

## Costa Blanca: Exploring Spain's White Coast

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

Europe's Mediterranean coast is well known for its wonderful, year-round weather and beautiful beaches, and both have ensured a lasting appeal for Spain's Costa Blanca.

Costa Blanca literal means, "white coast." It's located in the southeast of Spain, about five hours from the country's capital, Madrid and also five hours down the coast from the beautiful city of Barcelona.

Because the main draw is the coastline, that's where you'll find the majority of the development. Despite that, many towns still retain much of their original Spanish charm. We were lucky enough to be based in one of those towns, Moraira, which has yet to be discovered by the masses. It's easy to see how little it's changed over the years. The main part of the town grew up around the town's marina, with little shops and restaurants dotted along the seafront. Head further back inland and you'll find villas and residences on hills that rise up from the sea. A car is an absolute must, as walking here would be quite a hike.

We headed up the coast one day to explore the route from Xabia, another resort town set on a hilltop, to Denia, a small family-oriented resort town a few miles farther north. The drive took us through some beautiful scenery, as we wound our way on roads that passed through park lands. It's amazing how, as soon as you leave a town behind, it feels as if you're in the middle of nowhere, with nothing in front of or behind you except open countryside. It makes getting away from it all a very easy past-time.

Down the coast from our base of Moraira was Calp, which is dominated by Penyal d'Ifach, a rocky outcrop that looks as if it comes straight out of the sea. You can hike to the top, but looking at it was exhausting enough for us! Once again, the town is set around a marina, with some beautiful seafood restaurants to be found here.

The next town you come to is Altea, overlooking the sea and full of beautiful whitewashed buildings, as much of Spain is. It has attracted artists for many years and it's easy to see why as you look around. Therefore, it's no surprise that the town is now home to a number of galleries, which are presided over by the town's blue-domed church.

Altea is also home to one of the area's biggest flea markets, which has hundreds of stalls selling all sorts of souvenirs, including belts,

handbags, clothes, and kitchen ware. It was a struggle to get out of there without losing a fortune. Everything was reasonably priced and very unique, although haggling with the sellers is part of the fun!

From Altea, you can head inland to one of the major attractions of the Costa Blanca -- and one of the few that doesn't involve beaches! The mountain community of Guadalest draws visitors from the major coastal resorts and it's easy to see why. As we drove along narrow and winding roads to get to it, suddenly you could see the village appear before you on top of a rock! It's the most bizarre sight and you can't help but wonder how safe those buildings are.

Unsurprisingly, it's quite a hike to reach those buildings, but well worth it. You pass through a sloping tunnel cut into the rock and emerge into a cobbled street. It's almost as if you've stepped back in time as you come back out into the light. Guadalest was originally founded by the Moors, who carved the town and castle into the hillside. Sadly, very little apart from ruins remains of that castle, but there's plenty to see in Plaza de San Gregorio, which is home to shops, cafes, and some beautiful views over a crystal clear reservoir below.

Most of the day trippers to Guadalest come from the bustling seaside resort of Benidorm, which has been a firm favorite of British travelers from the 1970s onwards. Today, it's still packed with foreign visitors and, as a result, it's become something of a concrete jungle, as developers compete to erect more hotels for those who come here. One look at the beach tells you why it's still so popular today, sprawling for what feels like miles in front of you in a beautiful climate, with cafes littered along the seafront road.

On our visit here, we headed for the Bali Hotel, where, for a small fee, you can take an elevator to the outdoor viewing area on the roof. It certainly gives you the full measure of Benidorm as it sprawls beneath you. In the distance, we could see some of the theme parks that this place is well known for, including Terra Mitica, which is themed around Mediterranean civilizations and is packed with terrifying coasters and thrilling water rides.

Amazingly, we were only able to explore a small amount of what the Costa Blanca has to offer, and we're already eagerly looking forward to our next visit out there, so we can explore that beautiful part of Spain more fully.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland*

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Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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