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The Amare Marbella has considered every possible stress and found a way to eradicate it. The Amare Club encompasses a private beach, spacious pool, indoor lounge and outdoor restaurant.

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Back at the hotel and when it comes to gastronomic delights the Amare has you covered. The Belvue rooftop bar, with its infinity 360° views, is the perfect place to enjoy a pre-dinner drink while watching the sun set over the Med before a meal in one of the hotel's restaurants.

The Messina Restaurant is the Amare's Michelin Star offering. Judged as the 10th best restaurant in Spain for creative cuisine at Madrid Fusión's Gastronomy awards, elaborate dishes combine high quality local products with sublime presentation. There is also the Mare Nostrum restaurant where diners can enjoy a buffet style/live cooking experience and the

Amare Lounge that serves up entertainment with its cuisine in the form of flamenco shows and themed dinners. One of the lovely parts

While Puerto Banus seemed a little bit too much like hard work for us we were still keen to embrace some local hospitality so after dark ventured back into the old town and Orange Square to visit 'David Place', a small gem of a place that feels half watering-hole, half fancy dress shop. Here patrons can choose to wear a variety of head wear (there was everything from crowns, to sailors' hats, gladiator masks, steppers and much, much more) while enjoying a beverage. If you don't pick your own hat then owner, David (funny enough), will get one for you - don't ask me why this works, it just does. The craic was great and the tiny bar was filled with a mix of tourists and locals.

The nightlife in Marbella may be more relaxed than its lively neighbour but there is still plenty to choose from and the same can be said for restaurants.

Feeling somewhat delicate the next day, a factor due to too many of David's delicious mojitos and zero to do with the ridiculously comfortable hotel bed, we ventured to the Mare Nostrum restaurant. Breakfast is my favourite meal of the day and I very much judge any hotel by its selection so thankfully the Amare didn't disappoint, with every culinary whim catered for - enjoying a chilled Cara (it would have been rude not to) with a sea view is definitely my new favourite hangover cure!

No good girls' weekend would be complete without a trip to the spa and the Germaine de Capuccini spa at Amare offers a hydrotherapy circuit with professional treatments, massages and relaxation zones. I opted for a Vitamin C facial to help boost my out of season suntan.

I visited Marbella and the Amare with my best friend but would have enjoyed the experience just as much with my partner or even my mum. Testament to how relaxing it was is the fact that, leaving on the Monday, our three day stay had felt more like a fortnight. But the true benchmark for the experience? I can't wait to book to return to Marbs and the Amare again this year.

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**Stay in the Amare Marbella with nightly rates starting from £200 in an 'I Luv Here' room on a bed and breakfast basis including complimentary daily sunbeds, use of the Technogym and WiFi.**  
[www.amarehotels.com](http://www.amarehotels.com)



I'll confess; I've always been something of a Costa del Snob - shunning mainland Spain in favour of other shores. 'Too touristy, too tacky, too crowded,' being my main (unfounded) beliefs. A road trip around part of Spain's southeastern coast last summer quickly shot those notions down. But when it came to the idea of Marbella? Well the jury was still out.

Admittedly shows like *The Only Way is Essex* with its big haired, big ego-ed, big bank account 'babes' and their depiction of 'Marbs' hadn't helped matters but when the chance presented itself to escape Belfast's cold wet weather at the end of October last year and spend a long weekend at one of the resort's top hotels in the sunshine of the Costa del Sol it was just too tempting an offer to even try and resist.

Leaving Belfast International first thing on

the Friday morning had us arriving into Malaga just after 11am and a short transfer later we were driving into Marbella. The white washed, low rise buildings, palm trees and brightly coloured flowers hanging from every balcony had me beginning to doubt myself and by the time we'd finished checking into our hotel, the Amàre Marbella, I was ready to hold my hands up and admit I'd got it all very wrong.

First impressions count and the recently renovated Amàre prides itself on being a hotel for the senses. Acting as a unique exhibition space - photography, fashion, design, sculpture and moving art from local artists are present through the building and the hotel's bespoke scent fills the corridors and lobby.

The adults only, beachfront property is contemporary in style and feels undeniable cool but the charm and warmth that we were

met with was proper old school. Friendly staff and the mix of young and old clientele made it clear that while the hotel may have a real buzz about it, it's not reserved strictly for the hip.

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Whether your preference is for beach or pool, staff greet you with towels and help you make your selection - there's no fighting for sun loungers here. The pool is lovely but the Beach Club is something else. Wooden decking leads to an enclosed area and comfortable loungers.



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