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The New Managing Editor at CP magazine

MARC TOPIOL

"With The Seven we conceived the idea of a one-of-a-kind community by having seven of the world's leading architects work on developing a villa each"



Amidst olive groves, palm trees and the undulating 18-hole golf course, Sotogrande and La Reserva Club curates the finest of Andalusian experiences for adventurers and luxury travellers, golf enthusiasts and sun-seekers. Marc Topiol, the man behind this extraordinary luxury residential and leisure destination, has extensive experience, more than 25 years as an advisor for strategic and business plans, acquisition and sale of assets and development and asset management at an international level. We meet the CEO of Sotogrande to learn more about this project.

www.lareservaclubsotogrande.com

City Pages Magazine: Sotogrande was established by American entrepreneur Joseph Rafael McMicking y Ynchausti and his wife Mercedes Zobel de Ayala y Roxas as a private enclave inside a private world in the 60s following the dream of turning it into one of Europe's leading luxury residential and leisure destination. What's the current situation of this real-estate development?

Marc Topiol: I think that 60 years later the Sotogrande brand is established and the community is settled; and that's the way of the place as it was intended; offering the best of the simple things in life for family, as well as luxury. We provide a playground where people seem to have a life of comfort within themselves and I'm sure from wherever he's looking down from, Mr McMicking must be pleased with the evolution and passing of generations. We're now entering, in some cases, the third generation of residents taking advantage of the amenities and residences that are being developed in what is now a one-of-a-kind sports and leisure enclave in the south of Europe. What's more, it benefits from year-round sunshine, which helps it stand out as an attractive place among many great offerings in the Mediterranean coast that might be more seasonal.

Maybe you could say that McMicking wouldn't have foreseen or quite realised the sheer size of the destination, which is basically now a town with world-class amenities in sports and leisure, with a diverse food offering and 7,000 homes – and can now claim to be the largest private estate in Spain.

CPM: Located in San Roque, for those who are not familiar with Sotogrande and southern Spain, can you let us know about this specific part of Andalusia?

MT: In this specific part of Andalusia, we are not overdeveloped. We are, in lots of ways, the complete opposite of what you can find along the coast because, historically, it was very hard to get to Marbella so Sotogrande was set apart from it culturally. This is one place where population density does not exist. Everything is green! Other than that, in Sotogrande the feeling of being close to nature is of paramount importance. It is front and centre in all sport and leisure activities, which could be as simple as taking a walk in our 1,500-hectare green reserve. So, it's that aspect that clearly stands out as unique in the area, on top of our authenticity driven by the fact that it is a residential destination with only 300 hotel rooms and five villages around which makes it feel very local. We are not a touristic place, though tourism hot spots and history, such as the white village of Ronda, are just around the corner.

CPM: Buyers are requesting contemporary architecture, which pushes the boundaries and offers comfortable and luxurious family homes built with comfort and their very core. New developments are now being created to meet these needs in the final chapter in the Sotogrande story: La Reserva Club Sotogrande. What is the concept behind it?

MT: Well, the concept of La Reserva Club and our private gated communities, that we have conceptualised, can be summarised in a few key elements. One is for people to be protected, to be nourished and have access to health-related infrastructure if something happens. Before we launched our private gated communities: The Seven, The Fifteen, El Mirador, The Lagoon Villas there was just one similar in Sotogrande. Now, privacy and security is widely available due to our new residences. This concept of gated space where no one can knock at our door and you can create a neighbourhood and live in complete privacy and security can only be found in one other place in Sotogrande in an area called Altos de Valderama. All other communities are open because the roads in Spain are public. We have been able to create some private zones and I think this is the most important element in terms of the real estate we are offering – whether it's in our community properties starting at €800,000, all the way up to 'The Seven' starting at €7,000,000. The concepts of neighbourhoods and convenience are crucial to what we're offering, as being part of these gives you access to La Reserva Country Club which offers an array of amenities that only such a community can get privileged access to.



CPM: Some call it 'Spanish Venice', 'Little Beverly Hills'... How does La Reserva Club Sotogrande make a difference in luxury living in the region?

MT: The Spanish Venice is more related to the Sotogrande marina as, like in Venice, you can have your boat right in front of your property. To be honest I have never heard of the Little Beverly Hills reference but, clearly, McMicking came from California and the first district of Sotogrande was developed with Sunset Boulevard in mind. La Reserva district comes with sea views and the amenities of a world-leading country club, and managing this in its entirety has clear benefits, as we are able to control the quality of the entire offering, from the houses and the gated community to the leisure and sports facility. We are owners of hotels and hospitality and elements in retail, rather than just residential developers, therefore we are able to offer long-term services, which adds to the quality of life of all our residents.

CPM: The Seven is a collection of one-of-a-kind homes crafted by world-renowned landscape architect Jean Mus. Can you tell us more about the development of The Seven? Why did you choose Jean Mus to lead the project?

MT: The Seven is the penultimate gated community that Sotogrande SA has been engaged in as part of brining gated community concepts to the area. With The Seven we conceived the idea of a one-of-a-kind community by having seven of the world's leading architects work on developing a villa each. With Jean Mus overseeing the project, he is one of the best-known landscape architects around and the more subtle elements of his designs revolve around the concept of importing the finest elements of Provence to Andalusia. Jean Mus comes from Grasse, and his work is very much inspired by Provence. We've found this is something, which resonates with the families we are trying to attract to our communities. If we can provide a mystic sense of Provence, combined with an essence of its history, with the associated discipline in the landscaping then this will simply be a continuation of us being first in what we do. If our guests get the sense, visual and smell of Provence, it will hopefully generate a memorable reaction and entice them to keep spending time with us. We want to extract what Provence means and bring this to The Seven without it feeling fake or like an imitation. This is why we chose Jean.

CPM: A message for our readers in City Pages Kuwait?

MT: We look forward to hosting you, and hopefully when you are in Europe you will make a small detour to come and see us and discover the experiences we have to offer in Sotogrande and the destination as a whole. Most of all, we wish you a safe transition into post-Covid life and hope your 2021 is both healthy and prosperous.

