

ES  
LA  
VA

07/2003

# Condé Nast Traveller

**SPECIAL OFFER**  
Three nights at the Four  
Seasons Hotel in Prague



TRUTH IN TRAVEL

JULY 2003 £3.20

## The beautiful south

Why the Garden Route is blooming in **South Africa**

Discover great tapas in **Seville**

Stay in three wilderness hotels in **South America**

Enjoy the sunshine coast of **Italy**

**Plus** Why Málaga is  
worth a long weekend



River-rafting in Idaho • Wine tasting in Languedoc-Roussillon • Cheetah-chasing in Namibia

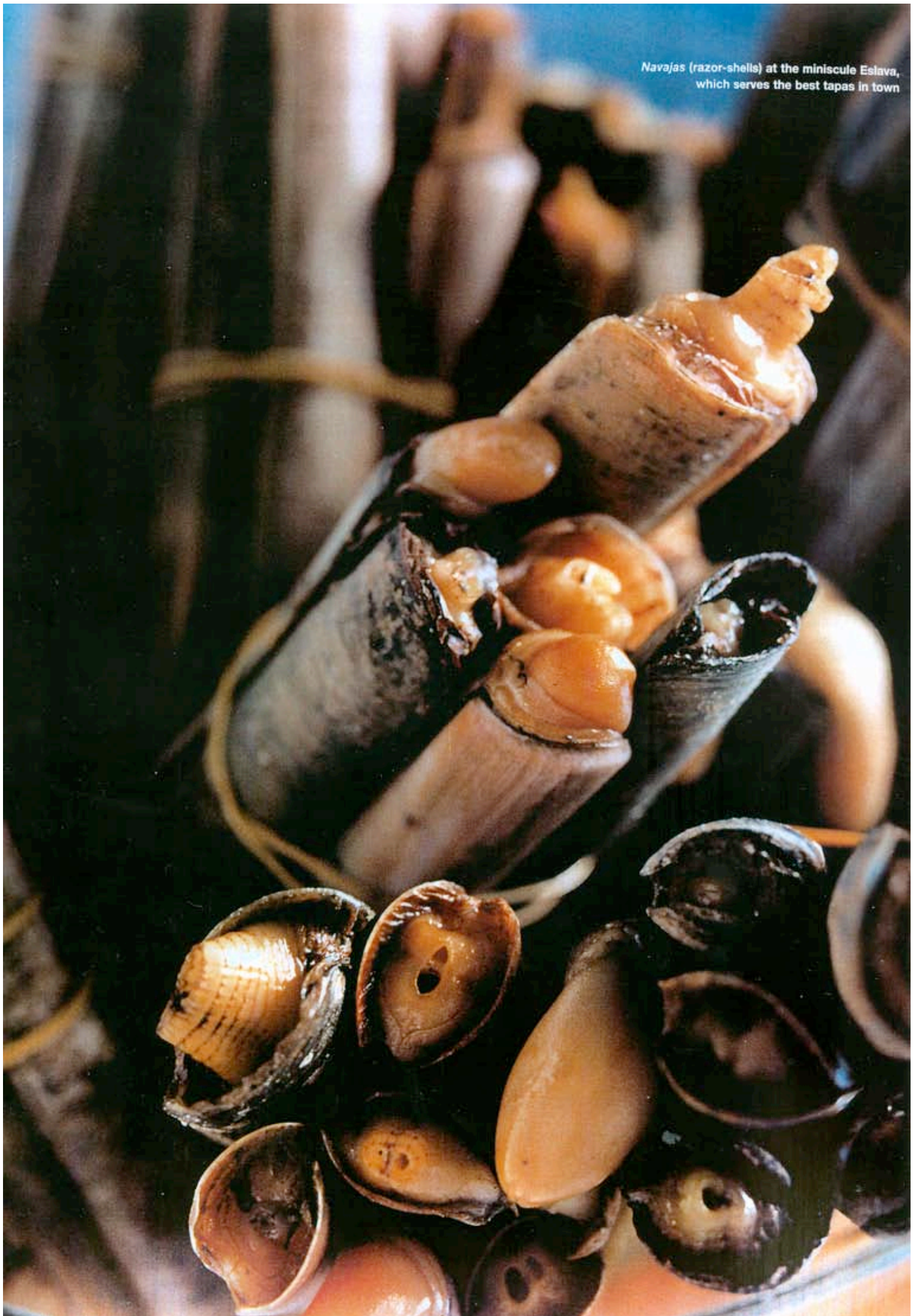
# Feeding frenzy

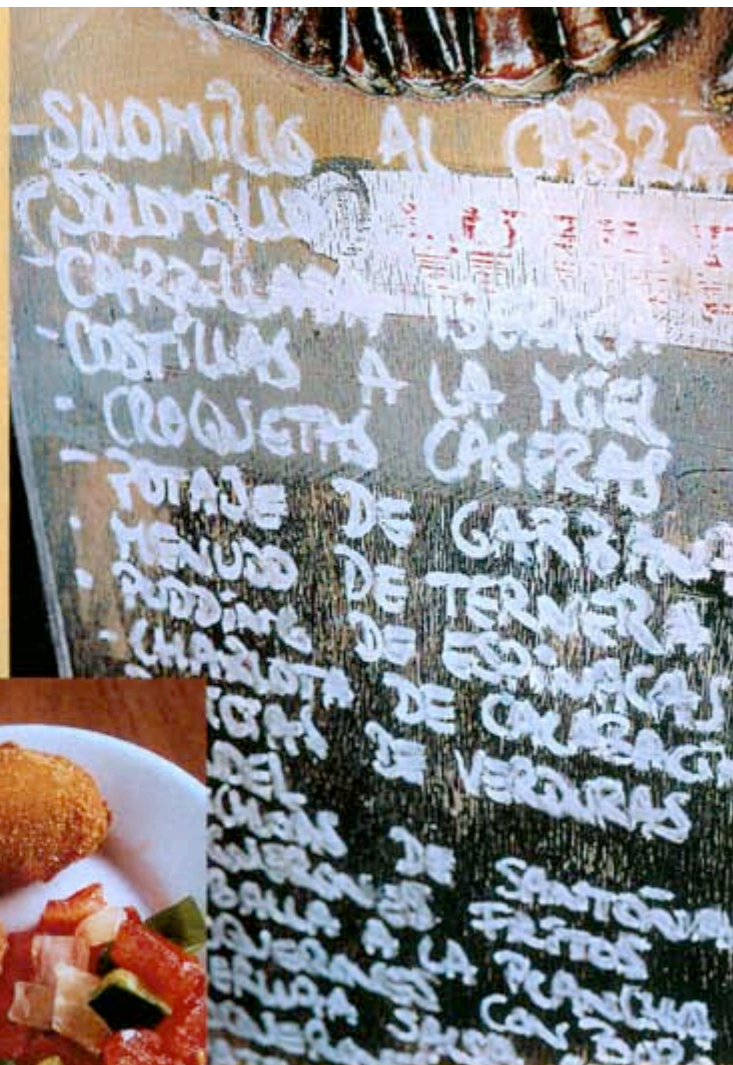


Tapas should be eaten without ceremony, quickly, and ideally standing up. Taras Grescoe trawls his favourite tapas bars in Seville

Photographs by Galilea Nin

Navajas (razor-shells) at the miniscule Eslava, which serves the best tapas in town





From left to right: mirror reflection at the noisy and perennially packed Eslava; croquetas stuffed with béchamel and ham; the menu board, chalked up afresh every morning

of ham thin as carpaccio, and laying them in a circle around the edge of a white plate. When I've eaten my fill, I leave a few euros and centavos, the bartender erases the chalked bill with a swipe of cloth, and another client takes my place. In and out, well-fed and rejuvenated, in less than 20 minutes.

This is how tapas have been eaten, joyfully but without ceremony, for generations. Some believe El Rinconcillo is the birthplace of the tradition: in the mid-19th century, wineglasses here were covered (the Spanish verb is *tapar*) with lids to keep the dust and flies out; the glass-top saucers were in turn topped with complimentary morsels of sausage and ham. Others subscribe to a hoarier creation myth, one that has the 13th-century King Alfonso X ('The Wise') ordering Castilian innkeepers to serve food with their wine to diminish the speed with which alcoholic vapours disordered his subjects' brains. Thus tapas, which are best eaten standing

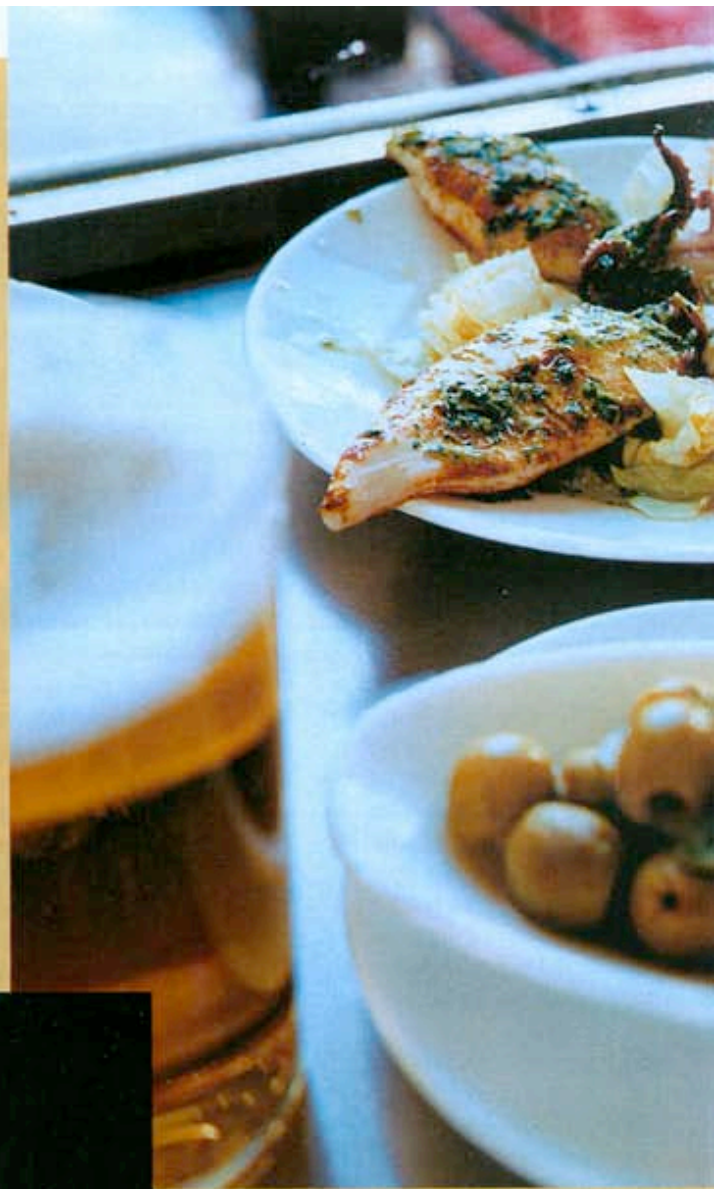
up, have the added virtue of preventing you from falling down.

By now, I have settled into a routine, a daily pub crawl that leaves me exhilarated, frequently; intoxicated, never; and satisfied, always. On my last day in the city, I set myself a challenge: to see if I can get through an entire day of eating and drinking without actually sitting down. Breakfast, *el desayuno*, begins when I claim a stretch of the wooden bar at the **Cafetería Doña Carmen**, on the pedestrianised Calle San Eloy. The waiters push tall glasses of gazpacho, stacks of *papas bravas* and *calamares fritos* across the bartop to clients who are already *tomando las once* – literally, taking 'elevenes', though the Iberian version of the late-morning snack is accompanied by wine rather than tea. I opt for a glass of chocolate – so much thicker than the thin milk-and-cocoa concoctions back home – and an order of *churros*, four fluted sticks of salty-sweet bread, criss-crossing the

plate like the decapitated columns of a toppled Corinthian temple.

A meal of what is essentially deep-fried dough and a melted chocolate bar calls for a little subsequent exertion, so I go for a stroll among the waxy-leaved bitter-orange trees in the Jardines de Murillo next to the Alcázar. After an hour of this my appetite has returned, so I repair to **El Patío San Eloy**, a raucous bar in the Centro, where people are queuing three deep at a long bar overhung with nobly moulding hams, shouting requests for *cerveza* and sangria to cheerfully overworked bartenders. Stacks of sandwiches (on white bread) and *bocadillos* (on buns) teeter behind the bar, and I'm handed a plate of aged ewe's cheese on potato chips and a *caña*, a small, frosty glass of beer. '*¡Al fondo hay sitio!*' shouts a barman – 'there's room in the back.' Five tiled platforms, like the banked steps of a steam bath, provide respite for those who wish to sit. A half dozen members of a *tuna*, a wandering





Clockwise from top left: Sangre de Cristo cocktails at Garlochi; assorted tapas including grilled baby octopus at Bar Manolo; La Antigua Bodeguita; the Giralda. Opposite, stuffed pepper at Eslava

