

In collaboration with

# Forbes

## Marbella: Luxury with a Conscience

### Innovation & Elegance on Spain's Costa del Sol

While Marbella continues to thrive as a luxury destination on Spain's Costa del Sol, the city is embracing a proactive approach to ensure its excellence is matched by sustainability and innovation. By enhancing its natural beauty, integrating cutting-edge technology, and fostering year-round tourism, Marbella is setting a new standard for responsible and prosperous urban development. The city's commitment to inclusivity, economic growth, and environmental stewardship ensures that Marbella remains a premier destination with a lasting impact.





# Marbella

Sense of excellence



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## THE RENAISSANCE OF ANDALUSIA

Over the past few decades, Spain's Costa del Sol has experienced a remarkable transformation. Once filled with rural and tranquil fishing villages, it has evolved into a thriving hub of economic activity. Cities like Marbella and Málaga are now attracting investments and residents from around the globe, driven by booming sectors such as tourism, real estate and technology. Málaga, the largest city on the Costa del Sol, has emerged as a cultural and economic force for the region. Additionally, Málaga is leveraging its modern lifestyle to invoke innovative and sustainable changes. **“We have launched several Smart City projects in Málaga, embracing innovation with initiatives like Endesa’s smart networks and green energy solutions,”** states Francisco de la Torre, mayor of Málaga. **“We were chosen for these projects because of our evolving cityscape, including new neighborhoods and a youthful, tech-savvy population, which made us an attractive location for experimentation.”**

Elsewhere in Marbella, traditionally known for tourism and real estate, the city is also increasingly making a name for itself in the technology sector. The city’s favorable business environment, combined with

strategic initiatives by local authorities, has led to the establishment of numerous tech startups and innovation hubs. Marbella is becoming an attractive location for digital nomads, tech entrepreneurs, and remote workers who are drawn by the city’s excellent connectivity, modern infrastructure, and high standard of living. Co-working spaces and business incubators are proliferating, fostering a collaborative environment where innovation thrives. This focus on technology is transforming Marbella into a modern, forward-thinking city that balances tradition with progress. Marbella was the first Andalusian city to be named as a Smart City, a designation that highlights its innovation, sustainable development, and accessibility. Recently addressing this issue, Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of UN Tourism has remarked that, **“UN Tourism recognizes the importance of addressing the sustainability of tourism to ensure that economic benefits are balanced with environmental and social considerations. One key approach is through the promotion of sustainable tourism policies.”** As Marbella and Málaga continue to attract global attention and investment, they exemplify how a region can leverage its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and modern amenities to create thriving, prosperous communities. By embracing innovation while preserving their unique identities, Marbella and Málaga are showcasing the region’s renaissance on the global stage. ●



**ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI**  
UN Tourism  
Secretary-General



Boating & yachting are important for tourists & residents.





## MARBELLA: LUXURY WITH A CONSCIENCE

Innovation & Elegance on Spain's Costa del Sol

Marbella, located on Spain's Costa del Sol, epitomizes luxury and excellence. Renowned for its stunning beaches, such as Playa de Nagüeles, and exclusive resorts like Marbella Club and Puente Romano, Marbella attracts affluent visitors from around the globe. The city offers a lavish lifestyle with high-end restaurants, including the Michelin-starred restaurants Skina and Messina, a luxury dining establishment inside the Nobu Hotel. It also boasts a growing number of designer boutiques and vibrant nightlife centered around glamorous marinas like the popular Puerto Banús. For those seeking exclusivity, Marbella provides a range of luxury living options. The Golden Mile, a prestigious coastal enclave, is famous for its lavish villas and five-star hotels. Inland, Sierra Blanca Estates offers a tranquil retreat with stunning panoramic sea views, combining mountainside serenity and coastal glamour. In addition to its luxurious offerings,

Flower pots line the charming streets.



The city offers a diverse range of activities that cater to all tastes.

“This is a very important recognition for us,” states Mayor Ángeles Muñoz Uriol, “as it reflects our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and new technologies, while marking a turning point in strategies to consolidate our brand and offer excellence.” Additionally, Marbella has embraced digital tourism by adopting cutting-edge technology, including advanced information systems and mobile applications, enhancing visitor convenience. To cater to a wider range of visitors, the city is improving accessibility with ramps, elevators, and adapted facilities, while expanding transportation options with more bus routes and alternatives like electric bikes. Marbella's iconic beaches are receiving new amenities such as beach clubs and water sports facilities, and the cultural landscape is enriched through investments in museums and cultural centers.

Culture abounds here and art galleries like the Museo del Grabado Español Contemporáneo, one of the most important museums in Spain featuring works from artists such as Picasso and Dalí.

Marbella attracts guest from around the globe, ensuring a continuous flow of tourists throughout the year. This year-round tourism model stabilizes employment in the tourism sector and provides consistent revenue for local businesses, while events like the Marbella International Film Festival and the Starlite Festival further boost the local economy.

Beyond tourism, Marbella's economic success extends to robust growth in real estate, fueled by demand for luxurious properties, which has driven the construction sector.



Marbella is renowned as one of Europe's premier golfing destinations.

<b>MARBELLA AT A GLANCE 2024</b>						
	24 beaches	+320 days of sunshine a year	5 Michelin-starred restaurants	15 golf courses	4 high-end marinas	27 kilometers of coastline

### MARÍA ÁNGELES MUÑOZ URIOL

Mayor, Marbella

“ Marbella is a thriving destination, fostering employment & prosperity. ”



The city has transformed into a high-end fashion hub, with flagship stores of renowned brands like Tom Ford, Louis Vuitton, and Hermès attracting discerning clientele. High-profile collaborations with global fashion houses have enhanced Marbella's appeal as a style destination. The city has also made significant strides in employment by attracting investments in urban planning and infrastructure, exemplified by the development of modern amenities and transportation systems. This economic diversification, coupled with a focus on technological innovation, has made Marbella an attractive destination for investors and entrepreneurs. Whether it is the luxurious lifestyle, high-quality services, or investment opportunities, Marbella stands out as a premier destination with a bright future. ●





**MARÍA ÁNGELES MUÑOZ URIOL**  
Mayor, Marbella

## THE CITY'S AMAZING ECONOMIC RISE

### Fostering Growth Beyond Tourism

#### What are the main factors that have driven economic & labor growth in Marbella during your tenure as mayor?

Marbella is a thriving destination, fostering employment and prosperity. Guided by meticulous planning, unwavering commitment, and dedicated teamwork, our city council has propelled us forward. All of this adds to the multiple initiatives and measures promoted by this city council in terms of employment, economic development and SMEs, which-together with the efforts of the private sector-achieved historic figures in 2023 with record-breaking numbers in terms of contributors, employment, and companies. Marbella has achieved the best employment results since December 2007, and in total, we have reduced unemployment by 28% in the last 6 years. One out of every 4 unemployed people has found work in Marbella since 2019. These promising figures have also been reflected in a population increase.

#### How is the work being done to diversify Marbella's workforce & strengthen economic sectors outside of tourism?

The real estate and construction sector thrives due to international interest in residency and second homes, complemented by collaborations with renowned fashion brands like Karl Lagerfeld and Dolce & Gabbana.

Our strong service industry, including Michelin-starred restaurants, caters to both locals and visitors year-round, creating jobs and economic activity independent of tourism. Marbella serves as a financial hub, hosting various firms offering financial, consultancy, and insurance services.

The city's reputation for high-quality health and wellness services, coupled with its emerging technology sector, attracts investment and talent. Marbella's pioneering role in telecommuting, coupled with its appeal to remote workers, further enhances its economic diversification efforts.

#### Could you highlight some of the most recent investments in urban planning & infrastructure in Marbella?

Since taking office, we have made a significant commitment to

provide this city with updated infrastructure. In 2023 alone, we allocated over 80 million euros to boost major projects for the city. In addition to completed works such as the new facilities of the animal shelter, there are those that will be completed this year, such as the first public nursing home, the Serrano Lima Sports Center pool, and the expansion of new sections of the promenade. A key driver for attracting investments and enhancing municipal infrastructure will come from implementing new urban planning tools. This legislative period marks a pivotal moment for urban development. Currently, the City Council is actively working on the General Urban Planning Plan and the Urban Planning Plan, both slated for approval and implementation within this term.

#### What are the key investment opportunities in Marbella today?

Marbella is an ideal place to live, visit, and invest in. Just in the hotel sector alone, we have recently granted the construction license for the renovation and expansion of the five-star Hotel Don Carlos, totaling five million euros, a project that adds to a significant list of multimillion-dollar investments in the hotel industry in the city in recent times.

Our city is known for its luxury tourism, attracting high-net-worth visitors from around the world. There are opportunities for investors in the hotel sector, as well as for exclusive restaurants, luxury services, high-end real estate, and premium tourist experiences. The real estate market in the municipality remains attractive to national and international investors. There are opportunities for developers in the construction of residential housing, luxury apartments, tourist resorts, and commercial properties. Moreover, as an economic center in the region, Marbella offers a variety of



The Castillo of Marbella is a relic of Moorish heritage.



Marbella's Puerto Banús is a harbor of luxury & style.

opportunities in the financial and legal services sector. There is demand for banking services, financial advisory, wealth management, legal advice, and business consultancy. With a growing focus on environmental sustainability, there are also opportunities for investors in renewable energy projects, energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable transportation, and ecotourism. Our destination also stands out for its rise as a technological center in the region, with a growing ecosystem of startups and tech companies. We recently hosted an event that chose Marbella as its venue due to the opportunities that can be generated here. It is an innovation and entrepreneurship fair, called 'Startup Olé Marbella,' which we held in June, following its success in Miami, and was a great opportunity to generate business between entrepreneurs and investors at the highest level.

#### How is Marbella promoting sustainable tourism?

Marbella has always made a commitment to sustainability and innovation linked to tourism. So much so that the city has renewed instantly and maintains once again the Smart Tourist Destination certificate granted by the Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality. This is a very important recognition for us, as it reflects our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and new technologies, while marking a turning point in strategies to consolidate our brand and offer excellence.

Back in 2022, Marbella was the third city nationally and the first in Andalusia to achieve this certification, which evaluates 400 requirements across five management axes. These include governance,

innovation, technology, universal accessibility, and sustainability. At the Fitur Tourism Fair in Madrid held last January, Marbella also received, from the Institute of Spanish Tourism Quality (ICTE), the 'Q' Quality and 'S' Sustainability certifications that the beaches of Marbella have achieved. The joint action of the municipal delegations involved and the tourism sector itself has allowed us to achieve 18 'Q' recognitions and 13 'S' distinctions for our coastline, a process that is not easy as it requires compliance with very demanding standards and requirements.

The impact on the local economy of all these achievements has been extremely significant. So much so that, after a record-breaking 2023, Marbella has continued to advance in breaking seasonality, surpassing the pre-pandemic records in hotel employment creation and setting a new historical record in hotel profitability. This data indicates the good health of the tourism sector in Marbella, with significant benefits for employment and growth, as well as a solid positioning nationally and internationally for the city. But above all, they show that we have become a destination that has increased its de-seasonalization, thanks to the efforts of all parties involved, both in the private and public sectors.

#### What is your final message to the readers of FORBES?

I encourage all Forbes readers to come and visit Marbella to enjoy its hospitality, its fabulous climate unique in Europe, its wonderful golf courses, top-notch gastronomy, and multiple activities to do at any time of the year. Those who come to Marbella, come back, and often times choose to stay. ●

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