



Palace views The Alhambra, Granada, in southern Spain – one of the areas where international estate agents have been slow to move. Prices are low but rising as more buyers catch on

Spain's top five offer great deals for bargain hunters

Sonia Purnell puts together a portfolio of rising areas for the discerning property buyer

1 CADIZ PROVINCE

West of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean gives way to the breezy Atlantic, crashing against the Costa de la Luz in south-west Spain. Relatively undeveloped, it is fast becoming chic. While windsurfers flock to Tarifa, those seeking a genuine Andalusian experience enjoy the rakish charms of the coastal city of Cadiz and the grand, rolling interior.

Until recently poor transport links left it relatively cut off, but it has now been turned into a holiday home destination by budget flights to Jerez and the high-speed AVE train link from Madrid. Better roads also mean easy access to the coast, with Jerez – where an apartment in the historic city centre costs 250,000 euros (£160,000) – now just 20 minutes from the white-sand playas.

Medina Sotomayor and Arcos de la Frontera, blessed by fine lakes, are popular. Farmhouses near Arcos, a pre-Iberian town hanging over a dramatic gorge, go for £235,000.

"In the past Cadiz province could never compete with the Costa del Sol on accessibility," says Barbara Wood of Property Finders, who is now advising many Brits on buying in the area. "But the last couple of years have changed all that. Many well-off Spaniards buy here, so there's still a lot of price growth to come."

2 MAJORCA

With the world's rich, famous and royal flocking to Majorca for their summer holidays, buying property on the island has become prohibitively expensive for most of

us. "There is no undiscovered village that has not been restored and sold for a fortune," says one agent. But those with their ears to the ground point to two areas that have not yet had the star treatment.

"The east has a quiet, rural feel. It's the last unspoiled part of Majorca," says Michael Cunningham of MJC Associates. "Poor communications until recently made it cheaper. That is changing fast with better roads, but the price of a nice finca with land and views, 20 minutes from a gorgeous cove, is still half that in the overcooked south west."

Bargain-hunters are heading north from Porto Colom, which has future potential with a largely undeveloped harbour, to Porto Cristo, past some 20 mostly unspoiled coves.

Meanwhile, Soler, the one-time shabby port in the north-west, is also relatively cheap. But an extensive redevelop, including the demolition of ugly military buildings and a new



tunnel to take away the traffic, is attracting interest. The gin-palace yachts now berth in the newly expanded marina.

"The plastic café chaises have gone, the chic white shades are up, Soler is changing overnight," says Jan Westwood. "So you will have to move quickly if you want a bargain."

3 TENERIFE

Cheap as chips, dressed in high-rise hotels and tattoos, Tenerife has long suffered from an image problem. But four years ago, the government of the largest Canary island launched a rebranding exercise, aiming to lure the more discerning visitor by banning anything other than top-end development and planting a lot of new trees.

Many Brits have also been seduced by prices that are substantially lower than those on the mainland and the possibility of year-round rental

return, thanks to the winter sun.

The new, more upmarket developments such as Anarilla Golf – where properties with fewer than two bedrooms are banned – are selling well and resales have seen sharp price increases. Property prices in the new, smarter areas, including Fanabe and San Blas, have risen by 18 per cent over the past year, while there has been almost no increase in the old Tenerife fleshpots of Las Americas and Los Cristianos.

"Tenerife had the highest number of tourists in July this year since the heyday of 1973, so the move upmarket is definitely working," says Leslie Beeson of Tenerife Property Shop. "It is an island with the best climate in Europe that now appeals to the loft end of the market."

4 GIRONA

Ringed by ancient walls, high on a fortress like hill above the River Oyar, Girona's maze of medieval streets has been largely overlooked in favour of Barcelona, 45 minutes' drive to the south. But its undoubted charms – and the countryside around it – will be opened up by the launch of the new TGV service from Paris (four hours) and Barcelona (30 minutes) over the next two years.

A favourite spot with Spaniards, it is 45 minutes from the cove and pine forests of the Costa Brava and some elegant resorts such as Palafrugell and Galleta. But the island treasures, such as Besalu, an amazingly grand little town dominated by a splendid 11th-century fortified bridge: or



CADIZ Left: Three-bedroom flat on two floors with small private patio and great views in Alcala de los Gazules, near Cadiz. €250,000. Matt's Spain 07973 720439, email property_finder@hotmail.com. Right: Two-bedroom period property, shired roof terrace, very central address in the city of Cadiz, first floor with balcony. €295,000. Matt's Spain, as above.



GIRONA Left: Three-bedroom, three-bathroom townhouse at Veritello, just inland from the Costa Brava, needing renovation. €450,000. Lucas Fox 0034 933 562 969 www.lucasfox.com. Right: Renovated 18th-century abbe house in two acres of garden with heated pool and sauna, near Banyoles. €1.5 million. Lucas Fox 0034 933 562 969 www.lucasfox.com.



MAJORCA Left: Seven-bedroom townhouse with garden and pool in need of renovation in Soller. €650,000. The Property Finders 0034 971 233 207 www.thepropertyfinders.com. Right: New finca with views near the eastern village of Porreres, four bedrooms, four bathrooms, guest suite, terraces. €850,000 plus €200,000 to fit out. MJC Associates tel 0034 971 57 99 57.



GRANADA Left: Otara Villas – new three-bedroom villa in a country club 15 minutes from the Alhambra, with golf club, pool, tennis courts and mountain views. From €280,000. Foxtons 020 7198 7777 www.foxtons.co.uk. Right: Casa Ecologica – five-bedroom wooden house with city views from a terrace on its own tower. €291,000. www.findaproperty.com (ref: FAPVGA104).



TENERIFE Left: Royal Marina Golf – upmarket apartments with two double bedrooms, marble floors, sun terraces and pool, near marina. From €262,500. Tenerife Property Shop 0871 671 6131 www.tenerifepropertyshop.com. Right: Three-bedroom villa with large grounds, mountain views, at Aldea Blanca, 10 minutes from airport. €550,000. Tenerife Property Shop, as above.

Banyoles, a delightful place by a lake with dramatic views of the Pyrenees, are now attracting foreign interest.

"The physical beauty of the place has meant that it's never exactly been cheap," says Rita Fryer of Property Finders. "But with better communications, prices are still going up. There are also some attractive rains to be done up."

5 GRANADA

International agents have been slow to move in to the old Moorish city of Granada in southern Spain, but foreigners are increasingly attracted by its unique location, history and style. Not only is the Alhambra, a spectacular Moorish palace, the most visited site in Spain but its host city

is a sophisticated place with some of the best food in the country.

Just half an hour from Soldeu, Europe's southernmost ski resort in the Sierra Nevada, it is possible for the ski set to be on the slopes all day and in the tapas bars of Granada by night. In the summer, it is 45 minutes to some of Spain's best beaches around Sabonera on the Costa Tropical, which rarely gets too crowded.

There are also grants for up to 40 per cent of the renovation costs of historic buildings in Granada's centre. Although prices are below Seville, the gap is narrowing as more Brits buy. Yet it is still possible to find a small flat with views of the Alhambra for as little as £180,000.

