

A brief history of nerja history essay



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Nerja is one of the popular tourist destinations on the Costa del Sol. Bordering the province of Granada, it is eastern-most town in the Axarquía and is situated right at the foot of the Sierra de Aljara mountain range. This stretch of coastline is characterized by steep cliffs and some of Andalucía's best beaches.

History of Nerja

Prehistoric History –

The Nerja caves are actually situated five kilometers from the town in the nearby village of Maro. Discovered as recently as 1959 they have provided a wealth of historical information. The caves were lived in during the Paleolithic era. Initially the caves were inhabited by seasonal hunter-gathers, however towards the beginnings of the Bronze Age, about 6000 years ago, the settlement became more permanent with evidence of farming and animal rearing. The farming gradually became more sophisticated with the use of tools and simple pottery. The caves appear to have been abandoned some 3, 000 years ago.

Roman period – Detunda

The Roman's had a settlement called Detunda around 1KM from the Nerja caves. Detunda appears to have been a relatively small town and used mainly as a resting place for soldiers and tradesmen moving between Malaga – Almeria and Almeria and Jaen. The remains of a old Roman road, the Castulo-Malaca road, which linked the provinces of Jaen and Almeria are

still clearly visible along with an old Roman bridge. Today one of Maro's most famous landmarks.

Moorish times

The first written reference to Nerja came from the poet Said Al-Mugrabi, during the 10th century. The whole area was under the rule of Abderramán III, the Emir of Cordoba. Said Al-Mugrabi referred to a small market town called Narixa (meaning plentiful spring water) that was famed for its silk industry. Narixa silks were actually internationally renowned with documentary evidence pointing to their popularity in the markets of Damascus. This time period was characterised by its stability and wealth.

The ruins of Narixa are still visible next to the old Frigiliana turnoff in a place called Castillo Alto. word “ Narixa” which literally means “ abundant spring of water”. In the year 917, during the period when Spain was occupied by the Moors, the Arabian poet, Ibn Saadi, wrote: “ Stretched on a carpet of magic colours, while sleep closed my eyes, Narixa, my Narixa, sprang from the flowers to bathe me in all her beauty.

Christian times

As the Moorish began to crumble during the latter part of the 15C, things took a dramatic turn for the inhabitants of Narixa/Nerja. In 1487, with the surrender of Velez to the Catholic monarchs, Nerja quickly sent envoys to render allegiance to the Spanish King and Queen. A few days after Pedro de Cordoba took possession of the town. The initial transition period was anything but smooth. The inhabitants of Nerja were forced to renounce their

Muslim faith or be expelled. At the same time, there were increased Berber coastal raids from North Africa. Making living in the Coastal towns particularly dangerous. This period was characterised by a mass exodus of the local population. Many fled into the surrounding hills, around Frigiliana. The depopulation happened at such a fast rate that Juana la Loca ordered Nerja to be repopulated with long-time Christians from the Basque Country, Valencia, Galicia and Málaga itself.

During the late 17th Century the area was heavily fortified. These fortifications proved sufficient to deter any major coastal raids until the beginnings of the 19th century. The British fleet destroyed most of these coastal fortifications during the Peninsula Wars 1808-1814, to avoid them falling into the hands of the French. One such installation was the 'La Bateria,' a large gun battery that existed in a fortified tower standing where the where the Balcon de Europe is today.

On Christmas day 1884 the whole of Andalucía suffered a massive earthquake, with the epicentre near Granada – Arenas de Rey. Much of Nerja was destroyed. Several weeks later King Alfonso XII visited Nerja to view the destruction for himself. He is said to have declared this the 'Balcon de Europa' while visiting the site of the La Bateria. Documentary evidence has since proved that this title predated his visit. However the name and the King's association with it has stuck. Indeed, there is a life statue of the King on today's Balcon de Europa.

Modern day Nerja

With the loss of Cuba from the Spanish Empire at the end of the 19th Century, the sugar industry began to take off in Spain. The Larios family from Malaga began to capitalise on the demand for sugar and its related products (distilled alcohol and molasses) and built a series of sugar mills along the Eastern Costa del Sol.

During the early 20th Century sugar cane production was Nerja's chief industry. However with the increased growing of sugar beet in Northern Europe, the industry began to decline. More valuable cash crops began to dominate the local market, with tropical fruits such as mango and papaya becoming increasingly popular. The avocado was particularly in demand and the area is still one of the major avocado growing regions in Europe.

Tourism was relatively late in coming to Nerja.

sugar cane production has given way to more valuable cash crops, particularly semi-tropical fruits such as mango and papaya and widespread avocadoplantations in what is one of the major avocado growing regions in Europe.

the loss of Cuba from the Spanish Empire at the end of the 19th century helped to stimulate sugar production in Spain. There was still sufficient demand for sugar and the related products of molasses and distilled alcohol to encourage the Larios family from Málaga to build new sugar mills and irrigation structures. Examples of these factories, in what is now called the eastern Costa del Sol, can be found in Nerja, Maro, Frigiliana and Torrox.

Read more at Suite101: Sugar Cane Production and Sugar Mills in Andalucía <http://www.suite101.com/content/sugar-cane-production-and-sugar-mills-in-andalucia-a276295#ixzz13XskeLrm>

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in the age of Abderramán III (tenth century), in which he refers to this place as a city-sized farming community where fine silk products were produced. Ancient Narixa stood next to a fortress, whose ruins can still be seen in a place called Castillo Alto, next to the old Frigiliana turnoff.

Occupation of Southern Spain by the Moors

It was during the occupation of much of Spain by the Moors from the 8th to the 15th century that the first record of 'Nerja' appeared. An Arab poet wrote in the 10th century of Nerixa (meaning plentiful spring water) as a small well-run market town famous for its silks. Indeed, this era of Moorish rule brought a certain amount of stability and wealth to the region.

Christian Purges

The expulsion of the Muslims rulers from Iberia at the end of the 15th century led to widespread repression of the Andalusians by the Catholic authorities.

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The inhabitants of Nerja had to renounce their Muslim religion or be expelled. Many fled into the hills around Frigiliana, others followed as Berber raids from North Africa made coastal living increasingly unsafe. Nerja fell into decline despite repeated attempts to re-populate the area with Basques and other Catholics from northern Iberia, but farming continued on the surrounding plains.

Fortification of Nerja

Towers were constructed to fend off pirate Berber raids, and during the late 17th century a larger fortification was established on a coastal promontory in Nerja. This remained as a deterrent to erstwhile usurpers until the beginning of the 19th century. The Peninsular War (1808-1814) brought the British into conflict with Spain which, at the time, was largely under French control. In 1810, the British Fleet destroyed the defensive positions to prevent them falling under French control.

The Earthquake

On Christmas Day 1884 an earthquake occurred with an epicentre under Arenas de Rey near Granada. Flimsily constructed buildings were destroyed over a wide area and more than 800 people lost their lives. In early 1885 King Alfonso XII visited the area of devastation, and Nerja was included in his schedule. He promenaded the area known as La Bateria, where the old fortress once stood, and remarked on the view from the promontory. The ‘Balcon de Europa’ were words associated with the King, although the term was probably in local use before his arrival. Nevertheless, in later years, it was to become a valuable yarn for promoting tourism in Nerja.

Tourism arrived in Nerja.... slowly

There was a gradual increase in tourism along the Costa del Sol during the early part of the 20th Century, but Nerja remained largely untouched. The small-scale fishing industry continued, and farming was the mainstay of the local community. Sugar-cane production became popular for a while but this declined as the growing of sugarbeet increased in northern Europe. Avocado groves flourished, and still do, and the forced growing of salad foods under glass, then plastic, provide a valuable contribution to the regional economy. Occasional tourists filtered along the coast to Nerja during the '50s, and some stayed; but even in the '60s when cheap package-style tourism boomed, the coaches nearly all drove west from Malaga Airport. During the '80s, the penchant for second homes, especially amongst the British, led to a building boom. Fortunately, sensible planning permits, meant the excesses of high-rise development did not occur at Nerja. It is now a bustling town, with many second homes now becoming first homes, and a thriving ex-pat network exists.

General Climate and Weather in Nerja

The Sierra de Almijara rises to over 1800 metres to the north of Nerja, and this acts as a formidable barrier to the cold northerly winds that occasionally affect much of the rest of Iberia during the winter months. Rainfall is largely absent during the summer months, and with a regular afternoon sea breeze, the heat of inland Spain is seldom experienced. In fact, a survey suggests, that this part of the Costa del Sol experiences the best all-year-round weather in Europe.

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Around 6, 000 years ago, domestication of livestock began to take place and primitive farming commenced aided by the production of simple pottery. The farming became more sophisticated and evidence of locally produced textiles has been uncovered. The caves appear to have been abandoned as dwelling places around 3, 000 years ago.

almost the Eastmost town on in the Axarquía, with the province of Granada sitting t is the eastern-most town in the area known as the Axarquía

Signs of the first human settlement in this municipality were discovered in the famous Cueva de Nerja (Nerja Cave) and belong to the Auriñaciense stage of the Upper Paleolithic period. Nothing is known of other civilisations that may have existed here until the period of Roman rule, when apparently a small settlement (Detunda) was established at present-day Maro. It should be noted that Maro is another population centre of Nerja, where the cliffs and the Nerja Cave itself are located.

The first documented fact about the history of Nerja, however, appears in the writings of the poet Said Al-Mugrabi, in the age of Abderramán III (tenth century), in which he refers to this place as a city-sized farming community where fine silk products were produced. Ancient Narixa stood next to a fortress, whose ruins can still be seen in a place called Castillo Alto, next to the old Frigiliana turnoff.

After the surrender of Vélez (1487), Nerja sent its envoys to that place to render allegiance to the Spanish king and queen and thus prevent bloodshed. A few days after that visit, Pedro de Córdoba took possession of the town in the name of the Catholic Monarchs. Under Christian rule, the

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town began to lose population, and in order to prevent greater abandonment Juana la Loca ordered Nerja to be repopulated with long-time Christians from the Basque Country, Valencia, Galicia and Málaga itself.

In the late sixteenth century the first sugar mill was set up in Nerja and in the late eighteenth century a paper mill was in operation here, supplied with water from the River La Miel. This factory remained in operation until the early twentieth century. During the War of Independence, the English levelled the fortress that used to stand where the Balcón de Europa is today, and also destroyed the port that had been adapted to handle coastal shipping.

The name of the town comes from the Arabic Narixa, Naricha or Narija, which apparently derived from a pre-Roman name, and the translation “ abundant spring” that some give for this word is still not very certain, although there are plenty of reasons to speak of an abundance of water in this municipality.