



SEVILLE PUTS THE SPICE INTO SPAIN.

It's a city with the highest temperatures, one of the first centres of foot-stomping flamenco, and home to the fiery temptress Carmen. It's a busy metropolis that still makes time for siestas, and throws week-long parties each year in the name of the Feria de Abril.

Seville is sexy and self-confident; it prides itself on offering you a good time. It's also a city in love with tradition. Those vibrant spotted dresses with ruffles and frills aren't just there for the tourists. They're worn with panache every year at the Feria, complete with matching heels and huge flowers pinned to slicked-back hair. Legs of ham hang from the ceilings, next to calendars depicting statues of the Virgin Mary studded with tears. Then Holy Week, or Semana Santa, sees some of the world's most spectacular Catholic processions, with crowds and incense filling the streets all day and night.

Yet Seville has also opened up to the new of late, from wasabi-laced tapas to the swirling Espacio Metropol Parasol, the vast, contemporary wooden structure on Plaza de la Encarnación.

The Metro is clean and efficient, but you can explore the whole city on foot too, zig-zagging between shops and museums with the odd pick-me-up of hot chocolate and *churros*.

Wherever you end up, you can't miss Seville's Cathedral and its latticed tower, La Giralda. Beneath this landmark, you'll find horse-drawn carriages and the entrance to the Santa Cruz district – home to great tapas and flamenco bars, small museums and Arabic baths.

To regain a sense of space, stride past the peacocks in the gardens of the Real Alcázar and on towards Maria Luisa Park. See the Plaza de España, then stroll along the banks of the Guadalquivir river, where ships from the New World used to return laden with gold.

You may want to take a siesta like the locals, because eating dinner out is almost impossible before 8.30pm, and most places aren't buzzing until 10pm, while clubs stay open until dawn.

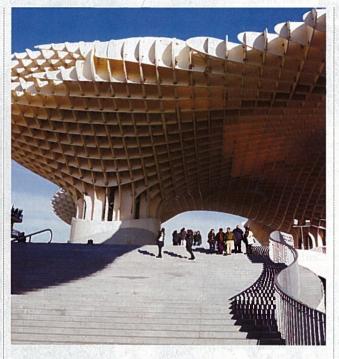
What you'll love most though is that there's nothing half-hearted or lukewarm about life here. Whatever the time of year and whatever the weather, this is Seville – and it's hot.





ON THE STREET

BEYOND FLAMENCO



YOU CAN'T GET FAR IN SEVILLE without noticing its history of flamenco. The Museo del Baile Flamenco (1) (www.museoflamenco. com) takes you through the steps of Seville's most famous dance to the soundtrack of stomping feet. Its rich visual display includes the costumes of some of flamenco's most beguiling stars.

Yet that's by no means the only culture to find here, with modern art galleries and live music on offer throughout the city, not to mention architecture that spans more than 1,000 years. A must-see attraction is the **Cathedral of Seville (2)** (www. catedraldesevilla.es), whose elaborate tower, the Giralda, has become the symbol of the city. Visible from miles around, this beautiful landmark used to form the minaret of the mosque that stood here before the Catholic Monarchs drove the Moors from southern Spain. Inside, you'll find crown jewels, gilded altars and the resting place (allegedly) of Christopher Columbus.

If you're in Andalusia and you can't reach

the Alhambra palace, then Seville's **Real Alcázar 3** (www.patronato-alcazarsevilla.es) is the next best thing. Extensive Moorish fountains, carvings and patios, as well as a few resident peacocks, make it a refreshing break from the busy streets.

Then there's the **Espacio Metropol Parasol** (www.espacio-metropol.com), the latest addition to the Seville skyline. Disliked by some for its drab-coloured walkways, there's no disputing that the view from the top of this modern monument, which includes shops and restaurants, is one of the best in the city.

For a look at how life used to be, including costumes and ceramics, walk though the wide expanses of the Maria Luisa Park to visit the beautiful **Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares de Sevilla (\$)** (www.museosdeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/MACSE). Drop down again in scale to appreciate the small but exquisitely formed **Casa de Pilatos (\$)** (www.fundacionmedinaceli.org/monumentos/pilatos). This palace showcases the elegance of Seville's old mansions, with interiors heavily influenced by Renaissance, gothic and Mudéjar styles. The fragrant gardens provide respite from the heat.

Travel further back in time to **Itálica** (2) (www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/CAI) on the outskirts of Seville. Crumbling columns, coloured mosaics and broad walkways all whisk you back to life in Roman times. However, for the latest in art and culture check out what's on at the **Instituto de la Cultura y las Artes** (3) (www.icas-sevilla.org), from theatre performances to photography, music and fashion.



Learn all about the flamboyant dance at the Museo del Baile Flamenco

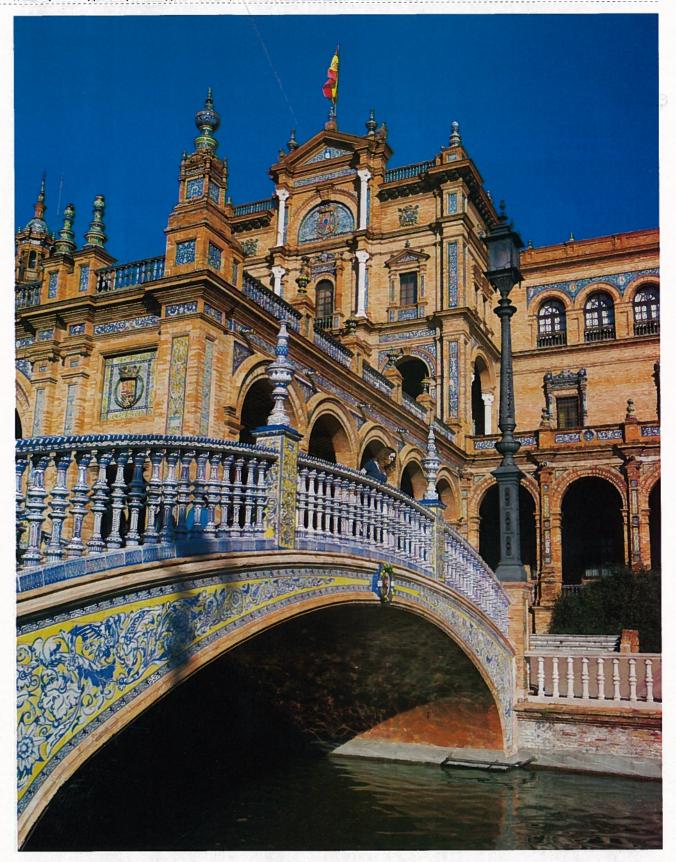
■ Espacio Metropol Parasol

Plaza de España



Historic spas

Public bathing using alternating hot and cold plunge pools was a concept embraced by the Romans and the Moors. So it's them we have to thank for Seville's excellent relaxation options today. One of the best baths is the Baños Árabes also known as Aire de Sevilla (9) (www.airedesevilla. com), tucked away down one of the narrowest streets in the Santa Cruz district. Its low lights, incense and sweet, cold apple tea alone make muscle tension melt. The baths are located in the former mansion of a viceroy to the Indies, on a site that actually used to be a hammam and Roman baths before that. Try the Thousand Shower steam room, hydromassage bath and saltwater pool before gearing up for the real temperature challenge: the tepidarium at 36°C, the calidarium at a scorching 40°C and finally, the frigidarium at a not-that-cold 16 °C.

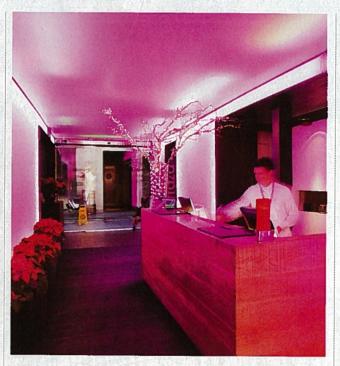


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AT THE HOTEL

BARS, SPAS AND ROMAN REMAINS



BUDGET OPTIONS ARE PLENTIFUL in Seville, as long as you book in advance. Hostales
Como Hoteles (1) (www.hostalescomohoteles. com), for instance, operates on the principle that hostels should be as hotel-like as possible. Its branch at Puerta de Jerez has basic but comfortable en-suite rooms, and a great central

location, Doubles from €54

For something more special, try the **Casa Romana Hotel Boutique** (1) (www.newhotel. hotelcasaromana.com), which has Roman columns and a popular rooftop bar. From here, you're in easy walking distance of the shopping action on Calle Sierpes, the Plaza Alameda and the central buzz of the Cathedral and Santa Cruz. Room rates include extras like wi-fi and fluffy white robes. Doubles from €79.

Behind wrought iron gates in a quieter part of town is **Palacio de Villapanés AlmaSevilla**(www.almasevilla.com). A rooftop solarium and underground spa mean it's fun to spend time here whatever the season. This is one of the top places to stay in Seville, so expect first-class service, a restaurant serving

gourmet versions of traditional dishes, lavish monochrome bathrooms and plasma TVs. Doubles from €169

If you have a hire car and don't mind being out of town, consider staying at the **Parador de Carmona** (a) (www.parador.es/es/parador-de-carmona). Perched on a clifftop, this 14th-century fortress offers sweeping views across the Andalusian plains, as well as housing a collection of tapestries and antiques. The restaurant focuses on seasonal dishes, while the bar has one of the most picturesque courtyards in the region. Doubles from €130.

The chic **EME Catedral Hotel** (a) (www.emecatedralhotel.com), overlooking the Giralda, created a buzz when it appeared on the Seville scene four years ago. It houses a Michelin-star restaurant, a contemporary bar that's always packed, and rooms kitted out with Bang & Olufsen TVs and state-of-the-art bathrooms. Doubles from €170.

More traditional accommodation can be found at the sumptuous **Doña María Hotel** (**S**) (www.hdmaria.com), also near the Cathedral. Printed wallpaper and striped velvet sheets decorate the rooms of this former palace. And as far as rooftop terraces go, not only does the Doña María have the best view of the Giralda, but it also comes with a small pool for a reviving dip. Doubles from €117.

Finally, with its exposed brick walls and spacious rooms, the eclectic **Hotel Husa Los Seises** (www.hotellosseises.com) is a cool place to stay. You can even see the remains of Roman mosaics in the basement. Doubles from €135.



■ Bed down at Palacio de Villapanés AlmaSevilla ■ Contemporary cool at EME Catedral Hotel

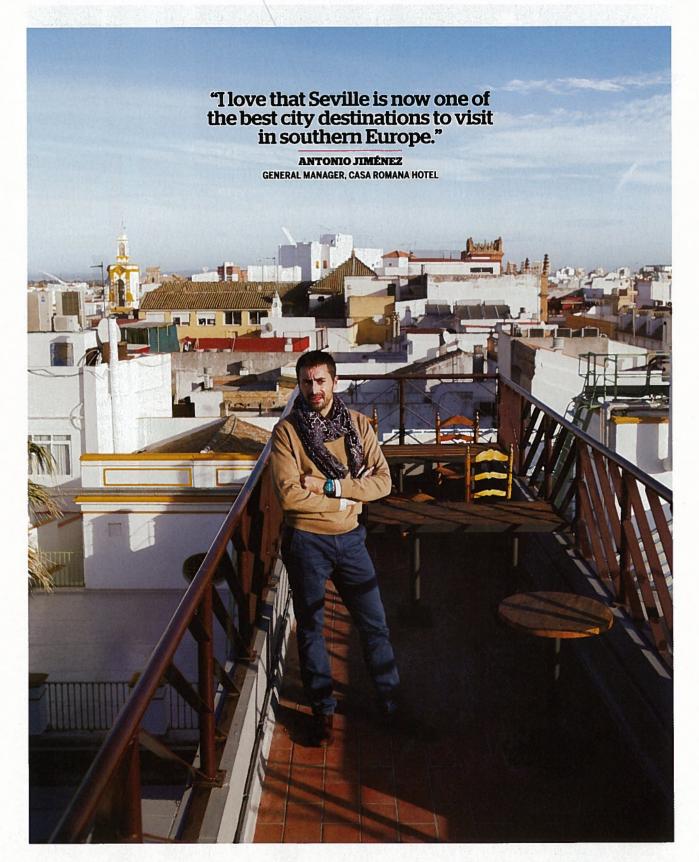


Cool it

If you're planning to visit the city in high summer, when temperatures hit 40°C and there's no rainfall in sight, you'll be glad to find that almost everything in central Seville seems to have been designed with the aim of keeping people cool. For instance, on the streets of Santa Cruz there are rain machines spraying water into the alleyways, creating a cooling mist for passers-by.

You can likely rely on proper air conditioning in your hotel. But you'll also notice many more traditional design touches related to coping with the summer heat. It's why you'll see so many marble floors and open courtyards, with cloisters providing shade. Not to mention Seville's many fountains.

You may want to indulge in a siesta – a sleep to escape the hottest part of the day and save your energy for the evening. In fact, we recommmend it whatever the weather or time of year!





ON THE TABLE

WHERE TOM CRUISE EATS TAPAS



TAPAS IS A WAY OF LIFE IN SEVILLE. You'd be hard-pressed to stumble for more than about 100m without finding a place that serves up a plate of sliced jamón washed down with cerveza. The anti-smoking legislation has cleaned up the bars, but their rich Andalusian character remains the same. There are plenty of places to eat tapas right by the Cathedral, but for our money the following are some of the best in Seville.

Casa Manolo León (p) (www.manololeon. com) ushers you into a stately private home complete with chandeliers, tiled fountains and some of the most succulent pork in Seville. It's one of the few places where you can sit down for a full three course meal, plus coffee, in the quieter part of town.

For a glimmering view of the Guadalquivir river and the Torre del Oro, or "Tower of Gold", step into the classy **Restaurante Abades Triana** (18) (www.abadestriana.com) in Triana.

Expect a beautifully turned out menu of caviar, tuna tartare and bacalao (salted cod).

Despite the Italian-sounding name, you'll



find that **Restaurante San Marco** (19) (www.sanmarco.es), in the atmospheric underground setting of former Arabic baths, serves plenty of traditional Spanish dishes as well as fantastic pizza. Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz dined here while filming the action comedy *Knight and Day*.

For a fast-paced, full-flavoured selection of tapas, head to **Taberna Coloniales** (www.tabernacoloniales.es/colonialesII/tabernacoloniales.html). It's just a few blocks from the Cathedral but make no mistake, this is no mediocre tourist trap. Be prepared to queue and jostle your way to the bar, but once you have, your tastebuds will thank you. Try the the tapas of quail eggs or the local salmorejo (tomato spread) with diced ham. Taberna Coloniales is busy for a reason.

Around the corner, relative newcomer **Vinela** (22) (www.facebook. com/VinelaSevilla) has a fresh and funky approach. It's a clean and bright space with a pared-down yet flavoursome menu. **Al Aljibe** (22) (www.alaljibe.com) on the edge of the laid-back Plaza Alameda offers a leafy retreat from the hectic streets. Try salmon ceviche or paprika prawns, all served beneath the shade of the restaurant's signature orange tree. A peaceful place to sit, eat and talk for hours.

To get well and truly off the beaten track, head to **Eslava** (a), a narrow corridor of a restaurant decked out in sky blue shades that actually do reflect the colour of the sky in Seville. Ask for the parcels of blue cheese and pork ribs that come in a delicious honey sauce.



■ Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz are fans of Restaurante San Marco

☐ Dine in style at the stately
Casa Manolo León



Jamón, jamón

To some outsiders, the sight of a pig's leg strung up from the ceiling may seem unusual. Yet in Andalusia, ham is so much more than a staple dish – it's almost a matter of regional pride.

The rest of Spain acknowledges that the hest ham in the world comes from the farms of Andalusia. In particular, it's the small town of Jabugo that's singled out for praise, where free range black pigs feast on an acorn-only diet. Jamón produced in this way attracts the highest prices and earns itself a place on the country's Christmas menu.

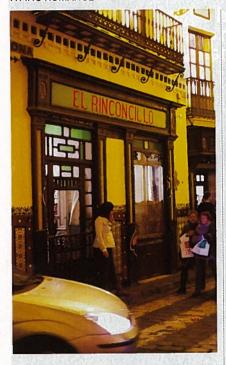
A word of warning: not all jamón is equal. Take your time in finding a restaurant that you're confident serves good quality local produce so that you can check out the real thing, which has a meltingly soft texture. Just be careful how much you eat, it costs a lot per bite.

"Just throw away your map and enjoy wandering through the labyrinth of small winding streets and little squares that make up the Barrio Santa Cruz" SHAWN HENNESSEY
SEVILLE TAPAS GUIDE (WWW.AZAHAR-SEVILLA.COM)



TO THE BAR

A FINO ROMANCE

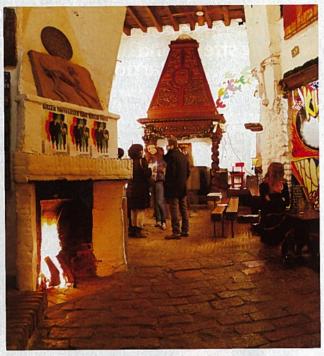


EATING AND DRINKING WHILE OUT on

the town forms such an integral part of life in Seville that it's sometimes difficult to differentiate between "restaurants" and "bars." Most self-respecting bars have their own tapas menus, while most tapas bars expect you to sit, chat and drink.

In a city where dinner rarely starts before 10pm, you'll have no trouble finding somewhere to dance the night away. Yet Seville's nightlife isn't reserved for clubbing youths alone – you'll find children and grandparents tucking into tapas at midnight, as well as adults enjoying free-flowing wine. With the crazy heat that Seville endures throughout much of the day, it's no wonder its streets come alive at night.

Start with a relaxing stop at the barcum-tapas-spot La Azotea (www. laazoteasevilla.es). Azotea has taken on several forms across the city, but its newest and smallest branch brims with creative cool. Tuck into steak tartare tapas or wasabiflavoured platters to stave off your hunger



while you take a closer look at its interesting wine list. If it's just fast, focused, all-night clubbing you want then try the recently rebranded **Kudéta Bar** (www.kudetasevilla.es). Known as the "Buddha Bar" to locals, you'll find a zen-like ground floor with cross-legged statues and an upstairs that hosts thumping dance beats.

El Rinconcillo (www.elrinconcillo.es) is more of an institution by now. It's the oldest tapas bar in Seville, dating right the way back to 1860, though the building itself goes back even further and was built in 1670. The decor looks that way too, with colourful tiles and wooden beams.

La Carbonería (27) has one of the most laid-back vibes in town – except for when there's a live flamenco performance. A world away from the image of spotted dresses and castanets, flamenco here is dark, soulful and serious. Occasionally, you may also catch a performance of sevillana, a colourful and much lighter form of dance.

Bodeguita Casablanca (28) offers up a hearty, no-nonsense bar experience within easy stumbling distance of the Cathedral and Santa Cruz. With ham hanging from the ceiling and football on TV, it's the Sevillano equivalent of a local English pub. For an upmarket sip of fino sherry while the sun sets over the Giralda, you can't beat the rooftop bar at the Doña María Hotel (28) (www.hdmaria.com). If cheap and cheerful is more your thing, try the Cervecería La Sureña (30) (www.gruporestalia.com/es/franquicias.cfm) instead. You can pick up discounts on tapas each Thursday and savings on beer every night.



■ El Rinconcillo just gets better with age

■ Enjoying the chilled vibe of La Carbonería



Sherry nice

Sherry in Seville is a serious affair. Served crisp, cool and white in its short-stemmed long glass, this bitter aperitif is Andalusia's signature drink – best enjoyed with some green olives or a few plates of tapas.

While popular beer brands like Cruzcampo can be found in all the bars, you'll also see fino sherry (as it's called here) almost everywhere you look – whether it's lurking at the side of the stage during live music performances, or being poured at the hotel bar.

However, its story reaches further than the bars of Seville. The word sherry comes from the anglicisation of "Jerez", a city and wine-making region in western Andalusia.

One specific town, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, has a very celebrated sherry: Manzanilla. Light, dry, slightly salty, it's certainly an acquired taste – but once acquired you'll find you appreciate it more and more.



HATS OFF
Sunny ceramics at
Cerámica El Altozano
Sombrero Padilla Crespo
has your hat needs covered



HIT THE SHOPS

SWEET BISCUITS AND CERAMICS



WHILE YOU CAN FIND ALL THE MAIN

chains in the city of Seville, it's the smaller independent stores that make shopping here a real treat. That, of course, and the flotilla of frilly spotted aprons and pink tights that crowd around the central tourist area.

Embrace the frivolity by heading into Sombrero Padilla Crespo (31) where you can pick up an assortment of souvenir paraphernalia, some of which can actually be pretty useful. Don't dismiss the folding fans when it comes to beating the heat, and perhaps pick up an illustrated tapas cookbook so you can recreate the flavours of Seville back home. To satisfy your taste buds a little earlier than that, try any one of the mouthwatering delicacies sold at the Confitería Heladería San Pablo (32). Keep an eye out for the crumbly, biscuit-like mantecado treats. They're very low in fat and extremely good for you. Alright, that's not entirely true but they do taste good!

For a genuinely healthy selection of food and a glimpse into how the locals shop, cross the Puente de Isabel II bridge from the centre

of town to reach the **Triana market** (33). Head here in the morning and you'll find fresh seafood, baskets of spices and curly squashes heaped up on separate stalls. It's not for the squeamish, though. Be prepared to see bulls' heads pinned to the walls and bulls' tongues sliced up ready for sale

If it's more gentrified shopping you're looking for, visit any of the six branches of **El Corte Inglés** (www.elcorteingles.es) found in the city. The department store chain is a national treasure and stocks electrical goods, clothes, books, music and photographic equipment. If you're British, think of it as Spain's answer to John Lewis.

For a more alternative, edgy shopping experience, browse the multicoloured leather goods sold by **Ginza** (S) near Plaza Alameda. From rainbow-patterned shoes to black Metallica babygrows, Ginza stocks a range of products that will make you smile.

The Triana district is famous for many things, from nightlife to the Spanish Inquisition. But it's also home to the celebrated ceramic workshops whose products decorate most of the Iberian Peninsula. Cerámica El Altozano offers a good selection of wares – from decorative plates to piggy banks and everyday utensils.

Finally, while **Julián López** (www.julianlopez.es) excels in selling reams and reams of fabric to the fashionable folk of Seville, this store's greatest draw is the extraordinary building itself. Bare brick, mirrors, arches and a high ceiling create a striking atmosphere. It's worth a visit to eye up the interiors and browse what's on offer, even if the only haberdashery you've ever done involved sewing a button onto a shirt.



Santa comes to town

Every now and then. you may catch a glance of a shop selling wizard hats that look horribly similar to those worn by the Ku Klux Klan. Well, not to worry, you haven't stumbled across a corner of racial hatred deep in southern Spain. These are the traditional costumes worn during the Semana Santa, and the Spanish invented them first. Each year during Holy Week, which runs up to Easter Sunday (1-8 April), the streets of Seville are filled with people in full costume for these religious festivities. Processions are slow and sombre, while the surrounding streets come alive with candyfloss, beer and people having a good time. See children carrying candles taller than themselves, immaculate women wearing black veils, and processions that last for more than 24 hours. Semana Santa outfits are available all year round from specially designated shops.

1/ AZULEJOS TILE

On the Triana side of the Guadalquivir river lie some of the world's most renowned ceramics houses. Their craftsmanship is as much in demand now as it was hundreds of years ago, when the workshops first started trading.

2/ FAN

Beat the heat with one of these folding fans. Sheer black lace gives them a particularly local flourish, but any pattern will do once the temperature rises. And if you've any little girls in the family to get gifts for then one of these will do the trick. **3.50**

3/ FERIA APRON

Bring some fun into your kitchen with one of these frilly, spotted aprons.
Although locals don't tend to wear them, they do wear dresses from the same kind of fabric each year for the week-long Feria celebration, with shoes to match. 26

4/ INES ROSALES

These round, flat treats bring a smile to your lips and a bulge to your waistline. Made from far too much olive oil for you to want to know about, their sweet and spicy taste makes them an ideal companion for the journey back home.

5/ CHAMBAO CD

The sounds and passion of flamenco still touch modern life in Andalusia, so be sure to pick up some tunes when you're in town. Popular local musicians Chambao join other artists for this 21st century take on the genre. **20.50**

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Avenida de la Constitución, tel: +34
902 099692 / 3 Real Alcázar Patio de
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Populares de Sevilla 3 Plaza América,
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Pilatos 1 Plaza de Pilatos, tel: +34
954 225298 / 7 Itálica 2 Avenida de
Extremadura, Santiponce, tel: +34 955
622266 / 8 Instituto de la Cultura y
las Artes 1 Calle Silencio, tel: +34 955

471422 / 9 Baños Árabes 15 Calle Aire,

1Museo del Baile Flamenco 3 Calle

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Calle Betis, tel: +34 954 286459 /

Adolfo Rodriguez Jurado, tel: +34 954 224114 / **29 Doña María Hotel** 19 Calle Don Remondo, tel: +34 954 224990 / 30 Cervecería La Sureña 1 Metropol Parasol Local, Plaza de la Encarnación, tel: +34 902 197 494 / 31 Sombrero Padilla Crespo 2 Avenida Constitución, tel: +34 954 222455/ 32 Confitería Heladería San Pablo 3 Calle San Pablo, tel: +34 954 212916 / 33 Triana market Calle Betis / 34 El Corte Inglés 1 Calle San Pablo, tel: +34 954 597010 / 35 Ginza 9 Calle Trajano, tel: +34 954 379387 / 36 Cerámica El Altozano 3 Calle Antillano Campos, tel: +34 954 340908 / **37 Julián López** 23 Calle O'Donnell, tel: +34 954 502743

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