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# Top Wine Hideaways In Portugal's Douro Valley



Anja Mutic Contributor

While Porto packs the punch for its urban charm, the rural appeal and rugged beauty of the Douro Valley are reason enough to visit northeastern Portugal. One of the world's oldest demarcated wine regions (since 1756), with twisting country roads, cascading vineyards, gaping gorges and traditional *quintas* (wine estates), this pastoral area – declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO – is a must-see on the world's wine trail. At these top-of-the-line wine hideaways, offerings go beyond a mere wine list. Stay at one of these and you'll get closer to the terroir in ways you can't if you just whizz through the region on a day trip.

## Six Senses Douro Valley



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When it first opened in 2015, the serene [Six Senses Douro Valley](#) was the European debut of this luxury resort brand, spreading over 19 acres right on the Douro River. It has since become a synonym for wine hotel done right, reaping a number of awards and recognitions. In a gorgeously renovated 19th-century manor house overlooking vine-covered hills, the resort is now adding seven new suites and three guestrooms, to be unveiled in summer 2019.

Wine is at the heart of the resort and its three restaurants. The innovative program includes daily wine tastings, a wine dispenser available 24 hours a day, a knowledge-packed wine team, an exceptional wine list and a dedicated wine cellar featuring local vintages. “The Wine Dinners, which happen every two weeks, are a great opportunity to get to know Portuguese wines,” says the resort’s wine director, Acacio Peixoto. “The winemaker sits with the guests around the same table, our chef creates a special menu and it’s all paired with carefully selected wines.”



Wine tasting class at Six Senses Douro Valley JOHN ATHIMARITIS

Wine treats at the resort are varied. At the resort's Six Senses Spa (with 10 treatment rooms as well as indoor and outdoor pools), you can book a Complete Grape Rejuvenation, an antioxidant treatment which includes exfoliation with grape pulp and grapeseed oil and a vineyard body wrap. Other wine-related touches include a fridge with a selection of Douro wines (in the first-floor suites only), with temperatures specially regulated to keep the wines at the ideal temperature. The decor fittingly showcases wine bottle light fixtures and wall art inspired by vineyard tools. Guests can book experiences such as a walk to Port Knox, a nearby hilltop cellar that has vessels with aging ports, some more than 100 years old; they meet with the owner and taste some of the ports with hints of caramel, nuts and dried fruits directly from the casks.

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### **Morgadio da Calçada Hotel**

Meeting the owner is among the highlights of a stay at [Morgadio da Calçada Hotel](#), a charming manor in the historic village of Provesende, perched high up in the hills of the Douro. Manuel is the 19<sup>th</sup> generation of the prominent Portuguese Cunha Pimentel family, and he runs this rural hotel with such enthusiasm and pride that you quickly become part of the story. Originally built in the 17th century, the wine estate has been meticulously restored to feature eight rooms in the former stables and barn, all with minimalist decor – think pine-wood floors, wrought-iron beds, skylights and bathrooms with sunken tubs. The beautiful swimming pool is in an old granite storage house for port.

Surrounded by vineyards, Morgadio celebrates wine in many ways. They even produce a line of soaps with olive oil and port, based on an 18th-century family recipe kept secret for generations. Food is served in the living room with a fireplace or you can request a candlelit dinner in the manor with hand-painted frescoes and antique furniture. Ingredients come from the estate's organic gardens, while handmade sausages, like *alheira* (a medley of chicken, pheasant and partridge), are smoked over firewood from the vineyard. You can do a wine tasting at the manor's original cellar with two antique barrels, taste the port and house wines they produce (in association with local winemaker Dirk van der Niepoort) and do a tour of their vineyards.

### **Quinta Nova Luxury Winery House**

Among the pioneers of wine tourism in the Douro Valley and one of its most scenic lodging options, [Quinta Nova Luxury Winery House](#) sits in a magnificent location at the end of a curvy road, with dazzling views of the Douro and the vineyard-covered hills. Its 11 cosy rooms are housed in a renovated 19th-century manor but the estate really excels at its wine-related activities and offerings – from guided tours of its 1764 winery and underground cellar, tastings in the panoramic tasting room, stellar wine pairings at Conceitus, the in-house winery restaurant to their Winemaker For a Day program (you blend, bottle, cork and label your own bottle of wine – and take it home). The Quinta has a small award-winning wine museum on site, with about 500 pieces from the 19th and 20th century related to the history of winemaking in the Douro and collected by one of the property's owners. For a little outdoorsy action, you can hike or bicycle along the estate's six miles of picturesque trails. Last summer, Quinta Nova added a private pier on the river as well as a new boat, for exclusive river tours that feature wine tastings and sunset tours.

While spring is a great time to visit the Douro Valley, fall is the most spectacular. “Harvest time in September and early October is amazing,” says Peixoto. “The Douro Valley is the only wine region on earth where grapes are still picked by hand in 60% of the vineyards and where top-quality wines are foot-trodden in stone tanks, the so-called *lagares*.”

For other wine-related experiences around Portugal, see [Wine Tourism in Portugal](#).



**Anja Mutic**

Born and raised in Croatia, educated in the UK and based in New York, I've been writing about travel for 19 years. During this time I have lived, worked and traveled on ... **Read More**