



## **Business over Tapas (Nbr 632)**

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Euro Mundo Global

**Viernes, 22 mayo 2026**

### **Editorial:**

I'm back from a fortnight's holiday – to a village in the sun-lit green fields of southern Germany. Beautiful walks (they have walking- and cycling-paths that go through the fields and forests rather than as here: a painted-red strip alongside the roads), there's a local children's zoo with ducks and lambs and budgerigars, and lots of storks nesting high above a jolly *chiringuito* where the adults stay for lunch and a drink; and there's a nearby glider club with a whisper of sound as the aircraft land on the meadow after a few turns in the sky above.

All very nice. We stayed in mostly and watched television.

Now returned on Election Day to my village on the Almería coast, my grown-up children wanted to 'take me out for a *tapa*'. This means, translated into English, to go and have a drink or two.

So we did, and duly refreshed, I thought I'd write about Mojácar's bars, which come, as only fair, in many different shapes and sizes.

I remember the first time I got drunk. I was fifteen and had gone with my parents to some party in the village given by an odd Spanish-American couple who were, I have to say, a little creepy. They served *champán* (as it was called in those days). I was given a glass of this sickly stuff as my dad explored

the house looking for something better to drink. He soon struck gold when he found a bottle of Johnny Walker stashed in the washing machine.

I thought it tasted even worse than the bubbly.

Later on, I was sick down my father's shirt and we all went home.

Mojácar back in the early days (in my case, the late sixties) only had a couple of local bars in the village, plus a tiny night-club in the arch run by *madrileños* and a discothèque owned by Philippe, a Frenchman from Casablanca (25 pesetas a gin and tonic). There were also a small number of bar/restaurants on the beach – plus a Government-owned Parador Hotel and towards the fishing village next door, a French-Algerian run restaurant with a cook from *Maxim*'s in Paris. If you made it as far as Garrucha, a fisherman's bar opened at one in the morning – idea for that final *carajillo* and a sing-song.

The French place, *El Rancho del Mar*, had excellent food and a roof terrace one could sit on. My dad fell off it once and, as he picked bits of cactus spines out of his back, falsely accused the owner of pushing him.

We lived in the village in the upper of two apartments, bought (according to the *escritura* I still have) for 90,000 pesetas, which is 540 euros. Now, I agree that people used to pay partly in 'black' with the bank-manager seated in the corner at the notary and holding a suspicious-looking package, but Mojácar was in those days quite ridiculously cheap.

Probably a point of contention these days: 'My dad sold your dad a plot of land for pocket change...'. Well *amigo*, that's for sure.

We rented the downstairs to the son of the *Rancho* for 1,000 pesetas and just across the way, my dad bought an old house, fixed it up with a plank of wood and a fridge, and opened his own bar. This was called *La Sartén* and served the community for the next half century (under various hands – my dad was strictly 'customer class'). Sad to say, it's now gone.

There were a number of foreign bars in the village in those times when few people lived on the *playa*, a couple of kilometres below. Americans Arthur and Geri had *The Saloon* (my dad – again – once kicked Dennis Hopper up the backside there). Sammy and Charlie Braun ran the *Zorbas* – both of them out to seduce tourists, according to their gender and inclination. Bob from London had *La Escalera*, where one could sit outside on the public stairwell and be noisy.

There was a Dutch bar, An Anglo-French eatery, an Indonesian restaurant, Mamabel's Spanish restaurant, and an English breakfast place run by a retired nurse who would give you your injection in the lavatory... all gone now.

Now it's rather a village of souvenirs, guided tours and improbable fictions.

On the beach for a couple of decades, the *chiringuitos* were mainly foreign: three American ones, an English one (with the train robber Gordon Goody), a Hungarian one, an Italian one and so on. Now, they are all reconditioned blockhouses run professionally by Spaniards.

Spain has a lot of bars. The Spanish don't tend to visit them with the intention of getting drunk (Well Done, those *tapas!*) but to socialise and even arrange business deals over a cold *caña*. In Almería, there's a bar for every 126 inhabitants. The winner though, is León with an incredible 79 neighbours for each and every caff and Granada coming next with 87.

There is, after all, nothing much on the television.

Our strip of coast has grown with over twenty beach-bars, several hotels, many restaurants and so on ( *Google* says there are 150 establishments now, making Mojácar, visitors aside, about one drinking place for every forty residents. If you had stayed home to watch Eurovision the other night, the town would have gone bust!).

We are lost for choice – although most of us have a very small number of preferred venues.

My parents and their friends drank too much, too fast and too well and they are all in the cemetery now. Indeed, if you visit late at night, you might be able to hear the furtive sound of a champagne bottle being opened and the bubble of muted laughter.

Me, I stick to beer.

### Housing:

When writing about housing – there are always the two strains: how expensive and difficult it is for either young Spaniards starting out in the City, or for old Spaniards losing their home to speculators, landlords, banks or vulture funds. Then there are the cheerful stories about foreign buyers living happily in the coastal resorts. Ah, bliss! Here's some from the first subject: 'Madrid residents need a lifetime to buy a home: they would need more than 58 years of salary to do so without assistance or exceeding the recommended income threshold'. The story comes from **El Economista** [here](#), adding: '...the UGT union says that a normal worker in Madrid would need an impossible 58.89 years of net salary to be able to buy a 60 square metre home in the Community of Madrid if he didn't want to cross the threshold of dedicating more than 40% of his salary to the acquisition'.

From **The Economist** [here](#): 'To understand European voters' anger, look at their rent bills. Rent-control policies are making Europe's housing shortage worse'. ( *Thanks to Jake* ).

**Xataca** [has](#): 'In Spain, there is a huge amount of undeveloped building land – plots that, after the crisis, have ended up in the hands of local councils unable to develop them or in the hands of banks, funds, and companies that have been unable to develop them or have not considered it viable. Estimates suggest that this massive land bottleneck is costing Spanish cities 2.9 million potential homes. In other words, houses that could be built on developed plots, but which, for one reason or another, remain just plans on paper...'

A major article from **Works in Progress** [here](#): 'Spain's cities are unusual. They are much denser, tighter, and more deliberate than other European cities, let alone North American ones. They reject picket fence for apartment block and choose balcony over front lawn. Two thirds of Spaniards live in flats, against 41 percent of Poles, 36 percent of the French, and just 10 percent of the Irish. Of the

remaining third, most live in terraced rowhouses. In Spain's cities, over four fifths of people live in an apartment...' ( *Thanks to Colin* ).

A book on Spain's Brutalism: ' *España Brutal* ', a look at the brutalist architecture scattered throughout the Spanish territory by Alejandro García Alcántara. The *Amazon link* is here.

#### Tourism:

From **The Guardian** here: 'The man on a mission to take Barcelona back from overtourism. After decades of relentlessly marketing their vibrant Mediterranean city, the Barcelona authorities have appointed a man on a mission to say "no more" – and, he says, to return its most iconic market back to local residents'.

**20Minutos** has 'The Alicante Tourism Board is participating this week in the *ICEF Spanish Education* language tourism fair, being held in Madrid, with the aim of "strengthening the promotion of the Costa Blanca as a leading destination for learning Spanish." To this end, the provincial body is highlighting "the quality of its academic offerings and its appeal as a tourist destination through meetings with international agents specializing in study abroad programs, as well as contacts with educational institutions interested in adding the province of Alicante to their portfolio of destinations."'

#### Finance:

From **Cinco Días** here: 'Spain's major banks are cutting over 8,000 jobs and closing 1,250 branches amid the rise of Artificial Intelligence. *Banco Santander* was responsible for most of the job cuts in the last year'.

**El Observador** says: 'The economic relationship between Spain and the United States has reached an unprecedented level of interdependence. According to the first edition of " *The Bridge Report 2026, Spain - U.S. Economic Relations* ," prepared by the American Chamber of Commerce in Spain, cumulative direct investment between the two nations now exceeds €213,000 million. This figure supports a workforce of more than 340,000 jobs in both markets, consolidating the United States as the leading destination for Spanish investment worldwide and, in turn, as the main foreign investor in Spain'.

From **La Razón** here: 'With nearly 32 million users, *Bizum* has become the most popular payment method for peer-to-peer transactions and is increasingly used for online purchases. Now, the Spanish platform has just announced the rollout of a new service that will allow you to make payments in physical stores as well'. It works out better than the *Visa* or *Mastercard*, says *Google*, '...because **Bizum** (homepage in English here) is a domestic Spanish network (and a core component of the broader *European Payments Initiative*) which strengthens local digital payment sovereignty rather than relying on US-owned infrastructure...'

#### Politics:

In yet another effort to unseat Pedro Sánchez, *Manos Limpias* ( wiki ) has made a complaint against José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero for money laundering. This follows from an accusation made by Victor Aldama (a businessman released from jail to help investigations against the PSOE) on a conspiracy

TV show called *Horizonte*. It's now in front of the court. From **El Mundo** [here](#), 'The judge identifies Zapatero as the "leader" of an "influence peddling" network to rescue the *Plus Ultra* airline and earn two million euros ( *for his efforts* ). The court notified the former president this Tuesday of his summons, requiring him to appear on June 2nd. The National Court has charged Zapatero with money laundering, and the police have searched his office and his daughters' company'. **El País in English** fully explains the case [here](#). The visibly indignant ex-president [issued](#) a statement following his indictment in the *Caso Plus Ultra*, releasing [a video](#) reaffirming that his public and private activities have been conducted "with absolute respect for the law". Or not.

As another ex-president José María Aznar [said](#): ' *El que pueda hacer, que haga* '.

Gabriel Rufián (ERC) speaking in the Cortes on Wednesday 'For all of us on the left – if this is true, then it's *una mierda*. If it's another right-wing scam, then it's an even bigger *mierda* ( [video](#) )'.

JL Zapatero is remembered for taking Spain out of George W Bush's Iraq war and bringing about the end of ETA ( [Wiki](#) ).

[Opinion](#) from **El Plural** : 'The *CIS* (Spanish Centre for Sociological Research) had once again accurately predicted the Andalusian elections, triggering alarm bells for the Spanish right-wing media and political establishment. In that same April poll, the CIS said that the PSOE were leading the PP by almost 13 points nationally. Amid this climate of widespread nervousness, the Partido Popular and its affiliated groups have chosen a primary target to destabilize the government and the PSOE: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. This is not a casual or merely retrospective attack, but rather a cold and calculated strategy to neutralize the socialists' most effective electoral asset and thus prevent another right-wing debacle in the upcoming general elections...'

From **20Minutos** [here](#): 'Feijóo demands Sánchez resign, but the president closes ranks with Zapatero and affirms that "there will be elections in 2027.".

*Anything said or done or alleged by someone regarding the PSOE is immediately investigated, while other things with much greater national impact are left until later (sometimes, much later). You might believe it or you might not, according to your politics, but you know it's a frame-up.*

**Público** is [indignant](#): 'The Spain the Right denies: how laws they voted in Congress impact citizens. On nineteen occasions, the right-wing alliance in the Lower House (PP, Vox, Junts, UPN, and sometimes the PNV) has overturned laws or royal decrees so far during this legislative term. The reduction of the workweek to 37.5 hours, the rent freeze, the tax on energy companies, and the suspension of the eviction moratorium are the most prominent examples'.

An irony alert from **The Objective** [here](#): 'The leader of Revuelta, the youth association that broke with Vox, reports receiving death threats'. Curiously, the young fascists have a motto: '*Sin miedo a nada ni a nadie*'.

The Andalusian elections on Sunday were a poor result for most people. Juanma Moreno's PP won but were just shy of an absolute majority and will probably [be forced to form](#) (says **The Guardian** ) an alliance with Vox. They were just two seats short, but the price from the Voxers will no doubt be steep. The PSOE continues to drift, with a poor second place showing. The local far-left group

Adelante Andalucía did well (for a small party). The results with 55 to win a full majority: PP 53, PSOE 28, Vox 15, AA with 8 and Por Andalucía (Podemos etc) with 5. The full results by municipality are [here](#). Regrettably, Vox beat the PSOE to second place in Almería 'the province with the highest concentration of immigrants in Andalucía'. With these results, Feijóo adds a fourth incomplete victory (Extremadura, Aragón and Castilla y Leon), which prevents him from escaping the clutches of Vox. **El Mundo**, just before the elections, was prescient: 'Pedro Sánchez is preparing to ignore electoral punishment in Andalucía, but critics warn: "There is a faction within the PSOE that is fed up with losing elections."'. Notably, Adelante Andalucía and Por Andalucía took 660,000 votes and – between them – 13 councillors, while Vox got 570,000 and sixteen councillors. Will the far-left ever learn to kiss and make up? Probably not.

From **Eye on Spain** [here](#), 'Why can't we foreigners vote in Spain?' After all, 'Some 302,005 Andalusians spread across 157 countries were eligible to vote in the regional elections of May 17, with Argentina being the main player'. As the final votes arrive from elsewhere, (302,000 Andalusians – or their children or their grandchildren – live in other countries but hold the right to vote). However, most of them, says **20Minutos** [here](#), don't bother.

From **Casena Ser** [here](#): "Spain has shifted significantly to the right": Carlos Francino's reflection after the Andalusian elections. The journalist analyses the interpretations following the elections and points to a change in the political landscape. "After the elections in four communities, which together represent more than 13 million people, what is quite clear is that, right now, at this moment, Spain has turned to the right in a remarkable way." All four of those communities have a PP winner, but only with the approval/partnership of Vox.

Vox has not clarified whether it will seek to join the Andalusian government but will demand that Moreno Bonilla accept its *National Priority* plan (a Spanish version of the Jim Crow laws). The far-right party will leverage its seats after the PP lost its absolute majority.

## Health:

The first few minutes of comic **Miguel Charisteas'** weekly look at Spanish politics is about the Hantavirus, the swimming rats (wearing goggles) along with the president of the Canary Isles who claims that rodents (they carry the virus) were not only infesting the cruise-ship, but that they can swim for up to three days to reach the shore. Then, from Santiago Abascal, it was all an invention by Pedro Sánchez to divert attention from the *Caso Mascarillas*. A complaint came from the PP that there isn't a national agency to handle viral attacks (although they voted against such a proposal *twice*). The empty Zandal hospital in Madrid (maybe they should build another one) and the Pope, Von der Leyen, the United Nations, the WHO all praising Spain for its handling of the stricken cruise ship.

Does drinking sea water cure cancer? From **Cuatro** [here](#): 'The nutritionist at *HM Hospital*: "Drinking seawater is madness, it puts your health at risk". We read: 'Influencers are saying you should drink seawater, which should be collected far away from ports. They claim that more salt in your life means more life, and they denigrate doctors who advise against salt intake. Some go even further, saying that drinking seawater regenerates cancer cells'.

Javier Martínez is clear on this. "It's nonsense. There's no safety whatsoever. It could contain microplastics, heavy metals, and other contaminants. It should never be consumed."

A healthy beer? Well, if you take out everything that isn't healthy (like alcohol) and add some things that are, then *Amber Triple Zero Probiótica* sounds like the answer to all our problems. **20Minutos** has the puff [here](#).

### **Corruption:**

From **elDiario.es** [here](#): 'The former head of the *UDEF* (Financial and Economic Crime Unit) describes to the judge the police "system" for falsifying the origin of major anti-drug operations. Sánchez Gil, from whom 20 million euros were seized, recounts how foreign agencies agree to appear as suppliers of information when in reality it comes from other drug traffickers' informants or from dubious wiretaps'.

More on Zapatero ( *sorry!*): 'The *UDEF* received help from a US agency to advance the investigation against Zapatero' says **elDiario.es** [here](#). The US agency was *Homeland Security Investigations* . The claim against Zapatero was created in 'Trump's White House', says **Diario Sabemos** [here](#). From **El Huff Post** [here](#): 'José Antonio Martín Pallín, an emeritus magistrate of the Supreme Court: 'It amazes me that people haven't read the ruling of the *Court of Justice of the European Union* , which upholds the European Commission's decision affecting all European airlines. In Spain, *Air Europa* , *Plus Ultra*, *Air Nostrum*, and *Volotea* were all bailed out—although the word 'bailout' doesn't seem quite right since it was more of a loan," he says. The magistrate commented that the amounts are known, and in the case of *Plus Ultra* , it was 53 million euros. "I don't see any criminal activity there," he asserted. *Air Europa* received 475 million euros, while *Volotea* received 200 million euros, and *Air Nostrum* received 111 million euros. Furthermore, a 320 million euro bailout for *Ávoris* was also approved by the Government in 2021...' (*Iberia of course belongs to the International Airlines Group (IAG) with its corporate headquarters in London*).

### **Media:**

Two muck-raking journalists – or better still 'agitators' – have [been expelled](#) from the parliamentary reporters pool for their activities. Vito Quiles was accredited to Congress by *EDATV* . Bertrand Ndongo, by *Periodista Digital* . Both of these pseudo-media outlets, which pay these two scamps, have negligible audiences, but receive generous public funding from regional and local governments controlled by the PP and Vox parties.

From **Espacio Andaluz** [here](#): 'A veteran journalist from *Canal Sur* breaks his silence on the control of journalistic work at *RTVA* by the Moreno government and the channel's management: "They would tell me what the angle of the news should be."

### **Ecology:**

From **Levante** [here](#): 'With the start of the cruise season, the debate about the high consumption of drinking water by these giants of the sea—veritable floating cities with several thousand people on board and equipped with all kinds of water attractions—has reopened. Cruise ships are often under scrutiny for their wide range of environmental impacts, both on land (generation of solid waste), at

sea (discharge of wastewater), and in the air (emission of polluting gases). However, it is water consumption, especially during periods of drought, that sparks the most intense debate. The title says: 'Barcelona and Ibiza require companies to fill their water tanks only in cases of genuine emergency'.

From **Energías Renovables** [here](#): 'Renewable energy sources were key to curbing electricity prices in Spain in 2025, according to a study by the *UNEF*. Without technologies like solar photovoltaics, the average price would have reached €218.63/MWh, almost triple the €74.83/MWh recorded. The report highlights that a greater renewable energy presence reduces energy costs, benefiting households, businesses, and industries. Furthermore, the hours with the highest renewable energy generation coincided with the lowest electricity market prices'.

#### **Various:**

From **RTVE** [here](#): 'Pedro Sánchez will meet with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican on May 27. The visit comes days before the Pope's official visit to Spain from June 6 to 12'.

**elDiario.es** [has](#): 'The God-show: charismatic leaders, mega-events, and preachers on the subway to spread the gospel. This May alone, three major events linked to Pentecostalism are planned in Madrid. Who is behind these groups? Are they representative of the approximately two million Evangelists living in Spain?'.

**The Olive Press** [reports](#) that 'Cuts to The *British Council* threaten to gut UK influence and soft power worldwide – with historic Madrid headquarters first on the chopping block'.

From **The Guardian** [here](#): 'Spain has banned Francoist symbols. So why is the country still full of kitsch cafes glorifying the dictator? These unsettling and unusual places tell a vivid story about the unique way that Spain deals with its past – or fails to'.

**Spanish Views from a Small Town** has [an essay](#) on politics: 'The world is becoming a scary place once more. Spain is no different, not when many young people under twenty-five, who are now eligible to vote, believe that with Franco Spain was a better place to live than now. They will happily vote for the extreme right Vox party at the next elections...' *An interesting read.*

"" *Gastarbeiter*": The Spaniards who suffered xenophobia and the "National Priority" now defended by the PP and Vox. Franco promoted the labour emigration of 3.5 million Spaniards in the 1960s. The stigma that they were dirty or committed more crimes was repeated in the press of the time. With the 1973 crisis, the idea took hold that they were stealing jobs'. A story from **elDiario.es** [here](#). The *BoT* consultant José Antonio Sierra was one of these, working in menial jobs in the early sixties in France and Germany.

'A Russian ship that sank after its engine room exploded in the Mediterranean could have been carrying parts for nuclear reactors used in submarines, according to Spanish government documents' [says ABC News](#). The ship sank (or was scuttled?) following an explosion off the coast of Almería in December 2024. **Diario de Almería** has [more](#).

#### **See Spain:**

‘We enter the town where you can eat the best food in Spain, known as "the cathedral of Iberian ham": it has a medieval castle and a fairytale mountain range full of pastures’. **Viajar** takes us to Cumbres Mayores in Huelva.

**Finally:**

Benjamín Escoriza with Radio Tarifa and *Tango De La María* on **YouTube** [here](#).

...and just for fun: ‘*España Cañí*’ - De Delftse Muziek & Theater Parade 2025.