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## latest features

### From Macau to the Douro Valley

Updated: 26-Jan-2012

by Roger Green [features@algarveresident.com](mailto:features@algarveresident.com)

I was in the middle of a remote and hauntingly beautiful part of the Douro valley to stay in the Quinta da Veiga, an historic house set amid golden vineyards and located on a hilltop with breathtaking views over the river and rugged terrain hundreds of feet below.



Photos: SUPPLIED

Quinta da Veiga is situated between Régua and Pinhão and on my arrival at the nearby railway station, the owner, Maria do Céu Esteves, came by car to pick me up and drive me to the quinta a couple of kilometres away where she invited me for a welcoming glass of wine.

It was a Cerro das Mouras 2009 white produced in the Quinta da Veiga adega, and it was interesting to learn that this label had been chosen for the visit of the American President Barack Obama when he lunched with the Portuguese President Cavaco Silva during his visit to Lisbon in 2010.

Maria said: "I didn't even know they had chosen our wine until I read about it in the newspaper, but I was very happy because we put so much effort into our wines and I felt this was some compensation."

The Quinta is a splendidly restored 18th century house that forms part of the network of the 94 Solares de Portugal, which are stately rural homes and houses of noble origin, many dating back several centuries and still in the ownership of the founding family.



They offer accommodation with a highly personal touch and to stay in one of these houses is to be treated like one of the family.

The Quinta da Veiga estate comprises 50 hectares of which 25 hectares are used to cultivate the grapevines, producing mainly Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa and Roriz. The quinta produces five labels - three reds and two whites. They are known for their fruitiness and elegant structure. Much to their enjoyment, guests are always treated to a tour of the adega with free wine tasting.

You cannot fail to be impressed by the surrounding landscape while the charm and beauty of the interior of the house was unforgettable. Walking through the rooms was like wandering through a gallery of dreams.

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**A Year in Monchique**

The furnishings and décor are a very unusual combination of Portuguese, Chinese and Indian antiques and works of art that are a feast for the eyes.

I slept soundly in an elegant antique bed and over a breakfast of mouth-watering fresh fruit, homemade cakes and pastries, local cheeses and hams and a choice of nourishing locally baked breads, Maria revealed the secret of her good taste and passion for art.

She is an economist and travels regularly to Asia on business and, in her spare time, scours the antique and design shops for artefacts and works of art which she brings back to the Douro.

Her passion for Chinese, Asian and Indian culture stems from 17 years living and working in Macau where she established, and became President of, the Institute of European Studies of Macau. She returns regularly and also travels to other parts of East Asia to pursue her profession and add fine pieces to her collection.

She has a special liking for Chinese hand pottery and ceramics from the 17th century and this is evident in an array of lovely blue and white plates and vases displayed around the lounge and dining room. She admires Chinese art for its simplicity, the cultural symbols and the philosophy embodied in the works.

Carefully chosen pieces of furniture, tapestries and ceramics are set in attractive harmony with fine antiques of Portuguese origin in the main house which has eight double rooms, seven of them with magnificent views over the river. There is an opulently furnished lounge, dining room, a games and reading room, and a building which once housed an olive oil press has been turned into a business centre.

"My father and grandfather were passionately fond of antiques, so I suppose it is only natural that I should inherit the same interest," she added.

Until recent times, the Douro valley was a beautiful backwater reached only by the wine trade and the hardiest of tourists.

But today it is fast becoming a desirable eno-tourism destination for a discerning number of foreign wine and gastronomy buffs who love to be in the lap of unspoiled nature. Gracious old manor houses and farms are turning into guesthouses with pools and wonderful views and Solares de Portugal is a key development in this new concept of rural tourism.

When tourism and wine production go hand in hand, there are moments of unforgettable pleasure and enjoyment to be experienced and more and more independent producers are helping to play host to visitors.

Quinta da Veiga estate is surrounded by a breathtaking panorama of typical Douro landscape.

Guests can enjoy wine tasting, nature walks, river cruises on the nearby Douro River and dining at traditional restaurants in the region.


Try the oven-baked kid (cabrito) cooked with wine and herbs at the nearby Repentina restaurant accompanied by one of the quinta's prize-winning reds. It will linger on the taste buds long after your visit is over!

*To book please contact Turihab Solares de Portugal, on telephone 258741672 or 258931750, or email [info@turihab.pt](mailto:info@turihab.pt) or [info@solaresdeportugal.pt](mailto:info@solaresdeportugal.pt). There is a minimum stay of two nights.*

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