

BENALMADENA

Benalmádena lies on the Costa del Sol, between Torremolinos and Fuengirola. It has a population of 67,000, having grown dramatically in the last 50 years as a result of tourism. Benalmádena is pronounced with the stress on the 'á'. Benalmádena is made up of three areas; Benalmádena Costa, Arroyo de la Miel and Benalmádena Pueblo.



Castillo Bil-Bil, Benalmádena Costa

are worth a visit. Between the park and Arroyo de la Miel is the fairground and auditorium, used for the annual *feria* and concerts

Benalmádena Costa is a tourist resort, built up over the last 50 years along the coastal strip. This is where the discos, souvenir shops and the English bars are. The main road through the resort is Avenida Antonio Machado. There is a long beach and promenade. The **marina** has a large variety of bars and restaurants, shopping centre, the **Sealife** Centre, and it is the starting point for sailing and fishing trips around the resort. The beaches continue beyond the marina to Torremolinos. The **Parque de la Paloma** and the **Selwo Marina** dolphinarium and penguinarium (behind Benal Beach apartments)



Arroyo de la Miel

Arroyo de la Miel (usually shortened to Arroyo) is where the locals live and, despite the tourists and recent expansion, it remains recognisably Spanish. This is where the ordinary shops are, and most of the Spanish bars and restaurants. The main street, which leads to the railway station is Avenida de la Constitucion. Towards the station is the Casa de la Cultura, where local events take place and exhibitions are held. Beyond the station are **Tivoli World** amusement park, and a cable car to the top of **Mount Calamorro**.



Benalmádena Pueblo

Benalmádena Pueblo is the original village, several kilometres inland, very picturesque and with good views down to the Costa. The Pueblo also includes more esoteric attractions such as the **Museum of Pre-Colombian American Art**, the **Buddhist Stupa**, the **Butterfly Park** and the **Castillo Colomares** folly. It retains a village atmosphere and has a multi-national community.

Between and surrounding the three urban centres are villa and apartment developments.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Benalmádena is an Arabic (Moorish) name meaning 'children of the mines' as there are known to have been iron ore and ochre mines in the area. However the Moors were only one of a series of peoples who occupied and lived in the area including the Phoenicians and Romans. Andalucía was the first and final Moorish area of Spain, and it is from this time that much of the traditional way of life architecture and way of life in the region dates, from the major buildings in Sevilla, Granada and Córdoba to the layout of the white villages.

Like most local villages, Benalmádena was built on a hill for defence from invaders, some way back from the shore, which was protected by a line of watchtowers (such as Torremolinos and Torreblanca). Due to fears of invasion, between the departure of the Moors and the 18th century the area was largely abandoned, after which, with social stability, came agriculture and viniculture.

Arroyo de la Miel was a small settlement founded in the nineteenth century around a paper-mill, the remains of which can still be seen next to the Plaza de España.

Through most of the Franco years following the Civil War the area was impoverished, and many Andalucians emigrated to Catalunya or Latin America. It was only with the opening up of the Costa for tourism in the 1960's that the area began to prosper. As Benalmadena Costa was developed, Spaniards from poorer inland areas moved to the coast, followed in due course by the large ex-pat population.

GETTING THERE



Windmills Roundabout, Benalmádena Costa

Benalmádena is about 12kms from Málaga Airport, which has flights from all over Europe. A taxi from the airport to Arroyo de la Miel will take about 20 minutes and cost about €25-30.

The public transport option is to take the local train (destination Fuengirola – every 20 minutes) from the Airport station to Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel – journey time 20 minutes, fare €2.05. Local taxis from outside station are plentiful and cheap.

The local train runs to and from Málaga city, from where there are connections to Sevilla, Cordoba, Madrid and Barcelona. Benalmádena is also linked by regular bus services from Málaga, which has coach connections from throughout Spain and beyond.

GETTING AROUND BENALMADENA



The map on page 5, will help you find your way round Benalmádena Costa and Arroyo de la Miel, which is walkable for most people.

There is a regular bus service between Benalmádena Costa, Arroyo de la Miel and Benalmádena Pueblo – usually 2 journeys each hour, fare €1.55. Another service links the Pueblo and Arroyo with Torrequebrada, for the beaches to the west of the area.

A hop on – hop off open top bus runs from the marina in Benalmádena Costa to Tivoli World and the butterfly park at the Pueblo. Tickets are €13, the commentary is banal and is really only of any use for first-time visitors to get their bearings. A road train 'Tren Turístico' covers a similar route from the marina to Tivoli, is much more fun and costs €5.



For a different perspective on Benalmádena, take the cable car to the summit of Monte Calamorro. It leaves from the entrance to Tivoli World, a few minutes from

Arroyo de la Miel station. There are tremendous views from the top, plus a café-bar, marked walking routes and birds of prey displays.



Local taxis are plentiful and reasonable. The taxi ranks are marked on the map, and taxis showing a green 'libre' sign or green light can be hailed on the street. Taxis can be called on 952 441 545, and very rarely take more than a few minutes to arrive.

DRINKING AND EATING



There are a huge number of bars and restaurants in Benalmádena ranging from the truly awful to the excellent. There should be something for everyone's taste - what follows is only a guide to the main locations.

Benalmádena Costa

The main focus of the area is providing for the holidaymaker during the day time then becoming the focus for the town's nightlife.

In the day time the Marina has a wide selection of bars and restaurants, many slightly more expensive than average. One attraction is the selection of *chiringuitas* along the beaches, selling good value fresh fish and seafood.

At night Benalmádena Costa is the focus for nightlife, not only for tourists but also for locals from Málaga and around. For the youngest, the main concentration of bars and clubs is around Plaza Sol y Mar, which is known by many locally as '24 hour square'. The Marina also has many bars and clubs, which tend to attract a slightly older crowd, and there are several upmarket restaurants.:

Between Benalmádena Costa and Arroyo is the main concentration of apartment blocks for holidaymakers and ex-pats, and therefore also the main concentration of British bars (and those run by other nationalities such as Finns and Irish). Around **Plaza Nueva Bonanza** (Bonanza Square) and the Jardines del **Gamonal** there is a wide choice, catering to many tastes, from breakfast bars, to local pubs, to sports bars and late night venues.

Steve's home bar in this area is the Eagle Café-bar, opposite Minerva apartments, a friendly bar with good breakfasts and snacks, and open into the evenings in summer.



Arroyo de la Miel

- S** Supermarket
- T** Taxi Rank
- BUS** Long distance bus stop
- +** Chemist
- +** Church
- €** Bank, cash machine
- i** Tourist information
- H** Hotel



Arroyo de la Miel has a host of bars, cafes and restaurants serving the local population, both Spanish and ex-pats, and the tourists who boost the population in the main holiday periods. The vast majority are Spanish run, though some attract a mainly ex-pat clientele (particularly those with sunny terraces). There are places along all the main streets, for example Avenida de la Constitución and Calle Andalucía, and plenty more to discover around the back streets. Most are locally owned, though a few chain bars and restaurants have moved in more recently. Look for special offers on food and drink, designed to maintain custom during *la Crisis* (Spain's current economic problems). Most sell tapas, filled rolls and meals, and some will provide a free small tapa with a glass of beer or wine, and are open all day from breakfast until late evening. There is a row of late night '*bares de copas*', with a focus on spirits and cocktails, in Plaza de la Mezquita.

In addition to Spanish and the inevitable international cuisine and hamburger places there are a variety of other restaurants, including Italian, Chinese and Indian.

Benalmádena Pueblo

The Pueblo has a similar selection of bars and restaurants, albeit on a smaller scale than Arroyo – there are Spanish, British and Danish bars and restaurants, a couple of very upmarket modern tapas bars, and Italian, Chinese and Indian restaurants,

HOLIDAYS AND FIESTAS

At any time of year you are likely to come across a Spanish holiday. In addition to the main national holidays, there are regional holidays and local holidays. Most shops, banks and public services close on the major holidays though supermarkets may operate restricted hours. Trains and buses operate a Sunday service.

The major Spanish holiday dates are: 1 January, 6 January, 28 February, Easter Thursday, Easter Friday, 1 May, Corpus Christi (end June), 15 August, 12 October, 1 November, 6 December, 8 December, 25 December.

The main local **fiestas** are:

- * **New Year**, at Plaza de la Mezquita in Arroyo and the feria ground in the Pueblo. At midnight the trick is to eat 12 grapes during the bells, washed down with *cava* (shops sell small seedless grapes specifically for New Year) for luck, followed by live music and dancing.
- * The arrival of the three kings (**Los Reyes**). The Spanish equivalent of Christmas is on the 6th January when the kings bring presents. On the evening of the 5th the three kings procession takes place in the Pueblo and Arroyo, where the kings scatter gifts and sweets for children.
- * Easter week (**Semana Santa**). There are processions each night in either Benalmádena Pueblo or Arroyo. These are fairly small scale compared to Málaga, which is worth a visit – trains run all night during *Semana Santa*.
- * **Corpus Christi** is celebrated in the Pueblo with streets covered in flowers and a procession.

* **Feria de San Juan** (St. John). San Juan Bautista is the patron saint of Benálmadena and festivities start on St Johns Eve (23 June) with fireworks, and there is a huge week long fair at the feria ground in Arroyo.

* **Virgin del Carmen** (mid-July). The virgin (patron saint of fishermen) is carried from the church at Bonanza Square to the Marina, where it is paraded at sea, in a procession of boats.

TOURIST INFORMATION



The main tourist information office is located in Benalmádena Costa, on Avenida Antonio Machado, by '24 hour square' .

TRIPS OUT



There is a frequent suburban (*cercanías*) **train** service from Benalmádena-Arroyo de la Miel to Málaga and Fuengirola. Fuengirola is a 15 minute journey and to Málaga takes 30 minutes.

The high speed AVE line from Málaga to Madrid and Barcelona has dramatically improved train services and reduced journey times. The line is also used by high speed trains to Cordoba and Sevilla. There are regional train services from Málaga to Sevilla, a daily train to El Chorro and Ronda, and a suburban line to Alora.



Local **buses** are cheap and fairly frequent. The local service extends to Mijas and Torremolinos. Along the coast there is a frequent service to Torremolinos and Málaga and roughly every half hour to Fuengirola.

For long distance journeys along the Costa del Sol to Marbella, Estepona, La Linea (for Gibraltar) and Algeciras,

use the '24 hour square' bus stop. Buses to the remainder of Málaga province, and nationwide, leave from Málaga bus station which is near to, and signposted from, Málaga (Maria Zambrano) railway station. There is an hourly express bus from Málaga to Granada and a regular express service to Sevilla



Coach tours are advertised locally. To the major cities, Mijas and Fuengirola they are much more expensive than service buses, though they usually include a guide. An exception is Gibraltar where tours are cheaper and more convenient than the service bus to La Linea. Tours also run to areas off the main routes, such as El Chorro and the nearby lakes, and to sporting events such as FC Málaga home matches at La Rosaleda stadium. Coach tours are also a convenient way to see several cities within two or three days, to Granada and the Alhambra (where entrance tickets can be difficult for individuals to buy on the day), and to Morocco. Tours can be booked at local travel agents, and via local bars which act as agents.



Finally, check at the marina for **boat trips** for fishing and dolphin watching. There is a ferry service to Fuengirola several times daily.