

Europe



ANALYSIS FOR THE TELEGRAPH: SUE CALISTER

SPAIN

Continued from Page 13

CAN GAIÀ, MALLORCA

The quintessential Mallorquin hideaway: a dreamy, ochre-stone agriturismo in native gardens, a couple of miles from the sandy coves of the south-east coast. Inside is cool and high-beamed; 12 rooms and suites, some with green-shuttered windows, others with private terraces. In the morning, breakfast comes courtesy of the vegetable garden, served on the sun-dappled terrace beneath the pines. **Doubles from £85 (00 34 97116 2021; cangaià.com)**

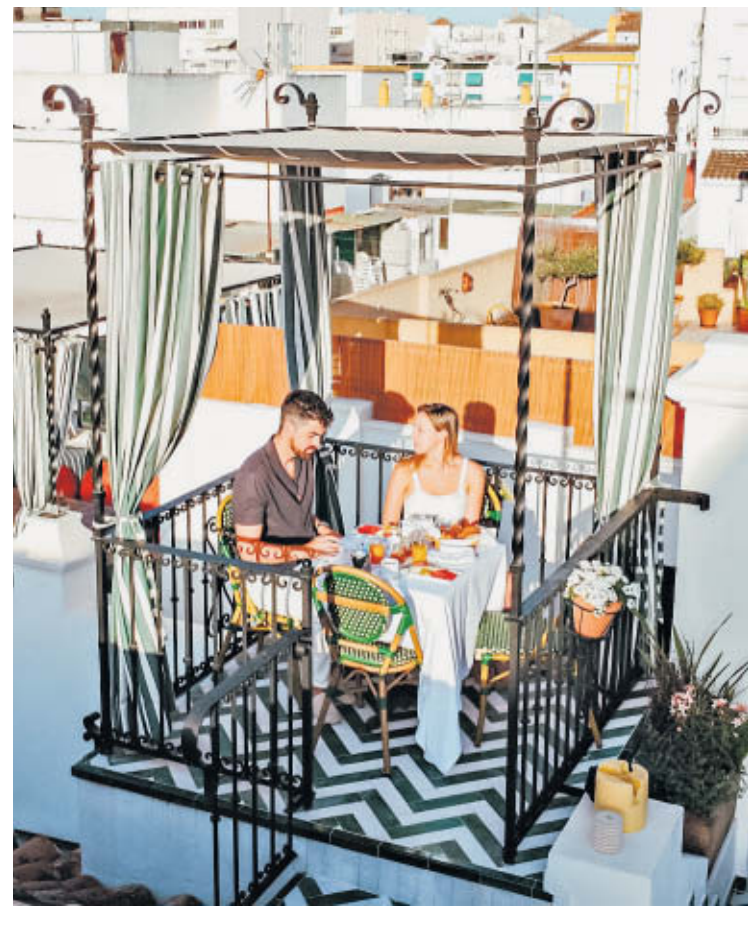
LOS JARDINES DE PALERM, IBIZA Ibiza is an island full of secrets, and Los Jardines de Palerm is one of them: a reimagined finca hidden amid the most glorious, jungly gardens, outside the village of San José. The 17th-century building has had a fresh, smart makeover, with cool, white, uncluttered rooms and wooden furniture, each opening onto a private terrace. Outside are two infinity pools and hip and chic, though hardly basic – rooms are bonkers-bold and fabulous, bathrooms dark and inviting, beds large and well dressed. There's a restaurant, too. **Doubles from £192, including breakfast (00 34 9718 00318; jardinesdepalerm.com)**

CHIC&BASIC HABANA HOOSE, BARCELONA

Imagine Vivienne Westwood let loose in a colonial Cuban casa and you'll have some idea of Chic&Basic Habana Hoose, in Barcelona's El Born neighbourhood. It's Scottish meets punk meets Cuba; it's young and hip and chic, though hardly basic – rooms are bonkers-bold and fabulous, bathrooms dark and inviting, beds large and well dressed. There's a restaurant, too. **Doubles from £72 (chicandbasic.com)**

CORRAL DEL REY, SEVILLE

Through a pair of those iron-studded doors that so intrigue in Seville,



▲ Breakfast of champions: Hotel Claude in Marbella
▲ Shades of blue: Can Gaià, also pictured on Page 13, is surrounded by pine forests

HOTEL CLAUDE, MARBELLA

It's easy to forget that Marbs, with all its glitzy five-star resorts, is in Spain's most fiery, passionate region of Andalucía.

Hotel Claude is a reminder of where you are – it's a classic 17th-century Andalusian house, once home to Eugénie, Empress of France, with a colonnaded Moorish courtyard at its heart, and galleries of upper floors leading to seven rooms, decorated with contemporary furnishings and irreverent art. **Doubles from £177, including breakfast (00 34 952 900 840; hotelclaudemarbella.com)**

HACIENDA DE SAN RAFAEL, ANDALUCÍA

This handsome hacienda, bougainvillaea clambering all over its lemon and white facade, still feels like a grand family home, though it took a 10-year restoration from neglected olive farmhouse to get there. There are inviting spaces indoor and out – cane chairs in a shady corner, dining tables in the courtyard, squishy sofas beside a fireplace, books, paintings, heirlooms and antique beds in the 14 rooms and casitas. Gardens are glorious: paths through towering oleander, arbours strewn with cushions, a mosaic-tiled pool. The kitchen serves simple, seasonal dishes beautifully cooked. Seville and Jerez de la Frontera aren't far, but it's tempting not to leave at all. **Doubles from £137, including breakfast (00 34 9542 27116; haciendadesanrafael.com)**

LA SERENA, ALICANTE

La Serena's rooftop, with its pool, terrace and bar, is an eyrie above the cobble backstreets of Altea's old town, with long-reaching views over tiled church domes and terracotta rooftops and, beyond, the Mediterranean Sea – the beach is just a few minutes' walk. There are 12 neutral rooms, some with private terraces, plus a small spa. **Doubles from £137, including breakfast (hotelleserena.com)**

HOTEL CORTIJO DEL MARQUÉS, ANDALUCÍA

There's a great sense of space at this thoughtfully restored Andalusian coun-



try estate. A pool terrace overlooks olive groves; rooms, set around the central courtyard, are large and lofty with the kind of bed you don't want to leave – though the location, outside Grenada and the Sierra Nevada, will do its best to lure you, whether that's for walking, Alhambra-touring, or riding through the mountains on bicycle or horse. **Doubles from £119 (00 34 9583 40077; cortijodelmarques.com)**

LA CASONA DE AMANDI, ASTURIAS Beside the Rio Villaviciosa nature reserve, La Casona de Amandi is a dreamy white 19th-century country house with glorious gardens. The surrounding Asturias countryside makes for great walking (the Camino de Santiago runs past) – or cycling or horse riding, which the hotel can arrange. Each of the 11 rooms differs wildly; most romantic is the Indiana, while others can accommodate families of four. **Doubles from £68 (00 34 9858 9341; lacasonadeamandi.com)**

CASA MORISCA, GRENADA

If you are in Grenada for the Alhambra – and who isn't? – you will love 14-room Hotel Casa Morisca. The 15th-century building is rich with scalloped arches, carved doors, a gallery and tiled courtyard – all giving the place a Moorish romance. **Doubles from £98, including breakfast (00 34 9582 21100; hotelcasamorisca.com)**

ITALY

ADASTRA, FLORENCE

An eclectic mix of modern and historic come together at AdAstra, a characterful 14-room hotel set within expansive gardens in the groovy Ultrarno neighbourhood. Design is bold and beautifully curated: mid-century flea market finds offset frescoed ceilings and antique chandeliers; books and fireplaces give it the feel of a new-generation aristocrat's apartment. Ineffably romantic in a wholly original way. **Doubles from £119, including breakfast (00 39 055 075 0602; adastraflorence.it)**

CASA OLEA, LAKE COMO

Superstars have been taking dips in Como's green-blue waters since the Golden Age of Hollywood. Italian nobility far longer, and its waterside villas tend to be five-star fancy. So three-star Casa Olea is quite the find – a 19th-century rectory, with 13 sophisticated, modern rooms, a pool and a garden, all overlooking the lake. **Doubles from £179 (00 39 0344 87352; casaeoleahotel.com)**

HOTEL GUTKOWSKI, SICILY

On the seafloor of Syracuse, Sicily's ancient isle where Archimedes had his bath-time Eureka moment, sky-blue Hotel Gutowski has been formed from two fishermen's houses. The 25 rooms are spartan-simple, decorated with bits of vintage furniture and, when you open the shutters in the morning, filled with dazzling light. After sundowners at its waterfront terrace bar, once the day trippers have departed, staying here feels like the real deal. **Doubles from £64, including breakfast (gutohotel.it)**

CONDOMINIO MONTI, ROME

Youthful spirit in the Eternal City? Converted from an early 1900s apartment block in Rome's boho Monti neighbourhood, whippersnapper Condominio Monti is refreshingly modern – velvet headboards, bold wallpapers, art-deco lighting – designed by two young locals, and there is an airy rooftop restaurant. **Doubles from £83, including breakfast (00 39 32049 4424; condominiomonti.it)**



HOTEL FLORA, VENICE

Venetian palazzo hotels without the palatial price tag do exist – if you know where to find them. Italy expert Merion Charles has a tip: three-star Hotel Flora, a 17th-century palazzo near St Mark's Square, run by the Romanelli family since the 1960s, whose passion for their city led them to create their Inside Venice guide for guests. The hotel's 40 rooms are Venice-ornate, with Canaletto-era beds and windows overlooking the rooftops or enchanting courtyard garden – where breakfast, drinks and lunch are served – hidden at Hotel Flora's heart. **Doubles from £171, including breakfast, via Merion Charles (00 39 0585 92098; merioncharles.com)**

HOTEL BRIOL, SOUTH TYROL

Back in the 1930s, the owner of this mountain refuge eschewed the trad chalet detailing in favour of clean-lined modernism, and today Hotel Briol cuts a sharp silhouette against the pine-forested slopes. Rooms are alpine-adorable – lots of hefty scrubbed pine and white linen, windows opening onto truly uplifting views, and air so clean you'll break into song. **Doubles from £102, half-board (00 39 4716 50125; briol.it)**

HOTEL PALAZZO VANNOINI, LEVANTO, ITALIAN RIVIERA

The ceilings steal the show at Palazzo Vannoni, in the old heart of Levanto on the Italian Riviera. The seaside town is just outside the Cinque Terre, making it a good base for exploring the candy-coloured coast on foot or by car. Levanto has its own smattering of pink and yellow houses, churches and castles, piazzas and restaurants – plus the only sandy beach on this stretch of coast. **Doubles from £137, including breakfast (hotelpalazzovannoni.it)**

LOGGIATO DEI SERVITI, FLORENCE

A 16th-century monastery on one of Florence's most splendid Renaissance piazzas is the setting for Loggiato Dei Serviti. A loggia sweeps across the front, while inside are vaulted ceilings, stone columns, beamed ceilings, with interiors to match, antique paintings, heavy wooden furniture, canopied and four-poster beds. **Doubles from £74 (00 39 0552 89592; loggiatodeiservitihotel.it)**

LA VECCHIO CONVENTO, APENNINES

Marisa and Gianni moved from Milan to the medieval village of Portico di Romagna in 1975, to run a 16th-century inn. Over the years they have renovated two more historic buildings, and turned the lot into a friendly, family albergo, with a restaurant that has a verdant sun-dappled terrace overlooking the sea, and, in winter months, roaring fires inside. **Doubles from £73, including breakfast (vecchioconvento.it)**

HOTEL CINCOTTA, PANAREA, AEOLIAN ISLANDS

Car-free Panarea is a gem of an island: unspoilt, beautiful, uncrowded – yet



▲ Eclectic: flea market finds meet frescoed ceilings at AdAstra in Florence
▼ Casa Olea on Lake Como

despite its rusticity, also rather stylish, thanks to the island's top address, Hotel Raya, with the only nightclub in the Aeolians. Hotel Cincotta, meanwhile, is altogether more low-key and laid-back, but still has a lovely pool, rooftop restaurant terrace, and knock-out views of the sea, with Stromboli smouldering on the horizon. **Doubles from £150 (00 39 0909 83014; hotelcincotta.it)**

TERU BOUTIQUE HOTEL, SARDINIA

In a village near the south-east coast, far from the swish golf resorts of the Costa Smeralda, Teku Boutique Hotel is small, stylish and independent, with 14 cool and contemporary rooms, and a sunny little garden out the back. **Rooms from £94, including breakfast (00 39 0782 29439; tekubotel.com)**

LA SETTIMA LUNA HOTEL, LIPARI, AEOLIAN ISLANDS

The action at La Settima Luna is all on the rooftop – bar, restaurant, pool and view – at this gleaming little hotel on Lipari, the largest of the Aeolian islands, with its extraordinarily turquoise bays. Bedrooms are slick and all-white, and the hotel offers a menu of spa treatments. **Doubles from £88 (la settimalunahotel.it)**

THE HOTEL STAR-RATING SYSTEM EXPLAINED (ALMOST)

Unless you are a hotel inspector, the star-rating system is completely unhelpful, and almost entirely meaningless. There is no European standard. "Comfort" is just about the only thing we can agree to expect.

► Portugal has invented 18 further ratings categories for holiday accommodation, besides the standard hotel category

► Spain goes by a points system that differs from region to region: to qualify as a three-star in the Balearic Islands, hotels require a dedicated porter and at least seven bedrooms; in Andalucía corridors must be 150cm (60in) wide

► In Italy the system is as perplexing to navigate as the roads in Naples. A lift and a large lobby area will win you stars... but that time-worn baroque facade turning pink in the setting sun, or bougainvillaea winding around the balustrades, owner swinging by with negronis on the house? Nul points.

► France is uncharacteristically straightforward, requiring simply an en suite, bedrooms of a certain size and a reception operated 10 hours a day by someone who speaks an additional European language – which you can expect to hear them using to reply to your abysmal French



FRANCE

LA MAISON DE LUCIE, HONFLEUR Hop across the Channel and you can be in Honfleur in time for lunch – which, on the Normandy coast, means oysters and a bottle of white. Tucked away in the medieval streets behind Honfleur's impossibly quiet harbour is La Maison de Lucie, a beautiful house that's furnished with antiques, warm colours and art all over the oak-panelled walls. Some rooms have terraces, others terrific views through shuttered windows that let in the light that drew Monet and Turner to this spot. **Doubles from £144, including breakfast (00 33 2311 44049; lamaisondelucie.com)**

HOTEL LE SUD, FRENCH RIVIERA Over the Cap From Antibes, the more down-to-earth Juan-les-Pins is home to Hotel Le Sud, a jewel of a Riviera three-star hotel. Inside its all-white simplicity with citrus zings of colour and bamboo furniture outside, there's a delicious little courtyard garden and deckchairs around a pool shaded by palms and pine trees. Settle in with Francois Sagan's 1954 *Bonjour Tristesse*, set right here. **Doubles from £69 or £91, including breakfast (00 33 4929 33260; hotellesud.com)**

LA PLANQUE HOTEL, PARIS

"The Hideaway" is right at home in the hip enclave between Belleville and the

Canal Saint-Martin. Interiors are beautiful, en-vogue-eclectic, mixing up jewel-coloured fabrics, brocantes and modern finishes. The former apartment block has 36 rooms upstairs and, in what was a sweet shop, a vibrant salon on the ground floor, with reception staff on hand 24/7 for insider tips on Paris. **Doubles from £124, including breakfast (00 33 1883 27315; laplanquehotel.com)**

L'ARLATAN, ARLES

When Van Gogh lived in Arles, he dreamed that the city would become a commune for artists. Some 130 years on, it has, with the opening of arts park Luma Arles, founded by Maja Hoffman – who also bought a tired hotel and commissioned Cuban artist Jorge Pardo to reimagine it. L'Arlatan is a masterpiece of form, colour and finish from top to toe. Staying here is like being immersed in an installation: enveloping halls of pure pigment colour, kaleidoscopic tiled floors from cocktail bar to outdoor pool, a filigreed spiral staircase cascading with laser-cut lanterns, plus artworks in each of the 34 bedrooms. **Doubles from £153, including breakfast (arlatan.com)**

HOTEL L'Océan, ÎLE DE RÉ

The village cottages of the Île de Ré lend themselves to a certain type of blue and white beach-breezy bolthole, and the island has a good selection to choose



▲ Taste of culture: even the food at L'Arlatan, Arles, is a work of art
▲ Cool off in the 'swish' pool at Les Florêts

from. Hotel L'Océan is a good bet, with its simple rooms and tongue-and-groove aesthetic, weathered pool deck and garden, a restaurant and, in high season, island-vibes barbecue terrace. Best of all, it's near Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré and the south-coast long, wild beaches backed by sand dunes. **Doubles from £79 (00 33 5460 92307; re-hotel-ocean.com)**

CHÂTEAU DE LA BOURDAISIÈRE, LOIRE VALLEY Your classic Loire Renaissance fairy tale: turreted on top, redly damasked

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