

Welcome to The Douro

historical 5 of the best vineyards to stay at in Northern Portugal

Lisbon and The Algarve may grab the headlines but Portugal's roots can be found in the terraced vineyards of the Douro Valley. One of the world's oldest demarcated wine regions (since 1756), visitors have been welcomed for centuries, but it's taken until recent years for the Dourense to catch-up to enotourism. Here, Andrew Day selects 5 extra-special places to stay, from classy-whitewashed quintas to a 17th-century manor house.

1) Quinta Nova

"Quinta" translates to country estate, and this one – set high above the deep green Douro River – is one of Portugal's most spectacular. Surrounded by ancient vineyards, beautifully preserved 19th-century buildings have been converted to a hotel offering 11 old-world bedrooms, decorated with antique cupboards, wooden headboards and sharply-styled granite bathrooms with bathtubs. Views over the orchards and vineyards to the river are magnificent, not least from the infinity pool, and guests can dine on the bougainvillea-clad terrace, sipping Quinta Nova's white Mirabilis until sunset (no, they are not all fortified and red in the Douro). Some of the region's top hiking trails can be easily accessed (the longest being 2½ hours), and a recently opened onsite museum exhibits a collection of vintage winemaking gear, collated by the Amorim family who purchased the property in 1999.

quintanova.com

2) Morgadio da Calçada

In the pint-size hill village of Provesende, this 17th-century mansion has been home to the Villas-Boas family for generations, and with Manuel very much a hands-on presence, guests are well cared for. The grand upper-floor rooms have maintained their 'enfilade' parlours and period-style furniture, as well as its charming chapel, built in honor to St. Jerome. A visit to the earthen-floored downstairs cellar – lined with two huge, ancient port casks – only confirms the presence of history. In contrast, across the courtyard, eight contemporary guestrooms have been carved out of stone outbuildings to provide comfort with wrought-iron beds and satellite TV. Guests can participate in one of the workshops, from vineyard visits to cooking classes in what used to be the farm workers' kitchen. And, if you're lucky, Manuel will be there to talk port.

morgadiodacalcada.com



3) Vintage House Hotel

The hotel, which had been suffering a little from neglect, is now gleaming again – like the mansion of a Portuguese Gatsby – after a recent refurbishment and the addition of four master suites. Bordering the Douro River in pretty little Pinhão, this former 18th-century wine estate has a prestigious feel with beautiful portraits, huge barrel lids and winemaking memorabilia adorning the walls. The elegant feel continues in the Rabelo restaurant – a vaulted former wine cellar – serving dishes based on local ingredients, and those looking for a pre-dinner aperitif can relax in the historic library bar, with its old wooden beamed ceiling. The hotel backs onto a lovely 19th-century train station (which can be reached by steam train from Campanha in Porto) and is tiled with images from a wine-maker's daily life.

vintagehousehotel.com

4) Monverde Wine Experience Hotel

Arriving at Monverde is a bit like stepping into a Bond villain's lair. Tucked behind high stonewalls in rural tranquility, gates slide open to reveal a world design-conscious luxury – but, instead of schemes for world domination the focus here is on fine wines and spa pampering. Using mostly granite, shale and Portuguese pine, local architect Fernando Coelho breathed life into two run-down farm buildings on Quinta da Lixa's 75-acre winery, transforming them into a luxurious yet eco-friendly retreat.



Facilities like a gourmet restaurant, indoor/outdoor swimming pool and vinotherapy spa add a contemporary edge to a region well known for its cultural heritage. Bedrooms are of minimalist Scandinavian design: Arne Jacobsen-style chairs and streamlined bathrooms, whilst terrace views sweep over rows of neat vines, which produce the vineyards bottled bounty.

monverde.pt

5) Quinta do Crasto

Quinta do Crasto is a grand 320-acre estate with a history stretching back 400 years. For the past century, this working winery – perched above the Douro River's north bank amid a patchwork of vineyards – has been in the family of Jorge and Leonor Roquette, producing some of

Portugal's finest drops at accessible prices. A one-and-a-half hour's drive from Porto Airport, the old terracotta-roofed Quinta was recently turned into a hotel and its character preserved with family portraits on the wall, antiques and creaking wooden floors. The stone terrace is a convivial spot for trading bites of locally produced cheeses, whilst the famous swimming pool – designed by Pritzker prizewinner, Eduardo Souto de Moura – appears to nosedive into the valley below. Tastings are available for wine-seekers and if you visit during harvest, grapes to tread.

quintadocrasto.pt

Andrew travelled to the Douro as a guest of TAP Portugal (flytap.com) and Visit Porto & The North (visitportoandnorth).