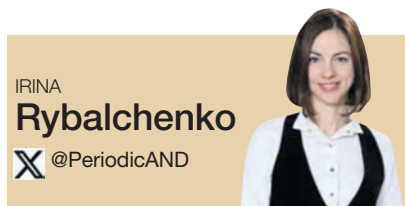




## Interview



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Marbella is a tourist city in Andalusia (Spain). It's an ideal place to visit, live and invest, according to Ángeles Muñoz, who first became mayor of Marbella in 2007 and was re-elected for the fourth time in 2019. We spoke to Ángeles Muñoz about the city's development plans, economy, tourism and its uncompromising stance on banning construction work in the green zone.

**–Marbella is a tourist city located on the Costa del Sol. What would you advise tourists to visit first?**

–Marbella is an ideal city in which to live and invest and, of course, to visit. To tourists who arrive for the first time in our city, I would recommend a walk through our wonderful Old Town to make purchases in our local shops and exclusive boutiques and a stroll along our coastal path that runs parallel to the beaches (a 27-kilometer seafront promenade that is unique to Europe). Tourists will also enjoy participating in our sporting (e.g., golf) cultural and leisure events and tasting our culinary offerings.

Our attractions mean that our city's tourism sector enjoys great strength, which allowed it to recover – in record time – after the pandemic and has obtained historic visitor numbers this year. A recent example has been the fact that the municipality has recorded 2.5 million overnight stays during the first ten months of this year, exceeding – by more than 84,000 – the number in the entire 2022 financial year.

At the city council, we have been working and betting on reducing seasonality, and the results are very positive. We are also going to continue strengthening the Marbella brand at the national and international level, along with actions such as attending the main tourist fairs, such as Fitur in Madrid, World Travel Market in London and the ITB in Berlin, among many others. We will also campaign in markets such as America, Asia and, of course, the Arabian Peninsula, where we have had a great projection and an important relationship for many years.



AJUNTAMENT DE MARBELLA

## Ángeles Muñoz

Mayor of Marbella

«Marbella will not allow construction in green areas in any enclave of the municipality»

**–Please tell us about the main Andalusian festivals and traditions of the city. How is gastronomic tourism developing?**

–The main local festivals of the city are June 11th's San Bernabé (Patron

of Marbella) and October 19th's San Pedro de Alcántara (Patron of Saint Peter), which are highly anticipated and loved, with special intensity, by the population. Likewise, July 16th's festival of the Virgen del Carmen and

– within our Andalusian hallmark-Holy Week occupies a fundamental place in the calendar of events, both bringing a large number of followers.

With respect to gastronomy, we can assure that it is one of Marbella's

TOP tourist attraction. The gala of the prestigious guide to the best restaurants held in Barcelona this year resulted in the maintenance of five Michelin stars for the city, the municipality in all of Andalusia with

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the largest number of these awards. Our municipality is a constantly-evolving culinary destination of high quality and great variety, with Mediterranean and international cuisine to satisfy all.

**-What are the main economic indicators of the city?**

-Marbella enjoys great strength, thanks mostly to the close collaboration between the public and private sectors, a strength that is palpable in the record-breaking economic and tourist data that we have recorded again this year. In tourism terms, we have had an impressive 2023, breaking seasonality and attracting more and more tourists looking for excellence and quality.

The fact that the number of companies and self-employed workers is growing - five times more than the national average - is notable. Furthermore, in this year we have managed to increase the number of self-employed workers by almost 50, without forgetting that we also have a record number of companies with more than 20,000.

**-What is the city's urban development plan? Who are the main real estate developers?**

-The General Municipal Planning Plan (PGOM) reflects the existing reality in the town and is committed to maintaining our garden city model, for flexibility in the use of land, the improvement of connectivity and public and affordable housing. The new document, which is in the phase of answering allegations, provides a detailed diagnosis to provide solutions to the problems and deficits that have been dragging on for many years. We hope it will be approved before the summer.

Also, we have the Urban Planning Plan (POU), which will include, in more detail, the future development of the land; we anticipate it will be ready before the end of the year. To prepare the new plan, we have had maximum dialogue with both professional associations and



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►► Marbella is an ideal place to visit, live and invest.

business groups to collect proposals of general interest and provide the city's urban planning with greater legal certainty.

**-The Golden Mile of Marbella is the area where the most luxurious villas and estates in the city are located, with views of the mountains and the sea. However, development in this neighborhood continues, causing discontent among neighbors, since it means building in a green area. What do you think about that?**

-Marbella's city council are guarantors when it comes to complying with the law and not allowing construction in green areas in any enclave of the municipality. The city council does not grant licenses to build in protected enclaves in the urban area.

**-How and who decides on the planning permission? Are there restrictions to building in green**

**areas? Are they protected by law?**

-Building licenses are the responsibility of the Department of Territorial Planning and, as explained before, the regulations are complied with and permits are not granted to build in green zones or areas designated as public facilities. We are strict about that, as it could not be otherwise. It must be remembered that, for many years, the lack of land meant Marbella had a very serious deficit when it came to having land for facilities. Therefore, for years, we have been working on the recovery of land for the residents of Marbella and San Pedro Alcántara, such as the La Caridad farm or the Puerto Rico Park.

**-Tell us about the most popular and renown cultural and sporting events in the city. What is planned for 2024?**

-There are numerous events that take place in our city. On a cultural level, we have a varied agenda both

at the *Teatro Ciudad de Marbella* and at the *La Alcoholera* Performing Arts Center in San Pedro Alcántara, book presentations or exhibitions at the Hospital Real de la Misericordia, the *Fernando Alcalá Marín Central Library*, the *Cortijo Miraflores Cultural Center* and the *Guadaíza Cultural Center*, the *Marpoética Poetry Festival* and the *Marcientífica* informative cycle. Also, especially during the summer season, there are street performances and other numerous activities for all audiences.

Regarding sports, in September 2023, the Costa del Sol became the venue for the Solheim Cup, which had an economic impact of 19.1 million euros, and, in November 2023, the Club Las Brisas hosted the best international golf players at the Costa del Sol Open of Spain. Also notable is the celebration of the One Marbella Golf Cup and, in other disciplines, the World Padel Tour, the Ironman and the Grand Prix of Rhythmic Gymnastics. Many of these events are scheduled to be repeated in 2024, since they are

and investments in infrastructure and equipment improvement. This initiative aims to innovate within the tourism field and support our main industry, which creates wealth and employment.

The actions planned in the agreement include the adaptation of natural spaces, the creation of green corridors to promote sustainable tourism, the commitment to quality in companies, the improvement of beach equipment and furniture, the promotion of large cultural, sports and congress events or the implementation of a Marbella tourism observatory. In addition, it will serve to strengthen sustainability, accessibility and digitization.

**-As mayor of the city, which project do you consider the most successful of all those you have carried out and which one would you like to carry out first?**

-I would highlight the development that Marbella has experienced over recent years. There are new facilities - not words, but completed works or works in progress - that residents can already enjoy and see how they evolve, growing day by day, such as infrastructures that have improved and will continue to improve the quality of life in all districts and in all neighborhoods. We have provided budget after budget for different maintenance plans for schools, sports facilities, urbanizations, neighborhoods, parks and gardens. Additionally, in collaboration with the *Junta de Andalucía*, we have responded to demands in health matters, with the promotion of the expansion works of the Costa del Sol University Hospital. We also completed the *San Pedro Alcántara* health center.

One of the main commitments of this government team and already underway in Trapiche del Prado is the first public residence for the elderly. The completion of this equipment and those mentioned in progress in health matters, along with other remodeling in sports matters such as the Pavilion of the southern variant of San Pedro Alcántara, are among the projects that we want to see completed next year.

In addition to new educational centers, such as the IES in San Pedro and one being built in *Las Chapas*, Marbella can also boast of having a new *Fernando Alcalá Marín* central library, which has become a meeting place for students, readers and activities for all audiences.

After more than 13 years of municipal government, there are numerous actions carried out and those that continue to be developed, those that are about to be completed or those planned. I feel very proud of all, because they have transformed the city and improved the quality of life of its neighbors. From daily micro-actions in the neighborhoods to large projects, such as the *San Pedro Alcántara* boulevard or initiatives as important as the recovery of the *La Caridad farm* as public facilities. We will continue working so that Marbella advances and remains at the forefront in all areas. ≡

«The General Municipal Planning Plan reflects the existing reality in the town and is committed to maintaining our garden city model»

consolidated and must-see events in the city.

However, we must add others, such as, for example, the one that will take place on the first weekend of June in *Puerto Banús*, which will be one of the nine world headquarters of the E1 competition, the electric formula 1 of the sea. It is a sporting discipline in which the team captains are figures, such as the tennis player Rafa Nadal, the Formula 1 driver Sergio Pérez, the footballer Didier Drogba, the American football player Tom Brady, the DJ Steve Aoki or the singer Marc Anthony, who has more than a million followers on social networks. It is an event with strong values of sustainability, as it is exclusively electric, and equality, because each team is made up of a woman and a man, and it foresees a media and destination reach of 15 and 26 million, respectively.

**-Do you plan to develop more infrastructure to attract more tourists?**

-The Tourism Plan for Large Cities, endowed with ten million euros for four years, the result of the signing of a collaboration agreement between the Marbella City Council and the Government of Andalusia, will undoubtedly give a boost to the sector, with new promotional actions