

# SPAIN & PORTUGAL SPECIAL

## HOTELS

### 1 FOR FOOD HOTEL VILLA SORO, SAN SEBASTIAN

The marble-floored villa that houses 15 of the hotel's 25 bedrooms was built in 1898 and is a peaceful retreat, decorated in soothing tones of cream and milky brown. It's a restrained contrast to the fireworks going on further down the tree-lined Alameda I Elosegi Hiribidea. For here lies Arzak, a temple to Basque fusion cuisine that has held three Michelin stars since the late 1980s. Run by Juan Mari Arzak and his daughter Elena, the restaurant serves up an array of dizzying molecular creations, including seaweed and kokotxas de merluza — delicate tufts of meat from a hake's throat (arzak.es). Doubles from £103, B&B; 00 34 943 297970, villasoro.es

### 2 FOR ISOLATION LA RECTORIA DE SANT MIQUEL DE PINEDA, GARRITXA

With dormant volcanoes, cave complexes that drip with stalactites, medieval villages and ruined castles, the little-known Catalan region of La Garrotxa is a mountainous frontier nudging the French border. This former rectory, dating from the 12th century, has been restored by the chef Roy Lawson, formerly of the Balmoral hotel, in Edinburgh, and his wife, Goretti, a Catalan whisky expert he met in the Scottish capital. The refurb exudes a roughly hewn feel, with exposed oak beams, monastic white decor and a menu that reflects Roy's Scottish roots, blending Catalan with the Clyde in dishes such as squid stuffed with black pudding. Doubles from £67, B&B; 00 34 691 353111, larectoriadesantmiquel.com

### 3 FOR NIGHTLIFE HOTEL PULLITZER, BARCELONA

Among the boisterous throngs of Las Ramblas and Placa de Catalunya, this sleek urban bolthole treads the fine line between stylish and informal with aplomb. Leather and wood abound, the lobby morphs into a bar and library area with blinding white sofas, and the 91 rooms are as snug as they are soundless. Begin your night with a cocktail or two at the rooftop bar, with thick wooden furniture, trellises and exuberant vegetation. It's more home-counties garden than urban hang-out. You could take one of the hotel's foldaway Brompton bikes as you head out into the sultry night, but the Raval district, on the other side of Las Ramblas, is an easy walk away — and bursting with cool nocturnal haunts. Doubles from £120, B&B; 00 34 934 816767, hotelpullitzer.es



# The hottest hotels and villas

Cool urban bolthole? Cottage for two in the mountains? Beachfront retreat? **Rob Crossan** knows all the best spots



### 4 FOR RELAXATION SIX SENSES DOURO VALLEY, VISEU

Set on the fringes of the Douro Valley, this is Six Senses resorts' first foray into the European market. The 57 villas, rooms and suites are built around a renovated 19th-century manor house, with views across vine-coated slopes to the lazy River Douro. The spa is as superb as you'd expect from these masters of pampered loafing, and there are local winemakers on hand to showcase the best varieties of this rich wine- and port-making region. Doubles from £192, B&B; 00 351 254 660600, sixsenses.com

### 5 FOR INDULGENCE ABADIA RETUERTA LE DOMAINE, CASTILE AÑO LEÓN

The medieval meets the postmodern at this 12th-century former abbey. Last year, the Abadía became the first hotel in Europe to offer Google Glass free to visitors, and its

cutting-edge credentials extend to the new El Santuario spa. Opening in the former stables in July, it will offer vinotherapy sessions, with a "spa sommelier" deducing your palate and prescribing the most effective treatment. You'll get to drink some of the stuff when you head to dinner at Pablo Montero's Michelin-starred in-house restaurant. Doubles from £280, B&B; 00 34 983 680368, ledomaine.es

### 6 FOR CULTURE URSO HOTEL, MADRID

This is the big new hitter in the Spanish capital, and its neoclassical frontage leads to 78 rooms decorated in muted grey tones, with marble bathrooms and huge windows that suck in the Iberian sun. Its restaurant, The Table By, features a rotating cast of Michelin-starred chefs; manning the stoves right now is Fernando Canales, of the Bilbao restaurant Etxanobe. Within walking distance are the baroque Museo de Historia



### 7 FOR WINE ESTALAGEM DE MONSARAZ, ALENTEJO

The popping of corks will drown out the ploughing of crops in Reguengos de Monsaraz, European Wine City 2015. Its focal point is the village of Monsaraz, a fortified settlement of just a few hundred people. Amid a garden filled with lemon trees, the whitewashed, two-storey Estalagem is built partly into the town's walls, and its rooms are stocked with charmingly creaky dressers and inviting beds. A short drive from the village is the property's vineyard, Herdade do Esporão, where tasting sessions are curated by the Aussie expat David Baverstock; don't miss the



### 8 FOR GREAT OUTDOORS LA ESCONDOIDA HOTEL & RESTAURANT, ALICANTE

Swapping the raucous roar of Wembley for the gentle rustle of olive groves, the former England and Barcelona boss Terry Venables is the gaffer at this former hunting lodge. Always one with an eye for a new signing, El Tel snapped up the property when it came onto the market and has turned it into a 10-room retreat with exposed beams and original masonry. Don't get too comfy: the Font Roja nature reserve is a playground for the active, with hiking, mountain-biking and riding among the extras on offer. Or, if retired-footballer activities are your bag, there's a great golf course nearby. Doubles from £134, B&B; 00 34 965 513046, hotelescondida.com



### 9 FOR FAMILY LA MANGA CLUB, MURCIA

This long-standing resort favourite now has extra appeal for any budding young Rory McIlroys, with the opening last November of its Golf Academy, which offers specialised tuition packages for children. This is all alongside a wealth of other junior academies in tennis, cricket, rugby and football. Don't worry about the young ones hogging the facilities: you'll have 28 tennis courts and three 18-hole golf courses to choose from. Doubles from £77, B&B; 00 34 968 175577, lamangaclub.com

### 10 FOR BEACH FUERTE DONI COSTA LUZ, CONIL DE LA FRONTERA

The Costa de la Luz is the better-looking, more refined brother of the Costa del Sol. La Fontanilla, a

archipelago, 35 miles from Santiago de Compostela, has won architectural awards for innovative design. Its sustainability credentials are certainly hefty — much of the house is made from recycled bateas, seaborne wooden platforms on which mussels grow. Inside, touches include a "boat therapy" bathtub, a teppanyaki table and underfloor heating. Sleeps 6; from £2,206 a week; 07460 815443, dezanove-house.com

### 12 FOR ART LOVERS CASA DALI, CADAQUES, CATALONIA

In the home village of Salvador Dalí, up near the French border, this colonial-style villa is more sybaritic than surreal, with views over a sleepy bay and a pleasingly laid-back air. The warren-like interior is all sloping beams, wrought-iron chandeliers and rustic farmhouse tables. Patio doors lead out into a garden awash with bougainvillea. Don't expect any original masterpieces in the small Museo de Cadaques nearby — but regular exhibitions explore Dalí's life and work. Sleeps 9; from £3,700 a week; 020 7351 6384, sjvillas.co.uk

### 13 FOR VIEWS TRUJILLO VILLAS, EXTREMADURA

Three hours from Madrid, but centuries behind in terms of development, Trujillo is a 16th-century time trap of crumbling castle walls and squat churches. These seven granite villas and studios, built into the old town's walls, are stylish and individual, with the Artists Studio the most bijoux. Prints by local talents should help bring out your inner Miró, while the views towards the Gredos Mountains from Villa Moritos may ignite a hitherto undiscovered passion for painting. Villas and studios sleep 2-10; from £330 for three nights; 020 7387 5345, trujillovillasespana.com

### 14 FOR CITY VIBE CASA DE PULPO, VALENCIA

You'll feel like a local if you stay in this three-storey townhouse in the fishermen's neighbourhood of El Cabanyal. Some of the best restaurants in town are on your doorstep — Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles used to frequent nearby La Pepica — and the local food markets and tapas bars teem with discerning foodies. Yet the quiet backstreet on which the recently refurbished "Octopus House" sits counts the number of tourists it sees in a year on one hand. Dust off your Spanish and the chances are no one will rumble you. The traditional facade belies surprisingly sleek decor, and there's a secluded terrace for a vino or two before you head to dinner. Sleeps 6; from £337 a week; 020 3384 2066, spain-holiday.com