

# MÁLAGA

## SPAIN

BY: ANDREW LOWTON





Panorama: The Rosaleda  
Image: Andrew Lowton



**C**ruel is the only way to describe it. Eliseu scores on 82 minutes to put Malaga FC 2-1 ahead on aggregate away to Dortmund in the 2013 Champions League Quarter Final. The Spanish minnows look to be heading through.

Then disaster strikes. Two Dortmund goals in injury time shatter Malaga's unlikely dream of reaching the semi-finals on their first entry into the competition. That TV replays reveal

no less than four Dortmund players offside for the winner only adds to the bitter disappointment of Malaga's fans.

Despite that defeat, the club's run to the quarter finals, including victories over AC Milan and Porto, captured the fans' imagination like no season before. Coach Manuel Pellegrini had, by some margin, led Malaga to the greatest achievement in their long and chequered history.

## MALAGA ARE THE ORIGINAL SPANISH YO-YO CLUB

Malaga have won few trophies in their 111 year existence but they possibly hold two Spanish football records. They can surely claim to have had the most names, the current incarnation being their seventh (or eighth, as they have now returned to their original name), and they have notched up a record number of promotions and relegations. They are the original Spanish yo-yo club.

Beginning as Malaga Football Club in 1904 they went through several name

On the march: Malaga fans head to the game.  
Image: Andrew Lowton







changes and mergers and became the city's only team in 1933. For the next 60 years the club never threatened to topple the elite despite spending a total of 20 years in the First Division. Their highest league placing was seventh on two occasions in the 1970s.

However, there were a few notable moments, both good and tragic, during that period. In 1949 Pedro Bazan scored nine goals in a Second Division match against Hercules. He went on to become a club legend, scoring 266 goals in 301 starts.

Another club legend, Antonio Benitez, coach on four separate occasions in the 1980s and 1990s, clocked up 380 matches in charge.

During the 1956/57 season the team emerged unscathed from a plane crash at Tenerife's Los Rodeos Airport. But tragedy struck in 1987 when goalkeeper Gallardo died in hospital after taking a heavy blow in a match against Celta.

In 1992 relegation and economic disaster combined and the club folded. Fortunately, the directors had made the far-sighted decision to disassociate the first team from the reserve team and the latter continued in the Third Division.

Two years later the club returned to the name Malaga Football Club and the Blue and Whites (their strip mirrors Argentina's) began a rise up the divisions, finally arriving back amongst the elite in 1999.

Now established in the First Division (popularly known as La Liga) the next milestone was qualification for Europe. This was achieved in 2002 when Malaga won their only trophy (aside from four Second Division championships), the now defunct Intertoto Cup, and gained them entry into the UEFA Cup. In that competition they eliminated Leeds Utd, amongst others, to reach the Quarter Final where they lost on penalties to Boavista.

Can any club match Malaga's achievement of reaching the quarter finals in their debut seasons in each of Europe's premier club competitions?

In 2003 Malaga's reserve team (then called Malaga B, now known as Atletico Malagueno) won promotion to the Second Division and stayed there for a few seasons. At one stage Malaga were the only club in Europe to have both first and reserve teams playing in the top two divisions of their league.

Malaga's club record run of seven consecutive seasons in the top division ended in relegation in 2006, with the reserves relegated from the Second Division in the same season. The club then endured a financial crisis (the equivalent of going into administration) and narrowly avoided demotion from the Second Division. The financial situation was finally stabilised in 2008, three days before a victory over Tenerife secured a return to the top flight.

After securing a superb eighth place in their first season back in the big

# MALAGA



FULL NAME  
MÁLAGA CF

NICKNAME  
LOS BOQUERONES  
(THE ANCHOVIES)

FOUNDED  
1904

GROUND  
LA ROSALEDA

CAPACITY  
30,044

## HONOURS

1 Champions Lge QF

1 UEFA Cup QF

1 La Liga 4th place

## 5-YEAR RECORD

**14/15** League: 9th  
Cup: Quarter-finals  
Ave att: 22,055

**13/14** League: 11th  
Cup: Round of 32  
Ave att: 22,325

**12/13** League: 6th  
Cup: Quarter-finals  
Europe: Champions  
League Q-Final  
Ave att: 27,109

**11/12** League: 4th  
Cup: Round of 16  
Ave att: 28,619

**10/11** League: 11th  
Cup: Round of 16  
Ave att: 24,904



City view: The Rosaleda  
Image: manuelfloresv



league the club struggled. In 2010 they went into the last game against championship-chasing Real Madrid stuck in the relegation zone. A thrilling draw and favourable results elsewhere led to joyful scenes as the drop was avoided.

That proved to be a turning point and with more investment required Malaga FC was sold to Sheikh Abdullah Al-Thani, a member of the Qatari Royal Family. Ruud van Nistelrooy arrived for his last ever season along with a host of big names.

Despite continued financial difficulties there followed the most successful period in the club's history. Pellegrini led them to 4th in La Liga in 2012, 6th in 2013 and on that epic Champions League run.

Due to club debts UEFA banned Malaga from the 2013/14 Europa League. The lack of European competition and the club's need to meet UEFA Financial Fair Play regulations inevitably led to predators circling. Pellegrini left for Manchester City and a number of top players also departed. Isco was sold to Real Madrid, Joaquin to Fiorentina, Toulalan to Monaco, Monreal to Arsenal, and Argentine Demichelis' loan ended and he signed for Atletico Madrid.

Not surprisingly, recent results have failed to match those ground-breaking seasons but the club now appears firmly established among the Spanish elite, finishing 11th and 9th in the last two seasons and clocking up a record number of consecutive appearances in the top division. Only a shocking run-in of one win from the last ten matches denied Malaga a place in next season's Europa League.

The club has played at La Rosaleda Stadium (The Rose Garden), situated in a quiet residential neighbourhood in northern Malaga, since 1941. Initially with a capacity of 8000 it has undergone many alterations and improvements.

By 1965 the capacity had risen to 20,000 and after being chosen to host matches during the 1982 World Cup it was expanded to hold 37,000. More improvements and modernisation left La Rosaleda with its current capacity of 30,044.

The stadium sits beside the Rio Guadalmedina, which usually contains no water unless a dam has been opened. Rather ugly on the outside, inside it is a smart bowl. The sections behind the goals rise up in a curve, slightly higher than the stands either side of the pitch. There are roofs over the centre of each side stand and the ends are open. As is common in Spain some of the seats are in poor repair and dirty so savvy locals take a newspaper to sit on.

**Over the bridge: Outside the stadium.**

Image: Andrew Lowton



The concourses beneath the stands are spacious but they are missing a trick with the catering as there is not much on offer. Most spectators stay in their seats at half-time.

The liveliest and most vocal home supporters gather in the blocks immediately behind each goal, the Frente Bokeron at the Fondo End and the Malaka Hinchas at the Gol end. Unfortunately, as in many Spanish stadia, they are led in song by a man on a microphone singing (badly) through loud speakers. He spends the match with his back to the game, consulting his written list of songs.

This bizarre (to English eyes) arrangement does stoke up a bit of atmosphere but tends to preclude supporters from starting their own songs, losing the spontaneity that can make visiting English matches such an event. The only time the whole crowd joins in is for the simple 'Malaga' chant and when the club anthem, La Bombonera, is sung. Written in 1973, the song has been one constant during a period of turmoil.

Malaga has a large following amongst ex-pats living along the Costa del Sol and they have their own supporters group, known as the Guiri Army. They stand at the Gol end with the Malaka Hinchas. They run transport from the resorts to all home matches and can provide advice for visitors through their website and forum: <http://malagafootballenglish.com/>.

Although one of the best supported clubs in the region Malaga only fill their stadium for matches against the top teams, with the average attendance less than 25,000.

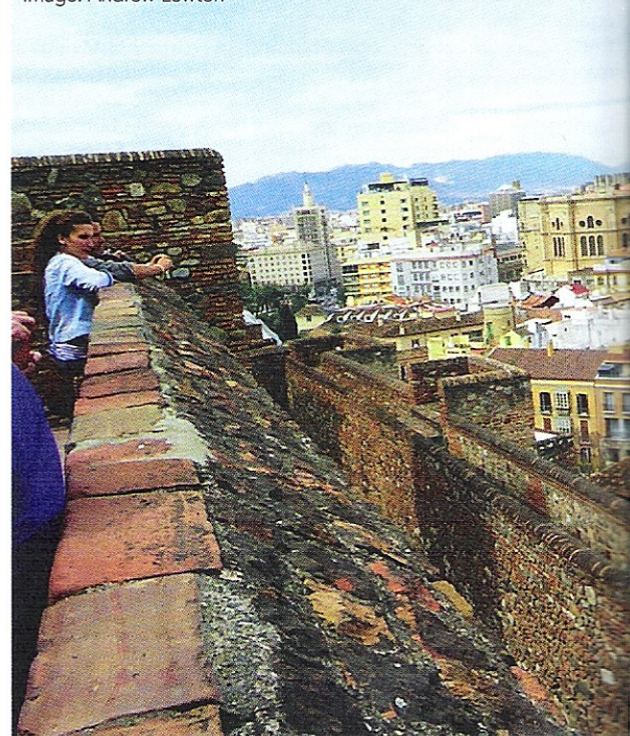


**The bullring**

Image: Andrew Lowton

**Spanish sunshine: Old city from the Alcazaba.**

Image: Andrew Lowton





## THE CITY

Most people know Malaga as the gateway to the beaches of the Costa del Sol but it is much more than that. With a history dating back 3,000 years the city has been shaped by many different cultures and events.

First up were the Phoenicians who founded the city and called it Malaka. Subsequently, the Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Moors and Christians all came and went and the city became a major trading port.

Malaga's people fought against Napoleon in the early 19th Century and against Franco during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s. Defeat in both led to much devastation.

The city also suffered more than its share of natural disasters, with epidemics, floods and earthquakes. Finally, the coastal tourist boom that started in the 1960s gave the local economy a boost and Malaga became the second largest port in Spain.

Most sights worth seeing are located in and around the compact old city. Top of the heap, literally, are the Alcazaba (fortress) and the Castillo de Gibralfaro (a ruined castle), which dominate the skyline. The climb to each is well-worth the effort for superb views of the bullring and port in one direction and the old city to the other.

Three hundred years older than Granada's more famous Alhambra, the Alcazaba is a treat. Originally constructed in the 700s, it was greatly extended in the 11th Century. A zigzag path leads up from an

YOU WILL  
WANT TO  
SPEND  
MOST TIME  
IN THE  
WARREN  
OF STREETS  
OF THE OLD  
CITY, NORTH  
OF THE  
ALAMEDA  
PRINCIPAL

## MALAGA – HOW MUCH?

### GETTING THERE:

- Flights from £60 return
- Airport to city:
  - Train €1.70 (£1.50)
  - Taxi from €20 (£16)

### CITY PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

- Single ticket €1.30 (£1.10)

### THE CITY

- 3 star hotel (2 sharing): £40-60 per night
- Bar meal €6-€9 (£5-£7)
- Pint of local beer: €2.50 (£2)
- Bottle of water: 0.60c (50p)
- Match ticket: from €10 (£8)

impressive Roman amphitheatre passing through numerous gateways, to a series of landscaped gardens and courtyards, topped by three palaces.

Whatever your views on bullfighting the bullring is worth a visit. Even off-season, you can buy a beer in one of the bars on the concourse and quaff it while sitting in the sun in the stands.

South of the bullring lies La Malagueta beach. The facilities are good with showers, toilets and lifeguards. There are bars at frequent intervals and adjacent to the port area is a recently developed strip of boutique shops and restaurants.

You will want to spend most time in the warren of streets of the old city, north of the Alameda Principal. Here stands the magnificent cathedral. Originally a mosque, construction of the cathedral began in the 16th Century and ran for more than 200 years before the money and the will ran out. One of the two bell towers was left unfinished, giving it a lop-sided look. The locals call it La Manquita, the one-armed lady. Fans of Pablo Picasso, Malaga's most

famous son, can visit his birthplace on Plaza de la Merced. The Picasso Museum on Calle San Agustin features more than 200 of his works.

In the evenings the old city fills with locals and tourists. Restaurants, cafes, bars and clubs abound and the choice is unlimited. You could easily partake in extensive bar-crawls on three consecutive nights without ever feeling the need to visit the same place twice.

Many bars show Spanish and English football matches and more traditional entertainment can be found in the form of table football and darts. The best venue for live (rock) music is the small and intimate ZZ Pub, which gets going around midnight.

For a more traditional bar the Antigua Casa de Guardia on Alameda Principal is hard to beat. Dating back to 1840, the oldest bar in Malaga is a throw-back. Staff serve small glasses of wine direct from huge wooden barrels stacked behind a long counter.

The Tourist Office on Plaza de la Marina provides maps and info.





## MATCHDAY GUIDE

### GETTING TO THE STADIUM

La Rosaleda is located in the north of the city, 2km from Malaga's cathedral in the heart of the old city. The walk takes 15-20 minutes. Follow the Rio Guadalmedina north and find the stadium on the left bank.

There is no train station close to the stadium but several buses will take you there from the Alameda Principal, a major road south of the old city. Take bus 17 (to La Palma) and get off at stop Avenida. Dr. Marañón; bus 26 (to Alegría de la Huerta) and get off at stop Rosario Pino; or bus 2 (to Ciudad Jardín) and get off at Jorge Silvela. In all cases the ride will take less than 10 minutes, followed by a few minutes walking.

Easier still, especially if there are a few of you, is to take a taxi for 4.50 euros (£3) from the centre.

### EATING AND DRINKING:

Although the area around the stadium is mainly residential there are a few options for pre-match sustenance. Centro Comercial La Rosaleda, a large shopping centre, lies a few hundred metres away and boasts a range of coffee shops and fast food restaurants.

Closer to the stadium there are a few bars. The Madrid Bar is where the expat Aguiri Army drink before games. Another bar, with lots of outdoor seating, is the blue and white striped Natalya Bar. There are also a number of pop-up bars and food joints that appear on match days.

Don't rely on buying food inside the stadium as there is very little on offer.

Given the relative proximity it may be better to fill up in one of the hundreds of bars and eateries in the old city before taking the stroll to La Rosaleda.

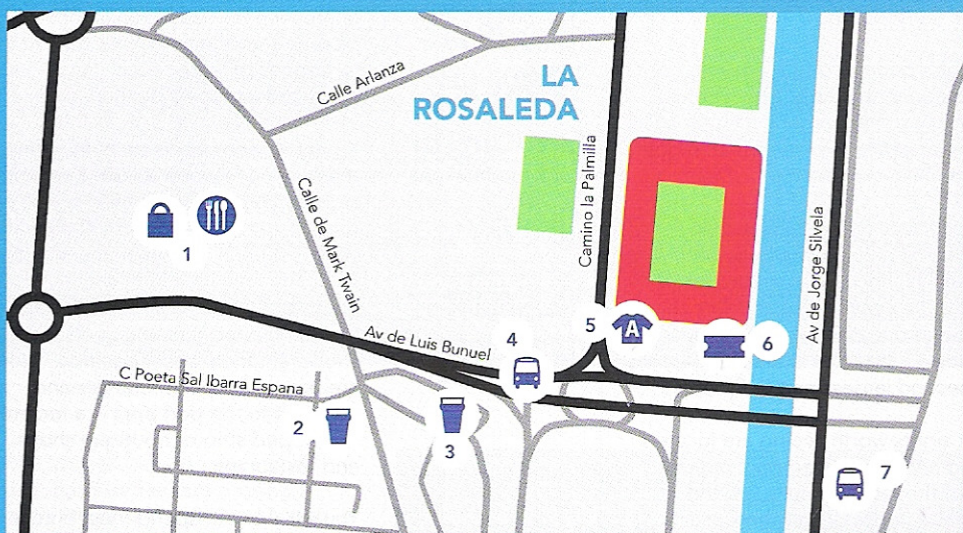
### BUYING A TICKET

Tickets can be bought direct from the club website. It's easy to do, has an English page, and you can choose your own seats. Prices range from 10 to 75 euros (£8-60), depending on seat location and opposition, with an additional 2.50 euros booking fee per ticket. You print your own ticket for the electronic turnstiles. Go to <http://www.malagacf.com/en/ticketing>.

Alternatively, buy a ticket at the stadium if it's not going to be a sell-out.

Note kick-off times in La Liga are not confirmed until around a month before the relevant weekend due to TV scheduling. If you are booking flights and accommodation before the fixture is confirmed it is best to include a Sunday night in case the match is scheduled for that evening. Kick-off can be as late as 10pm on a Sunday.

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1: Centro Comercial La Rosaleda | 8: Mario Zambrano station / bus station |
| 2: Natalya Bar                  | 9: Old town bars and restaurants        |
| 3: Madrid Bar                   | 10: Cathedral                           |
| 4: Bus 17 stop                  | 11: Picasso Museum                      |
| 5: Away supporters              | 12: Alcazabra                           |
| 6: Ticket office                | 13: Castilla de Gibralfaro              |
| 7: Bus 2 stop                   | 14: Harbour restaurants                 |



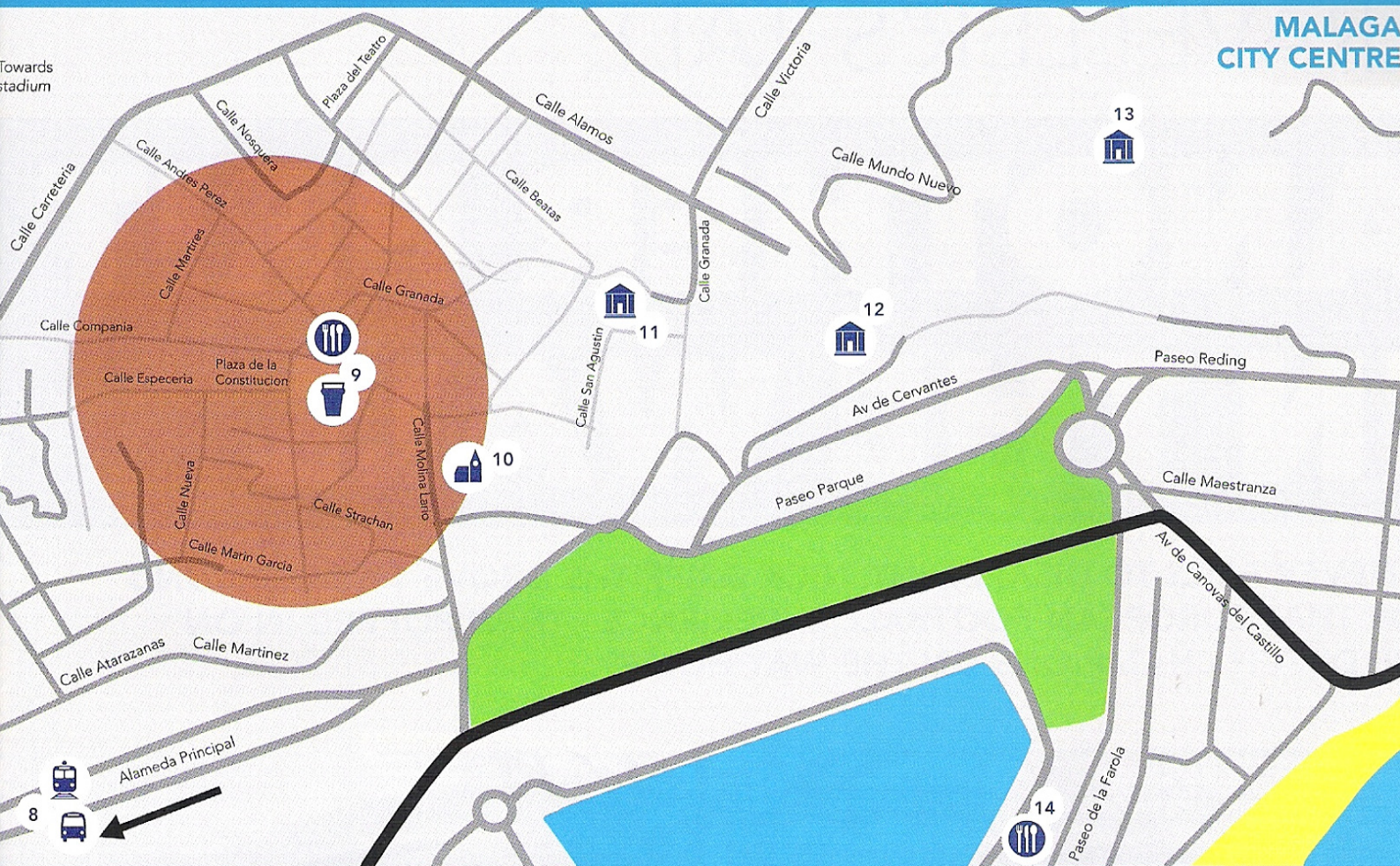
GIVEN THE  
RELATIVE  
PROXIMITY  
IT MAY BE  
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FILL UP IN  
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100s OF  
BARS AND  
EATERIES  
IN THE OLD  
CITY BEFORE  
TAKING A  
STROLL  
TO LA  
ROSAMEDA

Cheers: Our British party enjoys a breather in a back street bar.

Image: Andrew Lowton







## GETTING TO MALAGA

Many budget airlines, including easyJet and Ryanair, fly into Malaga-Costa del Sol Airport (AGP), the third largest international airport in Spain, 9km southwest of the city centre.

Trains to the city centre run from the station opposite the arrivals hall in terminal 3 every 20 minutes between 06:50 and 23:54 and cost 1.80 euros (£1.50). They stop at Malaga Mario Zambrano main station before terminating at Malaga Centro. The latter stop is on the edge of the old city, within a 5-10 minute walk of a host of city centre hotels. From the city to the airport trains depart every 20 minutes between 05:30 and 22:30.

Bus A from the airport costs 3 euros (£2) and runs every 30 minutes, stopping at Alameda Principal and Paseo del Parque, where most of the local buses that serve the city also stop. The stop names are shown on a display inside so you can tell when to get off. Bus A also stops at the bus station (beside the train station).

Taxis from outside the arrivals hall at terminal 2 cost 20 (£14) to the city centre. They can be pre-booked online (at a higher cost) to avoid the queues.

## IN THE CITY

The central Mario Zambrano railway station and the main bus station are

TRAVEL  
WITHIN THE  
CITY IS BEST  
DONE ON  
FOOT AS THE  
HISTORIC  
HEART IS  
FAIRLY  
COMPACT

**Grand: The Baroque Bishop's Palace.**

Image: Andrew Lowton



next to each other on Esplanade de la Estacion and Paseo de los Tilos respectively. Both have frequent connections to Cordoba, Granada and Seville (1-2 hours), opening up the enticing possibility of a two-match weekend.

Travel within the city of Malaga is best done on foot as the historic heart is fairly compact and largely

pedestrianised. For those who don't want to walk, a Hop-On, Hop-Off, double-decker tour bus, mainly aimed at cruise passengers, runs between the main sights for £13.

In addition there are a number of bike rental outlets and for those looking for something a little different there are horse-drawn buggy rides and Segway tours.