

# Alcoba del Rey de Sevilla

Two lucky Costa del Sol News readers can win two night's bed and breakfast at one of Seville's most enchanting hotels

By Derek Workman

IT'S NOT my charm, and it certainly isn't my good looks, but both times I've arrived by car in Seville, trying to find a hotel I had booked but had no idea where it was, I ended up being escorted there.

The first time was by a police car that raced through the tiny back alleys with me trying to keep up. The second was when I stopped to ask a young man loaded down with books if he knew where Calle Becquer was, in La Macarena. He knew exactly where it was because he lived right next to it, and would show me if I gave him a lift. A fair bargain, and it saved him waiting for the bus.

The hotel had been booked through Rusticae, and although I had an address I had no idea what the hotel was like.

It was bound to be lovely, though, because they don't have a bad one on their books.

From the outside the Alcoba del Rey de Sevilla appears to be a pleasing 19th-century casa señorial, a nobleman's house, but as I stepped through the door I was transported to Morocco - and there's no-where nicer you can transport me to!

Alcoba del Rey is almost next to the basilica of Santa María de la Esperanza Macarena, home to the city's most revered religious image, the Virgen de la Macarena.



Rumaykiyya, at the time when Isbiliyya (the Arabic name for Seville) was the most important city of the ancient world - although I suspect Cordoba might contest the title, as they did, after all, have the Mezquita, and at one time was the centre of education and religion in Moorish Spain.

As I register I hear the tinkling of a fountain, and glimpse through the doors into the lounge, in what would have once been the patio de luces, the internal open-air patio that was essential to any Moorish home, where the family relaxed, away from the gaze of passers-by.

Many Sevillian homes of this period were influenced by Moroccan architecture and the original white marble pillars and ornately carved plaster arches rise three floors to the roof-top terrace. Pierced metal lamps

scatter the ceilings and walls with patterns of light.

Burnished stucco adds warmth and colour to the lovely spiral stairway, and is also used in most of the bathrooms.

The bedrooms each bear the name of someone of note from the Moorish period. I find myself in Rumaykiyya, named after the laundress. I'm not sure if I should feel slighted that my working-class background has been recognised or proud that I'm given a room dedicated to a lady from lowly status who later became the only legitimate wife of the king's large harem, and rose to become one of the most powerful



people of her time.

I choose the latter, although when I read a bit more about her history and discover that her caprices in later life became a torture to the poor king, I wasn't sure, although, bless them, they remained ardent lovers into old age. (The name of the hotel translates as the bedroom of the king of Seville.)

I'm in love with the style, and ask if I can have a look at a couple of the other rooms. When I get a view of the suite, with its draped four-poster bed and Jacuzzi tucked into its own domed hammam, I know exactly where I'll spend my honeymoon night - although that's probably a long way off yet, as I'm single. But I can dream, and this is the place to do it!

The fifteen bedrooms vary in size, and are all different in design, although they all have big beds covered with brightly coloured sabra silks, and those that don't have four-posters have richly painted and carved cedar headboards, tables, desks and chairs.

I've stayed in plenty of hotels that offer a pillow menu, but this is the first time I've stayed in one that offers an incense menu. For a mere 2.50€ I can have Spa Engorgising, with aromas of fruits and lavender, which gives back the energy I've lost during the day and can stimulate personal

relationships, (that would be useful if I had one). Or perhaps Cinnamon, an aphrodisiac with effects against diabetes and cholesterol, (high cholesterol I have, see above for the aphrodisiac).

Then again, I could choose Lavender, which brings good luck and harmony, and helps to solve problems, (that I could do with!). Or maybe Cannabis, the exotic fragrance of which helps me explore my deepest thoughts and desires, (probably best not). But if you really feel like relaxing you can simply book a masseur to come to your room.

Moroccan style has influenced a number of new small hotels, its richness of colour and fabric adding a delightful decadence. But if you don't fancy haggling with the wily salesmen of Marrakech, everything on display in the hotel is on sale.

I've heard this a number of times before, but in this case it's absolutely true, because Rafael Carrión, who's family own the hotel, spent two years working in Morocco, and when he got back to Spain, after developing a pretty good network of suppliers, he opened a shop selling Moroccan products.

Some of the furniture comes from Osuna, a small town near Seville, that has maintained a small number of workshops that still produce furniture based on the styles brought to Spain during the 700-year rule of the Moors. Hand-made basins of beaten brass, reproduction Victorian taps from India, lamps, crockery, mirrors, silk cushions, the ornate headboards, tables and chairs, you can buy them all, at about the same price you would pay in Morocco.

No rest for the wicked, I have to be up early for breakfast, which I take in a private dining area just off the lounge. (There's a bar, part of the hotel, that serves drinks and tapas with a touch of Morocco, for daytime eating and drinking.)

The cheery young receptionist switches on the fountain (which is more than the



poet-king, Al-Mutamid, could have done!) She sees I'm writing, and asks if the fountain will disturb me. I lived for six years in the Lake District, with a stream that ran right past my bedroom window. Tinkling can eventually become torture. She adds to the delight of my stay at Alcoba del Rey by switching it off, and returning us once again to a pleasing quiet.

For further information about Alcoba del Rey de Sevilla visit [www.rusticae.es](http://www.rusticae.es) or call 902 103 892.



Two lucky Costa del Sol News readers have the opportunity of winning two night's bed and breakfast at the hotel by simply filling in the coupon below and sending it (or bringing it in) to the Costa del Sol News office. All extra drinks and meals must be paid for separately, and the dates of the visit are by arrangement with the hotel. The winner must contact the hotel no later than two months from the date of winning to arrange their stay.



## WIN two nights at La Alcoba del Rey de Sevilla

LA ALCOBA del Rey de Sevilla has very generously offered one lucky CDSN reader and partner the chance to enjoy two night's free accommodation and breakfast at their wonderful hotel, to be taken, by arrangement with them. Just fill in your details below and send your envelope, marked Hotel Competition, to:

Costa del Sol News

CC Las Moriscas 13  
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The draw will be held on April 7 and the winner announced in our April 14 issue. Send as many coupons as you like! But no photocopies please.

**Conditions:** The prize is for two people to enjoy two night's bed and breakfast at the hotel. All extra drinks and meals must be paid for separately, and the dates of the visit are by arrangement with the hotel. The winner must contact the hotel no later than two months from the date of winning to arrange their stay.

This competition is not open to Rotativos del Mediterraneo SL/Noticias del Mediterraneo SL/Media SL staff or their families.

