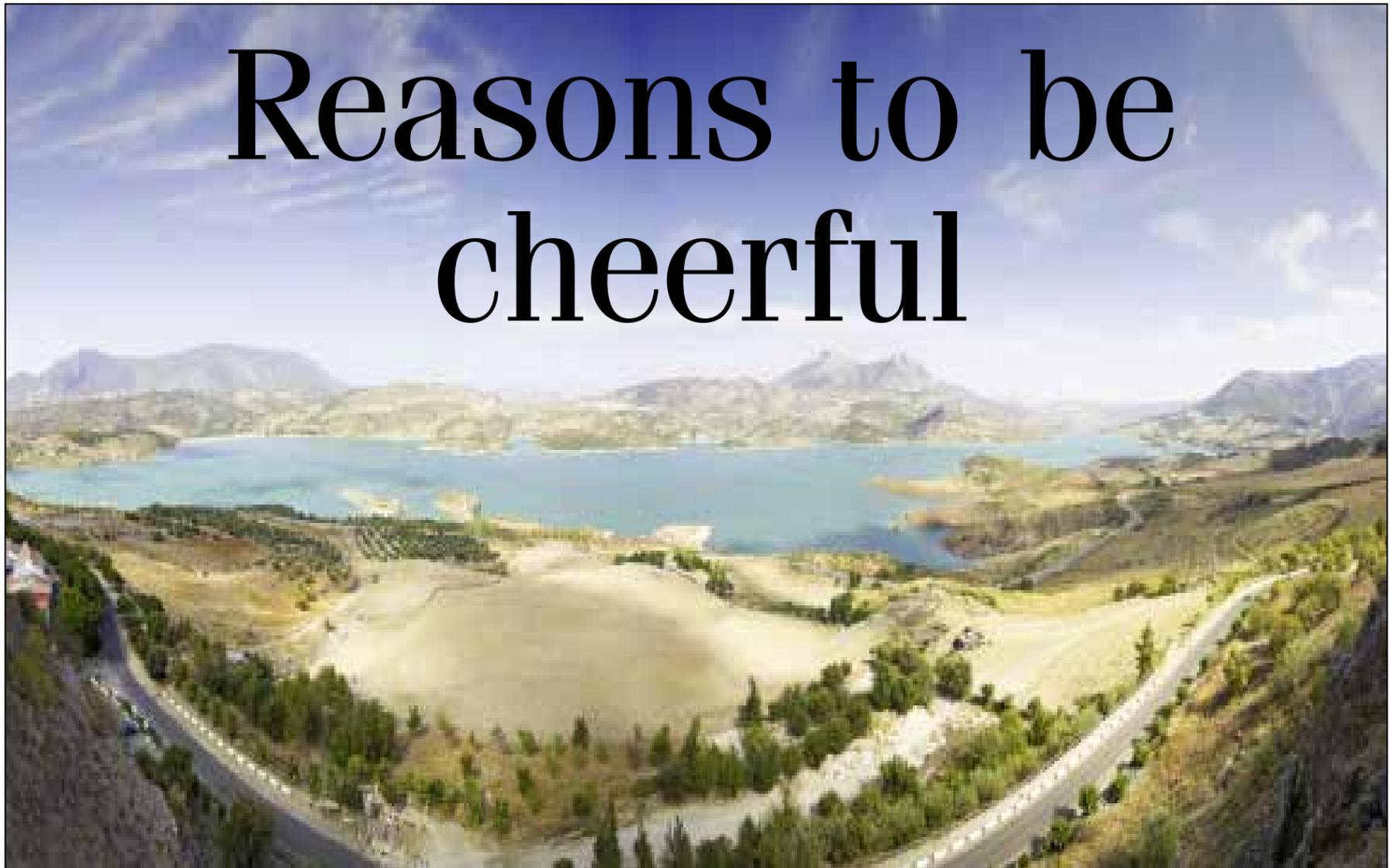


# EXPAT



It's a case of bureaucrats nil, Expat 1 when **Andy Chapell** finally signs on the dotted line for his beachside house. And what a good excuse to forget the recession and the disgraceful behaviour of the Spanish royals and crank his old bones into the Atlantic...



## Reasons to be cheerful

**W**E'VE won. The bureaucrats have delayed us for 14 months but we've finally managed to become proud owners of a house near some of the best beaches in Europe in the province of Cadiz, in the south-western tip of our adopted country.

OK, I'm not including Vazon in the reckoning of best beaches in Europe, but then again, Vazon can't boast 10 miles of golden sand and warm Atlantic breakers.

It's not tropical in southern Spain but I have managed to immerse myself in the Atlantic briny every month so far this year and even January was tolerable, albeit for a short while.

The fact that the local 'venta' is open all year round, near the sea and serving the most wonderfully fresh seafood and crisp local white wines at reasonable prices is, of course, an incentive to push the old bones a bit further.

To tie up another loose end from previous columns, I don't like to say I told you so – but I did.

The timing of the abdication of King Juan Carlos was not a random event. It happened just days before it was announced that his daughter will stand trial for her involvement in her husband's dealings for allegedly embezzling millions of euros from a children's charity.

Until recently the king's daughter... imagine the shame.

It seems unlikely to be a coincidence that his abdication and the inauguration as king of his son Felipe happened before Cristina was officially declared a suspect in the Noos case.

The judge presiding over the trial has said he 'did not believe a single word' of the Infanta Cristina's testimony when she appeared in court earlier this year. What a disgrace all round.

**T**alking about winning, as I was a few paragraphs ago, I should just let you know that we have been voted the best hotel in Andalucia for the standard of our service. Given that there are more than 5,000 hotels in our region, we are more than pleased with

**'Every morning I step outside to hang my shower towel in our patio to dry and very often I am blown away by the light and the colours and the peace of that time of day'**

our achievement. Perhaps I should give some serious thought to paying our staff after all...

Meanwhile, we are seeing a few green shoots of recovery in the Spanish economy and the general feeling is slightly more optimistic than it was even a few weeks ago.

Summer sales have just started in local shops and someone I spoke to recently said the amount of spending is like nothing that he had seen in the last five years.

Malaga, our cultural and administrative capital, is to see its Metro service inaugurated this month – a 12-year project finally coming to fruition – and all reports suggest

that new car sales in this area are on the rise.

**H**ere in the mountains, the agenda is dominated by the fact that high summer is upon us. The weather is mostly 100% stunning. You may think this too much detail, but every morning I step outside to hang my shower towel in our patio to dry and very often I am blown away by the light and the colours and the peace of that time of day. The sun is only just appearing over the mountains at 8am and that early light on the limestone crags causes them to glow a shade of amber that can stop you in your tracks.

I imagine the crops are earlier here than in the Channel Islands, as neighbours are

**Andy Chapell and Pauline Elkin with daughters Carmen, left, and Rosi outside the beachside home that is finally theirs, in spite of Spanish bureaucracy. (5242058)**



Andy's hotel and restaurant is located near Ronda in Andalucia.

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now appearing with baskets of local produce to share with us – and there ain't no bloney greenhouses yer, eh? Luscious green peppers for frying, deep green courgettes, plump onions, huge earthy potatoes and crunchy beans, destined for gazpachos, salads and pisto – a bit like ratatouille – are glutting all around.

There is a feeling of celebration in the air as another harvest is being safely gathered and some of these crops will be put away, as has been required for generations, to cope with the cold months when nothing will grow at these high altitudes. Of course there are now wonderful distribution systems that ensure that food is available year-round in all of our local shops, but it is not that long ago in this area that people were starving in the aftermath of a civil war that still casts its shadow in the memories of the older generation.

**A**s part of our promotion of the area and its charms, I recently spent a morning composing a list of 101 great things to enjoy here. It started as a catalogue of 25 but quickly grew, with very varied offerings. Within an hour of my front door I can recommend swimming in the Mediterranean, climbing to the summit of 6,000ft peaks, canoeing in mountain lakes like the one pictured above, taking in views of the African continent and mixing with an international set in Marbella.

If you'd like a copy, please contact me at the email address below.

Back in Guernsey in June, I was lucky enough to venture out into the Little Russel on a sunny Sunday afternoon jaunt aboard a best friend's sailing boat. The wind, the sea birds, the clean air, the views of Jethou, the timelessness of the surroundings, that was also very special, and a pint of Patois at the Yacht Club afterwards in the shadow of Castle Cornet didn't go amiss.

It's not a bad old life really, wherever you are able to enjoy it.

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