COSTA NOTES

STARTER EDITION

Less noise. Better decisions.

Stay · Eat · Family · Live
Explore · Winter · Shopping

Edition 0.4 · 1 October 2026



INSIDE

A compact guide to the decisions that shape the coast.

A premium orientation layer: enough to make better first decisions, with Costa Notes live pages for anything that changes.

01 **Think like a local**
Daily friction before postcode

02 **Read the coast**
Map, schools, hospitals, resort hubs

03 **Stay**
Two distinctive reasons to stay

04 **Beach clubs & day use**
Access is not one product

05 **Eat & Drink**
Two very different evenings

06 **Family**
Age, weather and rhythm

07 **Explore nearby**
Use the coast like a resident

08 **Living longer**
School run, work and everyday life

09 **Schools & healthcare**
High-friction choices

10 **Driving & car**
Checklist, then verify

11 **Sierra Nevada**
Winter within reach

12 **Look ahead**
Seasonal intelligence

13 **Shopping**
Practical, luxury and curated

14 **Ask the Guide**
Compare beyond assumptions

15 **Full Handbook**
What the paid edition adds

Choose the life before you choose the postcode.

A beautiful place can still create a bad week. Before you decide where to live or stay, map the journeys you will repeat: school, work, sport, groceries, beach, dinner and the route home.

THE 15-MINUTE TRAP

A 15-minute drive sounds easy once. Four return journeys can quietly consume a large part of the day. School traffic, rain and repeated A-7 crossings turn small distances into routines.

A QUICK DAILY-FRICTION AUDIT

01	**Where must you be every weekday?**	school · office · childcare
02	**When are the hard journeys?**	08:00 · 15:30 · evening sport
03	**What becomes annoying when repeated?**	parking · A-7 traffic · late return
04	**What do you want within walking distance?**	coffee · food · beach · pharmacy

THE POINT

Holiday convenience is episodic. Everyday convenience compounds. The best base often removes repeated friction, not simply the one with the best weekend view.

Think in corridors, not just towns.

The coast is connected, but each stretch changes the practical rhythm. Use the town as a clue, then compare the corridor around it.



West coast

SOTOGRANDE · ESTEPONA · MARBELLA

Resorts, schools, sport, longer drives.



Middle coast

BENALMÁDENA · FUENGIROLA

Family attractions, rail-linked days.



City coast

MÁLAGA

Rail, airport, museums, city rhythm.



NOT TO SCALE

A decision aid, not a travel-time chart. Compare real routes, school runs and current traffic-sensitive assumptions.

Two very different reasons to stay.

Costa Notes should never rank places because they are famous. It should show what kind of week each place makes easier.



Finca Cortesin

Casares · resort

Quiet resort stay with golf, spa and high-end dining. Beach-club access is separate from the hotel and seasonal rules matter.



Puente Romano

Marbella Golden Mile

Dining-led resort stay with family facilities. Restaurant, club and children's programme bookings are separate from the room.

A DIFFERENT QUESTION

Not “which hotel is best?” but “which stay makes the week I want easier?”

Think about room layout, breakfast rhythm, child logistics, beach access and the route home after dinner.

A beach lunch is not automatically a pool day.

Restaurant reservation, lounger, pool access, spa day and hotel guest benefit can be different products. Costa Notes should make that distinction obvious.



Marbella Club Beach Club

MARBELLA GOLDEN MILE

Beachfront restaurant with lunch and pool space. A lunch booking does not establish non-resident pool or lounger access.



Chambao Marbella

MARBELLA GOLDEN MILE

Beach and pool club linked to Puente Romano. Verify non-resident access, minimum spend, children and seasonal dates.



La Reserva Club

SOTOGRANDE

Destination day-use model with pool, beach-lagoon and broader club infrastructure. Check exactly what each pass includes.

DAY-PASS RULE

When a hotel publishes a spa or day-use route, say exactly what it covers. A spa pass is not proof of a beach-club or all-pools day pass.

Two meals can tell you two different stories of the coast.

A restaurant can be part of the route, the destination, or the easiest answer after a long day.



El Pimpi

MÁLAGA CENTRE

Historic bodega stop paired naturally with an old-town and museum day. Verify the table location and current menu when booking.



Nobu Marbella

PUENTE ROMANO

Destination Japanese dinner overlooking La Plaza. Confirm dinner service, child policy and live-table availability on your date.

THE USEFUL QUESTION

Do you want a restaurant worth travelling to, or a restaurant that makes the rest of your day easier?

The best family day often has the fewest hidden frictions.

From animals to waterparks to indoor activity days, the right plan usually depends on age, energy, weather and the return journey.



Selwo Aventura

ESTEPONA

Outdoor animal park with dated ticket purchase. Check the opening calendar and the child's age and height before travel.



Aqualand

TORREMOLINOS

A summer waterpark day with one-day tickets and slide restrictions. Do not assume autumn or 2027 opening dates until published.



SpaceBlock Climbing

MÁLAGA

Indoor climbing option for active families and weather-swaps. Check age suitability, session format and parking before you go.

FAMILY FILTER

Ask first: outdoor or indoor, full-day or half-day, toddler or older child, booking ahead or spontaneous?

OUTDOOR OR INDOOR

FULL-DAY OR HALF-DAY

TODDLER OR OLDER CHILD

BOOKING AHEAD OR SPONTANEOUS

Living in one town should not make the rest of the coast invisible.

A resident in Estepona may still want Málaga for museums, Marbella for an evening, or Sotogrande for sport and a slower west-coast day.



Marbella

OLD TOWN + GOLDEN MILE

Old-town walking, destination dining, resort life and a stronger evening scene.

ASK: WHAT FITS THIS DAY?



Estepona

OLD TOWN + WEST COAST

Calmer old-town rhythm, promenade time and easy access toward Casares and Sotogrande.

ASK: WHAT FITS THIS DAY?



Málaga

CITY + MUSEUMS

Rail, airport access, museums, markets and a dense city day without resort logistics.

ASK: WHAT FITS THIS DAY?

RESIDENT MODE

A local guide should help someone who already lives here use the coast better, not only help a first-time visitor tick off sights.

A holiday address and a good everyday address are not always the same.

A family can love Estepona and still discover that a daily Marbella school run reshapes the week. Repeated convenience becomes quality of life.

SCHOOL

What does the real drop-off look like at 08:30?

WORK

Can the commute survive traffic and winter rain?

DAILY LIFE

Can errands happen without becoming a road trip?

EVENINGS

Will sport, dinner or friends leave a long drive home?

A GOOD BASE IS A SYSTEM

School, work, food, sport, healthcare and social life interact. Ask the Guide should compare that system, not only property prices or postcard appeal. A move that saves 30 minutes once may save hours across a real week.

The least glamorous decisions are often the most expensive to get wrong.

The right answer depends on age, stage, residence status, policy wording and current admissions or entitlement.



School continuity

- age / stage
- curriculum and qualification
- school transport
- admissions timing
- what happens after school ends



Healthcare access

- temporary vs residence cover
- public entitlement
- private policy variant
- waiting periods
- hospital network

LIVE, NOT STATIC

If the answer depends on residence status, policy wording, school stage or a current procedure, use Costa Notes live pages before acting.

Use the checklist, then verify the procedure.

EU/EEA and non-EU licences follow different frameworks. Vehicle registration adds ITV, tax evidence, DGT registration and plates.



01	LICENCE	**Country, residence date, issue date and category**
02	VEHICLE	**Ownership and original documents**
03	ITV	**Spanish technical documentation**
04	TAX	**Payment or exemption evidence**
05	DGT	**Registration and plates**

WHY IT STAYS SHORT HERE

The Starter Edition gives the sequence. The full Handbook should carry deeper decision trees, country-specific checks and printable steps.

Snow is close enough to plan, but too dynamic to guess.



Semana Blanca

22-26 FEBRUARY 2027

The Málaga provincial calendar lists these as non-teaching days. A natural family winter-travel window.

BUILD THE TRIP IN ORDER

Conditions / webcams → day trip or overnight → parking / bus / transfer → pass → rental → lesson / childcare → hotel and dinner.

CURRENT HOOK

Selected 2026/27 advance pass offers run until 15 October 2026. Check live snow conditions and confirmed opening dates before booking.

Source: sierranevada.es · Checked 1 October 2026

ASK THE GUIDE

“From Marbella with a child: day trip or one night in Pradollano?” The answer should compare road time, lesson timing, snow conditions, parking, rental and the route home.

The useful guide starts before the season does.

Costa Notes should watch the next 1-6 months so useful content, booking routes and partner opportunities exist before people need them.



CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR

Hotel programmes, family workshops, festive dining, markets, resort stays and early booking windows.



EASTER / SEMANA SANTA

Processions, transport changes, family breaks, city movement and accommodation pressure.



SUMMER

Waterpark calendars, camps, beach clubs, day passes, indoor heat escapes and late dining.



WINTER / SEMANA BLANCA

Ski calendar, pass deadlines, rentals, ski schools, hotels, transfers and snow-condition checks.

Shop by mood, not by mall.

Practical choice, concentrated luxury and curated resort shopping solve different needs. The useful layer is the vibe, the mix and how shopping fits the rest of the day.



La Cañada

MARBELLA · PRACTICAL

Fashion, children, home, sport, electronics, food, leisure and cinema.



El Corte Inglés

PUERTO BANÚS · DEPARTMENT STORE

Designer brands, broad departments and services in one structured stop.



Puerto Banús

MARBELLA · LUXURY

High concentration of international luxury boutiques and statement shopping.



Puente Romano

GOLDEN MILE · CURATED RESORT

Women's, men's and children's fashion, accessories and lifestyle pieces at Boutique Puente Romano, plus La Petite Boutique Puente Romano and the resort's boutique gallery.



Marbella Club

GOLDEN MILE · CURATED RESORT

Boutiques and Shopping Gallery with hand-picked pieces and heritage luxury houses in a quieter resort setting.

ASK THE GUIDE

“Designer shopping without the Puerto Banús vibe?” or “Where can I combine lunch, a walk and curated shops?”

Compare beyond the assumptions you arrived with.

Ask the Guide should challenge the friction you forgot to mention, compare trade-offs and send you back to the right live pages and booking actions.

- We live in Estepona but school is in Marbella. Is moving closer worth it once you count weekday travel?
- Five nights, two children, no car: Málaga or Marbella?
- Beach-club lunch with children, or a real day pass with pool access?
- Sierra Nevada from Marbella: day trip or one night in Pradollano?
- Designer shopping without the Puerto Banús vibe: Puente Romano, Marbella Club or somewhere else?

Compare places, plans, routes, schools, stays, restaurants, shopping and seasonal choices.



Ask the Guide

/ask

The Starter Edition is orientation. The Handbook is the working manual.

The paid edition goes deeper where the cost of a wrong decision is real: moving, schools, healthcare, transport, driving, seasonal planning and long-stay logistics.

- ✓ **Destination-by-destination living guides**
- ✓ **Family relocation checklists**
- ✓ **School continuity worksheets**
- ✓ **Seasonal calendars and booking windows**
- ✓ **Healthcare decision framework**
- ✓ **Curated stay / eat / family / shopping shortlists**
- ✓ **Driving-licence decision tree**
- ✓ **Common mistakes and “what I wish I knew” pages**
- ✓ **EU vs non-EU vehicle sequence**
- ✓ **QR links back to live Costa Notes updates**
- ✓ **Parking by municipality**
- ✓ **Printable checklists and planning pages**

THE PROMISE

A premium handbook should save time, expose hidden friction and keep sending readers back to live Costa Notes when facts change.

Full Handbook

/handbook