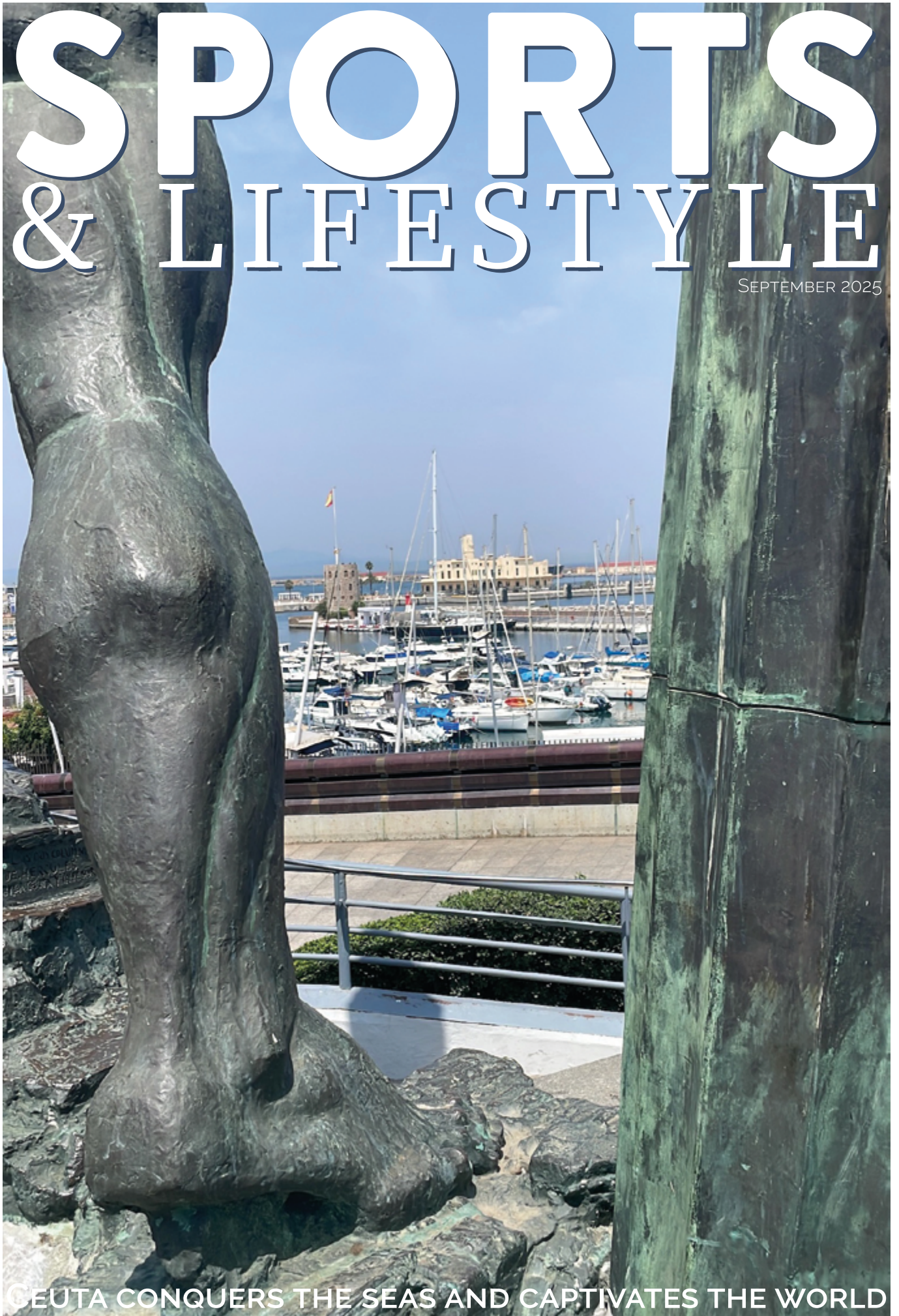


SPORTS & LIFESTYLE

SEPTEMBER 2025



CEUTA CONQUERS THE SEAS AND CAPTIVATES THE WORLD



DESCUBRE ESTA

TIERRA Rara

Rara, porque nadie más llega
en helicóptero a pasar un día de playa.



CEUTA.
Menos
de lo
mismo.



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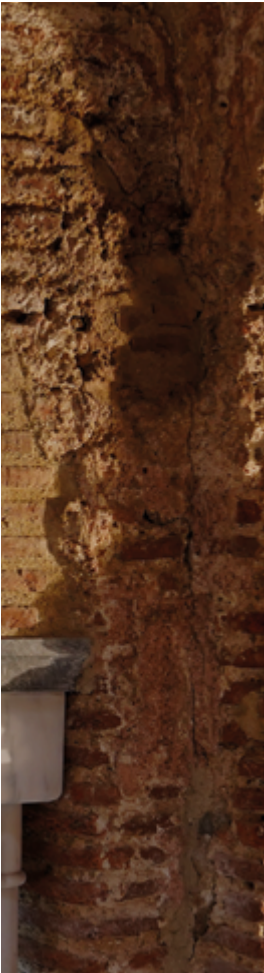




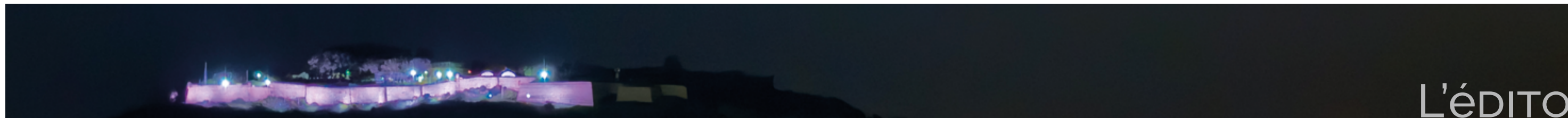
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Foto: Jorge Verdún Ayud

L'édito	6
Sport Nautique	8
Tendances	16

Bon Voyage	20
Football	38
Interiorisme Réel	42
Bon Appétit	48
Vie & Culture	52



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L'ÉDITO



Fotos: Cortesía de Servicios Turísticos de Ceuta



This edition invites us to discover a **great unknown**: a city once regarded as the edge of the world, now astonishing for uniting two seas, two continents, and four cultures within a single territory. Ceuta reveals itself through its people, its cultural plurality, and the heartbeat of its history.

The journey leads us to the imposing **Royal Walls**, a legacy spanning from the Phoenicians to the Portuguese—architectures in dialogue that shaped a fortified **moat** unique in Europe. Today, that monumental stage has become a living space, where **kayaking** and **sailing** unfold against a backdrop of history.

The Strait itself adds a natural challenge: **open-water** races confronting both Atlantic and Mediterranean currents, and **dives** that unveil seabeds as singular as the meeting of two oceans. To immerse here is to experience the strength of the Atlantic and the serenity of the Mediterranean at once.

This land has also seen the rise of football legends such as **Pirri**, Rafael, and Paco Lesmes Bobed—symbols of local pride that transcended borders.

Yet Ceuta is not defined only by its monuments, but also by its myth. And no one better than **Ginés Serrán**—whose *foundation* has made this edition possible—can proclaim to the world that Ceuta is not merely Africa: it is the origin of seafaring, cradle of the Latin tongue, and, above all, a source of Spanish pride. *Olé*.

Monique SM

LUXURY IN THE STRAIT,

ENDURANCE & NAUTICAL PASSION

Photos: Courtesy Servicios Turísticos de Ceuta, Jorge Verdún Ayud & Pepe Compaz





Ceuta's nautical wealth transcends the ordinary. It's not simply about practicing watersports but about doing so in a place where two seas, two continents, and centuries of history converge. Kayaking beneath ancient walls, international open-water competitions, endurance crossings, prestigious regattas and unique dive sites shape an offering designed for the discerning traveler—one who seeks authenticity and intensity in every experience.

Open-water challenge

Few events in the world can compare to the **Vuelta al Hacho**, a race that has outgrown Spain's sporting calendar to become an international benchmark. It's a spectacle for the sophisticated traveler who values unrepeatable settings and pure emotion. Swimming alongside the Royal Walls, facing the currents of *Punta Almina*, or witnessing a horizon split into two seas transforms sport into an aesthetic experience.

In the latest edition, Britain's Hywel Davies defended his title with a time of 2 hours and 19 minutes, followed by Seville's Sancho Blanco and local talent Nacho Gaitán, who keeps Ceuta's spirit alive in this elite event. In the women's race, Ana Macera of Seville claimed victory, with Algeciras' Naira Gutiérrez and the young Luna Aguilera completing a podium that confirmed Ceuta's place on the international stage.

The event demands far more than speed. **Alberto Gallardo**, *presidente de la Fundación Gallardo*, puts it bluntly: "The open-water competition is brutal. Once you round the islets, the currents are fierce. This year it was won for the second consecutive time by a Briton, and on the podium was Nacho Gaitán, who had already set records swimming the Strait. It's not speed, it's endurance—there are moments when you are literally stuck in place by the force of the sea."



That same spirit of resilience has made the Strait a legendary stage not only for swimmers, but also for rowers and kayakers. "Years ago, there was the Strait crossing in kayak, from Ceuta to Algeciras," Alberto Gallardo recalls, evoking the memory of a challenge that united shores and maritime traditions.

Beyond the *Vuelta al Hacho*, Ceuta continues to witness feats that verge on the epic. In May, Nacho Gaitán completed the Strait of Gibraltar crossing: 23.6 kilometers in 4 hours, 42 minutes and 14 seconds. His arrival at Benzú beach was nothing short of historic.

"It's an open-water race that touches two seas, crosses the royal moat, passes through the eslero... over 300 slots that sell out in minutes," explains Nicola Cecchi, Ceuta's Tourism Councilor, who emphasizes its international magnetism: "Every year swimmers come from South Africa, Australia, and across the globe."



Diving between two seas

To dive in Ceuta's waters is to enter a marine universe that has captivated photographers and divers worldwide. Each May, an international underwater photography competition confirms the quality of its seabed, considered among the most spectacular in the Mediterranean. Every weekend, groups of divers arrive—including prominent figures from Morocco and beyond—drawn by the singular beauty of *Monte Hacho*.

With more than twenty certified dive sites, Ceuta offers remarkable variety: from the North Bay, with views of the Iberian Peninsula, to the South Bay, facing Morocco. This dual condition—Mediterranean and Atlantic—creates a privileged ecosystem, with crystalline waters, abundant marine life, and seascapes that alternate between rocks, dunes, and vestiges of history.



At **Laja del Pineo**, just a few meters down, rests a statue of the Virgin of Carmen, submerged in 1957. It symbolizes the union of seafaring tradition and popular devotion and has become a point of pilgrimage for divers. Other highlights include **Piedra Gorda**, home to a fossilized 18th-century English anchor; **Callejones**, with its vivid orange corals accessible only by boat; or **Bajo Susan**, where the remains of a ship have formed an artificial reef teeming with bream, damselfish and anchovies pursued by mackerel and tuna.

History too lies beneath the waves: off **Santa Catalina**, the cannons of French ships sunk in 1692 remain as silent witnesses of another era,

adding archaeological value to an experience that seamlessly blends luxury and nature.

Yachting port

Marina Hércules, set in the heart of the city, is one of the Mediterranean's hidden gems. With 464 berths for vessels up to 35 meters, it's a natural gathering place for sailors and sportsmen alike. More than a port, in summer it takes on the air of an open-air private club, where locals mingle with visitors arriving in yachts from Sotogrande, Marbella, or Monte Carlo.

From here, prestigious regattas set sail, such as the **Strait Challenge**, linking Algeciras,


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Tarifa and Ceuta in a course as technical as it is spectacular. It also hosts national and Andalusian championships, as well as civil-military events organized by Ceuta's *Regulares*, adding an exclusive note to the city's nautical calendar.

Ceuta has consolidated itself as a strategic stopover for elite sailors and sea lovers who wish to combine the glamour of yachting with the authenticity of a unique destination. A glass at sunset overlooking the Royal Walls, a boat ride through waters that have seen civilizations cross, or the chance to train where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic—all complete an offering unlike any other in Europe.





For the cosmopolitan traveler, Ceuta offers a rare privilege: the chance to blend the essence of Andalusia with the magnetism of Africa in a single journey. From Málaga—an international hub with connections to 153 global destinations—everything is less than half an hour away by air: Marbella, with its VIP lifestyle, marinas and nightlife, or even the legendary Ascari circuit, where Nordic drivers arrive by helicopter to test their own supercars.

Beyond scheduled services, the heliport has become a hub for private flights, film shoots, aerial photography and bespoke travel. It's no coincidence that the company ranks second worldwide in-flight hours. Its strategy is clear: not to grow indiscriminately, but to lead its own niche, *connecting southern Spain with northern Africa*. In the future, only select routes to Gibraltar and Tangier are under consideration.

"Some come from Australia, Israel, Denmark or Sweden to drive their cars on Spain's longest circuit, but they don't want to make the trip by road from Marbella. They prefer the helicopter: they arrive, race, and waste no time," explains Antonio Barranco, president of Héliity.



Agilidad,
bonificaciones y
conexiones estratégicas
entre Ceuta y la península



Today, Hélicity transports between 85,000 and 90,000 passengers per year across roughly 6,500 flights. Five helicopters depart daily from Algeciras and seven from Málaga, adding *up to 24 to 28 flights each day*. Every operation is an exercise in precision, because in aviation even the smallest issue means “no go.”

September embodies this crossroads: the anniversary of the Spanish Legion coincides with the decision of the Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Southern Spain to hold its executive committee in Ceuta instead of Seville. The city invites a stay that is short but intense: not fifteen days, but three or four to capture its essence.

Barranco sums it up with a powerful image: “Here you can watch the sun rise over the Mediterranean, between *Gibraltar* and *Monte Hacho*, and set over the Atlantic, between *Tarifa* and *La Mujer Muerta*. Two seas, two continents... something unique, almost Homeric, like reliving the Odyssey of Ulysses. Nobody leaves disappointed; everyone wants to come back.”

Hélicity Copter Airlines

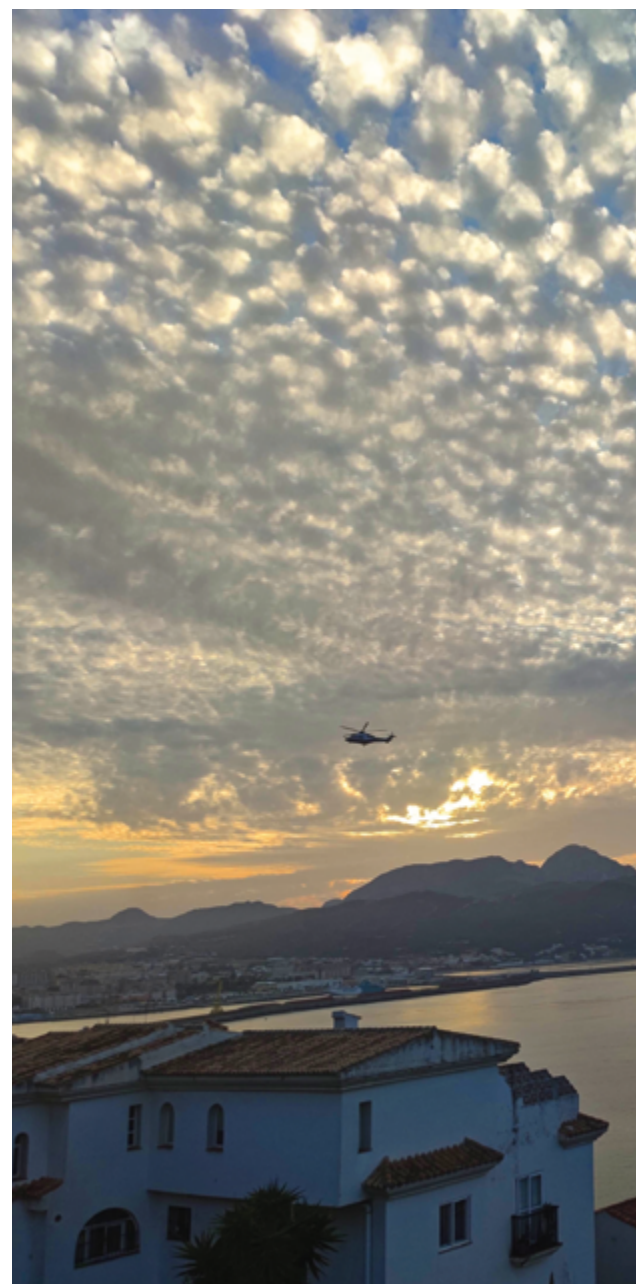
Since its *first flight in 2017*, Hélicity Copter Airlines has established itself as an essential infrastructure for mobility between Ceuta and mainland Spain. With regular helicopter services linking *Ceuta*, *Algeciras* and *Málaga*, the company offers a fast and efficient alternative to sea transport: just *7 to 8 minutes* to Algeciras and about *30 minutes* to Málaga.

It operates with *15-seat AgustaWestland AW139* helicopters, designed to ensure safety, comfort and efficiency. In addition to its regular routes, Hélicity offers *private charter flights* tailored to the needs of companies, groups or individual clients seeking flexible, made-to-measure travel.

The fleet—manufactured in Italy and the United States—is assembled in Vergiate, north of Milan. “They’re built next to Monza, very close to the Ferrari factory,” notes Barranco. “They are true Ferraris of the sky: high precision, outstanding performance and cutting-edge technology.”

Europe in Africa

The ease of connection is striking. A flight departing from Ceuta at 8:00 a.m. allows passengers to be on Madrid’s Paseo de la Castellana by 10:15. “For many, it’s an attraction in itself,” Barranco tells *Sports & Lifestyle*. “Because I go, I get on a helicopter, I see the Strait and the Costa del Sol from the air, enjoy a red tuna from the Strait, spend the afternoon at the Mediterranean Park and visit the Caliphal Gate... curious things that Ceuta has,” he continues. “Because Ceuta is Europe in Africa: the only territory, along with Melilla, where Europe exists in another continent. So close, and at the same time so far... it captures people’s imagination.”



Since the beginning of operations, *Hélicity has transported more than 552,000 passengers*, positioning itself as the only airline in Spain operating regular helicopter routes, and providing a direct solution to the connectivity challenges faced by Ceuta.

65% fare discount for non-residents

One of the company’s most notable initiatives, backed by institutional support, is a *65% fare discount for passengers* who are *not residents of Ceuta*. This incentive is designed to encourage travel to the autonomous city for business, family or tourism.

To qualify, three conditions must be met:
The flight must *depart from the Peninsula* (Algeciras or Málaga).
A *round-trip ticket* must be purchased.
The stay in Ceuta *cannot exceed 15 days*.

The process is simple: just select the corresponding option during online booking before completing payment.

With more than half a million passengers carried, active fare incentives, customized charters and an operation designed to save time, **Hélicity Copter Airlines** has become a strategic pillar in keeping Ceuta connected with the rest of Spain.





CEUTA CONQUERS THE SEAS AND CAPTIVATES THE WORLD

Photos: Courtesy Servicios Turísticos de Ceuta, Cruz Ortiz Arquitectos, Pepe Compaz & Jorge Verdún Ayud

Ceuta takes its name from the ancient *Septem Fratres*—the Seven Brothers. With barely 20 sqm and 84,000 inhabitants, its essence is that of a universal place: a crossroads where four cultures live in harmony, where the Mediterranean merges with the Atlantic, and where, over the centuries, Phoenicians, Visigoths, Arabs and Portuguese have left their mark. Its black-and-white flag perfectly reflects what Ceuta truly is: a European city on African soil.

Just minutes from Europe, across the Strait—whether by boat or helicopter—lies this hidden gem. A city that astonishes through its natural coexistence: here, rituals, festivities and traditions are shared as effortlessly as accents intertwine. As **Nicola Cecchi**, *president of Tourist Services*, puts it: Here it's perfectly natural to enjoy couscous with a glass of Rioja, or a Sephardic pastry with a cup of Moroccan tea. Ceuta is coexistence, respect, and acceptance of diverse cultures... and that is precisely what we should be exporting to the world."

Tradition, fusion and flavors of memory

In Ceuta, the sea is not just a backdrop: it's identity, culture, and a shared table. It is no coincidence that its people are affectionately known as *caballas*, after the mackerel that abound in its waters. Perhaps nowhere else does the palate reflect with such authenticity the blend of Mediterranean, Arab and Atlantic roots.

One of the city's most storied dishes is *mero al Rigamonti*, born almost by chance in the 1950s. After a football match between Tetuán and Ceuta, the Italian player Rigamonti improvised in a restaurant's closing kitchen, combining grouper, tomato and capers. The recipe was such a success it became a local classic, a living culinary memory of the city.



Equally distinctive are *volaores*—flying fish dried in sun and sea breeze. The salty winds of the Strait transform them into a perfect bite to accompany a cold beer, as Pepe Compaz recalls, proud father of singer Nazaret.

Ceuta's gastronomy is also tied to its spaces. Chief among them, the **Oasis Restaurant**, founded in 1971 by Ramón Pouso and Malika on the slopes of Monte Hacho. What began as a tearoom soon evolved into a gastronomic temple of Arab cuisine, with unique views over the Strait. Its menu—over fifty dishes—offers a sensory



journey where everything from grilled *pinchito moruno* (spiced lamb, beef or *kefta* skewers) to elaborate specialties turn dining at Oasis into an immersive experience.

The *Tea Room*, with its sea-facing terrace, once hosted a royal visit, when Princess Leonor shared a meal with fellow cadets from the training ship *Juan Sebastián Elcano*. The *Hall of Light*, bathed in radiance, mirrors Ceuta's luminous clarity, while the *Classic Hall* envelopes diners in Arab craftsmanship and a palatial air, turning every meal into an aesthetic ritual. To dine here is not just to eat—it's to enter a stage where history, landscape and beauty meet.

The fearless crossing

Ceuta's sporting pulse beats with intensity. Each year it hosts events that draw thousands of participants, affirming its place as an adventure destination. One of the most emblematic is **La Cuna de la Legión**, a civil-military race with



more than six thousand runners. Its start, announced by a cannon shot and the Legion's anthem, sends a collective shiver through the crowd, transforming the competition into an emotional experience for both athletes and spectators. The 50-kilometer course winds through mountains, trails and landscapes that test the body while inspiring the soul.

The **Desafío de los 300**, organized by the *Regulares*, is another milestone. More than an endurance test, it's a symbol of tradition and local pride—a fusion of sport and historical homage. To participate is not just to measure strength, but to connect with the spirit of a land that has always withstood sieges and challenges.

At sea, Ceuta is a natural sports arena. Kayaking, paddle surfing, surf-ski, fishing, diving or whale-watching all form part of the offering. "The union of two seas means you might dive and come across an Atlantic moray or a Mediterranean croaker; turtles of several species, or even coral with a tropical look at barely 30 meters depth," explains Cecchi.





<https://luxsurftravel.com>



Alberto Gallardo, CEO Gallardo's Foundation, captures it in one phrase: "Here, everything carries an element of adventure. Choosing a boat according to the wind, starting a race with a cannon shot, diving between two seas... that adrenaline is part of Ceuta's identity."

The sea as stage

Ceuta lives facing the sea. The blue horizon is always present, shaping its skyline and lifestyle. Among the city's most cherished spaces, the **Mediterranean**

Maritime Park holds a special place. Conceived by César Manrique as a symphony of water, rock and vegetation, the 56,000-sqm complex—opened in 1995—unites saltwater lagoons, waterfalls, gardens and promenades, turning nature into art.

More than a leisure site, it proposes a way of life: strolling among palms and lagoons, swimming in sunset light reflected on the water, or admiring how architecture blends with the landscape becomes part of a Mediterranean lifestyle elevated to *art de vivre*.



Beyond the park, Ceuta's coastline unfolds with beaches of varied character. *La Ribera*, in the heart of the city, recalls the great seaside capitals of southern Europe. Nearby, *Chorrillo* offers serenity and privileged views of the Royal Walls.

For those seeking intimacy, *Desnarigado* or *Benzú* provide hidden retreats where the sea becomes shared silence. Each beach carries its own atmosphere—some vibrant, others contemplative—yet all part of the same coastal identity: a fusion of Mediterranean and Atlantic.

Myth travel and sculpture

In Ceuta, sculptures are not mere urban ornaments: they speak, narrate and remind. **Ginés Serrán**, one of the city's most celebrated artists, has filled its squares and promenades with works that tell the story of cultural diversity. His *Hercules*, the city's great symbol, holds the weight of tradition and the strength of a land that has always been a gateway between continents. Around him stand *Henry the Navigator* as Christian figure, *Yosef Ben Yehuda* as Jewish representative, *Gandhi* for the Hindus, and *Al-Idrisi* as the Muslim voice—together forming a sculptural map of identities in dialogue.

Among the city's most beloved tributes is the bronze of Manuel Sánchez Ordóñez, "*El Almendrita*." Known for selling caramelized almonds on the Paseo de las Palmeras, he was not just a vendor but part of Ceuta's human landscape, remembered for his charm and constancy.

The ensemble at Plaza de la Constitución unites universal symbols: *Africa* appears as a dark-



skinned woman holding dates; *Commerce*, in robes with caduceus; *Peace*, with olive branch and cornucopia; *Labor*, as a blacksmith with hammer and anvil; *Industry*, with gears and honeycomb; and the *Arts*, with lyre, brushes and parchment.

The *Fountain of San Amaro* completes the sculptural journey. Its bronze cherubs, resting on vegetal and marine motifs, mark the meeting point between devotion and daily life—a reminder that in Ceuta, tradition is not confined to museums but lives on in the present.



Monuments of memory

The city is a mosaic of histories. **Plaza de África** gathers symbols of power and devotion: the *Cathedral*, the *Autonomous Palace*, and the *Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa* share space with the monument to those fallen in the *War of Africa*. The *fernandinas streetlamps* illuminate processions, ceremonies and everyday walks, reminding that Ceuta always moves between solemnity and life.

The **Assembly Palace** preserves the grandeur with which it was built at the dawn of the 20th century. Ceramic staircases by Ruiz de Luna, salons with French and Spanish echoes, and paintings by Bertuchi reflect a time when Ceuta sought to assert itself as a capital with its own style. Across from it, the **Cathedral** reveals layers of history: once a mosque, later a Portuguese church, and finally a Neoclassical temple. Every stone marks an era, every fresco by Bernardini or Lorente Germán bridges the spiritual with the artistic.

Steps away, the **Sanctuary of Our Lady of Africa** maintains a devotion that has endured for centuries.



The Gothic sculpture, sent in 1421 by Prince Henry the Navigator, still draws prayers, promises and glances. Its gilded Baroque altarpiece shines like an intimate beacon, merging the religious with the popular in a shared ritual.

Contemporary Ceuta finds expression in the **Revellín Theatre**, designed by Álvaro Siza. Here, local artist **Nazaret Compaz** has sung—moving between *copla*, *flamenco* and ballad—bringing her homeland's cultural fusion to national and international stages. Her concerts feel like celebrations, an echo of Ceuta's caballa identity.

Unexpected symbols also punctuate the cityscape: the mysterious dragons atop the **Casa de los Dragones**; the **Caliphal Gate**, unearthed intact in 2010, evoking medieval Ceuta; or the



University, wrapped in its own legends. Alberto Gallardo recalls: "In the campus courtyard, there is, let's say, a chest. It opens into a staircase that, back when this was a barracks, led to an underground canal where soldiers would row a small wooden boat beneath the grounds. Imagine if that could be restored today—it would be marvelous."

The fortress that became an island

Of all Ceuta's monuments, none embodies its history more than the **Royal Walls**—stone heartbeat of the city. First built in the 10th century under Abd al-Rahman III and completed by his son Al-Hakam II, they established the foundation of a strategic defense. The porous yet resilient *piedra ostionera* from Cádiz absorbed artillery blows and showcased the military ingenuity of the era.

With the Portuguese conquest in 1415, the walls were transformed into a vast military system. The Royal Curtain Walls rose, along with the bastions of flag, *Coraza Alta* and *Mallorquines*, while the **Royal Moat** linked the northern and southern bays, turning Ceuta into an island with a drawbridge.





In the 16th century, under the Spanish Crown, the navigable moat of San Felipe became a masterpiece of military engineering—unique in Spain. The 17th and 18th centuries added bastions such as Santa Ana, San Sebastián and the Revellín de San Felipe, shaping the majestic geometry that still astonishes from the air.

Ceuta endured dozens of sieges but was never conquered. Its walls fulfilled their purpose, becoming a symbol of resistance. Today they host concerts, exhibitions and twilight walks, while the original drawbridge has given way to fixed crossings. Declared a *Cultural Heritage Site* in 1985, they remain the only Renaissance military fortification with a navigable moat in Spain.

To sail along the Royal Moat or walk atop its bastions is to traverse the living memory of a land that has been Arab, Portuguese and Spanish; a territory where every stone holds the tension between sea and earth, history and modernity.

Feelings reawakened

Like Monaco or Macao, Ceuta has become a new stage for *luxury gaming*. After Brexit, many platforms operating from Gibraltar relocated to the autonomous city, drawn by its competitive tax system, legal stability and the allure of a European enclave in Africa. Today, more than twenty-five international operators have turned Ceuta into an exclusive digital hub—modernity layered over history.



And amidst this blend of innovation and memory, the city continues to breathe through rituals that make it unique. Each midday cannon shot from **Monte Hacho** recalls that Ceuta lives between history and legend. The military traditions that once opened and closed its drawbridges have become a daily gesture linking past and present. **Pepe Compaz** knows this well: during the pandemic, when the silver crown of the **Christ of the Bridge** was stolen, he carved a new one, restoring the symbol's dignity. That act distilled Ceuta's spirit: resilience, memory, and collective care.

Ceuta, European city in Africa, land of seas and cultures, territory of histories and futures, defines itself through its ability to reinvent without losing its soul. As Nazaret sings on stage, the city has a voice all its own: the voice of a land that unites, celebrates and excite.







FROM THE STREETS OF HADÚ TO BERNABÉU

Photos: Courtesy Real Madrid, Fundación Real Madrid & Pirri

In Ceuta, the neighborhood of *San José Hadú* pulses with a life of its own. Among its web of streets—where cultures intertwine and generations share the same pavements—a young man grew up who, without knowing it, would set the tempo of Spanish football for more than two decades. José Martínez Sánchez, “*Pirri*,” was born there in 1945. The sea breeze, the mix of accents, and the intensity of a border city shaped him, instilling a character both strong and disciplined, determined yet humble. Those early years—spent in a Ceuta still without major sports infrastructure, but brimming with passion for the game—marked

the beginning of a career now remembered as one of the most complete and exemplary in the history of Real Madrid.

His first club was *Atlético de Ceuta*. By the age of 18, he was already distinguished by his vision, commitment, and natural leadership on the pitch. Soon after, he signed with *Granada CF*, where just one season was enough to catch the eye of *Real Madrid*. There was no hesitation. On November 8, 1964, aged only 19, he made his debut for the first team in a *Clásico* against FC Barcelona. The stage was no longer a dusty square in Hadú, but the Santiago Bernabéu itself.

A story that endures

The white shirt fit him like a second skin, and the number that defined him was *the eight*—the one he wore most often during his years as a midfielder. That number accompanied his seasons of glory, his tenure as *captain*, and his battles in Europe. It was no ordinary number. The eight stood for balance, drive, and relentless effort. In Pirri’s case, it gained an additional meaning: silent commitment, the player who held the team together from the heart of the pitch. At different points in his career, he also wore *the four*—particularly when called upon to play as sweeper or take on more defensive duties. Both numbers, on his back, spoke of order, dedication, and leadership. For 16 seasons, he was the beacon that guided Madrid, the player who turned every match into a masterclass in character.

His versatility made him unique. He could be a *midfielder*, a *defender*, or a *forward* if the occasion demanded, yet he never stopped being that number eight that said everything without saying a word.

Distinctions

The statistics tell a story, though not the whole of it. Pirri played *561 official matches for Real Madrid*



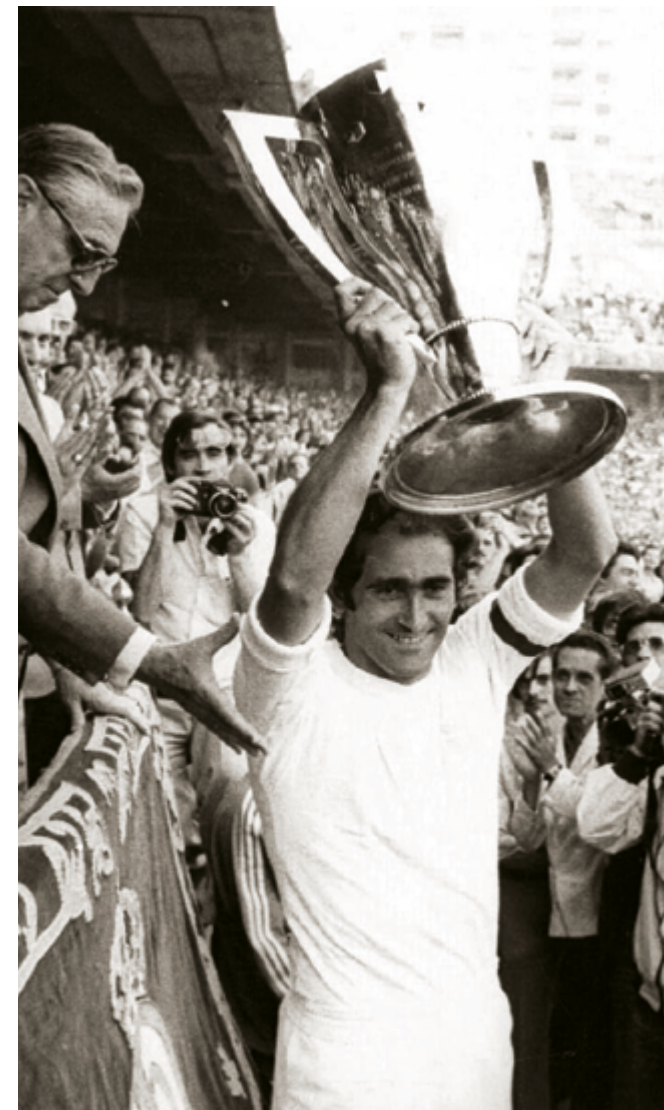
and scored *172 goals*—an extraordinary figure for a player whose natural position was never as an out-and-out striker. His record includes *10 La Liga titles*, *4 Copa del Rey trophies*, and the *club’s sixth European Cup*, lifted at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels with the legendary “*Yeyé*” team, in an unforgettable final against *Partizan Belgrade*. That side was made up entirely of Spanish players, turning each victory into a statement of identity.

He was also capped *41 times for Spain*, making his debut on July 13 at the 1966 World Cup in England, where he scored his first goal for “*La Roja*” against Argentina. His ability to adapt to the rhythm of any match, his deep understanding of the game, and his willingness to sacrifice himself at crucial moments made him indispensable for over a decade.

Resilience, Medicine, and leadership

Pirri’s physical toughness became part of his legend. He played European finals with fractures, fever, his arm in a sling, or even with a broken collarbone. This was not recklessness—it was an unshakable conviction: duty to the crest. The club honoured that spirit with the *Laureada of Real Madrid*, the highest distinction ever awarded in its history. Only he and Goyo Benito have received it. It was **Santiago Bernabéu himself** who presented it to him personally, deeply moved by Pirri’s courage in the *1971 European Winners’ Cup final*—a historic gesture that sealed not only the club’s respect, but also the admiration of the man who gave the stadium its name and the team its soul.

When his playing days were over, Pirri returned to the club wearing a white coat. He was also a Doctor



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of Medicine, serving on Real Madrid's medical staff throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He later became technical secretary and sporting director until the year 2000.

On November 11, 2023, he was unanimously named **Honorary President of Real Madrid**—not as an exercise in nostalgia, but as recognition of an impeccable career that had begun decades earlier on the modest pitches of Ceuta.

Ceuta as origin, Madrid as legacy

Pirri never forgot his roots. The discipline inherited from his hometown, the *Ceutí* composure, and the coexistence of cultures in which he was raised shaped not only the footballer, but also the doctor, the leader, and the icon. From the southern shore of the Strait, that boy from *Hadú* climbed to the summits of European sport, the number 8 stitched to his back and his heart given over to every game.

His name is not only part of Real Madrid's history—it's part of **Ceuta's** history. A city that, like him, knows what it means to endure, to advance, and to shine.



WHEN HISTORY...

DRESSES YOUR HOME

By Mairena Suárez

Photos: Courtesy Freepik & Pixabay

This marks the debut of a new permanent column in the magazine: *Interiorisme Réel*—a space to explore design, the kind of luxury that has meaning, and ways of inhabiting spaces untouched by fleeting trends. I'm **Mairena Suárez**, interior architect, and each month I will share ideas, references, and projects born from a simple yet essential principle: interior design should not just frame your life—it should elevate it.

Traditional elements for a 21st century design

Ceuta occupies a singular point on the map—between two continents, embraced by two seas. A city where histories, cultures, and ways of life intertwine, weaving together across centuries.

Today, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu communities share its streets, each leaving their trace in traditions, in architecture, in the rhythm of daily life. For me, this interlacing of influences is an inexhaustible source of inspiration—fuel for those who believe that design should be not only beautiful, but purposeful.



If you know Ceuta, you will have sensed it in its streets, noticed it in its squares and narrow lanes. As you wander through its corners, you come across a lattice that filters the light, a fountain in a shaded courtyard, a carved wooden door... Details that speak of other centuries, yet still have much to say in ours.

In an age where so much is reduced to the instant click, where decoration is often measured by its “Instagrammability”—all WOW-effect, stripped of soul—recovering the symbolic (and aesthetic) value of these elements becomes almost an act of quiet rebellion. Ceuta reminds us that true luxury doesn't dwell in the new, but in what endures; in what tells a story; in what has weight.





Take the **lattice**: once a decorative art of intricate geometric or organic patterns, often imbued with religious or cultural symbolism. Beyond its beauty, it softened harsh sunlight, drew delicate shadows, tempered the heat of southern summers. It allowed air to flow freely while shielding privacy—granting the gift of coolness in courtyards and interiors, and in cultures where seclusion mattered, allowing one to see without being seen.

Or the **mosaic**: more than a feast of colour and geometry, it holds meaning. Its repeating patterns and precise symmetries reflect spiritual ideals of harmony and balance, deeply rooted in the Islamic culture of its time. They are also durable and easy to maintain, made from tiles that resist

water and the passage of time—perfect for patios, bathrooms, or other humid areas.

Finally, the **courtyard**: in Mediterranean and Andalusian architecture, it's the heart of the home. It anchors the layout, moderates the climate, and offers a soft threshold between public and private life. It's not merely functional. Fragrant plants cool the air; cross-breezes dance through open archways; sunlight falls gently into rooms. But it also carries an emotional weight—the sound of water over stone, the texture of terracotta tiles underfoot, the shifting patterns of light. The courtyard is a refuge, a place to pause, to breathe, to be. And this, too, makes it the true heart of the home.



Bringing it into the present

Translating these ideas into contemporary design does not mean recreating a Moroccan *riad* room for room, or filling a space with arches and mosaics without reason. It means understanding the spirit behind these elements and reimagining them with sensitivity. A lattice might become a subtle partition that filters light and creates intimacy without severing the space. A mosaic might appear in the clean lines of a modern shower or as a striking counterpoint in a minimalist kitchen. A carved door might live again as a headboard, or as a table that brings history into the heart of a home.

In a world obsessed with urgency and disposability, to design with patience, with discernment, and with roots is almost revolutionary. And here, Ceuta has much to teach us. Its spaces are not merely to be visited—they are to be inhabited, remembered, returned to. To find yourself in a place that connects you to something deeper than fashion is, to me, the truest luxury of all.





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THE CHROMATIC ART OF FLAVOR

Photos: Courtesy Hugo Ruiz & Pepe Compaz



Ceuta-born chef **Hugo Ruiz** shared, in an exclusive interview with *Sports & Lifestyle Magazine*, how at the age of 24 he founded **Bugao**, a restaurant that for a decade reshaped the city's culinary landscape. There he earned recognition in the Michelin Guide and a Repsol Sun, the only one awarded in Ceuta. After opening a branch in Madrid for four years, which he sold last December, the original restaurant in Ceuta embraced a new name: **Goichu**.

"My wife was affectionately called Go, and I call her Goichu. That's how I decided on the name; it also carries my own name in its first and last letters," he said.



A gastronomy between two seas

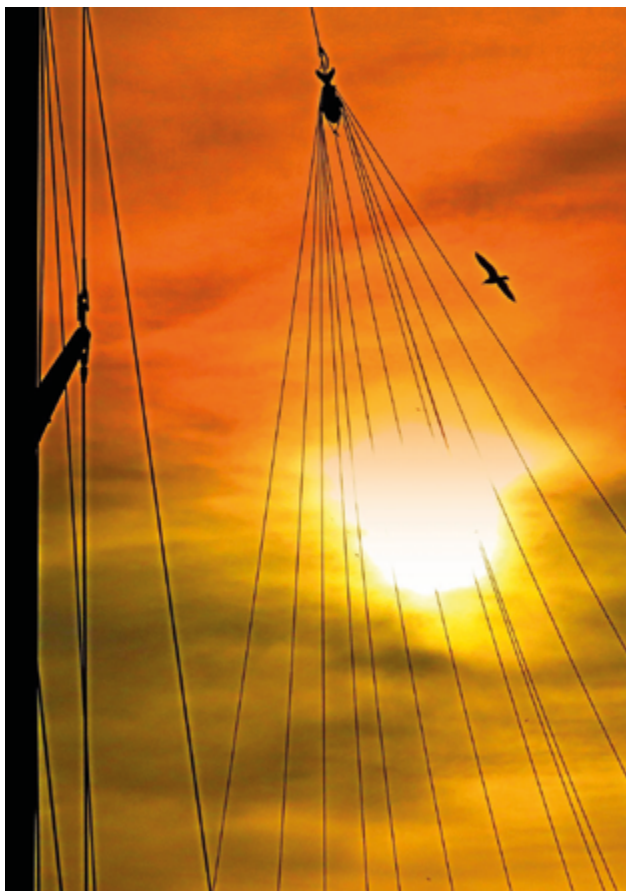
The menu at Goichu is largely Basque, enriched with local products from Ceuta and subtle Asian accents. Ingredients are fresh and sustainably sourced: fish from the coastline, local corvina, and the prized red tuna —now a hallmark of the Strait. With these, Hugo has shaped a cuisine that bridges Basque refinement with the Mediterranean and Atlantic essence of his city.

The restaurant stands in one of the narrowest parts of Ceuta, where barely four streets separate the Atlantic from the Mediterranean. Between Paseo de las Palmeras and Calle Independencia, Goichu opens its windows to the sea, offering not only exceptional dishes but also views that embody the city's singular character. Just a few steps away, **Piscolabis** completes the experience with a more relaxed atmosphere, though with the same uncompromising standards.

El arte de salazón

The chef also spoke of a Ceutan tradition that remains alive: fish salting. *Mojama*, *volaores*, *agujetas* and *bonito* split open and dried in the sea breeze have been part of local culture since Phoenician and Roman times.





Bluefin Tuna, emblem of the Strait

The menu breathes freshness and technical precision, balancing respect for tradition with a cosmopolitan touch.

Its undisputed star is the bluefin tuna of the Strait, regarded as the finest in the world for its quality, caught in Barbate, Tarifa, Ceuta or Conil. Hugo Ruiz noted that fifteen years ago tuna culture was almost nonexistent in Spain, and that thanks to the work of chefs it is now recognized for its true gastronomic value. "The bluefin from this region is the best in the world; the Japanese knew it before we did," he admitted.

Among his most emblematic creations is the *tosta de tarantelo with black truffle*: tuna seasoned with truffle oil, freeze-dried tomato, soy mayonnaise, and finally fresh truffle grated on top, enhancing the fish's almost meaty texture. A dish that embodies the house philosophy: sophistication without losing touch with the product.

The *Russian salad of white prawns and langoustines*, on the menu for fifteen years, pays homage to constancy and the comfort of familiar flavors. The *warm salad of local octopus and langoustine*, served with hot potato and mustard cream, shows how the Strait's products can be transformed into surprising combinations. For dessert, a *caramelized rice pudding cream* honors Casa Gerardo and the formative memories that shaped the chef.

Flying fish, or *volaeros*, are particularly distinctive in Ceuta. Sailing through the Strait in summer can feel surreal: suddenly, small fish no longer than thirty centimeters leap from the water and rise as if they had wings. With their fins outstretched, they glide above the surface, slicing through the air at more than 50 km/h, crossing the waves like tiny silver arrows.

"It's very typical in summer to go to the beach with a few beers and, instead of ham or cheese, bring *salazones*," Ruiz explained. "The fish is covered in salt for a day, then hung in the air right by the sea, at the *volaeras* on Juan XXIII beach. There, master salters cut it after the salting and hang it like a ham. It's covered with cloth to keep away flies, and it cures for about fifteen or twenty days," he said. A delicacy that belongs to every Ceutan table —and one that carries in its flavor not only the intensity of summer, but also the thrill of watching them dance above the waters of the Strait.



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MY HOME IS THE WORLD: I NEVER FORGET MY ROOTS TO FOLLOW THE PATH

Photos: Courtesy Ginés Serrán & Pepe Compaz



In a city shaped by the winds of the Strait and the imprint of ancient civilizations, **Ginés Serrán** was born—a creator from Ceuta who, from an early age, knew his destiny lay in artistic exploration and in dialogue with diverse cultures. That calling led him to New York, where he studied Anthropology and Archaeology, gaining a solid framework for understanding symbols, collective memory, and shared roots. Painting was his first medium, though he soon discovered its limits.

“Paintings are sold and end up in a museum or a collector’s home, where most people cannot always see them. A sculpture, however—especially a monumental work—belongs to everyone: it stands outdoors, visible twenty-four hours a day, reshaping a city’s image, beautifying it, transmitting a message, and becoming part of people’s identity,” he said in an exclusive interview with *Sports & Lifestyle*.

Twelve of Serrán’s sculptures rise across Ceuta’s streets and squares. Among them, two Hercules stand as cardinal emblems. One separates the columns of **Abyla and Calpe**, evoking the mythological gesture of opening the ocean and marking the limits of the ancient world—Abyla identified with Monte Hacho and Calpe with the Rock of Gibraltar. The other, however, unites them: **The Union of the World** reimagines the legend as a symbol of peace between Europe and Africa. “When I made the Hercules in Plaza de la

Constitución, I wanted to distort the myth. So I sculpted another Hercules joining the two columns, a gesture of union between Europe, Africa, and the world—a monument to peace,” he explains.

The monumentality of these works reflects not only aesthetic ambition but also a profound commitment to the city’s identity. Facing the Trujillo Building rises **Calypso**, wearing a diadem that bears Ceuta’s coat of arms and a bracelet adorned with the symbols of its four cultures—*Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu*. The nymph holds a pearl, a metaphor for the city, the “Pearl of the Mediterranean,” embodying the value of coexistence. As Pierre Grimal, emeritus professor at the Sorbonne, recalled, Calypso dwelled on the island of Ogygia, sometimes identified with the Ceuta peninsula (*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*).

From the *Paseo de las Palmeras* to the *Puente del Cristo* stand busts of philosophers and writers such as **Strabo, Homer, Aristotle, Plato, and Pomponius Mela**, evoking the city’s classical roots. They are joined by the statue of Ceuta-born rabbi **Yosé Ben Yehuda** on the *Paseo de la Marina Española*; a tribute to **Gandhi** beside the Hindu temple; the bronze of the renowned cartographer **Al-Idrisi** at *Puerta de Santa María*; the figure of **Prince Henry the Navigator** at the *Puente del Cristo* roundabout, recalling the Age of Discovery; and the **Infante Fernando**, housed in the



lobby of the *Parador La Muralla*. Together they turn Ceuta into an open-air museum, a space where history converses with daily life.

Ginés lives history with passion, delving into universal mythology and, above all, the myths of his native land. He recounts with fervor: “**Latinus**, according to Apollodorus of Athens in his classic *Bibliotheca*, was born in what is now Ceuta, son of **Calypso** and **Ulysses**, and the first king of Italy (*Latium*). Latinus gave his name to Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire, from which the Romance languages were born: Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese... Very few people know that the language we speak has roots in Ceuta!” Serrán adds: “Ceuta is also one of the oldest ports in the world, the gateway for the first human

settlement in Western Europe and the Iberian Peninsula. In what we now call France, England, Germany, Italy... there were only plants and animals. Humans did not yet exist. The first people to cross the Strait into Western Europe departed from here. Before the discovery of America, this place was considered the ‘end of the known world.’ The first navigators were born here, the pioneers of passage. That vision inspired my sculpture **The Passage from Africa to Europe**: a tribute to my city of origin, because it is here that Western culture—and what we are today—began.”



conveys the strength and dignity of the sea. The piece links the father’s legacy with the son’s vision, transforming maritime passage into a symbol of lived experience. His book *The Memory of the Wind* gathers those recollections—diaries, photographs, letters, and passages where his father’s voice resounds like a compass. It reveals the intimate connection between a seafaring life and artistic pursuit. To navigate, to create, to discover, always to look beyond the horizon.

The world like home

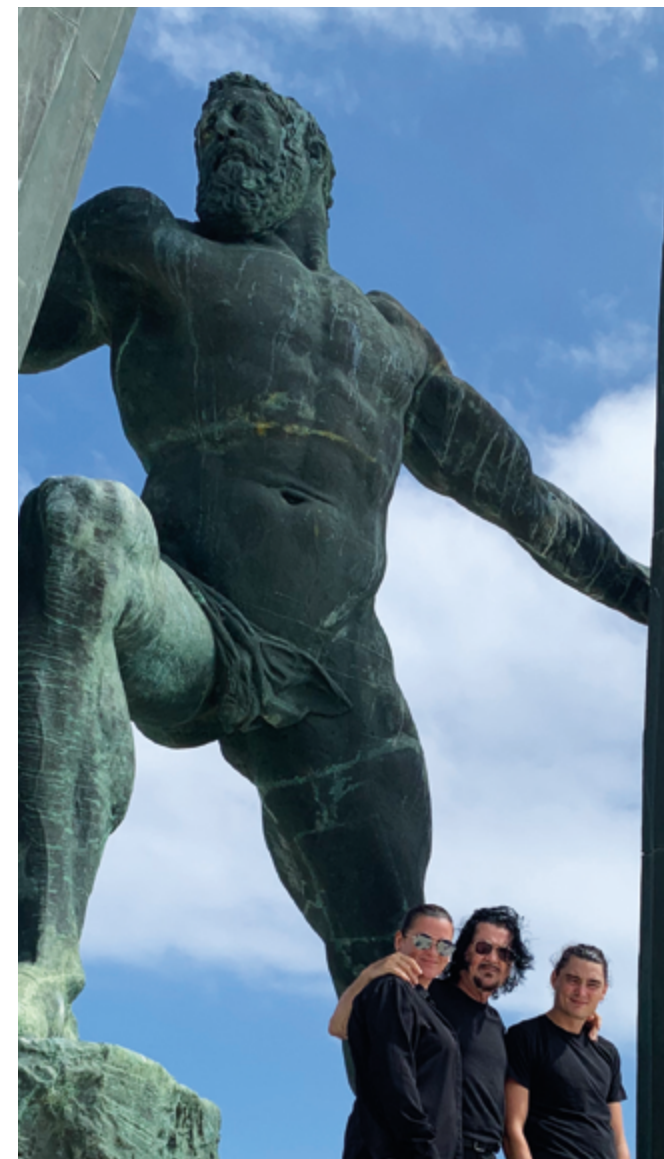
His story cannot be understood without the hunger and hardship of his early years abroad. In New York, Rome, Paris, and Athens, he survived with little—working relentlessly, learning languages on the fly, adapting with determination. “The hunger and

are like trees: we must nourish our roots so that the branches may grow, flourish, and bear fruit. That is how my work finds strength—never forgetting where I come from.” His words reveal a sensitivity that transcends monumentality: each sculpture in Ceuta is also an act of gratitude to the city of his birth. “Its ancient history and culture are Ceuta’s great treasure. Identity is what defines the city’s destiny—yet so few people know how beautiful it is,” he affirms.

Among his works there is one especially personal: **Neptune** at the port of Málaga. This monumental sculpture is not only a tribute to the sea god but also a deeply intimate homage to his father, who sailed on the *Juan Sebastián Elcano* (1928/1929) during its first circumnavigation (1928–1929). The memory of that man who crossed the oceans at a time when travel was a privilege for the few remained with him always.

Cast in bronze to withstand time and the elements, Neptune is more than a mythological figure: it is a bridge between generations. Every feature of the face and every fold of the musculature





Fortune will soon crown a thirty-five-meter obelisk as a symbol of prosperity. His series dedicated to **Magellan** honors those who dared to circumnavigate the planet, linking directly to the artist's own lineage as the son of a seafarer, heir to a sensibility shaped by travel and wind.



the struggle of those years gave me immense strength to chase my dreams, to see the world, and to do what I longed to do with almost no resources." Out of that sacrifice was born a creative energy that would leave its mark across the globe.

Three decades in New York shaped his formation and opened doors in both the academic and artistic worlds. There he took part in groundbreaking exhibitions such as *New Images of Spain* at the Guggenheim, consolidating a vision that fuses research and creation, anthropology and art. "Very few dared to live among those peoples in traditional ways. By creating in those countries, you identify with them: their colors, textures, and techniques transform you, as does the cultural contact with artists, with the environment, with the needs of the place." His social commitment led him to serve as a consultant to the United Nations, working with rural and indigenous communities in the United States and Mexico, designing projects to reduce mortality and strengthen local economies.

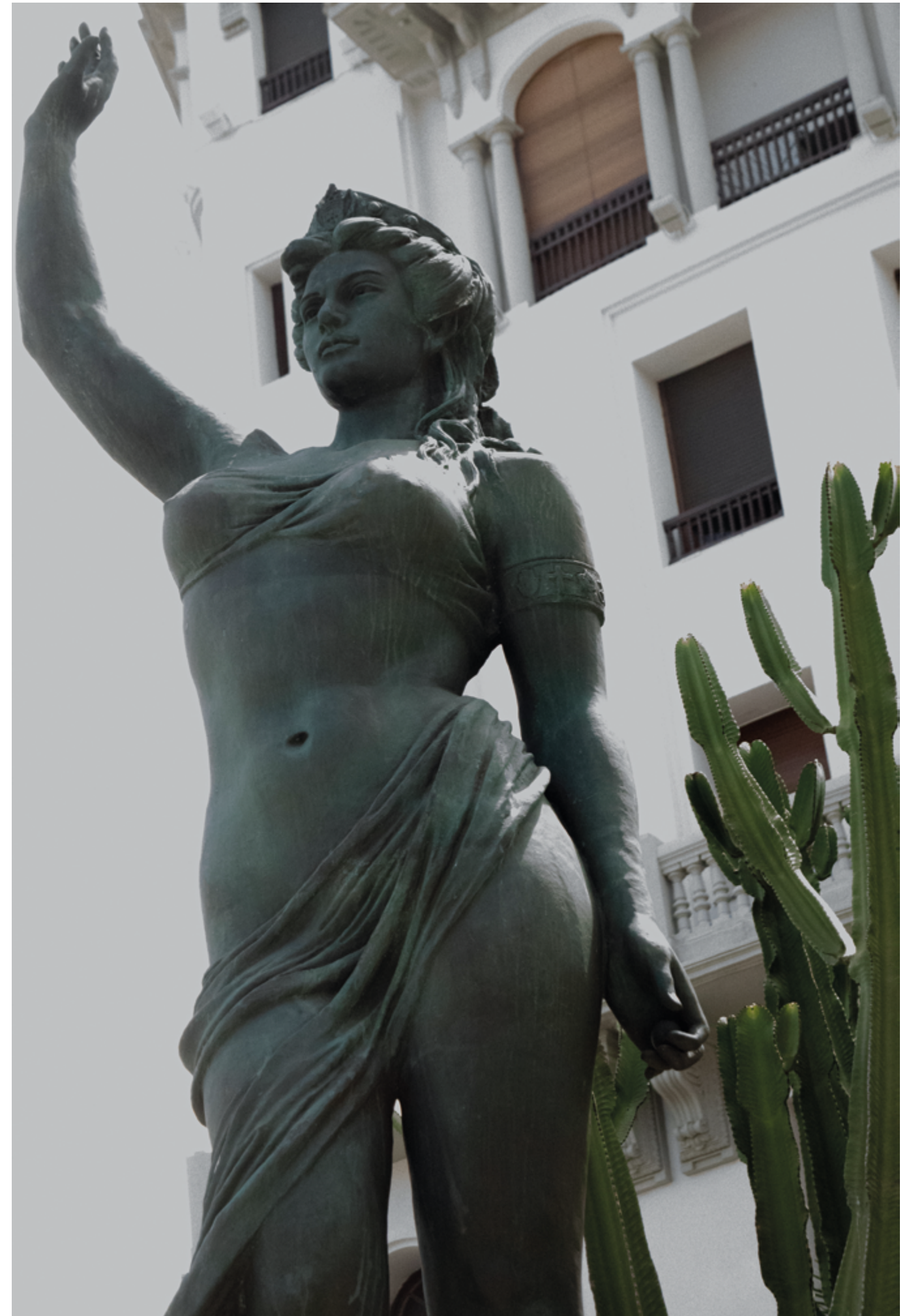
His monumental work unfolded across five continents. In Kentucky, **Vulcan** became a cultural landmark. In the Philippines, **Emperor**—rising twenty-three meters high—stands as the country's largest monument. The goddess



"I want to leave in my sculptures an artistic legacy that strives to create a better world than the one I found. That is my mission." That vision takes form in works such as **The New World**, acquired by Melilla, where children of different cultures shoulder a broken planet divided by war—a planet they must rebuild.

In Asia, the Americas, and Europe, his sculptures have become urban landmarks and symbols of shared identity. And though his home expanded to embrace the planet, Serrán never ceased to think of **Ceuta** as his root and point of departure.

It's no coincidence that his works rise in public spaces: his purpose is that art be shared. That in Ceuta, Málaga, New York, London, Rome, or China, anyone may look up and encounter a sculpture that demands neither ticket nor barrier. "Your home is the world, and you begin to respect and value different ideas and cultures; that enriches you." That phrase sums up the experience of a life: transforming the planet into an open studio, and into a home forged in bronze.



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