

travel



ROOM TO RELAX: The Casa de Carmona

A touch of old world Spain is just right for 21st century traveller

As we walked down the street the neon light on the Farmacia flashed up the temperature. Even though it was 8pm it was still 40C.

The sun was beginning to drop in the sky but the searing afternoon heat still hung in the air, the temperature showing no sign of dropping.

It was no wonder the town was almost deserted.

We meandered along the narrow cobbled streets towards the town square drawing strange looks from the signors and signoras sitting in the windows of the houses that we passed sheltering from the heat – the very fact that we had ventured out marking ourselves as strangers to the town.

The streets opened out into Carmona's town square.

Surrounded by small shops and quaint tapas bars and with benches

Emma Dance and Neil Rose basked in the heat of central Spain in a town near Seville. Neil Rose took the pictures

shaded by trees it was quintessentially Spanish.

A couple of old men were sitting outside one of the bars sipping cold beers. Waitresses hung around the

doorways waiting for customers and four signoras sat in the shade fanning themselves as they talked.

We selected a table outside and, in woefully inadequate Spanish, ordered our drinks, the waitress trying to talk to us and then smiling sympathetically at our blank-looking faces.

As the sun set and the dusk brought with it a balmy coolness, the square began to get busier. Children began a ball game as their parents gathered to share an evening meal.

It was as if the town had awoken and the heavy cloud of sleep had lifted, revealing a vibrant, almost party-like atmosphere.

We may not have been invited, but no one minded us being there.

Later we returned to our hotel.

The Casa de Carmona sat nestled among the winding streets, grand, but at the same time fitting in perfectly with the town – not surprising given its history.

The Casa was built in 1561 as the home of a wealthy, land-owning, aristocratic family.

In 1987 it was bought by the Guardiola family who turned it into a luxury hotel, which opened in 1991.

The hotel is still run by the family, with Felipe on hand to greet guests. This is very much part of the charm of the hotel, and staying at the Casa feels like staying at someone's home, with comfortable furnishings and plenty of space to relax.

The rooms are laid out around a central patio, shaded by a canopy which sends a warm orange glow throughout the hotel, and breakfast is served in the Loggia, a bright and airy room with large doors opening



TYPICALLY SPANISH: The central patio at Hotel de Carmona

on to the swimming pool.

The pool was the perfect place to spend the afternoons, the cool water providing a welcome contrast to the blazing sun and the small patio, shaded by an orange tree with a fountain babbling in the background a lovely place to relax with a book or just soak up the sun with a glass of wine.

Just a 30-minute drive from Seville, Carmona is an idyllic small, Spanish town and the ideal place to discover the Andalusian

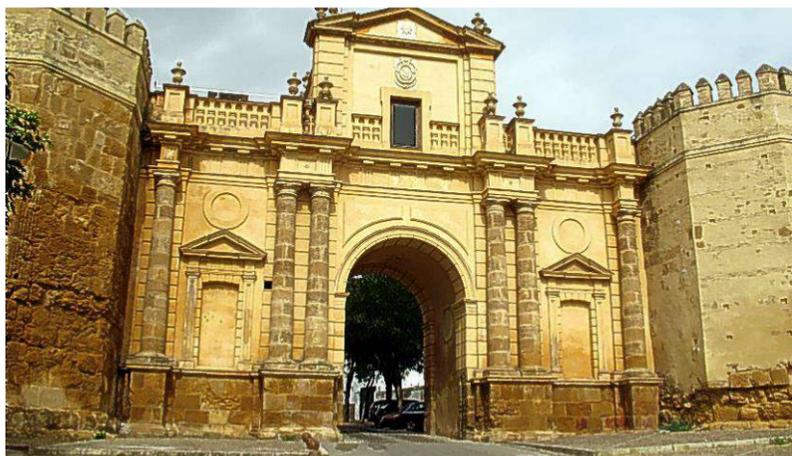
way of life.

The town is easily explored on foot and everywhere you go the people are friendly and welcoming.

Something about it is very special, and I know that I will never forget it.

Rooms at the Casa de Carmona start from around £110 a night for a double room.

For more details and to book visit www.casadecarmona.com or email reserve@casadecarmona.com.



ANCIENT SPLENDOR: The town gates at Carmona



OLD WORLD: One of the many winding streets in Carmona