

Marbella's €400 million port Al Thani Marina ...

The shape of things to come – courtesy Vivaestates

Hailed by mayor, Ángeles Muñoz, as **“an emblematic work that will lay the foundations for a new city model and act as an engine of economic development for the entire coast”**, the recent announcement that a staggering €400 million is about to be spent on the expansion of Marbella's La Bajadilla Port, has to be the biggest shot in the arm in the town's 60-year history as one of the world's leading international destinations.

The ambitious project, however, goes a whole lot further than merely creating a second Puerto Banús, because reminiscent of the iconic yacht harbours of the UAE, **the plan is to build “the most important marina anywhere on the Mediterranean Coast”**.

Led by Qatari sheikh Abdullah Al-Thani – coincidentally the owner and president of Málaga Football Club since 2010 – the Nasir Bin Abdullah & Sons Consortium behind the Port Al Thani scheme also includes Marbella Town Hall, which has a 3% stake in the project. All the companies involved in the scheme will be Spanish, including well-known architects Estudio Segui and engineering firm Berenguer Ingenieros.

Work could begin early next year, and it's estimated that the project will create 1,500 much-needed direct jobs plus an additional 3,000 indirect posts. An initial investment of €84 million will include extending the existing wharf to enable cruise ships to tie-up alongside, while further plans envisage both a 5-star hotel and luxury shopping mall. Once completed – and according to some reports that could be as soon as 2015 – the scheme will feature a stunning 900 metre circular pier as well as berths for an additional 500 yachts, plus an underground car park. Other plans are currently also in the pipeline to rehouse the unsightly 'La Ermita' industrial estate and to redevelop the whole area.

The tide is indeed about to turn, not only for Marbella itself but for the entire Costa del Sol!