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Spain

The magnificent seven

Liz Rowlinson examines how the once super-luxury resort of Sotogrande, now under new ownership, is returning to its former glory with cutting-edge new development

THE Spanish resort of Sotogrande has not been especially fashionable in recent years. Like its glitzy neighbour Marbella, it was hit hard by the Spanish property crash and, as newer, more cutting-edge high-end resorts sprang up elsewhere, it fell off the radar of high-net-worth individuals who were seeking privacy and exclusivity.

However, 2014 heralded a new chapter for Andalusia's largest resort, an almost 5,000-acre piece of prime coastal land near Gibraltar that stretches back to the Sierra Almenara mountains. The 52-year-old resort was acquired by Cerberus Capital Management and Orion Capital Managers from the NH Hotel Group for €225 million and new CEO Marc Topiol has begun to turn things around.

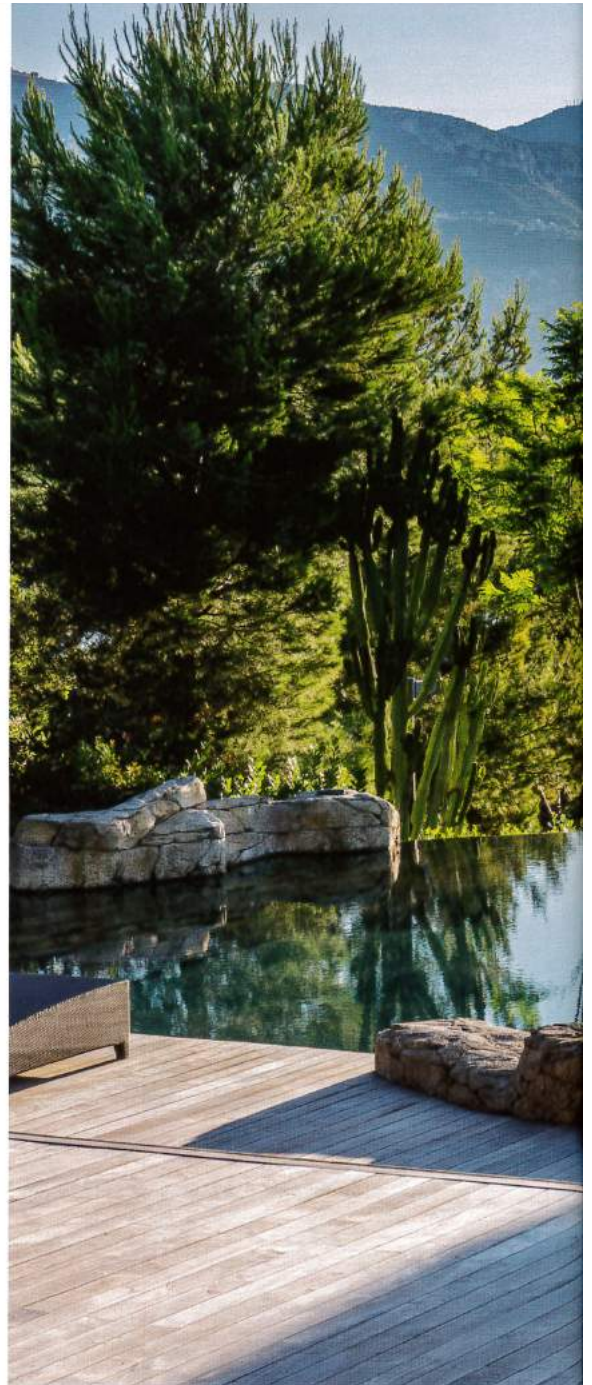
'Sotogrande has a large number of residents who had been there 40 or 50 years, but it needed to adapt to attract new generations,' says Mr Topiol, who previously worked for the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotel groups. 'I wanted to reintroduce the idea of community living with a strong sense of security—the resort is so huge that families have to get in the car to reach the beach.'

Thus, at La Reserva Club, the highest point of the resort, close to the popular Sotogrande International School (expanding this year) and La Reserva Club golf course, Mr Topiol has created a 'secluded within secluded' environment.

The 1,480-acre gated community of La Reserva will include 400 properties with a new beach club, children's club and watersports hub based around a new manmade sandy lagoon, wellness spa, padel-tennis centre and restaurants.

Along with El Mirador's six new plots for design-and-build homes with prices from €5.8 million, there will also be a collection of new villas of the type Sotogrande has never seen before—the Seven, a septet of stand-out 2,000sq ft-plus homes on the hill, each individually designed by leading architects, including Brazilian Studio MK27, Norwegian Jensen & Skodvin and London-based Gumuchdjan Architects. The striking designs start from €13.5 million (www.7sotogrande.com).

For those with smaller budgets, there are Andalusian-style town houses from €550,000 in the existing Los Cortijos village nearby or five-bedroom resale villas from about €1.8 million.



To build on the resort's success as a top sporting venue, along with five championship golf courses including Ryder Cup venue Valderrama, the best polo fields in Europe and a good tennis academy, there will be a host of new facilities and a calendar of events to attract a younger demographic. These have included the inaugural Grand Prix—100 classic cars arrived in the marina from Seville—following GC32 high-speed catamaran racing last year.

There are also regular cocktail par-

Privacy and exclusivity are the order of the day at the reinvigorated Sotogrande, although there are plenty of activities if you're feeling sociable

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ties, jazz nights, fitness boot camps and detox retreats. Certainly, the beaches have never been so full as this summer, says James Stewart, a Savills associate who's been there for 35 years. 'The beach bars are packed, buyers are getting younger and the price of plots has doubled since 2014,' he says.

It seems Sotogrande is worth another look. 🐦

For further information, visit www.lareservoclubsotogrande.com or telephone 00 34 856 560 922



← From **€13.5 million**

The Seven, a collection of villas at La Reserva Club, includes this striking design by Fran Silvestre Arquitectos, inspired by the gorges and cave homes of nearby Granada (www.7sotogrande.com)