



**5 minutes...**

**4 minutes...**

***Beads of sweat begin forming like condensation on a window. The clock's menacing red digits drop down to '3:00'. As shaky hands finally spin a dial to the correct code, the heavy lock falls to the floor as chips, money, and a gold bar follow with a thud. Reaching into the darkness of the safe, clammy fingers wrap themselves around the next clue.***

**1 minute...**

Some of you may have already heard about these popular 'escape rooms' and may have even given one a shot yourself, but for those of you who haven't, here's the low-down: The idea originated from the ever-popular 'point-and-click' computer games of the 80's, where the user would use a variety of clues and objects around a fictional room on-screen in order to solve it and escape before moving on to the next one. These were brought to life by a 35-year-old Takao Kato from Japan, in 2007. One themed room, a series of creative puzzles and riddles, and just 60 minutes to crack them. Soon after, the game snowballed into other parts of Asia, gaining huge popularity in Singapore. By 2015, there were over 50 different games in Singapore alone.

Even Barack Obama has tried his hand at an escape room. In 2016, the US President and his family visited Breakout Waikiki in Honolulu during their Hawaii vacation after the escape room tweeted: "*Hey @POTUS, if you think running a country is hard, try breaking out of one of our rooms!*" He successfully completed the Mission Manoa room with 12 seconds remaining. (Of course he did. He's Obama.)

These live 'escape-the-room' adventure games are set in a variety of fictional locations such as prison cells, hotel rooms, dungeons and even space stations! The games require strategy, critical thinking, concentration and determination in order for players to escape a locked room within a set time. The days of sitting around and passively watching something are over, and in its place is an opportunity to get involved and grab a piece of the action for yourself.

Founded a year ago, Rock Escape Rooms arrived on the rock and hit the ground running – and they're still gaining traction. What sets them apart from some other rooms you may have tried elsewhere is their original and unique storylines, created just for us here in Gibraltar.

Escape rooms are still a relatively new concept, but unlike most you may see around the world, Rock Escape Rooms are not a franchise. Because of this, they endeavour to create original and unique storylines for people to come and lose themselves in. All aspects of Rock Escape Rooms were created completely from scratch by James Grimes, Ben Clark and Jack Brown. They each used their specific skill sets in order to provide a completely unique experience to locals and tourists alike. James, a former leisure provider owner and Ben, a former manager in the gaming industry, are the operations directors; the friendly faces you're greeted by as you follow a series of coloured question marks up their stairs and enter the dimly-lit reception area. Jack is the third mastermind of the trio, and the creative director. Although he is based in the UK, he is back in Gibraltar often, constantly designing and upgrading the games within the rooms. He is a masters qualified psychologist, specialising in behavioural psychology, a skill he has most certainly put to use in the creation of these rooms!

Since opening their doors on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, Rock Escape Rooms have welcomed through a whopping 300 avid adventurers. At present, there are two rooms to be cracked: The Box, and Room 83. Their third is currently under construction, and they are planning a fourth as you read. One will be an intense, compact, challenging, shorter



time room and the other will be Rock Escape Room's biggest game yet, with possible links to the culture and history of Gibraltar... stay tuned!

Rock Escape Rooms have concentrated their efforts on both the themes and puzzles of both rooms, making the challenges relevant to an immersive theme that is centred around Gibraltar. The rooms contain various challenges, riddles, codes and hints all framed within an exciting storyline. The idea is to use your skills, and those of your teammates, in order to find your way back out of the room in one hour, after which you will remain locked in the room *forever*. (Or at least until James comes to let you out.) If there is some spare time after your booking, the GamesMaster might be kind enough to let you have a little bit of extra time to finish the game, depending how close your group is to the finish. If not, and 60 minutes is up, better luck next time!

Both games were deliberately created to be completely different in terms of theme, storyline, and challenges. They were designed to create the feeling of being in a completely different world – and boy do they succeed. It's quite the challenge itself just to tell you about these rooms without *actually* telling you about these rooms (now that would be cheating), but here is a short description for each:

**'Room 83'** – *There are always vacancies at this mysterious hotel and you'll soon see why, all is not as it seems. Check-in is easy, check-out is harder. Can your team solve the murder and escape in time to catch the killer?*

From the moment you enter Room 83, you are immersed in the thrilling and chilling world of a detective. Just as you feel you've almost cracked the room... a new surprise comes out of the blue to turn the investigation on its head.

**'The Box'** – *Welcome aboard! We have intelligence that there are enemies in the area who want to attack. Your team will go and meet Lieutenant Jenkins to make sure the secrets of Gibraltar and the box are safe.*

The Box is arguably a little more 'hands-on'. As you work your way around the room, every aspect of your senses is challenged as you diligently work together to rescue 'the box'.

The newest room soon to grace the Rock Escape hall of rooms is an innovative concept where you are essentially required to rob as much as you can from a casino within the allocated time of 60 minutes. To set the scene: you will be robbing the infamous Marian Atraco who has previous connections with the Mafia, and is known to be quite the unsavoury character. Working your way around the room, you must unearth clues to strategically complete a number of objectives within the allocated time, or risk being caught by the owner of the menacing voice that periodically sounds over the intercom. And if you manage to break into the vault and steal every last piece of loot in the game? Treat yourself by heading to the casino bar to claim your booty: a bottle of bubbly. Bring your best casino-robbing crack team – this one's a doozy.

These rooms have been described as "highly stimulating", "more fun than the PlayStation!", "a mind-teasingly, titillating, *tour de force*" and "a highly recommended challenge that will get you working together as a team... or never speaking to each other again".

These rooms are a fantastic way to bring friends, family and even colleagues together. All you need is between 2-5 people, your thinking cap, and some patience. There's no need to worry about physical exertion as the only strength you'll need is mental, although you're likely to break a sweat as the sands of time trickle away. Consider this activity your workout for the week!



Our verdict? Exciting, theatrical, and entertainingly chaotic. But don't just take our word for it; Rock Escape Rooms has accumulated some impressive reviews over the past year:



**"Brilliant fun from start to finish – would highly recommend and would definitely go again!"**



**"Loved it! I'm now completely addicted to doing these rooms, so much fun and you never know what to expect."**



**"Excellent story setting and challenging puzzles to test your brain and skill. Would highly recommend."**

This is an exciting, alternative leisure activity for local families, friends, couples and work colleagues to come and try. No matter your age or interests, this activity is guaranteed to be unlike anything you have experienced before. Do you have what it takes to beat my top time? There's only one way to find out. Tick, tock, tick, tock...

*For more information and to book your room visit [rockescaperooms.com](http://rockescaperooms.com) or email [rockescaperooms@gmail.com](mailto:rockescaperooms@gmail.com).*