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SOMNI

BARCELONA

The story with Barcelona started for me sixteen years ago. Actually, the obsession with Spain started when I was thirteen and randomly watched an old Almodóvar movie on Polish TV. I didn't understand much of it. But the heat of it — the emotional chaos, the quirkiness that is double-layered and makes you think for hours later, the characters who loved too much and said too little — that stayed. It planted something. A certainty that one day, I would be living in Spain.

Although it took me twenty-three years to materialise this plan, I finally visited Spain for the first time in 2010 — and that was Barcelona.

I came with cinematic expectations — I won't pretend otherwise. I was convinced Almodóvar's transvestites from *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* were somewhere out there, walking the Ramblas. A Catalan abogado, slightly older than us, kind enough to show us the city, looked at me sideways when I asked where to find them. Are you looking for prostitutes? he said. Because if yes, there's a small street near the FC Barcelona stadium.

I was not looking for prostitutes. I was looking for the Almodóvar vibe.

He showed me and my friends the city anyway. And when I got sick — properly sick — it was him who took care of me and made sure I got on the bus home first. That kind of gesture stays with you. Quiet and practical and completely without drama. Very Catalan, I would later understand.



There was always something keeping me away from Barcelona. The tourists. The pickpocketing stories. The feeling that a city that beautiful might expect something in return — and I wasn't ready to give it.

But there is a particular kind of story that doesn't end just because you stop telling it. Some things circle back. Some cities wait.

Last year I passed through Barcelona twice — both times just for a few hours. And something shifted in a way I couldn't quite explain. The way Berlin once did: nothing at first, and then suddenly everything. A slow burn that had been burning quietly all along, without my permission.

I live now in Madrid, and last year I went through a very complicated and exhausting process where I got to know that patience is the first word you need to learn when you decide to live permanently in this country. And somewhere in the middle of all that bureaucracy, I came to understand the Catalan character again — a bit cold, a bit stiff at the beginning, but getting things done and providing a kind of quiet, supportive presence when everything else seems to fall apart. I found myself thinking again about Barcelona. About what it means to choose a city. About the things you think are finished that are simply... waiting.

Almodóvar understood this. His characters never really leave anything behind. They just carry it differently.

This magazine is not a tourist guide. It is not a list of tapas bars and rooftop pools. It is my attempt to understand a city I have been circling for sixteen years without ever truly landing. To find what is real and local and hidden in plain sight. To give Barcelona — finally — a proper chance.

Some stories begin and end cleanly. This is not one of those stories.

Somni. Dream, in Catalan. The kind you're not sure is over.

— Wiktorja



HOTEL · BARCELONA

HOTEL BRUMMELL

AN URBAN OASIS CREATED BY FRIENDS

One of my main inspirations for writing about Barcelona was my obsession with Hotel Brummell. As often happens with me, I found something online and became completely captivated. At first, it was the hotel's website, the fonts and the color palette but then, of course, I fell in love with the interior itself.

This 20-room boutique hotel is a true oasis located in Poble Sec, right at the foot of Montjuïc. While the building's façade remains exactly as it was in 1870, the interior has been completely transformed. The architect, Inma Rábano, worked to rehabilitate this historic building into a structure capable of housing such intricate details.

The design was executed by the Australian-born, Barcelona-based duo Blankslate. Their work was inspired by their travels to Sri Lanka and a shared passion for Geoffrey Bawa's "tropical modernism."

During my visits, I've had the pleasure of exploring the rooms and the spa, but it is the stunning terrace that truly stands out as a highlight.

From there, you are treated to a view of the neighboring buildings' fantastic architecture, but it's the view of the building's inner life that is most captivating — plants spilling over balconies and the quiet "micro-life" of local Barcelona residents in their natural element.

To dive deeper into the story behind this unique space, I had the opportunity to interview Anne-Sophie Rossel, the hotel's Brand Director, who shared the vision that makes this oasis so special.

Q

Hotel Brummell describes itself as an "urban oasis created by friends." What does that idea mean in practice for the guest experience?

At Hotel Brummell, the idea of an "urban oasis created by friends" is something you feel from the moment you arrive. It's not just about design or amenities, but about atmosphere.

The hotel was imagined and brought to life together with friends (architects, designers, creatives) and that spirit translates into a place that feels personal and relaxed.

Guests are invited to make themselves at home: to linger over breakfast, take a swim, join a yoga class, or simply retreat to their room.

It's an environment that encourages both exploration and rest, where the experience is shaped by warmth, informality and a sense of belonging.

Q

Many boutique hotels claim to be unique. What makes Hotel Brummell genuinely different from the typical boutique hotel in Barcelona?

What sets Hotel Brummell apart is not a single defining feature, but a combination of intention and feeling. With just 20 rooms, it remains deliberately small, allowing for a more personal and attentive experience.

Its design avoids trends in favour of something more timeless, blending influences from tropical modernism, European antiques and local creative collaborations.

More importantly, the hotel is deeply rooted in its neighborhood, offering a way to experience Barcelona that goes beyond the expected.

Rather than focusing solely on aesthetics, Brummell is about how a place makes you feel: calm, inspired, and quietly connected to the city around you.



Q

Your concept of "casual luxury — less shine, less bling, more soul" is interesting. How do you translate that philosophy into daily operations?

For us, casual luxury is about stripping away the unnecessary and focusing on what truly matters. It's reflected in a service style that is friendly and intuitive rather than formal, in spaces that prioritise comfort and functionality, and in details that are carefully considered but never overstated.

From the quality of the linen to the music playing in the background, every element is chosen to enhance a sense of ease and well-being.

Experiences such as complimentary yoga or a simple, well-made coffee become part of that luxury. It's less about impressing guests and more about making them feel good and cared for.





NEIGHBORHOOD & LOCATION

Q

Hotel Brummell is located in Poble Sec. Why was this neighborhood the right place for the hotel?

Poble Sec felt right from the beginning because it feels like home. It's a neighborhood that still holds onto its local character, where daily life unfolds at a natural pace.

At the same time, it sits just moments from the city centre, the sea and Montjuïc, offering a unique balance between energy and calm.

This combination mirrors what we wanted the hotel to be: connected yet slightly removed, part of the city but not overwhelmed by it.

Being here allows us to offer guests a more grounded and authentic experience of Barcelona.

Q

How would you describe the personality of Poble Sec to travellers who have never visited Barcelona before?

Poble Sec is one of those places that reveals itself slowly. It's local, charming and a little cheeky, with a strong sense of community and a creative undercurrent.

You'll find some of the city's most interesting restaurants, bars and cultural spaces here, but without the intensity of more touristic areas.

It's a neighborhood of everyday life — where people know each other, where mornings start quietly and evenings unfold around shared tables.

For travellers, it offers a glimpse into a more intimate and authentic side of Barcelona.



Q

Being next to Montjuïc seems like a big part of the experience. How do you encourage guests to explore this side of the city?

Montjuïc is very much part of the Brummell experience. It's a place we love and one we naturally share with our guests. Whether it's through an evening run with locals, a walk through the botanical gardens, or a visit to one of its museums, we encourage guests to discover it in their own way.

It offers a different rhythm to the city and creates space to breathe. Simply being so close to it invites guests to step away from the usual routes and experience Barcelona from another perspective.



Q

Poble Sec still feels very local compared to other parts of Barcelona. How do you encourage guests to connect with the culture of the neighborhood rather than just visiting the city as tourists?

We try to create natural points of connection between our guests and the neighborhood. This can be through our curated map with recommendations, shared spaces like our café.

We also work closely with local designers and artists, integrating their work into the hotel.

Rather than directing guests towards a checklist of sights, we encourage them to explore nearby streets, and engage with the everyday life around them.

Q

If someone stays at Hotel Brummell for three days, what would you want them to understand about Barcelona that they wouldn't learn from a typical tourist visit?

We would hope they leave with a sense of how Barcelona feels beyond its landmarks. That it is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own rhythm and identity.

That there is as much value in a quiet morning coffee, a walk through Montjuïc, or an evening spent in a local restaurant as there is in visiting its famous sites.

Ultimately, we want guests to experience a more personal and balanced version of the city: one that combines culture, gastronomy, nature and everyday life.

The Brummell indoor lounge

Q

Barcelona has seen strong debates around tourism and short-term rentals in recent years. As a hospitality brand that also offers apartments in the city, how do you approach this topic and what steps do you take to ensure that your presence supports the local community?

We are very aware of the impact tourism can have on a city like Barcelona, and we believe it comes with responsibility.

Our approach has always been to remain small in scale and thoughtful in how we operate. We focus on quality over quantity, and on creating experiences that respect and integrate into the local environment.

By working with local partners, supporting neighborhood businesses, and encouraging a more conscious way of travelling, we aim to contribute positively to the community.

For us, hospitality is not just about welcoming guests, but about being part of a place in a way that is sustainable and respectful over time.

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A Quiet Practice in Poble Sec

“Time eventually puts everything in its place”

Poble Sec, despite being just a stone’s throw away from the center, is still a neighborhood filled with locals—a place where you actually hear Spanish and Catalan spoken in the streets.

While spending time in the barrio, I became curious about how the people here carry out their days and what daily life looks like in a traditional, working-class neighborhood. As it turned out, I didn’t have to look far. Raul, who runs a massage practice in the heart of Poble Sec, reached out and was happy to share his story.

What began as a spontaneous interaction evolved into this interview. Given that Poble Sec sits at the foot of Montjuïc, it already carries a natural, grounded spirit. When you combine that with Raul’s holistic approach, you find a complete wellness package all within a few meters of the hotel.

How did you become a massage therapist?

Years ago, I worked as a technician, but I always had it in mind to contribute to people’s health. Eventually, I decided to save some money, take a course, and become a massage therapist. Now, I am happy to help with the healing of my clients.

What inspired you to open your practice in Poble Sec?

There are many premises for rent in Barcelona, but I found one that is close to the center, has great facilities, and is right in front of the Poble Sec metro station!

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What kind of massage treatments do you specialize in, and what do clients usually come to you for?

I really enjoy relieving muscle tension and pain. I do a 'mix massage' (decontracting and relaxation), which is strong on the back and more relaxed on the rest of the body. People really like this massage. Most clients come to me wanting to get rid of pain they have been dragging around for a while until they just can't take it anymore.

In your experience, what are the most common physical problems people have today?

Definitely stress, because it spreads throughout the entire body and leads to so many aches and pains.

What do you enjoy most about working directly with clients?

I'm a social person, so I enjoy the brief chat at the beginning and the end. I also like to tune into the energy of the client—and my own—while I am performing the massage.

Poble Sec still feels very local compared to other parts of Barcelona. How would you describe the spirit of the neighborhood?

Fresh. Here, everything moves fast and there are a lot of activities to do. People live together here regardless of their background or race.

How has the area changed since you started working here?

This is my fifth year working in Poble Sec. It is a solid neighborhood, and honestly, not much seems to have changed.



Raul at his practice, Poble Sec

