

Murcia SPAIN

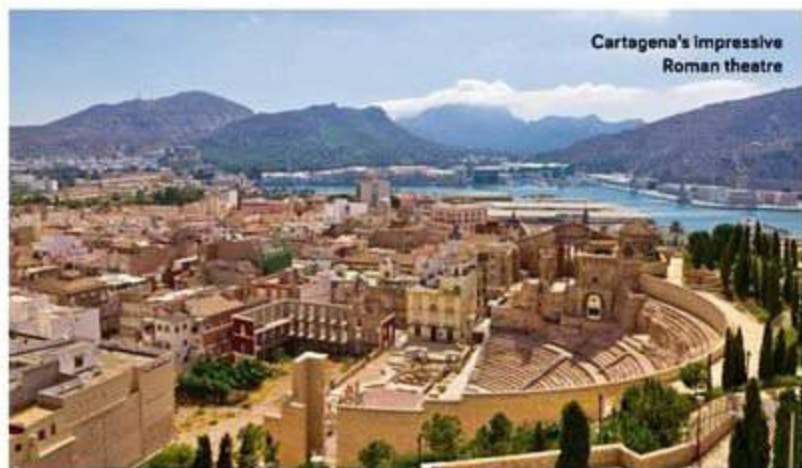
From its mountains to its 250km of Mediterranean coastline, Roman remains and Moorish architecture, the region of Murcia is one of Spain's best-kept secrets.

WHERE Situated in south-eastern Spain, just a short drive from Alicante airport, Murcia is known as the Costa Cálida, or warm coast.

WHY Sun-worshipper, activity junkie or history buff, Murcia has something for everyone: from watersports on the shores of Mar Menor (Europe's largest natural saltwater lagoon), to the beautiful churches and plazas of the region's capital, also called Murcia.

WHEN Boasting more than 300 days of sunshine a year, Murcia is an all-season holiday destination. Sun-seekers flock to its shores in the summer months, but spring and autumn are also popular, especially with sightseers and cyclists.

SEE Take a step back in time at the Roman theatre in Cartagena. Or sink below the surface at ARQUA, the



Cartagena's impressive Roman theatre

National Museum of Underwater Archaeology, also in Cartagena. The city of Murcia is a treasure trove of historical delights, too – from the cathedral with its Gothic interior and Baroque façade to the Royal Casino of Murcia, a dazzling example of aristocratic opulence.

DO La Manga is renowned as one of the best places to dive in Spain, both for its marine life and abundance of shipwrecks. If you prefer to keep your head above water, head north to San Pedro del Pinatar for a spa treatment like no other – Charcas Mud Baths on the banks of Mar Menor.

And while you're there, be sure to keep an eye out for the resident flamingos.

SLEEP

Hotel Puerto Juan Montiel EE

This seafront hotel in the fishing town of Águilas is a haven for sports enthusiasts, from sailing to windsurfing lessons, paddle tennis to mini-golf. And there's a thermal spa to wind down in! (hotelpuertojuanmontiel.com/en)

Hotel NH Cartagena EE

Set in the heart of historical Cartagena, this four-star boutique hotel is the perfect base to explore this ancient city. Comfortable,

contemporary and a short walk to the harbourside and museums.

(nh-hotels.com/hotel/nh-cartagena)

Hotel Costa Narejos EE

Just a stone's throw from the beaches of Mar Menor, Hotel Costa Narejos is a firm family favourite thanks to its child-friendly rooms with lounge area and kitchenette. (hotelcostanarejos.com)

EAT If you go to Murcia city, said to serve some of the tastiest food in Spain, head to Plaza de las Flores – a pretty square in the old quarter with bars serving the best tapas in town. Visitors to the region should also try local speciality *cañero*, a rice and seafood dish. And for dinner with a view, *Zoco del Mar* sits on the hillside by the Castle of San Juan de las Águilas in Águilas.



Inside ARQUA, the National Museum of Underwater Archaeology

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