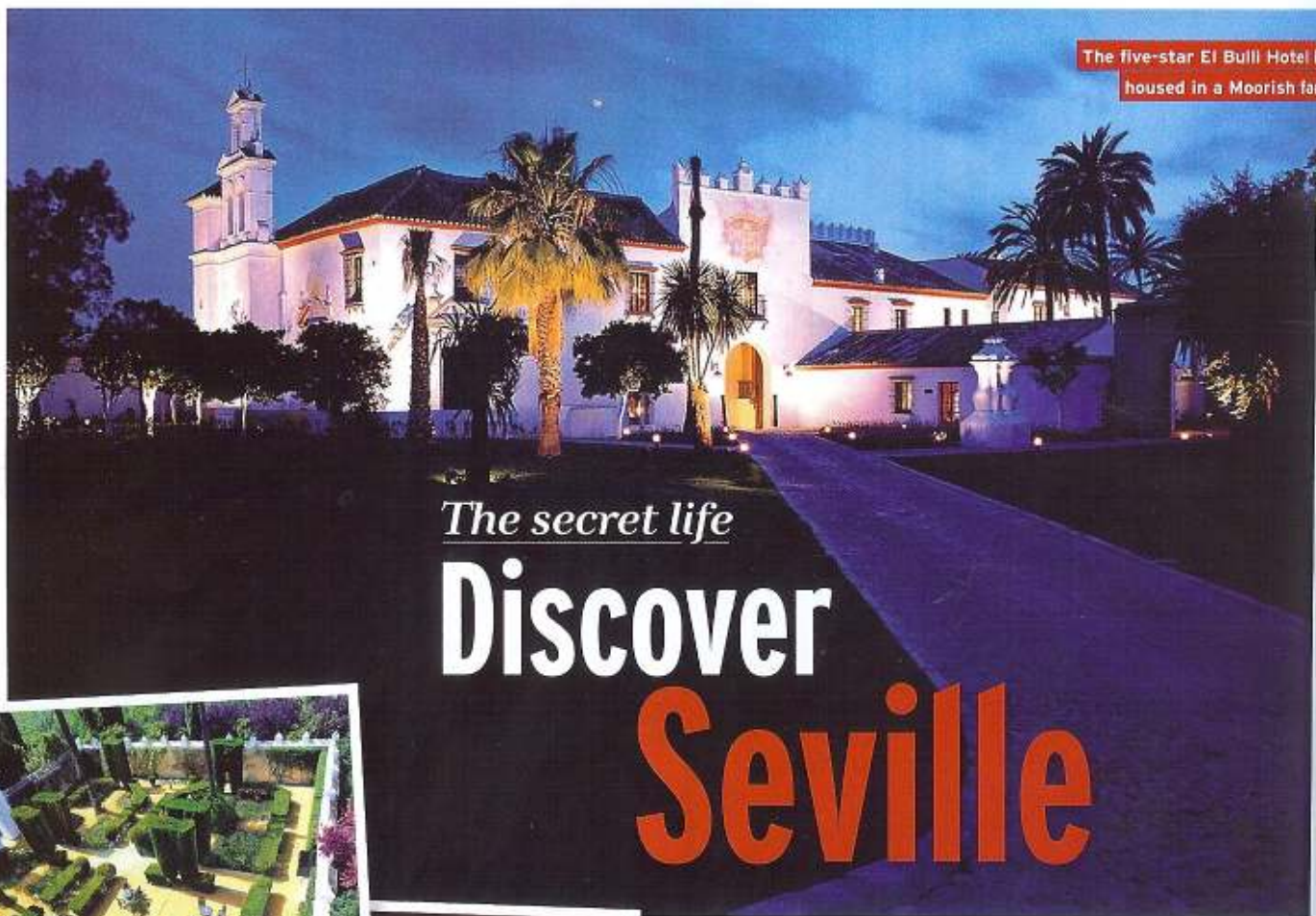


DEPARTURES

THE LAST DANCE

EVENING
GLAMOUR
NEW IN CAPRI
CLIMBING
MONT BLANC
BRITISH WINE

The five-star El Bulli Hotel is housed in a Moorish farm



The secret life

Discover Seville



El Bulli's gardens (above) and two Michelin-star restaurant, La Alquería, right; AC Ciudad de Sevilla, below



Style at Victorió y Lucchino

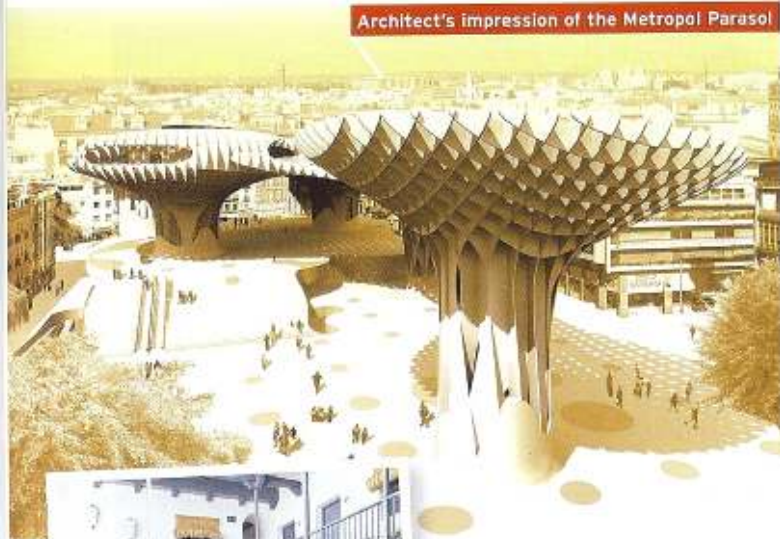
Right in the heart of Andalusia – where the Arab Moors ruled for six centuries – Seville, Spain's former royal capital, is looking to instill a similar dose of the contemporary cool that helped Barcelona and Valencia evolve into world-class cultural centres.

While nearby cities such as Granada and Jerez are also on the path to parallel urban upgrades by starchitects such as Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & DeMueron and locals Campo Baeza, the most ambitious new Andalusian schemes are in the heart of Seville itself. There's a sleek new tram system debuting next year, the luxed-up Plaza Nueva and a new pedestrian-friendly Alameda de Hercules, with its towering Roman pillars, outdoor cafés and weekly crafts market. But Seville's real stunner has to be the oddly-shaped Metropol Parasol, a massive city-centre redevelopment in the historic Plaza de la Encarnacion. Set to open within a year, the Parasol is designed by hotshot German architects Jurgen Mayer. Shaped literally like amorphic umbrellas, Metropol Parasol will include numerous restaurants, bars, farmers' market terraces – even an archeological site – and is intended to serve as a landmark for the new Seville, much as Santiago Calatrava's City of Arts and Sciences symbolises the new Valencia.

While modernists will certainly welcome projects such as Parasol, purists need not worry that progress is eroding Seville's soul. Indeed, as much as the city is moving forward, redevelopment does not mean it has forsaken its past. Quite the contrary, in fact. 'Because the city has such historic value there is a real sense of sustainability when it comes to development,' observes Anglo-Spanish developer



Architect's impression of the Metropol Parasol



Patrick Reid. And Reid ought to know. His latest project – the six-room hotel **Corral del Rey** – opened at Easter in a meticulously renovated 17th-century mansion in the Barrio Alfalfa on the fringes of the old Jewish Quarter, a short stroll from Seville's iconic Cathedral.

Delicately restored over two years by local architect Javier Betencourt, the hotel stands in sharp contrast to Seville's other luxury properties, such as the grand, sprawling – though service-challenged – Alfonso XIII. Filled with elegant antique tapestries, Roman marble columns and vaulted ceilings clad in original carved wooden beams, the hotel is capped by a duplex rooftop eyrie which includes an al fresco jacuzzi and private dining perch, surrounded each evening by Seville's dramatically illuminated landmarks. The Corral del Rey's intimate size and atmospheric location nicely complement Seville's other hotel newcomers, the hacienda-styled **Las Casas del Rey de Baeza** and the modern, business-friendly **AC Ciudad de Sevilla**, with its

angular, al fresco swimming pool. The Corral del Rey is also emblematic of Seville's new urban upgrade, in typically languid Spanish fashion 'brought about by the Sevillanos themselves, and not city hall', says Virginia Irurita, of Madrid-based bespoke travel firm, Made for Spain.

For Irurita, it is in Seville's kitchens – as much as its newer hotels – that the city is most compellingly evolving. At **Egaña-Oriza** across from the Alfonso XIII, for instance, chef Jose Mari Egaña injects a dose of Basque bravado into traditional Andalusian fare, resulting in dishes such as ceviche of monkfish and grouper with clams splashed with virgin olive oil, or San Sebastian-styled partridge salad spiked with sherry vinegar and spider crab. Even the most fusion-fearful should at least visit for tapas, Irurita insists, 'which are very Basque, but with that great Andalusian accent'. Another essential meal, Irurita adds, is at the restaurant in the **El Bulli Hotel**, where the cuisine may not be as experimental and ambitious as the original El Bulli, but is served in a 'beautiful' 1,000 year-old hacienda. Both the El Bulli and Las Casas del Rey de Baeza hotels have recently debuted new spas.

In common with the city's hotels and restaurants, Seville's style scene is also picking up, although traditional fan makers such as Forondo still line Calles Sierpes and delicate ceramics workshops remain the mainstay of Calle Alfarería in the Triana quarter. Local design duo **Victorio & Lucchino** are often called Seville's Dolce + Gabbana – and for good reason. Their Plaza Nueva flagship houses their entire range of chic, sexy, glamorous creations for men and women. Also on the Plaza Nueva – Seville's own Place Vendôme – are **Agua de Sevilla** for the city's signature, citrus-infused cologne and **O'Kean** for traditional men's tailor-made shirts and suits. Nearby, **Pilar Burgos** stocks some of Spain's finest handmade shoes, Lina creates one-of-a-kind flamenco dresses, while **El Torno** offers a sinful selection of traditional

Andalusian cookies, handmade by nuns in convents throughout the region. Nibble them while strolling through the Plaza de Santa Marta. This often-overlooked medieval square near Seville's iconic Cathedral is considered by insiders to be the city's loveliest, anchored in its centre by a grandly ancient marble cross.

DAVID KAUFMAN

Address book

EGANA-ORIZA
San Fernando, 41;
+34 954 227 211;
restauranteoriza.com

EL BULLI HOTEL
From €340-€1,345. 41800
Sanlúcar la Mayor; +34 955
703 344; elbullihotel.com

CORRAL DEL REY
From €280-€350. Corral
del Rey 12; +34 954 227 116;
corraldelrey.com

**LAS CASAS
DEL REY DE BAEZA**
From €160-€500. Santiago, 2,
Plaza Jesús de la Redención;
+34 954 561 496; hospes.es

AC CIUDAD DE SEVILLA
From €110. Avenida Manuel
Siurot, 25; +34 954 230505;
ac-hotels.com

VICTORIO & LUCCHINO
Plaza Nueva, 10; +34 954 502
660; victorloylucchino.com

EL TORNO
Plaza del Cabildo s/n, Santa
Cruz; +34 954 219 190

PILAR BURGOS
16 Calle Tetuan; +34 954 562
117; pilarburgos.com

AGUA DE SEVILLA
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145; aguadesevilla.es

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Las Casas del Rey de Baeza

17th-century history, modern comforts and cuisine at Corral del Rey (above, below, bottom)



Victorio y Lucchino