

REVIEW:

First in: Nobu Hotel Sevilla

There's a cool new place to stay in Spain's prettiest city – we were first in to check it out

Reviewed by **NICOLA CHILTON**

Why book?

Seville is a city that seduces at first sight. With one of the best locations in town, the cool, calm Nobu Hotel provides the perfect position to fall in love with it all.

Set the scene

Seville is a stunner, but there's also a subtleness to it. Jacaranda trees fill its squares, convivial tavernas line narrow labyrinthine streets, and there's exquisite architecture at every turn. Rather than shouting about its beauty, Seville welcomes visitors with warmth and lets them discover how spectacular it is step by step.

The new Nobu Hotel Sevilla is similar, fronted by orange trees at numbers 11 and 12 on the Plaza San Francisco. It whispers rather than shouts its presence, even though its location is one of the best in the city's historical heart. Housed in two early 20th-century buildings that were once family residences, the 25-room hotel occupies the spaces with the unfussy interiors and relaxed mood for which the brand is known worldwide.

There are elegant arches, internal courtyards, detailed ironwork and those oh-so-Andalusian wall mosaics, and subtle nods to the city's signature Baroque, Mudéjar

and Gothic styles. The overall effect is soothing, balanced by Seville's rich artisanal heritage and Japanese minimalism.

The backstory

Founded by chef **Nobu Matsuhisa**, **Robert DeNiro** and Meir Teper in Las Vegas in 2013, the Nobu Hotel brand has grown to include 35 open hotels in development in just 10 years. Destinations as diverse as Chicago, Manila and **Santorini** are already home to Nobu hotels, and more are on the way in cities like Abu Dhabi, Bangkok and Rome. The new Seville hotel is the second in Spain after **Barcelona** and will be joined by two more – one in **San Sebastián**, opening July 2023, and another in **Madrid**, coming in 2024.

The rooms

Spanish design studio dAAr Arquitectura have breathed new life into the two buildings, inspired by the city's architectural heritage and Japanese culture. The interior designers created two subtly different narratives for the rooms, which remain minimalist and allow statement furniture pieces to stand out. Room layouts are primarily at the whim of the two buildings' original bones and can differ significantly.

The clutter-free interiors are a counterpoint to the handsome bones of the buildings. Accommodations facing the Plaza San Francisco take cues from classical materials, with moulded ceilings and walls, warm walnut herringbone flooring, and feature walls painted in bold **Japan**-inspired colours - matcha green, indigo blue, the grey of calligraphy ink. This is also prime people-watching territory. Not only do the large windows and balconies on some suites let Seville's plentiful sunlight flood in, but they also provide the perfect perches for watching the action in the square below.

Rooms overlooking Álvarez Quintero Street, to the rear of the building, are designed to have a feeling of warmth, with black marble in bedrooms and bathrooms and a black and grey colour scheme.

The smallest rooms measure a bijou 23 square metres, which is fine if you'll be spending most of your time exploring Seville's alluring streets, but if you plan on relaxing in your room, you may want to opt for more space.

The food and drink

At the heart of every Nobu hotel is its restaurant. And as impossible as it may seem to tire of Seville's excellent tapas if you find yourself craving a different flavour palette, the kitchen here can be relied on to serve up the classics which made Nobu famous.

Open for dinner daily except Monday; the restaurant menu incorporates the usual favourites – yellowtail sashimi with jalapeño, crispy rice with spicy tuna, the iconic miso black cod – as well as Grade A5 Japanese Wagyu and a multi-course omakase menu. Many ingredients are local, as is much of the fish, sourced daily from the market.

In the bar, fried squid with shiso salsa, chicken honey anticucho tacos and salmon karashi su miso skewers all pair perfectly with the well-curated selection of Spanish wines and sherries or with a glass of the Nobu exclusive Hokusetsu sake.

Up on the **roof**, which is also home to the hotel's sun terrace and plunge pool, the views from the Nobu Rooftop Bar are as Sevillian as they get, with the cathedral and its much-loved bell tower, La Giralda, almost within touching distance. On a warm evening, with swallows tearing through the sky, the sun setting over the rooftops, and an Andalusian Collins (a blend of sherry, triple sec and Sevillian orange blossom water) in hand, it's easy to find yourself falling head over heels for the place.

The service

Service here is friendly, knowledgeable and welcoming, just like the Sevillian spirit. The small lobby has a residential feel, and every time you enter or leave, the team greet you with a smile and is always ready to make personal recommendations about what to do, where to go and where to eat.

The neighbourhood

Slap bang in Seville's centre; you couldn't ask for a better location. Step out of the front door, and you're less than five minutes walk from the spectacular cathedral and the extraordinary Real Alcázar palace, a dazzling showcase of exquisite centuries-old **tilework**, carved plaster and palm-filled gardens. You'll practically fall over the excellent cafés, bars and tavernas that fill the neighbourhood around the hotel, and the Calle Sierpes shopping street, the spot to buy everything from traditional mantón scarves and fans to espadrilles, hats and ice cream, leads straight onto the Plaza San Francisco. The Guadalquivir River, loved by SUPers and kayakers, is less than 15 minutes away on foot, and the Plaza de España, whose fountains, porticos and colonnades provided the backdrop for the unveiling of Dior's 2023 Cruise Collection, is a lovely 20-minute walk away.

For families

While three connecting rooms and families are welcome here, it feels more like a hotel for a grown-up city break.

Eco effort

The builders of Andalusia's historical edifices knew how to take the edge off the extreme summer heat by creating cool courtyards, shading and harnessing air currents, and the hotel has kept those features in place. In addition, windows have climatic insulation to reduce heat input in summer and heat loss in winter. This feature not only helps to save energy but also reduces noise. As a result, even on a particularly festive night, the rooms facing the square are surprisingly quiet.

The hotel's other serious eco-efforts are energy-efficient LED lights with motion and presence sensors to reduce unnecessary consumption, taps fitted with aerators, and refillable cruelty-free bathroom amenities.

Accessibility for those with mobility impairments

The hotel has wheelchair-accessible lifts, bathrooms and refuge areas on all floors. While the hotel's layout means that there are plenty of staircases throughout, ramps and lifts ensure that every floor, up to and including the rooftop, is accessible by wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility. There's also a Grand Deluxe Suite with an adapted bathroom and free space to facilitate turns and allow for additional mobility needs.

Anything else to mention?

Look around the restaurant and the courtyard for the fragments of the third-century Roman walls discovered during the hotel's construction.

Is it worth it?

The starting rates feel fairly steep for the smallest rooms, but there are few better locations in the heart of Seville than this. If you're in the mood for a Sevillian splurge, fork out for one of the sunny rooms overlooking the square, and you'll be in one of the loveliest locations possible in this seductive city.

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