

Sustainable Developments

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...Spain is one country that's sorely in need of more sustainable development. The sheer number of new resorts, golf courses, houses, shops and road systems on the southern coast, for example, are taking their toll on the area's natural resources. So it's good to see that some companies are taking the matter seriously.

In an area bordering the Segura River in the region of Murcia, the Terrazas development combines luxury living with low environmental impact. Buildings use cutting-edge technology, such as roof tiles with super-efficient insulation, non-toxic paints, wood from sustainable sources and geothermal heat pumps. These use the heat from the ground to create free, clean energy, cutting up to 70 per cent of your fuel costs and eliminating carbon dioxide emissions. The developers have also installed taps with a ventilation device that reduce the water volume without reducing pressure, and toilets and garden irrigation systems that use recycled 'grey' water.

There are also plans to get an original mill on the site restored to provide hydroelectricity in communal areas. Only 10% of the development will be built on. The remaining land, with its orchards and natural vegetation, will be cultivated for produce and every tree that has to be removed for building will be replaced on-site.

All of which offers low-impact homes that are high in style. The single-level, three bedroom properties are designed to be open-plan and airy, with terraces overlooking a private garden and pool. Tony Sparkes, managing director for AGS properties, which is marketing the resort, says: "This is a unique development, and one which I think is long overdue in Spain. The location's perfect with picture-postcard surroundings and the peace of mind that building in this area is limited to protect the natural beauty." Considering the quality of what you're getting, the prices are also surprisingly affordable with a three-bedroom villa on a plot of 500 square metres starting around £210,000....