

20 Spanish rural retreats

Stay on a finca, cortijo or traditional inn to see Spain at its best, says **Annabelle Thorpe**

Best for walkers

1 Casa Olea, Priega de Córdoba Andalusia

Tucked away among the silver-tinged olive groves of the Sierra Subbética and just over 90 minutes from Granada Airport, this newly-opened former *cortijo* (country property) has six simply-furnished rooms, which overlook the hills. Hearty breakfasts and suppers are served up by the English owners, Tim and Claire, who have an encyclopaedic knowledge of local walking/cycling routes.

Details Doubles from £214 (0034-696 748 209, casaolea.com)

Best for cooks

2 Finca Buen Vino, Sierra de Aracena Andalusia

Surrounded by lush countryside, 90 minutes from Seville, this perfect gastro-escape was created by Scottish couple Sam and Jeannie. It has just five rooms that feel delightfully homely. Four and five-night cookery courses run in spring and autumn, focusing on traditional Catalan dishes, while Cordon Bleu-trained Jeanne serves up wonderful suppers in the cosy dining room.

Details B&B doubles from £118 (0034-959124 034, fincabuenvino.com)

Best for swimmers

3 Casa Sibarita, Rafelguaraf Valencia

Inland guesthouses rarely come with a whirlpool, let alone a gleaming 30ft swimming pool. Casa Sibarita is a real find. The 19th-century converted townhouse in the sleepy village of Rafelguaraf, outside the city of Valencia, still has many of its original features, including hand-painted floor tiles, double-height vaulted ceilings and a huge

fireplace. The five bedrooms are light and airy with a cosy dining room.

Details B&B doubles from £63 (0034-96258 6337, casasisarita.es)

Best for isolation

4 Mas de la Serra, Fuentespalda Aragon

Widescreen views of olive groves and vineyards, unbroken by buildings, make this a relaxing spot to escape to. The house is an old *masia* (farmhouse) that has been restored so that it mixes tradition with luxury. Rooms are sleek with vast beds, while the surrounding countryside offers hiking, cycling, kayaking and horse riding. Mas de la Serra sits inland about halfway between Barcelona and Valencia.

Details B&B doubles from £108 (i-escape.com)

Best home from home

5 Trasierra, Cazalla de la Sierra, Seville

The Scott family have been running Trasierra for more than 30 years, and in some ways it's more like staying in a private home than a hotel — although the spacious bedrooms, all different and each with their own terrace — have a sleek hotel feel. Tucked away in the hills behind Seville, this is a great

choice for walkers and those who long for a real feeling of escape.

Details Doubles from £85 B&B (00 34 609 550 600, trasierra.eu)

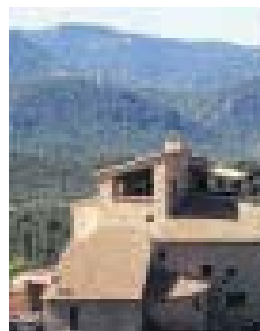
Best for grown-up clubbers

6 Atzaró Ibiza

Away from Ibiza's sprawling coastal resorts, Atzaró is a gorgeous, family-run *finca* with 24 stylish rooms.

They all have private terraces overlooking the orange groves. It is located towards the north of the island, a scenic half-hour drive from Ibiza airport. Being Ibiza, the feel is a mix of Asian and Spanish, with a sushi bar next to the pool, Balinese furniture and a spa that offers oriental-themed treatments and therapies. It is an egalitarian kind of place; perfect whether you want mojitos or meditation.

Details B&B doubles from £150 (08450 340700, mrandmrsmith.com)



**Atzaró in Ibiza, and
below, Mas de la
Serra, Fuentespalda**



Best for scenery

7 Fonda de la Tea, Gran Canaria Canary Islands

Away from the coastal resorts, Gran Canaria is dominated by spectacular mountain landscapes that have all the drama of a mini Grand Canyon. Fonda de la Tea is in the pretty village of Tejeda, at the very heart of the island, with 11 cosy rooms, a sun terrace with great views and the warmest of welcomes.

Details B&B doubles from £85 (0034-928666422, hotelfondadelatea.com)

Best for luxury

8 El Peregrino, Puente la Reina Navarre

If you like the idea of rustic charm but still need your luxuries, El Peregrino is the ideal choice. A member of Relais and Châteaux, the 12 rooms are spacious and comfortable and the elegant restaurant overlooks a blissful pool area, flanked by manicured lawns. The hotel is near Pamplona, on the Pilgrim's Way to Santiago de Compostela, making it a great base for walkers.

Details B&B doubles from £165 (00800-20000002, relaischateaux.com)

Best for budget breaks

9 Can Rosich, Maresme Catalonia

Ideally located for a day trip to Barcelona, and just a couple of miles from the nearest beach, Can Rosich still has the feel of a rural bolthole. The 200-year-old house has been well restored, with seven simply furnished bedrooms which overlook the lush Santa Susanna valley. There is a pretty dining room where hefty breakfasts and traditional Catalan suppers are served.

Details B&B doubles from £52 (0034-937678473, canrosich.com)

Best for contemporary chic

10 Fountainhead, Riogordo Andalusia

Barefoot luxury arrived in the Andalusian hills when the Fountainhead opened its doors; a mix of five-star boutique and

chilled-out retreat, with four beautifully decorated suites — and all just a short drive from Malaga. There are no TVs or newspapers, no need to stir for breakfast (suites have their own kitchen area and bread and pastries are delivered to your door each morning) and the spa offers treatments with all products made from local natural ingredients.

Details B&B doubles from £220 (0034-696183309, fountainheadinspain.com)

Best for tranquillity

11 El Secreto de Olo, Olo Navarre

Although busy Pamplona is just 24km away, El Secreto does feel delightfully secret, surrounded by rolling hills and fields of wheat. The nine bedrooms, with exposed stone walls and cool, cream furnishings, are wonderfully relaxing and the grand old stone house has plenty of shady terrace space for curling up with a book and a glass of fino after a stroll through the valley.

Details B&B doubles from £88. Book through i-escape.com

Best for village life

12 Casa Manadero, Robledillo de Gata Extremadura

If you value authenticity over luxury then Manadero will hit the spot; a restored

country inn with just seven simple rooms, tucked away in the tangle of alleys that make up the village of Manadero, south-west of Salamanca. The restaurant specialises in local produce — homemade chorizo, goats cheese and local pork.

Details B&B doubles from £60 (0034-927671118, casamanadero.com)

Best for lake lovers

13 Hotel Hospes Villa Paulita, Puigcerdà Girona

Right on the shore of beautiful Lake Puigcerdà, a former private house has been converted into an elegant retreat.

Rooms are sleek and cool, with those in the original 19th-century villa the most charming, while the Bodyna Spa offers a

wide range of therapies. Lake views are best enjoyed over dinner in the swish Senzone L'Estany restaurant.

Details Room-only doubles from £125 (0034-972884622, hospes.com)

Best for horseriders

14 La Corte, Somiedo Asturias

From the outside, this 19th-century converted farmhouse looks deeply rustic, but once inside it comes alive with plenty

of 21st-century comforts, from wi-fi to flat-screen TVs and well fitted-out kitchenettes in the comfortable bedrooms. The owners can arrange horesback riding to explore the surrounding countryside of Piguena. Situated in the north western tip of Spain, the nearest city is Oviedo

Details B&B doubles from £60 (0034-985763131, lacortesomiedo.com)

Best for foodies

15 El Capricho de la Portuguesa Alicante

Midway between Alicante and Valencia (about 75 minutes drive from each),

La Portuguesa is squirreled away in the lush Vall de Gallinera, with its wonderful almond and cherry tree groves. The hotel is a boutique retreat that offers spa treatments, and a simple restaurant serving tapas and grilled fish. It has elegant rooms with exposed brick walls and beams, warm pinks and burnt orange colour schemes, and sumptuous beds. The valley might be rural — there are just 700 inhabitants in the eight villages — but there are 14 restaurants to try and a Michelin-starred restaurant within 25 minutes drive.

Details B&B doubles from £92 (0034-966406674, elcaprichodelaportuguesa.com)

Best for romance

16 Alodia, Alquézar Huesca

In the pretty medieval village of Alquézar in the Sierra de Guara, near the city of Huesca, Alodia is a real find — a traditional house complete with wooden balconies and stone façade. The six rooms

are cosy and tasteful, with muslin-draped beds, striped floorboards and muted cream walls. Take breakfast on the balcony and drink in the views across the village rooftops or plunder the impressive wine cellar — tastings can be arranged.

Details B&B doubles from £85 (0034-974318450, rusticae.es)

Best for wildlife

17 Hotel Aldori, Landetxea, Muxika-Múgica Vizcaya

Located in the tranquil Urdaibai biosphere reserve, just east of Bilbao, the Aldori is ideally placed for birdwatching on the Guernica estuary, diving at Bermeo or a trip to the Basondo wildlife refuge. What looks like a traditional farmhouse on the outside actually has six rooms within all decorated in an avant-garde style with hot-pink furniture, murals, vast artworks and sleek, charcoal-coloured bathrooms.

Details B&B doubles from £100 (0034-946271509, aldori.es)

Best for history

18 Hotel Posada la Pastora, Uncastillo Aragon

A beautifully restored village house, La Pastora is a great choice for those interested in Zaragoza's rich history; there are six Romanesque churches in the village of Uncastillo and a 12th-century castle near by. The ten rooms are small but well furnished and the cosy lounge — complete with a roaring fire on cold days — is a great place to relax and indulge in Inma's wonderful home-made cakes. Uncastillo is roughly halfway between Pamplona and Zaragoza.

Details B&B doubles from £75 (0034-974318450, rusticae.es)

Best out of season

19 Caserío de Mozaga, San Bartolomé Lanzarote

A holiday to Lanzarote does not have to mean a mass-market beach hotel. Mozaga, west of Arrecife, is a charming jumble of traditional whitewashed buildings right in the centre of the island, with eight cosy

rooms furnished with Canarian antiques. The buildings are surrounded by quirky, cactus-filled gardens and there is an excellent restaurant in the converted stables, serving traditional dishes using local produce from around the island.

Details Room-only doubles from £60 (0034-928520060, caseriodemozaga.com)

Best for tradition

20 La Casa de Arriba, Navarredonda de Gredos Avila

Evening meals at this beautifully renovated 17th-century house, situated west of Madrid, come with an added slice of history; all the recipes come from previous generations who lived in the house and only local produce is used. Breakfasts are hearty too; homemade breads, jams and cold meats — perfect fuel for a day exploring the spectacular Sierra de Gredos on foot, horseback or bike.

Details B&B doubles from £90 (0034-918596391, casadearriba.com)

