



# PARADISE FOUND

## Roger Wheeler jets off to Hotel Masia-Sumidors

Over the years many travel writers have written endless purple prose about finding the perfect 'bolt-hole', 'hideaway', 'retreat' or 'escape'. All these places are undoubtedly fine and suit the individuals who have discovered them; yet I have always been quite dubious about these claims, until now that is. Last year I wrote about Furtherafiel.com, a new website that features Gay owned or very Gay friendly hotels and guest houses. *The Independent* newspaper recently rated it as number nine on the top 50 travel websites. For a Gay travel site, that is high praise.

So we took a look, being on a very limited budget, we saw a place which seemed to tick all our boxes, the **Hotel Masia-Sumidors**, near **Barcelona**, close to **Sitges** and as easyJet flies four times a day from **Gatwick**, very accessible. Devilishly handsome 43-year-old, ex-financier and former Brighton

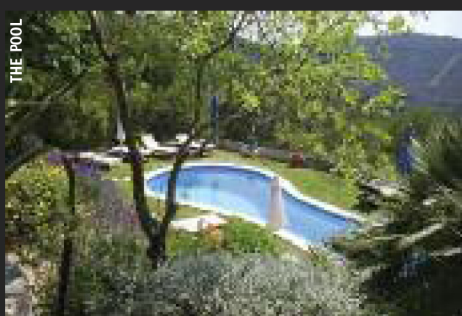
minutes from civilisation. The name is Catalan, Masia is farmhouse and Sumidors is the name of the range of hills. Access to the hotel is via quite a rough track, which makes arrival at the hotel even more of a surprise. You don't need a car, the boys offer to collect from Sitges railway station but having one does give that extra bit of freedom.

While this is officially Spain, it's in the fiercely independently minded Catalonia. The language is part Spanish and part French, and they would love to be a separate country from Spain. They're also very proud people, but realistically being a separate country is



unlikely to happen.

Each of the seven rooms in the main house has an individual and tasteful theme from India, Asia and Africa, to blue and music - each also has a very smart bathroom. There is a beautiful little cottage that is ideal for families or small groups as it sleeps four in two bedrooms. We had the separate and quite stunning suite with its own private terrace. Heaven. The swimming pool is down a few steps, tucked away and almost hidden from the main house. There are also many little



secluded areas where you can sit and read or just admire the view. There is a very well stocked and reasonably priced honesty bar, help yourself and note it in the book. A self-service continental style breakfast is everything you would need and at night Iain cooks quite lovely dinners. The evening's menu is written on a board in the morning; you do need to tell them if you have any dietary issues. Three courses are on average just €26 and the local wine is around €10 a bottle, excellent value. Dinner is served outside on the candle-lit terrace, everyone is served at the same time and it becomes something like a house party, with the hosts joining in and chatting - it's a delightful atmosphere.



Eating in the hotel is great, Iain is a fabulous chef, but with Sitges only minutes down the road the options for an evening out aren't limited. This is real luxury at budget prices; room rates for two sleeping are from €95 to €140 in high season (June - September), and €75 to €110 at other times. These prices include an excellent breakfast. Real value for money.

I last visited Sitges about 25 years ago and of course things have changed, though not a lot. It's still the lively resort it always was. Today it seems to be about 50/50 Gay/Straight. For many years it relied mainly on Gay visitors and to an extent still does, but there is a more mixed atmosphere today. The bars are still doing a good trade; usually from about 11pm until whenever the last man standing falls down. The beaches are clean and sandy and can get quite busy with young hunks in or out of their Speedos. Just out of town is the exclusively nudist beach, **Playa del Muerto**,

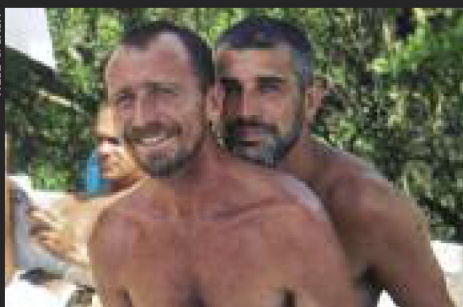


which is very quiet and relaxing.

We were sorry to leave Neil and Iain's house, it is a lovely place and we really felt that we had made two new friends. Some four years ago *Attitude* magazine wrote a page on the hotel and concluded with the words: "You will never want to leave this place; you'll fall in love with the hotel and the owners, just as they did with each other". We will certainly return.

[www.sumidors.com](http://www.sumidors.com)  
[www.furtherafiel.com](http://www.furtherafiel.com)

NEIL & IAIN



University student, **Neil Stock** and trained chef **Iain Murray**, 46, (just call me gorgeous) have been together for 17 years; they've lived in Detroit and Amsterdam, enjoying the high life. A few years ago they decided that there was more to life than just working and having fun, so these crazy, lovely guys bought a nine bedroom 400-year-old farmhouse in the hills just 10 minutes from Sitges. They now know what work really is, as for the past five years they've worked their socks off to establish one of the most perfect, rural and rustic hotels. While the Hotel Masia-Sumidors appears to be isolated in beautiful, tranquil semi-mountainous countryside (they even have five hectares of their own) it is only

TERRACE & BAR

PLAYA DEL MUERTO

THE POOL