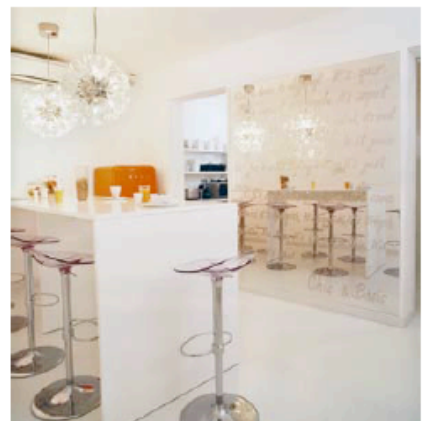
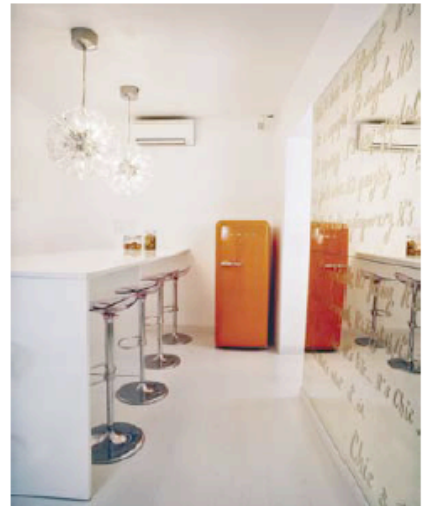


WHERE TO STAY HOTELES

Chic & Basic Tallers



Central Barcelona on a budget

By Alda Gil Pérez

CHIC and Basic Tallers (literally 'workshops') is a new concept in holiday accommodation. The group knows exactly what its clients want, and the proof of the pudding is in its six successful branches operating in Spain and in Amsterdam.

The aim of this hotel chain is very simple: offering the maximum comfort at affordable prices, the design and location of the hotel taking top priority. Despite this, Chic and Basic Tallers is not a hotel, neither is it a hostel, and far from being a youth hostel. Yet it manages to be all three at the same time.

The young people who run them have travelled a great deal and this comes across loud and clear, because they give the services that a nomad needs when they come to a big city and want to enjoy themselves and exhaust themselves exploring, without having to share their precious hours of sleep with anyone else.

Staying in the centre of the city without paying a fortune was usually synonymous with a dark and dingy hostel, until the arrival of the Chic and Basic – a new concept in hotels for travellers who don't want to rough it but don't need to be in the lap of luxury. Next to the Plaça de la Universitat, the best of Barcelona is just a few minutes away on foot.

At just a minute on foot from the Plaça de la Universitat and five minutes from the Plaza Cataluña, Chic and Basic looks like any other city-centre building. You have to go up to the second floor to enter, and you'll walk into a corridor painted white from floor to ceiling, minimally-lit by fluorescent orange tubes that come out of the door-frames. Suddenly it seems that the block has transformed into a plush central London hotel where you wouldn't get change out of 200 pounds sterling just for the room.

There is no reception nor complex system of room service. The people who run it just explain to you which

is your room and from here on in, you can start to enjoy yourself.

In the communal area you'll find a tall table with transparent stools where you'll be welcomed with a cup of tea, coffee or a sandwich, without paying a single céntimo. It's as close as you'll get to being in a friend's house, borrowing a room for your holidays. It might not be the same as being in your own house, but you won't feel homesick if you're staying for several weeks.

The rooms, also white, even the floor and bedclothes, are not especially large and do not have a wardrobe, but as it mainly caters for tourists and couples who are only staying

for a couple of nights, this is not crucial.

Every room has a plasma-screen television and connection for an iPod or MP3 player. There is even Wi-Fi and air conditioning that you can set to your own, preferred level, in each of the rooms.

The showers are built into the wall, which can be awkward in terms of privacy if you're not travelling alone, but as there is one in each room you do not have to share a bathroom with total strangers as you would in a youth hostel.

In the morning, breakfast is available, and you prepare it yourself. This type of service, which you can only imagine in a small hotel, has many advantages for independent travellers who don't want to have to stick to fixed time-tables nor restrictions. You can eat as much as you like from a very European menu – cereal, toast, coffee, tea, jam, fruit and fruit juices. Other customers come and go to the large table and share their experiences of the trip.

The best of all is having

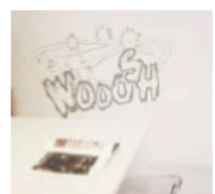
your own room, with all the privacy you'll need, in the centre of a city and at a very reasonable price – a very common concept in Europe but which has not caught on yet in Spain. At Chic and Basic, they don't have a complex about being small. They're just proud to be able to give so much and provide such a pleasant service without protocol or red tape.

Leaving the building you just drink in Cataluña. The Plaça de la Universitat is on the right and the red and white bikes pass up and down the street. Europe is closer at every step, and Las Ramblas just a few metres away.

The same group has a hotel in Barcelona with larger rooms in an historic building, next to the Santa Catalina market.

Opposite the hotel El White Bar, since they couldn't have it any other way, the same style and concept, design, service and breath of fresh air is all there. They have varied menus and even DJ music available.

Also, in Barcelona, you can



stay in one of the Chic and Basic apartments, which is just like owning a second home directly in the middle of the Born district. These apartments have everything you need to live in the city either for long periods or as a family with all the tasteful design and comfort you can imagine – plasma-screen TVs, terraces, fully-equipped kitchens and bedclothes.

All accommodation and services provided by Chic and Basic offer tailor-made customer service and quality, a far cry from the standard procedures and protocol of large hotel chains.

For more information, take a look at www.chicandbasic.com.