

DISCOVERING THE COSTA BLANCA

Focus on Alfaz & Albir



Alfaz del Pi and El Albir

By Karen Marco
Alfaz del Pi (officially l'Alfàs del Pi) is a pleasant residential town just three kilometres from the Mediterranean coast, in the heart of the Costa Blanca, just off the usual tourist track.

The name 'Alfàs' comes from the Moorish era (XVI) and means 'fertile land' and 'Pi' refers to the centuries old pine tree in the 'Plaza Mayor', a symbol of the town's independence from neighbouring Polop de la Marina in the year 1836.

Like many places throughout Alicante Province, Alfaz arose as a fortified settlement to protect the population from invading Berber pirates in the Middle Ages, and traditional economy was based on agriculture.

Over the last decades, Alfaz del Pi has become a popular place to live, especially for expatriates who love the relaxing way of life, the sunshine and dining al fresco - more than 100 different nationalities now live in the town, on the surrounding urbanisations which lead down to the coast and the beach area of El Albir:

Just behind the busy main street, you can discover the 'old town' where time almost stands still, a neighbourhood with traditional townhouses, San José parish church by the small main square, the Town Hall and street cafés!

The emblematic 'Casa de Cultura' is just around the corner, located beside the municipal sports centre, swimming pools and playing fields. The distinctive pink-hued Cultural Centre has a magnificent theatre which is renowned for the yearly Alfaz del Pi Film Festival - one of the most important events of its kind in Spain, which attracts both Spanish and international critics, directors and film stars. The event promotes short films produced in Spain, the winner

receiving a 5,000€ prize and the coveted 'Silver Lighthouse' trophy. This year's 28th edition will be taking place from July 8 until July 17 with films being shown here and down on the beach at El Albir:

From the centre of Alfaz it's only a short walk away to the countryside...a rural world of citrus orchards and pine groves with views to the sea and El Albir, the town's coastal resort!

El Albir has always been rather exclusive, stylish villas on the slopes of the Sierra Helada ridge and low-rise apartments with swimming pools line the streets behind the seafront promenade. Just around the corner from mega tourist hotspot Benidorm, Albir has a unique appeal of its own - it could almost be the Riviera with the transparent turquoise sea bathing a white pebble beach! The sweep of Mediterranean shoreline ends abruptly at the Sierra Helada, a protected nature park, where you can find a couple of little secluded rocky coves under the cliffs and the landmark lighthouse.

A huge selection of restaur-

ants, cafeterias, gastro bars, pubs, street terraces, etc. offer an amazing choice of international and Spanish cuisine ranging from gourmet gastronomy through to popularly priced menus of the day...and the house wine is often included!

Cultural events, concerts and exhibitions are also high on the agenda at the Foundation Frax, although the highlight of the year has to be the Alfaz Cinema Festival which shows selected films on the beach, in the sultry heat of July evenings.

The Albir Fiestas take place in August - enjoy activities in the Eucalyptus Park, music and dancing in the streets until the early hours, and the fabulous grand finale firework display.

There is in fact too much information for one page, so we'll be publishing another feature on the attractions of Alfaz and Albir in a future edition, which will include walks across the Sierra Helada.

You can see more features about the Costa Blanca on my personal travel blog.

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 Photos by K. Marco



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