



■ Sardine Festival. Picture: Sergio Gonzalez

# Discovering the real Spanish south



■ Lorca Castle

## Joanna Davis ventures into a part of Spain off the well beaten tourist trail, and discovers a treasure trove...

**M**URCIA isn't the first destination many would think of when planning their Spanish sunshine holiday.

This unspoilt region of south east Spain is blessed with turquoise sea waters, intriguing castles and beaches so deserted you can call them your own.

And it has just become a lot easier to get there.

The region has recently seen its own airport open and I flew there direct from Bournemouth on a 2hrs 20mins flight.

Prior to the opening of this new modern terminal – so quiet it was a breeze to get through – visitors previously had to come from Alicante Airport, 90 minutes drive away.

If you're looking for a place worlds away from the usual Brits abroad paraphernalia of full English

breakfasts and Sky Sports TV, this is the place for you.

Our first stop was Los Acazares, which is located next to the shores of the Mar Menor, a lagoon separated from the Mediterranean sea by La Manga, a 22km sandbar. It offers seven km of stunning coastline from Los Narejos to Punta Brava.

We stopped at the large village of Cabo de Palos and climbed the 51 metre high neo-classical style lighthouse at its eastern tip, which completed in 1864, has been declared a site of cultural interest and looks out north to the sprawling La Manga sports resort. There are also picture postcard views to the west along the unspoilt coastline of Calblanque and Cartagena.

The high salinity of the waters in Murcia's coastal area, Costa Cálida, aids flotation, making them ideal for all kinds of water sports including

sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, kite surfing, speed boating and surfing. It's also the perfect place for snorkelling and, heading into shallow, clear, warm waters, we saw an entrancing array of fish, different sizes and colours, not mildly perturbed by our presence.

We stayed at the La Encarnacion hotel in Los Acazares, quirky lodgings complete with an intriguing shrine of curios in the middle of a courtyard area surrounded by lush greenery.

The Murcian food is fresh, local and full of panache. A typical dish is Caldero (rice and fish). All local restaurants offer excellent Calderos throughout the year and if you're a fan of seafood like myself, you won't be disappointed with any of the fish offerings. We enjoyed sun-blushed tomatoes bursting with sweet flavour, tender pork, potato croquettes and typical fruity red Spanish wines.

We moved on westwards to Mazarron and headed out on a relatively flat hike which took in coastal views. One particularly unusual view as we departed the town was the otherworldly Bolnuevo Erosions, eroded rock formations more like something you would see in a science fiction film. The area is perfect for keen walkers and cyclists with 35 clearly signposted paths.

For the more adventurous, there



■ Aguilas



■ Snorkelling in Costa Calida

while the sun set along with freshly caught seabass and other regional delicacies.

With everywhere in the region said

by locals to be 25 minutes' drive from the next, Murcia made for the ideal destination to get away from the crowds and tour conveniently.

### factfile

■ Joanna flew to Murcia from Bournemouth Airport with Ryanair

■ For more information on the region, see the website [murciaturistica.es/en](http://murciaturistica.es/en); Facebook: [Visit.Murcia.Spain](https://www.facebook.com/Visit.Murcia.Spain); Twitter: [@Visit\\_Murcia](https://twitter.com/Visit_Murcia) and Instagram: [@visit\\_murcia](https://www.instagram.com/visit_murcia)

We dined at Zoco del Mar, which is nestled just below the castle and enjoyed breath-taking views



**Stanton  
Garage Doors Ltd**

Established 1987

- Up & Over
- Sectional & Roller
- Remote Controls
- Door Frames
- Repairs

**Showroom now open**

Come and browse our showroom in Weymouth with 13 door styles on display

**Call to make an appointment**

**Come and see us at Dorset County Show**

**Unit D2 Mackay Way, Lynch Lane, Weymouth DT4 9DN | T: 01305 789883**

[www.stanton-garage-doors.co.uk](http://www.stanton-garage-doors.co.uk)

