



Costa de Almeria



THE PLACE FOR... A DIGITAL DETOX

Forget yoga retreats and babymoos – the travel trend du jour is the digital detox. ELSPET BERWICK reveals the perfect place to go cold turkey...

Picture the scene. It's mid-afternoon, you're stretched out on your sunlounger, and the warm breeze is nudging you into an epic nap. Next thing you know, your phone's shrilly cutting into your Zen-like state. It's your boss, and in one split second that knot in your shoulder has returned and your head's swimming with pie charts from last week's meeting.

Sound familiar? Don't worry. If you find it hard to switch off on holiday, you're certainly not alone. In fact, a recent survey suggests more than a third of Britons use their smartphones to check their emails and voicemails abroad. And 41% log on to a social networking website at least once. This addiction has even coined a term – nomophobia. Definition: the fear of being out of mobile phone contact.

Like any addiction, the best way of getting clean is to go cold turkey. That's where the digital detox comes in. The idea is to switch anything with an 'on' button off, and enjoy the kind of break you did back in the pre-internet era. It doesn't have to mean a fortnight in a Buddhist retreat in Tibet – if you're looking for a bit of peace and quiet closer to home, our hot tip is Spain's Costa de Almeria.

Why the Costa de Almeria?

The wallflower of the Costa family, this part of the Andalucia region is more *Place In The Sun* than *Benidorm*. Back in the Sixties, when the tourism boom hit Spain, poor transport links meant holidaymakers never made it this far south. And, even though the connections are now in place, a lot of people still haven't. As a result, the coastline

looks like something off a postcard, and quiet hamlets are squirreled away in the surrounding Sierra Nevada Mountains.

So, rather than lying by the pool trawling the net for celeb gossip, leave your phone in the hotel safe and head into the hills to explore. The town of Sorbas, which grips the edge of a deep ravine about an hour inland, is dotted with hole-in-the-wall craft shops that beckon passers-by with handmade pottery. Then there's the old town of Mojucar Pueblo, which is the kind of place where lanes barely wider than a piece of string give way to courtyards framed by whitewashed houses.

Even the Costa de Almeria's main hub, Roquetas de Mar, harks back to Spanish resorts of old, with a palm-lined promenade, seafront restaurants and colourful street markets. And, as you kick back on one of the longest stretches of beach in this part of Spain, you'll be far too busy taking in the incredible view to even think about checking your voicemail. ■



Unplug at the **Protur Roquetas Hotel & Spa**. The hotel's pool is hula-hooped by a lazy river and accessorised with in-water hydro-massage beds. Add three restaurants and a full-blown spa into the mix and logging on to Facebook will be the last thing on your mind.