



Cotton House Hotel

BARCELONA

Lázaro Rosa-Violán transforms a 19th century mansion with links to the cotton trade for Marriott International's Autograph Collection.

Words: Regina Winkle-Bryan | Photography: Courtesy of Cotton House Hotel

Opened in February 2015, the recently unveiled Cotton House Hotel would not be the unique space it is without the Boadaes. The bourgeois family made their fortune in the Americas producing cotton and textiles in the 19th century, and later hired architect Elies Rogent to build a lavish mansion in Barcelona's Eixample neighbourhood, not far from Passeig de Gràcia and iconic Antoni Gaudí buildings. It was the Boada family who put in the marble staircase, which climbs from the foyer just off what is now the Cotton House's lobby. At the base of the staircase an iron sculpture of an attractive woman, made in the image of Mrs Boada, still stands.

The family also commissioned the intricate wood ceilings in the library, the boiserie-clad walls, and inlaid wood flooring in what is now the concierge's hall. Kudos should be given to the Boadaes and Rogent for creating such a splendid space, but also to those who later maintained the building's rich interiors during the 130 years that followed.

In the 1950s the Boada home was turned into the headquarters for the Association of Cotton Manufacturers and some remodelling was done, including the addition of an innovative suspended spiral staircase panelled in wood. However, for the most part, the interior



Above: An ornate mantel and dark wood wall panelling adorn the Batuar restaurant as a reminder of the Boada era

of the home was untouched until about four years ago when new owners acquired the premises and remodelling commenced again. Spanish designer Lázaro Rosa-Violán was asked to transform the property, and he and his team at Contemporain Studio obliged, but with a light touch. “We have developed a contemporary urban hotel in a historic building,” says Rosa-Violán, adding: “The building is protected by the city hall so we had to work with a lot of the existing architecture, trying to combine old and new, blending the building’s history with a contemporary look.”

Up the marble staircase on the second floor, Rosa-Violán created a lounge in what was once a library and informal social club for men in the cotton trade. The designer left original floors, ceilings, doors, and even some books, and added a modern white sofa, aqua-hued armchairs, a large square of blue rug, as well as a few period piece tables. An adjacent room, called L’Atelier, was once a tailor’s workshop where men at the club had cotton shirts and suits made while they mingled. Rosa-Violán preserved this space, incorporating red leather rocking chairs and abstract paintings, in addition to stuffing the room’s antique cabinets with bolts of cotton fabric. Guests can have a shirt or suit made here, just like in bygone days, by tailors at the renowned boutique Santa Eulalia.

Batuar, a Mediterranean restaurant, is found just across the hall

from the library. A mammoth fireplace with an ornate wood mantel and dark wood wall panelling adorn the dining room, a reminder of the Boada era. Rosa-Violán fitted out the room in white and black leather chairs in addition to quilted Chesterfield-style benches along two walls. The overall effect is masculine and cosy; it’s a space that invites guests to order a glass of red wine and a tapa of strong Spanish cheeses and linger awhile.

In the bar, set within a luminous conservatory, Rosa-Violán moved away from earthy brown tones and instead, embraced Barcelona’s natural palette: the sapphire sea and silver-green olive tree. Blue and green chairs surround small tables atop a white and grey tiled floor, while white pillars and suspended white lamps make the sunlit space even brighter. “We chose the same spectrum of colours for the interior that are found in the exterior in order to make the separation of the terrace and bar almost invisible,” says Rosa-Violán.

Just off the bar in a small private dining room, an antique chandelier hangs from an ornate pink and grey ceiling. The room is encircled in gleaming white cabinets filled with hundreds of bolts of textured cotton fabric in ivory, chalk, and similar creamy tints. Former invoices, like those the Association of Cotton Manufacturers would have used, make for creative wallpaper above the cabinets.

From the restaurant and bar, two doors let out onto a 300m²



Above: Guestrooms are predominantly white, the colour of a cotton tuft, and feature artworks depicting the cotton flower

terrace set inside the quiet confines of a traditional interior courtyard. Neighbours hang out their wash, sit down for lunch, and lean from windows while smoking cigarettes just beyond Cotton House's foam-green trellises, offering guests a glimpse of local life in the city. On both sides of the ample terrace, stone fountains bubble, just as they did in the days of the Boada family. Some of the hotel's 83 rooms look out onto the terrace, many of them with compact porches. Sun-drenched and tranquil, these are some of the best rooms in the house.

The majority of guestrooms share the same interior design and layout, featuring doors that open directly into anterooms where sinks, showers, and toilets are located; an approach that might be off-putting for some, but certainly maximises square meters. Sliding doors separate bathrooms from bedrooms, the latter clad almost entirely in white, the colour of a cotton tuft. On one wall, white headboards are crowned by illuminated frames containing sketches of flowers, and below, black reading lamps rest on simple nightstands.

"We created oversized headboards made of white leather, and used aged brass tacks as a decorative border. In some rooms the

headboards cover the entire wall," explains Rosa-Violán. On the opposite wall from the bed, the designer installed bespoke wallpaper depicting the cotton flower in grey and coffee tones, picking up the colour of the dark laminate floors.

The deluxe 90m² Vichy Suite breaks away from the standard room layout with a stacked duplex design, its two floors connected by a narrow staircase. The lower floor opens out onto a private patio with sun loungers and an outdoor shower. A privacy wall divides the suite from the Cotton House pool and solarium, a small area panelled in pine on the building's sixth floor. From the pool's sundeck the vistas are of the ever-buzzing Gran Vía de les Corts Catalanes and the spires of La Sagrada Família Basilica in the distance. The soon-to-open spa and fitness centre are also on the sixth floor.

Overall, five-star Cotton House is a well-balanced blend of old and new. Rosa-Violán seamlessly incorporated Boadaes' heirlooms and history with the 21st century comforts one expects from a five-star hotel. A stay at Cotton House is akin to time travelling back to the 1800s, but with WiFi, satellite television, and Nespresso.

EXPRESS CHECKOUT: 83 guestrooms | 1 restaurant | 1 bar | Fitness Centre, outdoor pool | 2 meeting rooms | www.hotelcottonhouse.com
Operator: Marriott International | **Architecture:** Elies Rogent | **Interior Design:** Lázaro Rosa-Violán