

Best hotel chain

Hospes, Spain

While we're the first to applaud Spain's booming hotel chains, which are starting to spread the gospel of contemporary design beyond the Iberian peninsula, some of them are in danger of churning out interiors that err on the bland and ubiquitous side. Not so Hospes, which has raised the bar in Iberian hospitality with a distinct style and a philosophy that embraces sustainability and authenticity. CEO Antonio Pérez Navarro cut his teeth at NH Hotels, and went on to found AC Hotels with Antonio Catalan. When it came to starting his own brand, he had the foresight to recognise that sophisticated visitors to Spain want an experience that's truly Spanish. By rescuing crumbling wrecks with history and personality, such as the stunning Palacio de los Patos (pictured), which opened in Granada to huge acclaim last year, Navarro has created a template for the *grande dame* hotel for the 21st century.

In terms of dining, he has turned his back on the watered-down Ferran Adrià fare of many of his competitors to champion regional cuisine, and has hired nutritionists to create dishes that will ensure a good night's sleep. In fact, his gastronomic philosophy is so strong it has spawned a food and beverage brand, Senzone. Navarro's spas, meanwhile, will soon have their own product line and will be known as Bodyna spas. He has also launched a specialist business travel service called Utmost. All three enterprises, along with Hospes, will fall under a new umbrella brand, Fuenso.

This year, Navarro is set to open new properties in Madrid and the Pyrenees and to go international with a new-look Lancaster in Paris. Next year will see new openings in Jerez, Malaga, Pamplona, Murcia and Budapest. We can't wait. ★

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HOSPES TREATMENT ABOVE, THE LOUNGE OF THE PALACIO DE LOS PATOS, GRANADA, ONE OF HOSPES'S 2006 OPENINGS

LEFT, ONE OF THE 42 GUEST ROOMS IN THE 19TH-CENTURY FORMER PALACE