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Minimoon in Marbella: A guide to taking a swish post-wedding break in Spain's stunning south coast

Mediterranean magic and unadulterated luxury make Marbella a cool choice for a swish mini-moon, suggests Mary Kate O'Flanagan

Marbella strikes the perfect balance – offering the charm and culture of a historic seaside town with the right pinch of resort sophistication. Here the Mediterranean lifestyle meets the jet-set, the pretty old town spills onto the breezy promenade and the harbour sparkles beneath constant sunshine. Promising the height of creature comforts as well as dramatic natural beauty, it's a destination that steals hearts.

Once home to the Phoenicians, Visigoths, Romans and Moors, Marbella has a rich past. A guided walk around the Old Town, or casco antiguo, will reveal its many charms. Twisting cobbled lanes of whitewashed houses with geranium-laden balconies lead to small, picture-perfect squares where you should linger with a coffee or vino. At its heart is Plaza de los Naranjos, an atmospheric 500-year-old square planted with orange trees and bustling with life.

Reached by flying into Malaga, which is close by and worth lingering in, it's the one place where Hans Christian Andersen says he felt truly happy. Malaga is the birthplace of Picasso and has a terrific museum dedicated to him as well as a gallery of modern art. A drive down the coast brings you to the old town of Marbella and the Amàre Beach Hotel Marbella, a boutique hideaway with access to the coast and a beautiful beach.

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Fresh air fun

The bicycles outside Amàre aren't just adorable aesthetics; they're ideal for exploring the the Paseo Marítimo path that runs for several kilometres all along the coastline.

Cycling along the promenade is a perfect way to work out the kinks in the limbs from flying. The sea air, the natural beauty of the Costa del Sol and the ineffable joy of freewheeling are an intoxicating combination of sensations. If yoga on the beach, sea-swimming and a walking tour of Marbella's historic quarter are more your thing, then you'll be equally happy here.



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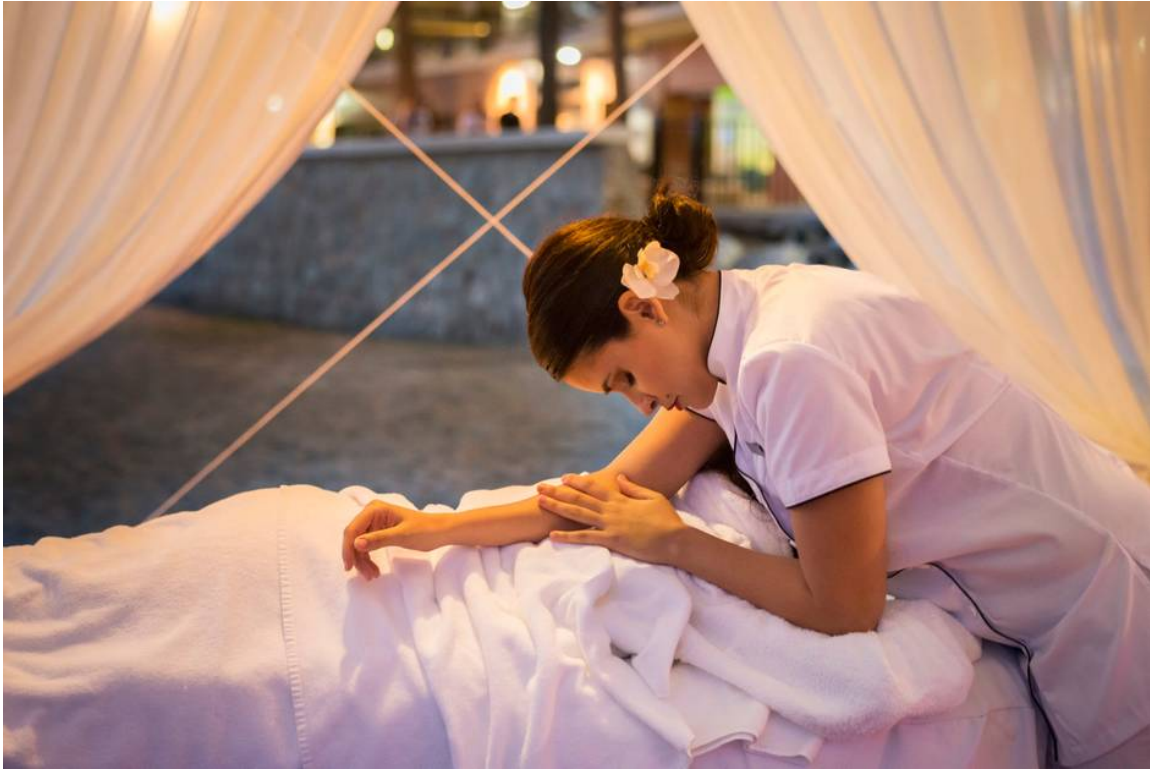
Explore the area

Spend a day on the water, to appreciate the magnificence of the Costa del Sol. If you can't afford a private speedboat cruise, hop on the high-season ferry from Marbella to Puerto Banús, a 30-minute trip, and marvel at the golden beaches, Sierra Blanca Mountains, super yachts and far-off glimpses of Morocco and Gibraltar. At the marina in Puerto Banús you're likely to spot a couple of sheiks' yachts, dwarfing everything around them. These impressive vessels set the tone for the salubrious resort where designer boutiques, chic restaurants and flashy cars are the norm. If your wedding has dented your credit card it's still a pleasure to come, explore and see how the other half lives.

Related: Win a honeymoon in sun-kissed Cyprus with Sunway Holidays in the new issue of The VOW Magazine - out now! (<https://www.thevow.ie/the-final-say/wedding-talk/win-a-honeymoon-in-sunkissed-cyprus-with-sunway-holidays-and-the-vow-magazine-37071374.html>)

Treats for the senses

Unwinding from a day's activities is best done in a good spa. Amàre's up to scratch with its thalassotherapy pool, salt chamber, steam room and sauna. Couples massages are a wonderful shared experience as newly-weds and the soothing massages at the hotel are excellent value.



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Solo trips to the spa can also be desirable if one of you is a more enthusiastic hiker, sea-swimmer, golfer or sunbather than the other. “Let there be spaces in your togetherness,” is part of Kahlil Gibran’s advice on marriage and the honeymoon is an ideal time to establish that you can live in harmony without living in each other’s pockets.

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Culinary thrills

Of all the senses to be stimulated on honeymoon, taste buds should be indulged. Marbella has a terrific local cuisine, based around the rich Andalusian larder and local seafood.



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In the old town try tapas with the locals at the authentic *La Niña del Pisto* (followed by a wine and olive oil tasting session at the super *D'Oliva* shop.) For something swankier dress up and hit up the Michelin-starred Messina restaurant (the hotel can book this for you!) An elaborate 7-course tasting menu costs about €70 head, which is considerably less than one might pay for similar in Ireland.

Top of the world

The highlight of a Marbella mini moon, a hike in the Sierra Blanca mountain range delivers the perfect vantage point from which to consider the beauty of this special destination. It's a place to feel connected to all that is good and peaceful. With the beating down it's hard not to feel that this is the best place on earth. Now, that's a honeymoon kind of feeling.



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Amàre Beach Hotel Marbella B&B rates from €230 including complimentary daily sunbeds, use of the Technogym and WiFi, www.amarehotels.com. For local information and to book a guided tour visit Marbella Tourism Office at www.turismo.marbella.es/en.

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Words by [Mary Kate O'Flanagan, The VOW Magazine \(,/\)](#) 11 August 2018 08:39 AM

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