

Pousada de Óbidos: A Romantic Marriage of Old and New

Heading off to a Portuguese village for a romantic holiday or anniversary trip is an attractive prospect and the settlement of Obidos, known as the “wedding present town”, has an interesting accommodation option on offer in the form of the Pousada de Óbidos. This small hotel, which embraces the style of the boutique pousadas, was the first of a growing line of unusual establishments to adapt and celebrate a historical landmark and has done so with Obidos castle, a site named as one the 7 wonders of Portugal.



The castle has a grand history and this is carefully reflected in the architecture and design choice of the clever restoration.

Obidos Castle has been the focal point for a number of communities and settlements over the years and while most attribute it the 14th century with the grand designs of King Dinis and King Fernando, it was originally built by the Moors after they took over the region in 713 and there is also archaeological evidence of Roman buildings and occupation. Over the centuries, the castle has been updated to meet the needs of its royal residents and even had to be restored following an earthquake in 1755; today it is awaiting World Heritage status and guests can enjoy it in its current role of hotel and stay in rooms named after the Royal guests that once occupied them.



As a pousada restoration, rather than a new build, rooms are limited and there will never be masses of other tourists around. Because of the faithful attempt to appreciate the castle's architecture, each of Pousada de Óbidos' rooms has its own charms and there are different shapes and styles across the building with different views and amenities. Some of the more “standard” rooms are quite spacious and very welcoming and the “superior” rooms naturally offer something a bit more luxurious but it is the high-ceilinged, compact tower rooms that many guests seem to enjoy the most.

The charm of this hotel is the authenticity and ability to escape to the past and this is seen in the faithful restoration of architecture and numerous features and details throughout. Instead of putting in big windows for a grand view and plastering the rooms, the designers have retained the exposed brickwork and Manueline-style windows. It feels like being in a real castle not a restoration, ignoring the modern amenities of the plumbing and electric lighting of course.



In addition to this, rooms are furnished with four poster beds and there are suits of armour, fireplaces and paintings among the many authentic features throughout the establishment. Of course one of the highlights for many foreign visitors is the scale of the castle walls and the chance to simply explore those fortifications.

The best pousada restorations are those that hold on to the charm of the original settlement while offering the comforts guests require. Holding on to the romance of the past is ideal, as seen here with the grand views from castle walls, birds of prey flying overhead and a loved one in your arms, but so is the ability to sleep in a warm bed in a comfortable room and have a romantic meal in a modern restaurant. By keeping this balance, Pousada de Óbidos has set a benchmark for those that follow and started an interesting trend of 21st century holidays in medieval locations.

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