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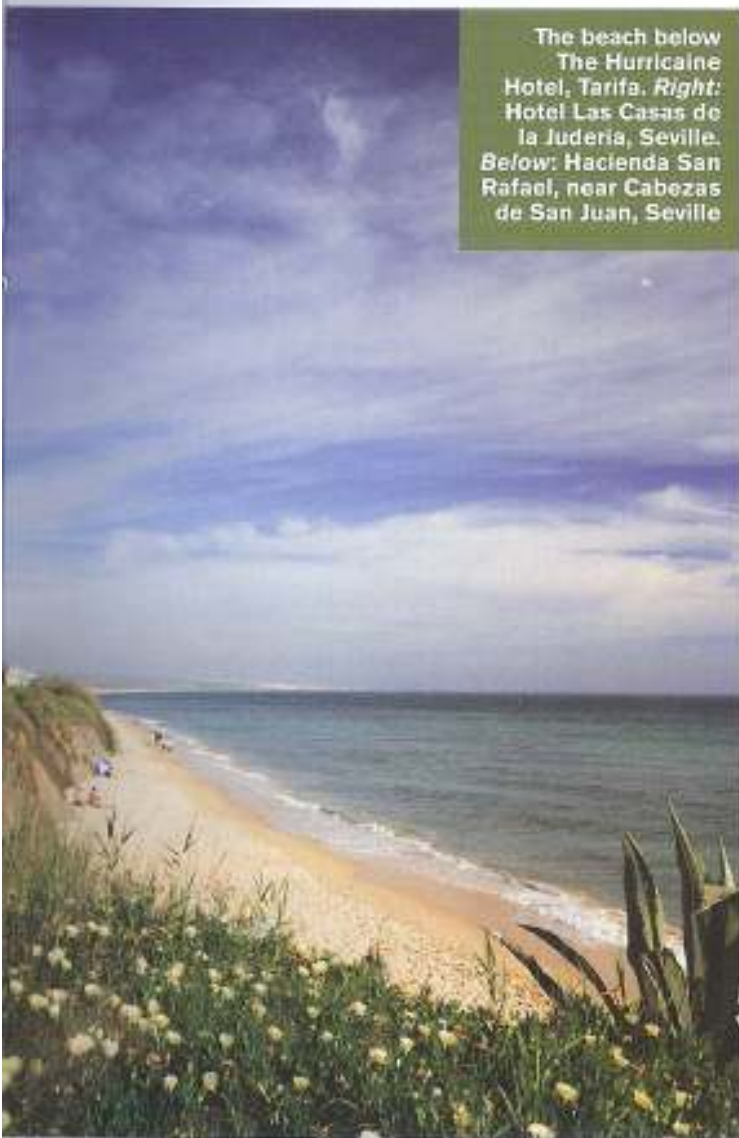
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The beach below
The Hurricalne
Hotel, Tarifa. Right:
Hotel Las Casas de
la Juderia, Seville.
Below: Hacienda San
Rafael, near Cabezas
de San Juan, Seville



(www.westin.com/hotelalfonso), built to house the heads of state visiting Seville's 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana and posited as the most luxurious hotel of its age, have updated their services whilst trying to keep a feel for their own history.

The Alfonso's position on the edge of the Alcázar gardens is enviable. In a market where travellers want to be at the romantic centre of crowded, bustling Andalusian cities, the new challenge has been to provide spacious and modern accommodation within the jumbles of small, centuries-old houses, reached by narrow alleys, in the hearts of the congested old towns.

Seville's Barrio Santa Cruz, a maze of whitewashed lanes, small squares and hidden courtyards, is a case in point. For decades the only accommodation within the barrio

was in simple hostels based on the small rooms around family patios. The hostels still exist, and are still welcoming to students and others on a budget, but new solutions have been sought to provide city-centre atmosphere with international comfort for more discerning travellers. Some hotels – the Petit Palace Santa Cruz (www.sevillapetitpalacesantacruz.com), for example – have taken larger courtyard-centred houses, and made fewer but far bigger and more airy en-suite rooms with all that's necessary in the way of double-glazing, air-conditioning and Wi-Fi communications.

Others hotels have run numbers of houses into single labyrinthine establishments. Las Casas de la Juderia (www.casasypalacios.com), still within the Barrio Santa Cruz, is a case in point. Expansive