THE DREAM SCENE



Newsletter

Issue no. 48 1st of February, 2011 (Second edition)

Bienvenido and welcome to the 48th issue of The Dream Scene, the final issue of our fourth year in print. We experienced a particularly cold spell around mid January made a lot worse by a vicious north wind. According to the Spanish newspaper *Informacion* temperatures in nearby Rojales dropped to minus six and to minus 9 degrees in Villena. Aside from that very brief cold spell, the winter so far has been reasonably warm and dry.

The Torrevieja and Orihuela Costa areas have been remarkably quiet over the last month. Roads are very quiet in the evenings and I think all businesses are suffering. Hopefully by Easter things will pick up significantly.

I notice that work has finally started on the new large retail outlet scheduled for the area next to the La Zenia toll. This site is now owned by the Auchen Group, who are placing one of their large *hipermercados*, Alcampo, as the leading business in the new park. The hypermarket will cover 14,000 metres². Leroy Merlin, the DIY and builders merchants, have signed up for 9,000 metres², and Decathlon, the retailer of sport's equipment and clothing, will be taking 5,000 metres². There is space for a further 150 shops in the retail village and there will be 4,500 free parking spaces. The development is scheduled to be open in 2012. Looking at the developers leaflet (you can see it at http://www.immochan.com/upload/projet/Zenia%20Boulevard%20Spain%20Project%20201006.pdf), it appears that they are going to build it along the lines of the Habeneras in Torrevieja, with an open roof. This is a pity as there will be no protection from the rain or the sun as you have in *Dos Mares*. In any event it will still be a very welcome addition to the Orihuela Costa area, although no doubt smaller businesses in the region may suffer.

Next month will see the start of a new year's edition of The Dream Scene. As it does involve a lot of work people often ask why I don't get a professional printer to print it? The answer is cost. Including IVA, I was quoted a cost of €310 to produce 300 twelve page copies in black print only. That is more than twice what it costs me at the moment. I would have to increase the advertising and subscription rates and it would then become more of a business rather than a hobby, albeit a time consuming one! I would also have to give the printers my copy a week before distribution date - the first monthly - which would make the contents as out of date as the local English newspapers! You can still have the next 12 issues of the Dream Scene delivered to your post box or home locally for just €5. Alternatively, you can have it sent to you by email in PDF and colour, for the same amount or £5 if you live abroad. It is still produced on a non-profit basis, with the occasional free adverts given to repeat advertisers for their consistent support.

Grateful thanks to Judy & Terry, Kath & Bill and Pat & Laurie for their kind donations.

Mick, Editor.

Feb. 14, St. Valentine's Day



634 336 059



The Basque terrorist group ETA has announced a 'permanent, general and internationally verifiable' cease fire. The government and opposition are not convinced as during the last cease fire (announced in March 2006), it was broken nine months later when two men were killed by a bomb explosion at Barajas Airport in Madrid. Since that cease fire declaration ETA has killed a further 12 people. The Government has already commented that it will need to see the handing in of weapons, but there was no mention of that by ETA. Neither was there any apology to previous victims, any mention of dissolution of the group, nor of an end to the extortion of businessmen for funding which recently has been reported to have been continuing. In his first comment on the new ETA statement, the Minister for the Interior, Alfredo Pérez-Rubalcaba (Rub is as 'tough as nails' and is tipped to replace Zapatero as the leader of the PSOE), said 'If you ask me if I think this is the end, I would tell you no'. The newspaper ABC, has a dramatic black and white front page cover, with the headline 12 reasons not to believe ETA. It shows the faces of the 12 people to have been killed by the Basque terrorists since the declaration of the last cease fire. The paper notes that 845 have been murdered by ETA, and says that the ETA statement 'defrauded' the Government and also Batasuna, ETA's political wing, which had hoped for more in order to stand at the forthcoming municipal elections.

The Spanish 'State of Alarm' has now ended and the civilian air traffic controllers are no longer 'supervised' by the military. Around 1,000 soldiers participated in the operation, ensuring a 24 hour, seven day a week service for 43 days. Inflation is hovering around 3% at present, the latest hike due to large increases in petrol and tobacco prices. The price of petrol is now up by 24% since January 2010 at around €1.28 for 95 octane, the highest its ever been. Increased government taxation and oil company greed are to blame. A review is now being taken of the Spanish saving's banks. If it is found that they are not adequately capitalised, which is most of them, they will be nationalised.

Comments made by the Bishop of Córdoba, Demetrio Fernández, during his sermon on Boxing Day, indicated that Bishops in the Catholic Church believe a conspiracy theory which they claim is being organised by the United Nations. The Bishop of Córdoba said 'The Minister for Family of the Papal Government, Cardinal Antonelli, told me a few days ago in Zaragoza that UNESCO has a program for the next 20 years to make half the world population homosexual.' 'To do this,' he says, 'they have distinct programs, and will continue to implant the ideology which is already present in our schools'. (What's the Spanish for straight-jacket?) Look out for insidious campaigns of flower-arranging and swapping of quiche recipes

In another story illustrating intolerance or rather stupidity, a secondary school teacher from La Línea in Cádiz province, was denounced by a Muslim pupil's parents after the boy said he felt offended by the mention of the word 'ham' in class. The teacher was explaining to his geography class how the cold mountain climate of the area aids in the curing of the hams that the boy became offended. The boy's parents placed a *denuncia* on the grounds of psychological ill-treatment in the context of xenophobia and racism. The Spanish Federation of Islamic Organisations described the *denuncia* as 'absolutely ridiculous' adding that while the Koran may prohibit the consumption of ham, it does not prohibit talking about it. (Maybe if both the Israelis and the Palestinians were to 'tuck-in' to a feed of bacon sani's, they might see each other in a different light!)

On January 1, a 45-year-old woman in a Huelva town was savaged and killed by her two Rottweiller dogs. Then in Málaga last week, a three-year-old girl was attached by a Great Dane/German Shepherd cross while she was eating in a restaurant with her family. She suffered a fractured skull as the animal held her head in its jaws for several minutes. She is now in a serious but stable condition. Dangerous dogs killed five people in Spain last year, including two children under 5.

A 12-year-old boy was left alone in a flat in Burjassot, Valencia, when his parents returned to Morocco to 'sort out some documentation.' Although the flat was said to be in a 'dreadful state,' the boy is understood to be in good health. The parents have still not returned and hopefully will be 'sorted-out' when they do return.

It seems that urbanisation communities across Spain have been fiddling the taxman. 50% of their *facturas*, estimated at 3.5 billion €across the country were not declared to the *Hacienda*. Cataluña leads the tax abuse with €651 million in black money not declared in the region alone. (I think this is probably a case of the suppliers not reporting payments!) The figures declared indicate that the average community charge paid is €600 per year. OUCH!

Ryanair has responded to a ruling by a Barcelona court which ruled against its policy of charging 40 €for passengers who have failed to print out their PDF file of their boarding pass, by threatening not to allow such passengers on board the flight. The Barcelona court considered the policy of the airline as abusive, and now Ryanair has responded that it is considering 'no longer printing boarding passes in the airports where it operates', which means in effect that if you arrive at the airport without your boarding pass, you will not be able to fly. The case was brought by the owner of the website www.retrasos.net, a service which deals with claims against airlines.

Ryanair have just announced new links from Manchester to Madrid, Alicante and Faro. The new services start on April 14 and tickets Jan 27. Ryanair's O'Leary has vowed to undercut the other airlines flying from Manchester, which include EasyJet, Jet2.com, FlyBe and bmibaby. A new twice weekly series will also run from Humberside Airport to Alicante from April 12. Jet2.com are also expanding their operations in Spain. At El Altet airport in Alicante, they are offering three new routes to Glasgow, Newcastle and East Midlands, in addition to the current links to Leeds, Manchester and Blackpool.

Four members of the Civil Guard have been found guilty of torturing two ETA terrorists who were arrested in January 2008 for the fatal bomb blast at Madrid Barajas four years ago which cost the lives of two people. The remaining 11 officers who took part in the operation which arrested the two suspects were acquitted in court. The lengthiest term given by the provincial court in Guipúzcoa, (a province in the Basque Country) in its sentence was for a Civil Guard sergeant, who will spend four years and 6 months in prison, in addition to a 16 year ban from his profession. All four belong to the Civil Guard's Rapid Response Force, the GAR, and must pay compensation to the two terrorists of €24,000. The court ruled it proved that the two men who were taken into custody in January 2008, Igor Portu and Mattin Sarasola, were beaten and kicked and threatened with death after their arrest. Igor Portu, who was admitted to hospital after the beating, claimed that his head was held under the water in a local river, a claim which the court has now upheld. Both of the terrorists were later sentenced to more than 1,000 years in prison. (Is is just me who thinks that the inmates have taken over the asylum?)

The PP Nuevas Generaciones (New Generations Youth Wing) leader, and road safety spokesman, Nacho Uriarte, has been banned from driving for eight months and fined €2,400 for drunk driving and crashing into a parked car. The party said he will not be suspended from his post as he said he was sorry. Well, that's alright then I suppose!

A young farmer's association has warned that the level of thefts from farms in the Alicante region are 'very serious.' In some instances over 20 tons of crops have been stolen. They estimate that over recent months, some €200,000 in artichoke production has been stolen from the areas of San Miguel de Salinas, Orihuela and Abanilla in Murcia. The association states that farmers are having to sleep with their crops to protect them and have demanded a greater police presence and harsher punishments for those caught.

The sports centre of the Orihuela town of La Murada has been closed as thieves have stolen the copper wiring for the lighting in the centre. Damage was estimated at $\le 16,000$.

An unnamed British citizen was arrested after a chase in nearby San Fulgencio on January 20th. The man, who was on the list of the most violent sex offenders in the UK, tried to escape by jumping off a roof and was detained by the police. He has now been sent to Madrid to facilitate extradition proceedings.

An illegal weapons' workshop was discovered in Orihuela. The police arrested three individuals, all Spanish, and confiscated 54 weapons. The seizure included weapons of various calibres, including revolvers, pistols, sub-machine guns, a shotgun and a mortar! Thousands of rounds of ammunition were also seized, together with night vision devices and silencers. The weapons would have been sold at between 400 and €1,000 each. The 60-year-old alleged leader of the gang, who also ran a scrap metal business, is reported to be highly skilled in the manufacture of weapons, particularly single shot pen-guns which sold for €200. Now what would anyone want with a mortar?

A recent survey found that 73% of Spaniards think Spain will not exit the crisis in 2011. It says most want early elections next year and also to see the end of ETA.

In July 2008, a homeless drug addict was released from prison after serving 13 years of a 36 year sentence for a crime he didn't commit. The original sentence was for a multiple rape and Rafael Ricardi was convicted based on DNA evidence and testimony from one of the victims who said her assailant has a 'peculiar visual defect.' Ricardi is cross-eyed. In 2000, similar rapes were reported and when the DNA evidence was rechecked, it was found not to be that of Ricardi. However, Ricardi was still held in custody for a further 7/8 years based purely on the evidence of his visual defect, even while another man was arrested in his place! In late December 2010, Ridcardi was awarded €55,600 in damages, scarcely justice! His lawyers are appealing for more.

A Civil Guard from nearby San Javier has been arrested with a group of Spanish and Romanian burglars for a series of armed robberies. The police officer allegedly not only took part in some of the armed robberies, but also used the Guardia's electronic intelligence system to select the targets and to see if his nefarious colleagues were being investigated or pursued by the police.

People are reported to be squatting in Barcelona flats and then offering them for rental. Reports say that the squatters break into empty property, or when the owners are away. They then change the locks and rent the property to unsuspecting third parties. Cases are on the increase as the judicial cases to evict the squatters or the renters can take as long as three years!

The provincial court in Alicante has confirmed a six month distancing order for a man who insulted his wife by calling her a 'whore' and threatened to keep back the housekeeping money after his dinner was not ready waiting for him on the table when he returned home from work. The man lost his appeal as the judge considered that the man's clear intent with his words was to humiliate and 'dominate his wife for being a woman and because she is not the one who brings in the income to the family home'. Happy Valentine's Day!

Sunkl

A cruise holiday on the Pacific goes wrong, the ship sinks and there are only three survivors, Damien, Darren and Deidre. They managed to swim to a small island and they lived there for three years, doing what comes naturally to most men and women.

After three years of casual sex, Deidre felt horrified at what she was doing, having sex with both Damien and Darren, and in a fit of depression, she killed herself. It was tragic but Damien and Darren got through it and after a few months nature once again took its course. After another couple of month Damien and Darren began to feel awful about what they were doingso they buried Deirdre.....



Peter Dawson 17th April 1938 -20th December 2010 Rest in Peace



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How Much?

'woops' and prays that a sales person was not anywhere near.

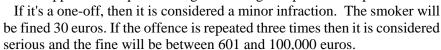
materialises in the form of a salesman standing right behind her - Good looking as well and cool as a cucumber, he displays all of the qualities one would expect of a professional in a store like Harrods. He politely greets the lady with, 'Good day, Madam. How may we help you today?'

Blushing and uncomfortable, but still hoping that the salesman somehow missed her little 'incident', she asks, 'What's the price of this lovely bracelet?'

He answers, 'Madam - if you farted just looking at it - you're going to shit yourself when I tell you the price!' Pete Dudman

The new smoking ban in Spain

What happens to the person caught smoking in a prohibited space?



What happens to the bar owner who allows people to smoke?

This is classed as a serious offence. The fine ranges between 600 and

Within two days of the smoking ban coming into force, a bar in the old town part of Alicante, Bar Bohemia, became the first casualty to fines. A customer, a Polish lady, was fined €30 for smoking in the bar. The bar owner was fined €600, the lowest fine for an establishment; it could have been €10.000!

Bar and restaurant owners across the country have also commented that there is an increasing number of clients who leave without paying the bill, using the excuse of having a cigarette to leave as an excuse. The bar also had a 'Smoking' sign outside.

A bar in Alicante, with only a small pavement area outside, has parked an open-backed lorry outside where customers can sit & enjoy their drink

Sales of electronic cigarettes have soared across the country, with manufacturers taking advantage of a lack of legislation on electronic cigarettes. In Andalucía, the Junta's tobacco laboratory is investigating the devices and their composition. Although they contain no tobacco, it is thought that some may contain nicotine so no doubt the tobacco nazis there may yet have their day.

Speaking about the call from the Minister for Health to report citizens who were flaunting the anti-smoking law, Francisco Javier León de la Riva, the outspoken Mayor of Valladolid said, "This invites people to report one another. This is how terrible things in the history of mankind have always begun. First they started reporting the Jews, we are here now reporting smokers! "

In Bilbao, a 44-year-old went outside a bar with friends to enjoy a smoke, when a piece of cornice stone fell on his head! He needed 30 stitches and stated that the smoking ban 'almost killed him!'

A survey by the National Federation of Self-Employed Associations shows that 8 out of every 10 bar owners have suffered losses between 11% to 60% since the new law came into force. More than half the bar owners A lady walks into Harrods. She looks say they will have to get rid of at least one member of staff. Some of the around, spots a beautiful diamond bracelet larger companies in the sector are studying legal action against the state to and walks over to inspect it. As she bends claim compensation for the money they spent on creating the separate over to look more closely, she unexpectedly smoking areas which were permitted under the 2006 Smoking Law. The farts. Very embarrassed, she looks around argument is that they have been unable to recoup the cost of their investnervously to see if anyone noticed her little ment owing to the changes brought in by the government.

The legislation will be difficult to police and will rely heavily on people reporting offences. Madrid alone has 6.4 million residents and 36,000 bars As she turns around, her worst nightmare and restaurants, but only 17 inspectors to police the area.

Second Opinion

A Doctor was addressing a large audience on poisons in food.

'The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago. Red meat is dangerous. Soft fizzy drinks corrode your stomach lining. Chinese food is loaded with MSG.

High fat diets can be disastrous, and none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water. However, there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all and we all have eaten it, or will eat it. Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?'

After several seconds of silence, an 80-year-old man in the front row raised his hand, and softly said, 'Wedding Cake.'





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The Banana Tree II by Tid

Did you know that the popular Banana Tree in Quesada has opened another restaurant just a short drive from Dream Hills? It is located at Calle Eneldo on the east side of Villamartin, close to Las Piscinas.

When you arrive at this new restaurant, called the Banana Tree II (also called Mr. Yao Jian's Gourmet Thai and Asian Cuisine), the first thing that strikes you is the exceptional décor. This purpose-built restaurant is crammed with a range of carved wood, gilt and brass effigies and statues, under a canopy of vines and leaves supported by two artificial trees, a cornucopia of 'fruits' and 'birds' adorning - almost a mirror image of the restaurant in Quesada. The tables are laid with linen serviettes and napkin rings, together with a full range of appropriate condiments, and the carved upholstered chairs are sturdy and comfortable. The friendly and efficient staff will greet you and show you to your table.

The menu is extensive, offering both Thai and Chinese cuisine. The Thai food offers more delicate flavours with a choice of mild, medium or strong sauces, whereas the Chinese menu is more standard. You can combine both Thai and Chinese cuisines when you are dining.

Before I get to the a la carte menu, I must tell you about the Chef's Special Menu, which changes weekly and offers a choice of 16 starters, 15 main courses – all for Θ – drinks not included. But there is also an excellent Menu del Dia which includes a small drink, also for Θ . Do take note that IVA (VAT) of 8% is not included in any of the prices!

Both the Menu del Dia and Special menus offer many delightful dishes; starters include spare ribs, duck-filled spring rolls, aubergine-stuffed pillow, crispy cuttlefish with pineapple (my favourite), several soups and much more. The main courses include duck in mango sauce, prawn in noodles, Thai style salmon with black bean sauce, chilli beef, chicken or prawn, all served with rice or noodles. These two menus offer excellent value for money and are ideal for a lunch time visit. If you have never tried 'Thai' food before, this is the place to start!

Their a la carte prices are very reasonable and the choice is so varied it is difficult to decide what to have. A good idea is to share a few dishes between friends as the main menu portions are generous and all the food is exceptional.

Starters range from ≤ 1.80 for a small skewer of beef, chicken or prawn, choose as many as you like! Cuttlefish & pineapple with fragrant dip is ≤ 3.75 (Have I mentioned my favourite before?), Larb Gai (spicy minced chicken in a lettuce shells) at ≤ 3.45 , the most expensive being a mixed plate of starters for two people at ≤ 3.45 (very filling).

Main course seafood and meat dishes start at €6.95 with beef and chicken strips with pancakes at €7.95; Thai seabass (a good sized whole fish) beautifully seasoned and cooked at €10.85; plenty of prawn and duck dishes, the dearest being sizzling leg of lamb with pancakes at €13.80. In the past I have enjoyed the seabass and also a dish called Bangkok Eight Treasures (€12.85). This was a mini cauldron of duck, beef, chicken and prawns with veg in a beautiful delicate sauce, very filling and all mine! These generous portions are ideal for sharing if you add an extra rice dish. Speaking of rice, I had to try one of their intriguing 'Ping Ping Pang Pang' rice dishes (€4.65). This is a rice and veg dish with spices, served with a raw egg in the centre of the sizzling pot. The waiter then beats-in the egg at the table, the hot metal pot cooking the egg and producing a sticky rice which is delicious. I recently also tried their Ping Ping Pang Pang rice with a mild curry and prawns, and although I was not a rice lover, it was delicate and delicious, and I am now hooked!

You will be brought a hot towel at the end of the meal to clean your fingers and freshen up. A bottle of house wine costs €6.50 and a large beer €2.65. There is a good selection of wines and drinks and if you have won the lottery, why not go for the Faustino I Gran Reserva at €46.80, which is the top price.

Don't be put off if you go at lunchtime and it is very quiet. Your food will be cooked freshly for you and once this restaurant becomes better known, it will be standing room only! Being a little bit off the beaten track, the Banana Tree II can be difficult to find. If coming from Dream Hills, the easy way is to head towards the Saturday market area of Playa Flamenca. As you pass the bars on the right hand side (including Ebony and Ivory Bar) before the Celtic Isle, take the first right hand turn at the Mercadona green sign which leads to the new Orihuiela Costa Sports' Centre. By the Sports' Centre turn left and keep going, then left at the next roundabout until you will see some rough ground and a bridge leading across the motorway. The Banana Tree II (868186096) is on the other side of the bridge and there is plenty of parking available. The trip takes only 8/10 minutes from Dream Hills.

I have been to the Banana Tree II around eight times since it has opened. Here, they continue to meet the highest standards and every meal I have had there has been faultless. My friends have been equally impressed. It has become one of my favourites and I can confidently recommend it to you. Enjoy your meal there! I am sure you will.

An Italian in London

'One day ima inna London in bigga hotel. Ina morning I go down to eat breakfast. I tella waitress I wanna two pissis toast. She brings me only one piss. I tella her I wanna two piss. She say go to the toilet. I say you no understand, I wanna to piss onna my plate. She say you better no piss onna plate, you sonna ma bitch. I don't even know the lady and she call me sonna ma bitch,

Later I go to eat at the bigga restaurant. The waitress brings me a spoon and knife but no fock. I tella her I wanna fock. She tell me everyone wanna fock honey. I tell her you no understand. I wanna fock on the table. She say you better not fock on the table, you sonna ma bitch. So I go back to my room inna hotel and there is no shit on my bed. I call the manager and tell him I wanna shit. He tell me to go to toilet. I say you no understand. I wanna shit on my bed. He say you better not shit onna bed you dirty sonna ma bitch.

I go to checkout and the man at the desk say "Peace on you". I say piss on you too, and then he call me a cork soaker and I no a cork soaker, I a fowl plucker......I gonna back to Brindisi!'

Out & About

In Via Park III, the Lime Bar raised a commendable €1,400 + last year for Paul Cunningham Nurses. With your help they are anxious to improve on that this year. If you have any old mobile phones you do not require, working or not, do bring them and hand them in behind the bar for the charity please. It is good to see that Neil is 'back in the saddle' again at the Welcome Inn, following his 'freefall' experience.

I had some take-away steak pies from Butterflies Tea Room & Coffee Shop on the ground floor and they were delicious, the pastry being exceptional. Their 'hog-roast' is very popular and is always fully booked. They have transformed what used to be a dowdy outlet into a very attractive and welcoming spot. Do pay them a visit.

Plenty of 'comings & goings' at Via Park V at present. All Bar Sue has reopened with new management and the R Bar has reopened as the Sun Bar & Grill, specialising in fast food. I also believe that the team from Stallion's are moving up to larger premises in what used to be Scampi's on the top floor.

Don't forget that Galadriel's now also stock phone cards, newspapers, TV mag's, milk, etc., for your convenience.

The main structure for the new hotel being built by the roundabout at the bottom of the hill has now been completed after a resurgence by the builders. (I reckon the Eiffel Tower went up quicker!) Seen from the road, the rooms look more like cells, unless of course they have placed the bathrooms on the outside walls!

The really interesting new addition though has been in Los Balcones.

Neurological and Functional Recovnext to the Filton Centre in Los ment which has finally been comstarts. Originally it was to be a development changed ownership so plex covers 16,000 square metres floors. There is a central walking rehabilitation pool and a large spa off from the road. According to for the treatment of stroke victims, dent victims and recovery clinic for



The Juan Carlos International Clinic of ery is opening shortly (within a month) Balcones. This is a massive developpleted after many years and many false nursing/retirement home, but after the obviously did the final vision. The comwith 202 small apartments in the upper area together with two outdoor pools, a and gym. The whole area is also fenced-Informacion.es, this is a private facility the rehabilitation of (spinal) traffic accihigh-performance athletes. The idea is

to combine the treatment of patients with families also helping with the recovery of the victims. There will be a facility for families to stay on the premises, which the owners say can cope with 500 people. The centre also boasts a polyclinic with 38 medical specialties, open to any inpatient or outpatient that requires a medical specialist (radiology, orthopaedics, cardiology, gastrointestinal, dental and ENT). It would be wonderful to see a strengthened Dependency Law in the Alicante region, which would make facilities such as this more accessible to the general public.

One of the matters which seems to have been overlooked is the issue of parking. As this area of Los Balcones is very limited for parking, this will become a major problem when the clinic is operational. Add the vehicles of say, 50/60 staff, visiting families and technicians etc., and it will be chaotic and no doubt affect other local businesses as well.

I was having dinner with Viswanathan Anand (World chess champion) and there was a check tablecloth. It took him two hours to pass me the salt.



I went down the local supermarket, I said, "I want to make a complaint, this vinegar's got lumps in it." He said, "Those are pickled onions".

Butterflies

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Orihuela Medieval Market

The city of Orihuela will be hosting Spain's largest medieval market from February 4th to the 6th. Although it is a massive market with over 400 stalls Anton. On this day people took their over five kilometres, there will plenty of activities to keep you entertained if the pets - dogs, cats, birds, (goldfish?) - to stalls don't appeal to you. There will be wandering troubadours entertaining the local church to have them blessed.

the public, live music, ling or just 'poncing' falconry, costume, pageantry and lots, many attractions for

I went to the market was very impressive done. If you miss this



live theatre, jousting, the younger children.

last year and thought it professionally you are missing one of

the best events in this part of Spain. But do wear some comfortable shoes as there is quite a bit of ground to cover. The market is divided into three main areas, the Catholic town with mini-castle and Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand; the Moorish town and the funfair area. This year an addition theme features the warrior prince, Origor, and Princess Lorena and their battle with Satan to save the Last Cross. Free transport has been laid on by the town hall for the Saturday.

Buses will depart from near the Ayuntamiento, Playa Flamenca on Saturday 5th of February 2011.at 9.30, 11.00, 12.30, 14.00 and 17.45 hours.

Return from Orihuela City to Orihuela Costa: 11.45, 13.15, 16.45, 19.00 and 21.00 hours.



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Feast of San Anton

January 17 was the Feast of San LA LUCTIMA CRUZ knights in armour duel- Locally there were blessings in Orihueabout, lots of people in la Costa and Torrevieja (see photo).

We were thinking of taking our dog more including along, but decided that it might be more appropriate to wait for an exorcism!



Watch your step!

Several years before the Gulf War, a female journalist did a story on gender roles in Kuwait. She noted that there it was customary for women to walk 10 feet behind their husbands.

After the war, she returned to Kuwait and was pleased to observe that now the men walked 10 feet behind their wives. She approached a woman at the airport and asked, "What enabled Kuwaiti women to achieve this role reversal?"

The Kuwaiti woman replied, "Land mines."

Although we use the term 'Spanish Empire', the Spaniards themselves saw it as the 'Holy Roman Empire'. The empire was essentially controlled from Castile, with Madrid as the administrator and Sevilla as its commercial capital and the main port for imports and exports to and from the colonies. As early as the 1490's, Queen Isabella decreed that all revenues/treasures from the colonies were to go to Castile alone.

As Christian-held territory in Spain expanded during the early *reconquista*, the monarchs encouraged resettlement of the conquered regions by granting *fueros*. (These *fueros* were a charter of rights or privileges, unique to the region or town, which gave a certain level of independence and concessions to the inhabitants. These rights often released these areas from taxation by the monarchy.) Efforts were made, mostly unsuccessfully, by several monarchs and their ministers or favourites, notably Olivares, to get the remainder of the 'Spains' to contribute both financially and militarily to help Castile defend the empire. Olivares proposed a 'Union of Arms' whereby the different regions of Spain and the empire would contribute men and funds towards a single army and navy. Whereas the proposal was attractive to the colonies, the Spanish regions - particularly the Catalans - rejected it out of hand. The Spanish-controlled territories in Aragon, Italy and the Netherlands also contributed little to the royal coffers. This meant that the cost of shoring-up and defending the empire fell on Castilian shoulders alone and the cost was immense.

Although we refer to the empire as 'Spanish,' from the late fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century, it was really 'Castilian.' As the empire grew so did the arrogance of the Castilians. A Catalan wrote in 1550 that the Castilians 'want to be absolute, and put so high a value on their own achievements and so low a value on everybody else's, that they give the impression that they alone are descended from heaven and the rest of mankind are mud.'

Spain's global advance can be simply plotted by a series of dates: the 1490s and early 1500s, the conquest of the Caribbean; the 1520s, the conquest of Mexico and Central America; the 1530s, the conquest of Peru; and in the 1560s, the Philippines (named after King Philip II). The annexation of Portugal then led to the acquisition of Portuguese Africa, the Far East, and Brazil. Although the defeat of the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 did not gain Spain any new territory or wealth, it did improve its image on the world stage.

Apart from the struggle between the Spanish crown and the followers of Pizarro in the aftermath of the conquest of Peru, and the abortive conspiracy by Cortés in Mexico in 1566, there was no major challenge to the crown from the settler communities in the New World for nearly 300 years, the indigenous populations being conquered, assimilated or simply wiped-out. It was Spain's fellow Europeans who, jostling for power, would eventually call the great empire the first one on which the sun never set - to task.

At the time of the disastrous Spanish armada episode in 1588, Castile was already bankrupt and had to reschedule its debts three times before the century ended. Continuing wars with England and an emerging France, the 30 Years' war in Germany, but especially the 80 year war with the Dutch, would continue to drain the treasury and lead to massive debt with foreign financiers. 'If the Dutch are not stopped,' a minister in Madrid argued, 'we will lose the Indies, then Flanders, then Italy and finally Spain itself.'

Although the Spanish were greatly shocked by the Armada debacle, in 1625 three significant victories bolstered their confidence: the port of Bahia in Brazil was recaptured from the Dutch; Breda in the Netherlands was also recaptured from the Dutch; and a joint English & Dutch fleet was repulsed from Cadiz with the Spanish killing or capturing 17,000 and sinking 62 ships with minimal loss of their own. As the new (and useless) king, Philip IV, proudly reported in 1626, 'we have had all Europe against us, but we have not been defeated.' However, this run of successes was short lived.

In 1628 a Dutch admiral captured the entire Spanish treasure fleet from America as it was setting out from Cuba. In 1635 France entered the 30 Years' War declaring war on Spain. Then in 1639 between the coastlines of Dover and Deal in the south of England, the Dutch navy under their Admiral Tromp, caused severe damage to the Spanish navy in the Battle of the Downs. (England was at peace with Spain at the time and neutral.) But worse was to come. In 1640, first Catalonia and then Portugal rebelled against the crown and three years later, for the first time, an army of the Spanish Empire was totally routed, this time by the French in battle after it tried to invade France from Flanders. Encouraged by the Catalans and Portuguese breakaways, the nobles in Argon and Andalucia also plotted separatism threatening to tear the peninsula apart. Even in Italy, there were rebellions in the Spanish territories of Naples and Sicily.

In 1648 a weary Spain finally recognized the Independent Dutch Provinces and although a civil war raged in France from 1648 to 1652, Spain was too weak to take advantage of her neighbours vulnerability. England then reentered the fray with Cromwell declaring war on Spain in 1655 and seizing the island of Hispaniola - modern day Haiti/Dominican Republic (not Cuba as I wrote in a previous article) - in 1656, seizing Jamaica in 1658, and also destroying the entire Spanish Indies treasure fleets in 1656 and 1657.

Spain's population growth had ground to a halt around 1580. Epidemic diseases such as bubonic plague, smallpox and diphtheria, together with famine and malnutrition, accounted for the loss of over a million lives in the first part of the seventeenth century. The expulsion of over a quarter of a million Moriscos between 1609 and 1614; the recruitment of 68,000 Galicians to fight abroad and the migration to America of more than 200,000 in the first half of the 1600's, led to a demographic crisis which had a profound impact on economic activity. Except for Madrid, most towns in Spain experienced a fall in population and many villages, particularly in Valencia, were totally deserted.

In 1659, a cowed Spain made peace - the Peace of the Pyrenees - with France. Peace with England came the following year and after three major defeats by the Portuguese, Spain formally recognized the independence of Portugal in 1668.

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'And what does this inkblot look like?' I said it looks like a horrible, ugly blob of pure evil, that sucks the soul of men into a vortex of sin and degradation. He said, 'No, uh the inkblot's over there, that's a photo of my wife.' *Emo Phillips*

Priest to woman: 'I don't think you'll ever find another man like your late husband.'

Woman: 'Who's going to look?'

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Men forget everything; women remember everything. That's why men need instant replays in sports. They've already forgotten what happened.

Rita Rudner

Take a good guess!

A woman decides to have a facelift for her 50th birthday, spends \$15,000 and feels pretty good about the results. On her way back from the clinic she stops at a newsagents and asks the man behind the counter how old he thinks she is?

'About 32,' was the reply. 'Nope! I'm exactly 50,' the woman says happily.

A little while later she goes into McDonald's and asks the counter girl the very same question.

The girl replies, 'I'd guess about 29.' The woman replies with a big smile, 'Nope, I'm 50.' Now she's feeling really good about herself. She stops at a shop, goes to the counter to get buy some mints and asks the clerk this same question. The clerk responds, 'Oh, I'd say 30.' Again she proudly responds, 'I'm 50, but thank you!'

......While waiting for the bus to go home, she asks an old man next to her the same question. He replies, 'Lady, I'm 78 and my eyesight is going. Although, when I was young there was a sure-fire way to tell how old a woman was. It sounds very forward, but it requires you to let me put my hands under your bra. Then, and only then can I tell you EXACTLY how old you are.'

They wait in silence on the empty street until her curiosity gets the best of her.

She finally blurts out, 'What the hell, go ahead.'

He slips both of his hands under her blouse and begins to feel around very slowly and carefully.

After a couple of minutes of this, she says, 'Okay, okay, enough....How old am I?' He completes one last squeeze of her breasts, removes his hands, and says, 'Madam, you

Stunned and amazed, the woman says, 'That was incredible, how could you tell?'

The old man says, 'Promise you won't get mad?'

'I promise I won't' she says.

'I was behind you at McDonalds!'

Ken Billingham

Handing back the keys - new developments.

The current legislation provides that consumers who cannot pay their mortgage must deliver the property to the lender and that in the event that an appraisal showing that the property has all look forward to with great expectations. Whether it is lost value, they must pay the remaining amount. This amount cooked at home or eaten at friends or as in our case going out usually includes exorbitant charges and costs by the bank.

For the first time ever in Spain a sentence from the Court of the First Instance in Navarra, backed by the Audiencia Foral before last, 2009, and had a lovely meal, so we booked again (Provincial Court), has defended the argument that handing for this last Christmas 2010 having recommended it to over the ownership of a property can clear the mortgage debt friends and neighbours. We all expected it to be a delicious with the bank concerned. The sentence goes against what is and a fun time again. established under Spanish Mortgage Law which considers that both the house and the total debt have to be considered.

The main elements of the case are as follows the debtor sought a mortgage for a total of €71,225, which was motorway bridge. The cost? €29 per head. Well what can I granted by the bank (in this case, a branch of the BBVA). However, in the writing of the loan, the bank itself valued the seated as two parties next to each other, one table of nine house at €75,900. Subsequently, the debtor failed to pay. It persons and one of six. The tables were laid out nicely and we then went to a judicial sale (the usual procedure in these cases) sat there in anticipation, and we waited and we waited. One and was auctioned for €42,895 euros (nearly half of the ap- of starters, tomato & lentil soup, was so lumpy and thick, you praised value).

practice in these circumstances, the difference between the value of the award and what it was receivable. In this case, it is 28,129 euros. In theory, the debtor and or his guarantors mostly cold when you got them. When I bit into my first would have to repay the remainder of the debt. But the courts brussel-sprout and cold water spurted out, I ended up eating have now decided that this is not so. The bank will have to only a cold slice of turkey and a few peas.! People were settle for the house, as the value which appears in the writing finishing their meals before their neighbour had even got one. originally was superior to the debt payable. Therefore, it is One couple on the adjourning table to us who had sent their sufficient to cover the principal of the debt claimed, being meal back because it was drowned in gravy never got a circumstantial that the auction, having been unsuccessful, only replacement meal at all, 'say a word and you got nowt' policy awarded the amount of 42,895 euros.

civilian courts. As the amount claimed was less than 120,000 that was supposed to be gravy but it tasted of nothing like it. euros, there is no appeal to the Supreme Court, as in other One table by then who had had enough downed their cutlery, similar cases. In principle, the only option left to the bank's claim to the Constitutional Court. It is the intention of BBVA of the meal to the management, refused to pay, demanded to appeal to this court.

As I understand it, the decision of the Provincial Court, however, does not create law; two judgements by the Supreme were served, loads of uneaten food crowned the plates. Court are now also required before it will be applicable elsewhere.

particularly for the banks who will undoubtedly have to make brandy/Baileys which was by far the best part of the meal. further provisions for bad debt. The government however may not be too keen on this. El Pais reports that Zapatero's govern- ourselves and were just glad to get home and have a sandment has opposed major changes in the practice of credit, and Economy Minister Elena Salgado has said that the Spanish system of obtaining personal guarantees saved the banks from cannot go back to something you thoroughly enjoyed one a similar crisis to that which occurred in the USA.

ALWAYS CONSULT A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL BEFORE MAKING ANY MAJOR FINANCIAL DECISIONS.

Christmas lunch - a bad experience! by Disappointed, Dream Hills.

I think that Christmas Lunch/Dinner is something that we to a restaurant, it is usually the centre of our celebrations. We went to Concierto's at Residencial Parque del Duque the year

This Christmas, together with 15 of our friends we went back to the Concierto Bar/Restaurant which is situated up the back of Playa Flamenca by the school and this side of the blue say except this year it was a disaster, big time! We were could stand your spoon up in it! They could only serve two After the auction, the bank claimed in court, as is standard meals at a time so some of us got our meal but others waited as long as 30-40 minutes; some meals were floating in thick 'globby' gravy and others had none at all. The meals were obviously. People who didn't get gravy on their plate were The sentence in this case is final and not subject to appeal in eventually served some thing liquid and white in a gravy boat got up to complain in no uncertain terms of what they thought their deposit back and then walked out.

The waiters were clearing the tables when the last of us When the waiters came to clear the table nearby everyone had left their lunches and the waiters didn't even query why!!! At If this ruling is ratified, the implications are enormous, the end of the meal we were served with coffee and

Although we stayed until the end, none of us had enjoyed

It is a bitter lesson to learn and the saying is quite true! You year and expect to do the same again. This is a restaurant that we will never go back to again.

(Name and address withheld.)

Groan!

German guy approaches a prostitute and says 'I vish to buy sex vit you'. 'OK' says the girl 'I charge 100 euros an hour'. 'Is goot,' he says, 'but I must warn you, I am a little kinky'.

'No problem' she replies cautiously, 'I can do kinky'. So off they go to the girls flat, where the German produces four large bed springs and a duck caller. 'I vant you to tie ze springs to your handz and kneez'.

'Now pleez you will get on your hanz and knees'. She duly does this, balancing on the springs. 'You vill please blow zis duck caller as I make love to you'.

She finds all this very odd, but figures it's harmless, and the guy is paying. The sex is fantastic. The energetic German bounces her all over the room, with her honking on the duck caller. The climax is the most sensational she has ever experienced, and it is several minutes before she has recovered her breath. Finally she gasps 'That was totally amazing....what do you call that ?' 'Ah' says the German, 'FOUR-SPRUNG DUCK TECHNIQUE'.

Don't come a QROPA in Spain

Since they where introduced in 2006, QROPS have advanced greatly and can now offer reasonable alternative to your UK pension. Again I must stress that every individual has different requirements and should seek expert financial advise from someone who is qualified in that area. The one thing that really upsets me is the way that it is 'sold' within Spain and not advised on.

Recently I was in conversation with someone in a local DH bar [not a local person] who said his job was to "transfer pensions". He did not know my occupation at this stage !! I then asked him what qualifications do you have to give this advise? He replied he had passed a Health and Safety at Work exam when he was a builder !!!! and over the last few years trained as a salesman for Atlas . He had recently been to Malaga for a 1 day course on QROPS!!!!!

This is not uncommon in Spain, and takes you back to the way things where in the UK 25 years ago. Thank God for regulation and hope that it comes to Spain sooner rather than later. I asked the salesman , 'How was it going? 'He said 'Fine , all we have to do is show them a fund that has done well this year and tell them they are losing money by not being in it and how bad their fund is in comparison, fill the forms in and send them to Malaga.'

I found out who the company was and eventually obtained an illustration. After a few calculations I fount that the salesman, I refuse to call him an advisor, got paid 5% of the fund value, the financial advisory company receive7.5% and the QROPS provider 2% initially and then 4% per annum That's a total of £7,250 initially from a fund of £50,000 plus £2,000 every year!

Whist QROPS are still a little more expensive than UK pensions, the above is obscene and does not even include any ongoing advise !!!

I have access to a wide range of QROPS which could be of benefit to you, so if you would like qualified professional advise on your pension please contact me. .Even if you already have a QROPS we may be able to reduce the charges that you are paying. I don't have any more space to give you the advantages or disadvantages of QROPS and will endeavour to provide more details in a future issue but having your pension paid without tax can be very important.

These are important areas for your future wealth... Don't be misguided, contact me Mike Heighway on she loves London." 07957360349 or mike@maypolefs.co.uk for your FREE consultation.

Don't come a QROPA in Spain! Mike Heighway

Pooches!

Some dog I got. We call him Egypt because he leaves a pyramid in every room. Rodney Dangerfield Did you ever walk into a room and forget why you impossible. It kept sliding down the table. walked in? I think that's how dogs spend their lives. Sue Murphy



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Rapid Fire

David Beckham was asked in an interview "You've played for two northern clubs in your career, playing down south for 'spurs', are you worried about the 'stick'." Beckham replied " No, not at all,

I bought a car last month that used to belong to Bonnie Tyler. Great runner, but every now and then it falls apart.

Korea has just introduced a vegetarian Pot Noodle. It's called Not Poodle.

Paddy says to Mick, "Christmas is on Friday this year". Mick said, "Let's hope it's not the 13th then."

I tried drinking from a West Ham FC mug yesterday, but it was

Never judge a man until you've walked a mile in his boots....after that say what you want, he's a mile away and you are wearing his boots.

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This is a very informative and helpful resource. The 260 walks in Spain along the mountain ranges and coasts are accompanied by a detailed description, map, contour profile, GPS waypoints, slide show, photos, driving instructions and a road map. There are also photo sets on more than 1500 plants as well as the many types of butterflies, which you encounter along these hiking routes.

The website is in English, Spanish, German, Swedish and Finnish.

Good News!

The chemists/pharmacists in Los Balcones are now open seven days a week, **365 days** a year from 9am to 9pm.

Like moggies?

If so, you will be pleased to know that for the second consecutive year, Pilar de la Horadada will be hosting an international cat show on the 5th and 6th of February at the Duques de Palma.

Points to Ponder.

The salary of the chief executive of the large corporation is not a market award for achievement. It is frequently in the nature of a warm personal gesture by the individual to himself. J.K. Galbraith.

With fame I become more and more stupid, which, of course, is a very common phenomenon. Albert Einstein.

Men's legs have a terribly lonely life - standing in the dark in your trousers all day. Ken Dodd.

The English are not happy unless they are miserable, the Irish are not at peace unless they are at war, and the Scots are not at home unless they are abroad.

George Orwell.

If you want my opinion on the mystery of life and all that, I can give it to you in a nutshell: the universe is like a safe to which there is a key. But the key is locked up in the safe. Peter de Vries.

Any astronomer can predict with absolute accuracy just where every star in the universe will be at 11.30 tonight. He can make no such prediction about his teenage daughter. James T. Adams.

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