

# Hotels

## An evening with a view of Porto



The old port cellars have been converted into a 103-room hotel, a spa, restaurant and rooftop bar. Gaia now has a new view of the Douro. And the region has gained a five-star hotel that makes us feel right at home.

There's nothing like a history lesson as you check in. And there's no shortage of history at The Rebello, which opened last June and boasts the River Douro (and a small boatyard) right on the doorstep. True to the Gaia riverside scenery, the four buildings fit right into the postcard as if they have been there all the time, which they actually have in a way. While part of this block was once a row of port cellars, like most of the large buildings on the old quay, there was also a factory of pots and pans, which served as inspiration for restaurant interiors. But more of that later.

We are looking at an "industrial chic" style, in the words of Spanish Daniela Franceschini, the interior designer. Starting in the lobby, the founder of Quiet Studios combined almost homely comfort with the sophistication you expect from a five-star hotel. There are few colour shocks in the atmosphere enriched by art and textures. From the wooden shelves by Tomaz Viana to Edurne Camacho's tapestries, the décor has an arts and crafts vibe. There's more: a light bulb designed by Spain's Casa Josephine Studio, pieces by Joana Passos, a Lisbon-based ceramic artist, and flower arrangements by Menez, the artistic name of Porto's Beatriz Faria Ribeiro.

The spa is another of the jewels in the crown of Bomporto Hotels' latest undertaking. This is their first hotel in Porto, after the two they opened in Lisbon – The Lumiares Hotel & Spa and The Vintage. The spa opens bright and early, at 7 a.m., and is reminiscent of old Roman baths. The ochre walls open up in a succession arches in a true sanctuary in the middle of the city. Note the heated pool and wooden loungers.



The cubicles exude natural aromas of pine, juniper, cinnamon, lavender and cardamom, all of which are ingredients used to make the spa's products, developed with the Portuguese company EssenciAroma. Face and body treatments are inspired by traditional Chinese, Japanese and Indian medicine. If you're not sure what to choose, go for The Rebello Ritual, a total experience that includes body exfoliation, a relaxing massage and a facial. It costs €150 and lasts two hours.

The Metro Urbe studio drew up the plans for combining seven 19th-century industrial buildings into one that could meet different needs – ranging from the

balconies overlooking the river to indoor courtyards that are a haven from the city's hustle and bustle. It's no different inside. The Rebello has 103 rooms of 11 different types. They all have a kitchenette and utensils for preparing light meals. The smallest are 37 square-metre studios, while riverside rooms can be as big as 137 m<sup>3</sup>, including the three-room apartments, just like home, but with room service. In the middle of it all, there are small clues proving that you really are in a Portuguese hotel. Take the Claus Porto toiletries in the bathroom, Grau Cerâmica pieces on the walls and Burel Factory throws at the foot of the bed.



And as it is a five-star hotel (the second member of Small Luxury Hotels in Porto), one comfort leads to another. Satisfy your cravings at the Pot&Pan restaurant on the ground floor, inspired by the old cookware factory. And this takes us into the realm of Chef André Coutinho, with A Brasileira and Papparico, already under his belt. Here he has let his imagination run wild, as the menu is described as Portuguese cuisine, but with a ruse or two from the chef. You have two choices right at the start. Do you want to dine in the comfortably lit dining room or retire into one of the booths designed for privacy? For starters, we recommend the beef short rib croquettes with sun-dried tomatoes and tomato mayonnaise (chef's surprise) or Bisaro cured ham, served on a little clothes line (€14) with capers. The mains include À Rebulhão Pato, a reinterpreted classic with clams, cockles and razor clams in an alvarinho foam (€17), fish and shellfish Cataplanão for two (€50) and caramelised short ribs, broccolini, smoked paprika mayonnaise, served with rice that smacks of a Valencia socarrat (€22). Note the way in which the wine list is organised. Rather than regions, the list is divided into three groups: Atlantic, where

you can find the light Soalheiro Sauvignon Blanc & Alvarinho or the surprising Filipa Pato Nossa Calcário, Valleys and South.

But to discover the best kept secret at The Rebello, you have to go to the fourth floor. Bello is a must on a sunny evening, on a terrace with a stunning view of the Douro, D. Luís Bridge and Porto's Riverside. It is open until midnight and serves pizzas certified by Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana. It has a dozen or so signature cocktails (in addition to the classics) – there's pineapple, rum, chocolate and coconut milk for those with a sweet tooth and vodka, kaffir lime leaf and Green Chartreuse liqueur for a sourer cocktail (11€).

The bar and restaurant are expected to open to non-guests by the end of the year. This is when the hotel also plans to open a third space, the River Social Café & Store. It will be part grocer's and part outlet for Portuguese craftsmen and women with items designed by Daniela Franceschini, organic wines, speciality coffees, craft beers and cheese and cured sausage hampers, among other regional delicacies. —Cais de Gaia, 380. +351 22 002 8940 From €180 a night

PHOTOS: FRANCISCO NOGUEIRA