

Travel

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‘There are 80km of wild coastline, countless great beaches, and very few tourists’

James Ellis visits Crete’s less-visited east coast

MICHELLE CHAPLOW

2 Hotel Cortijo del Marques, Albolote



Andalusia’s 20 best hideaways

From charming fincas tucked away in the hills to secret city B&Bs, southern Spain has plenty of cool places to stay. **Helen Ochyra** seeks out the best

1 Almohalla 51 Archidona

Even the promise of a meander around the gleaming whitewashed village of Archidona might not be enough to rouse you once you settle into this beautiful, adults-only bolt hole. Everything is about relaxation, from languid days lounging about the shaded patios or soaking in the plunge pool, to nights in a cosy corner with a glass of wine. The five bedrooms have whitewashed walls and timbered ceilings. Breakfast is served on the patio or at the communal dining table. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €100 a night (00 34 952 71 63 70, almohalla51.com). Fly to Malaga or Granada

2 Hotel Cortijo del Marques Albolote

It’s pretty much just you and the olive trees out here, plus a great view of the mountains from the small outdoor pool. It’s a short drive from Granada if you want to visit the Alhambra, but the owners have created quite the soporific escape so chances are you’ll want to stay put. The 15 rooms are spread throughout the 500-year-old cortijo; the best is in the former grain silo with a gorgeous wooden ceiling. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €119 (00 34 958 34 00 77, cortijodelmarques.com). Fly to Granada



Almohalla 51, Archidona

3 Hospes Palacio del Bailio Cordoba

Cordoba was once the largest city in Roman Spain, and this palatial hotel gives a nod to the city’s former grandeur, with its Moorish gates, flamboyant frescoes and grand, citrus-filled courtyard — there are even Roman ruins displayed beneath the restaurant’s glass floor. You’re tucked away from the city here and it’s tempting to stay on the canopied four-poster beside the pool all day, although it is an easy walk to all the main sights, including the Mezquita. Rooms are surprisingly spacious for such an old ►

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ABRAN RUBINER



10 Hacienda de San Rafael, Las Cabezas de San Juan

building; those overlooking the courtyard are the most peaceful. **Details** B&B rooms cost from £120 (0330 1275743, mrandmrsmith.com). Fly to Jerez

4 Shanti-Som Sierra de las Nieves

This retreat in the Sierra de las Nieves offers a selection of Pilates, yoga and fitness programmes. Everything is included, from the healthy meals in the Samsara restaurant to use of the sauna, steam room and gym. Spa treatments are available at additional cost. The 14 rooms have views across orange groves, and the pool is surrounded by gardens.

Details Six nights' full board costs from £1,375pp, including activities (020 3397 8891, healthandfitnesstravel.com). Fly to Malaga

5 DDG Retreat near Casares

Up in the Sierra Crestellina above the town of Casares you'll find three suites clinging to the wooded slopes. Book the Royal or Maharaja suite and, although technically you're sleeping in a tent, you'll find marble floors, chandeliers and comfy beds, plus either a hot tub or plunge pool on the terrace. Casa Pino is more rustic, and comes with an alfresco bathtub and a plunge pool. Breakfast includes a glass of cava, and platters of local meat and cheese can be brought to

your suite for lunch or dinner. There's also a spa and a large shared pool.

Details From €147, room only (hostunusual.com). Fly to Malaga

6 Almijsara Residence Competa

This four-room guesthouse in Competa is a lofty smattering of salt-white buildings surrounded by vineyards. The plant-decked roof terrace looks on to the church, and two of the rooms have balconies that overlook the village square. The owners, Paul and Maurice, make each stay feel like a relaxed visit with friends. Breakfast focuses on Andalusian produce and local wine appears every night for happy hour.

Details B&B doubles cost from €65 (00 34 642 95 02 69, furtherafield.com). Fly to Malaga

7 Finca el Moro Sierra de Aracena

A stay at Nick and Hermione's farm in the Sierra de Aracena national park is billed as "an escape from the tyranny of urgency", so don't expect TV or wifi. Instead there are walks along old smugglers' paths, horse rides to local villages for tapas and alfresco yoga, as well as Violetta the donkey, who gives rides to children. Nick and Hermione produce most of their own food, from olive oil to jamon serrano, and the accommodation is blissfully quiet,



5 DDG Retreat, near Casares

spread through three stone barns, each with a pool.

Details Rooms cost from €130 (00 34 627 47 97 38, fincaelmoro.com). Fly to Seville

8 Posada La Sacristia Tarifa

The beaches of Tarifa (and their associated water sports) are a short walk from this hidden hotel in a 17th-century

palace in the old town. The ten bedrooms are white and airy — think Juliet balconies hiding behind billowing ivory drapes — and there's a sauna, plus acupuncture and massages on request. The hotel staff can also rent out bikes, book kitesurfing and windsurfing lessons, and organise guided tours to Morocco just across the water.

Details Rooms cost from €85 (00 34 956 68 17 59, lasacristia.net). Fly to Gibraltar or Jerez

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9 Casa Shelly Hospederia Vejer

There's something instantly soothing about this guesthouse, with its whitewashed rooms, brightly tiled floors and courtyard full of flowers. Don't expect tons of facilities; this is more a home from home and you're on your own for breakfast — popping out for pastries and coffee to bring back and eat in that courtyard, perhaps. The seven rooms range from one designed for single travellers to a sizeable junior suite. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €80 (00 34 639 11 88 31, furtherafield.com). Fly to Jerez

10 Hacienda de San Rafael Las Cabezas de San Juan

Almost halfway between Seville and Jerez, this restored 18th-century olive estate offers numerous activities to keep you in the countryside, from horseriding and guided hikes to organic farm visits and yoga sessions, while the restaurant serves local produce at tables arranged around an ancient well. Eleven standard rooms run off the bougainvillea-decked courtyard, and each of the three casita suites has a private garden. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €235 (00 34 954 22 71 16, hacienda desanrafael.com). Fly to Seville or Jerez

11 Hotel V Vejer

This hotel is worth booking for its roof terrace alone, a glorious space where you can soak in a hot tub or loll on a Bali bed overlooking the rooftops of Vejer — on

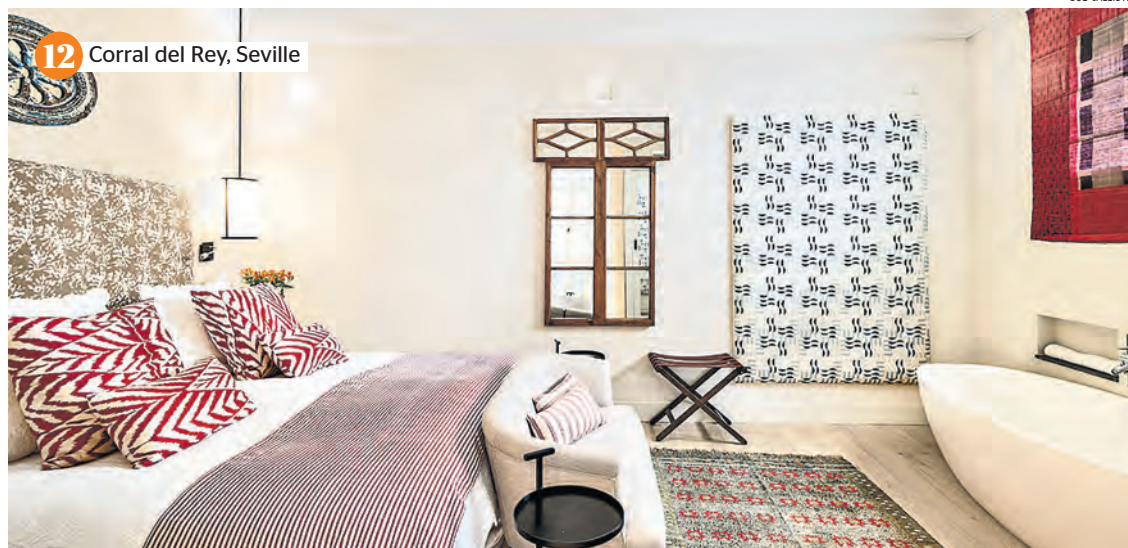
a clear day you can even see as far as Morocco. Vejer is one of Andalusia's most picturesque hill towns and has an enticing selection of restaurants. You'll need these for dinner, although breakfast is served in the courtyard until midday or later. The 12 rooms range from snug to spacious. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £138 (0117 9467072, i-escape.com). Fly to Jerez

12 Corral del Rey Seville

You don't need to tackle Seville's crowded streets to take in its cathedral — simply book a stay at this 17th-century *casa palacio* and soak up the view from the roof terrace. The 17 rooms are spread across three buildings, and you'll spot Roman marble columns and original wood carvings as you make your way to your room. Standard rooms are traditional and cosy, while each of the two pool suites has a plunge pool. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £205 (0330 1275872, mrandmrssmith.com). Fly to Seville

13 Finca Naranja Ronda

Worried the children will disturb those hushed couples at breakfast? This one's for you. Finca Naranja has oodles of space (14 acres to be exact) and each suite is in a stand-alone cottage, some featuring sleeping platforms reached by a ladder. You will have to share the pool and playground, but breakfast is eaten on your private terrace (it's also left in the fridge for you so you don't even need to get dressed). **Details** B&B doubles cost from £133 (0117 9467072, i-escape.com). Fly to Malaga



12 Corral del Rey, Seville



8 Posada La Sacristia, Tarifa

14 Hotel Palacio Blanco Velez Malaga

Escape the crowds of the Costa del Sol by turning inland to the lesser-known Velez Malaga (be sure to be there on a Thursday for the market) and this 18th-century palace turned hotel. The nine simple rooms are arranged around a quiet courtyard, where breakfast is served, and on the rooftop is a small pool and sun terrace with views of the town's Moorish castle. **Details** Rooms cost from €104 (00 34 952 54 91 74, palacioblanco.com). Fly to Malaga

15 Fountainhead Axarquia

Forget the region's typical whitewashed walls — each suite here is decorated in a different acid-bright colour scheme. The restaurant continues the fiesta, serving dishes that burst with colour and make use of homegrown ingredients. Breakfast is delivered to your suite, so there's no rush in the mornings — there's also no TV. Suites have their own pool. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €225 (00 34 696 18 33 09, fountainheadinspain.com). Fly to Malaga

16 Las Chimeneas Alpujarra mountains

The Alpujarra mountains are a walker's paradise, as is this friendly guesthouse. The owners, Emma and David, often lead guided walks, but there are also self-guided walks or you can simply sit by the pool and enjoy the view before settling in for a Spanish-Moroccan dinner at the on-site restaurant. The

nine rooms have those same views, and the scattered books and antiques add a homely feel. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €90 (00 34 958 76 00 89, laschimeneas.com). Fly to Almeria

17 Hotel Casa Morisca Granada

Wander through the studded wooden gate into this Moorish hotel's shady courtyard and you'll leave the bustle of Granada's Albaicin behind. The standard rooms are somewhat small (although some have views of the Alhambra), so it's worth booking the deluxe room for its separate seating area. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €91 (00 34 958 22 11 00, hotelcasamorisca.com). Fly to Granada

18 La Donaira Sierra de Grazalema

Head for the hills and this biodynamic farm for a true hideaway. The nearest village is a ten-minute drive away and through the huge picture windows the mountains tempt you out for long walks. There's much to stay in for too, including a spring-fed pool, yoga platform and spa. The nine rooms have a quirky style while much of the food is vegetarian. **Details** Rooms cost from €340pp, all-inclusive (00 34 951 39 00 59, ladonaira.com). Fly to Jerez

19 Casa No 7 Seville

British style meets Andalusian flair at this private mansion turned boutique hotel. The owner, Gonzalo del Río y González-Gordon, loves all things British, so you'll find the sort of artworks and antique furnishings you might expect to see in a National Trust property. The six rooms are arranged over three floors — the drawing room with fireplace and honesty bar makes up for their cosy proportions. **Details** Rooms cost from €200 (00 34 954 22 15 81, casanumero7.com). Fly to Seville

20 La Bobadilla

Take the family to this rambling estate arranged around a child-friendly five-star finca. There's a free club for children aged 4-12 (July and August only) and a gated, shaded playground, while teenagers will love La Bodeguilla, a lounge with pool table, computer games and piano. There's also a glorious spa with indoor pool, hydrotherapy, sauna and steam room. It's remote, although Granada is doable as a day trip. **Details** B&B doubles cost from €188 (0333 3636366, mrandmrssmith.com). Fly to Granada or Malaga

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