

TRAVEL

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Robb Recommends: Nobu Seville

The hotel group's foray into Spain's scorching south is an enticing hotspot for gourmands, historians and aesthetes alike.



Wandering aimlessly around the capital of Andalusia—one of life's greatest indulgences, even with the mercury nudging a lung-scorching 42°C, as it has frequently this summer—the stranger to Seville will notice the city's cryptic motto, 'NO8DO', embossed on drain covers, railings and other public fixtures. The '8' character represents a bundle of yarn ("a madeja" in Spanish), and so the whole rebus should be pronounced "no me ha dejado", or "It has not left me" in English: a reference to King Alfonso X's gratitude towards Seville for remaining loyal to him, and offering him shelter, when his son Don Sancho turned usurper in the late 13th Century.

The concept of hospitality, then, is woven into this sun-parched metropolis's history: so it was an apposite choice to become the setting for [Nobu Hospitality's second hotel in Spain](#) earlier this Summer, following the Barcelona branch's opening in September last year (another hotel has since opened in San Sebastián in July 2023, whilst a fourth is due in Madrid in 2024).



If there's one thing you can guarantee checking into any Nobu hotel—as well as incredible food and service, more on which later—it's that you'll be in a prime location. Chef Nobu Matsuhisa, Robert De Niro and Hollywood producer Meir Teper—who co-founded the Nobu Hotels brand in Las Vegas in 2013, —have, in the past, explained to Robb Report that growth of the business is organic: dictated entirely by the right properties becoming available in the right spots, as opposed to expansion being an end in itself.

And what premises they've found here. Lurking inconspicuously behind the orange trees on the Plaza San Francisco, facing the imperious City Hall, the hotel is overcast by the elongated shadow of the Giralda: an eight-centuries-old tower, dating back to the Iberian Peninsula's Moorish era but serving now as the cathedral's bell tower. If popular culture is more your bag, the adjoining Real Alcázar (Royal Palace) provided a setting for several scenes in *Game of Thrones* (fans will recall the scene in which Daenerys arrives at Dragon Pit to meet Cersei). Even those with only a cursory interest in history, though, will marvel at the Julius Caesar-built Roman wall—visible, via a glass floor, in a zone just off the ground level restaurant—that was discovered during the renovation of the two early 20th century residential buildings that make up this exceptional new addition to Nobu's hotel portfolio.



It wasn't just Roman handiwork that was left well alone during the most recent overhaul: the fine line between renovation and restoration was trodden carefully when it came to far more recent attributes, too, with the original central glass courtyard preserved, along with the stunning mosaics which flank the staircase. The resulting effect—minimalist, with flashes of flamboyance—is complemented by the oversized primitivist marvels-on-canvas, in scarlet, white and black, by post-modern Catalan artist Agustí Puig.

Spanish boutique design studio dAAr Arquitectura has breathed new life into the two buildings, both of which are former residences and one of which used to be a bank. In keeping with Nobu's cultural melding ethos, they've taken inspiration from the city's architectural heritage—with a remaining Mudejar influence alloyed with Gothic and Renaissance aesthetics—and Japanese culture. The 25 rooms' and suites' décor is eclectically styled—another Nobu trademark (“We have Nobu the way it is, and that's something to always hold on to: keeping that individuality,” as De Niro told us at the opening of the chain's Marrakech outpost earlier this year). In whichever room becomes, fleetingly, “home”, guests can expect to find clean lined minimalism, bathed in moody lighting and interrupted sparingly with handcrafted, statement wooden furniture. In the Nobu Suite (which we thoroughly recommend) walnut herringbone flooring juxtaposes elegantly with the deep indigo blues and greys, with bonus points awarded for the incredible rain showers, Eight & Bob toiletries and pair of balconies Juliet balconies, set within the air-conditioning's imperative influence, from which to watch street performers down on the square whilst sipping a Hokusetsu sake—Chef Nobu's choice of tipple from his native land.



Tempting as it is to remain ensconced in your suite—the laid-back hygge of the rooms, as well as Seville being located in the lower part of the Guadalquivir Valley, referred to by locals as “the frying pan of Andalucía”, both being factors—a visit to Seville is freighted with must-visit attractions. Dining, performance and exhibition centre Setas de Sevilla (“Mushrooms of Seville”) in La Encarnación, a square in the city’s old quarter, is a must for architecture buffs: designed by Jurgen Mayer, it claims to be the largest wooden structure in the world.

Elsewhere, visitors with leisure time will find Seville and its surrounds to be brimming with the kind of cultural fare immediately associated with the country within which it is the fourth largest city: Spain’s famous folkloric performance art emerged from the agrarian towns of Andalusia and Murcia, and finds a home just 500 metres away from Nobu at [Flamenco Theatre Seville](#); not much further away is—if you’re untroubled by the moral quandaries with which it is freighted—the 12,000-capacity bullring [Plaza de toros de la Real Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla](#). Sherry, of course, comes from the surrounding province of Jerez, and the city boasts 36 bodegas: or cellars devoted to making the fortified wine that has been a local liquid delicacy since the Phoenicians almost three millennia ago.

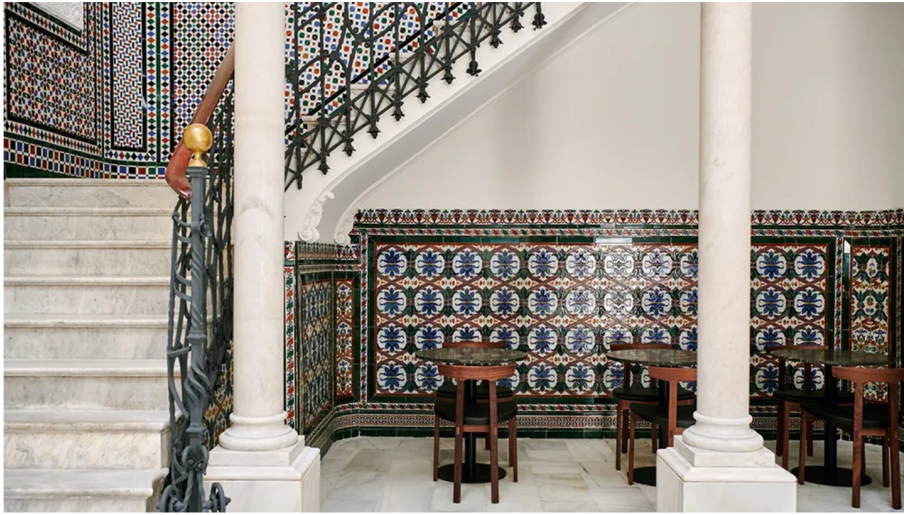


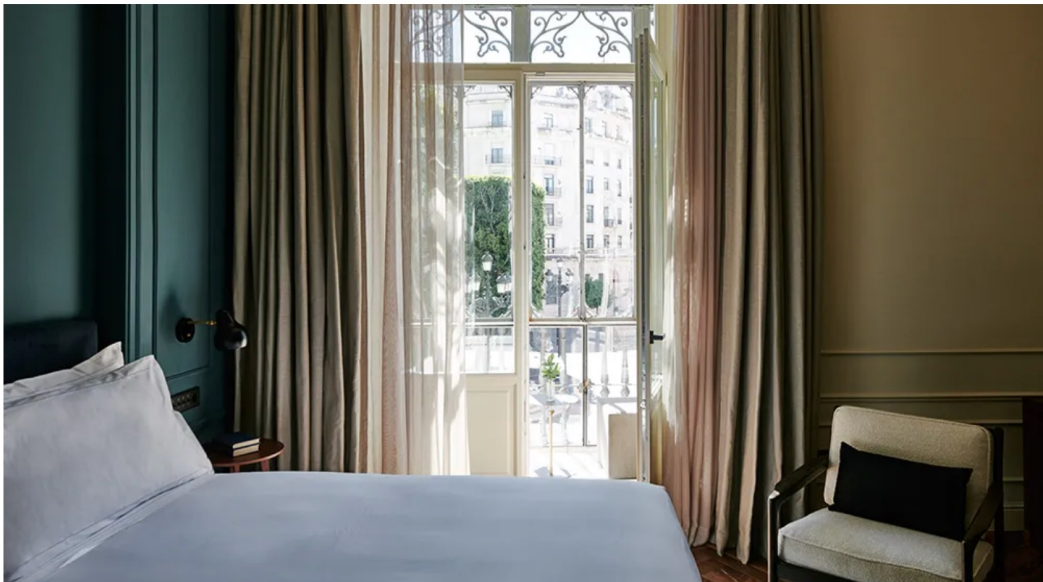
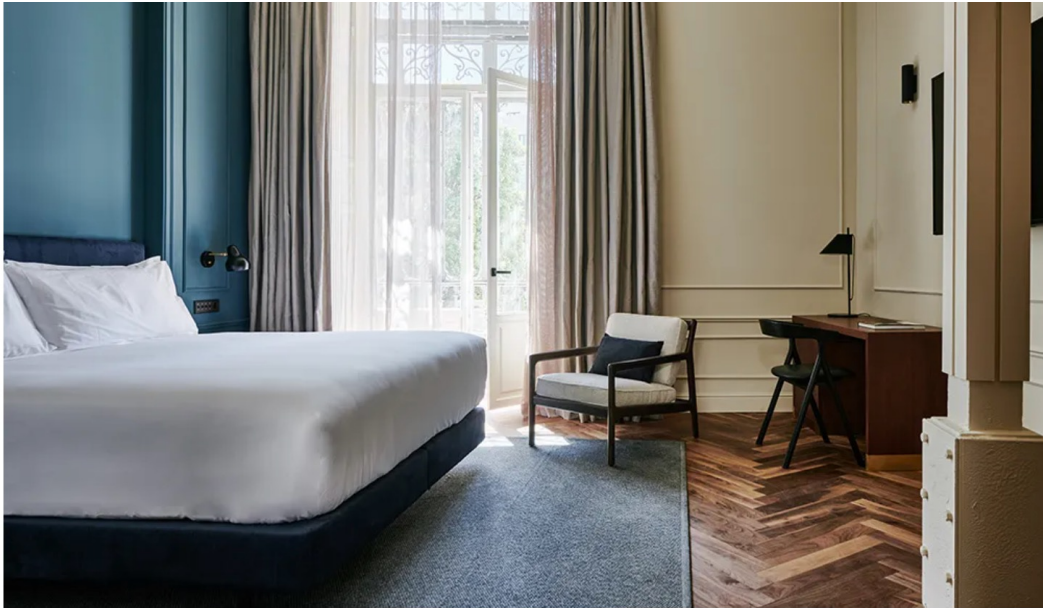
The city's Jacaranda-lined trees squares and serpentine streets are also home to endless tavernas and Michelin-starred gems including Ivantxu Espacio Bistrónomico (seafood in the style of Galicia, north-west Spain) and Ispal (the city's former name—hence the local flavours). Hotel guests with epicurean leanings, though, will struggle to leave the hotel: Chef Nobu's Japanese-Peruvian cuisine (he spent many of his younger years in Lima, developing a style based on not being able to source Japanese ingredients), finds eloquent expression here at the hands of Niclas Nussbaumer. Black cod miso and yellowtail sashimi are considered signature dishes; guests are advised, though, not to overlook the Toro Tartare with Caviar, the King Crab Tempura Amazu Ponzu or—arguably the kitchen's *pièce de résistance*—Rock Shrimp Tempura with Creamy Spice sauce, the shrimps for which have been sourced from a uniquely brackish patch of sea where freshwater meets saltwater, in the Gulf of Mexico.

The food—and the hotel experience more broadly speaking—is seasoned with a customer service approach that is friendly rather than fawning, as knowledgeable as travellers have come to expect in a five-star hotel in any major US city, but tinged with the affable Sevillian spirit.

It may well leave you hungry—literally and metaphorically speaking—for more. Sadly, the 550-mile trek north to Nobu's new venture in gastronomic hotspot San Sebastián seems a bit too taxing. In this heat, anyway.

See below for more images of Nobu Seville





<https://robbreport.co.uk/lifestyle/news/robb-recommends-nobu-seville-1234703672/>