

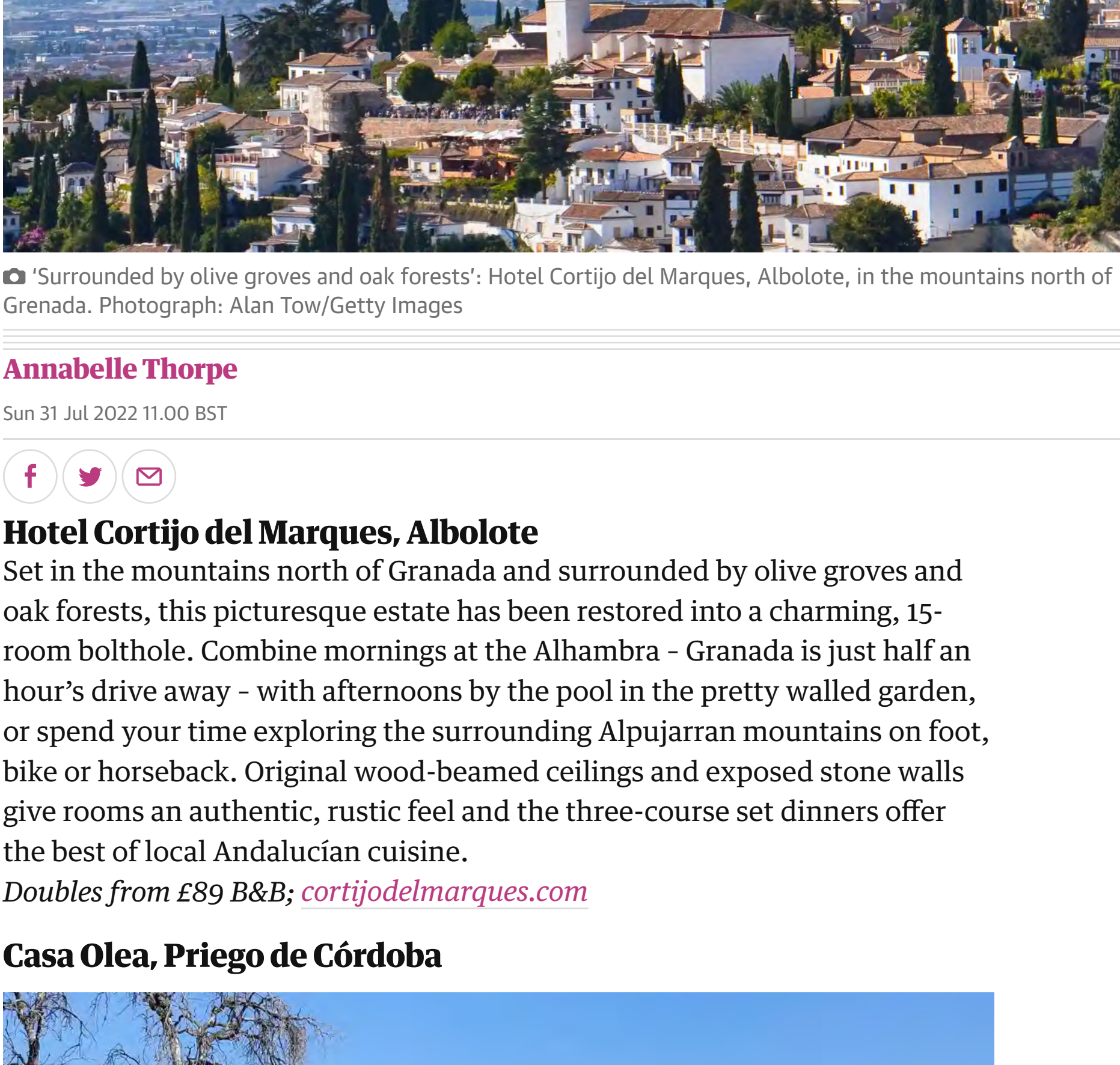


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The Observer Andalusia holidays

10 stunning places to stay in southern Spain

Where to go in southern Spain for culture, history and cuisine – from mountain horseback riding to the ultimate fly-and-flop



📷 ‘Surrounded by olive groves and oak forests’: Hotel Cortijo del Marques, Albolote, in the mountains north of Granada. Photograph: Alan Tow/Getty Images

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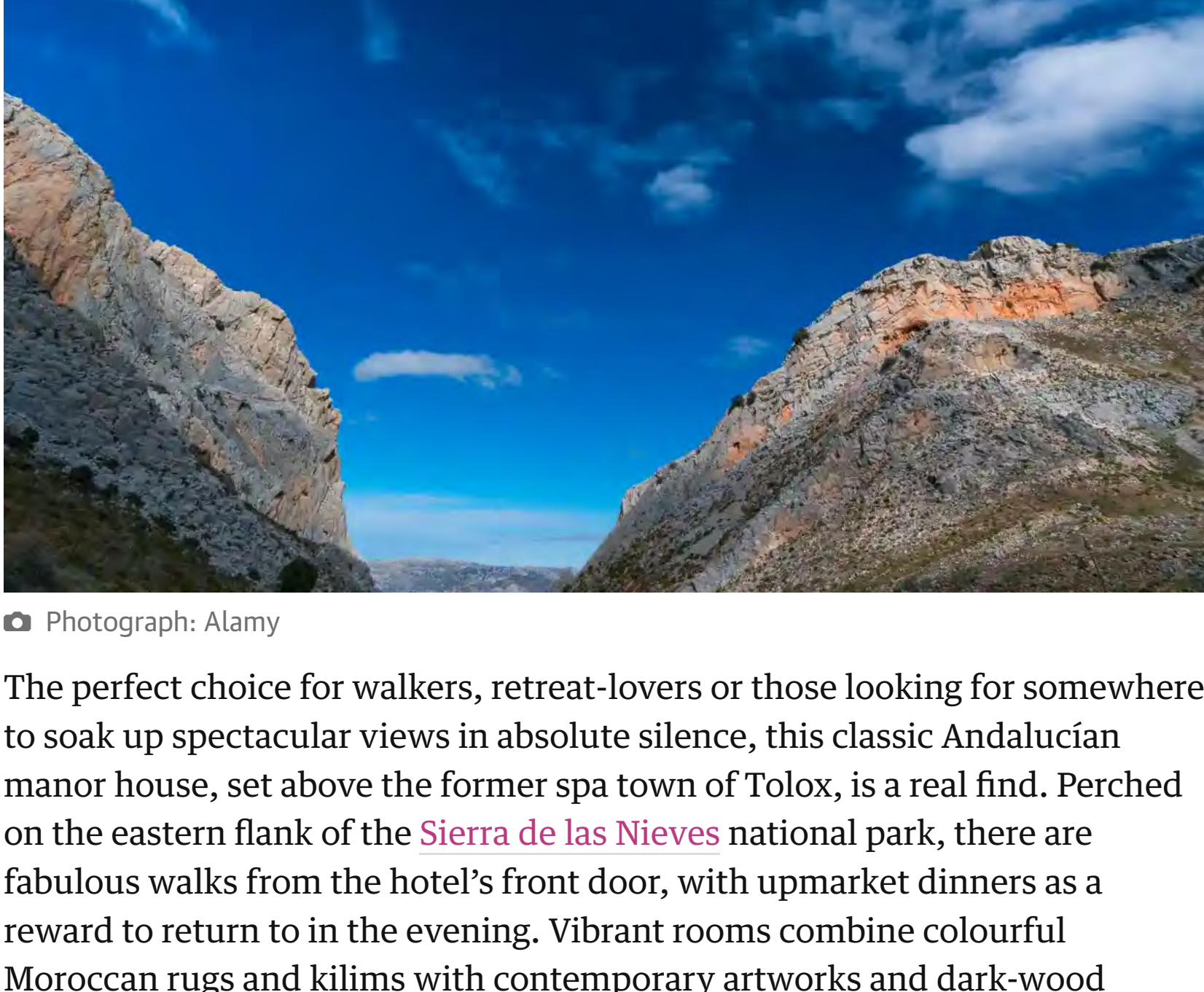


Hotel Cortijo del Marques, Albolote

Set in the mountains north of Granada and surrounded by olive groves and oak forests, this picturesque estate has been restored into a charming, 15-room bolthole. Combine mornings at the Alhambra – Granada is just half an hour’s drive away – with afternoons by the pool in the pretty walled garden, or spend your time exploring the surrounding Alpujarran mountains on foot, bike or horseback. Original wood-beamed ceilings and exposed stone walls give rooms an authentic, rustic feel and the three-course set dinners offer the best of local Andalusian cuisine.

Doubles from £89 B&B; [cortijodelmarques.com](#)

Casa Olea, Priego de Córdoba



English-owned and surrounded by the leafy Subbética hills, Olea is a cosy, six-room hotel that makes an ideal base for exploring Córdoba, Granada and the Renaissance cities of Ubeda and Baeza – all around an hour’s drive away. Pair sightseeing with relaxing afternoons on the flower-draped pool terrace, or hiking or cycling along centuries-old tracks through the surrounding olive groves. Dinners might be a communal paella or *tablas* – platters of meats and cheeses – with a veggie option always available.

Two-night breaks from £236 B&B; [casaolea.com](#)

Cerro de Híjar, Tolox



📷 Photograph: Alamy

The perfect choice for walkers, retreat-lovers or those looking for somewhere to soak up spectacular views in absolute silence, this classic Andalusian manor house, set above the former spa town of Tolox, is a real find. Perched on the eastern flank of the **Sierra de las Nieves** national park, there are fabulous walks from the hotel’s front door, with upmarket dinners as a reward to return to in the evening. Vibrant rooms combine colourful Moroccan rugs and kilims with contemporary artworks and dark-wood furniture, but the real joy is opening the shutters or balcony doors to reveal the glorious views.

Doubles from £124 half-board; [cerrodehijar.com](#)

Los Castanos, Cartajima

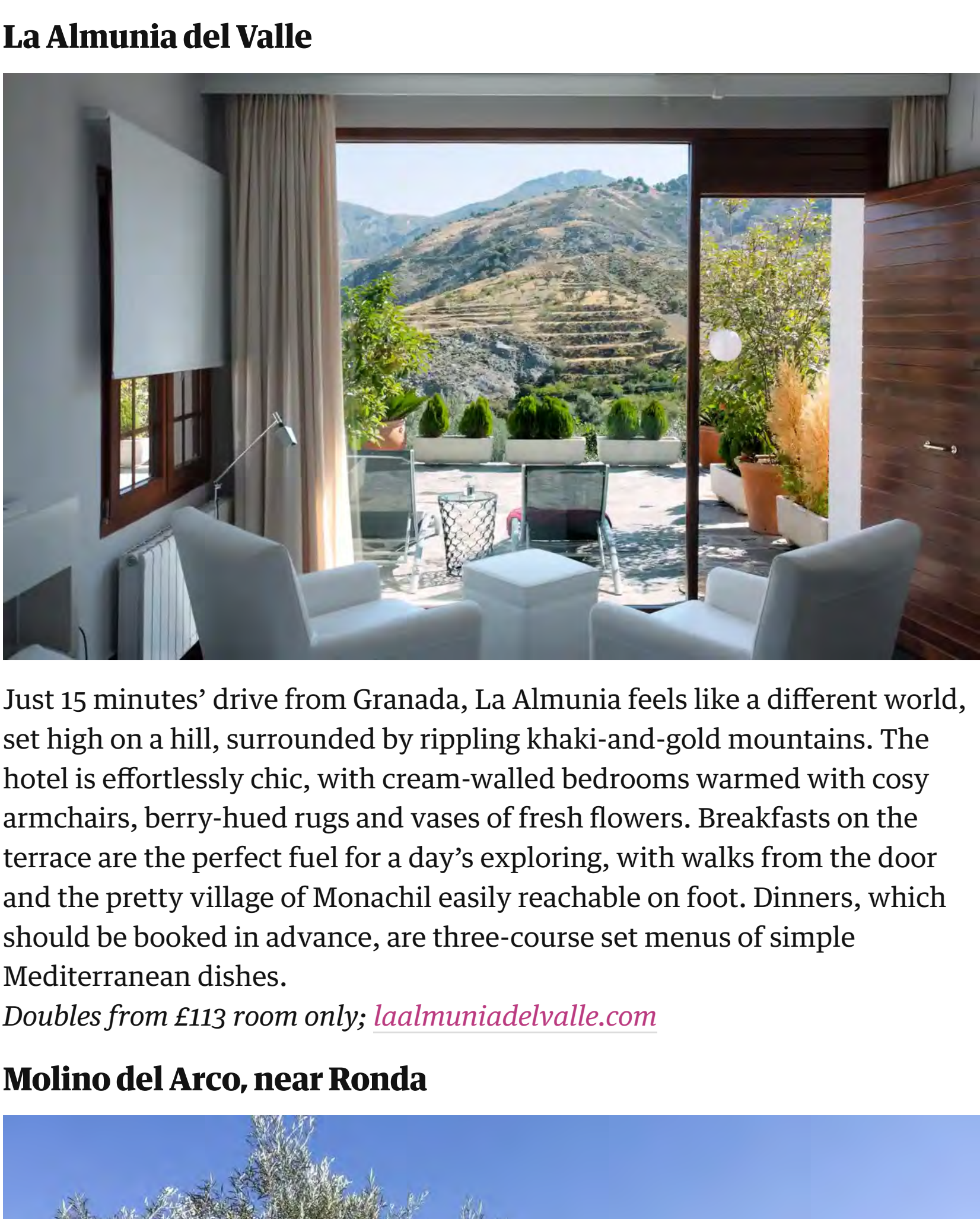


📷 Photograph: Carmen Sedano/Alamy

Tucked away in pretty Cartajima – a sleepy white-walled town that has somehow managed to remain under the tourist radar – this small, traditional hotel makes a wonderful base for dipping into the larger, better-known white towns (Ronda is 11 miles away). The six rooms are simple but warmly furnished, with Moroccan mirrors and local artworks, and although there’s no pool there are armchairs to sink into and patios that make the most of the spectacular views. In the evening, a set menu of slow food dishes is one of the best in the area.

Doubles from £111 B&B; [loscastanos.com](#)

La Fuente de la Higuera, near Ronda



📷 Photograph: Robin Smith/Getty Images

Close enough to Ronda to dip in and out, La Fuente offers something a little different to many Andalusian hotels, with light, airy bedrooms dotted with exotic antiques and objets, wood and sandstone floors and sleek, hardwood furniture. This is a great choice for those looking for an active break, with canoeing, mountain-biking and parapenting all easily arranged by the hotel. With Ronda just 10 minutes’ drive, it can be tempting to head out for dinner, but suppers at the hotel are fresh and organic with vegan and veggie options always available.

Doubles from £169 room only; [hotellafuente.com](#)

Fountainhead, Axarquía



Ideal for couples looking for some peace, space and uninterrupted time together, Fountainhead has just four ornate suites, each with its own private pool and terrace. Don’t come expecting rustic simplicity; the suites blaze with colour – walls in bottle green and deep claret-red – while the restaurant serves up inventive gourmet dishes, with the wine list an encyclopaedic dip into Spanish vintages. The Bath House offers restorative spa treatments and salt and essential oil baths, with one-to-one yoga classes available.

Doubles from £193 B&B; [fountainheadinspain.com](#)

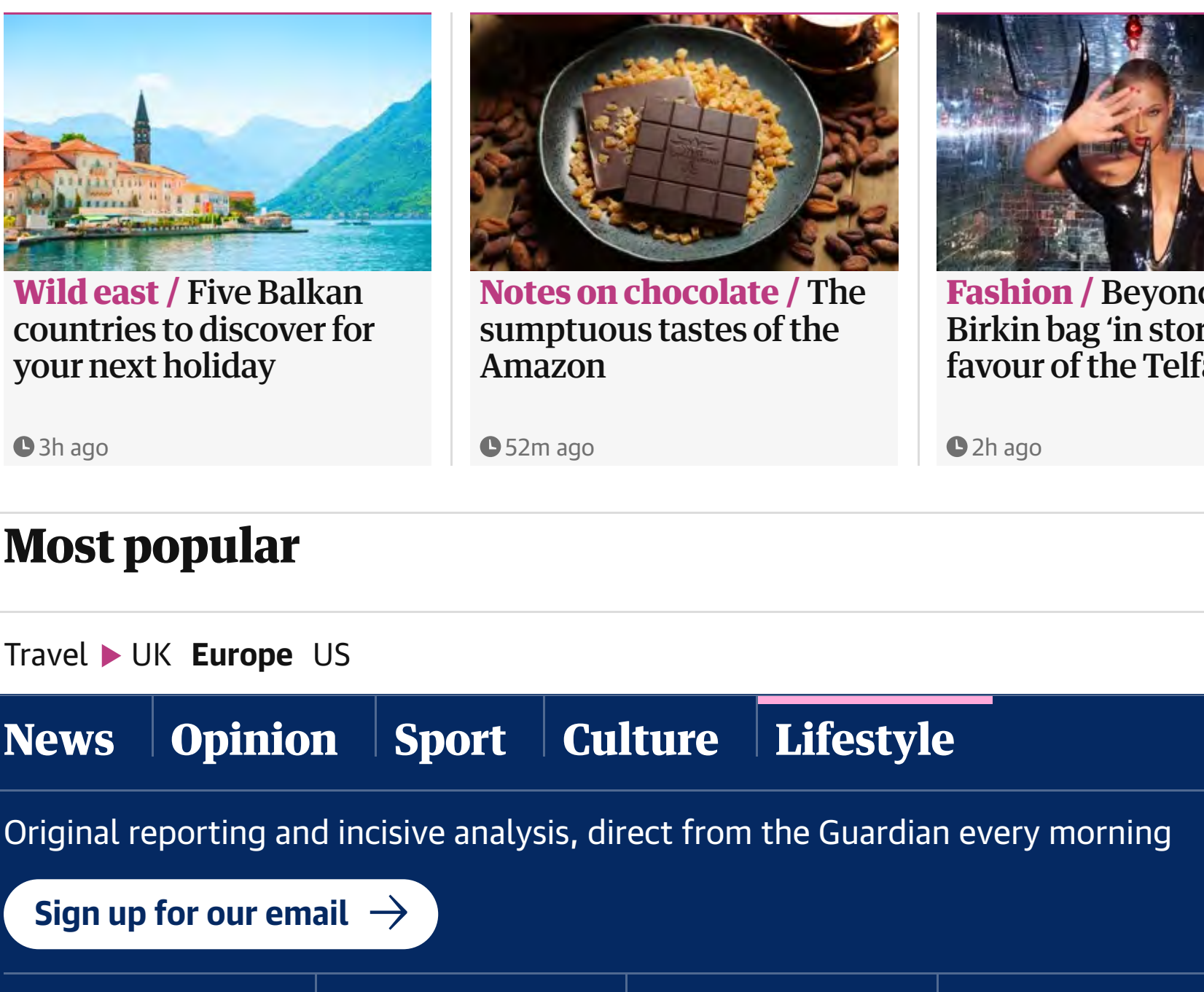
La Almunia del Valle



Just 15 minutes’ drive from Granada, La Almunia feels like a different world, set high on a hill, surrounded by rippling khaki-and-gold mountains. The hotel is effortlessly chic, with cream-walled bedrooms warmed with cosy armchairs, berry-hued rugs and vases of fresh flowers. Breakfasts on the terrace are the perfect fuel for a day’s exploring, with walks from the door and the pretty village of Monachil easily reachable on foot. Dinners, which should be booked in advance, are three-course set menus of simple Mediterranean dishes.

Doubles from £113 room only; [laalmuniadelvalle.com](#)

Molino del Arco, near Ronda



📷 Photograph: Perry van Munster/Alamy

A characterful converted olive mill with a low-key sophisticated feel, Molino del Arco is a rural hotel, with works by **Braque** dotted across the walls and antique furniture in the lounges. It has a charming Moorish-style garden, with orange, almond and pousimmon trees. Rooms oozie rustic chic, with terracotta floors and pretty printed fabrics, some with romantic, canopied beds. The hotel’s rich kitchen garden supplies many of the ingredients for sumptuous evening meals, with the well-stocked honesty bar ideal for a nightcap under the stars.

Doubles from £146 room only; [hotelmolinodelarco.com](#)

La Bobadilla, near Loja

📷 Photograph: Manolo Yllera

A picture-perfect fly and flop, Bobadilla is a luxurious country estate set deep in the Sierra de Loja, surrounded by 350 hectares of private grounds. It’s bigger than many hotels in the area – 83 rooms – and offers a wide range of experiences, including walking tours, olive oil and wine tastings and bikes to hire, while helicopter tours and hot-air ballooning can be arranged. Kids will love the farm animals, outdoor playground and separate children’s pool, while foodies are spoilt for choice, with two restaurants serving upmarket Spanish dishes and more rustic Andalusian food.

Doubles from £210 room only; [barcelo.com](#)

El Paraje del Chef, Laroles

📷 Photograph: Bon Appetit/Alamy

An adults-only foodie escape, El Paraje del Chef (the Chef’s Place) is the creation of chef Juan Carlos Espejo, who offers a “getaway with gastroexperience”, with a nightly menu of fusion dishes, using ingredients from local farms and the Granada and **Almería** food markets. There are just three individually styled “cabins”, each with a wood-panelled seating area and luxurious en suite bathrooms with exposed brick walls. The surrounding Alpujarran countryside is crisscrossed with more signposted walking trails than from anywhere in Spain.

Doubles from £215 dinner, B&B; [elparajedelchef.com](#)

● This article was amended on 31 July 2022 to correct a misspelling of Axarquía.

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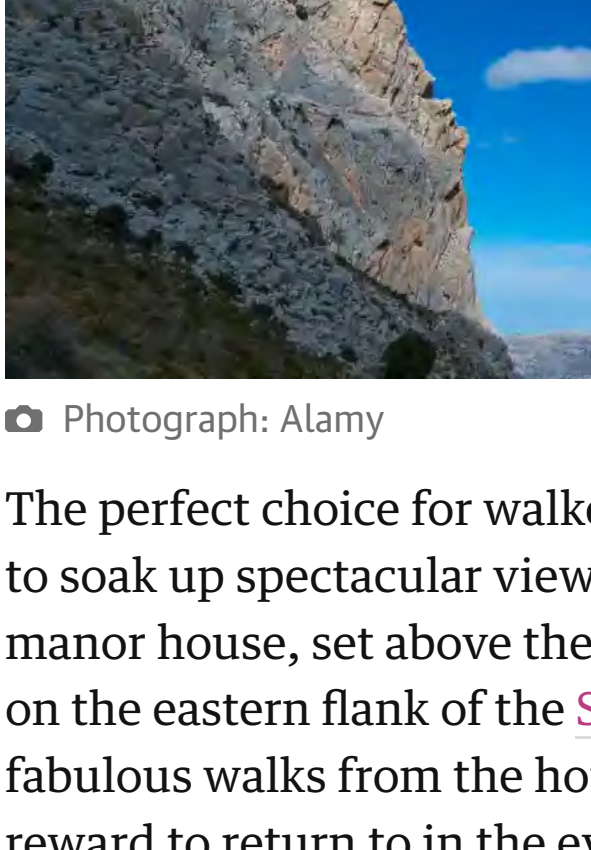
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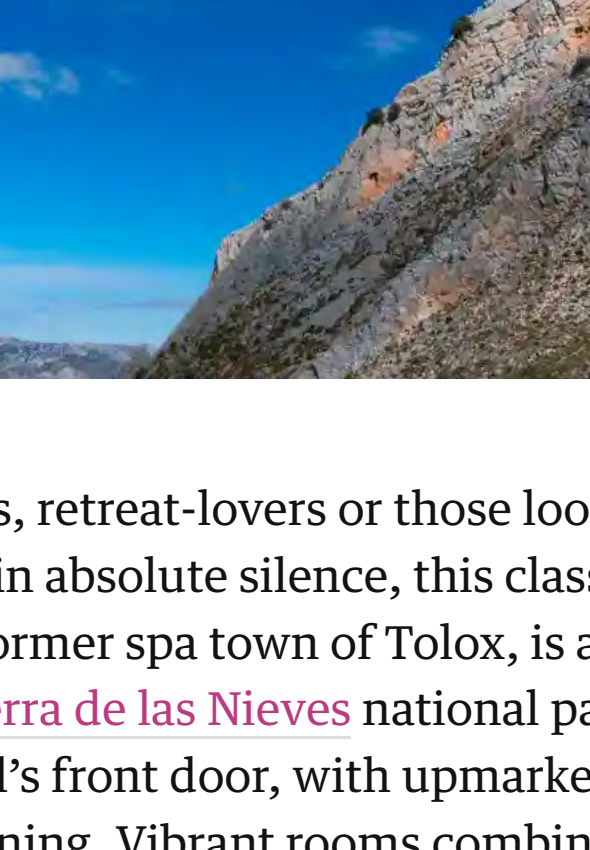
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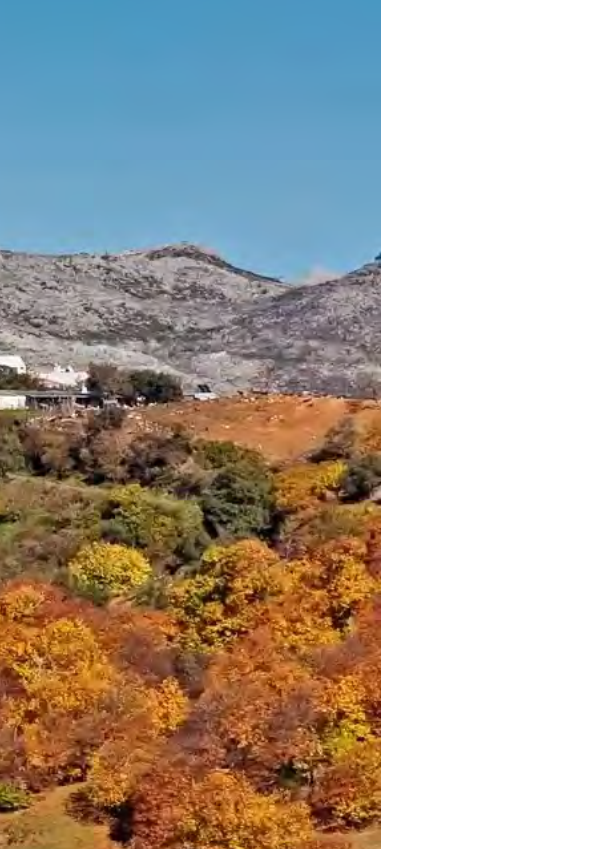
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