

Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

LA BIENVENIDA
BIENVENIDA, SPAIN

Looking down the long outer corridor that runs the length of the hotel **La Bienvenida** from front to rear, you get the feeling of being transplanted to a pastoral Spanish street of some previous century—but one that is, in fact, given over entirely to the pleasure of the establishment's guests.

The hotel has 9 rooms, built partly in the stables of the original 17th century building, and partly in the old living quarters. The latter are particularly spacious, 2 of them offering views directly upon the central town plaza and the church. The doors of the rooms are covered by traditional *esteron*, canvases that offer shade most welcome in this hot Spanish village (it is situated in Extremadura, between Badajoz and Sevilla.) All rooms offer air conditioning, private bath, phone and a fireplace. The one we stayed in features classic Spanish furniture in darkly stained woods, plus a fully-vented, blown-fan fireplace in iron and glass—there's nothing like falling asleep beside the orange glow of a fire turning to embers for a lovely night's sleep. The bathroom is a modern affair with a stainless-steel shower outfitted with spa-like massage jets to pamper the happy bather.

The original 18th century house underwent 2 years of renovation by its current owners before opening in October 2000 to receive guests, explained manager Natalia González de Ara Jerez to visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors. The works of Diego Canogar and other contemporary artists enhance the decorative surroundings. A few more of the daring representations, such as the painting in gray and

blue by artist Parra in the reception room, or the crusty black “canvas” that sticks out flagrantly from a grand old traditional frame, manage to enliven the public sitting rooms and leaven their otherwise traditional sobriety with a touch of the modern, yet without utterly overwhelming them.



The “corridor” at La Bienvenida

The salons also reveal alcoved ceilings done in the traditional regional style known as *boveda extremaña*. The modern bathroom here has antique, hand-painted tiles in greens and blues, and an original stone-walled wine cellar also has large recessed olive oil storage jars which been cleverly fitted with track lights by the hotel's present owners.

La Bienvenida serves dinners to guests who wish to

dine on-premises. The meals we sampled included dishes like leek gratin with *béchamel* sauce, spinach terrine with baby shrimp, flat beans with salt port, tender sautéed chicken (freshly harvested from the hotel's own free-range flock), and, for desert, fruit salad in its own juices as well as lemon meringue cake powdered with white sugar.

The house wine, a 1999 Tena Tinto was only fair, its fruit not well concentrated—perhaps the result of the region's scorching summer season?



Style and art in the rooms

In Extremadura, where temperatures soar in summertime, the sparkling blue swimming pool, surrounded by fig and oak trees in a green garden, is most welcome. Lounging lazily on one of the wooden chaises poolside, the facilities have a resort-like atmosphere. In this tranquil little town, a place that continues to offer its visitors plenty of traditional character, La Bienvenida is a fine place to rest and relax for a few days.

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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La Bienvenida

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