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Museum, home to 233 works and nestled in the old town's narrow picturesque streets. I've not seen a collection more mind-blowing since my GCSE trip to Paris in 1990.

Hipster Málagaños use the new Boris-bike equivalents, Málaga Bicis, but we prefer to ramble everywhere and a five-minute reconnaissance takes us through the Jewish quarter. Here we find the Carmen Thyssen Museum, built four years ago and boasting old masters including Velázquez and El Greco.

By day three, I'm on a devoted culinary mission. If you're a food-lover seeking new thrills, head to the sandy seaside, where you will find the local barbecuing ritual, 'espeto'. I watch vendors – old men who have done it for years – gently grill fresh sardines on an open fire built from olive wood. Although I'm told that discerning seafood eaters should wander another kilometre east to Pedregalejo, a fishing village of



Al fresco: The city is full of interesting places to eat



Café culture: Take your pick



On yer bike: A hip Málagaños cyclist

Málaga: most definitely Moorish

whitewashed houses and rows of restaurants, I discover there is a more modern scene flourishing back in town.

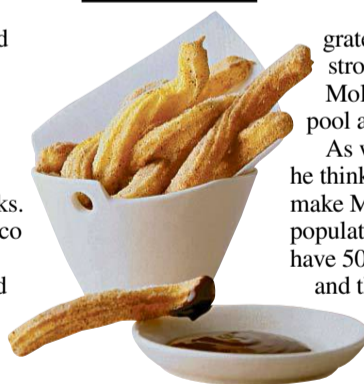
Pedro Sánchez de la Nieta is partially responsible for this movement because of his Food Sherpa tours (£51 including lunch, spainfoodsherpas.com) that attract twenty and thirtysomething food-obsessives who are after meals away from the mainstream.

His 'sherpa' Simone shows us the best boquerones – gently fried battered anchovies – at an inconspicuous stall called Bar Mercado Atarazanas in the eponymous bustling food market where we also nibble madroño – strange orange fruit with red flecks.

She tells me that the local Ibérico pigs from Ronda, a city west of Málaga, feed on chestnuts instead of acorns, resulting in a meat to rival the famous ham from the town of Jabugo. 'The



Whatever your taste: Street art and churros con chocolate (below)



ingredients and flavours range from village to village,' shouts Simone above the din of the market.

We then wander to nearby Antigua Casa de Guardia (antiguacasadeguardia.net), a creaking bar with 100-year-old barrels serving Málaga wines, and the latest must-visit tapas, Taberna Uvedoble (plates from £5, uvedobletaberna.com) – I'd recommend its albóndigas de rabo de toro (oxtail meatballs).

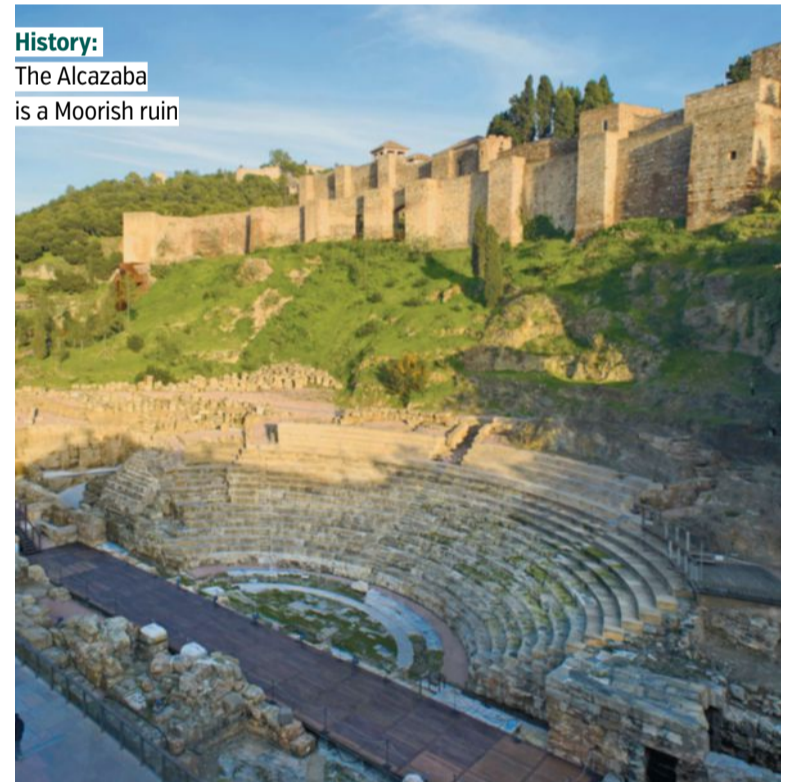
With my belly so full, I'm grateful we are only a minute's stroll to our chic boutique hotel, Molina Lario, home to a rooftop pool and modish interior design.

As we leave, I ask Antonio if he thinks this year's openings will make Málaga the new Bilbao. 'Our population is bigger than Bilbao – we have 500,000 to 600,000 living here – and there aren't tourist traps so we still have local pricing,' he replies. I think you'll agree, that says it all.



Doubles start from £117 at Hotel Molina Lario (hotelmolinario.com). Flights from £45.98 return (easyjet.com); malagaturismo.com/en

History: The Alcazaba is a Moorish ruin



LIVE LIKE A LOCAL MÁLAGUEÑO PHOTOGRAPHER JUANDE JIMENEZ, 36, REVEALS HIS FAVOURITE HAUNTS



BEST NEW CAFE
RECYCLO BIKE CAFE
'It's next to the central Málaga market (Atarazanas) but it feels like stepping into a café in Berlin or London. Good music, fine coffee'. recyclobikeshop.es



TAPAS FOR FOODIES
MIGUEL
'Miguel is by the bullring and only has a few tables. I love the roast lamb and piglet, cuts of prime beef, amazing cod.' restaurantemiguel.es



SECRET SPOT
MERCADO DEL CARMEN
'This fish market restaurant in El Perchel is owned by a family of fishmongers and is a 30-minute walk from the old town but you get the best fried fish here.'



THE LATEST BAR
EL MURO
'El Muro hasn't been open for very long and is tailored for those who care about their drinks'. @elmuromalaga