



## ALTEA - the most picturesque town in Spain

*Photo courtesy of Altea Tourist Info*

By Karen Marco

The historical Altea 'old town' is poised on a hillside overlook-

ing the Mediterranean Sea, guarded by the imposing Sierra Bernia mountain ridge. Steeped

in Mediterranean culture, Altea has always been a refuge for poets, artists and musicians.

The atmosphere is decidedly relaxed and unmistakably Mediterranean; fine dining al fresco, stylish restaurants and pizzerias with haute flair, trendy pubs, pretty patios and rooftop terraces...Altea is romantic and unforgettable!

An emblematic blue domed church sits at the top of the ancient village; a maze of narrow cobbled streets lined with traditional houses, white-washed walls with bright bougainvillea and geranium-filled balconies, twist up to the lively church square. There are secret corners to discover on the way up to the plaza, with glimpses of the sea and mountains at every turn, and amazing views of Altea bay.

A wide promenade and boardwalk define the modern seafront which is bordered by a remarkable variety of restaurants and street cafés - a choice of Mediterranean, Spanish, European, or even Asian cuisine...and cocktail bars ranging from the smoothly sophisticated to colourfully Caribbean.

Shopping ranges from exclusive high street fashion extravaganzas, to handmade jewellery and gifts sold at craft stalls, beachside sketches or paintings in an artist studio. Browse the many art and craft shops, and discover the handicraft fairs and stalls, which you can find set up somewhere in Altea most times of the year.

Altea Bay is part of the protected Sierra Helada Natural Park. If you are fortunate you can see bottlenose dolphins swimming in the sparkling clear sea. Eight kilometres of coastline stretch southwards from the Morro de Toix headland, a succession of pebble beach and coves.

Mascaret beach is next to Campomanes Marina, an exclusive yachting harbour with restaurants and cocktail lounges. You can enjoy a variety of nautical activities including sailing, scuba diving, jetski, outrigger, SUP, kayak, boats charters and guided tours. La Barreta and La Solsida are secluded naturist coves, access-



*Photo K. Marco*

ible on foot.

L'Olla is a long pebble beach located between the tiny harbours of El Senso and El Portet. There are a couple of beach restaurants serving local cuisine, and shady picnic areas. It's a great place to hire a kayak in summer or for a quiet stroll in winter.

Continue along to Cap Negret beach and the scenic Algar River Estuary. There are signposted walks and bicycle routes into the surrounding countryside. A brand new promenade runs from here to Altea's central beaches and the main stretch of seafront restaurants.

L'espigó is the name of Altea's newly inaugurated beach - the old seawall and lagoon have now been replaced by a magnificent white pebble beach which is sure to be popular this summer.

La Roda is Altea's main beach; pebble with large sandy areas, it is ideal for families... there are kiddies' play parks, beach volley and other games, and even yoga classes on the beach! There's a huge choice of restaurants, ice-cream parlours and cafés.

Further along the wide esplanade you'll see the fishing

port, leisure harbour and Altea Nautical Club, where there's a sailing school and numerous water sport activities. There is a pleasant walk along the waterfront to Cap Blanc beach and El Albir at the southern end of the bay, defined by the Sierra Helada cliffs and Albir lighthouse.

Altea is conveniently located in the centre of the Costa Blanca - the perfect base for a holiday, whether you're looking to relax beside the sea in the sunshine or want to explore further afield...

Altea is fast becoming one of Spain's most sought-after destinations, fantastic for families, friends or couples... peaceful but lively, traditional and trendy, classy but laidback, mountains and sea...Altea has a characteristic charm of its own.

### Getting there:

*Nearest airport:* El Altet, Alicante (71km)

*By road:* AP-7 motorway exit 64 or N-332

TRAM from Alicante City

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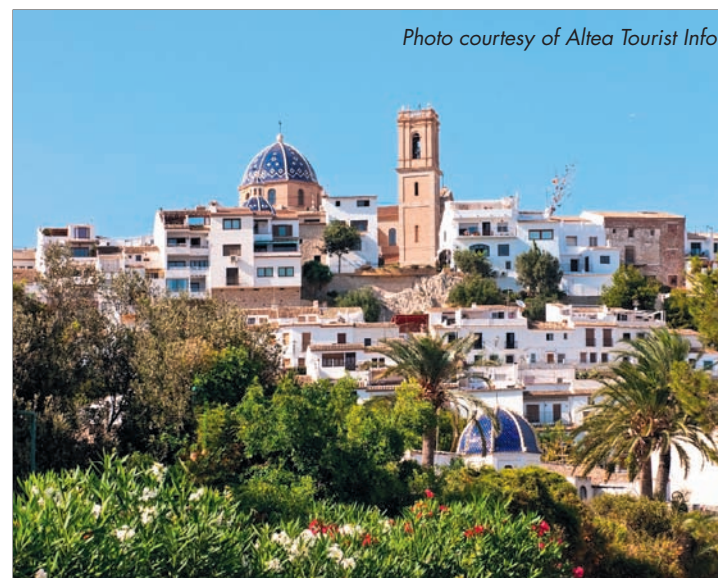
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