Where the sun always shines
The Costa del Sol's success as a holiday destination is due to a combination of differentiating factors which make it a unique destination, a tourist destination of quality. It is important for a holiday area to be able to offer a wide range of activities, parks, festivals, and so on. All these contribute to making the Costa del Sol a high class destination. Nobody would argue that other holiday areas may have even better beaches or natural parks or archaeological remains, or gastronomy, or historic monuments or climate or leisure facilities, but we can state unequivocally that if the Costa del Sol maintains its position as a leader in international tourism it is because of its unique combination of attractions of all types. Where else can you find sunshine and beach tourism at the same time as the opportunity to learn languages? Where else has so many golf courses and leisure ports, and also so many conference facilities? Where else can offer health tourism, gastronomic tourism, cultural and equestrian tourism? And on top of all this we have to add almost anything you want to know. The tourist board has produced a series of useful colour guides on themes such as beaches, shopping, art, folklore, gastronomy, wine and olive oil, golf, marinas, equestrian centres, museums, and health and beauty, and these include maps, explanations and advice on how to visit historical buildings. There are travel outlines guides, and these can also be downloaded from the website.

The Costa del Sol has something for everybody, and a look at the tourist board website demonstrates that this region can meet any requirement. It is a great help in planning holidays. The climate lends itself to sports and outdoor activities, and enthusiasts will be amazed at the choice on offer, from golf to excursions on horseback, from paragliding to sailboarding, from hiking to sailing, and from windsurfing to skiing. Cultural values will find their fulfillment in all kinds of places. Then there's gastronomy, whether it's avant-garde in award-winning restaurants or traditional specialist dishes cooked in small bars normally known only to locals. If you want beaches, www.visitacostadelsol.com will tell you all about them. Also spas, beauty treatments, leisure facilities for senior citizens, flamenco, rural tourism, and funny hotels, and much more..

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No chance of getting bored

The Costa del Sol has attractions to suit all ages and tastes

They are the words which are guaranteed to cause discord on any family holiday: ’I’m bored!’ These are the words which, if they are to be heard on a family holiday it is chosen a destination which has something to interest everybody in the group, young, elderly or in-between. The Costa del Sol is one of the prime destinations in the world for family holidays, and this isn’t surprising when you look at the extensive theme parks on offer. Let’s take a look at a few ideas to keep the children happy.

The Costa del Sol has several theme parks, all of them easily accessible and guaranteed to interest youngsters and adults alike. Sabin Safari Park in Estepona is a must-see; as well as more than 2,000 animals from the five continents, it offers adventure activities and cartoon rides in a beautiful, natural setting. You can even learn how to shoot with a bow and arrow. Its sister park, Selwo Marina, in the home of Treasure Cave, the only marine caves in Europe which can be visited, and Cueva La Pileta, a marine cave in Europe which can be admired from outside as it is not navigable by experts and with guides, but its spectacular waterfall runs all year round and the bathing pools below provide a cool and refreshing place to lie back and enjoy the view of the cave.

The Costa del Sol also has several water parks, with some of the biggest and best rides in Europe. The Mijas Aqualand Park in Mijas Costa boasts a wave pool, kamikaze slide, water chutes, adventure river with winding roll slides and a mini aqua park for little ones. There are also five showers and five water aerobics classes. Torremolinos AguaPark has the added attraction of sea lion shows and Aqua Volta in Torre del Mar has 21 rides including super-f флооед slides, a dinghy river ride and a padding pool for small children. If you have ever fancied water skiing, or would like to improve your skills, there are water ski schools in Torremolinos and Fuengirola.

But that isn’t far away from La Pileta, which is also the venue for an International Music and Dance Festival every summer, La Cala del Moral, just east of Malaga city, is the home of Treasure Cave, the only marine caves in Europe which can be visited, and Cueva La Pilota, close to the inland village of Benamoc, has one of the country’s most important collections of wall paintings. The Cueva del Guaro, which isn’t far away from La Pilota, can be admired from outside as it is only navigable by experts and with guides, but its spectacular waterfall runs all year round and the bathing pools below provide a cool and refreshing place to lie back and enjoy the view of the cave.

The Costa del Sol is, particularly, Malaga province, is also known for its historic sites. Malaga is dotted around the countryside, the Arques Roman Theatre just outside Ronda. Ronda is one of the finest examples of its type, and there are caves just waiting to be explored.

DOLPHINS. Children can also swim with sea lions at Selwo Marina

HORSES. A dressage exhibition

CABLE CAR. The journey up the mountain is only part of the trip

REMEMBER. Malaga provine has fascinating historic sites
Beaches and marinas galore
The Costa del Sol boasts 160 kms of sandy beaches and eleven luxury ports

The Costa del Sol has an aesthetic lure with sunshine for more than 300 days of the year and an average temperature of 22 degrees Celsius. This, combined with 160 kilometres of beaches ranging from wide stretches of golden sand to tiny hidden coves, makes it a paradise for lovers of sunshine, swimming and nautical pursuits.

Many beaches have been awarded the European Blue Flag for the quality of the sea water and their facilities, and 5000 sunbeds can be found on all town and city beaches during the summer. Think of Frigiliana or the beach on a bunch of golden sand, with a bar restaurant close by for refreshments, think of swimming, sailing, surfing, or windsurfing on the blue waters of the Mediterranean; think of sunbathing is now the norm on all beaches and suitcases can be found in every city. The beach is the place to be and you are thinking of the Costa del Sol.

Four of Malaga province’s municipalities are border the sea and others are just a few kilometres away. Such is the attraction of the beach here that people who live or are holidaying could find inland as easy to make the trip down to the coast for a day or two. Whether on the eastern or western Costa del Sol, the beaches are magnificent. The town and city ones have the most facilities, such as showers, lavatories, pebble and pebble bays and children’s play areas. They all have umbrellas and sun umbrellas, and a choice of several “chiringuitos” restaurants. These beach areas are perfect for families with children of all ages, and an added advantage is that there are usually good parking facilities nearby. Family favourites include Malaga city, Torremolinos, Banús, Marbella, Puerto Banús, Puerto Banús, Puente Romano and Cabopino, Benalmádena and Fuengirola.

Several new ones are also planned. Perhaps the most famous port of all is Puerto Banús, in Marbella, known for its mega-yachts. A stroll along the quay there gives an insight into the lifestyle of the wealthy, whether you are peering into the luxuriously furnished saloons with their leather upholstery, gold plates and oil paintings, or looking into the windows of the designer boutiques and jewellery shops which line the quay. Marbella has three other ports as well as Banús. One of these, La Duquesa, has been awarded the Blue Flag of distinction for its fishing port. Marbella Leisure Port is right in the centre of the town, and the smaller, pretty Calahonda is also in

The most famous port is Puerto José Banús, where the mega-yachts are moored

In Torremolinos this includes El Rompito, La Calahonda and Playamar beaches, and all of Fuengirola’s beaches have been awarded the Cruz Roja (Red Cross) service. The Costa del Sol is also known for its nudism is accepted on some of those which are not officially classified as being for naturists.

The Spanish authorities are working hard to improve facilities for disabled people, and the beaches are no exception. Six of the sixteen beaches of Malaga city are officially classified as being suitable for the handicapped and have disabled parking facilities nearby. Wheelchair ramps, fixed pathways and wheelchair accessible toilets are also available. Those at Maro, near Nerja, and in those which are not officially classified as being for naturists. These are classified as being suitable for the handicapped. This is an ongoing process and more beaches will be adapted in the future.

Yachts
Most people enjoy looking at yachts even if they are not into sailing, and there is plenty of opportunities to indulge oneself on the Costa del Sol as it is now eleven pretty harbours, some of which are internationally renowned, with almost 2,500 berths between them. Interestingly forty per cent of all moorings in Andalucia are on the Costa del Sol, and the demand for berths in this area is so great that many existing ports are to be extended in the near future, while several new ones are also planned.
The treasures of Mediterranean cuisine
A wealth of delicious dishes and fine wines

The health benefits of the famous Mediterranean diet are well known, and dining out in Malaga province is hugely enjoyable because the delicious dishes you order are probably also doing you good. The Mediterranean diet is based on simple, fresh ingredients, abundant vegetables and salads, fruits, pulses, meats, fresh fish and one magic ingredient: olive oil, known locally as 'green gold'. In a region where the gastronomy is already noteworthy, its high quality olive oil plays a starring role and it is no coincidence that there are 30,000 hectares of olive trees in this region, some of them, especially in Periana in La Axarquía and in Almijara, over one hundred years old. Olive oil is said to lower cholesterol levels in the blood, lower blood sugar levels and blood pressure, prevent peptic ulcers and is even eaten for breakfast, poured over toast which has been rubbed with a piece of raw garlic.

Although some traditional dishes feature on menus in both inland and coastal restaurants, in general the cuisine on the coast is based more on fish and seafood, while country establishments will offer more rich stews and meat dishes. In coastal towns and villages, one of the most requested dishes is the 'pescaíto frito' or 'fritura' fried fish for which Malaga is deservedly famous and of which there are different variations. Malaga’s chefs are masters of frying and they jealously guard the secret to their delicious, crisp golden batter. The other fish which is most frequently requested by tourists at both coastal and inland restaurants, is paella. This dish originated on the eastern coast of Spain but can now be found everywhere. In Malaga, however, there must be at least one thousand different ways of preparing paella, including meat versions, seafood ones, a mixture of meat and fish, and even vegetable paella. In some restaurants the word paella is never seen: this is because, officially, a paella is cooked outside. Traditionalists will list the dish as an ‘arroz’ (rice) on their menus because it is prepared in a platter and covered with slices of toasted bread, and the restaurants in Archidona are famous for their ‘perota’. A hot soup consisting of water, broad, egg white and a little macarrón, which has previously been diluted in some of the soup. Paella soups are a popular starter, as are stews made with pulses, noodles and/or meats such as the ‘menudo de fideos’ which is a specialty of Colmenar.

While the delicious traditional dishes of Malaga province will ever disappear, during the past five years chefs of this region have progressed in leaps and bounds in the field of creative cuisine, and have brought Malaga to the forefront of Europe in terms of avant-garde gastronomy. The history schools which have opened on the Costa del Sol in the past few years are producing skilled, innovative chefs and the kitchens of Malaga can now hold their own with those which are deemed to be the best in Spain. The cosmopolitan population of the region has also encouraged the opening of Chinese, Japanese and Thai restaurants, and the geographical proximity to Morocco has resulted in Moroccan dishes featuring on the menus of many restaurants as well as those which specialize in this type of cuisine.

And what about wine? It almost seems too good to be true, but Malaga province produces some very good wines to accompany its delicious meals. The history of wine in Malaga dates back to Roman times, and nowadays the region has two Designations of Origin. The D.O. Malaga includes liqueur wines and natural sweet wines, while those classified as D.O. Sierra de Malaga are the locally produced red, white and rosé wines. Although the local sweet wine is world famous, the region is now also getting a name for its reds, many of which are produced at bodegas in the Ronda area, and the white wine of Malaga is becoming increasingly popular.
A perfect climate and great golf courses
Suitable for all ages and levels

The Costa del Sol is the primary European destination for golfers, thanks to the number and variety of its courses and the fact that its lovely climate means that it is possible to play all year round. There are courses to suit all levels, situated amid beautiful, natural surroundings and designed by some of the world’s leading experts and golf champions. The Costa del Sol’s courses have been designed to take into account the conditions of the terrain, and you will find courses by the sea, Scottish-style courses with up-and-downward slopes, and the American style with plenty of flat spaces and lots of water. Some courses include a combination of these features, and can test even the most experienced player.

Golf courses
Many courses are designed by golfing champions

Golf is so popular in this region that it has been nicknamed the ‘Golf Capital’ (Very Difficult) because after winning the Volvo Masters in 1990, Roman Ballester described it as one of the toughest par-4s he had ever played. The Santa Maria Golf course, on the eastern side of Marbella at Elviria, is always popular. It is quite a short course which is best suited to players with a high or medium handicap. The Atalaya Golf and Country Club, in Estepona, is the winter base of the PGA of Europe. It consists of two courses, the Old, which is flat, and the New, which is more difficult and hilly. Classes and courses are available at the Atalaya International Golf Academy.

initial. Alhaurín Golf was designed by Severiano Ballesteros and is in a stunning location with fantastic views. It is suitable for all levels of play, but is very hilly and can be challenging. East of Malaga, the par 71 Baviera Golf near Caleta de Vélez is worth a visit. It was designed by José María Canizares and has spectacular sea and mountain views. The course has wide greens and numerous details and is suitable for all levels of play.

One of the other advantages of the Costa del Sol is that non-golfers can also have fun while their golfing partners are practicing their skills on the course. Beaches, shops, bars and restaurants are all close to hand, and at the end of the day, the social life of courses’ Golf Clubs’ captivates you. Unless, of course, the golfers have planned a night-time round at the floodlit La Dama de Noche course in Marbella...
Inland Malaga is just waiting to be explored. There is plenty to do and see. Inland Malaga is full of history and culture, and Ronda or Antequera is ideal. Both are well worth a visit. A short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal. Both are well worth a visit. A short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal.

There are many hotels and country cottages, with or without private swimming pool. The region has strict terms of facilities and safety, and standards for accommodation, so there is something for everyone. For a short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal. Both are well worth a visit. A short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal.

The natural parks are also zones of special protection for birds. Inland Malaga is covered in pine forests. The region has strict terms of facilities and safety, and standards for accommodation, so there is something for everyone. For a short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal. Both are well worth a visit. A short break, a country town such as Mijas, Ardales, or Estepona is ideal.

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Fairs and Festivals throughout the year
Always something to celebrate

The Three Kings start the festivities each year

on route to regale the customers with natural songs which come from barrios among these lucky enough to have a thorough grasp not only of the Spanish language but also the national and local political scene.

The mood becomes more sober after Carnaval, because the next major festival is Holy Week, or Semana Santa. The beautiful and emotive processions in Malaga city should not be missed, and it is also well worth seeking out one of the villages where Passion Plays are performed, such as Bajamar and Alhaurín el Grande. Almost all the towns and villages on the Costa del Sol hold their own Holy Week processions, the smaller ones on just one or two days of the week, when the images of Jesus and Mary are brought out of the church and paraded through the streets to a haunting drum beat and the fragrance of incense. The size of the procession, the number of participants, and the length of time the image of the Virgin is paraded are a good indicator of how big the party will be in that village.

In July, another religious festival takes place on the 15th. This is the Festa del Carmen, which is of vital importance to the local fishing industry as the Virgen del Carmen is the patron saint of fishermen. This is a very happy festival, but is also touching as the procession is led by the village’s fishermen. This is a very happy festival, but is also touching as the procession is led by the village’s fishermen. This is a very happy festival, but is also touching as the procession is led by the village’s fishermen. This is a very happy festival, but is also touching as the procession is led by the village’s fishermen.

Day of the Nispero, the medium fruit which grows there are said to be the best in the country. Also in La Axarquia, the village of Periana has two claims to fame, its olive oil and its peaches, and it holds festivals in March and August respectively in honour of these products. The Guadalhorce Valley, west of Malaga, is famous for its citrus fruits and the small town of Coin holds an annual Orange Festival every summer, when there is much music and dancing in the streets.

Periana has two food festivals each year, one for olive oil and the other for its peaches.

In Cómpeta’s Noche de Vino, people flock to drink the local wine all night.

In Cúllar’s Noche de Vino, people flock to drink the local wine all night.

Ferias mean frilly dresses, fairground rides, and dancing in the streets.

The grape harvest, La Vendimia, is celebrated in municipalities which produce wine, such as Manilva and Mollina, usually in September. As Autumn draws on, another major religious festival, Todos Los Santos, or All Saints, takes place on November 1st. This is the day when families visit the cemeteries to pay their respects to deceased relatives, but it is not deemed to be a solemn occasion, especially by those who also mark the occasion by heading into the mountains to eat roasted chestnuts and drink the powerful aniseed liqueur known as ‘aguadiente’. And then it is Christmas. Only Christmas Day is a holiday here, although most businesses close early on Christmas Eve if possible because that’s when the customary meal is held with family and friends. After that comes New Year’s Eve, but, unlike in some countries, the partying is not yet over. In fact, it is just beginning.
Costa del Sol

Holidaymakers’ paradise

November 2008

MORE INFORMATION:
www.visitcostadelsol.com