



LA ESPERANZA GRANADA



This Spanish Mission style villa, with a courtyard inspired by the Alhambra, lies amidst 4.5 hectares of flower gardens and organic fruit trees overlooking the beautiful Lecrin Valley. Only 35 minutes from Granada and 90 minutes from Malaga, it is Spain's most coveted new escape.



TRUE ROMANCE

One of the most romantic properties in Andalucia, this impeccably designed hacienda, filled with antiques and art chosen carefully to reflect the culture of Southern Spain, comes with a panoramic swimming pool and jacuzzi.

A tennis court and a heliport are also on site.

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Expansión 35

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIE CULLEN OF THE HOTEL JOURNAL,
OWNER & FIRST-TIME HOTELIER CHRISTINE CUNANAN
DISCUSSES HER EXPERIENCE OF BUYING AND
OPENING A LUXURY HOTEL AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.



Christine, can you tell us a little about your background?

I live in Tokyo and now also in Granada, and I have homes in other parts of the world. I've been running Travelife Magazine, one of the leading publications for luxury travellers in Southeast Asia, for over 13 years. During this time, as Publisher and Editor, I was on an airplane somewhere exotic almost every other week, and I was living in hotel rooms practically half the year.

Most of the hotels I stayed in were among the best in the world – whether for work or for leisure. I'm passionate about staying in beautiful hotels with great service because I think the choice of hotels can make or break a trip, so I had ample opportunities to observe the fine details of luxury hotels and to critique the guest experience.

How did La Esperanza Granada come about?

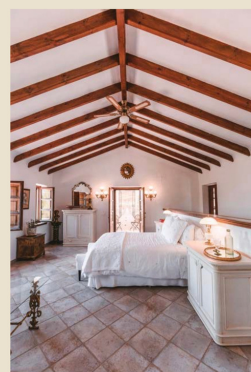
Befittingly for a travel magazine owner, I was on a Japan Airlines flight landing at Tokyo's Narita Airport in 15 minutes when the idea to purchase a property in Spain suddenly came to mind. It was the height of COVID in June 2020 with so many countries in lockdown and no vaccines on the horizon.

One of my last trips before COVID closed down the world was to Spain. I spent a week in the quiet part of the Spanish Pyrenees and this happy visit—and Spain, was still very much on my mind.



I'm one of these people who just goes out and does things, when I have an idea. So after this seed was planted in my mind, that was it. As soon as I reached my home in Tokyo, even before unpacking my bags, I went online and typed out: properties for sale in Spain. Several interesting homes came up, but when I saw this Spanish Mission-style hacienda property in Granada, I just knew it was going to be mine.

It took me all of 30 minutes to decide to buy it, and I never looked back or hesitated after that. It was then a private property but it was built to function as a small hotel. It was also in the middle of nature but at the same time near enough to big cities and just 90 minutes from Malaga International Airport, which has direct flights from so many countries. It was exactly what I wanted.



What was your vision for the project?

Initially, I was just happy to have a small beautiful hotel. But now we are a member of the L.V.X. Collection of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, and I would like La Esperanza Granada to be one of the greatest small hotels of the world.

We only have eight rooms, but I want people to regard us as a destination hotel rather than as a hotel for a destination. Already, it's happening. We get messages from potential clients saying: "We want to stay at La Esperanza Granada. What is there to do around there?"

Tell us about the design process for the conversion. How did you incorporate the property's tradition and location into the spaces? And did you work with an interior designer?

The property was initially a private residence with a guest wing and a license to accept paying overnight guests. However, the former owners never operated it as a hotel so we had to undertake a lot of renovations and refurbishing to bring it up to the luxury level I wanted for the hotel.

For the interiors, I chose almost every item in the hotel myself. I wanted to ensure that everything we brought into La Esperanza Granada reflected the deep culture of this part of Andalusia, which is essentially the culture of the Moors. I enjoyed this process immensely and we worked with some of the finest purveyors in the region for our furniture and artworks.



I am also very proud of our main courtyard, which is inspired by the world-famous Alhambra Palace. This courtyard was originally quite plain and life and colour were badly needed. So we hired some of the best traditional artisans in Granada to reinvigorate the space with tiles similar to what was used in the Alhambra.

Not just anyone can recreate these tiles, and the resulting work was a major investment of time, money, and love. Our artisans, of Muslim faith, put great thought into the design of the tiles and the connection of this design with the surroundings and with God. In fact, after they finished the courtyard, they prayed over it; this was truly a labour of love.

Meanwhile, our gardens were designed by the owner of a local firm that also does gardening work for the Alhambra. In fact occasionally he calls us up and says: "I'm sorry I can't go there today as I have work to do at the Alhambra." We're very happy to play second fiddle to Spain's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

What's your favourite part of the property?

Every nook and corner of La Esperanza is wonderful and full of memories for me. There is a story behind each painting, chair or table. Whenever I walk around my own hotel, I just think everything is beautiful, and I want to take photos of everything for Instagram, even if I have already seen the same things a hundred times. So it's difficult to choose a particular favourite.

However, perhaps the most memorable place for me is the salon (main image) where guests can have breakfast in the winter. This was once an empty barn with strings of garlic hanging from the ceilings, as is typical in many Andalusia hacienda.

From practically nothing, we transformed this cavernous room into the most beautiful salon full of lovely things like a handmade stone table inlaid with lapis lazuli and rose quartz, carved mirrors with bone inlay, and paintings of flamenco dancers. While we were renovating the hotel, we spent many nice evenings in front of the fireplace and we also did a New Year's Eve dinner here under lockdown. So I have happy memories of this beautiful room.



What makes La Esperanza Granada the perfect place for weddings?

Conde Nast Traveler recently called us "the most romantic hotel in Granada", and rightly so. Everything about the property – from the gardens and the impressive façade to the detailed rooms and public spaces are just perfect for special occasions. In fact, we've just opened and we have had weddings practically every weekend of summer.

The brides and grooms – and perhaps more importantly, their parents – are overjoyed with La Esperanza Granada, and their guests tell us that they've never seen anything like our hotel before. In fact, for a wedding last weekend, a florist drove over to deliver the flowers. When he got out of the car, he was open-mouthed and his first words were: "What an incredible place this is."

This is an excerpt from a Q&A interview in The Hotel Journal

<https://thehoteljournal.com/interview-christine-cunanan-la-esperanza-granada-spain/>