

## ROOM KEY

## The New Room With a View: Madrid's Gran Hotel Inglés

After a top-to-bottom redesign, the Spanish capital's oldest hotel sparkles once again.

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*Editor's Note: Where you stay can sometimes make or break a trip. So, twice a month we're going to be bringing readers inside recently opened hotels with our new feature The New Room with a View, focusing on ones that are visually stunning, historic, or have some unique approach.*

When [Gran Hotel Inglés](#) opened in 1886, it boasted five-star amenities seldom seen in Madrid: electricity, a full-service restaurant, and indoor toilets—one per floor. The definition of luxury may have evolved since the frocked and corseted Spain of King Alfonso XIII, but Gran Hotel Inglés's ethos—to dazzle out-of-towners with the best service, food, and design in Spanish hospitality—remains the same.

Yet the hotel's illustrious beginnings and its spring 2018 reopening are bookends to decades of mediocrity and decline. Until last year, most Madrileños knew Gran Hotel Inglés as a decaying grande dame, a starchy, hidebound vestige of viejo Madrid—that is, if they'd heard of it at all. By the early 2000s, the hotel that had once catered to the likes of Henri Matisse and Virginia Woolf had slumped into irrelevance.

In 2014, [Hidden Away Hotels](#) swooped in. The Spanish husband-and-wife team, Ignacio Jiménez and Carmen Cordón, had just finished converting a ramshackle 16th-century palace into one of Mallorca's toniest hotels, [Posada Terra Santa](#), and were hungry for their next project. They saw potential in Gran Hotel Inglés's architectural bones, landmark status, and buzzy Barrio de las Letras location. But with its fusty interiors and crumbling skeleton, the building needed a dramatic facelift.

Enter [Rockwell Group](#), the AD100 firm behind 15 Hudson Yards, Union Square Café, and the New York EDITION hotel, that Jiménez and Cordón tapped for the redesign. "From day one, we saw enormous potential in the project," David Rockwell, the president and founder, told The Daily Beast. "The hotel had always been a cultural icon, so playing a part in its rebirth fascinated us."

Three years and \$18.4 million later, Gran Hotel Inglés is ready for its closeup, its soaring lobby, inviting restaurant, and sumptuous rooms at once restored and transformed. Here, a peek into the new space.



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## Location

Look down—sidewalks here, in the Las Letras neighborhood, are embossed with quotes from the legendary writers who once called these cobblestoned streets home including Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Góngora, and Cervantes. That literary spirit lives on in the streets surrounding Gran Hotel Inglés, where you can find some of the city's top theaters and museums. Calle Echegaray, where the hotel is located, is a gastronomic highlight reel with everything from [ramen stalls](#) to [cheese shops](#) to [sherry bars](#).

## Lobby & Cocktail Bar

Grand, old-timey hotel lobbies, the kind that lend themselves to unhurried reading and anonymous coffee-sipping, are a dying breed these days, but the cathedral-like space that welcomes you at Gran Hotel Inglés aims to reverse that trend. Tufted leather sofas, silky wingback chairs, and plush patterned carpets invite you to stay awhile; so does the twinkling (if unfortunately named) LobByto bar with its conversation-starting oculus shape and best-in-the-barrio cocktails like the Trump-hating “Donald, eres un pendejo” made with Ilegal mezcal and Punt e Mes vermouth.



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## Rooms

Rockwell toppled walls like dominoes to make the (previously 72, now 48) guest rooms more spacious with the smallest clocking in at a solid 290 square feet. The Mallorcan owners imbued rooms with that island's dozy Mediterranean aesthetic—think slate-gray curtains, crisp white duvets, and cyan throw pillows. In upgraded digs, the standalone clawfoot tubs, custom made in Canada to Rockwell's specifications, are an ideal vantage point to take in views over the terracotta roofs.

## Restaurant

Lobo 8, the ground-floor restaurant, makes no apologies about serving Madrid's most castizo (down-home) dishes like “broken eggs” over fried potatoes and stewed Ibérico pork cheeks— even if they eschew tradition with twists like truffles and sesame, respectively, that would earn the ire of most *abuelas*. Sherry pairings are a welcome departure from the usual albariño and Rioja selections.