

Discover Puerto Banus

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Marbella News, Spanish Tit-Bits



Puerto Banus is the most famous marina in Spain. For over 50 years it has been the firm favourite with the jet set, and each summer 'The Port' is packed with superyachts, supercars and the occasional superstar. The hub of all that is hip and happening, join us as we take you on an exclusive, behind the scenes tour.

A little history first. Unlike the marinas in Marbella or Estepona that evolved from fishing ports, Puerto Banus was constructed purely as a leisure port. Originally envisioned by construction tycoon Jose Banus, who was so well connected in the dictatorship that he was known as 'Franco's Builder', work began on the strip of undeveloped land close to the newly built Hotel Andalucia Plaza (now the Hard Rock Hotel) and Nueva Andalucia Bullring.

The official opening of Puerto Banus in August 1970 was the highlight of Spain's social scene. Over 1500 guests included the Aga Khan, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco, film director Roman Polanski while Hugh Hefner flew in with assorted bunnies on the Playboy jet. Due to the lack of waiters on the coast, 300 hundred were bused in for the night from Seville, while a youthful Julio Iglesias serenaded the guests for the then astronomical fee of 125,000 pesetas (around 700 euros today).

The combination of typically Andalusian style architecture, quayside bars, boutiques and restaurants and celebrities and the super wealthy who were regular visitors to Marbella or based permanently, meant that Puerto Banus quickly became a popular hang out for the jet set. In the pre social media and Smartphone era, people could let their hair down and

generally relax away from the glare of publicity. Formula 1 world champion James Hunt was a regular at Sinatra Bar, sometimes playing backgammon, or enjoying a beer with Sean Connery. Rod Stewart was spotted dining at Don Leone, or might be catching up with his friend Mel Williams at Mel's Club. Piano bars were big in Puerto Banus in the 70s and 80s, and it wasn't uncommon to see some of the best-known names in British entertainment – Bruce Forsyth, Ronnie Corbett, Jimmy Tarbuck, Cilla Black – enjoying a late night drink.

Meanwhile the seriously wealthy preferred to party on the superyachts that were permanently moored by the tower. Shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis was a visitor, while Adnan Khashoggi kept his superyacht 'Nabila' (later to be briefly owned by Donald Trump) in Banus for long periods. The biggest yacht, however, was that of Saudi ruler King Fahd, whose huge vessel could not actually enter the marina, but was moored up by the outside sea wall!

Although the more modern developments and facilities in the past 50 years mean that Jose Banus might have a hard time recognising the Puerto Banus that opened in 1970, apart from the statue of himself at the main entrance, there are still some establishments that encapsulate its original spirit. Sinatra Bar and Salduba (the Roman name for Marbella) have been the perfect place for people watching over a drink since the mid-seventies. Both on the front line as you come into Puerto Banus, they still attract a mixed crowd of tourists, the well heeled and yachties. If you want to know the latest gossip about who did what to who last night, or what boat or celebrity is due in that day, the staff or locals nursing a morning pick me up can normally give you the low down.

If you fancy something more substantial, Da Paulo and Don Leone, although somewhat remodernised since the 80s, are still popular, while the family run Picasso's Pizza, Dalli's Pasta Factory and El Gaucho have a loyal clientele, evidenced by the queues outside in the summer months.

Looking your best has always been a big part of the Puerto Banus scene, and long established boutiques such as Gomina, as well as Dolce & Gabbana, Tom Ford, Hermes and Gucci are always on trend.

While nightclubs and lounge bars predominate, you can still find live music in the piano bar Joy's, and if you just want a quiet corner to slip into after a round of golf and perhaps dinner to celebrate a successful back nine, Patrick's 19th has been a haven for decades.

Finally, if the plethora of supercars and supermodels has you wondering if anyone actually works on a boat in Banus, head to the eastern end of the front line. Tucked in by the beach is the boatyard surrounded by chandlers providing everything from a upgrade to a complete overhaul and necessary maintenance.

Which you might need for yourself should you stumble into one of the, ahem, more 'interesting' establishments on the second line...