



# SOUTHERN *Comforts*

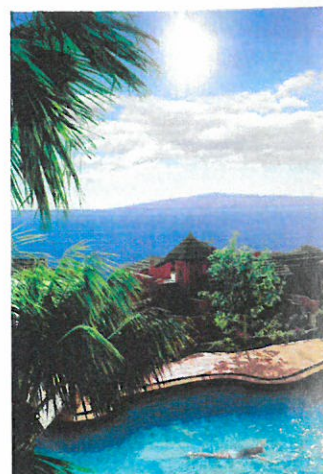
For relaxation, great weather and five-star luxury, and all within a four-hour flight from Ireland, it's hard to beat The Abama in Tenerife, writes *Norah Casey*

**T**he Abama is a special place for us as we have been travelling to this little oasis in Tenerife for the past five years in search of mid-winter pampering and, in particular, the sun. A visit helps to bridge the gap between the long dreary days of January and the milder days of March, and brings all the therapeutic benefits of sunshine and sea along with a stress-free break from the long Irish winters.

We began going to The Abama just after it became a Ritz-Carlton property and the first General Manager, Pep Lozano, had joined from Hotel des Arts in Barcelona. His arrival spearheaded a significant step-up in facilities and service at the resort; when we returned one year

A chic sort of Canary: The Abama resort offers a more sophisticated side of Tenerife.

ABOVE: The main swimming pool.





later, we were pleasantly surprised by the many improvements he had introduced. Pep is now in charge of the new Ritz Carlton in Abu Dhabi and, undoubtedly, he will make a big impact there as well.

What I love about The Abama is that it ticks all the boxes in terms of a relaxing break. Increasingly I find the whole flying experience stressful and tiring, so short-haul is always preferable for shorter holidays. Tenerife is only a four-hour flight away from Ireland and Aer Lingus and Ryanair fly regularly, which means that flights tend to be competitively priced, although they can

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soar during the school holidays. Another big plus is that the sun almost always shines – we have been there in the depths of winter and yet still enjoyed lovely sunny days with temperatures in the low to mid-twenties. In fact, this particular area of Tenerife is purported to enjoy more hours of sunshine than any other part of Spain, with an average annual temperature of 23°C.

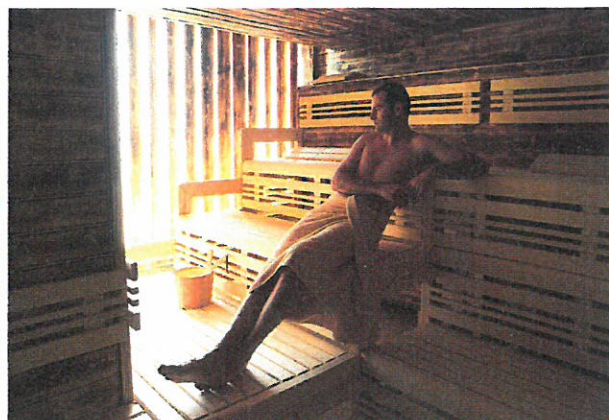
Don't be put off by preconceived ideas about Tenerife. The Abama is located well away from the hustle and bustle of the island's crowded beach resorts around Playa de Las Americas and Los Cristianos. The resort is situated in Guia de Isora, the quieter – and many say the most attractive – west coast of Tenerife. The

coastline here is simply stunning with dramatic cliffs giving way unexpectedly to quiet little inlets and beaches. The vista is truly spectacular and The Abama is perfectly positioned to capture views of the neighbouring Canarian island, La Gomera.

Make no mistake, The Abama is a five-star proposition on an island not always known for its fine dining or quality accommodation. If it's all-day breakfasts, theme parks and Irish pubs you're seeking, you'll be disappointed. If sybaritic comfort, superb service and excellent facilities are on your wish list, however, look no further.

ABOVE: Stunning views of La Gomera; LEFT: The Citadel at Abama.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Verona Restaurant; relaxing in the Spa Sauna; a double room in one of the villas; the golf course commands stunning views.

Just as a book cannot be judged by its cover, first impressions of The Abama can be misleading. At first glance you might be taken aback by the initial appearance of the resort and wonder if you have taken the wrong turn. I still remember driving towards this large, pink, Moroccan-inspired resort and its turreted towers with some trepidation – now we crane our necks to see who will be the first to glimpse the terracotta citadel on the horizon.

I have grown to love the quirky irregularity of the ethnic architecture. There is a beautiful synchronicity between the earth-coloured walls, the rich vegetation and the dramatic seascapes. It was designed by internationally renowned architect Melvin Villarroel, who creates wonderful buildings that work in harmony with their surroundings.

Water is a key theme at The Abama, with numerous lakes and waterfalls throughout the sprawling 160-hectare grounds. As a result, wherever you are in the resort, you are soothed by the sound of water. The landscaped gardens are beautiful and showcase the lovely scented and dramatic flowers of the Canaries. There is something almost luxurious about being amongst so many dramatic Bird of Paradise blooms.

While The Abama's striking exterior is evocative of the landscape itself, the beautiful grandeur of the interior space is elegant and muted and always dressed by an amazing floral centrepiece. If you want to be close to all of the main facilities, you can opt to stay in the

main hotel. Otherwise, excellent accommodation is available in any of the lovely on-site villas.

With an excellent spa, award-winning 18-hole golf course, 10 restaurants, eight pools, seven tennis courts and its own private beach, The Abama is truly a five-star mini-village and there is really no need to leave the resort at all during your stay, should you so desire.

It may sound like a cliché but returning this year, for the fifth time, The Abama felt like a home from home. From the moment you arrive, the service is exemplary – having spent many years travel writing, I appreciate far more now the importance of arrivals and departures at our destination.

A welcome drink and hassle-free check-in at The Abama puts you at ease from the outset. A reservation for dinner is promptly made for us at our restaurant of choice – we always dine at the Italian restaurant, Verona, on the first night for its relaxed and casual ambiance.

After that, who knows? A visit can be as relaxing or as energetic as you like. The only certainty is that you'll leave refreshed, relaxed and with the batteries charged and ready to tackle the latter stages of the Irish winter. **TM**

