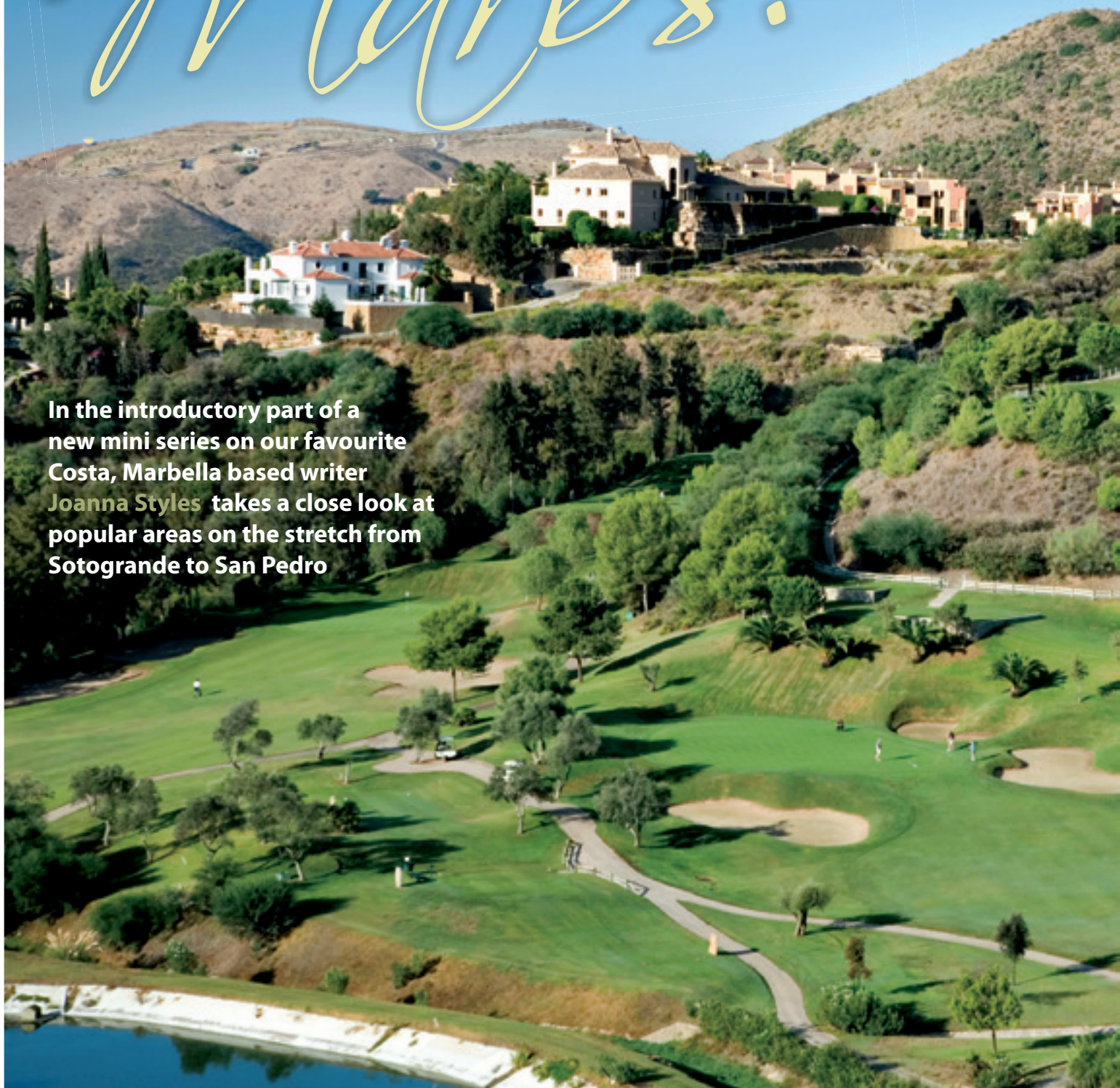


THE ONLY WAY IS
(WEST OF)

Marbella?

In the introductory part of a new mini series on our favourite Costa, Marbella based writer **Joanna Styles** takes a close look at popular areas on the stretch from Sotogrande to San Pedro



Part 1

of our 3-part
tour of the
Costa del Sol

A

long its 150km of Mediterranean-hugging coastline, the Costa del Sol packs a lot in. Long sandy beaches and high mountain peaks sandwich

Mediterranean forests and manicured golf greens. Andalusian white villages rub shoulders with high-rise resorts. Traditional local festivals compete with glitzy nightclubs for fun and noise levels. And lunch could be a typical grilled *sardine espeto* or an all-day English breakfast.

This mixture plus over 320 days of sunshine a year – and that's guaranteed – have massive appeal. If you then add great transport connections (including Spain's fourth busiest airport with direct flights to dozens of destinations) and plenty to do all year-round it's easy to see why over 10 million tourists flock to the Costa del Sol every year. More than ever in fact – 10.19 million visitors in 2014, over a third of them British.

And along with those who pop over for a holiday are the thousands of us who have chosen to make the Costa del Sol our permanent base. Unsurprisingly, the winning combination of sunshine, modern infrastructure and great leisure opportunities has made this part of Spain a top choice for buyers, both for holiday properties and long-term homes.

After seven quiet years on the property market, the Costa del Sol is now back on everyone's shopping lists. Sales soared by almost 24 per cent in Q3 last year – according to the Ministry of Development – and after dropping nearly 35 per cent since their 2007 peak, prices appear to have bottomed out. The price per square metre for holiday homes in Malaga in Q4 last year was down just 0.11 per cent on the previous quarter with some areas – Marbella, for example – seeing slight price rises.

But making a choice about where to buy on this popular Spanish coastline can be challenge. To help you find the best spot for your dream home, this three-part series puts the Costa del Sol under the microscope. First up is the West End – starting at Sotogrande, we make our way towards Marbella with an up close and personal look at the places and property on the way.

West is best? Greenery, low-density resorts – and affordability?

Mountain ranges back the western end of the coast just as they do all the way along the coastline, but they're greener at this end and there are more trees. Higher rainfall is the key to this more verdant landscape and you'll



also find it's windier – don't forget, the European kite-surf capital of Tarifa is just down the road.

It's also a lot quieter. The resorts are smaller, low-rise and generally less touched by the ravages of tourism seen further east. The beaches are still clean but less manicured and some so quiet you can find a spot to yourself even in high summer. This is a place where you'll be hard pressed to find a flamenco doll souvenir and Spanish is mostly what you'll hear on the streets.

"The west coast is far more spread out with a lower build density," says Mia Pearlman of Chestertons Affinity (affinityspain.com). "In the west you'll find a build capacity of 20 to 30 per cent compared with 30 to 50 further east."

This idea of less construction is echoed by Conchi Ruiz from ABF Estates (remaxtop.es) who says that most of her clients in this area are attracted to the quieter and less built-up feeling to this part of the coast. But she points out that this tranquility comes with the down side of being that bit further from Malaga Airport, a disadvantage for those who do a lot of international travelling.

Cheaper property

"Better value for money when it comes to property is a big plus for the western end of the coast," says Samuel Markmann of Crystal Shore Properties (crystalshore-properties.com). "Prices here are much more affordable than Marbella yet it's only a short drive from the more expensive areas".

Official statistics back up this view. In the last quarter of 2014, prices on the western side of the Costa del Sol averaged €2,188 a square metre, but this median hides huge contrasts. At the lower end was Manilva whose property price tags read €1,759 while those in Marbella are almost double at €3,128 (figures from the Observatory of the Urban Environment).

General consensus among agents is that now is the time to buy. Ms Pearlman says that although bank repossessions on the market can give the impression that there's still a way to go before the market bottoms out, the reality is different. "Our vendors are upping their asking prices and very rarely taking a drop in price," she says.

Mr Markmann has also noticed the upbeat feel among sellers. "We're seeing developers starting to increase prices and private resellers aren't so eager to negotiate anymore," he says.

Buyers too think that now is the time to buy. "Nine out of 10 clients tell me they've been waiting for a couple of years and now feel prices are at their very lowest," says Ms Pearlman. "If you've been playing with the idea of buying a property on the Costa del Sol then the time is ripe to take action," adds Mr Markmann.

So, if you're looking for a quieter, less built-up side on the Costa del Sol where your euros stretch that bit further, the West End seems a good option. ☉



ESTEPONA

Population
Around **68,000**
Distance to
airport
81km

What's it like?

Along with Nerja, Estepona is probably the Costa del Sol resort that has best kept its authentic Spanish identity. The town itself has a pretty old quarter with traditional shops and tapas bars, a long seafront promenade with a family-friendly marina at the western end and over 20 (and counting) giant murals dotted throughout the town. Look out for Europe's largest orchidarium opening later this year. Long grey-sand beaches line this part of the coast where you can still find a quiet spot to lay out your towel in August, but Estepona also has its share of luxury. On the so-called New Golden Mile,

five-star hotels and funky beach bars rub shoulders with some of the Costa del Sol's most luxurious beachfront properties.

Alongside are some of the Costa's oldest developments such as El Paraíso with villas and townhouses, and the Cancelada area, popular with relocating families. Inland is the super-luxe Villa Padierna hotel, Los Flamíngos golf course and the hugely successful Selwo safari park.

What you get for your money

When the tunnel-bypass under San Pedro opened in 2012, almost overnight Estepona

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // ESTEPONA



Frontline Med: €168,000 (£124,359)

Located on the New Golden Mile, these two bed, two-bath apartments enjoy sea views from the terraces. Communal pool, gardens and play parks. remaxtop.es



High-spec living: €306,470 (£226,859)

On the New Golden Mile and a short walk from Estepona, these two-bed, two-bath apartments come with high-spec extras and a long list of facilities. Direct access to the beach. crystalshore-properties.com

was just 10 minutes' drive from Marbella. This proximity to its glitzy neighbour is reflected in the property prices, although in Estepona you can buy far more for your money and the cost of living is cheaper here too. You can snap up a two-bed apartment from €150,000 (£112k), although from €200,000 (£149k) buys you a better location. Three-bedroom townhouses cost between €200,000 (£149k) and €450,000 (£336k). "There's a lot of growth potential still in and around Estepona," says Marc Prichard of Taylor Wimpey Espana, who is launching a new development there, Jade Beach. Estepona's one of the Costa del Sol's holiday let hotspots with many properties seeing record occupation in 2014. "The last two years have been great for rentals in Estepona," says Ms Ruiz. Ms Pearlman agrees – "It always does well because it's cheaper, appeals to families and there aren't that many hotels," she says.

► Suitable for:

Families and golfers in search of the Spanish side to the Costa del Sol and/or a buy-to-let holiday home. ☉



WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // ESTEPONA



Off-plan winner: €429,500 (£578k)

Two or three-bedroom apartments with large terraces at this frontline boutique gated development of Horizon Beach in Estepona. Being sold offplan, due for completion in July 2015. taylorwimpeypain.com



Golf on your doorstep

€168,000 (£124,359)

New-build complex with high-end finishes. Located east of Estepona next to a golf course. Two bed, two bath properties. crystalshore-properties.com



Safari park bargain: €178,250 (£133,241)

Two-bed south-facing apartment 900 metres from the beach in Selwo. affinitypain.com



SAN PEDRO

Population
Around 34,000
Distance to
airport
61km

What's it like?

Administratively part of Marbella, the sleepy town of San Pedro is a far cry from its celebrity sister, but it's where *A Place in the Sun*'s presenter, Laura Hamilton, chose to buy a family holiday home two years ago. In the Spanish bars and restaurants life moves quietly by and this is indeed a very much a family-centred town. Hugely improved by the tunnel-bypass, San Pedro has a mixture of traditional Spanish builds and newer developments that meander down to the seafront via the huge boulevard park. A new bus station is on the cards this year and services will include a direct bus to the airport.

What you get for your money

San Pedro's all about location and although it's cheaper than Marbella, you'll still paying a premium for proximity to the luxury postcode. Expect to pay at least €200,000 (£149,000) for a two-bedroom apartment

and from €220,000 (£165k) for a townhouse. In the really prime locations these will be nearer €400,000 (£300k). Prices are on the up as demand increases and the few new developments have been snapped up quickly, within just six weeks in one case. Ms Pearlman thinks the new bus station will also hike up prices. Like Estepona, San Pedro's a sure bet for holiday lets – "walking distance to restaurants, the beach and amenities make it a perfect spot for a holiday," adds Mr Markmann.

Taylor Wimpey Espana are just launching their new development on a frontline spot between San Pedro and Puerto Banus, Jade Beach (see picture, right). So popular is this location, they report that there is already a waiting list of several hundred buyers. Apartments start from €400,000 (£296,242), and are due for completion in July 2016.

Suitable for:

Families looking for a Spanish atmosphere in easy reach of Marbella. ☉

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // SAN PEDRO



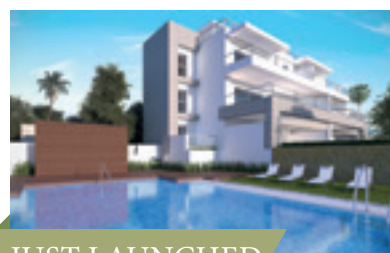
San Pedro: €295,000 (£218,455)

Modern apartment in San Pedro with all amenities, the beach and new boulevard within easy walking distance. Quality finishes, parquet flooring, terrace, private parking. Three-bed, two-bath. affinityspain.com



San Pedro: €375,000 (£277,678)

Beachside three-bedroom ground floor apartment in San Pedro. panorama.es



San Pedro: €400,000 (£296,242)

New complex of 24 apartments in the Nueva Alcantara area near San Pedro. Just 100 metres from the seafront connecting San Pedro with Puerto Banus. Jade Beach is being sold offplan. taylorwimpeyspain.com

MANILVA

Population
Around 14,600
Distance to
airport
91k

What's it like?

Perched above the coast, Manilva is a sleepy town whose economy once revolved around grape growing and vineyards still cling to some of the hillsides. But down on the coast, the big supply of plots caught developers' eyes and Manilva now has some of the area's largest developments. Be very selective about location in the Manilva region. Among the biggest – and better quality – are Duquesa Village and Residencial Duquesa, both with over 500 apartments. Frontline golf property with sea views is available on the two golf courses. Slightly further east along the coast sit the higher-end Marina de Casares and Casares del Mar developments. There's a good choice of shops and services in Sabinillas and the Duquesa Marina with



A townhouse with a view: €198,000 (£146k)

Spacious living with panoramic views of the mountains and coastline from the rooftop terrace. High-end communal facilities in this secure gated complex include pools and landscaped gardens. A roomy three-bedroom apartment. crystalshore-properties.com

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // MANILVA



Gateway to the beach: €102,500 (£76k)

On the Manilva coast, a quiet development with its own private beach access. Two-bedroom and two-bathroom apartments with garage and sea views from the terrace. remaxtop.es



Three-bed penthouse: €150k (£111,532)

Great-value three-bed, three-bath penthouse with huge sun terraces on an Andalusian style gated development in Duquesa just 900m from the beaches of Manilva. europrestige.es

COSTA DEL SOL

its selection of bars and restaurants has a traditional Spanish fishing port feel to it.

What you get for your money

Bank repossessions in Manilva's sprawling developments have been commonplace and the excess supply has brought prices down. That said, sales here were brisk in 2014. "You can still pick up a two-bed, two-bath property in Manilva within walking distance of the beach and marina for €120,000 (£90k) fairly easily," says Ms Pearlman. For something bigger, expect to pay from €180,000 (£134k) for three-bedroom townhouses.

Suitable for:

Young families looking to get a foot on the Spanish property ladder. ☉



WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // MANILVA



Frontline marina: €180,000 (£134k)

Seriously spacious four-bedroom duplex apartment in the heart of La Duquesa marina with sea and mountain views, and roof terrace with BBQ. Beach and all amenities are literally on your doorstep. Four beds, three baths. affinityspain.com



Fine golf living: €130,734 (£96k)

Generously-sized townhouse complete with marble floors, private terraces, solarium, sweeping views. Golf course complex with four pools, playpark and tennis court. Three-bed, three-bath. affinityspain.com



Casares apartment: €159,900 (£118k)

This two-bed apartment is located in a private complex 500 metres from the beach in the authentic town of Casares, through yourviva.com





SOTOGRANDE

Population
Around 2,500
Distance to
airport
105k

What's it like?

Designed and built as a millionaire's retreat, Sotogrande is home to one of Spain's top polo clubs, five golf courses (including the Ryder Cup host Valderrama), a smart marina and some 2,500 luxury mansions. Almost deserted out of season, Sotogrande comes into its own in July and August when diplomats, millionaires, models and the odd Royal get together for a round of golf or a charity fund-raiser.

What you get for your money

Surprisingly more than you'd think considering this is one of southern Europe's most exclusive developments. You can pick up a two-bed marina apartment for just under €200,000 (£149k) and villas start at €600,000 (£448k).

Suitable for: Golf and yachting lovers in search of a (very) quiet life. ☺

One to watch for value: La Alcaidesa



If you like this area but can't afford Sotogrande, have a look at nearby La Alcaidesa. It's one example of an area that is seeing a significant upsurge in interest, especially from British buyers, partly because of its proximity to Gibraltar, which is easy to fly to from the UK and the airport is only a few minutes' drive across the Spanish border.

The other key factor is price. "Currently you can

find amazing properties in Alcaidesa with discounts of up to 60 or 70 per cent. Brand new two-bedroom/two-bathroom homes close to the golf course [see right] are selling for around €103,300 (£76k) which, given their quality build, are not surprisingly generating a great deal of interest in this area," says Marcos Lorient, VIVA Sales Manager. yourviva.com

WHAT'S ON THE MARKET // SOTOGRANDE



Valgrande, €399,000 (£300k)

Lovely two-bedroom ground floor apartment in Valgrande, Sotogrande. Enjoys wonderful views of a ravine, and very generous sized rooms. savills.com



La Alcaidesa: €103,300 (£76k)

This two-bed, two-bath 79m² apartment on a new development in La Alcaidesa is great value. Near golf course and beach, it's in a private complex with shared pool and gardens. yourviva.com

Don't miss Part 2:
Navigating the areas
in and around Marbella

ON SALE MAY 8th