that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie recently took a spin around the village, allegedly ending up buying two pieces of art at the Studio 54 gallery. TV presenter-turned-politician Robert Kilroy Silk liked the place so much he bought an incredible mansion on the outskirts, which he sold last summer.

The area also boasts a large expat population, with Casares Costa officially hosting 1,000 Brits among its population of 2,570, although the expat presence is considerably higher than the latest *padron* (electoral role) suggests.

It is no surprise, having one of the coast's best beaches, stunning views and excellent connections to Sabinillas one side and Estepona the other.

Dublin journalist Diarmaid MacDermott is just one of many smitten expats. He arrived in 2001 and now broadcasts a weekly summary of the news in English on *Radio Casares*.

"I fell in love with Casares when I first came here almost 15 years ago," MacDermott told *the Olive Press*.

"The beaches were lovely, the old town interesting and the people were friendly and open. I like the contrast between the mountains, where Casares is situated, and the coast only a 12km drive away."

He added: "It is a good base to visit many other interesting places in Andalucía, with Gibraltar and Marbella within easy reach and the Costa de la Luz only a short drive away." For a more authentic Spanish experience, head to Secadero

A slice of paradise



TIMELESS: Swim in Casares' roman oasis

Catalogue of events

The cultural calendar includes Culture Week which brings street theatre, flamenco and a book fair to town from April 25-30, and an annual summer music festival in June or July.

Duracell bunnies can take on the 21km Mountain Race Challenge on April 10, while there is also a 'beginners' race of 10km and a 500m kids race.

Meanwhile film junkies are being invited to make their own Casares blockbuster for the third edition of the Andalucian Film Festival, split in two parts: the 48-hour film competition (June 3-5) and the main festival with Spanish screenings (June 6-11).

where the orange tree plantations extend for hectares. You might even bump into its most famous resident, Europe's number one amateur golfer Mario Galiano who continues to make the locals proud of his killer

swing. With three courses, Dona Julia, Casares Costa and world-famous Finca Cortesin he gets plenty of practice. The latter is one of Andalucía's leading courses with a stunning five-star hotel to match. While Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale and Everton captain Phil Jagielka have been spotted

playing the course, celebrities including Axl Rose, from Guns and Roses, Patrick Stewart, from *Star Trek* and Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are said to have stayed there. But Casares has also become synonymous for something else over the last couple of decades... dining!

It's famous road up to the coast counts no less than half a dozen excellent places to eat, while the village itself also counts a couple of top eateries. See *On restaurant road* on page 28.

Head out of town on the Gaucin road to find emblematic Queseria Sierra Crestellina cheese factory, where you can buy day-old fresh cheese, two-month-old semi-cured and four-month-old cured cheese.

Running for four generations, there are farm tours for the kids and tastings, and a 'make-your-own-cheese' day. First, milk your goat!

Back down on the coast, a new beach scheme will introduce kayaks, a massage service and more help for the disabled this year, while the town has now applied for blue flag status.

It is down here on June 23, that you will find one of Casares' best nights out.

Celebrating the longest day of the year San Juan is hard to beat with its fireworks, live music and massive beach bonfire.

As long as you wash your face and feet three times in the sea, a happy year is guaranteed... I did it last year and I haven't looked back!

Food fest

The annual food festival (*Jornadas gastronómicas*) on April 23-24 turns the streets into an open market with stalls groaning under the weight of cheeses made from the endangered Payoya goat, 'chivo' kid meat and the town's signature bread.



SCENIC: Hike through Hedionda valley

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People of Casares



Rosario Lorin has lived in Casares for 26 years and runs Ecotours Casares from the tourist office

"Casares is popular with tourists but at the same time it conserves its traditions and its village life. It's not like other places on the Costa del Sol, it's more authentic and has beautiful views and great walks in every direction."

Montse Espinilla lives in Casares del Sol and runs an artisan shop on Calle Villa



"Casares has everything: mountains, sea, nature and tranquillity - everything you could ask for for a good life well lived."



PICTURESQUE: Pueblo blanco and (inset) Galiano

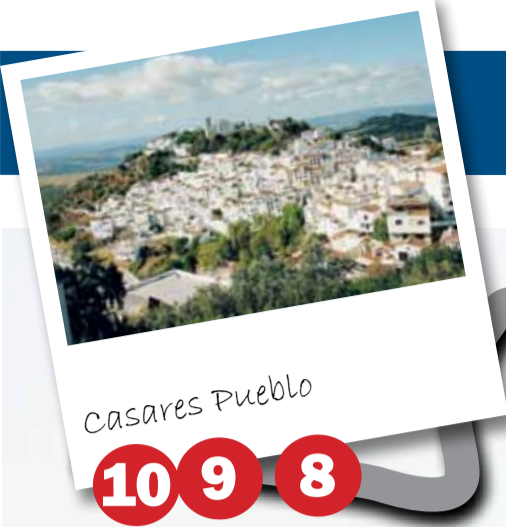
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10 9 8

9. LA ANTIGUA VENTA NUEVA

One of the oldest spots in the village, there are few nicer places to sit and watch the world go by than at la Antigua Venta Nueva. There is a nice wine list, which includes some local wines and dishes including garlic goat, duck breast and langoustines in Jack Daniels! Owners Nicholas and Monica open it for breakfast too.



10. MI CORTIJO

When you finally arrive in Casares Mi Cortijo takes some beating, with its amazing views of the white town and a coquettish French host Elizabeth, who knows how to knock up a decent lunch. A real queen of the kitchen she has fantastic foie gras, wild boar stew and other authentic local dishes.

All about **Casares**

ON R

It's route one (to 1 fans... the road up one of the true go... Andaluca, writes Andaluca.com edi

7 6

8. LA BODEGUITA DE EN MEDIO



With its amazing top floor terrace for summer and charming dining room with views of the sea in winter, the Bodeguita is a place for all seasons. Boasting a very seasonal menu, including mushrooms in winter and the best fish in summer, it also has loads of local classics such as stew and lentils. In the heart of the village, it is important to book your table in advance.

7. ARROYO

Things real citing when chef Chinese wife Noriko of a decade ago. A Christian honed h and the Far East. Th weekly and he use produce. With an e dishes, with a twi include such delig tail with Parmesan truffle oil and king a Wakame salad a You might find Tem with 'nam jim' dress salad. They also o through the winter like loin of venis jamon serrano and His miso cod also r

5

4

ARROYO HONDO
Bar Restaurante



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6. THE FORGE

The grandfather of the modern restaurant scene in Casares is The Forge. Opened two decades ago by Michael and Athene Forge, this 200-year-old farmhouse is elegant in the extreme and has a fabulous menu to match. Thanks to the couple's love of jazz and theatre, it is little surprise to discover numerous stars have dined in this charming spot over the years. Sit on the terrace or the candle-lit dining room and opt for exciting starters such as Devils on Horseback (melt-in-your-mouth chicken livers wrapped in bacon) or spicy minced lamb 'empanadas'. Mains include Cape Malay chicken curry and roast rack of lamb and a superb pudding is chestnut cheesecake. The punters keep coming back.



5. VENTA VICTORIA

Open since 1942, charming Venta Victoria is one of the most authentic places to eat, beautifully decorated inside and with a nice dining terrace, sheltered from the sun and wind, at the back. Open most of the day, expect to eat the most hearty of meals, including lamb chops, bull's cheeks and stew.

4. VENTA GARCIA

Previously a spit and sawdust 'truck stop', today Venta Garcia has an Ibiza feel with chic urban lines and a fantastic use of light. Broadly 'modern Spanish' the menu is enticing with an emphasis on quality ingredients and good, solid cooking. Busy at weekends, it has been in the same Casares family for three generations.

RESTAURANT ROAD

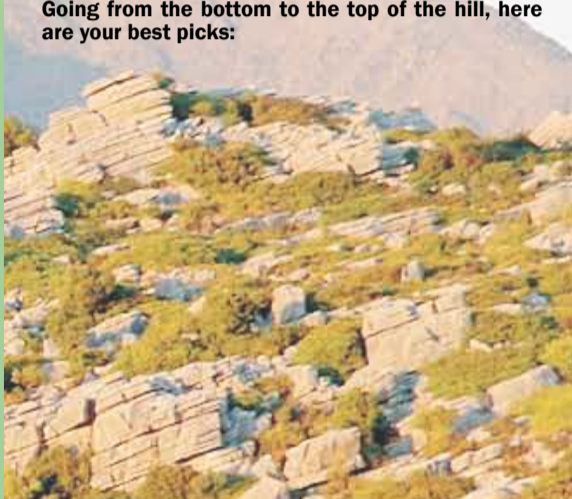
0) for food to Casares is gourmet routes in Dining Secrets of Editor Jon Clarke

It was once a brassic backwater where local transport was by donkey and the main reason to come was to collect wood and *esparto* grass, to weave baskets and shoes. Today, the road from the coast to Casares is a true foodies' paradise full of veritable dining secrets, where those-in-the-know come for a cheeky lunch or a gourmet weekend. As editor of www.diningsecretsofandalucia.com I have long headed into these hills to seek out its chestnuts, often combined with a lovely walk. "The Casares road has long been known as the place to come and eat," explains Michael Forge,

an English expat, who opened his restaurant The Forge with his wife Athene two decades ago. An atmospheric place, set in stunning wooded scenery, he adds: "It sort of happened out of the blue and in summer you often need to book a week in advance if you want a table." Fellow chef at Arroyo Hondo Christian Robson-Burrell believes that it is the healthy mix of styles and 'bags of ideas' that has helped to turn the road into a true 'ruta gastronomica'. "There are none of the usual boring *ventas* and each place has its own USP with everything from modern Spanish to traditional mother's cooking and the Asian influence," he estimates. "And above all, we all work hard." Going from the bottom to the top of the hill, here are your best picks:

ARROYO HONDO

Christian and his Japanese Arroyo Hondo true Dining Secret, his skills in London the menu is changed es mostly seasonal emphasis on quality st, the menu might ghts as braised ox- n gnocci with white prawn tempura with and Ponzu dressing. upura soft shell crab sing and a sea weed offer plenty of game , as well as dishes on wellington with mushroom duxelle. ocks.



3. VENTA COZAR

It may be a *venta* in style but this place oozes charm and warmth and sits with stunning views to the hills and coast. Run by Andres Cozar and his wife Loli for the last two decades, it specialises in meats cooked on the bbq, as well as other classics such as beef stew with mushrooms and the emblematic oxtail meat balls, as well as rabbit in garlic sauce. Friendly in the extreme, at weekends punters come from as far as Gibraltar and Malaga.



2. EL JARDIN/KABUKI

For those with deep pockets looking for a real treat head into Finca Cortesin, one of the true high-end, glamour spots of the Costa del Sol. Here, you will find two excellent restaurants, the first, El Jardin, run by German Lutz Bosing and the second, Kabuki, which was recently awarded a Michelin star. El Jardin has a distinct Portuguese feel with a fantastic terrace for lunch and warm summer evenings. Kabuki Raw is an Asian-influenced fusion joint, where you will appreciate creativity at its very best.

1. VENTA LA CHOZA

The tour begins at the bottom of the MA-546, beside Playa Ancha beach, with its ancient watchtower. Here, you will find historic Venta la Choza, beside the N-340 main road with its turn off up to Dona Julia golf. A friendly spot run by a local family, it is an authentic and attractive place to eat, with some real chestnuts such as clam and mushroom stew, which is delicious, and a Parmesan and spinach crepe, which oozes with goodness, not to mention king prawns with cream and boiled rice and shoulder of lamb.



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Swooping down for lunch

IT is almost impossible to spend a day in Casares without spotting at least one large bird gliding overhead.

And when we say large, we mean very, very large, for the large colony of vultures that lives nearby have wingspans of up to 2.8m.

These scavengers are majestic griffon vultures,

who have made their home in limestone formations on the western side of the Sierra Crestelina.

Circling around overhead, they keep a watchful eye out for dead animals and for the farming community, and the vultures are generally helpful for clearing away carrion, although they have also

been known to carry off the occasional new-born goat. The vultures have become very much a part of Casares, featuring in everything from art all the way through to school-yard tales, with children at the local school pointing in delight as they swoop past.



Blas Infante - the 'father of Andalucía' - was born in Casares and gave his life for the region, writes Tom Powell

THE 'father of Andalucía' and a son of Casares, Blas Infante is as much a part of the region as the vultures and eagles soaring above it.

The writer and politician was born and schooled in the village of Casares, where he is now immortalised through a small museum in the very house in which he entered the world in 1885.

He is most famous for sowing the seed of Andalusian nationalism, designing the flag, composing the anthem and fighting non-stop for the region's 'self governing statute'.

He wrote a book titled 'Andalusian ideal' and delivered Andalucía's first ever Assembly in nearby Ronda in 1918.

He was also elected council representative for the district of Gaucin-Casares-Estepona in 1918, a year before he

married Angustias Garcia Pradas, with whom he had three daughters and a son.

In 1936, after the February elections, the Andalusian campaign intensified and Blas Infante was proclaimed President of the new assembly.

However, his political ideals did not sit well with the fascist Franco regime and in August that year, as civil war broke out, he was arrested at his house in Sevilla and locked away in an old cinema.

Tragically, nine days later, without trial or sentence, he and two others were driven away and then shot dead at the side of the main road to Carmona.

As his body crumpled to the ground, he is believed to have roared: "Long live free Andalucía!"

Nowadays, his memory is



ICONIC: Infante and (right) tiles in the village

honoured in Casares with the placing of flowers at the base of his statue every year in plaza de Espana.

'Long live free Andalucía!'



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The larger estates, which tend to be located towards the Gaucin area, offer owners the possibility to plant a vineyard or establish their very own olive grove.

"What joins the people here is the love for nature, peace and tranquility, yet none of us want to be isolated," adds Anita.

"Our children go to international schools on the coast, which are still within half an hour's drive and we also like to join the hustle and bustle of the coast every now and then."

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The founders of Villas & Fincas Country Properties discuss the privilege of rural Casares life



TEAM: (From left) Aurelia Perez Romo, Luna Lane Notario, Anita Schmidt and Oscar Ernstsen and (below) one of their properties



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m ² Built: 2.160	m ² Plot: 368.000
Pool: Yes	Pool: Yes
Garden: Yes	



Ref. Nr. 186-00472P

CASARES – 2.450.000 €
LUXURY COUNTRY VILLA, PRIVATE, LARGE PLOT

Bedrooms: 4	Bathrooms: 4
m ² Built: 502	m ² Plot: 23.115
m ² Terrace: 150	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	Garage: Yes



Ref. Nr. 186-00280P

CASARES – 1.950.000 €
SPACIOUS PROPERTY WITH STUNNING SEA VIEWS

Bedrooms: 5	Bathrooms: 3
m ² Built: 332	m ² Plot: 12.300
Garage: Private	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00242P

CASARES MONTAÑA – 895.000 €
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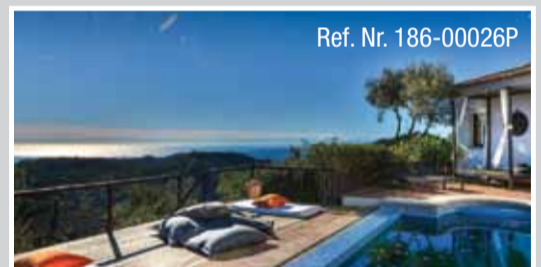
Bedrooms: 4	Bathrooms: 3
m ² Built: 361	m ² Plot: 20.500
Garage: Private	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00238P

CASARES MONTAÑA – 790.000 €
COUNTRY VILLA WITH SENSATIONAL SEA VIEWS

Bedrooms: 5	Bathrooms: 3
m ² Built: 228	m ² Plot: 20.000
Garage: Private	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00026P

CASARES – 790.000 €
SPACIOUS COUNTRY HOUSE, PANORAMIC VIEWS

Bedrooms: 4	Bathrooms: 4
m ² Built: 287	m ² Plot: 3.869
m ² Terrace: 45	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00470P

CASARES – 785.000 €
SUPERB VILLA WITH SPECTACULAR SEA VIEWS

Bedrooms: 3	Bathrooms: 2
m ² Built: 268	m ² Plot: 10.000
Garage: Private	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00471P

CASARES – 725.000 €
SUPERB VILLA WITH SPECTACULAR SEA VIEWS

Bedrooms: 4	Bathrooms: 3
m ² Built: 316	m ² Plot: 10.000
m ² Interior: 316	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



Ref. Nr. 186-00196P

CASARES – 675.000 €
SPACIOUS COUNTRY HOUSE, FINCA, SEA VIEWS

Bedrooms: 3	Bathrooms: 3
m ² Built: 210	m ² Plot: 4.340
m ² Terrace: 100	Pool: Private
Garden: Private	



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