



The recently opened Palácio Príncipe Real hotel is described by owners Miles and Gail Curley as an "oasis" in the heart of Lisbon, and no other word could more accurately define this very special place created by the talented couple.

Situated close to the buzzing Bairro Alto area, the hotel has wonderful restaurants, bars and sightseeing spots right on its doorstep. Its central location might suggest noise and chaos, but this could not be further from the truth. Palácio Príncipe Real offers a haven of tranquillity and respite within the hustle and bustle of the streets that surround it, celebrating the natural beauty of expansive grounds and outstanding Portuguese architecture and décor, which was the inspiration behind the huge restoration project that this building went through for it to be authentically resurrected in all its glory. The 19th century building was formerly a palatial home for the distinguished Teixeira da Mota family up until the 1980s, before being turned into offices. When Miles and Gail acquired the property, they decided against opening a hotel with numerous rooms and instead opted for fewer rooms where guests can rejoice in large luxurious spaces.

When you arrive at Palácio Príncipe Real your senses are instantly aroused. The already well-established grounds put you immediately at ease, with the soothing sound of trickling water from the fountain and birds tweeting among the tall trees. On entering the hotel, you are met with friendly smiles, relaxing music and the delicate scent of aromatic candles; and then you start to focus on where you have actually just walked into... a refined stately home that is a veritable feast for the eyes, both decoratively and architecturally.

In terms of design, the British duo – who have resided in London, Singapore, Madrid and Mallorca – drew most of their inspiration from personal luxury travel experiences. Every room has a freestanding bath from the prestigious British bathroom company Drummonds, renowned worldwide for their deluxe classic English style, while the exquisite bedlinen, candles, furniture and stone were all locally sourced from Portugal.

One charming décor feature is the Indian runner duck which can be observed on furniture pieces dotted around the hotel – a bird that Miles became particularly fond of whilst in Asia. The decision to build a zen-like heated outdoor swimming pool at the end of the garden is another nod to their Far Eastern travels.

A grand staircase from the reception area leading up to the rooms sets the scene for what follows. When you look up, you notice the ceilings soaring above, with detailed stucco work and glistening chandeliers. Underfoot, wooden floors are laden with thick luxurious carpet, whilst in other areas there is checked black and white flooring for a touch of neoclassicism.

All of the bedrooms at the Palácio Príncipe Real have their own personalities, but always maintaining the same high standards throughout and paying the ultimate respect to the building's heritage. Therefore, if there were original Portuguese tiles in a room before the renovation, the tiles can still be observed there today – a constant reminder of the history of this awe-inspiring building.

Each room is facilitated with a Smeg refrigerator, Dyson hairdryer and Nespresso machine, and even a yoga mat to boot, so a few modern touches



have been added to give an extra level of comfort. All of the 28 bedrooms are highlighted by towering windows that allow natural light to flood inside whilst offering views to the Edenesque garden outside.

At breakfast, guests gather in the intimate dining area on comfy pink velvet seating at tables adorned with crisp white tablecloths and delightful Portuguese tableware. The room is elegant yet the ambience is casual, with Miles and Gail milling around greeting and chatting with guests, exchanging local information and giving personal recommendations to set you up for a perfect day to discover the city. The all-day breakfast offering was more than satisfactory, with the likes of seasonal fresh fruit, tomato on toasted sourdough with avocado, and various egg options for a heartier meal.

Lisbon is a city with a great deal to offer. Its hilly streets can initially be daunting (kick off those stilettos, Cinderella, and get those walking boots

on!) but you soon get used to the inclines – with so much to see and enjoy around you. The ubiquitous mosaic pavements, alluring architectural styles and genuine warmth of the Portuguese locals all make this vibrant coastal city a joy to wander around by foot. If it all gets too tiring, you can jump on one of Lisbon's famous funiculars to give those legs a rest.

With regular inexpensive direct flights from Málaga, Lisbon is a hop, skip and a jump for those residing in southern Spain who would like to immerse themselves in authentic Portuguese culture, history, design inspiration and, last but certainly not least, exceptional gastronomy. "Foodies" – you won't be disappointed!

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