

CASA LOUISA

ALCAUCIN ANDALUCIA

This is the real Spain!

In the heart of the little-known Axarquia, in a stunning location with wonderful views of the mountains and the beautiful Vinuela valley with its lake far below, Casa Louisa is a large, spacious and comfortable house, sleeping up to ten, with large pool and several sun-trap terraces. Although it looks and feels like a traditional Spanish house, Casa Louisa is newly built with all the comforts of the 21st century. Facing south, it has sun from around breakfast time until sunset with the unspoilt natural beauty of the Sierras all around. If summer-time lazing by the pool in the hot sun or reading in the shade of an olive tree appeals... if peace and tranquillity broken only by birdsong or the tinkling of goat bells as Pepe shepherds his flock home at the end of the day sounds good or sitting on the balcony with a gin and tonic watching the incredible skies as the sun leaves the valley and disappears behind the mountains tempts you ... then this and more is what you will find. Although all the activities and necessities you might need for a good holiday are only short drive from the Casa, dragging yourself away can be difficult! UNLESS, of course, you want to explore following the endless mountain tracks and trails through a beautiful unspoilt paradise with one of our experienced guides .. on a mountain-bike, on foot or cycling on the tiny almost traffic-free roads ... or, for example, visiting the old Moorish cities of Granada, Seville or Cordoba ... perhaps take the kids to the water park or to eat paella on the beach in the lovely little white 'pueblo' town of Nerja .. and so much more. Summer is hot, hot, hot ... spring and autumn are wonderful times to enjoy the best Andalucia has to offer... and a great time to get out and about. Winter, too, could find you in a t-shirt on a clear sunny day high on a peak with wonderful views in all directions ... and going home to a warm house, roaring fire with something delicious cooking in the wood oven on the terrace ...

Location

Casa Louisa is in southern Spain, east of Malaga, a little way inland in the mountains and at the foot of the Sierra Tejeda National Park.

Set on a hillside in over an acre of land amongst the olive groves and almond trees, it is near the pretty little white pueblo mountain village of Alcaucin where you find a jumble of little white houses clinging to the hillside, narrow cobbled streets and rushing fountains of the pure mountain streams watering the whole valley. The mountain road from the valley leads only to this peaceful little village with several restaurants, simple Spanish tapas bars, basic food shops, bakery, pharmacy, post office and doctor. The old men of the village still sit in the square or in a bar drinking sweet wine, banging dominoes and putting the world to rights as they have for a hundred years or more. The Casa itself is 3 kilometres from the village with the final 2 kilometres on a dirt/concrete track (in common with almost all countryside houses in Andalucía - described here). There are quite a few well-spaced out private houses along the track so although you are in the country you are not isolated. As you drive along the track towards the Casa, you begin to see the dramatic peaks and pine forests of the Sierra Tejeda ...and when you get there and stand on the balcony, gazing at the magnificence of the mountains and the tranquillity of the valley below, its hard to believe the full-on experience of the Spanish coast is so close.

HOW FAR IS THE ...?

- Airport: Malaga airport is 64 kilometres ...about an hour depending on traffic. Its an easy drive along the coastal motorway for most of the way and then 15-20 minutes inland on a good road. The last two kilometres of the journey is on the track which gives access to many houses in the area. Granada airport is 1 and a half to two hours.
- Beach: Nearest one is at Torre del Mar (about 20 minutes) ...a large very Spanish busy seaside resort ...huge, long, safe, sandy beach with a long promenade. Recommended is El Morche, again about 20-25 minutes, quieter, better for children and with beach bars etc. Burrianna beach (in Nerja) ...about 35-40 minutes. This has all the trappings of a real up-market English holiday beach with sun beds, palm tree umbrellas, bucket and spade shops and so forth ...worth a trip for paella on the beach and the English papers on Sunday alone! Sand on this coast is clean and stone-coloured - not gold.
- Village: Alcaucin: 3 kilometres; about 20-25 minutes walk, mostly flat. All the essentials including bank with cash point. Puente don Manuel, 6 kilometres has a greater variety with everything for everyday needs – excellent butcher selling local meat, cheese and cured ham, fresh vegetables, fruit, fresh milk, good bakery, local olive oil, honey and so forth. There are two shops with everything 'British' if you need something particular... also English papers. Every so often we go further for a large food shop, however, for variety and value for money.
- Restaurants: Two or three in the village which we go to regularly. Food is simple and based on the superb local meat and vegetables. There are good restaurants in the valley where the service is always friendly, relaxed, quick ... and children are welcome. Eating out is informal and usually excellent value for money. Several other good restaurants within 10 minutes drive
- Huge shopping complex on the coast ... 15-20 minutes. This has an enormous supermarket, clothes shops etc which has anything you could ever want and more ... even a Dunne's Stores!
- Market town of Velez-Malaga is a bit closer for shopping: ...about 15 minutes. Bustling, industrious but with an historic Moorish-influenced quarter that so typifies Andalusia... all sorts of shops and excellent market and supermarkets (we like to shop here much more than at the complex near the coast as it is 'real Spain' - try out your Spanish!). Find the municipal market at the top of town - good fun!
- Torre del Mar is also an excellent place to shop with many cafes, bars and restaurants, a market on Thursdays ... and a long promenade and beach on the seafront
- Velez-Malaga, the huge shopping complex and Torre del Mar is linked by a posh tram (lots of EC money!) and is a fun cheap ride for the kids.
- Water-park (summer only) just opposite the huge shopping complex
- Golf: 25 minutes to an excellent Baviera golf club and Anoreto at Rincon de la Victoria. Antequera around an hour away.
- Walking and Biking: Fantastic! ... See 'THE ACTION'.
- Horse riding: Two options ..one in the village just over 5 minutes drive away and the other in the nearby village of Periana (15 – 20 minutes drive). English spoken at both.
- Sailing and Kayaking: On the lake below. Or take a yacht for the day (with qualified skipper) ... moor for lunch and a swim at a deserted cove .. expensive but a great day out!
- Medical Services: Doctor and pharmacy in the village. 24-hour 7 day emergency services in Vinuela village about 15 minutes drive. Most residents say medical services in Spain are now better than in the UK.

The Casa

The Casa sleeps 8 people in four double bedrooms but has two full-size single beds in the lower ground floor living room for extra flexibility. The house feels spacious with plenty of room for everyone.

First floor (and main living area)

- Entrance
- Large sitting room with comfortable sofas and chairs, large dining table, flat screen TV, DVD player, a few DVDs, books, sound system; wood burning stove for those chilly winter evenings and with double glass doors leading out onto ...
- Covered 'L' shaped balcony looking out over the beautiful valley and with sofa, comfortable chairs and gas bar-b-que. Glass door to kitchen
- Master bedroom (6' double bed); en-suite bathroom with basin, loo, bidet and large walk-in shower; double glass doors leading to main covered balcony and separate glass door leading to private balcony... and with stunning mountain views. Built-in cupboards.TV
- Bedrooms 2 and 3: Both twin-bedded rooms both with built-in cupboards
- House bathroom with basin, loo, bidet and bath with overhead shower
- Well-equipped kitchen with granite worktops, oven, hob, dishwasher, kettle, toaster, large fridge/freezer and all the crockery, china, cutlery and kitchen equipment you could possibly need - including separate plastic plates, glasses and bowls to take down to the pool
- Laundry with washing machine, iron and ironing board
- Larder with separate fridge for fruit and vegetables; blender and microwave
- Stairs to Lower Ground Floor

Lower Ground Floor

- Fourth double bedroom (6' double bed); double glass doors leading out onto lower terrace; built-in wardrobes
- Third bathroom with basin, loo, bidet and large walk-in shower. Separate hot water system.
- Second large living room with sofas, chairs and two full-size single beds. Large TV with separate satellite feed (will suit the fanatical sports watchers ... or kids ... or those wanting a bit of quiet space!). Double glass doors leading to a large lower part-covered terrace, another outside table and wide gentle slope to the pool terrace.

Outside

From the covered balcony and kitchen you step out onto the top terrace with fantastic views – a real suntrap and ideal for a bar-b-que when the sun goes down. There is a shaded area a large marble table, comfortable chairs for eating outside and a wood oven (for use in autumn, winter and spring only because of the outside fire ban in summer). A wide, shallow flight of 25 steps from this terrace leads down to the swimming pool, pool house and huge walled sun terrace .with magnificent views.. the perfect place for relaxing on a sun bed. From here you can walk back up to the house on a wide slope to a large part covered terrace outside the lower living room with another comfortable sofa and chairs and lovely afternoon shade from an olive tree. Because of the various different terraces, there is plenty of room for everyone.

- Large private swimming pool (10 by 5 metres, 1 to 1.5 metres in depth) with wide steps for access. Top and bottom terraces have gates between the house and poo. As well as making a safe play area for little ones just outside the sitting room and kitchen, these gates prevent access to the water. We are told by our guests that the house is very suitable for young families! The pool itself is surrounded by walls. Because it is set well away from the main house and on a hillside children need to be well-supervised when they are in and around pool.
- Corner pool house with outdoor kitchen ready for summer 2008
- Poolside shower
- Gas bar-b-que
- 8 full-size comfortable sun-beds
- Other comfortable portable chairs (shade or sun? ... you choose ...)
- Olive trees that offer shade from the heat of the midday sun
- Umbrellas and gazebo for extra shade

Outside low-level lighting and pool lights controlled from the covered balcony

YOU NEED TO KNOW...

- Car: Essential. Note that the last bit of the journey is on a dirt / concrete track and is perfectly drivable with an ordinary car. Periodically the surface is levelled but at times there may be new ruts from recent rain - mostly in the winter months. Confident drivers have no problem with this last bit of the journey but if you are a nervous driver you probably won't like it
- Children welcome. Various games and toys in the cupboard downstairs. No pets.
- Not yet suitable for the disabled
- Wireless internet - bring your own laptop
- Full-size travel cot and highchair provided on request
- All the rooms have under floor heating which makes the house suitable for the cooler months
- Beds are all comfortable. Duvets and blankets provided should you need them.
- Air conditioning in all bedrooms and in the upstairs living room
- Mosquito blinds on all windows
- Ceiling fans in all rooms
- Satellite TV: 2 Separate feeds in the 2 living rooms so no arguments about who wants to watch what! Basic UK channels only. DVD in each living room.
- Swimming pool is cleaned twice a week throughout the year
- Bed-linen provided. Bath towel and pool towel provided for each person'
- The casa is serviced before new clients arrive as well as after they have left - so it will be squeaky clean and ready for you when you arrive.
- Extra cleaning can be arranged during your stay if required (Pay locally).
- No smoking inside the Casa
- The Casa is managed by Lisa who is English and lives with her family in Alcaucin. She will show you to the house, give you a key and of course will sort any difficulties you have with the house.
- If you are thinking seriously about booking you may like to look at the low cost flight options. We like to get a morning flight out arriving early afternoon so we can have something to eat on the way and go to a supermarket for some food before we go up to the house. You probably won't want to go out again to shop once you get there. Also, in high season arrival is not before 4.30pm and departure is by 9.30 am which may make a difference to your plans ... standards are high and it takes our housekeepers a full day to prepare the house for you. Suggested carriers: www.flymonarch.co.uk, www.jet2.co.uk, www.thompsonfly.co.uk, www.bmibaby.com, www.ba.com, www.easyjet.com, www.globespan.com, www.ryanair.com.
- Car hire: www.carjet.com , or www.doyouspain.com (on-line brokers) have always given us a very good service.
- Are you sure this is where you want to be? For us, the peace, tranquillity, comfort and gorgeous situation make it a very special place. Think carefully, however, because If the idea of driving along a dirt track for the last 2 kilometres to the house puts you off or if you want to walk to the shops, like the tourist bustle all around you and want the bright lights in the evenings, you will probably be happier elsewhere!

AROUND AND ABOUT

The inland Axarquía is a glorious region, largely unspoilt by mass tourism, rich in history and architecture and much influenced by 700 years of Moorish rule when the caliphs held sway from the seats of power in Córdoba and Granada. Still dependent on agriculture - mainly olives, almonds, avocado, oranges, and lemons - and producing a mass of delicious vegetables and fruit as it has done for centuries, it has one of the best climates in the Mediterranean with over 300 days of sunshine a year. Below are a few ideas for an excursion ...

- **Nerja:** 35 minutes Pretty white town on the sea with narrow little streets where you will find lots of interesting shops ... excellent for browsing. Popular tourist spot. And having cafe con leche on the famous Balcon de Europe promenade watching the world go by is a must. Go on Sunday, pick up the papers and have paella for lunch on Burriana beach - fantastic!
- **Caves at Maro:** Just beyond Nerja. Spectacular subterranean caves where concerts are held in the summer among the stalactites and stalagmites (book early - very popular!)
- **Granada:** One and a half hours. Gorgeous little city with the amazing Alhambra palace (book in advance), Moorish quarter and Arabic steam baths.
- **Malaga:** Three-quarters of an hour. Picasso museum. Arabic steam baths. Excellent shopping
- **El Torcal:** 40 minutes. National Park with 3000 acres of 'moonscape'. Impressive limestone formations shaped by the elements over millions of year ago with marked walks and a visitor's centre.
- **La Laguna de Fuente de Piedra:** in April and May. A salt lake that is home to 15,000 breeding flamingos in transit.
- Visit the many delightful small '**pueblo blanco**' **mountain villages** nearby: Comares (perched on top of a mountain - you can see it in the distance from the casa), Canillas de Acentunas, Periana (and lunch on the terrace at Cantueso), Frigiliana, Torrox Pueblo (pretty little square) and many more.
- **Alhama de Granada:** ! hour. Through the Zafarraya pass and towards Granada. A delightful, totally unspoilt little town with an amazing gorge (for walking ... or just looking!). Find the tiny church given to the town by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in honour of its important historical and strategic position... or sit in the wide square in the old part of the town in the sun and dream. The hot springs are 10 minutes away ... swim in hot outside pool or take a treatment in the centre there.
- **Antequera:** 45 minutes. Ancient old town with many churches and museums and a covered market. Ancient burial chambers from the Neolithic age (Dolmens)
- **Córdoba and Seville:** Vibrant, exciting cities with all their beautiful Moorish buildings. Both around 2 to 2 and a half hours away... a very long day out but worth it!
- **Riofrio:** 1 hour. Through the Zafarraya pass and inland taking in some lovely country. A village around the trout farms which supply all of southern Spain. Walk up the river, watch and feed the fish and then have a wonderful lunch in one of the local inns - very popular with Spanish families on Sunday - busy, bustling and noisy - lovely fresh fish!
- **Local markets:** Each town and village has a local street market day - details in the casa.
- **Fiestas:** Andalucians take every opportunity to get together for a party! Each town and village has several fiestas each year so you can usually catch one. Celebrations start late and go on way into the night with food, drink, dancing and a warm welcome to all comers. Locally, the main fiestas are the flamenco festival in August, the wine festival at Vinuela in September and the peach festival in Periana at the end of July. Easter is the greatest celebration of the year ... in every village and town.

Night life: Torre del Mar seafront boasts night clubs and all the towns have bars with Nerja's 'Tuti Fruti' area probably the most exciting.

PRICES PER WEEK FOR 2012

JANUARY – MARCH 31	£850
Including Christmas / New Year	£1200
MARCH 31 – APRIL 14 (Easter):	£1100
APRIL 14 – JUNE 2:	£950
JUNE 2 – JUNE 9 (half-term):	£1200
JUNE 9 – JULY 21:	£1100
JULY 21 – AUGUST 25:	£1350
AUGUST 25 – OCTOBER 20:	£950
OCTOBER 20 – DECEMBER 15	£850

- Based on 7 nights for up to 10 people
- Euro rate on request
- Extra / less days pro-rata
- Short breaks – minimum cost calculated for 4 nights but you can go for 2 or 3 if you want to!
- Off-peak parts of the year, beginning and end dates to fit in with you and the advantage of cheaper mid-week low-cost flights.
- May, June, July, August and September and some bank holiday weeks – Saturday to Saturday.
- Arrival is after 4.30pm and departure at 9.30am in high season.
- If you stay for two weeks, a couple of hours cleaning and a change of linen is included in the price
- Cost of almost all utilities (plus firewood, gas for bbq) included
- Optional: air-conditioning or heating at additional £125 per week. Pay in advance or per night when you get there (If you do that it would be cash in advance at a similar rate per night plus 15 euros per manager visit to activate / deactivate). Refunds on return home if you change your mind when you are there.
- Deposit of £150 required at the time of booking
- Total of 30% of non-returnable rental payable by 10th January 2011 for summer bookings
- Balance plus £150 bond plus advance payment for aircon or heating 8 weeks before departure
- Bond of £150 held in a separate account over the letting period to be sent back to guests within one week of return to the UK providing all is tidy and in order in the house when you leave. (but you don't have to clean)
- You can pay by cheque or on-line transfer.

To find out if the dates you're considering are available, contact Jill Firth

email: snowlea@hotmail.com ...This is probably the easiest way to contact me to make sure of a quick response.

If you would rather talk, call 0780 395 1960 / 01484 659588 or, if I am in Spain, 0034 635 126 800.

If you call or email Spain I will ring you back on SKYPE and that won't cost you anything.

Wiking and Biking

The house is in the most stunningly beautiful mountainous region and on the edge of the Sierra Tejada National Park. There are hundreds of square kilometres of peaks and valleys, pine forests and great swathes of gorgeous open countryside. Hidden throughout are the little white pueblo Spanish mountain villages where life goes on much the same as it has for so many years. All this is on the doorstep... and better still... relatively undiscovered. There are countless tracks and paths to suit all requirements. You could take a two-hour stroll for the moderately fit on a reasonably level path (not missing the fabulous views of course) or decide on a strenuous full day, to stand, perhaps, on top of a glorious peak with breathtaking vistas for hundreds of miles in all directions. These seemingly endless trails are perfect, too, for mountain bikers of all levels, with dramatic views to distract even the most committed... and if cycling is your sport, riding on miles of tiny almost traffic-free mountain roads is a delight. (Bike hire is easy to arrange for you). Spring and autumn are wonderful times to go... July and August are almost too hot except for the most dedicated who like to get up really early. In winter, too, although sunset is earlier, there are crystal clear sunny days when it is a joy to be out... and down to a t-shirt at mid-day! It is however, easy to get lost... no 'public footpath' signs and reliable OS maps here! Although there are several 'there-and-back' tracks you could take on your own... self-guided pull-out trails in the house ... and maps that show some of the roads... the full glory of Andalucia is best discovered with one of our guides...



Marta

Marta's main passion is walking in her beloved mountains. She has a great zest for life coupled with a love of Andalucía where she was born and raised, although she has lived and worked in USA for some time... which accounts for her perfect English.

- She has now returned to her roots, settling in the valley with her husband and young son with a mind to make this life-time's love of walking more than just a hobby.
- She is a fully qualified Spanish Mountain Guide... a full-time 2 year course (TECO)... and walking in the mountains is where she likes to be.
- She can take you for a beautiful undemanding stroll, an energetic morning hike or a full-day's expedition.
- She could, for example, take you walking high on the plateau to Alhama de Granada where a stop for a swim in the natural hot springs of the old Roman baths might be on the cards... or through pine-clad hills in the National Park to a fabulous view-point... and she can also arrange a typical Spanish bar-b-que or picnic (depending on the season) in the mountains at the end of your walk when non-walkers can be brought to join you and so get a taste of the action.

She knows the mountains like the back of her hand... and has some wonderful ideas for exploring the best the area has to offer. Your own holiday insurance would need to cover you to walk with Marta as she has no specialist policy.



Terry

Terry loves walking. Either on his own or leading groups he has explored many of the famous battlefields of the world and loves the lure of a country track going 'over the hills and far away'!

- He lives close to our beautiful neighbouring mountain 'pueblo blanco' – Cannillas de Aceituno, about 15 to 20 minutes drive away.
- Has trekked and walked all his life all over the world mostly for pleasure but he knows the delightful walks around his home best.
- Could take you on a 2-3 hour walk into the forests and foothills, a 3-hour scramble to the Bat cave or an enticing, more strenuous half or full day trek around our highest mountain, La Maroma (6,700 feet), or even to the top if you feel up to it!

He has wide interests, however, and he is not always at home. He can sometimes be found lecturing on English History on a cruise ship, maybe in the Caribbean or Med, or performing music in a bistro or local bar.. So Terry is indeed, a man of many parts! If you want to walk with him, just ask... he's an organised sort of adventurer and wouldn't let you down if he's around. Your own holiday insurance would need to cover you to walk with Terry as he has no specialist policy.



Michael

Michael can offer mountain biking and walking. He swapped a frantic working life trading on the floor of a US bank, moving to Spain with his family for a more relaxed and ambient quality... and slower pace found in a Spanish life-style and the temperate climate of the south coast.

- From the age of 7 he followed his adventurous father (who was in the Parachute regiment), walking and climbing in Europe and all over the world, trekking, fell-running and climbing in all conditions throughout the UK, all of which has left him with a passion for walking and cycling in the mountains where he has made his home.
- Around this he has built his business in Spain and with formal orienteering and Red Cross medical training he is equipped to offer you an exciting day exploring the Axarquía.

You choose... from a relaxing stroll around the many famous little 'white villages' to tough climbs and exhilarating downhill for those seeking thrills... or anything in between. He has high spec bikes to rent (bring your own if you'd rather) and vehicle back-up. In the summer he can offer you an exciting river walk (can be adapted as a family day to suit children of 12 and above)... or even a river 'canyoning' day for the toughest and most active who seek serious adventure. He would be happiest if you checked and extended your own holiday insurance before you leave home but could offer you a day policy if you need it.

All our guides love the mountains and forests around the Axarquía and are very knowledgeable about tracks and trails. They will help you choose your route according to your fitness level, ability and inclination and will talk you through what you need to take before you set off. They all ask that you be properly shod and equipped for your chosen activity. They are all well-acquainted with prevailing local weather conditions (rain and mist do happen – sometimes – and can descend unexpectedly), are fully equipped with GPS (or in John's case a faithful compass which he prefers), two-way radio or mobile and speak enough Spanish to alert the National Park wardens and rescue services... which, incidentally, are very good in Spain. Times and prices are based on a door-to-door trip which makes it easy for you – and with transport if required. Please take note of each guide's insurance status and the extra insurance on offer from John and Michael. If you are going to rely on your holiday insurance you must make sure it includes your chosen activity - mountain biking, cycling and walking in the mountains. In addition, in spite of any amount of experience and training our guides have and all the precautions they take, accidents do occasionally happen. In common with almost all companies providing active holidays world-wide you will be asked to sign a simple form stating you have been fully informed of the insurance situation and risks before you set off.

If you like the idea of planning active time while you are in Spain, email or call for an idea of costs... or to ask for an email address so that you can contact one of them directly to find out exactly what they offer... bike specs etc.' For each one, guiding is a major part their lives and each one books clients in advance... and each one of them, we know, would be a sorry to have to disappoint you. We have met (and followed) them all and can recommend them! If you'd rather take a chance and not be so organised, risk it and ring when you get there... phone numbers are in the house.