



SAMPLING SPAIN'S COASTAL CITIES

WRITTEN BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

“First time” milestones set the tone for life going forward, and my first “professional” overseas trip to Bilbao,

Spain and the surrounding Rioja wine region in 2004 continues to inform the way I travel... and still puts a smile on my face. While I had traveled abroad prior to that, I felt this trip was the first one I had truly earned and could truly enjoy on my own terms. Although I was required to work much of the time (taking copious notes, interviewing winemakers, sampling a lot of wine and delivering articles for exacting editors on time), specific details

about that trip are far more vivid than my earlier European jaunts.

Earlier this year, when I sailed on the Celebrity Beyond ship’s maiden voyage from Southampton to Barcelona, I was particularly excited about the scheduled days-in-port. La Rochelle, the first stop, allowed me to put my conversational French to good use. The Lisbon stop allowed me to enjoy a leisurely day with friends. However, at the outset of the trip, I was looking forward to the day in Bilbao to see if it was still as wonderful as I remembered...or if a combination of the

2004 career opportunity to work abroad and the fabulous Rioja red and Txakoli sparkling white wines influenced those memories.

Bilbao had changed a lot over the course of two decades, with new trendy neighborhoods taking shape in the old quarter. Yet it lived up to expectation, and I found myself wishing there was more time to leisurely explore downtown highlights, including the



OPPOSITE: Cadiz Cathedral.

TOP: A view of Port City Cádiz from the top deck of the Celebrity Beyond luxury cruise ship.
MIDDLE: Palma de Mallorca is awash with plazas, cafes, and prime people watching.
BOTTOM LEFT: Specialty food shopping in Cádiz.
BOTTOM MIDDLE: Sampling sardines in fine olive oil at Los Patios de Beatas, known for its prolific selection of wines and beautifully prepared bites made for pairing.
LOWER RIGHT: Patios de Beatas’ white Spanish anchovies, a local “must try”.



TOP: On "tapas" the world" in Bilbao, one can master the art of tapas-making and other Spanish culinary skills at UMAMIE's cooking school.

BOTTOM: In good taste: Los Patios de Beatas in Málaga features a stunning stained glass ceiling as well as pairings of Southern Spain's superb red wines with regional appetizers and main courses.

OPPOSITE: Málaga's Mercado de la Merced and Bilbao's La Ribera Market showcase the best examples of local produce and artisanal foods. Here, an edible sugared hibiscus flower.

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao which had opened just before my first visit.

As is what often happens during the day at a port-of-call, the seeds are sown for an intention to return for a longer visit. However, even a day in town with a good pair of walking shoes provides a hearty taste of the city... quite fitting as Bilbao sits in the heart of Basque Country, which enjoyed notoriety for having the highest per capita concentration of Michelin star restaurants in the world. It also whetted my appetite for the visits to cities in southern Spain that followed after Lisbon.

BILBAO

Bilbao is a true 21st Century renaissance city—a sparkling urban expanse emerging out of its gritty industrial past over the last few decades. Even with bold architecture defining the city, other eras of the city's history from the Middle Ages forward can be enjoyed at street level.

Nothing beats a city's food hall when it comes to an inexpensive but high-quality bite, quality souvenir shopping for avid home cooks, or getting a sense of its residents' day-to-day life. However, Bilbao's La Ribera Market, built in 1929 and most recently renovated in 2010, is a standard-bearer. One of Europe's largest indoor markets (over 110,000 square feet) is also one of the most beautiful with its art deco flourishes and location on the Nervion River's right bank. The organized maze of vendors sitting at the heart of it, sell Jamon Serrano, almonds, sweets, olive oils and herbs and tapas to-go. It also houses several sit-down bars and restaurants, a cooking school and an in-house jazz band.

Mercado del Ensanche (dating to the mid 19th Century) is a true neighborhood shopping spot that's ideal for anybody preferring smaller crowds, allocating a few hours for the tapas trail, or dedicating more time to arts and culture. The immaculate

and upscale pintxos (i.e. tapas, or bite-sized appetizer) bars in Plaza Nueva in the Casco Viejo (historic quarter) draw tourists, but there's much to be found on the side streets including unassuming pintxos bars with the strongest word-of-mouth. On one of these streets, UMAMIE, a sustainability-focused ready meal service, hides a wonderful cooking workshop venue with a pintxos making class that will not only fill participants up, but also send them home with the knowledge of recreating Bilbao in their kitchens.

The stained glass window at the Abando Train Station is a good first stop of the day, with its overview of key landmarks (i.e. Basilica of Begoña) and Basque culture. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the equally worthwhile Bilbao Fine Arts Museum and lots of outdoor public art surrounding the buildings and downtown provide a feast for the other senses. Postcard views of the city, teamed with a few more examples of good public art make a trek to Mount Artxanda a good use of time on a one-day visit. Serious fashion shoppers can get caught up in Bilbao La Vieja, noted for its indie fashion shops, street art, bars and small galleries.

CÁDIZ

While Sevilla, Granada and Córdoba are the "Big Three" of Andalusia, going to any one of these cities can be problematic if a cruise ship is the primary mode of transportation. Even if bus tours to these cities are available, the rides can end up being longer than staying in town. Port city Cádiz may be less flashy, but it has more than 3,000 years of history going for it, making it one of Europe's oldest continually occupied towns. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and North African Muslims all called this city home, and evidence of their occupation and cultural influences abound throughout the old town. The Museum of Cádiz takes history buffs on a deeper dive, with its collection of Phoenician artifacts

and paintings by Murillo, Zurbarán, Rubens, Zuloaga, Sorolla and Miró.

The city also has lovely beaches and parks, as well as many tiny streets and squares to stroll through to visit churches and shops. Other ways to soak in this corner of Andalusia like a local is to pass the day in a cafe in the Plaza de la Catedral, or rent a bike for a ride around the waterfront.

While getting to many of Andalusia's famed sherry producers may require long drives, Bodegas Osborne in Puerto de Santa Maria is 15 miles away from Cádiz and accessible by taxi or rideshare. In addition to winery tours and sherry tasting accompanied by Spanish charcuterie and snacks, it has a fascinating history dating to the 1770s, gorgeous grounds and architecture. An adjoining museum is dedicated to Bodegas Osborne's impact on international popular culture and fine art, while its boutique not only carries its wines (specially packaged for travel), but also conversation-starting apparel and home accessories.

MÁLAGA

Málaga draws people in with its beaches, street art, restaurant scene, boutiques, and Costa del Sol

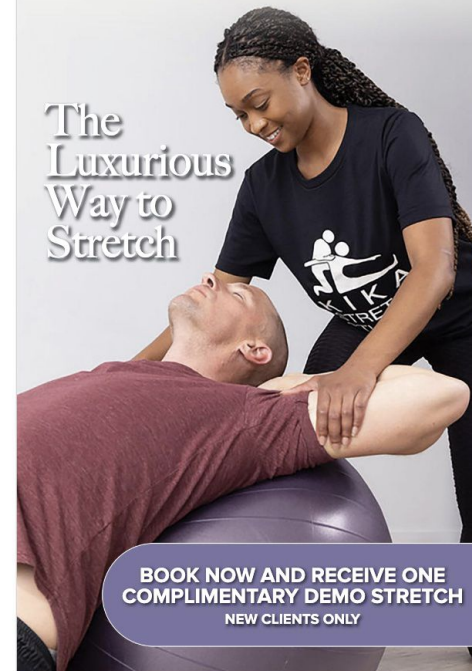


location. However, its history and interesting geography add context and depth to a visit of any length. Alameda Park (a.k.a. Parque de Málaga along with the adjoining Paseo del Parque) is both the oldest park in the city as well as a verdant "gateway" to the city highlights. It is further enhanced with walkways winding past tropical plants, gardens, sculptures, and sitting areas facing the sea. In the opposite direction, the Alcazaba and Moorish Gibralfaro citadels complete the backdrop.

While Málaga is the sixth largest city in Spain, some may be surprised to discover there are many world class cultural sites. In addition to its own Picasso Museum, Picasso Foundation (at the site of his birthplace) and Picasso statue, art lovers have its Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Centre Pompidou Málaga (the first outside of Paris), Carmen Thyssen Museum (19th Century and Andalusian art), Glass and Crystal Museum, Museo de Artes y Costumbre Populares,



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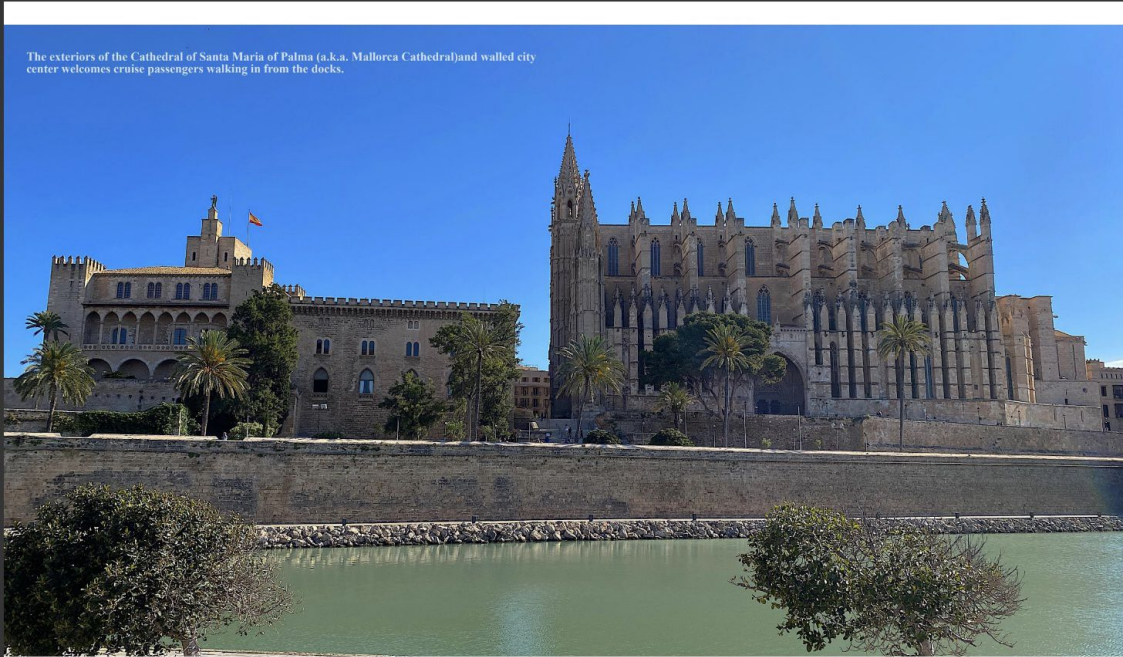
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The exteriors of the Cathedral of Santa Maria of Palma (a.k.a. Mallorca Cathedral) and walled city center welcomes cruise passengers walking in from the docks.



Museo Alborania Aula del Mar (focused on environmental issues) and many others (including the aforementioned citadels) to choose from.

That said, if the weather cooperates, make time to wander the streets and squares, whether it is to scope out boutiques or hidden gem restaurants on small streets off the main Calle Marques de Larios (this is where apps come in handy). Alternatively, the Mercado de la Merced is perfect for a quick bite. While, yes, it's another manicured food hall with trendy vendors, those selling finished dishes show native Malaga cuisine is about hearty meals rather than small bites. Wine shops also abound, but Los Patios de Beatas is worthwhile for its stained glass ceiling, huge selection of acclaimed and rare wines from nearby regions, tastings, and if you're really hungry, a meal of local snacks and main dishes.

Muelle Uno Mall, some of the best shopping in town, is a ten minute walk from the city

center, and in a blink-and-you'll-miss-it location. While its permanent shops are a mix of national (Spanish) and local, if you happen to be in town on the second Sunday of the month, hit El Zoco de Muelle Uno for gourmet food, handcrafted products, and vintage clothing vendors.

PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN

Palma de Mallorca enjoys a niche as the chic hub of a vacation island packed with sidewalk cafes, beaches, fashionable people filling these places, and high-end stores catering to them. Monge specializes in gorgeous, insanely comfortable hand-crafted espadrilles and loafers. Rialto Living, the apex of the city's many "concept stores," is essentially a department store with painstakingly curated stock. As the city drips in pearls (one of its biggest cottage industries), proceed with caution and seek out boutiques like Mallorca Pearl Shop, with its fashion-forward Ma Q collection. Weekend

craft markets such as Alcúdia and Artisans' Craft Market are also worth perusing for high quality fashion and home finds made on the island.

Fancy food is part of the lifestyle here, and opulent wine boutiques, cafes and specialty shops abound. Mercat de l'Olivas, on the other hand, is refreshingly unpretentious and well-organized. Among its handful of tapas bars, Bar-Tapas Los Maños is the standout for its diverse cross section of fresh, filling individual tapas, combo tapas dishes and sandwich plates.

Beyond the landmark Cathedral of Santa Maria of Palma (a.k.a. Mallorca Cathedral), many treasures await architecture and art buffs. Antoni Gaudi's Edifici Casasayas may be considered a jewel in the city's architectural crown. However, serious Gaudi enthusiasts won't want to miss a visit inside the Mallorca Cathedral as the visionary architect was involved in major renovations of the 13th century landmark



TOP LEFT: A walk through time: the Alcazaba and moorish Gibralfaro citadels peek out behind the greenery of Málaga's Alameda Park and buildings from later centuries.
TOP RIGHT: Palma de Mallorca's Juderia provides glimpses into THE ISLAND'S JEWISH LIFE CENTURIES AGO.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Bodegas Osborne in Puerto de Santa Maria, a short cab ride from Cádiz, is worth a visit for samplings of its world-class sherries and gallery.



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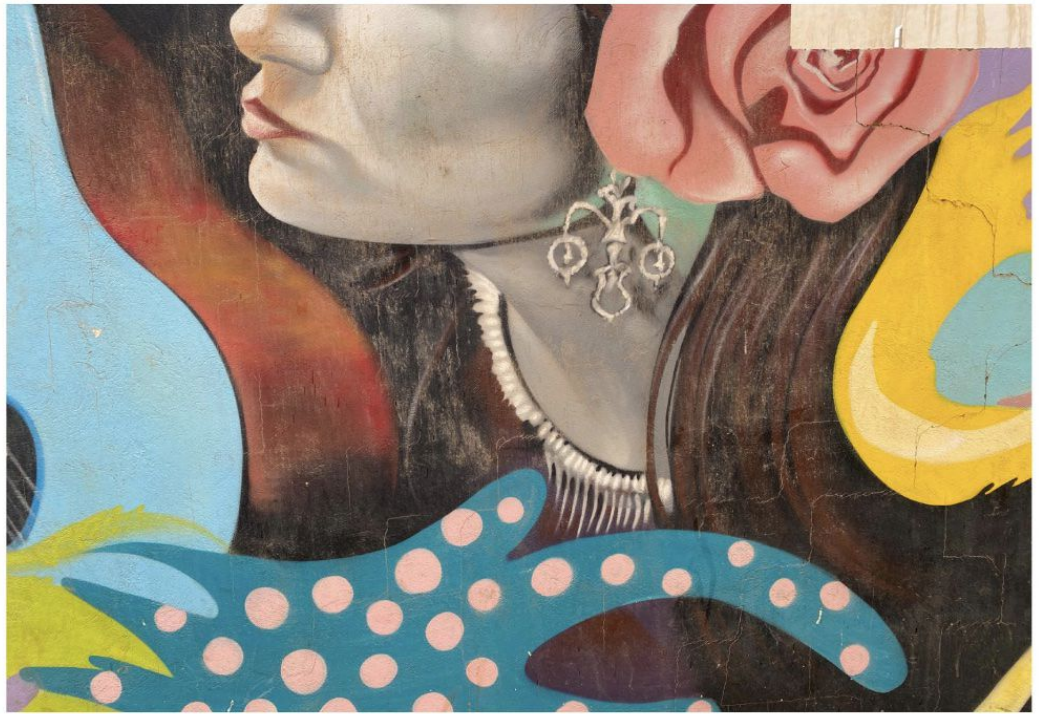
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between 1903 and 1915. Buildings from other leading architects of the Art Nouveau era include Gran Hotel, Palma's first luxury hotel designed by Catalan architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, and Can Forteza Rey, adorned with whimsical sculptural flourishes and mosaics assembled from multicolored broken tiles, wood, iron, glass, and ceramic plates.

Innovation goes further back in history, however. The construction of the Arab Baths, dating between the 10th and 12th centuries, is strikingly relevant today given the popularity of repurposing and recycling. Situated in a private garden, it is constructed from bits and (large) pieces of other buildings from earlier civilizations, including the Roman Empire. The nearby Judería de Palma and its information center is small in size, but fascinating in its presentation of the island's Jewish history. The Museum of Mallorca, a few minutes' walk away, tells the story of the area through curated island artifacts and works of art.

One important takeaway from this experience is that if time doesn't allow for a feast at a Michelin-starred restaurant, a food tour, a full-on museum day, or scouting out the city's most unusual one-off boutiques, You can still put together a hearty sampling of the city's best with a few simple tools in your pocket: Smartphone restaurant apps, map apps, city guide apps, related social media, and your keen observation skills to dig up local gems. 📱



TOP: One of Málaga's many vibrant murals.

BOTTOM: Gaudí's contemporaries, such as Catalan architect Lluís Domènech, in buildings like this.