



Where is the Costa del Sol?

The Costa del Sol is the name given to the Mediterranean Sea in southern Spain between Sotogrande in the west, and Nerja in the east. The Costa del Sol is the southern part of the Andalusia region. Malaga is the capital.

Information about the Costa del Sol

The Costa del Sol, dotted with numerous famous resorts, is one of the most popular places in Spain to spend your holidays, as well as one of Europe's favorite places to move to. Typical aspects are the wonderful climate all year round, the beautiful beaches of the Costa del Sol, lots to do and see, great communication and many affordable houses.

In general, the Costa del Sol can be divided into three areas:

Western Costa del Sol: located between Sotogrande and Marbella. The area includes the resorts of Manilva, Estepona and Marbella, as well as the small town of San Pedro and the white villages of Benahavis, Casares Istán, and Ojén. The western part of the Costa del Sol is home to some luxury resorts and the most expensive real estate properties - Marbella Golden Mile, Puerto Banus and La Zagaleta estate are all located here.

Central Costa del Sol: this area is the most developed and lies between Marbella and Malaga. Here you will find the popular resorts of Mijas Costa, Fuengirola, Benalmadena and Torremolinos, the place where mass tourism started on the Costa del Sol in the 1960s.

Eastern Costa del Sol: Located between Malaga and Nerja. This area is less known and is therefore quieter and less developed. Popular resorts on the Eastern Costa del Sol are Torre del Mar, Torrox and Nerja.

How big is it?

The Costa del Sol stretches along the Mediterranean coast for about 150km, although it is not very wide. High mountain ranges along large parts of the coast have limited new developments inland.

What is the population of the Costa del Sol?

The official population of the Costa del Sol is more than 1 million. With only 1,700 inhabitants, Istán is the smallest of the 11 municipalities that make up the Costa del Sol. Marbella is the largest resort with an official population of almost 140,000 people. Malaga has about 568,000 inhabitants.

How many people of foreign origin live in the Costa del Sol?

Officially, almost 300,000 foreigners live on the Costa del Sol, about 18% of the population. In some resorts, such as Mijas and Marbella, almost half of the inhabitants are of foreign origin.

Two-thirds of the foreign residents of the Costa del Sol are European, while British citizens form the largest group - more than 75,000 Britons are based in the Costa del Sol.

What is the weather like in the Costa del Sol?

The weather is one of the main attractions of the Costa del Sol. There are 320 days of sunshine a year (which is guaranteed), there is little rainfall and temperatures are pleasant throughout the year. It can be very hot in the summer, because the temperature can easily exceed 30 degrees. However, in winter the temperatures are mild; rarely the temperature drops below 16 degrees during the day.

How can I reach the Costa del Sol?

Very easy, especially if you are travelling from a European city to the Costa del Sol. Malaga airport is in third place when it comes to the busiest airports on the Spanish mainland. Malaga Airport welcomes more than 15 million passengers a year.

From Malaga Airport you can fly to more than 100 destinations worldwide, including the largest cities in Spain, most European capitals and New York (in the summer season). There are about 70 airlines operating all year round.

If you are in a resort on the western side of the Costa del Sol, and you are flying from the United Kingdom, it might be worth looking at flights to Gibraltar Airport (see below).

How long does the flight to the Costa del Sol take?

From the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, flights to the Costa del Sol take about 2.5 to 3 hours.

From Central Europe: a flight from Germany to the Costa del Sol takes at least 3 hours.

From the US: a flight from Malaga to New York takes 7 to 8 hours.

How far is it from the Costa del Sol to Malaga airport?

Distance from Malaga Airport to the centre of Malaga: 8km, about 10 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Benalmadena: 10km, about 15 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Fuengirola: 24km, about 20 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Marbella: 50km, about 40 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Estepona: 80km, about 55 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Manilva: 90km, about 65 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Torrox: 65km, about 45 minutes by car.

Distance from Malaga Airport to Nerja: 70km, about 50 minutes by car.

How far is it from the Costa del Sol to Gibraltar airport?

Gibraltar airport is about 30km from Manilva, 48km from Estepona and 76km from Marbella. Please allow at least 30 minutes extra travel time before crossing the border between Gibraltar and Spain.

What are the main attractions of the Costa del Sol?

There is a long, long list of attractions on the Costa del Sol. The beaches on the Mediterranean are one of the main attractions. The resorts on the Costa del Sol offer various beach options. There is something for everyone.

Recreational opportunities are in place 2. Like the beaches of the Costa del Sol, there are several options to choose from. Sports enthusiasts can choose from more than 60 golf courses (some of the Costa del Sol's courses are among the best in the world), Blue Flag (marinas), tennis and racquet clubs, as well as numerous opportunities for outdoor sports such as climbing, hiking, canyoning... And of course, skiing in nearby Sierra Nevada, just 2 hours' drive from the Costa del Sol resorts.

There are also many family activities to choose from. From safari excursions in Selwo Aventura to visiting one of the world's best zoos in Fuengirola; from the water parks in Torremolinos and Mijas to a cable car that takes you to the top of a mountain in Benalmádena. Let's not forget the Tivoli World theme park, Sealife, Mariposario (butterfly park), music museum and dolphin watching.

Besides the many tourist attractions, the Costa del Sol also has a lot to offer for the residents themselves. Resorts have excellent medical facilities, facilities and schools, including many international schools that offer children the chance to receive education in another language, as well as Spanish.

How are the beaches of the Costa del Sol?

The 150km long coast has many different types of beaches. Along the Costa del Sol you'll find long sandy beaches, pebble coves, naturalist spots, family-friendly beaches, popular beach clubs and secluded coves that you probably have all to yourself. By 2016, the Costa del Sol had a total of 22 Blue Flag beaches. Benalmadena, Fuengirola, Estepona and Mijas each had 3, while Marbella had 4.

What cultural activities are there in the Costa del Sol?

Apart from the beaches and recreational activities, there are many other things to do in the Costa del Sol. Most resorts have year-round cultural programmes with theatre, music, art and dance. Malaga is the cultural centre of southern Spain with more than 35 museums, including the famous Picasso Museum and the Pompidou Centre. The city is also home to a philharmonic orchestra, several theatres and concert halls.

For activities outside the city, there are also various options. Marbella has an annual art exhibition and there is the summer Starlite Festival with big names - Santana, Tom Jones, El Divo and Estrella Morente all performed during the 2016 edition. Jazz festivals take place in Mijas and Alhaurin de la Torre, while the Nerja Festival, held in the resort's world-famous caves, offers top concerts and ballets.

And true to Spanish tradition, the fairs and festivals are an essential part of life on the Costa del Sol. Each resort, town and village celebrate at least one major event a year in honour of the local patron saint. The most famous festivals on the Costa del Sol take place during Holy Week - the solemn processions in Malaga, Marbella, Velez-Malaga have a special tint; the festivities in honour of the Virgen del Carmen, the patron saint of fishermen, are celebrated on July 16, especially in all the resorts on the Costa del Sol; the Malaga Fair in mid-August, known as the biggest summer festival in southern Spain; and the Fuengirola fair in early October.

Eating out in the Costa del Sol

The Costa del Sol is a paradise for food lovers. There are many locations and different kitchens to cater for all tastes. There are literally thousands of restaurants on the Costa del Sol to choose from. Ranging from humble bars serving traditional tapas to gourmet eateries similar to the best that New York or London has to offer.

In terms of absolute top restaurants, there are no less than seven Michelin-starred restaurants on the Costa del Sol. These are four restaurants in Marbella - Dani Garcia Restaurant in Puente Romano Hotel has two stars - one in Malaga, one in Fuengirola and one at Finca Cortesin in Casares. As well as the award-winning restaurants, there are many excellent restaurants where you can dine and enjoy the best food and wine at surprisingly affordable prices.

Due to the large foreign population, the Costa del Sol offers dishes from all over the world. However, Spanish cuisine is preferred. This includes local dishes such as fried fish, gazpacho and Mediterranean standard dishes such as paella and fresh fish. Just about all European gastronomy is represented in the Costa del Sol. You will find numerous British pubs, Italian eateries, French bistros, Swedish restaurants, as well as Indian, Thai, Mexican, Persian, Chinese and Japanese cuisine.

Shopping in the Costa del Sol

The Costa del Sol is a great shopping destination and you will find an extensive choice of shops and larger shops in many resorts.

The best shopping centers in the Costa del Sol

There are several, including:

La Cañada in Marbella - one of the largest shopping centers in southern Spain, as well as popular shopping streets and shops like Apple, FNAC, Guess and Habitat.

Miramar in Fuengirola - one of the most popular shopping centres on the Costa del Sol with a very wide range of well-known brand shops, as well as a selection of smaller shops.

Centro Larios in Malaga - a favourite place among locals and tourists. This mall has a Primark and Dunnes Stores. An extra advantage is the location, namely next to another large shopping mall (Vialia).

El Ingenio in Velez-Malaga - the best shopping centre on the east side of the Costa del Sol with a good selection of shops, a supermarket and a cinema.

El Corte Inglés - the Spanish department store has several large shops on the Costa del Sol, including two in Malaga, one in Fuengirola and two in Marbella.

Best shopping streets in the Costa del Sol

The best places to go are:

Calle Larios in Malaga - in the centrally located street with the adjoining Calle Nueva you will find many famous shops and brands.

Avenida Ricardo Soriano in Marbella - in the main street there are many famous Spanish shops like Zara, Massimo and Mango. The neighbourhood of the old part is full of small, unique shops.

Best luxury shopping spots in the Costa del Sol

If you want to treat yourself to a luxury purchase, Marbella offers the best choice:

Puerto Banus - after Madrid and Barcelona, this is the best place for luxury shopping in Spain. In Puerto Banus you'll find many of the world's most famous fashion and accessory brands. Italian, French and American fashion houses have shops here. This is a great shopping location, even if you just want to see the shop windows.

El Corte Inglés - this department store is also located in Puerto Banus and specializes in luxury brands in all departments, from the supermarket to the furniture.