

# Travel

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'Circular mounds of stones are piled high, like primeval flying saucers'

Stephen McClarence heads to Inverness



2 Memmo Alfama, Lisbon

## Portugal's 20 hippest hotels

From a beach villa in Cascais to a suite on an Alentejo vineyard, **Mary Lussiana** picks the best places to book now

### 1 Areias do Seixo Santa Cruz

About 40 minutes north of Lisbon, with views of the deserted golden coastline and bracing Atlantic, Areias do Seixo is run by its owners, Goncalo and Marta, who wanted to create a hotel with a difference. Fourteen eco-friendly bedrooms offer the latest in sustainable living. Some have olive trees growing up

through their bathrooms, others have bathrooms made from driftwood and pebbles. All are magical, with log fires and patchwork quilts. There is a swimming pool, a greenhouse and vegetable garden that supplies the excellent kitchen and an Ayurvedic spa. Expect campfire evenings with Goncalo on the guitar. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £225 a night (00 351 261 936 340, areiasdoseixo.com). Fly to Lisbon

### 2 Memmo Alfama Lisbon

In ancient Alfama, with its narrow, Moorish streets, Memmo is just steps from the cathedral and Sao Jorge Castle. It has both a traditional and contemporary style, with plenty of exposed stone in its 42 bedrooms with their muted colour palette and locally woven rugs. There's a stunning view from its swimming pool and roof terrace of the characteristic red roofs of the capital, with the wide Tagus River beyond. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £121 a night (00 351 210 495 660, memmohotels.com). Fly to Lisbon



### 3 Sublime Comporta

Lying south of Lisbon on the sand dunes of Comporta, Portugal's hidden playground for the elite, Sublime's cool interiors offer 14 white-on-white rooms spread between two ochre-coloured buildings. This year 22 cabanas and villas with private pools have been added to meet demand. A dazzling kitchen offering regional specialities, a fire pit, a swimming pool stretching under the pines, and a spa offering treatments from the Organic Pharmacy make this unmissable. **Details** B&B doubles cost from £165 a night (00 351 269 449 376, sublimecomporta.pt). Fly to Lisbon ▶

#### 4 Fazenda Nova Algarve

This elegant 19th-century house set amid carob and almond trees on the unspoilt eastern side of the Algarve has been sympathetically renovated by its British owners, Hallie and Tim. It offers three bedrooms in the main house and a further seven suites and a penthouse in the aromatic gardens. Bedroom interiors mix varnished eucalyptus wood with polished cement and bathrooms of duck-egg blue have Grohe rain showers and Ren products. There are hammocks to laze in and a swimming pool bordered by lavender and rosemary. Food from the garden and regional wines complete the picture.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £171 a night (00 351 281 961 913, fazendanova.eu). Fly to Faro

#### 5 Casa Arte Algarve

This tiny gem, designed by a British architect as a private house in the late Seventies, is a vision of startling white cubes, topped with traditional terracotta roofs and the region's characteristic latticed chimney pots. Sunlight floods in through the five bedrooms, dappling the floors of varnished cement and black and white tiles. The simple, smooth, whitewashed exteriors open out to minimalist interiors with oversized bathrooms (four with shower only) and stone basins. The garden is perfect for long, lazy days, with gnarled olive trees giving shade around a lovely swimming pool.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £133 a night (00 351 282 688 185, casaarte-hotel.com). Fly to Faro

#### 6 Casa do Rio Douro Valley

In the far reaches of the Douro Valley near Foz Coa and its Unesco world-heritage, paleolithic rock-art site, Casa do Rio sits suspended over a small gorge, with the River Douro flowing past. Designed by Francisco Vieira de Campos, its six simple suites, all with showers, look across the orchard to the green river. A restaurant spills on to the terrace, with glass tables atop old tree trunks and directors' chairs, creating an *Out of Africa* feel. It serves wine from the surrounding vineyards and regional cuisine. A swimming pool lies by the river banks and there is a boat for exploring.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £162 a night (00 351 279 764 340, quintadovallado.com). Fly to Porto

#### 7 Imani Country House Alentejo

Neighbouring Portugal's most important megalithic site, the Almendres Cromlech, Imani is a rural paradise. Think lavender-filled gardens and parkland, a long cypress-lined drive and donkeys. Six ground-floor bedrooms have been converted from stables into a gorgeous modern and vintage mix, with basins hewn from local marble, boldly designed rugs, cowhide stools and woodburning stoves. Up a flight of stairs is another room with a tub-for-two centrepiece and views over the round swimming pool. A restaurant spills out of the main house, serving the not-to-be missed own-label wine, Improviso.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £123 a night (00 351 925 613 847, imani.pt). Fly to Lisbon



#### 8 L'and Vineyards Alentejo

Bringing the 21st century to the unspoilt rural plains of the Alentejo, L'and Vineyards created a sensation when it opened in 2011 with its sky suites, which open on to the Alentejan night sky with the flick of a rooftop button. Dotted among the vineyards running down to a lake, the 22 sky and land suites mix black slate with eucalyptus wood, plunge pools and local touches such as striped wool rugs from nearby Monsaraz. The restaurant is a real draw here, with the chef Miguel Laffan delivering delicacies from oyster vichyssoise to wild sea bass with spicy chorizo.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £137 a night (00 351 266 242 400, l-and.com). Fly to Lisbon

#### 9 Praia Verde Algarve

There is a breezy, Mediterranean feel to this resort near the Spanish border, despite its proximity to the Atlantic. Surrounded by an aromatic pine forest with a path cutting through it to the beach, Praia Verde is the ultimate family hideaway, its sleek slate exterior lying low between the trees. Forty suites with garden or sea views have separate sitting rooms, with sofabeds for children and well-equipped kitchenettes. Interiors are pleasingly simple, with slate or mosaic tiled floors. Pizza is a must from the wood-fired oven at the À Terra restaurant, before popcorn at the nightly cinema screenings.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £102 a night (00 351 281 530 600, praiaverderesort.com). Fly to Faro

#### 10 Farol Design Hotel Cascais

Right on the ocean's edge in chic Cascais, where Lisbon's wealthy escape for the weekend, the Farol Hotel was

originally a private villa dating from the 19th century. Now all designer-cool, its 33 bedrooms include eight bespoke creations from international fashion designers. There's also a penthouse with butler service and a personal chef. Don't, however, miss the superb sushi at Sushi Design, or Mediterranean fusion dishes such as grilled octopus with garlic purée at The Mix. Swim it off afterwards in the stylish pool.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £196 a night (00 351 214 823 490, farol.com.pt). Fly to Lisbon

#### 11 Pensao Agricola Algarve

This little hotel, deep in the Algarve countryside, has only six bedrooms. Three are in the main house and three have been created from the stables and outhouses. Modern art decorates the whitewashed walls; books of Portuguese authors, in translation, grace the shelves; furniture mixes antique with retro. All the rooms have rain showers with natural light above and heated floors of varnished cement. Flowers from the garden add homely touches to the bedrooms. Enjoy the delicious food by the small heated pool under the shade of a magnificent olive tree.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £111 a night (00 351 917 782 189, pensaoagricola.com). Fly to Faro

#### 2 Memmo Baleeira Algarve

Perched above a little harbour in sight of the swell that makes this west coast so excellent for surfing, the sleek,



white, minimalist Baleeira was the first outpost of the Portuguese Memmo group. Airy, sun-filled interiors brim with cool sophistication, with furniture from Philippe Starck and Tom Vac. The 144 rooms and suites are simple — bleached wooden floors, small bathrooms, tiny balconies — but have exquisite linen and mesmerising sea views. There are swimming pools inside and out, a spa and regional cuisine — but really you come here to ride the waves.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £75 a night (00 351 282 624 212, memmohotels.com). Fly to Faro

#### 13 Villa Cascais Cascais

This 19th-century villa, recently refurbished by the designer Paulo Lobo, overlooks the bay of Cascais and the beach where the fishermen bring in their catch. Interiors are mostly contemporary, with a matt-gold staircase winding through bold blue walls, but there's a nod to the 19th century in the hand-painted blue and white tiles that cover the ceiling of the wine bar. The 11 bedrooms vary in size, but all are flooded with light and have sea views. Reserva, the newest restaurant from the Lisbon chef, Olivier da Costa, looks out on to the pretty old town square — make sure you don't miss out on the restaurant's signature royal crab salad.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £79

