

# Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

POSADA DE ESQUILADORES  
SAN ESTEBAN DEL VALLE, SPAIN

Those seeking to escape the crowds of Spain's capital, Madrid, and reach fresher pastures can head northwest into the mountains where, in the small village of San Esteban del Valle (800 meters altitude), they'll find **Posada de Esquiladores**, an elegant charm hotel with a fine restaurant.

Owners Alumudena Garcia Drake and husband Miguel vacationed in the village for many years before they decided to take on what amounted to a very sizable restoration project, for Posada de Esquiladores was built from the ruins of an old building. Enormous challenges had to be overcome: the underground cellars, for example, were completely flooded, and the roof had collapsed in places.

The house, nearly 200 years old, was originally used as a "colonial store" selling goods gathered from the Spanish colonies in Latin America. The wine cellar—a network of underground caves—dates from the 1830s. It remained deliciously cool on the warm

summer day on which **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors visited.

After 20 months of painstaking repair, the Posada opened to guests in March 2001.

In the large lobby, a special attentiveness to décor is evident, in the leather chairs by the fireplace, in variegated lamps arrayed on the tables, and in large vases of fresh flowers found everywhere.

Posada de Esquiladores features 12 rooms, including one with handicapped access (large doors, no steps). The rooms have thick exposed beams, original to the house, and polished dark wood cupboards, dressers and desks. Attentive touches include a basket of fresh fruit and an assortment of fresh herbal teas left in the room. In many of the rooms, amenities also include hydro-massage, air conditioning, TV, minibar, and minisafe.

Mrs. Garcia Drake is a talented (and modest!) cook who served us a fine *Magret de Pato*, a duck breast in a



An appealing salon at  
Posada de Esquiladores

rich and tangy currant sauce, as well as a tasty *lumbina*, a sea bass served in oil spices.

The town lies at the foot of some impressive moun-



Rooms are done with great attention to detail

tains, and from here visitors can stage dozens of walks into the surrounding countryside. With the variety of recreational activities available—even paragliding!—both the region and the hotel are well recommended for a quick getaway from Madrid’s hectic pace.

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

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