

Maribel's Guide to Barcelona ©-Updates, January '08

New and noteworthy hotels coming in '08 to the Eixample

5 star Suites Avenida

Opening date yet unannounced, this new entry into the luxury market is a creation of the Derby Hotel group, with sister hotels, Claris, Granados 83, Balmes and Astoria, all in the Eixample. It is located in the most privileged of spots, directly on the Passeig de Gràcia, opposite Gaudí's La Pedrera, with an vanguard façade designed by Toyo Ito. This property will consist of luxury apartments and suites with the services of a 5 star hotel, a gastronomic restaurant, a garage, pool, solarium, health club and spa, business center, the usual Derby collection of art. Look for its opening at www.derbyhotels.es

4 star Murmuri

Opening in the spring on semi-pedestrian Rambla de Catalunya in the Left Eixample, a member of the 3 member Majestic group (5 star Hotel Majestic and 3 star Inglaterra) along with the Preferred Boutique group, whose members include the Montalembert in Paris and Dublin's Hotel Morrison. It will boast 53 avant-garde rooms and suites, created by English designer, Kelly Hoppen, all equipped with flat screen TV, Wi Fi, mini bar, iPod docks, alarm clocks and offering 24 hr. room service. This is most definitely one to watch! www.hotel-murmuri.com

4 star 987 Barcelona

Slated to open soon in the upper Right Eixample on chic Carrer Mallorca with 90 rooms and suites, some with views of Gaudí's Sagrada Familia Basilica, all done in highly contemporary design in a bright, primary colors palette. Some rooms have terraces. The hotel also will house a restaurant and "chill out" bar. www.987hotels.com

The High Tec/Petit Palace hotel group has just entered the Barcelona market with two new properties, the 4 star plus **Petit Palace BCN** in the Right Eixample (corner of Roger de Llúria and Gran Vía) and the **Petit Palace Museum** on the Left (at the corner of Diputació and Rambla de Catalunya). Both offer this popular chain's usual amenities, such as "high tech" rooms with personal computers and stationary bikes, along with family rooms (quads) with 2 single beds and 2 bunk beds for the kids, plus free crib. The Petit Palace BCN has rates starting at €125, while the Petit Palace Museum rooms start at €160. See both at www.hthoteles.com

Wine excursions to the Penedès and Priorat

El Moli Tours offers day long, luxury wine trips from Barcelona to all of Southern Catalunya's wine producing regions. These excursions include a Catalan breakfast, two VIP winery visits, refreshments, a Catalan lunch with wines, and multilingual guide-sommelier. They also offer a Wine Lovers' romantic 3-day mini break at a charming rural B&B in the Penedès. See www.elolitours.com for more information.