

Titan Properties

Do you know your River story?

In a magical environment, amongst deep underground springs that rise in a series of lakes and waterfalls near the



very heart of Spain, rises a great river.

It bubbles and torrents and falls, it glides and hides underground; it moves through mountains, deserts, lakes and dams. It carries watercraft of all kinds; it is home to birds, turtles and slippery otters. People irrigate from it, run water mills and hydro-electricity from it. They exploit it. They join protest marches against its exploitation. They live beside it and work on it. They swim, dive and float on it, hike, bike and camp beside it - for all of its 770 kilometres. Finally it spills into the Atlantic Ocean, a

dynamic, living border between two proud nations, Spain and Portugal.

You know this river; it is your resident river - the River Guadiana.

The river's history is as long and complex as the river itself. A waterway that was used extensively for the transportation of minerals from the interior since the Iron Age, it still carries to millions, the gifts of food and water.

Until the towering suspension bridge was built in 1991, boarding the ferry from Ayamonte to Villa Real de San Antonio was the only way to cross the southern reaches of the Guadiana. Because of ancient rivalries, neither country had been in a hurry to get closer to its neighbour, and so the river might have been a 'Guardian' to both, but this is an accidental translation - in fact the Romans called it the 'Ana' (meaning 'duck') and later the Moors called it 'Wadi Ana' meaning 'River of Ducks', distorted to 'Guadiana' by later generations, both Portuguese and Spanish.

The ducks are still there - some day you should get out there on the water and see them for yourself. And, the ferry still runs - you can pick up the boat at the ferry port on the waterside at Ayamonte, and

15 minutes later you could be having a coffee at one of the bars that face the river at Villa Real, or in one of the graceful, grand old squares that open up inside the town.

If you have a day in hand, take one of the big boats and travel upriver, exploring the small towns along the way. Some of the trips are very tourist-orientated, but you can still enjoy hours of freedom and space on the water. The river gives you back to yourself, encouraging you to slow down and look around you.

Sailing northwards, before you cross under the high bridge, you will pass alongside the Portuguese village of Castro Marim, named for its castle stronghold set on a hill, where for hundreds of years it has kept constant watch for approaching vessels, quick to warn whether friend or foe. Castro Marim is also famous for being a refuge for people who escaped the Spanish Inquisition. There is a fine medieval fair every August, with minstrels, jesters, traditional food from the Middle Ages, falconry, music and dancing.

Opposite Castro Marim, on the Spanish skyline, you will see a long white building, which used to be a fort, and is now a Parador hotel. It curves around the hill, with breathtaking westerly views of the great Guadiana and the countryside beyond. Below the Parador, Titan Properties is promoting new townhouses, whose owners will be among the fortunate few who can give the name of the river whenever they give their address: 'Mirador del Guadiana'. These houses will have the same views as the Parador. They are being built on separate levels on the side of the hill, above a botanic garden being created between the houses and the shore. There is a balcony below each window, and everyone has a view, a little piece of the river to call their own.

Gliding further upriver, passing under the bridge, you will be awed at the width of the waterway at this point and the sheer size of the 666 metre long bridge crossing it. The bridge

is built in an inverted y-shape, with cables fanning upwards from the bridge platform, attached to two pylons, soaring 100 metres into the sky. As you pass beneath it, you may just catch a note of the vibrating song of the wind in the cables; a harp that plays unheard.

The river rolls on, passing salt-pans, in use since pre-Roman times, and lapping at the swampy, marshy shores. Because people will always like living beside water, another development can be seen on the Spanish side - so large that it is set to become a town in its own right - Costa Esuri. Titan Properties has been promoting Costa Esuri since its inception, and they know that this community is going to feel great affinity with the Guadiana.



Many of the homes will have expansive views of the river, many a golfer will shoot little white balls into it, sailors and windsurfers will be 'messaging about in boats' and children will be dreaming of Huckleberry Finn adventures, or waving to the skippers as the boats glide by. Another Titan project, Vistas del Guadiana, is especially well-placed on a hillside overlooking the water - those who live here can call this reach of the river their own, they can catch its changing moods from the safe harbour of home.

Leaving the cranes and construction to the builders, you move on and become one with the water, entering an enchanted world, empty of people, crowded with birdcalls, fragrant with pine scent. You will see crumbling ruins and thriving farms. You are bounded on all sides by the beauty of the Iberian landscape - of carob and cork-oak trees, almond, orange and olive trees, prickly pears, purple thistles, thyme, rosemary and sinuous grasses.

You will see flocks of sheep on the Portuguese side, some goats



too. Unseen, on the Spanish side, wild boar will be rooting for acorns in the undergrowth, fattening themselves up for jamón. A splash at the approach of your boat may be an otter sliding below the surface. Attracted by the nutritious waters teeming with fish, there are storks all year round, cranes in autumn, pink-winged flamingos slip-streaming across the sky, eagles if you are lucky, and flocks of azure-winged magpies. In little coves or on rocky outcrops you will see herons, still, silent, watching the water and waiting.

About 40 kilometres upriver (the water is still tidal and salty here) you will come across a charming settlement on the Portuguese side, the town of Odeleite. And if you would prefer to drive this route, the road that follows the Guadiana along the Portuguese border from Castro Marim, is just as beautiful as the river route.

The landscape around Odeleite is hill-bound, with ups and downs much like the dales of England. In the orchards hundreds of oranges shine like small suns. Here and there a simple farmhouse with dogs, cats and hens, adds to a picture that a child might draw.

In the interior near Odeleite is a vast dam, a valley flooded by the Guadiana, at who knows what cost to the people who used to live there, but a life-giver to thousands more now. Odeleite village (also called Foz de Odeleite) on the river's edge, is a small settlement, like the others around here going back thousands of years, where giant carob trees spread their sheltering shade, cork oaks climb the slopes and ancient olive trees stand about like wrinkled peasants who



TITAN PROPERTIES

Established, Dedicated and Professional

Experts in Golf, River and Beach Developments



Qualified agents for:

- *Nuevo Portil*
- *Mirador del Guadiana*
- *Costa Esuri*
- *Isla Canela*
- *Tasa Golf*



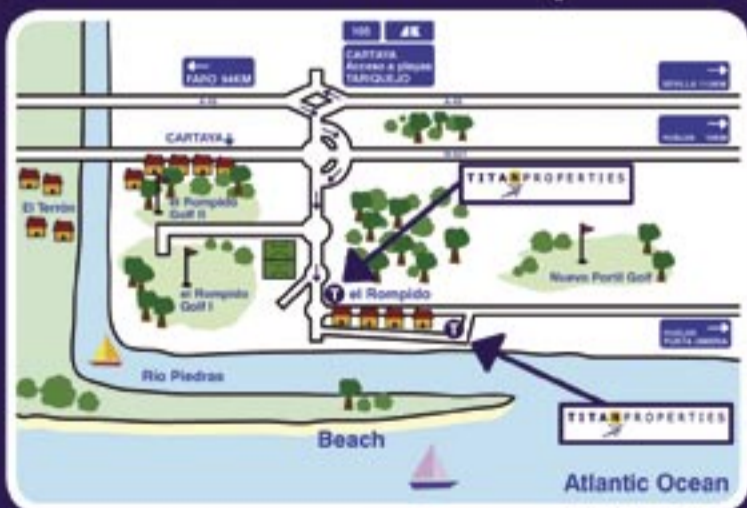
and more...



Free property investment research on our website

- Apartments, townhouses, villas, land plots and large scale development opportunities
- With prices from only €99,000 (£66,440)

Two offices in El Rompido



(+34) 959 399 968 (English) or (+34) 959 399 982 (Español)

info@titan-properties.com

www.titan-properties.com

have led a hard life. There is a well, still used, but not for drinking water. A nearby ivy-covered mound is in fact a bread-oven, which gets fired up on high days and holidays for villagers to bring their bread and cakes for baking. And talking of food, there are a couple of restaurants here so you could take your time and have a meal of fresh local food and wine, or take a picnic.

Proceeding north of Odeleite by car, you come upon Guerreiros do Rio, where there is a small river museum. The scenery is picturesque here, and you will want to see more. Driving on you will pass farms and orchards, and some fine fig trees, growing right down to the water's edge and freely available to all who go by. Around a bend in the road, you will find a surprise, an archaeological site.

Laid out on the banks of the river, fair and square, you will see the foundations of a large Roman building with many rooms laid out within it. There is evidence here of a long line of occupation from the Romans up to the mid-5th century AD, then the Visigoths in the 6th century and from the 8th century, the Moors. The river widens here and the opposite bank is flat, which allowed for traders' ships to berth and trade. The ships would have been going further upriver to the open cast mines at Pomerio, to load copper, iron and silver, but this would have been a settlement where they traded for agricultural produce.

Archaeology proves that life is short. It's time to move on around a bend in the river, where you can view the pretty pueblo blanco that is Sanlucar de Guadiana, across the river on the Spanish side. On the hills stand two old-fashioned windmills with broken sails, of the kind that Don Quixote would have duelled. Higher still, on the mountains behind, about 50 white windmills move in the wind, like a class of giants performing tai chi.

The river turns yet again, to deliver another delight, the white village of Alcoutim on the Portuguese side. These towns face each other across the river, across history and language, with only the odd rowing vessel or motor boat chugging between them. Yachts find this anchorage pleasant. Both villages are topped by castles, church spires and buildings that appear to tumble all the way down to the river. Overlooking the water are wide pathways, bright with bougainvillea. On the Portuguese bank people lean on railings, and look out at the people leaning over the river on the Spanish bank. Curiously they are separated by a three-minute river crossing, yet are an

hour apart time-wise. This is the place to be on New Year's Eve, when you can party at Sanlucar on the Spanish side, celebrating with champagne as the clock strikes midnight, Central European Time. Then you are ferried over to Alcoutim, to await the chimes all over again, and pop the corks an hour later, as Portugal celebrates to Western European Time.

Alcoutim is the perfect place to have lunch. There are several good places to eat fresh fish and locally-grown vegetables, with bread and cheese, honey, wine and olive oil from the region. Look out for street stalls selling delicious home-baked cakes, and others selling traditional crafts.



You may head for home now, the river drifts onwards to Mértola, Alqueva, Badajoz, Mérida and the plains of Castilla La Mancha, but perhaps you could squeeze in a little more time-travelling and head for the Neolithic site at Langeiras. On a nearby hilltop, standing at about the height of a man, are two great standing stones. Although they are fenced, you can climb up and get quite close to them. From the top you can see more stones, tumbled, on the opposite hillside - these had originally been aligned with one another. Westerly, as the sun sinks below the hill and sparks light off the edge of the stone monolith, you can see that at certain seasons, significant signs would have been interpreted from the position of the sun or the moon, in relation to these stones. Standing here today, you can take a small gadget from your pocket and tell the time, call a friend or send a text to Australia. You can watch a plane passing overhead, and you can piece together the history, having followed the evidence from Neolithic days all the way up to your own time.

And now that you have explored the special places where the flow of its life touches your own, the River Guadiana can be part of your story too.

By Jennifer Day

The real estate experts at Titan Properties look forward to welcoming you to our unique Costa. Visit us at either of our two offices in El Rompido.