



Mongibello

IBIZA

Concept Hotel Group brings a taste of Amalfi to the Balearics, opening a dazzling property that marries the best of both regions.

Words: Agnish Ray • Photography: © Adam Johnston

Italian architect Gio Ponti left an inimitable impact on Mid-Century European design, epitomising the rational, functional vision of Modernism while adding bursts of personality and playfulness. He is best known for buildings like the Pirelli Tower in Milan and the Concattedrale Gran Madre di Dio in Taranto, but he also designed a hotel – Parco dei Principi in Sorrento, a landmark for design lovers holidaying on the Amalfi Coast.

Covered in blue and white tiles, the property was an homage to the dazzling myriad of colours in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Its opening in 1960 came as the region of Italy became an unmissable stop for glamorous jetsetters, artists and filmmakers, offering a mix of natural beauty and enchanting luxury. When Diego Calvo, CEO of Ibiza-based Concept Hotel Group, stayed at the property in April 2021, he was taken by the distinctive spirit and aesthetic of the area.

Calvo says that thinking of the Amalfi Coast in the '60s conjures a sense of elegance, freedom and rebellion. He travelled around towns such

as Ravello, Capri and Positano, photographing details of style, design and architecture, which sparked his desire to replicate something similar on his home island.

The result is Mongibello, a coastal property located near the town of Santa Eulalia, that aims to replicate the glamour and decadence of the dolce vita on the Balearic Sea. "I had the concept in mind for a long time, but I needed to find the right location," says Calvo. The setting of Mongibello's site against a mountain on Calo de s'Alga bay reminded him of a landscape like Positano, so it made for the perfect spot.

The Italian theme is clear on arrival, with a giant Testa di Moro – an iconic symbol of Sicily – set in the middle of a fountain. So too is Calvo's fondness for vintage automobiles, with an Alfa Romeo Spider and red and white Vespa scooter sitting either side of the doorway.

Inside, the blue and white tile pattern wrapping the reception and lobby areas recalls Ponti's iconic azulejos at Parco dei Principi. The contemporary reinterpretation of the original is



Throughout the guestrooms and public spaces, blue and white tiles recall Gio Ponti's iconic azulejos at Parco dei Principi in Sorrento

designed by Madrid-based studio Ilmiodesign, run by Italian duo Michele Corbani and Andrea Spada. The pair have also placed Ponti's furniture designs throughout, including chairs by Molteni&C in the lobby.

The studio's architectural intervention in what was previously another hotel, entailed bringing more natural light into the ground floor. "Before, it was totally closed off to the outside," explains Spada, "We wanted to open the lobby up to the pool area at the rear. Now, when guests enter the reception, they can look straight towards the pool and the sea."

The colour theme of the pool area – most striking when viewed from the room's balconies above – is also blue and white, this time with a wavy pattern found in the tiles. Eye-catching stripes are repeated as a motif across the property too: "When you go to an Italian beach, it always has striped huts and umbrellas," says Espada. "It's a typical pattern, particularly in localities like Amalfi and Liguria."

The romantic, indulgent essence of the Amalfi

Coast continues through photographs captured by artists like American photographer Slim Aarons, one of Calvo's favourites. His works are displayed across the hotel's lounge areas, depicting sun-kissed bodies reclining languidly on sea fronts, by pools or on yachts. In the Art of Living corner, guests can flick through books about photography, design and architecture, or spin a vinyl on the record player.

Overlooking the bay, diners at La Terraza can also enjoy a Mediterranean menu with Italian touches, from pastas like trofie and caserecce to tiramisu, risotto and Aperol Spritz. Bar Aperitivo acts as the daytime restaurant, offering tributes to the sea including grilled octopus, steamed mussels and yellowfin tuna.

Before co-founding Concept Hotel Group in 2013, Ibiza-born Calvo worked for NH, Marriott and Hilton. His homegrown firm has carved out a distinctive space on the island, drawing in fun-loving crowds with the creative touch offered by its properties. As the group's name suggests, each hotel is designed around





a particular concept: Cubanito is packed with the sounds of salsa and the swagger of Havana; Gran Paradiso is an homage to cinema; and the saucy neon lights at Romeo's evoke the love motels of America's Route 66.

Unlike the other properties in the Concept portfolio, all one-offs, the latest project will function as its own brand and expand further. Calvo cannot say where or how many, but the ambition is for other Mongibellos to open in coastal destinations outside Ibiza. Concept also plans to launch the fashion-themed Los Felices in 2024, reveals Calvo, something of a local style icon himself, owning a collection of 500 colourful vintage shirts.

Mongibello takes its name from the fictitious town – inspired by Positano – in The Talented Mr Ripley, a 1955 novel by Patricia Highsmith. Hedonist, playboy and bon vivant, the character of Dickie Greenleaf – played by Jude Law in the 1999 film adaptation – optimised the carefree, pleasure-seeking spirit that came to be associated with this part of Italy in its heyday;

his charm is alluring and risqué, ultimately driving the tale's protagonist to madness. Murder and deadly mind games aside, Calvo finds the passion and intensity of the story a thrilling fit for the theme of his new hotel.

But amidst all the Amalfi fever, Mongibello has not forgotten its Ibiza home. Instead, the property aims to marry the two locations. Another photography installation at Lola's cocktail bar – a clandestine room designed like a 1970s disco with carpeted floors, velvet sofas and a glittery disco ball – pays tribute to 32 iconic characters from Ibiza, each of whom also has a suite themed around them.

Said icons include Tony Pike, founder of legendary nightclub Pikes; Pino Saggiocco, founder of Pachá; Elena Ruiz, Director of Ibiza's Contemporary Art Museum; artist Marcos Torres; actress Ángela Molina; and others who have lived the sweet life on the island. Together, they form a picture of Ibiza's social fabric – a reminder that, in the end, Balearic heritage and culture lie at the heart of this hotel.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Owner: Bain Capital, Stoneweg
 Operator: Concept Hotel Group
 Interior Design: Ilmiodesign
 Graphic Design: Marcos Torres
www.mongibelloibiza.com

