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REST ASSURED

Seville

Play cowboys in a colonial-style casa, unwind in an ancient retreat with a modern twist, or uncover a sultry Andalucían hideaway – variety reigns in southern Spain. By Marcus Scriven



£108 Las Casas Del Rey De Baeza 'Lamps float across the rooftop pool'

Wooden colonnades painted a weatherbeaten blue, cobbled courtyards, hessian mats pinned to whitewashed walls – just add a curl of smoke from a glowing cheroot and you'd be in spaghetti westernville. But there's much more to Las Casas than Clint Eastwood clichés. Downstairs it's colonial cool, with stone floors, planters' chairs and an Anglo-Spanish library. You ascend to an Andy Warhol-esque world, where floating lamps of clinical white bobble across the rooftop pool. Rooms are generous, but avoid those off the northern colonnade, unless you're immune to the percussive of pedestrian traffic. The mood is smart but sink-into, with rattan armchairs, marble bathrooms containing Villeroy & Boch tubs, and continental 'sausage' pillows (as well as their rectangular English cousins). Luxury lotions and lip balms in rooms offer salvation to those who've blistered in the heat, as do calming roof-terrace massages. One glimpse of the breakfast spread, however, will persuade even the most toasted to refuel for another day out: fruit smoothies, scrambled eggs, jamón, tortilla, chorizo, cheeses in garlic oil, and breads of every origin and texture. And when you finally set forth: Seville's great royal palace is only 18m away. *Las Casas Del Rey De Baeza* (00 34 954 561496, www.hospes.es) has doubles from £108, room only.

£60 Hotel Alminar 'Tables made for writing that lusty novel'

Take care at the Alminar. The hotel is so close to the other side of the street that the roofs almost touch (those curvy terracotta tiles, incidentally, are said to be shaped over a woman's thigh). Shoe-horned in it may be, but it's a beauty: exotic porcelain-floored bathrooms with mosaic walls; striking translucent basins with stylish mixer taps; and slim lacquered black tables (made for writing that lusty novel). All 12 rooms exude the same exotic style, and two open onto the roof terrace. The hotel also has Seville's best front-of-house duo, Francisco and Maria: between them, they know all the town's secrets. Hotel Alminar (00 34 954 293913, www.hotelalminar.com) has doubles from £60, room only.



£190 Corral del Rey 'Book the chef's table on the upper terrace'

If intent on divorce, simply drive a hire car into Seville's old Jewish quarter, Santa Cruz: the density of its cobbled streets is intensified by a one-way system presumably designed to keep the local cardiac unit at full capacity. Get a cab from the airport, however (it takes 20 minutes and costs about £17), and you're laughing all the way to Corral del Rey, a new six-room hotel. OK, the structure isn't exactly new: after all, this is Santa Cruz, where traces of ancient Rome linger in triumphal columns and the occasional aromatic ripeness hangs in the air. But Corral del Rey is the perfect retreat: it has arches, Doric columns and carved cedar ceiling beams, with a mod-metropolitan



feel conjured by diaphanous curtains in junior suites (above), Scandinavian oak floors, and bathrooms of Spanish limestone. We'll keep the techie stuff brief – for pummeling, there are nine jets in the rooftop plunge pool. It's one of the best pieces in Seville to view the Giralda, the cathedral's 97m-high tower, in which Fernando III installed ramps (not stairs) in 1248,

so he could ride his stallion to the top. Dine at the Chef's Table on the upper terrace for salmoreço (Andalucían tomato soup) and guacamole, sinfully good miso cod, and chocolate fondant with raspberry sherbet. In every way, it's the crowning glory. Corral del Rey (00 34 954 227 116, www.corraldelrey.com) has doubles from £190. B&B. ■

And the best of the rest

£128 CASA NO. 7... is fit for a duchess (the Duchess of Bedford, in fact, who stayed recently). You'll find six bedrooms and a regal drawing room (below) with photos of the González Byass sherry dynasty. A white-gloved butler serves samples of the family product. Doubles from £128, B&B (00 34 954 221587, www.casanunero7.com).



£80 LA CASA DEL MAESTRO... was built by a nobleman for his two love-children; later, flamenco legend Niño Ricardo lived here. Its accents glitter with bullfighters' costumes. Doubles from £80, B&B (00 34 954 500007, www.lacasadeldelmaestro.com).

£75 LA MUSICA DE SEVILLA... is the younger, prettier sister of Seville's landmark Hotel Amadeus. Six rooms have pristine parquet floors and rattan chairs. Doubles from £75, room only (00 34 954 501443, www.hotelamadeusevilla.com).

£50 HOTEL ALCANTARA... Alminar's two-star sister has marble-floored bathrooms and shares an entrance – a studded double door – with Casa de la Memoria, showcase for emerging flamenco talent. Oh. Doubles from £50, room only (00 34 954 500695, www.hotelalcantara.net).

£44 HOTEL MURILLO... is both ancient (the owner's antiques) and modern (eco-lighting), with a roof terrace over the Murillo Gardens. Doubles from £44, room only (00 34 954 216295, www.hotelmurillo.com).

Clickair (www.clickair.com) flies to Seville daily from Gatwick; **Ryanair (www.ryanair.com)** flies from Stansted and Liverpool; **Iberia (www.iberiaairlines.co.uk)** flies from Gatwick and Heathrow.