

# Hotel news

## CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND

In an age of vast, anonymous resorts and towering, impersonal hotels, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and lost during what is supposed to be a pleasant experience. So, it's a welcome relief to stumble across an establishment such as Hotel Claude, a breath of fresh air with a level of attentive service and class rare in the world of hotels, much less in Marbella's Old Town.

Just one part of the cultural and economic renaissance the classic neighbourhood has witnessed over the past year, Hotel Claude invites guests in a tranquil corner of the neighbourhood, just across from the Santo Christo church and only a few minutes walk from the central Plaza de los Naranjos. Equipped with just seven rooms and a cosy restaurant with, coincidentally, seven tables, Hotel Claude is a hotel for those looking for more than just a place to sleep in-between visits to the beach. Instead, the boutique establishment, which opened its doors this past July, focuses on providing a taste of old Spain, though with all the modern amenities and service one would expect from a five-star hotel. Further, the family run lodge is a doorway to the past, both cultural and architecturally, as it is built within a family home that has a story all its own.

Dating back to the 17th century, the building has had many roles in the years since, most recently as the home of opera singer Claude Devoize. During her residency there, the home was a focal point for artists, actors and musicians who gathered to share their gifts and spend a little time with Claude herself.

After years spent empty following Devoize's passing, the home was rediscovered by the family of Claude's widower, seeing the potential of such a striking and beautiful building. After spending five years refurbishing the structure from the ground up, brother and sister Franz-Josef and Désirée Willmes inaugurated Hotel Claude, in honour of the one-time proprietor. The refurbishment, completed with the aid of Angell

Gordon, helped create a stylishly modern interior within the confines of the existing structure, combining elements of both to create a hotel that is both classic and innovative at the same time.

Entering through an open-air courtyard, with the home's columns still intact, guests are welcome to either spend their time having a drink in Claude's comfortable library or atop the building itself, on a rooftop terrace.

The seven rooms, divided into small, medium and a single suite, have each been designed individually, each boasting their own unique personality and feel, though all come equipped with the latest in comfort and technology, including flat-screen televisions and i-pod consoles. Outside the rooms, the hotel offers guests a central beverage station, complete with fresh fruits, coffee and other drinks, all included in the price of a room, as well as a complimentary breakfast, with a menu that will vary from day to day according to what is freshest that day. Completed as a passion project of sorts, Hotel Claude, and its small but expert staff, has set out to create a deeply personal and unforgettable hotel experience.

Intent on recreating the familiar and welcome mood that its one time owner offered to her family and friends, the hotel welcomes each guest like an old friend. Focusing on showing guests a slice of old Spain, in addition to the Costa del Sol's beaches and golf courses, Hotel Claude emphasises slowing down and enjoying the surroundings. While the hotel will grow no larger, the Willmes family do have plans to invite artists and performers to share their gifts to guests, just as Claude once did so many years ago. The hotel's boutique restaurant, spotlighting international cuisine, is open to non-guests as well and will welcome the services of a German chef with more than 15 years of experience, including working within a 3-star Michelin kitchen.

*The Hotel Claude is located in Calle San Francisco 5, Marbella Old Town. For more information Tel: 952 900 840 or Website: [www.hotelclaudemarbella.com](http://www.hotelclaudemarbella.com)*

