

A weekend away in sherry country

21 Apr 2008 by JR

Last week I spent a couple of days reuniting my acquaintance with Jancis and visiting Montilla for the first time prior to the [Jancis Robinson in Spain](#), on which I will be reporting a week on Saturday. What a wonderful part of the world this is – and almost three hours' flying time due south of Britain so distinctly warmer temperatures are virtually guaranteed (Dining fish accompanied them in Ronda but that is another story.)

Many Brits spend a fortune on smart places in Montilla to escape the British winter but Federico is almost as far south and of course rich in Montilla influence – with very much better wine.

It was wonderful round the modest whitewashed fishing village of Sanlúcar de Barrameda (right) that made me realise what a great weekend Brits could have here, provided they could live with their consciences for using up animals. It was sherry expert and professor of oenology, Jesús Barja, who guided me and David Schindler on his first visit ever to Spain. He spends every December here with his family in houses every nook and cranny, including the wonderfully domed Bar Neveuro that serves beautifully fresh fish in a back street. The classic Sanlúcar activity is to visit the fish restaurants on the quay looking across the river Guadalquivir to the famous Doñana marsh reserve but the Bar Neveuro seems like a quiet free zone. You sit on assorted plastic chairs, order at the bar and go and collect your food when the distinctly unobtrusive person behind the bar that it's ready. You can imagine that this is not the most expensive meal in the world. There is also a hugely atmospheric hotel in the historic Palacio Duques de Medina Sidonia, set in a sub-tropical garden overlooking the river.

Jerez, 20 minutes' drive away, is a much more sophisticated city and probably worth being based in. We stayed at the hip, very well situated Hotel Palacio Garvey, which has a talented young Andalusian chef currently installed in its Cordoba restaurant. There are lodges aplenty to visit and some of the most exciting wines I have tasted in a while – whereas of widely varying styles, most of them underground. A great place to visit would be Bodega Tradición, which has some particularly refined old sherris (though no fino, alas) and a leading collection of Spanish art to boot.

Ryker have well-earned rights to Jancis from London. Sherris! (as they call this large Essex estate) see on Friday afternoons and back on Sunday night. What are you waiting for?

Bar Neveuro, on the corner of a Sanlúcar backstreet, not too far from...

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