



First Impressions – Spain’s Alpujarras

by Sam Cresswell

This April I travelled to Southern Spain to discover the Alpujarras Mountains. Having not visited Spain before I was unsure of what to expect and not knowing the language very well I was also a bit nervous. As we drove up through the breathtaking mountain roads I was fascinated by the exquisite views and the wonderful climate – my fears were lifted and I began to relax into Spanish country life.

When we arrived at our destination in the tiny village of Mairena we met Emma and David who had restored the beautiful villa in which we were staying. Both were excellent hosts and full of information about the local walks and nearby villages that we would be visiting. They have plenty of route notes that you can take with you for the walking with background material about the area and parking. They can also arrange transfers if you prefer not to drive so you can get around to see the other villages.

I awoke each morning in Mairena to the sight of the mountains and the sound of local life. The accommodation we were staying in was exceptionally spacious and clean and could be used as self-catering even though meals are usually included. Most of the food is grown nearby and the fresh fruit and vegetables are farmed and hand picked on David and Emma’s own land. The local markets consisted very much of cheese and meat; in nearly every shop there were huge legs of smoked ham and salami, traditional food that was used to make many varied and exquisite meals. The aromas and different flavours were very satisfying and we could never say there was not enough food to go around with huge picnics for lunch and three course meals in the evening.

In the villages the society was relatively identical, they all had plenty of history, charming street scenes and similar housing. The people who lived there did not know much English but were easy to communicate with. Personally I found the villages incredibly stimulating with their historical churches, old water fountains for use by the whole village, a variety of small shops and cafes and white washed houses all clinging to the side of the hills. I noticed that all the houses were laid out on different levels; it was as if the villages had five or six tiers to them.

As a first timer to Spain I found this experience definitely convinced me to return, for others who were already familiar with the country the scenery was still an incredible sight which took even their breath away. I was very impressed with everything that this trip had to offer - I saw a different culture, tasted marvellous food, climbed steep but beautiful mountains and slept in sheer luxury. It was just a great holiday!



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