

La Gomera

IMADA RURAL HOTEL

The old school

□ By Barbara Belt

The mayor of Alajeró, Manuel Ramón Plasencia Barroso, and the director general of the regional government tourist office, Sebastián Ledesma, have signed contracts to start work on a new rural hotel in Imada. Maria del Carmen Piñero, representing the Cabildo, was also present at the ceremony.

The work will be carried out under the auspices of the Plan de Infraestructuras y Calidad Turística de Canarias, whose principal aim, according to regional government is, "... to improve the quality of tourist facilities and infrastructures throughout the Canarian archipelago." Finance will be provided jointly by regional government and FEDER, the euro-funding body beloved in these parts for its bountiful coffers. Seemingly endless thousands of FEDER euros are spent on the islands, providing employment on its wide variety of projects.

The new hotel will be housed in the old village school, which passed into council hands when it was closed many years ago and

has stood empty and in a deteriorating condition ever since. There are many such small school buildings on the island. Most are now abandoned, like the villages they served. The few children remaining are bused to schools in larger centres of population when possible, although these 'colegios unitarios' still exist in Arure, La Dama and Chipude/El Cercado.

They are small, village schools where children of all ages are taught together. There may be only ten or so children in the village and the low school roll does not justify employing more than one teacher. Although responsible for a tiny class, the teacher's work is considerable. Planning for, teaching and keeping track of progress with a spectrum of ages that may range from three to twelve is exhausting, if done well, and requires a strong sense of patience, vocation, meticulous curriculum planning and a great deal of energy.

Imada school was a typical colegio unitario, or village school. The downstairs of the small building housed the school's one classroom,

while the teacher lived in accommodation provided on the first floor.

Villagers are delighted that there will be life in the old school again. As neighbour Maria says, "...we all have lots of memories of going to school there. Some of the memories aren't so sweet. One teacher in particular was a real haridan. The punishment meted out certainly wouldn't be allowed today. But others were lovely and we all enjoyed being together. It was a real family school and it's been sad to see the place falling apart. A hotel here will bring some life into the village and, hopefully, some work."

The old school will reopen as a small hotel towards the end of next year and will have a bar and cafeteria, with seven double bedrooms overlooking the sun terrace and garden.

The conversion should bring rural tourism to Imada

Fuerteventura

El Cotillo

Last orders for Torino?

● A beach bar favoured by ex-pats in Fuerteventura looks as if it could be for the chop by the island's authorities.

Rumours have been circulating for months that the El Torino bar and restaurant at El Cotillo is to be knocked down to make way for newer premises to be built further back from the shore,

in compliance with coastal regulations. It appears that the prospect has moved a step closer in the past couple of weeks and the popular eatery and sangria server, not to mention sunset viewpoint, could be bulldozed in April.

The news has angered residents and visitors, prompting comments on the island's holiday forum. One poster said "this bar is part of the

character and uniqueness of El Cotillo and if it goes it will be a sad day.

There used to be one on the beach at Corralejo dunes which has gone and again it is not the same sunbathing and not being able to go up for cool beer, don't think the authorities want tourism on the Island as they remove all the things that we come for".

La Gomera

Cruise liners

New port of call

● La Gomera capital San Sebastián will host large cruise liners as of the autumn once work on extending the jetty at the harbour is completed.

The berthing facility, which is being extended by 100 metres to allow the bigger ships

to dock, should be finished by September and a German liner, the Mein Schiff, has already made plans to visit on 17 November.

The Port Authority and Cabildo say the ship will visit La Gomera every other Friday as of that date, bringing up to 3,600 passengers

each time, and talks are under way with other companies to add the island to their ports of call for the winter season.

In all, just over 12 million euros are being spent on the extension, including a bigger and more modern passenger terminal.



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