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THE VACATION REPORT

SUNSHINE SEVILLE

A mix of Moorish architecture, postcard-blue skies and abundance of traditional tapas make this Spanish city the perfect weekend getaway.

Words by Jane McFarland.



Once the heart of the Moorish empire, the sunny city of Seville has much to recommend it for a perfect weekend getaway. Not only is it a cultural haven for those wishing to indulge in Spanish traditions and awe-inspiring architecture, it's the perfect place for foodies, thanks to tasty tapas bars on every street corner. Autumn is a lovely time to visit; the tourist crowds have dwindled but the temperatures are still warm – ideal for leisurely exploration.

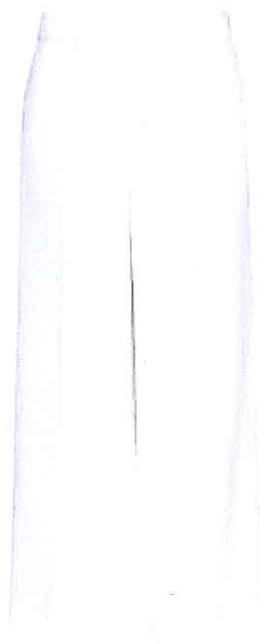


Corral del Rey.

DAYTIME ELEGANCE



ISABEL MARANT
Pilay long-sleeved silk blouse
€490



BARBARA CASASOLA
High-rise crepe culottes
€690

RUNWAY



MARNI
Trunk bi-colour leather shoulder bag
€1,300



NEWBARK
Roma III leather sandals
€362

STAY

Seville doesn't really do hip hotels, but the intimate Corral del Rey (corraldelrey.com) comes

close. Located on a winding lane in the Alfalfa district (finding the hotel's medieval wooden doorway may require a second look), the restored, 17th-century *casa palacio* is within walking distance of the Giralda tower, Cathedral and Alcazar – three of Seville's must-visits. The hotel's 13 rooms are split across two buildings, each incorporating clean, sandstone interiors with traditional Andalusian features such as original Doric columns, carved Moroccan mirrors and exposed wooden-beamed ceilings. From the crisp white bedding to walk-in rain showers, Corral del Rey provides quiet respite from the busy streets, but it's still a visual experience; the hotel's expertly curated artwork – all by local artists – is mostly on sale. When the city closes down for its daily siesta, head to the hotel's rooftop patio. It is modest in size, but perfectly proportioned with a small plunge pool and loungers; ideal for a sundowner (the espresso martinis are particularly excellent) and panoramic views of the neighbouring rooftops.

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SEE

Easily explored on foot, Seville is peppered with spectacular architecture. The first thing to remember when navigating the narrow alleyways? Always look up. With the mix of Moorish, Renaissance and Baroque buildings, there is no shortage of inspiration for home décor. From paint-drenched walls and flower-filled plazas to the geometric *azulejos* (ceramic tiles) that Seville is famous for, I challenge anyone to visit this city and not return wanting to redecorate their entire home. Getting lost is inevitable, but each corner presents something new to look at, and a taberna to have a drink in. Find your way to the Santa Cruz quarter, the city's old town, via cobbled streets and the Alcazar Palace (alcazarsevilla.org). Constructed in the 17th century by the Arabs, it became a royal residence in 1248 and today is Seville's most popular attraction. Set aside two to three hours to explore the sublime series of rooms with intricately carved wooden ceilings, wall-to-floor tiling and vast, manicured gardens. Equally impressive, but on a smaller scale, is the lesser-known Casa de Pilatos, located in the north of the city. The haunting 15th-century mansion, still occupied by the ducal Medinaceli family, is the perfect example of a traditional Andalusian palace and, fortunately, can be explored in peace. Seek shade from Seville's scorching sun (try to avoid summer months, when the heat is unbearable for most) under J. Mayer H's Parasol Metropol, which dominates the Plaza de la Encarnacion. For some locals it's an eyesore, for others, an architectural icon, but either way, the wooden waffle-like structure requires a visit. Climb to the top for a 360-degree view of the city. Finally, cross the Guadalquivir river to the bohemian neighbourhood of Triana, home to flamenco dancing and local artisans. Drop into Centro Ceramica Triana (ceramicatriana.com), an old tile factory turned museum, before a quick bite at the newly-renovated food market – a must stop for local, fresh produce.

