

## ANDALUCIA

# Olive country life



A view of Bubion from above.



Traditional white-washed houses are used as holiday homes.

### OLIVE GROVES

As we drove to the peaks, we watched brown, rugged landscapes give way to silvery olive groves, as the smell of pine and citrus permeated the air.

Our tour guide, Roberto, an olive cultivator in his 50s, told us what he loved about life in the Alpujarras: "Nothing thrills me more than reaping the fruits of my labour. Every season, I go out into the fields to collect the olives when they're ripe. That is the best part of my job."

### NATURAL SPRINGS AND HOLISTIC CENTRES

The pastoral life he described is an enticing one. In his 1957 book *South of Granada*, British writer Gerald Brenan detailed his seven-year stay in this area in the 1920s. Since then, it has become a veritable destination for hippies, and now, New Age practitioners.

The gateway to the Alpujarras, the town of Lanjaron, is home to a Buddhist meditation centre, yoga halls and holistic stores. It reverberates with spiritual energy, drawing artists and writers from all over the world.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

## Hippies as well as villagers live as one in Spain's deep south

NELLIE HUANG

traveller@mediacorp.com.sg

A KIND of Shangri-La lies tucked in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, deep in the heart of Andalusia.

The Alpujarra region is one of the most fertile areas in Spain. Water from the mountains and Mediterranean sunshine feed fruit orchards while the dry air

helps cure that Spanish staple, serrano ham.

The scenery, too, is pretty. White-washed villages, remnants of Muslim communities, cling onto the slopes.

While the Alpujarras is off the tourist trail in the way that cities such as Madrid and Barcelona are its stars, the region's bucolic way of life tends to attract travellers who want to stay.

My partner and I took a tour into the mountains to see this bohemian enclave for ourselves.

**Nothing thrills me more than reaping the fruits of my labour. Every season, I go out into the fields to collect the olives when they're ripe. That is the best part of my job.**

Roberto, an olive cultivator in the Alpujarras

Wind turbines dot the landscape: A mix of old and new.



PHOTOS NELLIE HUANG

**FLY & STAY HOLIDAYS**  
The Luxury Collection

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change.

2 To Go Daily Departure fr \$65 to \$420

<p><b>4D Shanghai</b> World Expo Indulgence</p> <p>Stay at 5* Daning Four Points by Sheraton or Similar</p> <p>Highlights: ✓ All-you-can-eat buffet at Golden Jaguar Restaurant with shark's fin, abalone, bird's nest &amp; free flow of red wine</p> <p>8 To Go fr \$1058</p>	<p><b>5D Enticing Beijing</b> Explorer</p> <p>Stay at 5* Hua Bin International</p> <p>Highlights: ✓ Forbidden City ✓ Tiananmen Square ✓ National Centre for Performing Arts ✓ Temple of Heaven ✓ Qianmen Street</p> <p>fr \$1038</p>	<p><b>4D Shop &amp; Relax in Xiamen</b></p> <p>Stay at 4* Local 5* Powerlong Hotel</p> <p>Highlights: ✓ Tour to Piano Island, Huandao Sightseeing Road, the Bund &amp; shopping at Xiamen's popular malls</p> <p>fr \$688</p>
<p><b>3D Pampering Langkawi</b> Gateway</p> <p>Stay at 5* Sheraton Beach Resort</p> <p>Return airfare ✓ Return private airport transfer ✓ Daily breakfast</p> <p>fr \$488</p>	<p><b>3D Relaxing Penang</b></p> <p>Stay at 5* 6 Hotel Located in the Hub of Penang's Noisy Paradise in Gurney Drive</p> <p>Highlights: ✓ Tour to batik factory, fishing village, fruit plantation, Snake Temple &amp; local produce shop</p> <p>fr \$408</p>	<p><b>4D Rejuvenating Bali</b></p> <p>Stay at 4* Local 5* Inna Grand Bali Beach Hotel, Resort &amp; Spa</p> <p>Highlights: ✓ 2 full-day tours with lunch to Barong, Kintamani, Ubud, Bedugul, Alas Kedaton &amp; Tanah Lot</p> <p>fr \$488</p>

**CHAN BROTHERS TRAVEL 6212 9688**  
150 South Bridge Road #04-04 Fook Hai Building Mon - Fri 10am - 7pm Sat 10am - 6pm Sun & PH Closed

\*Conditions apply. All information is correct at time of print.

<p><b>BINTAN ISLAND</b></p> <p><b>2D Bintan Lagoon</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Way Ferry</li> <li>One Night Accommodation</li> <li>Daily Breakfast</li> </ul> <p>fr \$108*</p> <p>2D Angsana fr \$118*</p> <p>2D Banyan Tree fr \$438*</p> <p>2D Nirwana Garden fr \$108*</p> <p>2D Mayang Sari fr \$115*</p>	<p><b>TIOMAN ISLAND</b></p> <p>3D Berjaya Tioman fr \$218*</p> <p>3D Paya Beach F &amp; E fr \$119*</p> <p>3D Panabu F &amp; E fr \$139*</p> <p>3D Happy Inn Fullboard fr \$149*</p> <p>3D Juara Fullboard fr \$199*</p> <p><b>Good Friday Long Weekend</b> Special Departure : 2 April 3 Days 2 Nights Berjaya Tioman By Coach &amp; Ferry fr \$290*</p>	<p><b>REDANG ISLAND</b></p> <p>4D Laguna Redang fr \$248*</p> <p>4D Redang Beach fr \$228*</p> <p>4D Redang Bay fr \$228*</p> <p>4D Berjaya Redang fr \$448*</p> <p><b>DESARU</b></p> <p>Golden Beach fr \$95*</p> <p>Pulau Desaru fr \$115*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Way Ferry</li> <li>2 Way Transfer</li> <li>1 Night With Breakfast</li> </ul>
--	---	--

**WTS Travel** www.wtstravel.com.sg

6735 8558 | 6587 8558 | 6467 8558 | 6764 8558 | 6346 8558 | 6452 2262

#02-03A Hotel Grand Central | #04-16 Tampines 1 | #01-59/59A Bt Timah Plaza | #04-14 Bt Panjang Plaza | #04-14 Lot One | #01-02 ANK Teck Ghee CC

# Olive country life

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52

We drove on to Cortijo Amapolis, a retreat in the shape of a Mongolian yurt hidden in the valleys. The retreat programme combines meditation, yoga and massages.

One of the guests, Ruben, a Brazilian dancer, said: "Waking up to the mountain air, meditating in the tranquillity and being surrounded by fellow artists – that's what makes me feel alive. I've been here for only a month, but I know this is now my home."

## ORGANIC LIVING

We left the hippie trail behind us, with the slopes carpeted by meadows of wildflow-

ers. Mushrooms and herbs found in the wild are used in local cuisine and what people can't pick, they grow in their backyard – one reason why Alpujarran cuisine is gaining fame for its organic origins.

Farmhouses, or cortijos, abound, serving food in its purest form. We stopped at Cortijo Garin to sample a typical item, the Plato Alpujarreno – a mixture of jamon (cured ham), morcilla (congealed cow's blood) and patatas a lo pobre (pan-fried potato), tossed in locally produced olive oil and condiments. Naturally, the ingredients came from the restaurant's own farm.

## CASA RURAL

Twelve kilometres away lies the Poquiera



The village of Pampaneira lines the valley slope.

valley, the backdrop to the famous trio: Pampaneira, Capileira and Bubion. The three are reportedly the most stunning of the Alpujarras' white-washed villages. Each is a phalanx of twisting mule tracks, steep cobbled paths and wooden balconies draped with bright red peppers that invites hours of exploration.

We pushed further to the other end of the highlands, 20km away, to get to Pitres. The town has a bundle of rustic holiday homes, or casas rurales. Poised on the slopes, these guesthouses have an unobstructed view of the gorge and outdoor terraces to while away the time.

As the sun set, we settled into La Oveja Verde, a traditional country-style guesthouse, to enjoy a glass of wine.

The beauty of the place inspired a fellow guest, a middle-aged British writer, to use Pitres as the setting for his next novel. "I want to use the romance of the Alpujarras in my novel," he said. "A place like this is rare these days."

## TRIP NOTES

**Go:** The nearest airports are in Malaga and Granada. Lufthansa and British Airways fly to both airports for about \$1,500. For optimum mobility, rent a car at the airport. The rate is about €50 (\$94) a day. Road signs are in Spanish but it is easy to find your way with a map. Most locals speak only Spanish, so learn some words before you go. The other option to book a tour. Olive Oil Tours ([www.oliveoiltour.com](http://www.oliveoiltour.com)) depart from Granada. A six-hour excursion including lunch costs €55.

**When to go:** The best time to visit is in spring (April to June) when the climate is pleasant and flowers are in bloom. Temperatures can drop drastically at night, even in summer. Winter is best avoided as roads might be closed due to snow.

## Eat and stay:

- Cortijo Garin ([www.cortjogarín.com](http://www.cortjogarín.com)). The average price of a meal is €10.

- Alpujarras Holidays ([www.alpujarras-holidays.com](http://www.alpujarras-holidays.com)) has homes furnished with a kitchen and swimming pool. Rates from €40 per person.

- Cortijo Los Iberos ([www.casaibero.com](http://www.casaibero.com)) is an excellent farmhouse for travellers to experience rural living. Rates from €22.5 per person.

- La Oveja Verde ([www.laovejaverde.es](http://www.laovejaverde.es)) has panoramic views. Rates start from €30 person per night.

- Cortijo Amapolis ([www.armonia.tantrika.net](http://www.armonia.tantrika.net)). Retreats that include accommodation in a yurt, meditation sessions and three meals daily cost €150 a day.

<b>2 to Travel Daily Departure</b>	
<b>NEPAL</b>	
6D Leisure Nepal	fr\$1128
8D Nepal Experience	fr\$1308
10D Nepal Adventure	fr\$1518
14D Nepal ABC Trek	fr\$2018
Disc up to <b>\$300</b> per couple	
<b>TIBET</b>	
7D Exotic Tibet	fr\$1098
12D Tibet Explorer	fr\$2388
10D Tibet Experience + Xi'an	fr\$1888
14D Captivating Mt. Everest	fr\$2988
Special Dep: May 21, 28 Jun 18	
<b>Ren Ren Travel</b> People's Park Centre #01-32A <b>6535 5655</b>	

**EVERYDAY LUXURY 56**

## The Extraordinary Taxi Ride of their lives

SINGAPOREANS Ong Jing Yi, 33, and her brother Jason, 35, won themselves a taxi ride of a lifetime on Tuesday. The prize was part of Tourism Western Australia's Extraordinary Taxi Ride contest launched in February.

The pair will embark on a seven-day tour of the Australian state with Doug Slater, a taxi driver chosen in an online voting contest. He will receive A\$25,000 (\$32,041) for driving the Ongs and 10 other pairs of passengers across Western Australia and telling them all about his home state.

His charges hail from Australia and around the world. The journey will take nine weeks starting from April 9.

The Ongs will embark on the fifth leg of the journey, visiting areas such as Monkey Mia, a popular destination to hand-feed dolphins and Shell Beach, which as its name suggests, is made entirely of shells.



WA's Tourism Minister, Dr Elizabeth Constable, presents Extraordinary Taxi Ride winners Ong Jing Yi and Jason Ong with the prize certificate.

The siblings were selected by a panel of judges based on their passion for travel and their ability to present themselves. They will be blogging about their experiences

while on the trip.

For more information on the contest, log on to [www.extraordinarytaxiride.com.au](http://www.extraordinarytaxiride.com.au).

TERENCE LEE

<b>MALAYSIA</b>		<b>STAR CRUISES</b>	
<b>1D Pangarang Fire Flies Tour</b>		<b>Superstar Virgo</b>	
✓ Fruit Farm & Ostrich Farm ✓ Lobster Lunch & Shopping ✓ Dinner & Fireflies River Cruise Dep: Apr 3, 10, 17, 24 May 8, 15, 22, 29 Jun 5, 12, 19, 26 Jul 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Aug 7, 14, 21, 28 Sep 4, 11, 18, 25		✓ Fu Zhou Traditional Noodle House ✓ Mushroom Farm ✓ Durian Feast ✓ Organic Farm ✓ Jusco Terbau City Shopping Mall Dep: Jun 5, 12, 19, 26 Jul 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Aug 7, 14, 21, 28	
fr\$75		fr\$60	
<b>FREE &amp; EASY</b>		<b>TWIN CITY</b>	
2D Desaru (by Ferry)	fr\$98	3D Kuala Lumpur/Genting	fr\$148
2D Malacca	fr\$98	3D Kuala Lumpur/Cameron	fr\$178
2D Kuala Lumpur	fr\$108	3D Berjaya Times Square/Berjaya Hills	fr\$208
2D Cameron	fr\$118	4D Penang/Kuala Lumpur	fr\$268
3D Damai Laut	fr\$168		
<b>联营假期 konsortium</b> TA1210 <b>6392 5000</b>		3D2N Redang Cruise Dep: Jun 4, 18 Sep 10 2N Redang or Malacca / Kuala Lumpur Cruise 2N Weekend Cruise 3N Penang / Phuket or Phuket / Langkawi Cruise	