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By Karen Marco

La Nucia is a pleasant rural town in the Marina Baixa area of the Costa Blanca, only a few kilometres inland from Benidorm and Altea. The name La Nucia comes from the Arabic word Nazilha, which means delicious. The first prehistoric settlers were attracted by the fresh water springs of these fertile lands between the sea and the mountains. The Iberians were followed by Phoenicians, Romans and the Moors, as the different invaders passed through this part of Spain.

With stunning views over to the Mediterranean Sea and Sierra Bernia mountains, and only a short drive from the Guadalest valley, it's a scenic location in the foothills of Puig Campana, close to all the activity and a great selection of beaches are within easy reach. La Nucia's thriving commercial activity and great variety of restaurants, complements a lively cultural agenda, sports championships, tournaments, exhibitions and festivities. Cultural activities, local fiestas, beer festival, traditional dancing and Xmas festivities are some of the highlights on the yearly agenda.

Residents from neighbouring towns visit La Nucia regularly, as the modern facilities are some of the best around, especially the Camilo Cano 'Sports City', whose installations are considered to be among the best in Europe. The famous Sunday morning flea market is one of the oldest, and undoubtedly the best in the whole area, more than 700 interesting stalls along a two kilometre strip on the edge of town.

The comprehensive range of restaurants, in and around town, is enviable serving everything from traditional Spanish cuisine to nouvelle gourmet and a vast selection of popular international eateries, tapas bars... there's something for every taste and budget.

The ultra-modern auditorium features an interesting programme of functions and cultural events throughout the year, and there's a convenient underground car park by the installations.

Strangers don't realise that the original heart of La Nucia exists;

it's almost a secret! The beautifully restored original public washhouse overlooks orange and nispero orchards. Steps lead up to a maze of little streets, a picturesque neighbourhood where artists and craftsmen love to live. Wander around the pedestrian-friendly old quarters, quaint plazas with wooden pergolas and benches, well-kept traditional townhouses adorned with colourful potted plants, and find your way to the main town square guided by the church bell tower peaking over the rooftops – the imposing parish church graces Plaza Mayor along with the Town Hall (a beautifully restored historical building) and typical terrace cafés. The old school house is another example of carefully restored architecture set in Mediterranean gardens it is now an educational centre, La Seu Universitaria, offering a number of courses through Alicante University. The charming courthouse also merits a mention.

Sant Rafael chapel and Calvari Mount are set on the hillside behind the main street, affording spectacular views over La Nucia to Altea Bay. There are guided tours in English around the pretty 'old town' and to discover places of interest such as Font de la Favara, a shady picnic spot with a scenic waterfall. Below the town, a pretty blue and white painted chapel is located beside pine woods where there are nature trails and walks. Visit the El Captivador centre and learn about local life and agricultural traditions in the past.

Smart well-kept urbanisations, villas with gardens and pools, lay on the outskirts of town connected with a good network of roads. Local services include clinics, hairdressers, home-decor, supermarkets, pizzerias and everything for your pets!

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

www.kalitravel.net



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