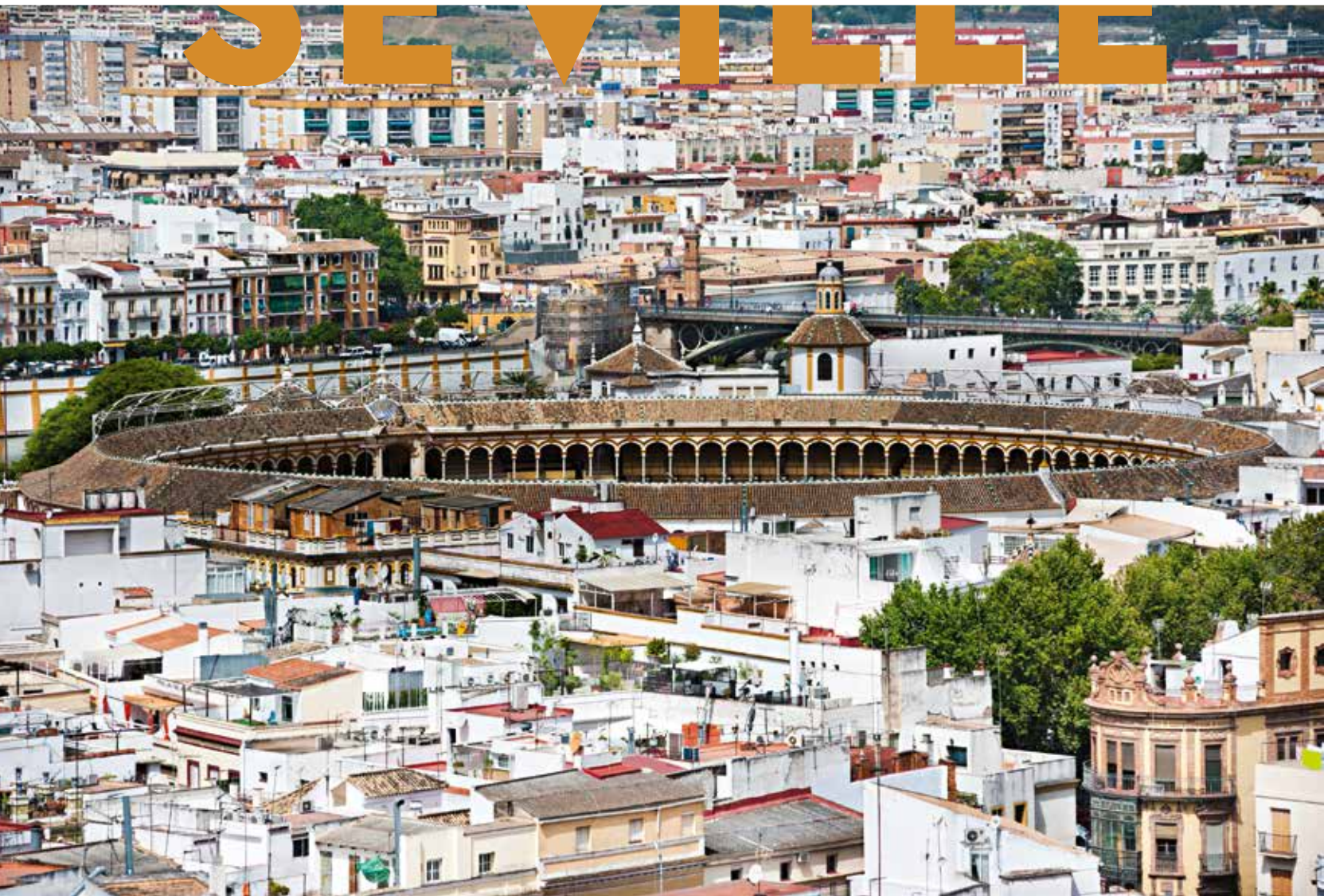


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SEVILLE



Seville is a city steeped in tradition and history, while at the same time, modern, vibrant and on the cutting edge. Travel writer **Lee Tulloch** discovers that this jewel of southern Spain is quickly becoming the country's latest food lovers' destination.

PHOTOGRAPHY TONY AMOS



Entrance to the stunning Catedral de Sevilla. **OPPOSITE:** the Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza, one of the oldest bullrings in Seville.

S

eville is one of Spain's most beautiful cities. Sensual, mysterious and flamboyant, it's a place where the traditions of the bullfight and flamenco are fiercely honoured. And from braised pork cheek to the local version of gazpacho, Seville's culinary offerings are legend. Add to this a new wave of chefs rethinking the classics and a market celebrating Andalusian gastronomy, and Seville is Spain's next foodie destination.

TAPAS

Seville is not short on bars, which means the choice can seem overwhelming, but there are a few rules. If you can, avoid those around the cathedral, where the tourists gather, although we found **Don Juan de Alemanes** (Alemanes, 7) served some fine *salmorejo*, the garlicky version of gazpacho that is served with a topping of acorn-fed *jamón ibérico* and egg.

Taking a tapas tour with a local like Samuel Lister, of **Tailormade Andalucía** (tailormadeandalucia.com), is a smart idea, as you'll be guided to places you might never find by yourself. Following his advice, we headed out after 8.30pm, when the blazing Seville sun had lowered.

Our first stop was **Bodega Góngora** (Albareda, 5), famous for its battered and fried live *ortiguillas* (sea anemones) and *mojama*, salted and air-dried tuna loin. Next, we walked away from the tourist spots to **Bodeguita Romero** (Harinas, 10) where we tucked into scorpion-fish mousse and tasty *salmorejo* (like a "savory smoothie", says Samuel). Last was a visit to the lively **Ovejas Negras** (Hernando Colon, 8) where traditional bar food such as *carrillada* (braised pork cheek) and mushroom risotto are reinterpreted. What to drink? Well, a local sherry is a good start, spritzed with soda and lemon.

MARKETS

We started our day at the produce market, **Mercado de Triana** (San Jorge, 6) situated on top of the ruins of St George's Castle. Doing as the locals do, we ate crispy churros dipped in hot chocolate from one of the casual cafes surrounding the stalls, before wandering the market, marvelling at the thick legs of *jamón* and gigantic summer tomatoes.

After a visit to the nearby **Cerámica Triana** (Antillano Campos, 14), which showcases the history of ceramic making in the neighbourhood, we'd worked up enough of an appetite to cross the Triana Bridge and have lunch at **Lonja del Barranco** (Calle Arjona), a gleaming market on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

The light and airy glass-encased building houses 20 stalls representing the best in Spanish gastronomy, including a *croquetería* serving bite-sized croquettes of *bacalao* (salt cod) and *rabo de toro*



View from the Triana Bridge. OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left): Mesón el Serrano; tiles in the Cerámica Triana; cupola seen from the Giralda bell tower; local dish *salmorejo*, a thick gazpacho; the grounds of the Alcázar Palace; éclair at Dulcería Manu Jara; spires seen from the stairs of the Giralda; Longines clocks on the Calle Sierpes.

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(bull's tail), and a *carcutería* selling cubes of *jamón* in paper cones. Grab a Cruzcampo beer or a *tinto de verano* (the red wine and soda combination that locals drink instead of sangria) and a stool at one of the high tables under the glass atrium.

SWEET TREATS

You can't go far in Seville without coming across a *pastelería*, with windows full of desserts such as *milhojas de crema* (mille-feuilles), *yemas* (candied egg yolk) and *torrijas* (similar to French toast). Try **Confitería La Campana** (Sierpes, 1-3), which dates back to 1885.

For the finest French pastries, visit **Dulcería Manu Jara** (Purity, 5), Manu Jara's cake shop in Triana. The French-born pastry chef's chocolate-dipped palmiers are a must-have. But don't stop there – the shelves are laden with delights such as gilded salted caramel eclairs, Saint Honoré gateaux and Bretonne pastry filled with mascarpone and raspberry.

Five minutes away inside the Triana produce market, Jara's stall **Bocasu** sells bite-sized *petits choux* in flavours such as violet, mango or praline, sold singly as sweet tapas or boxed in egg cartons to take away. Try the *leche merengada* (frozen milk flavoured with cinnamon).

A visit to Seville isn't complete without savouring the spectacular ice cream and sorbet at **Heladería La Fiorentina** (Zaragoza, 16). Master ice cream-maker Joaquín Liria Bulnes concocts recipes using the flavours and perfumes of Seville, such as his signature orange-flower ice cream, which is textured with brioche and crystallised orange.

TOP TABLES

Spain's oldest tavern restaurant is **El Rinconcillo** (Gerona, 40), established in 1670. It's worth a visit for the beautiful tiled walls and long bar, but we found the food and service a bit indifferent, so just stop by for a quick glass of sherry.

For really great casual dining, take a trip across the river to **Puratasca** (Numancia, 5) for a mashup of Spanish, Asian, Mexican and South American cuisine that has made the Michelin guide (even though only locals

seem to know about it). The open-plan kitchen dishes up some memorable tapas and main courses at surprisingly low prices. The menus change twice weekly, but the crunchy, spicy langoustine tacos, apple *blanco* (a refined cold soup) and sashimi of tuna with fig were particularly sensational when we ate there. The neighbourhood crowds in after 9.30pm, so go before 9pm to get a table without booking.

Seville's finest gastronomic experience is the one-Michelin-starred **Abantal** (Alcalde José de la Bandera, 7). It's an elegant, calm space seating just 28 and headed by Seville-born chef Julio Fernández Quintero. His cooking has great respect for *terroir*. The seasonal tasting menu might include suckling pig with white cabbage, cucumber and mint, or crisp lobster over almond creme and bittersweet peach. And at €65 (\$92) for the eight-course menu, with an extra €25 (\$36) for matching wines, this is one of the best-value Michelin experiences anywhere.

TRADITIONS

Seville is a city of bullfights and flamenco. The sevillanos are passionate about bullfighting, unlike other cities, such as Barcelona, where the sport is banned. Be prepared to find stuffed bullheads on many walls, especially in taverns.

Among the best is the **Mesón el Serranito** (Antonia Diaz, 11) opposite the **Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza**, one of the oldest bullrings in Spain. The restaurant, with its memorabilia and painted tiles depicting famous bullfights, is as much a museum as a place to eat.

The bullfighting season this year runs from Easter to mid-September with no fights in July and August. Even if you're opposed to the practice, a stadium tour explaining its history may be of interest.

Although the origins of flamenco are a subject of much debate, locals tell us it was not originally meant to be a performance. So, for a more spontaneous version, head to one of the flamenco bars along the river in Triana, such as **Lo Nuestro** (Betis, 31). Shop for flamenco shoes, fans and shawls in the streets that run off **Calle Sierpes** in the Centro Historico de Sevilla district.

MONUMENTS

Seville is more than 2000 years old, with Phoenicians and then Romans ruling before the Moorish conquest in 712. In the 13th century it became Christian, with Muslims, Jews and Christians living in harmony until the Inquisition in the 15th century. Evidence of all these cultures still exists in the city's ancient, narrow streets.

The beautiful, UNESCO-listed **Alcázar Palace** (Patio de Banderas) is still used by the Spanish royal family. *Game of Thrones* fans will know it as the Water Gardens of Dorne. Its Moorish patios pre-date the Alhambra in Granada. The grounds of the palace are stunning and include a maze, pools, fountains and 150-year-old bougainvillea climbing the walls.

Across from the palace is the magnificent **Catedral de Sevilla** (Avenue de la Constitucion), the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, built on the ruins of a mosque. The **Giralda bell tower**, once the mosque's minaret, offers sweeping views of the city. And don't miss the **Archivo de Indias** (Avenue de la Constitucion) next to the Alcazar, home to documents such as Christopher Columbus' diary.

STAY

The **Corral del Rey** (Corral del Rey, 12) consists of three historic *casas* on one of the narrowest streets in the Barrio Alfafa, the old quarter of Seville, five minutes' walk from the cathedral. The oldest, Casa Palacio, dates from the 17th century and has been beautifully restored, retaining the original beams and marble columns. There's a rooftop terrace, though the cooler downstairs restaurant and lounge/library with honesty bar can be more comfortable. (mrandmrsmith.com/luxury-hotels/corral-del-rey)

In a more residential area, but still conveniently located, the **Hospes Casas del Rey de Baeza** (Plaza Jesus de la Redencion, 2) occupies a converted complex of apartments around two rustic, flower-filled courtyards, with spacious lounge and reading areas, as well as a glamorous rooftop pool and spa. (mrandmrsmith.com/luxury-hotels/hospes-las-casas-del-rey-de-baeza) ✂



CLOCKWISE (from left): Great casual diner Puratasca; Plaza Mayor; cool off in the pool at Hospes Casas del Rey de Baeza; Plaza de Toros; Rita de Casia at the Convento de San Leandro; Avenue de la Constitucion.



GETTING THERE

British Airways flies from Sydney to London Heathrow daily. Connect with one of 13 daily flights to Madrid. (britishairways.com) From Madrid, we took the Spanish AVE fast train to Seville using the Eurail Three Country Select Pass, which allowed for five days of travel within two months. Fast trains require seat reservations. (railreurope.com.au)



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