

Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report[®]

SEPTEMBER 2018 SINCE 1979

Traveling the world in search of truly enchanting places



The Principal, right, at the edge of the lively Chueca district

MADRID ON THE UPSWING

New hotels, stellar gastronomy, museum discoveries

The financial crisis of 2008 hobbled the Spanish economy, but a decade later, Madrid has recovered much of its dynamism. Perennially vying with Barcelona for the title of Spain's gastronomic capital, it is currently in the midst of a restaurant boom. The city's hotel scene is also thriving. The venerable **Hotel Ritz Madrid** closed for a \$121 million renovation in February and will reopen as a Mandarin Oriental property next year. And a new Four Seasons is slated to open

on the Gran Vía, the city's main avenue, in 2019. Several distinctive and stylish smaller properties are also attracting the interest of hotel cognoscenti.

After a morning spent at the fascinating Museum of the Americas, with its extraordinary collection of Mayan, Incan and Aztec art and artifacts, we arrived at the 48-room **Gran Hotel Inglés** and immediately fell in love with this history-steeped property, which was built in 1853 and opened as a hotel in

1886. Located in the charming Barrio de las Letras neighborhood — which takes its name from the fact that Cervantes and other notable writers once lived in the district — it has just been completely renovated and now has stunning art deco-inspired interiors by New York's Rockwell Group. The young staff at reception were delightful, and we instantly felt very much at home.

The dramatic lobby and bar came with leather Chesterfield sofas and chairs,

Andrew Harper editors travel anonymously and pay full rate for all lodging, meals and related expenses.

Since the launch of *Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report* in 1979, the featured hotels and restaurants have been selected on a completely independent basis.

For comments and inquiries concerning *The Hideaway Report*, please email aharper@andrewharper.com.



tapestry carpets on herringbone oak parquet floors, antique cast-iron pillars and a dramatic circular bar located under a skylight. Unlike most hotel lobbies, this one is a place where you might actually choose to spend some time. Other public areas include a library with a woodburning fireplace and a restaurant, *LOBO 8*, where chef Willy Moya serves delicious contemporary Spanish dishes such as chilled almond *ajo-blanco* soup with prickly pear sorbet, and pork cheeks cooked in sherry. All of these spaces felt like those of a stylish private club.

Upstairs, our Premium Room overlooked Calle Echegaray and had two windows with Juliet balconies. These spacious, well-lit and thoughtfully designed accommodations came with satin-finished oak parquet floors, a pair of gray-velvet upholstered chairs at a white-marble pedestal table, a contemporary chandelier, a writing desk and an oversize bed with a feather-top mattress pad. A claw-foot tub occupied a corner of the dressing room alcove, and the good-looking bath provided a single vanity set in a white-marble counter and a walk-in rainfall shower. (Those willing to throw financial caution to the wind may wish to opt for the top-floor suite with its private terrace and Jacuzzi.)

The hotel's spa uses French Anne Semonin products and offers a first-rate anti-jet lag cure. And, usefully, the hotel has parking for anyone arriving in Madrid by car. Overall, the Gran Hotel Inglés is an exceptionally charming address with excellent service and superbly comfortable rooms. It is a good choice for travelers who like small properties with a unique personality and a strong sense of place. **HR**

GRAN HOTEL INGLÉS 94

LIKE Stunning interior design; the sense of history; the fine restaurant. **DISLIKE** The lack of outdoor public spaces. **GOOD TO KNOW** *Bistronómika*, an excellent new seafood bistro, is within walking distance of the hotel. **LOWEST RATE:** DELUXE ROOM, \$400; **EDITOR'S CHOICE:** SUPERIOR ROOM, \$480. **CALLE ECHEGARAY 8. TEL. (34) 91-360-0001. GRANHOTELINGLES.COM**