

Murcia coverage 6.7

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The Spanish cities with wonderful food and World Heritage Sites – but hardly any tourists

Don't follow the herd to Barcelona or Seville – Spain has many other alluring cities to discover

By Paul Richardson

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2. Murcia

A Mediterranean gem (and a vegetarian's dream)

Comfortably tucked into a corner of Spain's Mediterranean south-east, Murcia wins friends easily. A weekend stroll would typically take you from the mighty cathedral, a gothic/baroque mash-up, into delectable squares with fountains and terrace tables like the Plaza de las Flores, where on summer nights Murcianos congregate to take the cool night air, a *vínico* and tapas. In a protein-loving country, Murcia stands out for its love of vegetables, sourced in the farmlands surrounding the city, and employed in hearty plant-based dishes such as *zorngollo* (scrambled egg with courgette and onion) and *olla gitana* ("gypsy pot", a chickpea stew with pumpkin and pear).

Murcia is also notable for what lies on its doorstep. The Mar Menor, a saltwater lagoon separated from the sea by a thin strip of land, is a favourite day-trip from the city. Also within striking distance is one of the Spanish Mediterranean's last scraps of untouched coastline. The secret coves of Calblanque have dunes, dark cliffs, and waters the colour of lapis lazuli.



Mar Menor | CREDIT: Getty

Greatest icon

The Baroque Belén (Nativity scene) by 18th-century sculptor Francisco Salzillo is much loved by Murcianos. See it in situ at the Salzillo Museum.

The insider secret

Lemon leaves fried in batter and dusted in icing sugar are a cult Murcian dessert (don't make the mistake of eating the leaf – simply nibble off the fragrant batter). Perfect paparajotes can be found at the restaurant [Rincón de Pepe](#).

The place to stay

Hotel Cetina (cetinahotels.com), Murcia's only characterful boutique hotel, is design-savvy and affordable.