



Rosewood Villa Magna

MADRID

Rosewood debuts in the Spanish capital with the transformation of a beloved establishment in the Salamanca neighbourhood.

Words: Agnish Ray
Photography: Courtesy of Rosewood Hotel Group

In September 2021, a glittering collection of over 3,000 pieces of decoration, furniture and fine art went up for sale at Spanish auction house Ansorena, including originals by artist Javier Solís and designer Tomás Urquijo. The catalogue belonged to Madrid's Villa Magna hotel, a beloved establishment that has stood in the swish Salamanca neighbourhood since 1972.

Spanish newspaper El País reported that among the items going under the hammer were objects used by the likes of Gregory Peck, Julio Iglesias, Madonna and Tom Cruise. It gives a flavour of the guests that have passed through Villa Magna's doors over the decades, who also include royal families from Jordan, Belgium and Holland, housed here during the wedding of Prince Felipe and Letizia Ortiz in 2004.

The hotel had, however, been closed ever since Spain's first lockdown in March 2020. With the much-talked-about auction in the Autumn, it was out with the old and in with the new, as Villa Magna returned the following month in a new incarnation under the management

of Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, marking the brand's debut in the country.

Entering its new chapter, the refurbished property has opted for smart and stylish over fuss and frills. Australian design practice Bar Studio – based between Melbourne and Madrid – was appointed for the makeover, producing a sophisticated destination that houses 154 guestrooms, 53 of which are suites.

In the Grand Premier Castellana room, the black-and-white zigzag pattern of Alarwool's carpet contrasts with a deep blood-orange wall, which is complemented by leather touches in the form of a charcoal green headboard, burnt orange chair and brown bed bench. The curved edges of the bedside tables add a retro feel, while the bathrooms – complete with toiletries by French beauty brand Maison Caulières – feature a cool and contemporary pale marble.

Downstairs, the designers wanted to create openness between the spaces, expanding previously small and partitioned areas to create visual connections from one side of the



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hotel to the other. “One of the key elements was to connect indoor and outdoor,” explains Maria Garcia-Arribas, Director of Bar Studio’s Madrid office. “We opened up views with glass connections. Now there are layers in the hotel that guests want to explore.”

The practice also believed it was important to establish a residential atmosphere, which they see as one of the defining features of the Rosewood aesthetic. As such, Garcia-Arribas explains that the team installed new fireplaces to act as “elements of gathering”, used soothing piedra de campaspero limestone in the entrance areas, and added petrol blue lacquered timber wall panels for a pop of colour in the lounge and library. Contemporary chandeliers throughout also feature stained-glass baubles hanging in bunches from bronze stems.

At one end of the parlour sits in-house patisserie, Flor y Nata, where dark timber cabinets and crisp white marble counters reflect the design of Madrid’s traditional pastry shops, according to Garcia-Arribas. Baking goods like

cocoa, nuts, berries, meringues and macaroons are on display in jars around the workspace, where chefs prepare desserts and pastries for both hotel guests and walk-ins.

Across the front of the property is all-day dining venue Las Brasas, whose three sections can be joined or separated by the sliding partitions and retractable blinds. Floor-to-ceiling and windows provide views of the hotel’s front garden while diners enjoy recognisable but refined Spanish favourites, from grilled Atlantic octopus to Iberian pork shoulder, or classics like ensaladilla Rusa – Russian salad, a Spanish staple – enlivened by the addition of prawn carpaccio and dollops of fish roe.

The star attraction of the gastronomy offer is Amós by Jesús Sánchez, whose three-Michelin-starred flagship restaurant is located in Villaverde de Pontones in northern Spain. The new outpost marks Sánchez’s debut in Madrid and offers diners a flavour of the hilly, coastal region of his award-winning original establishment, with Esencia and Memoria





tasting menus serving dishes from pigeon pâté, Cantabrian anchovies and seafood ravioli to caramelised duck, hake loin with cockles and beef tenderloin with a Picón Bejes-Tresviso blue cheese sauce. Topping things off is a fig tart named after the chef's daughter and a crumbly almond cake with a velvety liquid inside.

Over in the Tarde.O cocktail bar meanwhile, the lights are dim and romantic while the glossy, reflective finish of a lacquered ceiling catches the flicker of candles and softly shaded lamps, complemented by furniture in a moody palette. Continuing the theme, the doors are lined with silvery embossed leather, while a large mirror – treated with acid to create a muddy, antique and damaged effect – spans the wall behind the bar. On the menu, Head Barman Carlo Proverbio has crafted several cocktail lists, including one devoted to the negroni. Each version pays tribute to a place he has lived, from his Italian birthplace of Alba – a negroni infused with truffle – to Madrid's Salamanca neighbourhood, a negroni sweetened by madrone berries.

Rosewood Villa Magna arrives hot on the heels of several luxury openings in the Spanish capital, including Ritz Mandarin Oriental and Four Seasons. With Edition and JW Marriott properties on the way, the city's surge in high-end hospitality is persisting despite the pandemic, meaning competition is fierce.

General Manager Charles Morris, who has taken charge of Villa Magna since 2011, says the hotel has always been a favourite for Latin American, Mexican and Hispanic travellers, and is certain that the new offering will continue appealing to those markets. "We have a lot of repeat clientele and we expect them to return," he explains. "And, of course, there's our local community, which I think will only blossom."

Recent openings have certainly raised the bar for the city's hospitality scene, though Morris believes that this is just the beginning. "We want the luxury traveller to think of Madrid as a top destination, in the same way they think of Paris and London," he confirms. "We hope that this is the start of something very special."



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Owner: RLH Properties

Operator: Rosewood Hotel Group

Architecture: Ramon de Arana

Interior Design: Bar Studio

www.rosewoodhotels.com