Your Money
A Look At The Euro

Spanish Thoroughbred
Andalusian Horses

A World Apart
Terra Mitica
Mortgage

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For further information please contact your nearest branch or call 902 343 999
You will receive immediate help and professional advice.

Banco Sabadell
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Dear Club Member,

As summer draws to a close, it gives me great pleasure to once again be addressing you in your autumn issue of Solbank Prestige Club Magazine. An issue that as you can see is slightly different in lay out from your last issue. The Prestige Partners have been taken out of the magazine and incorporated into a pocket-size guide that we hope you will find more useful and convenient. In their place, you will find a more extensive section on local news which now includes the Canary Islands and the Costa Brava as well, thus reflecting the increased presence of Solbank in these areas.

This increased Solbank presence is due to our strategy of expansion. You can see the tangible results of this in our more extensive branch network: you now have 42 Solbank branches at your service. 42 specialised branches with a specific design to offer you the maximum convenience and comfort. Over the next 12 months we plan to open another 30 branches to cover areas where we have had less presence such as the Balearic and Canary Islands while at the same time consolidating our network in the Costa del Sol, the Costa Blanca and the Costa Brava. Our aim is to have about 80 branches up and running by the end of 2002. As always, all new branches will specialise in looking after the needs and requirements of those people, such as you, who live part or all of the time in Spain.

Your needs and requirements are important to us and for that reason we are introducing a “Readers’ Page” in the magazine. You can express your views and comments, tell fellow readers about things that matter to you or that you would like to share, recommend places of interest or restaurants; whatever you decide, it’s your page and its success depends on you. You can also find in this edition an article on the Euro which I would particularly recommend because it will answer many of the most frequently asked questions about the new currency which all of us will be using as of 2002.

Times change and this change brings progress; we at Solbank strive to meet these changes with the evolution of the services we offer you, whether it be by expanding our branch network, bringing out new products and services or indeed by making your magazine more interactive. Whatever it may be, you can rest assured that no other Spanish bank has a bank totally specialised in looking after the financial requirements for non-Spanish people in Spain.

Until next time, I wish you all… happy reading!

With my very best wishes,

D. Marc Monràs
Deputy General Manager
Banco Sabadell

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Branching Out

By the end of 2002 Solbank plans to open another 30 branches. There is a clear drive to make sure that Solbank customers have a branch nearby so that they can receive the kind of service they expect. In little over a year Solbank will be unique within Spain because it will be the first bank with a name, a business and communication strategy that caters for those people who have decided to make their home on Spain’s coasts.

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Readers’ Page

It’s up to You!

Readers eager to have letters printed in the magazine will be delighted to hear that next issue we are launching a new Readers’ Page. Write to us about your experiences in Spain or any ideas or suggestions that you would like to share with other readers. Perhaps you have discovered a special restaurant and would like to recommend it, or have come across a new and better route to a favourite place, or just want to share an amusing or entertaining episode.

Star Letter!

Every issue the editor will nominate a star letter and we will send you a Prestige magazine prize.

We really look forward to hearing from you and launching the new readers’ page.

Please send your letters to:
Readers’ Page
Solbank Prestige Club Magazine
Calle Molino, 5
28690 Brunete (Madrid)
Managerland.com

On 15 June, Managerland.com was presented to the press. A joint venture between Grupo Banco Sabadell and Grupo Banco Comercial Portugues. It is divided into 4 operational areas: online corporate banking, company finance packages to cover day to day requirements, the contracting and buying of products and services at special rates and services and applications that help in the everyday running of the company.

Banco Sabadell: bank of the year!

The Spanish economic magazine Ranking brought out a report in June titled Banco Sabadell, bank of the year. The article highlights the flotation and the fact that Sabadell is now the fourth banking group in Spain.

Reader Survey: thank you!

The response to the reader survey we sent you in the last issue of your Solbank Prestige Club magazine has been overwhelming. Over 277 answers have already been received (as of 19 July) with more than 45% of readers rating the magazine as excellent. In the next issue we shall publish a full breakdown of this survey together with a selection of your comments and opinions. Special thanks are in order to all of you who answered and you can rest assured that your comments have been taken on board and will go towards shaping the way your magazine develops. Thank you!

Branches Opening Soon

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Prestige Partners

In this issue you will find that the Prestige Partners are not in their usual place. We have taken them out of the magazine and put them in a pocket size booklet that you can take with you anywhere. The idea is to make it easier to use and also more useful. To that end we have also included useful telephone numbers and other pieces of information to help you. You will be able to get the guide from any of the Solbank branches or indeed from the Prestige Partners from September onwards.

Forthcoming Open Days

You are all invited to attend the Solbank Open Days where you can experience first hand the way we look after our customers. The Open Days are a good opportunity to come in and talk to staff, look around the branches, ask any questions you may have and of course to enjoy yourselves.

October
Cala d’Or (Mallorca)

October
Santa Eularia des Riu (Ibiza)

Manager.com

On 15 June, Managerland.com was presented to the press. A joint venture between Grupo Banco Sabadell and Grupo Banco Comercial Portugues. It is divided into 4 operational areas: online corporate banking, company finance packages to cover day to day requirements, the contracting and buying of products and services at special rates and services and applications that help in the everyday running of the company.

Banco Sabadell: bank of the year!

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First Delivery of Euros

At the end of the first semester, the Bank of Spain sent out 18,000 million euros to the different banking institutions. Later, further Euros will be sent out until the amount reached totals some 70,000 million Euros. Banking institutions have to deposit the corresponding guarantees with the Bank of Spain.

Internet, a necessity for 52% of European Users

The use of internet in Europe is everyday more widespread, to such an extent that 52% of European users consider that Internet is now a necessity. Communication, entertainment and purchases on line are the main uses.

Golf Calender

15 September, Pula, Mallorca
20 October, Las Brisas, Málaga
17 November, Santa Ponsa, Mallorca
24 November, Villamartín, Alicante
1 December, Los Arqueros, Marbella

Closer to You

One visible result of our expansion is that the presence of Solbank has considerably increased in the Costa Brava and the Canary Islands.
Home Banking

Home Banking Services

Checking your balance  Making a transfer  Buying shares

Always by your side

Customer Help Line: 902 343 999

Banco Sabadell
The Bank you can talk to
A month ago I received a phone call from a friend offering me what he called the “trip of a lifetime”. He said it was the chance to visit Rome, Greece, Egypt and 2 other stops in the Mediterranean all in just two days and better yet, at a cost of under 6,000 pesetas. When pressed, my friend admitted he was talking about Terra Mítica, a place where one can do everything he had promised without needing a passport or ever getting on an airplane.
Terra Mítica authorities are quick to point out that this is not a fun park but a “Theme” park. This does not mean to say that visitors do not enjoy themselves. Fun is, after all, the main reason why anyone visits any of these parks no matter how it be defined. The difference lies in the fact that everything in a “theme” park revolves around one central idea. In Terra Mítica that theme is ancient Mediterranean civilizations. The park is divided into 5 distinct areas: Ancient Rome, Greece, Egypt, The Iberian Peninsula and the Islands.

Each area is made up of scale models of many of each of the aforementioned civilizations most important monuments, thus in Rome one finds an amazingly real looking Coliseum, in Egypt, a giant pyramid and so on. According to press officer Santiago Lumbreras “many people who come here and have also been to one of these civilizations have commented that apart from the size they could not tell the difference between the park model and the real thing.”

In fact the park is so well built that the British Construction Association gave Terra Mítica second prize in their annual International Quality in Construction Award. The park finished ahead of other impressive works such as the Oresund Tunnel in Denmark and The Biological Science Building in Hong Kong. “At some point in the day”, says Santiago, “nearly every visitor hits the walls of at least one of the buildings to see if it is made of the real thing or not. I am proud to say that this is all made of stone and you will not find any support beams holding up the walls like Hollywood sets. It all adds to realism of the park and the feeling of authenticity.”

The final result is one of the largest and most modern theme parks in the world, covering a total area of over one million square metres. There are over thirty rides divided in the parks five main areas. The centre of the park is a huge lake which represents the Mediterranean, Terra Mítica’s central theme. Street players, from Roman guards to Greek soldiers perform more than 250,000 shows per year making the streets come alive and lending the park a real feeling of the period represented.

Entering the park is like stepping back in time and once inside you are made more a participant than a visitor. Nothing has been left to chance. Even the rubbish bins are in tone with each section of the park. All the uniforms worn by the street players and other actors are authentic right down to the fabrics and threads used. The park worked closely with historian Ricardo Cagigal to assure that nothing is out of place.

Finally the time had come to put all these facts and figures to the test. I don’t think I had been on a roller coaster since I was about 15 years old. So as not to date...
myself, suffice it to say that it was an awfully long time ago. The main roller coaster at Terra Mitica, known as Magnus Colossus is Europe’s largest wooden roller coaster. The massive structure looms above the park daring the adventurous to take a turn. Fortunately we decided to do so before having lunch. One ride and I soon realised that Roller coaster technology had come a long way since my last ride. It was also a good reminder of why I had not dared to get on one for so long.

For a sheer adrenaline rush, however, there is nothing to match the Flight of the Phoenix. Actually the “drop” of the Phoenix would be a more appropriate name, for that is what this ride is all about, dropping 60 metres straight down at terminal velocity. Terminal, I can assure you, is the sensation this ride produces. Words can not describe the feeling, one just has to experience it. After these two rides my friends and I decided it was time to look into the more relaxed, cultural side of Terra Mitica.

The park, unlike many, is not limited to just thrilling rides. There are a number of rides based on popular mythological tales which are both fun and educational. After our earlier experience we very much appreciated and enjoyed these other rides including: The Mystery of Keops, The Labyrinth of the Minotauro and the Surprise of the Gods. One of the parks newest attractions is a 400 metre, 10 minute ride called The Rescue of Ulysses which includes film projections and incredibly realistic holograms.

Being a father, one of the things I liked most about Terra Mitica is the fact that every single ride has an exact copy for kids. This is important when one’s son or daughter misses the height requirement on the adult version by a hair. Those without family will also be happy to know that nearly all the children’s rides are grouped together in just two areas of the park.

When hunger strikes (as it certainly will, fear apparently burns an abundance of calories), Terra Mitica has a great assortment of restaurants on offer. Each civilization within the park offers cuisine from that region and each also offers a choice of restaurant category from fast food to formal dining.

As the evening came to a close we watched in awe as the final act unveiled before us. Terra Mitica offers a nightly re-enactment of the meeting of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. It is a very appropriate and spectacular way to end what is both a thrilling and educational visit.

For more information and reservations please call: 00 34 965 004 300
Don’t leave your home without it...

Home Protection Plan

Come in and talk to us or call:
902 153 851
An Interview with triathlete Spencer Smith

Spencer Smith’s story is remarkable. The youngest ever World and European champion at the age of 20, he was also the first male triathlete to win consecutive Senior World Championships (1993 and 1994). I was lucky enough to catch Spencer at his home in Denia, the day before he was off to Canada to prepare for the World Championships in Edmonton, where he kindly granted Solbank Prestige Club Magazine the following interview.

So, Spencer, how did you begin your career in sport?

I started swimming when I was about 4-5 months old. At 15 I reached the national junior level in 400 metre free-style. In the national squad, we had a coach and trained about ten times a week. It was a hard regime, especially because you had to find time to do your schoolwork and fit in the training. We often didn’t go to bed until eleven at night and were up again at 5:30 in the morning to swim; we did that 5 times a week. It was tough but I think it made one tough as well; it kept me focused and instilled the self-discipline and motivation one needs to succeed at an early age. Although hard, I remember it as a good period in my life, a time I enjoyed especially due to the good sense of camaraderie among the team members.
What early influences did you have?

Because I was involved so heavily in swimming, I looked up to the swimmers of the time. The best one of course in Britain at the time was Adrian Morehouse and there’s no doubt that I looked up to him a great deal. My father was also a great influence, perhaps the greatest. He was a footballer and had been on the books of both QPR and Brentford, so it’s fair to say that sport was expected of me. Later on, his support as both manager and father was a driving force. I was very lucky. As far as cycling is concerned; I would have to mention Miguel Indurain, everyone said that he was too big and too heavy and that he couldn’t climb and yet he won 5 consecutive Tour de France.

How do you move from swimming to Triathlon?

I gave up swimming at the age of 15. I think that I just got bored of it. I took a year and a half off where I actually didn’t do a great deal of sport, I think I needed a break. At 17 I thought I’d have a go at Triathlon. There was a local race at Hillingdon in the UK and I just thought I’d try my luck. I found I enjoyed it; swimming for so many years had made me strong and resilient. I developed a passion for it and was successful very quickly which always helps with motivation. I joined a local team in Hampton, Middlesex called the “Thames Turbos” who were one of the biggest triathlon clubs in England. I won the title of World Junior Champion in 92 and World Senior Champion in 93 and 94.

What made you come to Denia?

My father and I knew a woman who trained at our club and her father had a house here.

We were looking for a base in Europe so we thought we’d check it out. It’s a great place to train and the riding is good. I personally love Denia and I love Spain. The atmosphere is great: you can do a lot, you’ve got the water and the beach, the mixture of old and new which is something you don’t get in the States and of course the weather.

You mention the States, do you spend a lot of time there?

I do. I’ve got a house in California and my wife is American. I like California; it’s on the coast and laid back. They do things there to the extreme, especially in as far as the service culture is concerned.

Tell us about your training.

I normally train between 25 and 30 hours a week with one day off. I try and plan out the season starting off with the shorter races and leaving the longer races until the end of the season in October, where you have to go slower. My season ends with Ironman in October in Hawaii. After that, I normally take a holiday for a month: you need a mental and psychological break from the training. As far as nutrition is concerned, I’m obviously very careful about what I eat. You have to fuel your body correctly and to get the proper mix of proteins and carbohydrates. You mustn’t forget either that you improve when you rest, when you’re not actually doing anything; the thing about the Triathlon is that it’s more difficult to rest than when you actually do only one sport.

What about psychological preparation? What goes through your mind when you’re racing?

I have confidence in my ability. I know I’m as strong as anyone out there, mental strength is also important. Sometimes it can be hard to get into the framework of the race, a lot of times it can be like cat and mouse. I try and remain very much aware of what’s happening around me and this conditions what’s going through my mind. There are times when you are hurting and you need to maintain your mental strength; I try and keep as calm as possible so that I can attack when it suits me. There are also times when you think you are stronger than you are and vice-versa, so it’s very important to maintain your calm.

What would you say to people who said that Triathlon was one of the hardest sports?

Cycling I would say is just as hard as Triathlon. The thing that makes Triathlon so uniquely difficult is that all the disciplines involve intense cardiovascular exercise. Ironman which I normally leave for the end of the season involves a 4 km. swim, 180 km ride and a full marathon to finish. It normally takes around 8 hours to complete.

You travel around a lot: how does your wife cope with your absences?

She is extremely supportive. A good family is vital; it’s impossible to compete without family. You need someone to talk to, someone whose interested in what you are doing. I had a super relationship with my father who was both manager and dad, my mother is also very supportive;
you don’t need to see your family all the time but you need to know they are there.

You took a break from triathlon: why?
I needed a break. Whatever I do, I need to be passionate about it. I went to cycle for the Linda McCartney team for which I am thoroughly grateful. It helped me regain my passion for triathlon. Coming back was difficult at first because my upper body became extremely streamlined because of the cycling but I came back quickly.

What about the future?
In this game, you’re always thinking about the next race or competition. Right now I’m off to the World Championships. I’m 27 and that is still young. I did my first Triathlon years ago and you can compete in Ironman up to at least 35 years old. As you get older, you get wiser, you have more experience so if you’re into it, you can still win!

Thanks to Spencer Smith and wishing him the very best of luck in the World Championships. Thanks also to Spencer’s sponsors: Metrex Nutrition, Sigma Sport and Zipwheels.
To answer your two first questions, yes, your dog resident in Spain needs to have a microchip implanted, and, yes, you can now take your dog or cat back to the UK with you, as long as he is vaccinated and certified by a Spanish vet well in advance of the journey. Since February of 2000, all dogs in Spain are required by law to have microchips. Very few of them do, in spite of efforts by the authorities to encourage this chipping. In most towns, officials declared a voluntary period during which veterinarians were subsidised to implant the chips at a low price, usually around 5,000 pesetas.

A hand-held bar-code reader, just like the supermarket checkout, can be passed over the chip, which then shows on the computer screen the name and address of the dog’s owner, along with the details of the vet who implanted the chip.

Thus, any lost dog can be returned to its owner. This chip also allows the authorities to create a municipal pet census from the vets’ data base, which has created a negative effect in many municipalities.

Fears that towns would start charging a fee for dog licences apparently caused a sudden increase in abandoned animals. “We had 254 dogs left with us in the month after the law went into effect, a record number,” said Xandra Gamazo, president of Marbella’s Triple A, the “Asociacion de Amigos de los Animales”.

Different municipalities around Spain impose fines of varying amounts on the owners of dogs without chips, but enforcement has been extremely lax. The fines, usually between 10,000 and 15,000 pesetas, are only applied when the dog has been involved in some offence, such as attacking a person.

In rural areas, where hunters may have a pack of 20 dogs, the microchip law has been largely ignored.
New Rules For Those Taking Pets Into Britain

If you are among those fortunate few who make regular trips to your holiday property in Spain, you can now take your dog or cat with you to enjoy the Mediterranean sun, and take them back into the UK. Further, if you have acquired a pet in Spain, you may also take the animal into the UK.

Be warned that you had better start thinking about this operation more than six months in advance, however.

If you are in the UK, follow these steps:

1. Have microchip implanted, and pet vaccinated for rabies. Details go on animal’s veterinary record.
2. After one month, vet takes blood sample for laboratory to check if vaccine has taken.
3. If vaccine is effective, vet can issue document called Pet Travel Scheme Re-Entry Certificate. Valid for term of rabies vaccination.
4. Six months after blood test, pet can enter the UK from Spain and other countries on approved list.
5. It’s not over yet. Pet must be treated for ticks and parasites by qualified vet between 24 and 48 hours before entry into the UK. Vet gives certificate.
6. Owner must sign declaration that the animal has not been inside any of the non-approved countries in the preceding six months.

If you are inside Spain, and want to take your pet back to the UK, follow the same steps with authorised Spanish vets, vaccines and blood tests. The Spanish vet obtains from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture the same certificate as the British one.

One family who travelled by car took two weeks of leisurely sight-seeing through France from Spain, so they had to have the tick-treatment done twice, once in order to obtain the entry certificate, and again, in France, the day before they took the ferry, in order to meet the 24-hour rule. Pets can enter the UK by ferry or tunnel if you are driving. British Airways will take pets from Barcelona to the UK, but ask them first to be sure.

Double-check this information before planning any trips, as changes could still be made.

Contact UK authorities on the Internet at: www.maff.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine or telephone the Helpline on 0870-241-1710 or ask your vet to check for you.

Owners of Dangerous Dogs Must Carry Insurance

Spain’s national law regarding the keeping of “dangerous” dogs, which went into effect at the end of 1999, requires their owners to carry a liability insurance policy covering at least 20 million pesetas in claims. The law was hurriedly passed after a strong public reaction to a series of dog attacks. In one such attack, an Argentinean Mastiff killed a four-year-old boy in Palma de Mallorca. The dog’s owner was sentenced to one year in gaol for reckless homicide, and his insurance company paid an indemnity of 20 million pesetas.

The law does not specify exactly what breeds constitute potentially dangerous dogs, but it classifies them as animals laws specify that it is an offence to abuse animals, to keep them in small spaces, such as apartment terraces, that an owner is responsible for any damage caused by his pet, and usually that a dog may not soil the public way.

Generally, around Spain, public consciousness falls far short of pooper-scoopers seen in northern European cities, but the town of Benalmadena on the Costa del Sol has fined a number of owners 15,000 pesetas when police observed repeated offences, much to their surprise and dismay, so changes are slowly coming.

IN THE COMMUNITY OF MADRID, FOR EXAMPLE, ANY DOG WEIGHING MORE THAN 25 KILOS MUST BE REGISTERED AS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS AND INSURED.

Meanwhile, many of us have been confronted with the barking dog problem. Call a cop, it is the only advice we can give. In a town, if the police receive three or four phone calls about a barking dog, they will go to the house or apartment. Those who live in country areas, where owners leave a dog to guard their farm while they return home to the village, have more difficulties. Often they do not know who the owner is or where he lives.

One Spanish friend of mine faced with this problem obtained the telephone number of the barking dog’s owner. He called him at three o’clock in the morning, held the telephone out of the window, and let the man listen to his own dog.

After that, the dog spent his nights in town with his owner.

The twelve currencies that converted into the Euro were the German mark, the French franc, the Belgian franc, the Italian lira, the Dutch guilder, the Portuguese escudo, the Irish pound, the franc of Luxembourg, the Austrian schilling, the Finnish mark and the peseta. And one year later the Greek drachma joined them as well.

After over two years of coexistence between the single (and intangible) currency and its “national expressions”, we are fast approaching the time when the coins and bank notes of these twelve countries will be substituted once and for all for their equivalent in Euro. Thus, on 1 January 2002 the massive distribution of Euros will begin, and at the same time, and during a two-month period, all pesetas will be withdrawn from circulation.

Just to provide a glimpse of how complex the situation will be, it may be pointed out that 14,000 million bank notes and 50,000 million coins will have been manufactured, and (only in Spain) 32,000 tons of peseta coins and notes will be withdrawn.

From 15 December on it will be possible to obtain in the Spanish financial institutions a set of 43 coins, called “purse” or starter kit, which will contain the equivalent to 2,000 pesetas and will be useful for us to become familiar with the Euro. In this way, consumers will have fractional currency to make purchases more conveniently from 1 January on. On the other hand, most cash tellers will provide bank notes in Euro from the first day on the year 2002.

Peseta and Euro will coexist in our pockets for two months, up until 28 February 2002. From that date on, and until 30 June, it will be possible to exchange pesetas in any financial institution. After that, the old currency may only be exchanged in the Banco de España (Spanish Central Bank).
Bank Accounts and other Products

Due to the agreement between the different Public administrations and the banking industry, all bank accounts and associated services that are named using the twelve currencies will be renamed in Euro during the last quarter of 2001. The Banco de Sabadell Group will start this “fully automated” process during the month of October. Of course, the accounts that use currencies that do not belong to the Economic and Monetary Union (e.g.: accounts in pound sterling or US dollars) will be left unchanged.

Regarding taxation, the residents and non-residents’ accounts in pesetas will become residents and non-residents’ accounts in Euro, respectively. All other products (pension schemes, share dealing, mortgages, loans, credit cards, insurance policies…) will also be changed into Euro. If we stick to the sheer fact that the twelve currencies of the EMU are already nothing but mere expressions of the Euro, it can be assumed that the change will not have any repercussions on the conditions and prices of said products. Logically then, no change in interest rates or increase in cost or commissions is to be expected as a consequence of the single currency.

Also, the different Public Administrations will establish control mechanisms so that the use of the Euro will not be used as an excuse to increase prices due to rounding-up policies. In fact, the characteristics inherent to our markets (the law of supply and demand, together with the high competitiveness existing among companies) will be an efficient tool to fight such temptation.

Advantages of the Euro

The Euro is an old dream come true, that of a united Europe, that started to take shape after World War II, and was ultimately conceived at the Paris (1951) and Rome (1958) Treaties.

The Euro reinforces the role of the Economic and Monetary Union as an economic space with one single currency where there is a free circulation of goods, services, capital, and people. An area with only one monetary policy, ruled by the European Central Bank, that guarantees sustainable growth thanks to a pent-up inflation and, as a consequence, the elevation of living standards and social and economical cohesion.

To conclude, the most obvious advantages for the consumers may be summed up as: the reduction of costs due to currency exchanges; price homogenization and transparency in the area; a theoretical decrease of interest rates that will make loans cheaper; the maintenance of purchasing power (derived form the reduction of inflation); and more stability, due to a more sustainable economic growth.
Andalusian Horses:
The Spanish Thoroughbred

BY GUY FIDRITA

After sherry and flamenco there is nothing more representative of the city of Jerez than the horse. Talk to anyone in town and they are bound to know something about horses. This is, after all, the cradle of the Pure Breed Spanish horse. Spain’s most important horse fair is held here and it is also the home of The Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art. In addition both the horse breeding department of the Defence Ministry and the National Horse Breeding Association are based here.
he roots of the Pure Spanish breed have been traced back to the 15th century. Credit for the lineage is attributed to a group of monks at a Carthusian monastery three miles from Jerez. This is why the pure breed Spanish horse is also known as the Cartujano or Jerezano horse. It is a horse the great French horsemanship La Guernière said is “the most worthy of being ridden by kings on days of triumph”.

Although public haute école (high school) dressage shows were held in Jerez as far back as the 1700’s, it was not until 1973 that the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art was founded. Today, the centre is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Spain bringing in millions of visitors every year.

The centre, which sits in the heart of the city, is built around the Recreo de las Cadenas Palace, a stunning nineteenth century Baroque style building designed by the French architect Garnier, the same man who designed the Paris Opera House. The Royal School offers guided visits (Mon., Wed., Fri., 11:00 -13:00) of the grounds and a chance to watch the horses being trained. However, it is the show, How Andalusian Horses Dance (Thursdays 12:00) that draws the most visitors.

The day I attended, the 1,600 seat arena was completely full. The show began with a burst of music as laser lights danced across the groomed dirt floor. After a slight pause, the soft strains of a flamenco guitar filled the air, the doors at the far end of the arena were thrown open and 10 riders dressed in 18th century country costume made their entrance.

Thus begins the equestrian ballet. The six choreographed dances which followed are based on classical and country dressage as well as other traditional riding specialties. The first piece was a demonstration of cowboy riding with the horses walking or galloping around the arena making sudden changes of rhythm, leaping high in the air and performing amazingly tight spins.

As the riders filed out, a very young woman on a magnificent silver stallion took their place. Her performance made it clear why this is called an equestrian ballet. The classical movements of the
horse as it pranced about from side to side and its high stepping trot really do resemble ballet moves. By the end of the performance both horse and rider looked worn out.

This was followed by a beautiful exhibition of 8 unmounted horses with the riders leading them on foot using a long rein. The most spectacular part of their dance was the high leaping, which had the crowd shouting in joy. The Piaffe, however, where the animal trots in place so that the horse almost appears to be floating had most of the audience staring in wide mouthed wonder. It was a fascinating display of grace and powerful beauty.

The most exciting part of the show however, was yet to come. Accompanied by a burst of flamenco music, two antique carriages raced in through the open doors. After a few elegant spins around the arena, the carriages suddenly began to pick up speed until they were skidding around each turn throwing up dirt as they went. I noticed many in the crowd covering their eyes at what seemed an inevitable crash.

The carriages have one man riding on the back in bobsled fashion, his job is to counterbalance the carriage as it swings around the corner with two wheels flying high off the ground. Judging by the roar of the crowd this was evidently a great pleaser. At times it resembled an air show as the horses dashed around each other at breathtaking speed.

If you are in Jerez in May you won’t want to miss the horse fair. The fair which takes place in the city’s central fair ground, includes a number of equestrian events and races. The main attraction, however, is the daily horse parade. From 13.00 to 19:00 each afternoon, hundreds of horses and riders dressed in antique costume ride up and down the promenades of the grounds in colourful display.

In 2002 Jerez will be the site of the fourth World Equestrian Games (WEG), earlier editions were held in Stockholm, the Hague and Rome. The event, which takes place every four years, is considered the Olympics of the equestrian world. The games include competitions in the six official equestrian disciplines of show jumping, dressage, carriage driving, three-day event, vaulting and endurance. More than 1,000 horses representing 50 countries will be competing and television viewers are expected to reach one billion. The games are due recognition of the importance of the city of Jerez in the equestrian world.
In 1964 Prince Rainier of Monaco came to Mallorca to play a round of golf. There seems to be nothing very special about this statement except that he came to inaugurate the only golf course on the island, making him Mallorca’s very first golf tourist. After his round, Son Vida Golf Club was officially opened to the public as the only 18 hole golf course on Mallorca.

It is hard to imagine that this was just 37 years ago, considering that there are now 18 courses on the island. Interest in the game has been growing at an amazing rate. In the last three years, four new courses have been opened and there are plans for at least two more. More and more golfers are coming to play under the warm Mallorcan sun, 20% more per year, every year since 1995.

I am happy to report that I too can now be counted among this years golf tourists in the Mallorcan tourist boards statistics. I had been trying to work in a golf trip to Mallorca for years but something always seemed to go wrong at the last minute. This time it was my wife who insisted on making the trip. I think she may have known what was to come of this particular outing. This may be the one and only time that a Destination Golf trip turned into something more than what she calls “just a lot of golf”.

For our stay in Mallorca we chose the Marriott’s Son Antem Holiday Resort. The resort is situated just 19 kilometres from the capital city of Palma. The complex consists of a 150 room Marriott hotel, 232 holiday ownership townhouses, two 18 hole championship quality golf courses and a huge, newly opened, European style spa. There is also a clubhouse, pro shop and a good practice range with pitching and putting greens.
Also on offer are huge outdoor swimming pools, two fine restaurants and a very friendly lounge bar in the hotel. Every aspect of the complex offers all of the quality and impeccable service one expects of the Marriott group.

Although there are two great courses to choose from at Son Antem, I ended up spending a lot less time on either them than I had originally intended. The amazing thing is that I do not write this by way of complaint. There is so much on offer at both Son Antem and on the Island of Mallorca that the game of golf became secondary. If you can come up with something that keeps me off the course, more power to you.

Staying off the golf course is an old problem for me. I find it difficult to justify leaving my wife alone while I spend 4 hours hitting a little white ball around a field. I usually end up feeling guilty before, during and after the round. My solution is to find something fun and interesting for my her to do while I am playing.
This is where Mallorca stands out. It is, as my playing buddy calls it, one of the world’s great “golf widow” destinations. Nearby to any course one finds fantastic beaches, great shopping, fine cuisine and interesting cultural visits such as Palma’s Cathedral or the Miró Foundation.

Even without leaving the complex we both found plenty to do off the course. Apart from the above mentioned services, Son Antem has recently opened a 7,000 m² Spa with thermal waters piped in from Lluchmajor. Here the non player can enjoy thermal pools, a gym, sunbathing areas, a beauty salon, vitamin baths, aroma therapy, a massage, saunas and a restaurant overlooking the golf course. In the summer they even run an hourly shuttle bus to Es Trenc beach. This is where most of my golf playing time was spent. Although my game may have suffered badly from the lack of practice, personally I have never felt better. The water treatments and other therapies may not improve your slice but they make you feel so good that you just won’t care about it anymore.
When I did break away for a round, I found the courses to be both very challenging and beautifully manicured. The older east course, opened in 1984 is a 6,325 metre, par 72 which runs through woodlands dotted with manmade lakes. The course is flat and wide open with very challenging ruffs.

The newly opened west course, also designed by Francisco Lopez Segales, is longer than the east course, 6450 metres - par 72. This course also runs through woodlands but it is noticeably more hilly. It also proved to be a more difficult course to play, the 70 bunkers making it especially difficult though they are fairly placed. The newest course on the island is already counted among the best in Mallorca. It is just a shame I could not break myself away from the other activities to enjoy it more thoroughly.

For more information on Marriott’s Son Antem please contact: Michiel van Goep 00 34 971 12 9 140
There are undoubtedly an infinite number of reasons for wanting to live in Mallorca. Every year thousands of new residents set up home on the Isle of Calm. Most cite the island’s near perfect weather and natural beauty as key factors in to their decision to live here. Being bored in Stuttgart is rarely if ever mentioned. That was true until I met 46 year old Jürgen Plankenhorn.

Asked why he chose Mallorca, Jürgen responds, “I was really very bored and was looking for a major change of life. I had been on the island before and was impressed by the infrastructure and the fact that it was so easy to move back and forth to Germany. And of course I loved the laid back way of life.”

Up to this point Jürgen was the owner of a very successful advertising and graphic design agency. He was personally responsible for the concept behind Autofocus Magazine, one of the most important publications of its kind in Germany. He had also been involved in the launching of EasyRider Magazine and a number of other publications and important advertising campaigns.

However, as we have said, boredom set in and the decision was made to move. Jürgen sold the advertising company and almost everything else he owned and bought an apartment in Mallorca. “I cashed it all in on a ticket to paradise”, he says with a smile. “I began to find the German way of life to be a bit too rigid for me. Here things are a little more relaxed and one can take some time to enjoy life.” This, however, does not mean that things have been easy for Jürgen. Upon arriving in Mallorca, he immediately opened his own advertising and design agency in the centre of Palma. At the same time he went about setting up house and learning the language as well.

“Starting a new agency from zero in a new country was not easy. And although the Mähna stereotype rings true to a certain extent”, he says, “like anywhere else, if you don’t get the job done you will eventually lose the client and in the end, your business.” Jürgen has worked very hard not only to keep the clients he has happy but also to make sure that new ones come through his office door on a regular basis.

At one point the business was actually growing too fast. “We try to grow too fast, you end up making to many mistakes and the results of all your work suffers”, he says. All this in the little over one year that Jürgen has been in Mallorca.

When not sitting in front of a computer screen in his renovated loft office, Jürgen can often be found taking his time to enjoy a drink in one of the many sidewalk cafes sprinkled around the city of Palma. “People are able to spend so much more time outdoors here. It is one of the things I like most about living here, it feels so healthy”, he says.

Although one of his great passions golf is also an outdoor activity and can be enjoyed year round in Mallorca, Jürgen unfortunately finds little time for the links. A one time he was a seven handicap golfer, but now Jürgen admits that the number has gone up considerably due to, of all things, lack of play. “It is funny, but I rarely get out to play a round these days. I guess it is ironic really, I finally live in a place that has a lot of really good golf courses and the weather is never a factor and now I hardly play at all”.

Apart from having time to play a round of golf now and then, is there anything else he misses from the life he left behind in Germany? “Nothing”, he answered with a shake of his head, “and besides anything I may miss from home is never more than two hours away. If I ever miss anything badly enough I can always hop on a plane and have whatever it is I am craving.”

Looking at his watch Jürgen suddenly cuts our interview short. “Sorry but I have a flight to catch”, he says calmly. As it turned out he was booked on a flight to Zurich leaving in less than an hour. Seeing my concern that he would miss the plane, Jürgen turns to me as he headed toward the office door, “have I mentioned the infrastructure in Mallorca?”, he asked with a grin. “The airport, for example, is perfect. It is very well laid out, convenient and efficient and since there is never a problem with traffic, I can be inside the terminal in about ten minutes. There are also so many direct flights to Germany that I can go from my office here in the centre of Palma to downtown Stuttgart or any other major German city in a little over two hours.” “Not to mention Zurich”, I add as he disappears down the hall.

DESIGNING A NEW LIFE IN MALLORCA

Graphic Designer

Jürgen Plankenhorn

BY MATTHEW ARRIBAS
**Restaurante El Molino del Conde**

The area around Los Alcornocales Park, where groves of cork oak cover rolling hills in the southeast corner of Cádiz province, offers a delightful rural escape from the nearby Costa del Sol, Sotogrande and Gibraltar.

Rivers can either turn inland south of Manilva on the Costa highway, or head north on the road from San Roque to Jimena de la Frontera. At Castellar, eagles soar above the formidable ramparts of the medieval castle. Small houses cling to its walls and there are panoramic views of the distant Rock of Gibraltar, the Atlas Mountains and the Pantano de Guadarranque below the village. When the dam was built in the fertile valley, Franco created another village further down the road for the displaced locals. This is La Almoraima where a cork processing plant is the main industry.

A lovely retreat is the Casa Convento La Almoraima (Tel: 956 693 214), an intimate hotel in a 1603 convent which was converted into a hunting lodge by the Dukes of Medinacelli. One can eat or drink in the cool cloister patio, take a dip in the pool, play tennis, stroll under the palms in the gardens or go walking or riding in the country.

In keeping with this rustic atmosphere, the place to enjoy a meal is the nearby El Molino del Conde. Juan José Borreero makes the maximum use of the great character of this ancient flour mill to create different dining areas. There is a shady patio with a Russian vine and bougainvillea, a smart dining room, a bar for parties around the mill machinery and barn-like place to enjoy the Friday night New Orleans jazz band. Ascen Lozano is the excellent cook and her daughter, Ascen Rojas, a culinary artist, presents the sweets with flair.

I ate at a cork-topped table in the airy patio this spring directly beneath a swallow’s nest on the overhead beam. The parents, collecting titbits to feed their vociferous young from outside and not from our tables, were oblivious to us. Strategically hung cork bark prevented the birds from dropping in on the diners.

The good value menu has a good selection including meats from the charcoal barbecue grill in the garden. Juan José suggested a Legano 96 Crianza, a Ribera tinto with the Tempranillo lightened by Cabernet Sauvignon. This went well with a creamy, tangy, roasted Balanchares goat’s cheese from Córdoba served with mini toasts.

This was followed by Fillet of Iberian Pork (Presas de paletillas de cerdo Ibérico) barbecued with rosemary and thyme and served with chunky chipped potatoes and grilled tomato. This delicious meat is exceptional; coming from the same beast whose hind legs become the best cured Iberian hams. A real discovery! For dessert were freshly made apple fritters dressed with honey and sesame seeds and served with cream.
This menu is ideal as part of a summer barbecue because it’s easy to prepare – as long as you shop for the right ingredients which you may well need to order in advance.

**Roasted Balanchares Goats Cheese**

4 cheeses (about 200 gr each) for 4 persons

Place a round cheese, sprinkled with thyme and rosemary, in individual earthenware casseroles in an oven heated to 180ºC. When the cheese starts to brown, serve with dried toast.

**Fillets of Ibérican Pork with Rosemary and Thyme**

Ingredients for 4 persons

1.6 kg of Iberian Pork Fillets from the Shoulder Thyme, rosemary and olive oil.

You need a good Spanish butcher to order this cut (about 1.6 kilos) from the shoulder of the Iberian pig (cerdo ibérico) fed on acorns and is not normal pork. One trims off the outside fat from around the meat, slice into steaks, baste lightly with oil, thyme and rosemary and then barbecue. It’s best to sear to keep the meat succulent and juicy.

Serve with baked or chipped potatoes and a half a large tomato, grilled and sprinkled with herb

**Apple Fritters with Honey and Sesame**

Ingredients for 4 persons

4 apples, 40 gr of icing sugar, Pinch of salt, 2 eggs, white separated from yolks, 150 ml milk, 1 teaspoon of olive oil, 125 gr plain flour, 2 teaspoons of brandy (optional) or water, Olive Oil for deep drying, Honey and sesame seeds, A few mint leaves and peppermint liqueur (optional).

Peel, de-core and slice apples into quarters and cover with icing sugar. In a large mixing bowl, mix the flour with a little salt, add the beaten egg yolks, milk and oil. Brandy or water can be added. Leave the batter in a warm place for an hour or so. Then beat the egg whites until stiff and add to the batter. Heat the olive oil in a deep fryer. Cover the apple slices with the batter and fry until golden. On a serving plate, sprinkle with honey and the sesame seeds. Serve with fresh cream, perhaps with freshly chopped mint and a dash of peppermint liqueur.

**DRINK**

**Oro De Castilla Rueda Superior 2000**

100% Verdejo, 12.6%

Located about 170 kms northwest of Madrid, the Rueda area is famous for its fine white wines - so much so that in 1972 the venerable Marqués de Riscal Bodega of Rioja fame decided to produce its white wines in this region. The traditional grapes here are Verdejo, Palomino and Viura and new varieties include Sauvignon Blanc. But it is wines made from 100% Verdejo and labelled Rueda Superior which are the most emblematic. The Verdejo has to be hardy to survive here and grows vigorously.

Winters can be harsh in this part of Castilla-Léon with frequent frost. Spring and autumn are wet. In summer the climate is very dry with lots of wind. The River Duero borders the northern part of the Rueda region and an interesting base for exploring Rueda is the medieval city of Tordesillas.

Bodegas Hermanos del Villar has been producing for the past six years and its Oro de Castilla Rueda Superior 2000 is particularly acclaimed by experts having won several international gold awards. The bodegas themselves date from the 17th C. and include 950m. of tunnels, 25m. below ground. But the investment in modern equipment to maximise the aroma and taste of the freshly picked grape is also impressive.

Obviously this wine needs to be served well chilled. On opening one is immediately impressed by the intense, fresh aroma of tropical fruits and greenery. The colour is of a pale gold. In the mouth it has a deliciously delicate flavour with no sign of acidity. It lingers well leaving a dryish taste that is mellowed by its fruitiness.

This is a strongish wine that is perfect to accompany fish, like a grilled sole, or light salads. King Juan Carlos likes it this wine is supplied to the Royal Household.

**Oro De Castilla Rueda Superior 2000**

Bodega Hnos. del Villar

Zarcillo s/n. 47490 Rueda. Valladolid

Tel: 983 868 904

100% Verdejo, 12.6%

950 pesetas
A good swing is a successful blend of body motion and hand, wrist and arm action. It is difficult to say which one is most important but suffice it to say that one is not much use without the other. A good body action does however tend to lead to better consistency. The good news is that good body motion can be learned. I think that is fair to say that most of the pupils I see do not have a good pivot motion. A lot of the faults I see come from the fact the people want to do everything with their arms - lift the club up with their arms, then bring the club down through and up again with their arms. This invariably leads to the frustrating scenario of some good shots and some bad shots, and subsequently a few good days and a lot of bad ones.
Understanding how the body works, and therefore how to position the club and the arms within that pivot will ultimately lead to the consistency most people cover.

Photos 1 and 2 show a typical body motion fault - the reverse pivot. Firstly Photo 1 illustrates a straight right leg, left knee shooting out and the body weight hanging over the left leg. Photo 2 shows the consequence of such a backswing - the finish position with all the weight now centred on the right leg. This type of movement will obviously diminish the power of the shot.

Try this simple drill, not just as a warm up on the first tee but at home and on the driving range to really understand and then groove your body action. Grip a club behind your shoulders as in Photo 3. Take your correct posture. Photo 5 shows the posture from the front. Note how the left shoulder is slightly higher than the right as you would with a golf club in your hands.

Photo 6 illustrates the all important first move. At the start of your swing let the left shoulder swing down slightly and your right shoulders swing up whilst simultaneously allowing your chest to rotate over towards your right leg. Remember this is not a tilt, the shoulders should turn at 90º to the spine. From here now finish your backswing movement by rotating the back to the target and winding the left shoulder under your chin. Points to note: The weight is predominantly on the inside of the right leg, the right knee remains flexed and the chest is above the right thigh. Allow your head to rotate slightly to the right to permit your body to wind up behind the ball.

Photo 8 shows the very dynamic change of direction or transition. Start down by moving your left shoulder and knee towards the target almost like a small step. Do not jump of your right leg too quickly. Feel stability in your legs, note how my knees have separated slightly. This provides the solid base from which you can really release your right side through to the finish.

Note the straight, balanced finish. The knees are together and the right shoulder is closer to the target than the left.

I apologise if there is a lot of detail in this article but this is not a five minute tip. Obviously you do not have to think about this and hit the ball at the same time. First do this without a ball, study the pictures, and then make a few swings. Repeat this until you feel a good smooth fluid action. Now you are ready to try hitting a few balls. Good luck.

For more information on David Leadbetter Golf Academy in La Cala please feel free to call: 952 66 90 37
Alert on Mijas waste plant

The environmental group, Ecologistas en Acción Mijas (EAM), has issued official complaints against the waste disposal plant in Mijas to various environmental bodies.

BY DAVID CADE

The group (EAM) are concerned at the risks to the environment and of contamination from waste burned at the plant between June 9 and 11, which they fear could affect the Sierra Alpujata.

The ecological group claims that the construction of the Mijas plant is not up to the volume of work it is doing at present. They stress no provision was made for the continued burning, which could result in an accumulation of methane gas, especially in the current high temperatures. It also fears an escape of contaminants from the plant into the Arroyo de los Toros.

Málaga-Nerja autovía opens

The final stretch of the autovía between Málaga and Nerja is ready in time for the second of the summer’s busiest weekends

BY DAVID JAMIESON

Technical difficulties delayed the missing section from Torrox to Frigiliana by more than a year. The section to Maro, opened last summer, diverted heavy through traffic away from Nerja, but required vehicles travelling east to leave the motorway for the old N-340 coast road at Torrox, rejoining it a few kilometres further on.

The total cost of this final link in the Autovía Oriental has been 15,500 million pesetas, much of it as a result of the construction of a 1 kilometre tunnel, which proved to be much more complex than initial studies indicated.

The Ministry of Development has already given the go-ahead for the construction of the next section of the autovía, east from Maro to La Herradura, at an estimated cost of 21.6 million pesetas. Further extensions will eventually link it to the existing autovía at Adra and to the motorway being built south from Granada to the coast at Motril.

New Sevillana offices along the coast

If you live in Fuengirola, Mijas Costa or the Estepona area then there are three new offices where you can make personal contact with employees of the electricity supply company Sevillana. They will handle enquiries about contracting to their services, accounts queries and even arrange for you to be reconnected should your supply be cut off.

The Fuengirola office is in the Avenida de Mijas and the Mijas Costa office is to be found in La Cala. They are open to the public between 9 and 13.00 and from 16.00 to 19.00 Monday to Friday.

Residents of Estepona, Manilva and Casares can use the new office in Calle Huerta Nueva in the centre of Estepona.

Frigiliana’s charm shall not be broken

Frigiliana residents have voiced their concern over the new constructions that threaten to spoil the pretty village

Set in the southern foothills of the Sierra Almijara, six kilometres inland from Nerja, the village of Frigiliana is renowned for its narrow, cobbled streets, whitewashed houses, and flower-filled patios and balconies. It’s on every tourist’s itinerary and has all the charm of a 16th century Moorish settlement.

However, over the last few years, it has seen development unprecedented in its history, and is now facing an identity crisis as new housing overshadows the old town, both literally and metaphorically. Claims of irreparable damage to Frigiliana’s ambience have now been made by local residents, along with pleas for a halt on further building.

Particular problems have been caused by the development at Los Bancales, according to the President of the Residents’ Association, Ana Ortiz Cortés, who alleges that it has been built to greater dimensions than those for which it was licensed. An extra storey has been added, she claims, which overshadows the old town. Sra Ortiz is calling for developers to construct smaller buildings which fit in with the town’s appearance and meet legal requirements.

The town’s Mayor, Javier López Ruiz, has responded by saying the Town Hall was “not asleep” and would take court action against developers who do not observe the terms of their construction licences.

No more waste

The group has again voiced its concern that the Mijas waste disposal plant might be integrated into the network operated by the Association of Town Halls of the Western Costa del Sol. If that occurred the plant might be asked to treat waste from Fuengirola and Benalmádena, as it did during the recent strike at the Casares plant. The ecologists believe the Mijas plant simply isn’t up to the task.
Costa hangs up on Telefónica

Over 100,000 unsatisfied customers in the Valencia region have left telephone company Telefónica to switch to other suppliers in the past year.

Telefónica’s Regional Director Pedro Ortíz García this week confirmed the company’s customer loss, warning that the figure will increase in future as rival companies improve their services.

Sr. Ortíz García put the customer loss down to new free market regulations approved by the Government and the increasing number of alternative suppliers. Cable companies ONO, Med Telecom and Retevisión were named as Telefónica’s main competitors. However, consumer associations have pointed to Telefónica’s poor service as the real reasons for customers switching to other companies. The company’s policy to centralise its customer services in major cities has been most criticised.

The majority of customers leaving Telefónica are domestic users, a market that has seen a break-out of fierce competition among suppliers. Telefónica remains the main supplier for commercial and professional users with a market share of over 95 per cent - although its domestic share has dropped to 85 per cent. Telefónica has announced improvements to its services, focusing on digital technology, to reverse customer loss. Around 17 billion pesetas will be invested in a further 95,000 kilometres of fibre-optic cables in the region - where Telefónica currently has 1.3 million kilometres in place. By the end of 2002, the company intends to connect a million customers to ADSL high-bandwidth lines in Spain - 100,000 of them in the Valencia Region.

Power cut penalties

The Costa Blanca yet again is suffering from power cuts longer than the maximum period decreed in a law passed in December. Current legislation guaranteeing the quality of Spain’s electricity supply sets penalties against suppliers if power cuts last more than three minutes and total more than four hours a year in urban areas. The law estableishes a scale of time limits according to each area, raising the limit to eight hours in semi-urban zones and 12 hours in rural areas.

Suppliers were given one year to install a system to register the amount and duration of cuts. Consumers also have the right to install similar systems to claim refunds. Central and regional governments can now impose sanctions on suppliers by reducing tariffs if these limits are passed.

Torrevieja suffered its worst blackout this year with up to five hours without electricity on Wednesday. Iberdrola have sidestepped responsibility by blaming damage to underground cables during council roadworks.

Costa strikes gold

At a ceremony in Hotel El Montiboli in La Vila, senior executives from Thomson Holidays presented the company’s gold medal awards to the Costa Blanca’s top hotels. Awards were received by Hotels Nereo, Villa del Mar, Poseidon Playa, Ruidor, Calypso, Don Pancho, Torre Dorada, Avenida, Corona del Mar, Monaco, Hesperia Sabinal and Los Dalmatas.

Elche shoes go up in smoke

A huge fire devastated four shoe factories on Altabix industrial estate in Elche. The fire started in a factory situated between Calles Mallorca and Alcoy and quickly spread to the other three through interconnecting roofs. Nine fire engines were despatched to the scene to battle the blaze. All four sites were completely destroyed although fire fighters were able to save a petrol station and other properties. Three thousand square metres of factory space were burnt and 70 factory workers are left jobless.

Benidorm market doomed

Benidorm’s controversial open-air market near Hotel Pueblo has its days numbered - after the council approved the development of the area. The Town Hall awarded developers Ortiz e Hijos a contract worth 9,000 million pesetas for the development of the Plan Parcial 1 zone, which includes La Huerta where the Pueblo market is held. The Pueblo market obtained its opening licence thanks to a judicial ruling on ‘administrative silence’ - granting permission due to Benidorm Town Hall’s lack of response to market traders’ applications. Despite the market being popular among tourists, the authorities and the local establishment owners’ association have repeatedly claimed the site was only temporary. Benidorm will continue to hold its alternative Wednesday market near the football ground.
Germany’s leading tour operators have reduced travel offers in the Balearics by 25 per cent. The move comes amid fears of lower demand by holiday makers to visit the islands. Many German tour operators were left with a high percentage of unsold holidays this summer. The move includes a heavy reduction in both the number of beds reserved and flight frequencies to the islands will also be reduced two weeks ago. The President of the Majorcan Hotel Federation, Pere Cañellas, admits that this summer has been difficult to sell in Germany. Sales of Balearic holidays in the UK have slowed considerably. In a move to stem the tide hotel owners have announced that this year price increases are expected to be minimal, less than three per cent.

German Tour operators reduce offer to Balearic Islands

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Put them up and tear them down

A Balearic court has ruled that four chalets built in Llucalcari will have to to be torn down due to the fact that they were illegally constructed. The council has been given one month to begin demolition of the houses. Every ruling since the GOB environmental group started its campaign against the houses has ended in a demolition order. The homes were built by an Anglo-German company, Bancals, owned by Axel Ball, a partner of British magnate Richard Branson. One of the chalets is reportedly used by Virgin company owned by Branson and another is owned by Spanish writer Fernando Schwartz.

Rescue at sea

A simulated emergency was staged in the bay of Palma which involved all units of the CRCS’s rescue squad, as well as the Red Cross, the Palma Maritime Authority and the yacht club’s at Arenal and San Antonio de la Playa. A man over board operation involving a search and then the victim being pulled to safety from the water and taken by helicopter to a rescue vessel, was part of the event. The idea is to highlight this summer’s Recreational Vessel Accident Prevention Campaign.

With the number of recreational craft registered in the Balearic waters growing every year the CRCS has had to respond to an increasing number of emergency calls. Last year the CRCS responded to a total of 273 emergencies involving recreational craft in Balearic waters and since the start of this year, the total number of emergencies has already passed the 100 mark. A special instruction leaflet has been published in 17 different languages highlighting the dangers and outlining preventative measures which all recreational sailors must undertake. Last year the Red Cross, which has its own ambulance, rescue launch and jet ski, attended over 400 emergencies and accidents in the Playa de Palma area alone and assisted the CRCS in a number of searches at sea.

Ironically on the same day that Palma city council introduced new legislation banning car hire companies from parking un-rented cars in city parking lots, car rental firms reported that there are some 8,000 hire cars parked up because of a lack of business. Vice-president of the Balearic car hire association, Andreu Artigues, confirmed that there are nearly 8,000 unrented cars, which represents nearly a fifth of the area’s fleet of rental cars. Artigues said that business is very slow this summer despite the fact that many rental car companies have lowered their rates to stimulate demand. Artigues used Cala Ratjada as an example pointing out that tourists can hire a car for three days for just 8,500 pesetas.

Rental car companies claim that one of the problems is that the car hire industry is being given a hard time by the authorities. They also complain of being blamed for causing parking problems, traffic chaos, damaging the roads and increasing the number of accidents. Artigues says the car hire business is no longer financially viable and that for the past few years very few have made much money. As the years go by, more and more independent rental companies are being forced to close. Right now there are 286 members of the association, each with an average fleet of 50 cars. Rental fees are at an average of 3’000 pesetas a day.

Thousands of rental cars parked throughout Mallorca

Ironically on the same day that Palma city council introduced new legislation banning car hire companies from parking un-rented cars in city parking lots, car rental firms reported that there are some 8,000 hire cars parked up because of a lack of business. Vice-president of the Balearic car hire association, Andreu Artigues, confirmed that there are nearly 8,000 unrented cars, which represents nearly a fifth of the area’s fleet of rental cars. Artigues said that business is very slow this summer despite the fact that many rental car companies have lowered their rates to stimulate demand. Artigues used Cala Ratjada as an example pointing out that tourists can hire a car for three days for just 8,500 pesetas.
Costa Brava News

Road to cut traffic jams in Costa Brava still two years off

During the weekend and holiday times visitors have to run the gauntlet of tremendous traffic jams between the coastal towns near Platja d’Aro and the interior town of Víderes on the way to the E-15 and A-19 motorways. According to Martí Sabrià, manager of the Union of Associations of Hotels of the Costa Brava, “people ritually return a day early from their breaks to avoid traffic jams, costing the industry thousands of euros.” Now thanks to a new 36-million-euro project approved by the regional government, the Generalitat, the C-35 (just changed to C-249) between Llagostera and Víderes will get another lane in both directions. The problem is the road won’t be up-and-running until 2003. According to Xavier Civit, managing director of Tourism at the Generalitat, “no matter how many roads we build they’ll still be traffic jams because of the amount of people who go to the Costa Brava.”

Hotels install gas generators to hedge against electricity cuts

Two years down the line and the small town of Llagostera near Platja d’Aro is still negotiating the construction of high-tension electricity cables which have to pass through the town and on to the coast. The lack of accord has led to widespread Californian-style electricity cuts across the Costa Brava especially with the increase in demand for electricity during the summer period. According to the president of the Costa Brava hotel guild, Anna Maria Gallat, “frustrated hotel and restaurant operators are converting their power systems over to run on gas to hedge against the infuriating power cuts”.

New web for tourism in the Empordà

District councils across Baix and Alt Empordà have teamed together to create Ampurdan.com, a new portal aimed at promoting the area on the web. The website, available in English, has information on the different regions, maps of the area, relevant companies, tourist activities and practical information like flats or boats for hire.

Al Gore Spends holidays in Costa Brava

Al Gore, ex vice US president, and wife Tipper spent their summer vacations on the Costa Brava, and incognito at that – Mr Gore grew a light beard to disguise himself for the occasion. And while the Gores kept a very low profile for the majority of their two-week stay, they did venture out to sample the cooking of Santi Santamaria, chef at three-star Michelin rated Can Fabes restaurant in Sant Celoni, a town between Figueres and Barcelona. Gore, who also visited Barcelona back in March, said he had enjoyed his Costa Brava holidays thoroughly.

Half of all apartment lets on Costa are illegal

Girona’s Touristic Association for Apartments (ATA), bringing together owners and agencies dedicated to holiday apartment rentals, wants the law to come down stronger on illegal lettings of holiday apartments. The ATA estimates that half of all holiday apartments rented out are done so outside the law, illegally. In the last few years the regional government, the Generalitat, has clamped down on companies renting out holiday apartments with surprise inspections. Holiday apartments account for 77% of all the beds available on the Costa Brava and according to ATA’s president, Lluís Torrent, “If we want a healthy tourist sector the apartment rental sector has to be regularised.”

Platja D’Aro gives go-ahead for new Aquatic-Park

Aquadiver, Platja d’Aro’s aquatic theme park, will be bigger and better as from next year. The park’s owners will enlarge it by 30,000 m² to 60,000 m², and the rides themselves will be completely refurbished. One of the most promising is the 300-metre-long toboggan flume ride, which takes users 45 seconds to get from top to bottom mounted on rubber tyres. A conveyor belt whisks clients back to the top again to enjoy the ride. The park also plans to renew its picnic zone, Kids Park, sunbathing area and a new lake-like pool for bathing. Work should start this September coinciding with the end of the season and open in time for the summer in 2002.
A small piece of modern communications history is to be saved and restored. Tenerife’s first telegraph station stands in Los Silos, it was built in 1893 and represented the last word in hi-tech in those days, linking as it did Tenerife with La Palma. Overlooking the beach known as Agua Dulce, the station is in a deplorable condition and the council wants work to begin without further delay.

Mayor José Luis Méndez said: “The station is part of our heritage. It became the first meeting point between two Canary Islands when the underwater cable was laid.” The Los Silos-La Palma telegraph cable was inaugurated in the same year as the Tenerife to Spain cable.

Heyerdahl honoured in Güímer

One of Tenerife’s most famous foreign residents, explorer and anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl, has received yet another distinction.

This time it’s a very local one. The Norwegian octogenarian was given the title of “Adopted son” by the Güímar corporation, the district that has been home for Heyerdahl for the past ten years. The Güímar title is just one of a long string of awards with which Mr Heyerdahl has been distinguished over the years since he first leapt to world fame after his amazing Kon-Tiki adventure. The account he wrote of that voyage still holds the world sales record (after the Bible) and has been translated into sixty-seven languages.

The man who is now so closely involved with Güímar ethnological park, has received honours from the heads of state of numerous nations, including Norway, Italy, Peru, Egypt and Morocco. Queen Elizabeth decorated him with the prestigious Royal Geographical Society’s gold medal; he holds honorary doctorates from the University of Oslo and the Soviet Scientific Academy.

More recently his work in the field of conservation was recognised by the United Nations when it bestowed its international environmental prize upon him. Thor Heyerdahl’s documentaries have gained him an Oscar and an Oscar nomination.

Station restoration

The Canaries head European regions in renewable energy stakes.

The Canary Islands may lag behind on many environmental matters, but one thing’s for sure, the region is no slouch when it comes to renewable energy strategies. Power self-sufficiency isn’t just a clean dream anymore with more and more wind farms becoming an accepted part of the landscape, while solar panels are enjoying a big boom, prompted by their obligatory installation in future housing projects.

Transport and energy secretary Loyola de Palacio said the Canary Islands have a bright future in the development of renewable energy given their optimum conditions of prevailing winds and plenty of sunshine. Exploitation is being adapted to the specific characteristics of each island.

“If we don’t ever arrive at total self-sufficiency in this region,” she said, “we are well on our way to achieving the next best thing, a very high level self-sufficiency.”

Meanwhile, one island will be able to claim possessing a totally green energy supply, if all goes according to plan. El Hierro, already marked out by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve, is set to become a point of world reference when its revolutionary renewable energy scheme becomes operative in the not too distant future.

A mixed system harnessing wind and water power will eventually supply all the energy needs of the population. A 10 megawatt wind farm will pump water up to a reservoir poised 600 metres above sea level. From there the water will free fall back down to sea level via a specially constructed channel, setting an electric turbine in motion before being pumped uphill again. The proposed scheme is due to be unveiled in September.

Arona sleaze clamp-down

Arona council has fined a company described as “specialising in prostitution” 900,000 pesetas for infringing by-laws governing publicity. The move, part of a new get-tough policy in the district, is intended to send out a message to local businesses that the council is serious about a municipal clean-up. A bar owner caught selling alcoholic drinks after hours was also hit where it hurts most and fined 250,000 pesetas, while a private individual the police found drinking on the street was given a 25,000 peseta fine.

Pure power

The Canaries head European regions in renewable energy stakes.

Poetry in motion: Arico’s wind turbines.

A report just out shows the region is among the front runners for clean energy development and implementation in Europe. And power self-sufficiency isn’t just a clean dream anymore with more and more wind farms becoming an accepted part of the landscape, while solar panels are enjoying a big boom, prompted by their obligatory installation in future housing projects.
Golf Tour 2001

Bonalba
La Sella
Santa María
Aloha
Pula
Las Brisas
Santa Ponça
Villamartín

Solbank
The Bank you can talk to
Can my mother, aged 72, legally work in my bookshop?

I operate a bookshop in a Costa del Sol town, which I run as basically a one-man show. However, my mother, 72 years old and a UK pensioner, often helps me out when I have to take care of matters outside the shop.

I have been told that anyone working in Spain must have a labour contract and must pay Social Security, even if they are pensioners, and that there are no exemptions even for family members.

The fines for violating these labour rules run up to 500,000 pesetas, they say, so I am worried.

M.Z. (Málaga)

In principle, what you have been told is true. The basic rule is that all workers must have their Social Security paid and must have a contract.

However, you are in luck, because this rule was relaxed for immediate family members last year. Now the children, or parents, of the business owner can indeed help in the shop or business, as long as they are not paid.

There are so many ma-and-pa shops and small businesses in Spain, where the children help out after school, or where the grandfather tends the cash register, that they can go out of date quite rapidly, as regulations regarding amortization and a hundred other matters change frequently.

It remains true that any worker, including your mother, must have a labour contract and pay into Spanish Social Security if she is receiving a wage.

Yes, fines run up to 500,000 pesetas for violations, and hundreds of employers who refuse to give contracts and who employ workers on the black market, with no insurance, are fined every year for this offence.

Can I avoid capital gains tax if I buy a new home in Spain?

I am a resident in Spain and I have just sold my home for 38 million pesetas. I bought it for 22 million pesetas four years ago. I have been told that, if I buy a new principal residence in Spain for 18 million pesetas, the amount of my profit, I will be exempt from capital gains tax of 18 per cent. Is this true?

C.J. (Marbella)

Unfortunately, no. It isn’t true. If you are resident in Spain and have lived in your home for three years, you can be exempt from Spanish capital gains tax on the sale of the home only if you re-invest the entire sale price in a new Spanish residence. It isn’t just your profits, it’s the entire sale price. Thus, you must use the entire 38 million pesetas for your new home. If you spend less, however, you will get a proportionate reduction in your capital gains.

Where can I buy David Searl’s books on Spanish law and property?

I have read with interest your articles in Prestige and should like to obtain more information on taxation laws in Spain. I have been unable to obtain any books in the UK on the subject. I understand you have published a book on taxation through Santana Books and I would like to obtain any book on this or company law. I shall soon be moving to Alicante. As a retired accountant, I have a keen interest in these matters.

E.A.P. (Kent)

At the editor’s request, I shall unashamedly and bluntly promote my books and my book publisher, Ediciones Santana. In the UK “You and the Law in Spain” and “The Spanish Property Guide” can be obtained from major booksellers, including Waterstones. Any bookshop at all can order the books from the central distributor by contacting Aldington Books Ltd. Their telephone is: 01233-720123 and fax is 01233-721272.

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If you are in Spain or if you prefer to deal directly with the publisher, you can order my books, and many other books about Spain, directly from santana@vnet.es or visit their website at www.santana-books.com or telephone 34-952-485838 or fax to 34-952-485367.

Bookstores in Spain which carry English-language books usually have them. The book department in Corte Inglés department stores is a good source for all Santana books. Both the law book and the property book are general guides for the layman, intended to steer the new Spanish resident or property buyer through the maze of Spanish law.

If you are interested in the complexities of company law, I suggest that you wait until you arrive in Spain and then contact the commercial department of the British Embassy in Madrid and one of the major accounting firms like Arthur Andersen in Madrid. There are texts available in English on company law in Spain, but they can go out of date quite rapidly, as regulations regarding amortization and a hundred other matters change frequently.

David Searl is author of the books, You and the Law in Spain and The Spanish Property Guide. He writes a monthly column in Lookout Magazine on legal matters in Spain.

In forthcoming issues David will be happy to answer questions related to Living in Spain. Please send any questions you may have to:

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