

A country club community within a luxurious resort destination, La Reserva adds another lifestyle dimension to the exclusive appeal and heritage of Sotogrande.

WORDS MICHEL CRUZ PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SOTOGRANDE S.A.

# LA RESERVA

*A way of Life*

La Reserva has been designed to offer a lifestyle, not just residences

**Y**ou don't have to tell Marc Topiol that property in this part of the world is about much more than bricks and mortar. It's a lifestyle proposition that buyers, particularly those in the upper segments, are looking for, and in this regard southern Spain competes within a global market, so what it offers had better be pretty special. "Of course we have quite a few winning features, such as the climate, amenities and easy access to the rest of Europe, not to mention the beauty of this region, but beyond that you have to create a truly special environment to appeal to people who travel the world and have many options," says the CEO of Sotogrande S.A.

Having worked in leisure management and related property development in a wide range of countries, he is in a good position to judge the relative strengths of different destination markets. Following working together before, it was Marc Topiol that Orion Capital chose to lead the

rejuvenation of Sotogrande when the investment fund took over its assets and management from NH Hotels in 2014, and since then there has been a quiet revolution in the luxury resort half an hour to the west of Marbella. "We realised that a certain amount of restoration was in order; firstly of the infrastructure, which needed updating and beautifying, but also of the brand itself. Our task has been to restore Sotogrande to its former glory and take it beyond that. And in doing this, it was always understood that a partnership between ourselves and the area's businesses, investors and indeed residents was vital."

### BROADENING THE APPEAL

The first steps were therefore highly visible improvements to roads, landscaping and also initiatives such as the charming Mercado de Levante and range of summer activities that have made the quayside area come to life. "In addition to the market and the food trucks, eight shops and ten restaurants have been opened in that area alone, which shows the fertile ground we're working with." It has been part of a two-pronged programme to 'fix' Sotogrande and adding to its content. "Our first mission was to put Sotogrande firmly back on the map again, which has been succeeding, but we also realised that this is an area at a generational crossroads. Promoting

Sotogrande to its classic target audience is relatively easy, because they are part of its unique DNA and heritage, but to remain vibrant and have long-term potential the challenge is to appeal to a new, younger and more widely spread market."

This includes updating beach clubs with the special Sotogrande touch, as well as further developing the appeal of classic elements such as golf, polo and the unique equestrian lifestyle, but at the heart of it all is La Reserva, a luxurious residential resort community set around the golf course that sprawls across undulating hills not far from the marina. "The elegant clubhouse and beautiful course are already icons of Sotogrande, and while both have been improved and taken to a new level, this is just the beginning," says Marc. Far from offering the conventional series of urbanisations bordering the golf course, this country club, measuring roughly the same area as La Zagaleta, will also feature the first sand-floor lagoon pool in Europe, complete with a sophisticated beach club, as well as a two-hectare sports lagoon that 'takes sailing to the hills'. "La Reserva is a luxury living environment built around family life, the kind of place that offers exactly what people leave their busy lives behind to enjoy. In other words, a beautiful setting in which to reconnect with family, friends and oneself."

The elegant clubhouse is at the heart of La Reserva

The golf course is the green heart of the resort Lifestyle



A world of golf and sophistication



La Reserva is a large private country club within Sotogrande



Sotogrande's marina is five minutes away

### AN ALLURING ALTERNATIVE TO MARBELLA

Marc Topiol sees Sotogrande and Marbella, once diametrically opposed, coming much closer together in the next few years as a result of continued development along the coast. "Sotogrande is a complementary alternative to Marbella, offering a different ambience and pace of life in a way that is self-selecting." Indeed, he doesn't 'sell' properties, saying that "our clients are highly informed people who study the market and look at the alternatives. They choose La Reserva if it is right for them." He jokingly dubs himself "a salesman of sadness," for when potential buyers greatly regret leaving one of the full-service villas they have been staying at he knows he's done something right.

The approach to developing La Reserva de Sotogrande is that of engendering a sense of belonging through the creation of

independently planned and themed sub-areas that offer full privacy and security. In this, the true meaning of community is a central element, a place where residents know each other, spend time together and where children find a natural environment in which to grow up. Each of the areas caters to different tastes and needs, offering villas ranging in price from €2 - €18 million, with The Seven as the pinnacle.

"It represents the *crème de la crème* of Sotogrande real estate, with seven magnificent individually designed homes set upon a parkland landscape of 14 hectares designed by Jean Mus, who is merging beautiful touches of Provence into the local scenery to create an environment which, while entirely secure, conceals boundaries to produce an idyllic setting," says Marc

Topiol. Seven leading architects both local and international have designed the €13 - €18 million properties from within a concept of minimal impact upon and integration with nature.

"We are doing things differently, not following the usual patterns of property development on the Costa del Sol, as we want to create a resort living experience that stands out on an international level. All the conditions are there in this beautiful location, and the fact that we are selling these full-service homes at prices not achieved in Sotogrande before indicates we were right to be a little daring," says the CEO, who is currently working on an equally unique concept for a wellness spa that offers something different to the expected.

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