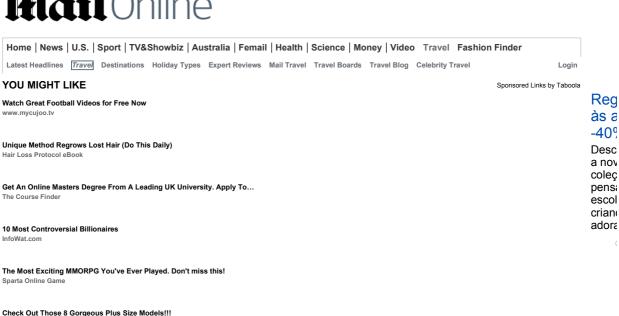
5-Day Forecast

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# Portuguese paradise: Inside the incredible Douro Valley wine lodge that has it all... from sensational views to world class food (and the port isn't bad, either)

- · Quinta Nova has 11 rooms, an outdoor pool and makes its own wine
- · It's easy to reach from Porto by train a spectacular riverside journey
- · Staff there will also book guests on a stunning yacht trip up the river

By TED THORNHILL FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 07:31 GMT, 2 August 2015 | UPDATED: 09:41 GMT, 2 August 2015

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Quinta Nova would be a tempting place to stay in an industrial wasteland.

So the fact that it happens to be set in one of the most stunningly beautiful landscapes on Earth -Portugal's Douro Valley - dishes out Michelin-star standard food in its restaurant and has a swimming pool with views along the Douro river makes it something of a tantalising prospect. To say the least

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TOP TRAVEL CREDIT CARDS



Quinta Nova is in Portugal's stunning Douro Valley - and would be a tempting hotel in an industrial wasteland. This picture shows the property nestled in its huge vineyard



A 'quinta' is a lodge run by a wine producer - and this one belongs to one of Portugal's best. And the view from the hotel are breathtaking

For wine lovers it's a destination box that cries out to be ticked. A 'quinta' is a lodge run by a wine producer - and this one belongs to one of Portugal's best.

And the produce is served inside, of course.

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Then there's the journey to get there - a joy in itself.

My girlfriend Gersende and I take the train there from Porto, where we've spent a couple of days quaffing fine port and wine and being gobsmacked by the city's wondrous charm and beauty.

The train is very noisy, but the views on the journey breathtaking.

For an hour the line winds through rolling countryside, then descends very rapidly to the banks of the Douro river. Now's the time to put the holiday read away and gaze out of the window.

The line hugs the river, which snakes through dramatic, vineyard-laden hills on both sides. The fact that this is a Unesco heritage site is no surprise at all.

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'Food porn' censored Why it's ILLEGAL to upload pictures of meals to Instagram in





The Douro Valley is a Unesco heritage site, which comes as no great surprise. Pictured is the wonderful for-hire yacht run by Douro a vela



Pooling resources: Guests at Quinta Nova can take a dip among the vines. Ted Thornhill wets his toes



MailOnline Travel's bedroom is pleasingly homely with great views of the terrace and valley

It's dreamy, but we have to be wide awake for Ferrao, the stop that's nearest Quinta Nova, because there are no announcements to alert passengers about upcoming stations. (If you go, gather your belongings and be poised after Regua.)

We're the only two people who disembark and one of the Quinta's chefs is there on the platform to meet us and drive us up the twisty road to the property.

And what a place.

It's a true haven.

Inside there's a restaurant - called Conceitus - two huge living rooms and a bar and shop, all decorated in a cosy country home manor, complete with creaky wooden floorboards. Think Laura Ashley with chefs and an epic wine cellar.

Our cosy bedroom has a scintillating view down to the terrace and valley.

There's a downside, I exclaim - the tea and coffee paraphernalia doesn't include milk.

Black-coffee-loving Gersende rolls her eyes at me.

Ryanair passenger forced to sit next to pool of VOMIT that was covered with tissues and left on floor from previous flight



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Couple's horror after BOILING water crashes through ceiling of Travelodge room



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Quinta Nova has a homely feel. Think Laura Ashley with a few extras thrown in - such as a bar and wine shop



Guests at Quinta Nova can sip wine on the terrace in the most gorgeous of surroundings

We're keen to explore, but decide on lunch first. Our chef/chauffeur had boasted on the journey up that the food at Quinta Nova is getting international recognition.

It doesn't disappoint.

The philosophy of the chef here is to forage and rustle. Some of this is done in the hotel's very own vegetable patch.

The menu is divided into a choice of three (38 euros), four (43) or five courses (50).

We opt for three courses and are blown away by the quality

First up is mushroom soup with bacon that Gersende - who's from Provence and knows a thing or two about cookery - declares is one of the best soups she's ever had.

A Yorkshireman finds a new admiration for Lancashire: Gothic glories, high art and glorious food on a weekend in Manchester







Where Skye is not the limit: A weekend on ravishing Raasay in the Inner Hebrides - arather long journey, but absolutely worth it

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Passenger jet with 150 people on board forced to dump fuel and return to Liverpool Airport after bird strike on take-off

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The labrador who's rearing LIGERS: Cute video of the dog who adopted triplet cubs after they were rejected by their parents

Can YOU name the landmarks hiding in this picture? Stunning artwork features some of the world's most iconic buildings (but you'll have to find them first)

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Sandwich wars!
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had to pack their
Victoria sponge cake
back into their































Quinta Nova has some excellent port in its cellars - don't leave without trying some



The restaurant at Quinta Nova serves Michelin-star standard food, with this mushroom soup hitting the taste

It's creamy and delicate and rich with flavour.

Next is a wonderfully rustic cod, tomato and aubergine dish, followed by ice cream and apple pie with berries that frankly sends us in to raptures.

Whatever they're paying the chef, it's not

The service is impeccable, too. As is the wine - a crisp, balanced white made right on the doorstep.

Feeling full to bursting we decide to explore the vineyard and grounds.

Being ready with the camera is an absolute must here - it's total lens bait.

We wander through the tree-lined grounds where other guests are sipping wine and gazing at the scenery but keep on going and embark on a circular tour of the vineyards surrounding Quinta Nova.

Boats chug along the river far below us as we stroll. It's idyllic.

We arrive back an hour later and plunge into the pool to cool off. Bliss.

The only impediment to relaxation is constantly feeling the need to take pictures.

Later, as the gloaming envelopes the hotel we decide to try some of the hotel's port stocks.

# HULL OF A PLEASANT EXCURSION: SAILING ON THE DOURO



To complete your appreciation of the Douro Valley you really must sail on the river.

The staff at Quinta Nova happily arrange a watery excursion for us with charter firm Douro a Vela.

We sit on a big bean bag at the bow in a zenlike state of relaxation as terraced vineyards slip by on the hills either side.

We are only on the boat (pictured) for an hour, but it's possible to take longer trips - up to a day in duration, complete with lunch on board.

There's also an option to stay the night on board.

Douro a Vela also offer guided tours to farmhouses with wine tastings - and even lay

It's all kicking off! Fearless riders compete in Britain's only rodeo championship... but most only last a few seconds on the ponies





Shocking moment woman is kicked-off plane screaming and swearing by police after refusing to put her dog, that was 'snapping at the crew,' in a pet carrier

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Hidden paradise: Inside the stunning Portuguese islands with volcanoes and shining lakes that lie undiscovered to tourists

"I'm not going near a bike!" Olympic cyclist Laura Trott vowed to keep things strictly off the track on her Jamaican break with fellow gold medallist fiance Jason Kenny

Presidential suite? Inside the Washington DC hotel where the Obamas stayed for a fortnight before Barack's inauguration

Children in charge! The London hotel package that lets kids also check into a miniature version....at the city's KidZania theme park

From the light being clearer, the sea being bluer and the colours





























We descend from our room to the hotel bar but find no one there. And there's no one at

on hotel and airport transfers from Porto to the Douro.

Eventually we snare the attention of a waitress who's on her way up to the restaurant and ask her for some of the good stuff.

It's service I would describe as rustic. The main focus, understandably, is the dinner service





Quinta Nova can be reached by train from Porto, with the journey being spectacular once the line reriverside

### TOP TIPS ON WHERE TO EAT, DRINK AND SLEEP IN PORTO

If you visit Quinta Nova it's very likely you'll pass through Porto on your way there. Here are some top tips on how best to spend your time in the city.



Pop into Calem for a fascinating tour and a port tasting. There's even a video presentation inside an empty

Portugal is the home of port - and there's no better place to learn more about this unique, fortified red wine - mainly by quaffing the stuff, of course - than at the oldest port house in the world, Kopke.

It was established in 1638 and makes some remarkable liquor. In Vila Nova De Gaia, across the river from Porto, is the three-storey Kopke House. A mecca for port lovers. We indulge in one of its port and chocolate tastings, where its ports - including an LBV 2009, rose, and 10-year-old white are matched with exquisite chocolates.

Its shop, meanwhile, stocks an intriguing range of bottles, including some that date back to the 1930s. I highly recommend setting aside some holiday money for the visit here.

We also pop into the Calem port house, founded in 1859, a hundred yards along for a tour of the cellars. It's fascinating, with a very knowledgeable guide explaining the history of port and how it's made. You even get to watch a video about port inside one of the giant (empty) barrels. Again, a tasting here is essential - Calem also makes some excellent port.

Visit www.sogevinus.com for more information.

Eating and drinking

being brighter: How 'everything in Sicily is more'

Coffee with a catch! Italian restaurant adds €20 'service charge' for four hot drinks and a pastry... almost TREBLING the overall



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Gold medal-winning Paralympian and world-renowned artist Gregory Burns shows off giant mural detailing London life in The **Cumberland Hotel** 



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Over 60% of Brits return from holiday disappointed, reveals new study (with 1 in 5 blaming a 'poorly chosen' travel companion)



Astonishing moment brave pilot turns the engines off and glides his plane in for a safe landing despite landing gear breaking



Rare photographs show the fascinating early days of London's Tube network (including vintage strike chaos)



Climate change will make the Mediterranean too hot for British



The same



Most of Porto is a Unesco heritage site and impossibly beautiful. Everywhere you go there are tourists taking pictures, with so many cameras clicking it sounds like a swarm of cicadas



When it comes to sunsets, those that take place over Porto and Gaia take some beating

If you crave a restaurant that assembles virtuoso fodder, serves top-end wine and throws in faultless service to match, look no further than DOP, the sister restaurant of the famed DOC. The row of chairs in the toilet puzzles me, though. Visit ruipaula.com for more information.

We stop here - actually just opposite the above-mentioned DOP - for a luncheon outside in the sunshine and drool within seconds of the menu being presented to us. I opt for boar loin with foie gras, laced with chocolate, and shoestring potatoes that sends my taste buds into a state of wild celebration. Don't visit Porto without first clicking here: www.restaurantetraca.com.

### A Grade

Hidden down a narrow alley near the river, A Grade looks like a greasy cafe, with cheap chairs and tables and a dirty awning. Don't be put off. It serves great food and the wine is a treat.

Address: R. de São Nicolau 9, 4050-298

This is very special indeed. Hip, friendly and amazing value. A guest house, bar and restaurant where great wine costs £1.90 a glass and the cooking is deliciously homely. Visit www.missopo.com for more.

### Sleeping

### **Guest House Duoro**

Here you'll find social media-baiting views from gorgeous river-side rooms, chatty and charming husband and wife owners and a breathtaking breakfast spread that includes a kind of fruit sculpture. A superb place to rest your head.

Visit guesthousedouro.com for more information.

For stunning views of the next sunset, head to rooftop bar Porto Cruz Space and relish the moment

### Exploring

Most of Porto is a Unesco heritage site and impossibly beautiful. Everywhere you go there are tourists taking pictures, with so many cameras clicking it sounds like a swarm of cicadas. Walk the bridge between Porto and Gaia for extra-stunning views. Then take the cable car down for more Instagram angles.

After sipping some epic ports it's time for more foraged fodder - and it's almost as brilliant as lunch. Though it doesn't quite touch the heavens, as lunch did, we're still moderately bowled over.

flock to resorts in the Balkans by 2100

Hut of the Year (and it's a quick tour): Shabby-chic shack in Essex called 'Betty' awarded the top prize Phil Spencer

**Designs for** 



American Airlines seating for PETS for just \$125 (and, of course, it's called Cuddle Class)

Designs for Edinburgh's controversial 'ribbon hotel' approved amid concerns its bizarre facade is 'too shiny' and

may 'damage' the city



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Pie in the sky! Domino's pizza delivered by PLANE to just £1.75)



**British Airways pilots** were forced to wear oxygen masks for emergency landing after 'debris blocking air to flight deck' made them



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Passers-by stop tourist's car from crashing into the sea by SITTING on the bonnet as it perches perilously over the water's edge



Film student spends loan capturing spine tingling time-lapse of Europe's most stunning landscapes



Man, 20, is escorted of plane by police after 'sexually assaulting' 69-year-old woman seated next to him



A refreshing tuna carpaccio is followed by lamb carre with sweet potatoes and fennel - just the way your mother would make it, but better - and then millionaire shortbread with melon sorbet and

The Quinta Nova red wine we wash it down with is equally pleasing.

The following day the agenda is a satisfying breakfast buffet and a wondrous trip along the river on a yacht to nearby Pinhao, where we'll catch a train back to Porto.

The staff at Quinta Nova happily arrange this watery excursion with charter firm Douro a Vela and drive us down to the river where the boat is moored by Ferrao train station.

We sit on a big bean bag at the bow in a zen-like state of relaxation as terraced vineyards slip by on the hills either side.

One of the crew hands us a couple of cheeky glasses of white wine as we near the docking point. We raise our glasses and hope we'll be shipped out here again in the very near future.

### TRAVEL FACTS

Quinta Nova has 11 bedrooms costing from £70 with breakfast. Visit www.quintanova.com for more information. To arrange a boat excursion on the river speak to the staff at Quinta Nova or visit www.douro-a-vela.pt. Porto is served by regular flights from the UK operated by EasyJet, Ryanair and TAP. Trains to the Douro valley depart from Porto's Sao Bento terminus and Campanha. Visit www.cp.pt/passageiros/pt for more information.

Read more: Rui Paula RESTAURANTE TRACA what is? | Miss'Opo **Guest House Douro** 

Porto Cruz - Experiencing Port Wine

Quinta Nova

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11



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