



# COSTA ALMERIA



**Hot and arid enough to be home to Europe's only desert, Almería has retained a rawness absent in more developed parts of Spain. If you're looking for a corner of real Spain, this could be for you...**

**A**lmería was one of the last of Spain's southern costas to be 'discovered'. Long after tourists were flocking to its neighbours the Costa del Sol and the Costa Blanca, Almería remained a rural backwater, its coast dotted with fishing villages and farmers scratching out a living from the arid landscape.

This is one of the driest parts of Europe with desert landscape similar to Arizona – which is why the region was used as a cheaper alternative to the US for shooting spaghetti westerns from the 1960s onwards. That said, there are lush landscapes in the western section, and at several times of the year rains bring grasses and blooms. Almería is also an agricultural centre, with hectares of orange trees and greenhouses.

Slowly Costa Almería became more popular, with Mojácar leading the way. Yet until ten years ago Almería was still seen as an 'alternative' option, being more

authentically Spanish than its neighbours. Since 2000 it has become the most popular choice for British (and other northern European) buyers looking for a keenly priced Spanish bolt-hole. EasyJet flights into Almería airport have also helped.

The inland villages have become favourites with British buyers tempted by cheaper smallholdings than in the neighbouring Alpujarras, yet with the same superb weather and rugged, rustic Andalusian charm. This is where you can still find picture-perfect, whitewashed villages and honey-coloured *cortijos* (farmhouses) on sun-bleached hillsides, while the coastline has seen extensive, but low-rise developments.

### EL PINAR DE BEDAR

Properties on offer at the *A Place in the Sun* auction are in El Pinar de Bedar, a small village perched on the mountainside below the



Spanish town of Bedar, just 15 minutes from the beaches of Mojácar Playa. Bedar has a total population of just 552 permanent inhabitants.

Within the historic village there are still ruins from its days as a mining town. Many buildings within the village have a history including the old school, bakery and Guardia Civil barracks with stables, all of which are now reformed houses.

Back on the coast, Mojácar's beach stretches for nine kilometres beneath the ancient hilltop town and there are plenty of bars, restaurants and shops to choose from there. Also close by is Garrucha, with its beach, marina and beach fish restaurants. And another five minutes along the coast is Vera Playa. Golf resorts in the area include Europe's only true desert golf course – Desert Springs at Almanzora.

Much of the area around El Pinar has been designated as natural park status due to the indigenous flora and fauna that is located there.

An idyllic country resort, El Pinar de Bedar is perfect for year-round living or as an enviable holiday retreat. Part of the new residential development there includes a commercial centre which will house amenities for residents.

Other facilities planned include a boutique hotel, rural golf course and driving range, country walking trails, a shopping centre, transport and preferential membership to beachside leisure centres.

