



A BRIT'S SCRAPBOOK

GOING  
NATIVE IN  
MURCIA

SECOND EDITION

DEBBIE JENKINS  
MARCUS JENKINS



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by Lean Marketing Press  
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Second Edition

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Typeset in Garamond

## Praise for Going Native In Murcia

*The book is literally packed from cover to cover with the most incredibly well researched and pertinent, up to date and relevant information that anyone – and I mean anyone – interested in buying property in Murcia, living in the region or just travelling around Murcia will ever require.*

*If you're about to become a new expatriate and move to Spain and in particular Murcia, this book can act as your guide, you won't want to go anywhere without it! In fact, the information contained therein will become your life map! There is information on every single conceivable topic – nightlife, the property buying process, shopping, the population and map reference of towns, airlines and hire cars, vocabulary, fiestas, money, making concrete! Every scrap of information that Debbie and Marcus Jenkins have gleaned over the past four years is in this book! I love it! It makes fantastic, interesting and even entertaining reading for anyone with even just a modicum of interest in Spain!*

**Rhiannon Williamson – [www.shelteroffshore.com](http://www.shelteroffshore.com)**

*I just wish I had got this book two years ago, when I was buying my house in Murcia! The Spanish house buying process can be a bit daunting for the average Brit... but the flow charts really make the steps and the roles of the associated people... absolutely clear!*

*As the book is full of very relevant web-site addresses, the content is actually much larger than presented... and will remain fresher... longer!*

*Expat... would be expat... or just visiting Murcia for a holiday... this book is essential reading... don't go without it!*

**John Mellor (Cheshire/Estrella de Mar)**

*We are coming back out to Murcia in April and have found your book to be an excellent starting point for the areas and things we need to be looking at. Both my wife and I both found the book very valuable in getting to know Murcia a little better.*

**John Wilson**

*We purchased your book via Amazon before Xmas and have found it a most useful guide to the area. We are about to start a property search in preparation for a permanent move with family to Spain at the end of the year. Had enough of cold, damp, dreary days (and nights) in Redditch, and the general social decline and rising costs in Britain. So the "Buying in Murcia" flowchart and viewing checklist are going to be most useful, as are the town/village guides.*

*Congratulations again on a brilliant, practical book.*

**Rosemary Clarke**

*Thanks to your book I have already started the ball rolling towards our move to Murcia and have had a meeting with an agents representative who happens to be here in Cowes to spend the holiday with relations.*

**Ken Meynell**

*Purchased Going Native in Murcia, prior to our first visit to that region in September of this year. The book is well researched and covers a whole range of information and many excellent website addresses. A must for anybody considering visiting or purchasing in the Murcia region.*

**Paul McGloin**

# Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank Joe Gregory our editor and designer, from [www.leanmarketingpress.com](http://www.leanmarketingpress.com), for his hard work in such a short space of time.

Our thanks go also to Jo Parfitt ([www.summertimepublishing.com](http://www.summertimepublishing.com)) for her wonderful preface and Joanna Styles ([www.joannastyles.com](http://www.joannastyles.com)) for writing the foreword.

We would also like to acknowledge all of the other adventurers who have visited the area, fallen in love with it and begun the process of making Murcia their home. These wonderful people have provided us with feedback, suggestions, ideas, corrections (there were many for the first edition!) and further inspiration.

In no particular order – we would like to thank our contributors: Mike Penning for providing us with a detailed breakdown of areas for improvement; Mike Birley for providing an excellent and thorough update on the Los Alcázares area; Margaret Poole for her tip on the restaurant in Los Nietos and John Mellor for his excellent list of website links.

And finally, thanks to our families, without their support we wouldn't be here. You're all welcome at the caves, any time!

*Marcus and Debs  
The Caves, May 2006*

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# Foreword

Most people have heard of Murcia, one of Spain's undiscovered corners, but few know much about it: ask a Spaniard what they know about Murcia and they'll probably mention La Manga and agriculture before they dry up. Put the same question to a foreigner and they're likely to get as far as the Mar Menor, golf and cheap property. But this is just a tiny fraction of what Murcia really has to offer and as this book shows, there's a hidden land out there waiting to be discovered and enjoyed.

Debbie and Marcus Jenkins open the window onto a world of fascinating contrasts: verdant mountain tops and desert rock formations; bustling Murcia city (one of Spain's up and coming must-see destinations) and fabulous sandy beaches that you could well have to yourself; busy expat enclaves and tiny Spanish hamlets. This is a land of Barbary sheep and Montpellier vipers, delicious Zarangollo and Carrascalejo, the Spanish Teleclub and expat bridge clubs. Surprised by the Jenkins' Murcia? I certainly was.

When you arrive somewhere new, you need all the help and information you can get. If that information is first-hand, accurate and bang up to date, so much the better. 'Going Native in Murcia' in its second edition is all of these. This gem of a guide contains vital facts, useful suggestions, handy flowcharts, top tips and helpful websites as well as plenty of valuable advice from the Jenkins who really have been there and done it (and often the hard way!).

If you're planning to move to Murcia, buy a holiday home there or just fancy going to have a look round, allow Debbie and Marcus to be your guides. They're passionate about life in Murcia and their enthusiasm is certainly catching – See you there!

*Joanna Styles  
Freelance writer and author specialising  
in Spain and relocation generally.  
[www.joannastyles.com](http://www.joannastyles.com)*

# Preface

I may have travelled to or lived in a few countries in my time, but oddly, for a Brit, I hardly know Spain at all. Three times to the Costa Brava has been my lot. Nevertheless the appeal of upping sticks and moving to the land of paella has not escaped me.

When Debbie and Marcus Jenkins decided to move to Spain their friends and family thought it was a perfectly sane idea. But when they heard that the couple were buying not one but three caves in a part of the country that no-one had heard of, and was not by the sea, they shook their heads in disbelief.

A couple of years on Marcus props up the tiny local bar in La Murta like a local and the neighbours have become such friends that they leave offerings of olives and local honey on their doorstep. Debbie and Marcus have so come to love the area called Murcia that their enthusiasm seems to have affected the rest of the world and a new airport is being built to handle the newfound popularity. Maybe they struck lucky, or maybe they have an eye for a trend? Whichever, this cave-dwelling couple do not want to keep their knowledge a secret any longer and now share their hard-won information with you.

Whether you want to go to visit the area and simply explore, or whether you are serious about buying there, this book has it all. From teaching you how to make concrete to suggesting where to stay, where to eat and how to rent a car, you will find your answers here.

I have lived in five different countries myself, and each time have found the first few months of getting to know the rules to be an exhausting task. Debbie and Marcus show you how to act local and think local and how to start the processes of settling in and belonging fast. And the sooner you find that house and find your feet the sooner you can get down to finding the best paella in town.

*Jo Parfitt, International Journalist and author of  
Expatriate Entrepreneur: How To Create and Maintain  
Your Own Portable Career Anywhere In The World  
[www.summertimepublishing.com](http://www.summertimepublishing.com)*

## About This Book

This book has taken 5 years to research and has been a real pleasure, taking us around the whole region that we now like to call our home. The first edition came out in May 2005, when we had to force ourselves to stop adding information and get the book out there! This second edition includes most of the stuff we couldn't fit into the first one plus almost a year's worth of extra experience and knowledge as well as the invaluable contributions from readers.

The book was borne out of the frustration of none of the major guides covering the region, or at best only dedicating 4 or 5 pages to it. When they did mention Murcia they focused entirely on the golf complexes and housing estates. In fact, the only guides we could find that covered the Murcia region in any detail were in Spanish, interspersing flowery language with inaccurate information. So we felt it was time for someone to put this major region firmly on the map.

Murcia is a beauty, with warm and welcoming people, a strong property market, wonderful food and fantastic weather.

Our goal for you as you read this book is that you'll be able to enjoy visiting this region in all its glory – with us as your equally wide-eyed guides. If you're thinking of investing here or even making this region your new home then the sections on buying and visiting will tell you all you need to know.

We, the authors, try to make the information available as accurate as possible, we accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this book.

Although inclusion in a guidebook usually implies a recommendation, we cannot list every good place. And we apologise in advance if we missed you out – get in touch and let us know ([www.lamurta.com](http://www.lamurta.com)). In addition, exclusion does not imply criticism. In fact there are a lot of reasons why we might exclude a place, for example it might not be appropriate to encourage an influx of visitors!

## **Updates, Changes and Your Feedback**

Stuff happens – prices go up, restaurants end up under concrete (no really they do!), places change hands, bad things get better and great things go bad! So if you find things have changed, please let us know. Pop us an email via [www.lamurta.com](http://www.lamurta.com).

Perhaps you have a story to share for the Native's Section? Or maybe you've visited a museum, gone scuba diving or had a wonderful meal. Get in touch, let us know.

Everyone who writes to us will find their name listed in the next edition. The very best contributors will receive a free copy of the next edition.

We plan to update this guidebook as frequently as possible, to ensure you get the best and most accurate information, probably every two years as our budget permits. Publishing a book like this can be quite costly, which is why for this edition we have allowed a select few advertisers to help us cover the costs. We'll see how this works out; let us know your thoughts too.

Contact us: [www.lamurta.com](http://www.lamurta.com)

# **Part 1: Visiting**

*You'd be forgiven for thinking that Murcia contains nothing more than the Mar Menor, La Manga golf club and a swathe of new-build housing estates catering solely for Brits and Germans. This is the view portrayed by most guide books and many journalists. Yet it's a view far from reality.*

*It's true that Murcia does have many golf clubs and an increasing population of northern European immigrants and with 320 days of sunshine per year you can see why. But, we also have mountains, wildlife, a city that retains a unique Spanish culture, unspoilt beaches, national parks, snow (though not much!) and wild boar.*

## Overview

Murcia, covering 11,000 square kilometres making up 45 municipalities is home to just over 1 million inhabitants. It has an airport, which although called Murcia airport is actually 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the city in the coastal town of San Javier. Due to the present location of Murcia airport the city is hardly a well-visited tourist attraction. However, spend a few days there and you won't regret it; it's a great example of Spain and all its character.

Murcia is located on the Mediterranean Sea and forms a small sea of its own, known as the Mar Menor. Some of the beaches of the Mar Menor include: San Javier, Santiago de la Ribera, Los Alcázares, and La Manga.

If you're looking for more than a swim and prefer hiking, we recommend the Natural Park of Calblanque and the beautiful coves and coastal parts that surround this area. For the nature lover, there are a number of activities in the mountains of the Sierra Espuña.

## The Climate

You can enjoy the coast practically year-round in Murcia, from the Easter holidays and well into autumn. There are a great variety of water activities, from sailing to windsurfing to water-skiing, scuba diving and kayaking. The average temperature during the year ranges from 11°C in winter to 25°C in summer. The climate is dry, hot in summer and mild in winter. Murcia receives the most sunshine per year in Spain.

The region of Murcia has the typical Mediterranean semi-arid subtropical climate: namely an average annual temperature of 18°C, with hot summers (registering peak temperatures of 40°C) and mild winters (though you still might see some snow higher up) with an average temperature of 11°C in the winter months of December and January.

There are between 120–150 days per year with clear skies and 2,800 hours of sun. Rain is scarce throughout the region (approx. 300–350 mm/year), falling mainly in the spring (April) and autumn (October), leaving the summer wonderfully dry. However, due to geography, the temperature differences between the coast and the interior are much

more extreme in the winter. On the coast temperatures tend never to fall below 10°C, while inland at higher altitudes (in the Sierra Espuña for example) they may not exceed 6°C. Areas at higher altitude also show a higher average annual rainfall, which reaches 600 mm/yr.

| <b>MURCIA WEATHER</b> |                           |                              |                              |                             |                                |                    |                          |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|                       | <i>Monthly Temp. (°C)</i> | <i>Max. Daily Temp. (°C)</i> | <i>Monthly Rainfall (mm)</i> | <i>Days With Rain (1mm)</i> | <i>Days With Thunderstorms</i> | <i>Cloudy Days</i> | <i>Hours of Sunshine</i> |
| <b>JAN</b>            | 10                        | 16                           | 25                           | 3                           | 0                              | 3                  | 170                      |
| <b>FEB</b>            | 12                        | 18                           | 28                           | 3                           | 0                              | 2                  | 180                      |
| <b>MAR</b>            | 13                        | 20                           | 30                           | 3                           | 0                              | 2                  | 210                      |
| <b>APR</b>            | 16                        | 23                           | 27                           | 4                           | 1                              | 1                  | 240                      |
| <b>MAY</b>            | 19                        | 26                           | 32                           | 4                           | 2                              | 1                  | 280                      |
| <b>JUN</b>            | 23                        | 30                           | 20                           | 2                           | 2                              | 1                  | 310                      |
| <b>JUL</b>            | 26                        | 33                           | 5                            | 1                           | 1                              | 0                  | 340                      |
| <b>AUG</b>            | 27                        | 34                           | 10                           | 1                           | 1                              | 0                  | 300                      |
| <b>SEP</b>            | 24                        | 30                           | 27                           | 2                           | 2                              | 1                  | 240                      |
| <b>OCT</b>            | 19                        | 25                           | 44                           | 4                           | 1                              | 1                  | 200                      |
| <b>NOV</b>            | 14                        | 20                           | 32                           | 4                           | 0                              | 2                  | 170                      |
| <b>DEC</b>            | 11                        | 17                           | 21                           | 4                           | 0                              | 3                  | 160                      |
| <b>YEAR</b>           | 18                        | 24                           | 301                          | 35                          | 11                             | 17                 | 2800                     |

A Brit's Scrapbook... Going Native In Murcia



Snow and Chumbos – a rare sight indeed!

## Guide



Airport



Telephone number



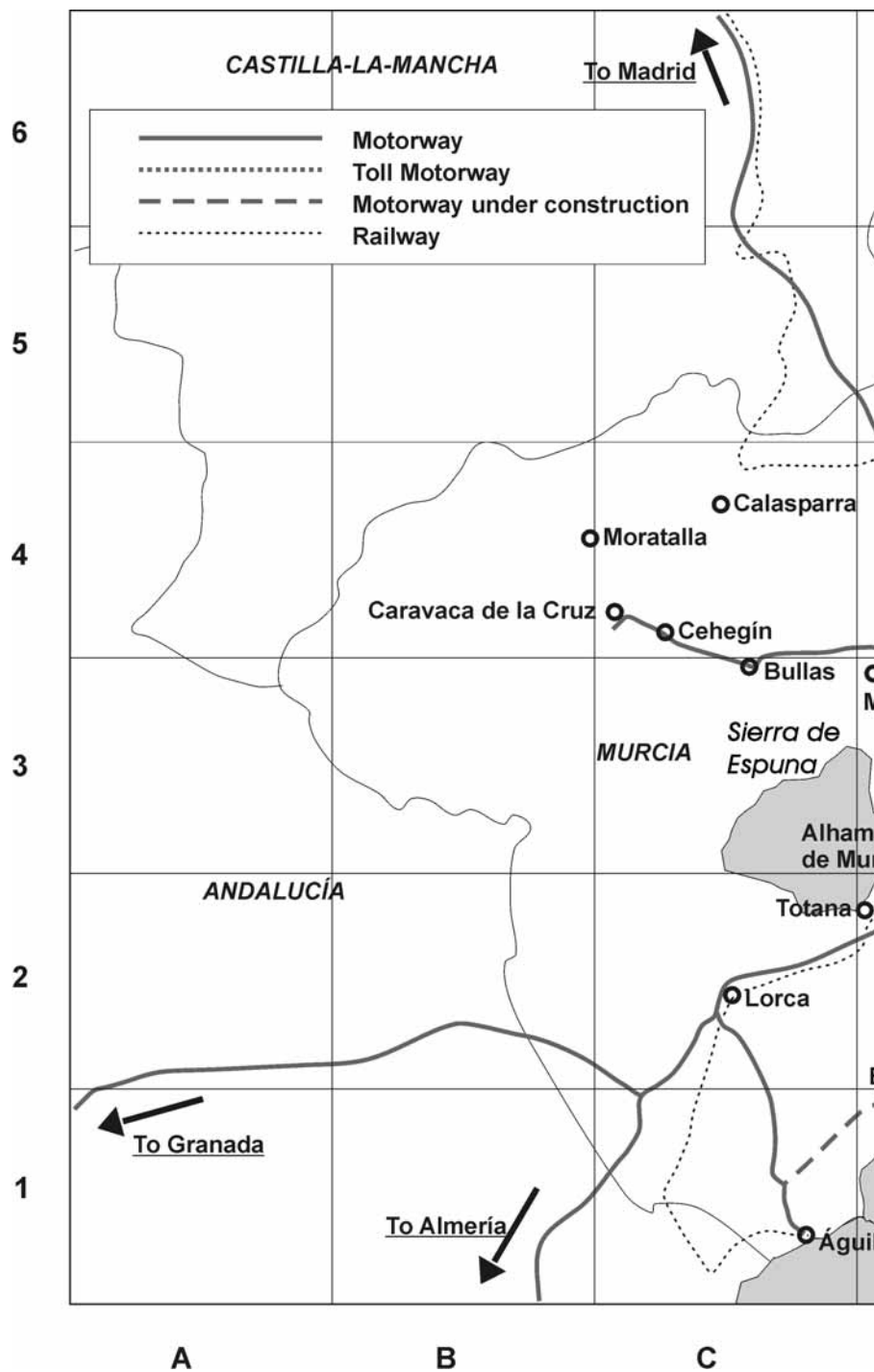
Tourist information



Hotel classifications

The prices for hotels are for one room with 2 people sharing unless otherwise stated.

We have included a Map Reference for all major towns. This includes the grid reference for the map found on the following page.





D

E

F

## Águilas

Population: 28,000

Map Reference: C1 1.57°W, 37.40°N

This southwestern city near the Murcian coast has an arid and mountainous landscape, extensive beaches with crystalline cliffs and small, little frequented coves.

The hill where the Castle of San Juan of the Águilas is based (century XVIII) was a refuge to a population afraid of pirate attacks. Its dilapidated condition prevents access to the interior, but it offers an excellent viewpoint of the town and the surrounding coast.

There's the Museum Arqueologico and Centro de Interpretacion del Mar, in the centre of town. A stroll to the Port, dominated by the lighthouse, leads to the wholesale fish market, where at 5pm there's a fish auction.

To see the natural splendour of the region is the main reason for visiting. If you travel on from the beach at Poniente, you reach a group of coves – Cuatro Calas. These are in a protected area and so are not only great places for quiet sunbathing but also good for walks.

Tranquil beaches with fine sand, huge cliffs and beautiful coves can be found at San Pedro, Blanca and Los Hierros. Los Hierros is dominated by the tower named Torre De Cope, which has been attacked on numerous occasions by pirates. Close by are the beach at Calabardina and the natural park of Calnegre–Cabo Cope.

In February you can enjoy Carnaval, which has a Rio de Janeiro feel about it, with 3 days and nights of floats, processions and fancy dress.

📍 Tourist Office – Plaza Antonio Cortijos

☎ 968 493285

[www.aguilas.org](http://www.aguilas.org)

[www.aguilas.tv](http://www.aguilas.tv)

Ayuntamiento

[www.ayuntamientodeaguilas.org](http://www.ayuntamientodeaguilas.org)

☎ 968 418800

Taxis

☎ 968 411 470 – Calles Isaac Peral

☎ 968 410 149 – Munoz Calero

Buses – stop at the bar on the corner of Avenida Juan Carlos 1 and Calle Carlos Marín Menú. Buses go to Almería, Cartagena, Lorca and Murcia.

There are trains to Murcia and Lorca, with 3 daily trains to each.



Harbour at Águilas

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