

# Huelva Province



Out on a limb at Andalucía's far western extremity, Huelva draws few travellers who are not en route to or from Portugal, except for those drawn to the famous Doñana national park with its vast wetlands and celebrated wildlife. But turn off the Algarve-bound motorway and you will find a land of many and surprising pleasures.

Huelva's coast – the western end of the Costa de la Luz (Coast of Light) – is an almost unbroken 110km stretch of broad, Atlantic sand, interrupted here and there by estuaries and coastal wetlands, Doñana's pre-eminent among them, that provide endless fascination for nature lovers. The coast's human settlements range from appealing ports-cum-local-resorts such as Isla Cristina and Punta Umbría to unabashedly industrial Huelva itself – interspersed with, it has to be said, an amount of uninspired, throw-it-up-quick touristic development.

North of the coastal strip, you move into a thinly populated rural zone of sleepy villages and occasionally bustling market towns. The millennia-old, moonlike mining zone around Minas de Riotinto boasts a set of excellent visitor attractions that really bring its past to life, from Phoenician times to the enormous British-run enterprise of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Far northern Huelva is beautiful, verdant, rolling Sierra Morena country and is the province's most glittering secret. Dozens of timeless stone villages are connected by ancient paths winding along river valleys and through emerald woodlands – a walker's and rider's dreamland that's only beginning to be discovered.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Wind your way along the woodland paths among the ageless villages of the **Sierra de Aracena** (p167), west of Aracena
- Discover the wildlife and vast wetlands of the **Parque Nacional de Doñana** (p154)
- Walk in Columbus' footsteps at the **Lugares Colombinos** (p149)
- Expose yourself to the elements and down plates of fresh seafood along the great Atlantic beaches of the **Costa de la Luz** (p152 and p158)
- Live millennia of unique mining history at **Minas de Riotinto** (p162)



■ POPULATION: 484, 000

■ HUELVA AV DAILY HIGH:  
JAN/AUG 12°C/24°C

■ ALTITUDE RANGE: 0M–960M

## HUELVA

pop 145,000

The capital of Huelva is a modern, unsentimental, industrial port city set between the Odiel and Tinto estuaries. Despite its unpromising approaches, central Huelva is a likable, lively place and the city's people are noted for their warmth. Though there's little evidence of it today, Huelva's history dates back an impressive 3000 years to the Phoenician town of Onuba, whose river-mouth location made it a natural base for the export of inland minerals to the Mediterranean. Onuba is one of several locations postulated for the legendary Tartessos (see p24), and was later developed by the Romans. Huelva was devastated by the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, but later grew rapidly as a port and commercial and administrative centre after the British Rio Tinto Company developed the mines in the province's interior in the 1870s. Today Huelva has a sizable fishing fleet, and a heavy dose of petrochemical industry, unignorable on the southeastern approaches.

## ORIENTATION

Huelva's central area is about 1km square, with the main bus station on Calle Doctor Rubio at its western edge, and the train station on Avenida de Italia at its southern edge. The main street is Avenida Martín Alonso Pinzón (also called Gran Vía). Parallel to Avenida Pinzón, one block south, is a long, narrow, pedestrianised shopping street that runs through several names, from Calle Concepción to Calle Berdigón.

## INFORMATION

There are banks and ATMs all over the town centre. The bus and train stations have ATMs, too.

**Ciber@lameda** (Calle Luis Braille s/n; Internet per hr €1.30; ☎ 10am–2pm & 5–9pm Mon–Sat, 5–9pm Sun)

**English Bookshop** (☎ 959 28 10 94; Calle San Cristóbal 11; ☎ 10am–1.30pm & 5.15–8.15pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1.30pm Sat) Sells bestselling fiction, guides and children's books.

**Hospital Juan Ramón Jiménez** (☎ 959 01 60 00; Ronda Exterior Norte) The main general hospital, 4km north of the centre.

**Medical emergency** (☎ 959 49 40 09)

**Municipal Tourist Information Kiosk** (☎ 959 25 12 18; Plaza de las Monjas; ☎ 10am–2.30pm & 3.30–8.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm & 4.30–6.30pm Sat)

**Policia Local** (Local Police; ☎ 959 21 02 21; Plaza de la Constitución 1) In the *ayuntamiento* (city hall).

**Post office** (Avenida Tomás Domínguez 1; ☎ 8.30am–8.30pm Mon–Fri, 9.30am–2pm Sat)

**Regional Tourist Office** (☎ 959 65 02 00/02; othuelva@andalucia.org; Plaza Alcalde Coto Mora 2; ☎ 9am–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun) Well informed and helpful.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Like most port cities Huelva can seem rough and ready at times, but most people are open and very friendly. There are a few dodgy characters around, however, so take care of belongings wherever you go and leave nothing in parked cars.

## SIGHTS

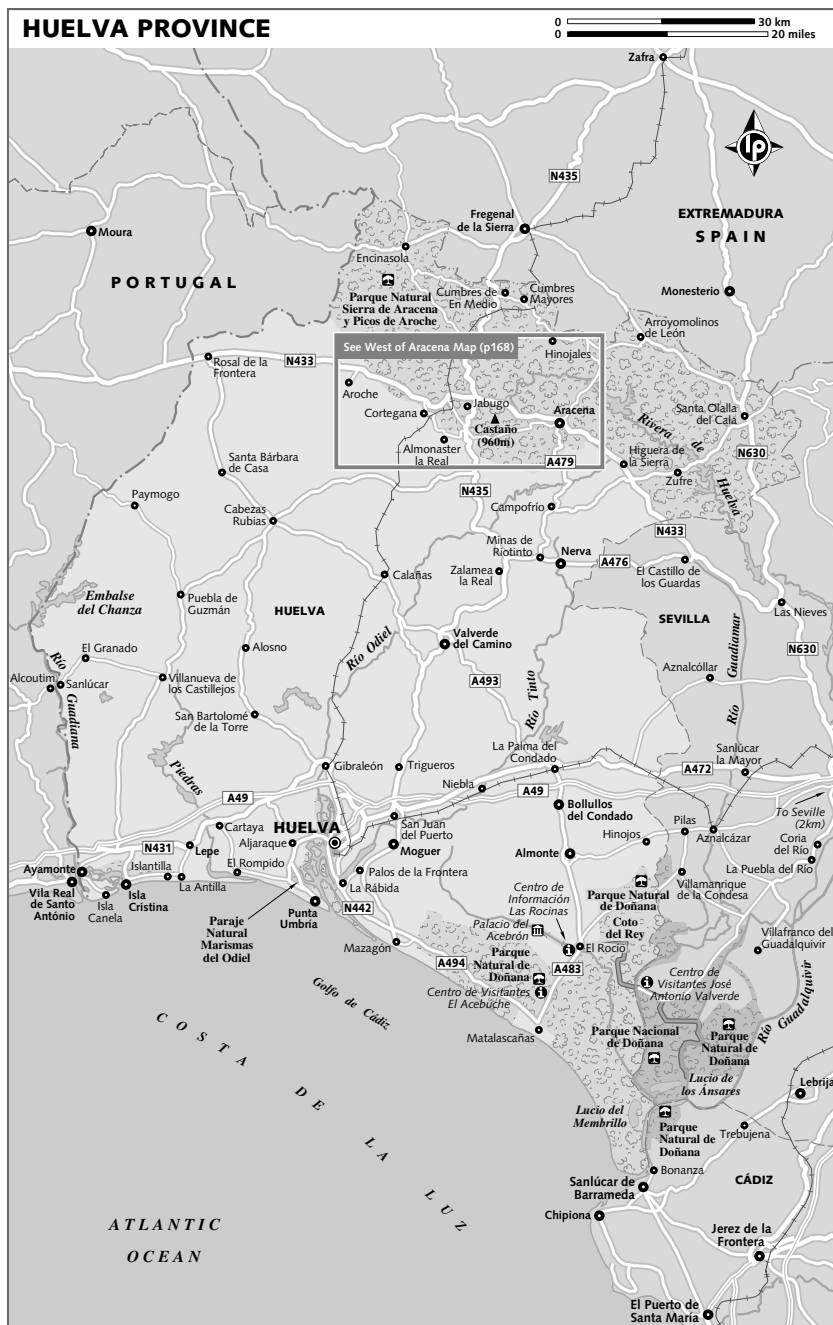
Despite its historical importance, Huelva's sights today are few. The well-displayed main museum, the **Museo Provincial** (☎ 959 25 93 00; Alameda Sundheim 13; admission free; ☎ 2.30–8.30pm Tue, 9am–8.30pm Wed–Sat, 9am–2.30pm Sun), concentrates on the province's archaeological pedigree, especially its mining history (see p162). Pride of place goes to a huge Roman water wheel that was used to extract water from mines near Minas de Riotinto. You'll also see a reconstructed gold-and-wood Phoenician funeral cart. Labelling is in Spanish.

An odd legacy of the area's mining history is the **Muelle Rio Tinto**, an impressive iron pier curving out into the Odiel estuary about 500m south of the port. It was built for the Rio Tinto Company in the 1870s by George Barclay Bruce, a British disciple of tower specialist Gustave Eiffel.

Two kilometres north of the city centre, off Avenida de Manuel Siurot, is the **Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Cinta** (☎ 959 15 51 22; admission free; ☎ 9am–1pm & 4–7pm), a chapel where Columbus is believed to have prayed after returning from his momentous 1492 voyage. The event is portrayed in tiles by artist Daniel Zuloaga and the chapel's hilltop position affords good views over the Odiel estuary and the wetlands to the west. City bus 6 (€0.80) goes there from outside the main bus station.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

From 29 July to 3 August each year, Huelva celebrates Columbus' departure for the Americas (3 August 1492) with its **Fiestas Colombinas**, six days of music, dancing, fun-fairs, cultural events and bullfighting.



## SLEEPING

Huelva has a limited range of accommodation and a lot of it caters for the business crowd.

**Instalación Juvenil de Huelva** (☎ 959 65 00 10; www.inturjuven.com; Avenida Marchena Colombo 14; per person incl breakfast under 26yr €13-15, over 26yr €17-19; 🚻) A modern youth hostel with a good standard of accommodation: rooms hold two to four and all have a bathroom. It's 2km north of the bus station: city bus 6 (€0.80) from outside the main bus station stops just around the corner, on Calle JS Elcano.

**Hotel Costa de la Luz** (☎ /fax 959 25 64 22; Calle José María Amo 8; s/d €28/50; 🚻) Despite its proximity to the fish market, the Costa de la Luz is reasonable and comfortable. Obviously decorated in a furnishings time warp.

**Hotel Los Condes** (☎ 959 28 24 00; www.hotelloscondes.com in Spanish; Alameda Sundheim 14; s/d incl breakfast €40/59; 🚻) Almost next door to the luxury NH Luz Huelva, Los Condes has 54 air-conditioned rooms at about half the price. They're large, bright and modern, with big gleaming bathrooms. Together with the friendly reception, free internet and a reasonable restaurant, this makes the best value in town.

**NH Luz Huelva** (☎ 959 25 00 11; www.nh-hotels.com; Alameda Sundheim 26; s/d €100/105; 🚻) This is the best hotel Huelva has to offer, with attractive, very comfy rooms in an ugly building with concrete, scallop-shaped balconies. Breakfast (only) is available. It's worth checking the website for discount offers, and ring ahead to book a parking spot.

**Hotel Tartessos** (☎ 959 28 27 11; www.hotel-tartessos.com in Spanish; Avenida Martín Alonso Pinzón 13; s/d €106/116; 🚻) This large, modern hotel has 100 rooms with all the comforts a business traveller expects, plus two restaurants and a piano bar. Rates drop to €63/74 from October to June.

## EATING

Restaurants and tapas bars cluster along and near Avenida Martín Alonso Pinzón, Avenida Pablo Rada and the streets south of the cathedral.

**Taberna El Condado** (☎ 959 26 11 23; Calle Sor Ángela de la Cruz 3; tapas €1.50, raciones €10-15; 🚻 closed Sun) An atmospheric tapas bar of just two

small rooms dominated by a ham-heavy bar, specialising in tasty local meats. Directors' chairs and tables out on the pedestrianised street are great for a quiet evening beer watching the world go by.

**Diez Barriles** (Calle Jesús de la Pasión s/n; tapas €2; 🚻 1pm-11pm or midnight) This popular uptown tapas bar is large, shiny and modernistically minimalist in design, but traditional meats and seafood remain the stocks in trade.

**Pastelería Dioni** (☎ 959 24 06 32; Calle Palacios 3; drink & snack €2-3; 🚻 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) A glittering bakery with an English-style tearoom upstairs, Dioni is great to drop into for tea or coffee and a mouthwatering array of cakes, pastries and sandwiches from its laden counters.

**Trattoria Fuentevieja** (Avenida Martín Alonso Pinzón s/n; mains €6-11; 🚻 closed Sun evening) This slightly refined and very popular Italian spot serves a good range of salads as well as pizza, pasta and meat dishes, with touches of vaguely classical art amid the tasteful sky-blue-and-lemon decor.

**Las Candelas** (☎ 959 31 84 33; Avenida Huelva s/n, Aljaraque; mains €10-15; 🚻 closed Sun) Huelva's most renowned restaurant is 7km west of the city in Aljaraque. It specialises in delicious fresh fish and *carnes a la brasa* (char-grilled meats), in a traditional inn setting. Turn off the A497 Punta Umbría road at the Aljaraque sign and you'll see the restaurant as you enter the town.

Also recommended:

**La Casa de la Patata** (☎ 959 28 25 75; Calle Ginés Martín s/n; baked potatoes €1.30-3.50; 🚻 closed Sun) Neat uptown diner serving up steaming and satisfying baked potatoes.

**Don Camillo e Peppone Aragón** (☎ 959 28 01 59; Calle Aragón 43; pasta & pizza €5-7; 🚻 closed Tue); Peral (☎ 959 28 18 06; Calle Isaac Peral 3; pasta & pizza €5-7; 🚻 closed Wed) Prepares authentic and tasty pizzas and pasta. Both branches get very busy at weekends.

**Restaurante La Caña** (☎ 959 54 16 75; Calle Garcí Fernández 5; mains €10-18; 🚻 closed Sun evening & Mon) A classy place that's particularly good on fish, but there's plenty of meat choice too.

## DRINKING

After 9pm tapas bars such as Taberna El Condado and Diez Barriles (see left) get quite lively. Later, crowds flock to the bars and terraces lining Avenida Pablo Rada and the student bars south of Plaza de la