

BEST STAYS UNPACKED

From swish surf hotels to palatial villas and forest retreats, here's our pick of the new digs in Portugal. By *Jake Russell*

VILLAS

CASA BLANCA, ALGARVE

SLEEPS 10

Near the village of Estoi, Casa Blanca is a colonial-style five-bedroom house with a good-size pool, set in gorgeous gardens of bougainvillea and palms. The nearest beach is Praia da Faro, 20 minutes down the road, and the nearest restaurant is the rustic Flor da Ameixa – turn right at the end of the drive. It opens in July; a peak summer week starts at £5,741, including maid service. Fly to Faro with Ryanair. cvvillas.com

CASA CRISTELO, NORTE

SLEEPS 4

Still in Portugal, but only just (Spain is across the River Minho), Casa Cristelo is a striking property designed by its architect owners on the outskirts of the ultra-chic village of Moledo, a traditional holiday retreat for the Portuguese glitterati. It has two bedrooms and a small pool set in a walled garden; the village shop is just around the corner. A week in the May half-term starts at £530. Fly to Vigo with Ryanair. vintagetravel.co.uk

QUINTA DE RIO MAIOR, CENTRO

SLEEPS 8

Could rural Portugal become the new Tuscany? On arrival at the whitewashed Quinta de Rio Maior, in Carvalhais,

deep in the Santarem countryside, you might well think so. The renovated farmhouse has four bedrooms, a private pool, a lovely outdoor dining area and

fabulous views towards the forests.

Nearby is the historic town of Rio Maior, with Roman ruins, salt flats and organic wineries. A week's stay starts at £1,855.

Fly to Lisbon with easyJet.

alternative-portugal.co.uk

CASA DA PRAIA, ALGARVE

SLEEPS 8

This is James Villas' standout new property on the Algarve: a four-bedroom, six-bathroom palace set in fabulous gardens in the chic enclave of Gale, just west of Albufeira. Praia da Gale is five minutes from the gate if you turn left, but go right, then right again, and a path over the dunes leads to a secret rocky cove. A week here starts at £5,352, including flights and car hire.

jamesvillas.co.uk

CASA GAIBEU, ALGARVE

SLEEPS 4

Olhao is a busy fishing port, 15 minutes east of Faro, that has somehow managed to escape the overdevelopment of its neighbours. One street away from the seafront is Casa Gaibeu, a dazzlingly white converted fisherman's cottage with two bedrooms and a fabulous roof terrace with a plunge pool. A week's stay starts at £826. Fly to Faro.

sawdays.co.uk

FAMILIES

BEACH SHACK, CENTRO

This eco-friendly, hippie-chic, surfcentric beach house, with a yoga studio and a skate park, is just 50 yards from a golden beach. It's called the Noah Surf House, and it's in Santa Cruz, an hour

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Unless stated, prices are for Easter in Villas and Families, and June in Couples and Wellness

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north of Lisbon. The 21 rooms have a driftwood theme, there's a pool, and when night falls, local musicians recreate that summer-of-love vibe around the rooftop fire pit. A week starts at £384pp, B&B, based on four sharing. Fly to Lisbon.
i-escape.com

DELUXE GLAMPING, ALENTEJO

A Portuguese take on Puglian *trulli*, the Corkshacks are a pair of thatched roundhouses in Escusa, a village in the wildly beautiful borderlands of the eastern Alentejo. This place is a laid-back green haven in summer, with a rhythm of life unchanged for centuries. The shacks are luxuriously simple, with just a bed, a couple of chairs, a kitchenette, a bathroom and, outside, a chlorine-free pool. Put the kids in one and yourselves in the other. A week starts at £261pp, self-catering, based on four sharing. Fly to Lisbon.
oneoffplaces.co.uk

COUPLES

CHIC BOUTIQUE, ALGARVE

If you ever saw that gorgeous art deco building on the quayside in Vila Real de Santo Antonio, the elegant port just across from Spain on the Guadiana River, and dreamt about turning it into a hotel, you're too late. It opened last November as the Grand House Algarve, with 30 rooms decorated in 1920s style. Free transfers take you to the Grand Beach Club for sun, sand, dining, DJs

and cocktails. A week's stay starts at £858pp, B&B. Fly to Faro.
grandhousealgarve.com

GRAND DAME REVIVED, CASCAIS

The venerable Albatroz Hotel in Cascais, the Nice-like resort west of Lisbon, reopens in May after a long-overdue refurb. On a cliff above its own beach, this aristocratic retreat established its style in the 1960s – waiters in blazers, roast beef for lunch and *espumante* on the terrace – and sees absolutely no reason to change. So, while the decor will be updated, the service most certainly won't. A week starts at £916pp, B&B. Fly to Lisbon.

thealbatrozcollection.com

WILDERNESS LUXURY, CENTRO

So taken was the architect Rogerio de Azevedo with the magnificent views down the Zezere Valley from this spot that he opened a hotel here in 1948. The building has now been revamped and relaunched as the five-star Casa de Sao Lourenco, with a fine-dining restaurant, a spa and 17 simple rooms that know better than to try to compete with the view. A week in a Panorama View double starts at £536pp, B&B. Fly to Porto with British Airways.
casadesaolourenco.pt

ECOHOTEL, EVORA

On the plains of the central Alentejo, five miles from Evora, the geothermally heated, self-sufficient Tivoli Evora Ecoresort is a corker. Literally: it's set in a cork oak forest, the main building is covered in the stuff and, if you book the antioxidant facial in the spa, they'll pull one out of a bottle and massage the wine into your face. A week in a suite in May starts at £262pp, B&B. Fly to Lisbon.
tivolihotels.com

WELLNESS

MEDICAL SPA, ALGARVE

The bright white design and rooftop pool might suggest that the Longevity Health & Wellness Hotel, in Alvor, is some Ibiza pleasure palace, but don't be fooled. This new 70-room resort – opening in June – is almost a hospital, with facilities ranging from ozone, detox and IV therapies to osteopathic and fat-freezing treatments. At least the rooms have minibars. Except they're wellness minibars. A week starts at £1,525pp, B&B, including flights.
thehealthyholidaycompany.co.uk

FITNESS RETREAT, NORTE

Opened last summer, the FeelViana resort comprises 46 comfortable cabins and nine bungalows in a pine forest five minutes from wave-thumped Cabedelo Beach. You could come here for the surfing, the paddleboarding, the kiting and the biking. Or for the spa and the 200 miles of hiking trails. But the main reason is the yoga, with sessions



GARDENING
LEAVE Casa
Blanca. Below,
Noah Surf House

twice a day: two hours in the morning and 90 minutes in the evening. A week's yoga retreat starts at £995pp, full-board, departing on May 17 and excluding flights to Porto.
destinationyoga.co.uk





Hit the trails, left; above, Grand House Algarve and yoga at FeelViana