

## LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS TESTIMONIALS YEAR 2022-2023



Arcos, a town which straddles the line between *pueblo* and city, has presented me many unique opportunities. It is the largest town in the comarca and thus offers many amenities that are not available to smaller villages, like foreign restaurants and supermarkets. Nevertheless, it possesses unmistakable small-town qualities. I see my students and teachers in the store, on the street, at town festivals. I can't get a kebab without cries of "hello, teacher!" and I couldn't be happier. As an auxiliar, the

students respect you, but they don't fear you. They proudly tell you where they saw you, when and who you were with. Sometimes, you stop to chat and learn about their lives. Even with varying levels of English, students are curious about you and make an attempt to communicate. In the classroom or on the street, these are my favorite moments, where I talk to them one on one and they tell me about their goals, their family, what sports they play, their favorite memes, funny things that happened to them, or even just a simple, "I'm fine. And you?". You're not just an auxiliar de conversaci3n, you're a fixture for at least half the town's kids, and a positive one at that. Most times I walk downtown, I feel like a local celebrity.

As a half-city half-pueblo, Arcos also acts as a bridge between the cities near the coast and the villages in the mountains. With some planning, you can easily travel to C3diz, Jerez and the cities between them for time at the beach, holidays, or visits; and nearly as easily head east to the mountains of Grazalema, Ubrique, and Benaocaz for hiking, leather or cheese. There is a bus that takes you north to Seville, which has one of the best airports in Andalusia, as well as an important train station. If you feel comfortable renting a car, the southern coast is not too far and offers sea sports. In short, Arcos is well positioned between several interesting regions.

As far as Arcos itself, I'm constantly amazed. To think this small city was once the capital of a medieval *taifa* blows my mind. Knowing this small city is nearly a thousand years older than that absolutely melts it. There are traces from each successive civilization, outwardly or under ruins. The city museum offers this history, but you can find the remains of a Roman villa or old hermitage yourself. History becomes much more real when you see it with your own eyes, and it becomes much more bizarre when you see apartment buildings and billboards for Burger King overlooking these ancient structures.

This isn't to say that you can't escape modern life – on the contrary, much of the town maintains an old-world feel. Still, if you want to get away from the noise, Arcos is perfect for outdoor activities. There are many footpaths in hills and valleys surrounding the town, allowing for a restless soul to walk or bike for many miles. Arcos Lake is an excellent place to cool off, as is the Guadalete river which supplies it. Nearby, there are several other lakes with water sports and hiking, such as Bornos just to the north or the Majaceite river to the south. Within the town's hills, you will certainly get your daily steps in.

Finally, Arcos is an extremely livable place. I'm in a nice chalet with a rooftop terrace and several bedrooms, split with a roommate for a very reasonable price. Groceries have been on the rise as they have everywhere, but you learn the town and which places have better deals and when. Between my salary and savings, I don't feel pressure to work more than I do, which frees up time for other projects, as some of my friends have done. Given that it's a

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slightly larger town, there are often other auxiliaries, but not so many that you shut out local friends. There's even a small nightlife scene, though you will not go wrong if you prefer a night in. In Arcos, you can afford to spend a little more on luxury than you would in even the nearby cities like Jerez.

All of this is to say, Arcos is a town rich in history, full of friendly faces, and surrounded by beautiful rolling hills. I would recommend it to anyone.

