

WHERE CLASSIC MEETS CONTEMPORARY

Discover Lisbon at Torel Palace, the city's hidden gem of a hotel. BY ARTIS HENDERSON



Caption tkk

LISBON IS OFFICIALLY ON THE VERGE of being discovered.

Hip and forward-looking but with a rich history woven into the fabric of everyday life, the Portuguese capital is attracting waves of in-the-know travelers. They're coming for the nightlife of the on-trend neighborhood Bairro Alto and for the narrow medieval streets of the Alfama district. They're enjoying up-and-coming eateries run by daring young chefs and old pubs that offer haunting, melancholy Fado music.

Though Lisbon is increasingly making top-destination lists, Portugal's largest city still has some precious gems discoverable only by a privileged few. The spectacularly renovated and artfully designed Torel Palace, a boutique hotel in the hills above the Baixa district, is one of these treasures.

The hotel is formed from two aristocratic mansions built in 1902 and 1904 and long-owned by a private Portuguese family. Bought by a pair of investors between 2013 and 2015, the buildings were painstakingly remodeled in a style that remained true to the original architecture of the structures. The owners brought in Portuguese interior designer Isabel Sá Nogueira, and her mission became to create a design style that was both classic and contemporary, rich in comfort and history, and that reflected Lisbon's eye to the future with an appreciation for its past. Each of the rooms was to be unique, and they would be named for—and inspired by—the great kings and queens of Portugal.

"The remodeling was total," says designer Sá Nogueira of the Torel Palace project. "The building had been a



family house, and it needed renovations and all the transformations to be prepared for a hotel. For example, in the bathrooms, everything had to be done with special care. For me, nothing should transform the initial lines and architecture of the building."

Sá Nogueira describes the design inspiration for the hotel as an easy relaxed style, where past, present and future meet.

"It has all the daily comforts but with lots of historical details. This provides us with the tranquility and peace that we normally only find in our family homes. In the end, it's a place where everybody feels good and likes to be."

In each of the hotel's 26 rooms, plus a villa and an apartment, Sá Nogueira combined a mix of antique and contemporary furniture, objects and rugs as well as bespoke pieces.

"That was the secret that resulted in this special ambience," she says.

The architecture of the Torel Palace includes both Neoclassic and Rococo details and is in line with the Pamboline style of architecture that changed the face of Lisbon beginning in the second half of the 18th century when a devastating earthquake shook the city. The earthquake, combined with the fires and tsunamis that followed it, destroyed most of Lisbon and its surroundings. Many of the medieval and gothic structures that had filled the city were reduced to rubble, and a complete overhaul was required.



Designer Isabel Sá Nogueira describes her inspiration as an easy relaxed style, where past, present and future meet



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—DESIGNER ISABEL SÁ NOGUEIRA

Following the destruction, the Marquis of Pombal, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, began a reconstruction plan that focused on a pragmatic and utilitarian style designed to resist seismic shocks. The Pombaline style and its influence can be found throughout the city in buildings and streetscapes designed from the late 1700s until the end of the 19th century.

Today, the twin buildings that make up the Torel Palace still maintain the architectural facades of the original 1902 and 1904 design. The second-story rooms are outfitted with elongated windows and wrought-iron balcony railings. On the hotel’s al fresco patio, the floor is created from cement tiles in modern designs which are in line with current trends in tile work and also nod to the hand-painted Portuguese tiles, or azulejos, that adorn many of the buildings throughout the city. The hotel’s pool is surrounded by cypress trees that, combined with the pink hue of the building behind it, lend a Tuscan or Provençal feeling to the outdoor space.

From the hotel’s hilltop vantage point, visitors can look out on the city and down to the harbor. It’s a perfect place to admire all that Lisbon has to offer—lush gardens and winding streets, vertical stairs cut into the hills and hidden alcoves lined with bright tiles. The hotel’s outside bar is ideal for sipping a glass of chilled Venho Verde and watching the sun set, backed by the historic architecture of the hotel and enmeshed in a feeling of aristocratic luxury.

Rooms at Torel Palace start at \$145 per night for a standard room off season and can reach as high as \$400 or more for a superior room with a view. Repeat visitors often request the Dom Jose I for its spectacular panorama of the city. To make reservations, visit torelpalace.com or call +351 218 290 810. | AH

With fantastic views, Torel Palace is the perfect place to admire all that Lisbon has to offer.



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