



PALÁCIO PRÍNCIPE REAL

LISBON, PORTUGAL

Some buildings have many lives. They never truly belong to anyone, their occupants mere transitory custodians. Amid the multi-hued façades and palm-lined parks of Lisbon's gilded Príncipe Real quarter, Palácio Príncipe Real (palacioprincipe.real.com), freshly flushed to a deep dusky-pink, is currently under the stewardship of British couple Miles and Gail Curley. They bought the 1877 palace in 2015, lavished it with love and antique blue-and-white tiles (*azulejos*) until it re-emerged, resplendent, as Lisbon's most charming new hotel.

The Palácio's former incarnation as the home of the noble Teixeira da Mota family and its place firmly entrenched at the centre of Lisbon society is fondly recalled by family members who drop in from time to time. "Many of them feel they're back home when they close the green gates behind them," says Gail.

The hotel's guests have a similar feeling. Behind those gates, instead of a reception area there's a lush, walled garden of gently nodding jacarandas, soaring palms and glossy-leafed lemon trees.

An infinity pool reflects the sky and, beyond it, guests sip local espumante on the terrace.

Each of the 28 rooms is different, with its own colour scheme, playful motifs and views over the garden. One room, recklessly large and decorated with Moorish stucco work, occupies the former ballroom; in another that was once the kitchen, the former cooking hearth is now a fireplace and an outside copper bathtub replaces the pots and pans.

With warm bright days well into winter, Lisbon is a city where the sun fades the exteriors of historical palaces to a pleasing, peeling pastel and haunting fado music echoes from tiny restaurants and bars on cobbled streets.

In Portuguese, the word "saudade" means a kind of longing – a nostalgia for something that may never return. Those fortunate enough to visit Lisbon in the summertime may experience it, especially if a stay at Palácio Príncipe Real is part of the itinerary. Who knows? Perhaps the place was yours in a previous life.