

# These Beaches Are Just Amazing.....

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Spanish News



Where Tarifa is bliss for spliffed-up surfers and world-weary dreadlocked hippies, Zahara is more-innocent, a let-it-all-hang-out family destination. It is also one that has carved a part in the heart-of the Spanish food lover with its devotion to the red tuna (Atlantic bluefin tuna, famed for its-rosy flesh) and the red-skinned Retinto cow.

In this land that so honours the pig, Zahara's red tuna is granted the title "the-ibérico of the sea".-As ever, Spain can leave the dedicated vegetarian feeling hungry – even the plainest of mixed-salads here will include fat chunks of tuna, "for flavour!" we were told.

Your pomaded open-shirted-playa-type tends to prefer Atlanterra, a slick purpose-built beach-resort two kilometres south of town, but Zahara itself is Spain's far south at her authentic, relaxed-best.

## Food and drink

### Food to go

It feels like there's hardly an hour in the day or night-when eating and drinking aren't central to Zahara life. For many, the day starts at the tiny-Mercado de Abastos (Plaza de Abastos, Mon-Sat 9am-2pm) where there's spanking fresh-produce, fish and meat, plus a stand-up bites and drinks bar, Abacería La Plaza. Alimentación-Aaron on the corner of Calle

Nécora has all the essentials for a beach feast. Down the road, Kikirimu (Paseo del Pradillo 4) serves great takeaway roast chicken, empanadas, sausages, Retinto burgers and drinks for the beach.

## Restaurants

Of the town centre restaurants, Ramon Pipi (+34 95 643 9580, Calle Maria Luisa 38) is buzzy, good and slightly smart. Make a point of trying their morillo de atun, a delicious, disc-shaped morsel from the top of the fish's head. El Castillete (+34 63 897 9493) is more old school, with traditional fishy tapas and raciones. Cerro Currita (Calle Cerro Currita, on the beach in front of Tourist Info, +34 68 623 3401) does gorgeous, unhurried rice dishes and local specialities well.

## Bars

In town, the pick of the bars includes La Malvaloca (Calle Maria Luisa 20), a cucumber-cool, crowded bar with affordable seafood tapas. We also loved El Último Gato (Calle Aldade José Ruiz-Cana 11) whose eight-seat bar and muralled garden are fine places in which to lose a few hours and a few inhibitions. Taberna Trasteo (Calle Maria Luisa 24) is larger and more lounge-like, with a charming line in killer rum-based cócteles.

Chiringuitos are beach bars that morph from late lunch to sundowners to DJ-till-dawn beats. The night scene here doesn't get grooving until at least midnight. The pick of Zahara's chiringuitos are El Pez Limon and La Luna, both on Playa de Carmen in front of the town. La Luna has its own record label.

## Things to do

### Sunbathe

Hit a different sandy beach each day along this 40km of clean coastline. Playa del Retin to the north of town has no facilities, and thus the luxury of space. It's popular with naturists, and with wandering Retinto cattle – don't be surprised to meet something red and horny. Playa de Carmen is Zahara's town-centre beach where sunbeds, kid-safe swimming and chiringuitos are yours to enjoy. Moving south, Atlanterra's beach is beautiful, but suffers slightly from the proximity of the purpose-built resort. Los Alemanos is named for the Germans to whom Franco gifted properties. He gave them a great beach. Clamber carefully down to Playa del Canuelo for perfect solitude, then potter on via Ensenada de Bolonia, Valdevaqueros and Punta de la Peña all the way to Playa de los Lances at Tarifa.

### Get active

In Zahara, take kitesurfing lessons and certified courses from Kitemanglar (+34 60 1369 2900, kitemanglar.com), and try surfing, paddleboarding or longboarding with Zahara Red Tuna extreme sports. For family activities, you could hire bikes or ride horses through the unspoilt landscape. Zaharaenlaweb.com is a privately-run concierge service for everything from cycle hire to diving and horse riding. And if all this hanging out leaves you strung out, you can always take the 45-minute ferry ride from Tavira over to Tangier, Morocco (frs.es).

### Festival feasting

There are two annual gastronomic festivals celebrating the cuisine of the region (with a big focus on tuna, of course). Ruta del Atun will take place in May 2015, while Ruta del Retinto from 24-28 September this year has horse races and polo matches. Each ruta includes a glorious weekend-long tapas crawl and competitions for the best dish.

(tuna or beef respectively).

### **Catch a film**

The now-ruined beachfront Palacio de la Chanca was built in the 15th century by the dukes of-Medina-Sidonia, who profited hugely from the tuna fishing industry, the-almadraba. The tuna-were processed in the palace precincts, with bootleg fish butchered in the church next door. Today-the palace's ruined walls host summer's exuberant open air Cine de Verano (June-September)-and stalls selling everything from kente cloth bumbags to octopus stew.

### **Where to stay**

Hotel Doña Lola Zahara-(doubles from €70) is clean and friendly, with a mixture of hotel-rooms, family apartments, a smart restored "hostel" and (unusually for Spain) some disabled-friendly rooms.

Hotel Avenida Playa-(doubles from €50) is a few steps from the beach, and great value. The-family also rent three holiday apartments, and run the noted, Restaurante Casa Jose Maria on the-ground floor.

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