

JULY 2026

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07

CONTENTS

REGULARS

- 07 UPFRONT: MUST-HAVES, MUST-KNOWS
- 10 VOLUNTEERING
- 22 GREAT TASTES
- 33 WINE: COOL NUMBERS
- 40 RECIPE OF THE MONTH
- 46 DAYS OUT
- 63 RECOMMENDED READS
- 66 COLLECTIONS IN CASCAIS
- 70 48 HOURS IN CASCAIS
- 74 GARDENING
- 79 WELLBEING
- 84 HISTORY
- 87 PHOTOGRAPHY
- 90 TECHNO
- 93 THEN AND NOW
- 95 MONEY MATTERS
- 97 GOING LEGAL
- 102 AGENDA
- 102 AND FINALLY...

70

28

55

58

FEATURES

- 12 ALJEZUR
Waiting for you
- 18 CHEFFING IT
Meet the new man at your table
- 24 SANTA LUZIA
One for your list
- 28 HIDEAWAYS
Family firsts
- 36 OLHÃO: STAY IN STYLE
Three very special places
- 44 RAISING FUNDS
The perfect recipe
- 48 SUMMER MUST HAVES
Brands with a message
- 55 IN FOR A SWIM
Great Portuguese kit
- 58 ARTS AND CRAFTS
We're talking beer here
- 68 LET THEM EAT CAKE
Pastries with a history

48

3 unique places to stay



O CONVENTO

This B&B was recently described by *The Guardian* as a “Riad by the Sea”. O Convento got its name back in the days when Olhão’s canning industry was still thriving and the building housed a dormitory for single women working there. The women wore white caps which made them look like nuns, and the neighbours who referred to the building as the ‘convent’ because the first floor, where the dormitory was located, was strictly off-limits to men, in an area best known for its rough pubs.

It was Eleonore Lefebure, herself an architect and the wife of architect Filipe Monteiro, who, after spending many years in the United States, fell in love with Olhão at first sight, and the charm of the old fishing district of Barreta. Their first renovation project was a loft, but Filipe’s dream was to turn the former dormitory into a retirement home for his family.

But, as is often the case, you make plans, start the work, and then something else

comes along; Eleonore and Filipe discovered Amsterdam and now live there part of the year.

O Convento is still family-owned and is run with heart and soul by João and Margarida, who will pamper you as a guest in one of the most beautiful B&Bs in the town.

During the renovation, Filipe reused the building materials as much as possible, and the unassuming exterior – which lies hidden like a treasure at Travessa António Bento 10 – has largely been preserved. The surprise comes when you step into the hallway leading to the completely renovated

patio, featuring a beautiful white colonnade, a cascading bougainvillea and a modest water feature surrounded by white and blue tiling. All inspired by the Moorish style so characteristic of Olhão’s old town.

The former dormitory area has been transformed into spacious and comfortable guest rooms with generous floor space and high ceilings. The rooms are mainly decorated in shades of white and feature antique furniture and marble bathrooms. The two



A CONVENT THAT ISN’T A CONVENT; THE FORMER HOME OF DR FUZETA WHERE A RUSSIAN CHARLATAN WHO CLAIMED TO BE THE PRINCE OF ANDORRA WAS A GUEST; AND A MULTI-AWARDED BOUTIQUE HOTEL, CASA AMOR. OLHÃO HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER

Words: WILL KOHLEN



rooms on the second floor – which features a roof terrace with various seating areas and a swimming pool – are accessible via a narrow spiral staircase. From there guests can enjoy a magnificent view of the city and the lagoon with the nearby islands. In the communal area on the ground floor, there is a long table where guests can enjoy local specialities and freshly baked bread and pastries as part of the extensive breakfast.

conventoolhao.com

CASA FUZETTA

The plaque on the façade of Casa Fuzetta, once a stately mansion, states that Dr Carlos Fuzeta (1872–1942) lived and died here. He was a lawyer of renown who represented Portugal at international conferences where the focus was on maritime law. As well as being known as a philanthropist, he was also the mayor of Olhão for two terms.

It must have been due to his philanthropic nature that this illustrious citizen of Olhão

offered hospitality to none other than the 'Prince of Andorra'.

Boris Skossyreff, a Russian charlatan of noble descent, proclaimed himself Boris I, Prince of Andorra, thereby provoking a conflict with the Bishop of Urgell in Spain, who laid claim to the co-principedom of Andorra through a regency of the King of France – pretender to the throne of the House of Bourbon.

After Boris I was arrested by the Spanish Civil Guard in 1934 on the bishop's orders and extradited to Portugal a few months later, he spent several months in Olhão. There, his flamboyant aristocratic appearance, complete with monocle, commanded respect and sympathy from the simple local fishing community. His new friend, Dr Carlos Fuzeta, arranged not only accommodation but also a passport for him, enabling this stateless con-artist and pretender to the throne to travel on to Genoa.

Boris I's life was later marked by numerous arrests, partly due to his shadowy activities ►



Opposite page: O Convento's magnificent patio and balconies, and the rooftop pool. This page: Casa Fuzetta which boasts outstanding design features and decoration



This page, left and below: the special features and intricate detailing of Casa Amor which have contributed to its success in the boutique hotel sector of the market. Opposite page: perfectly set in the cubist surroundings that have made Olhão one of the most loved towns in the Algarve

for British, German and Russian secret services during the War. In 1948, he was sentenced to 25 years hard labour in a Siberian camp, but was released after a few years and subsequently led a secluded life in Germany with his French wife.

The oldest residents of Olhão still remember the illustrious and controversial appearance of the 'Prince of Andorra' in the town's streets, and recount fascinating stories and anecdotes about him.

Following the death of Dr Carlos Fuzeta, the property was divided into two buildings and fell into serious disrepair. At one point, part of the property came into the possession of Piers de László, a British painter who had been living in Olhão for many years and was the grandson of the famous Philip de László.

This successful bohemian artist had conceived the idea of buying up as many properties in Olhão as possible to save them from demolition. Even now, he

still owns several iconic buildings in the town, although he was always busier with acquisitions than with restoration. During the same period, a group of concerned residents of Olhão succeeded in having the property classified as a listed monument.

However, it was the British couple, lawyers Tara and Jonathan Donovan, who brought about a real breakthrough in the restoration of Casa Fuzetta.

Through their work for celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, they had come to know Olhão and were immediately captivated when they saw the building complex, comprising single and two-storey structures with roof terraces, viewing points, a tower with coloured stained-glass windows in an eclectic Gothic style, and an impressive patio. They decided to buy both buildings, restore them and, together with architect Jaime Coutinho from Faro, turn them into a luxury retreat.

As soon as you enter Casa Fuzetta, your eye is immediately drawn to the magnificent

arches with their exposed brickwork. It has been beautifully restored. You can tell that Tara and Jonathan had a clear hand in the hotel's design. Every detail has been carefully considered; they even purchased the special Art Deco light switches.

It is perhaps one of the most beautiful retreats in the Algarve, with a rooftop swimming pool and, from the yoga terrace, a magnificent view over the 'cubist' town down to the water.

The view over the city is characterised by a white patchwork of flat roofs, typical of Olhão's North African architecture, dominated by mirantes (cube-shaped roof structures with terraces), contra-mirantes, cubist chimneys, gently curved flat roofs and staircases with elegant curls at the ends of the white-plastered balustrades.

But from the roof terrace, it is not only architectural details that are visible; sometimes you also see the neighbour hanging out her washing and greeting the



guests with a cheerful “bom dia”.

The complex can only be rented as a whole and is therefore particularly suitable as group accommodation, though you'll need to ensure there are around 24 people to make efficient use of the 12 rooms. It is frequently used for yoga retreats and, in addition to holidays, can also be hired for workshops, events and photo shoots.

casafuzetta.com

CASA AMOR

The third of Olhão's crown jewels is boutique hotel Casa Amor. The full story of its creation was documented at length over a long period in a monthly report by the French owners, Jacques and Walter, in AlgarvePLUS.

Following the extensive renovation overseen by architect Tatiana Bento of SENA Architects, a coffee shop was established for a time, offering visitors a glimpse inside the building even if they weren't staying there. This space is now used for yoga retreats, as is the roof terrace with its swimming pool.

An advantage of this change is that a fantastic Corner Shop has been added, offering a selection of gourmet and artisanal products, with a selection of exceptional breads from baker Luiz Silva available on Tuesdays and Fridays. (His handmade Pão com Manteiga – butterbread – is a real sensation.)

The hotel is one of the 25 hotels in the Algarve listed in the Michelin Guide and is also renowned for its superb and extensive breakfasts.

Casa Amor is one of the projects by SENA Architects which demonstrates how historic buildings of value must be treated,

as they can play a pioneering role in the urban regeneration of Olhão's old town.

Through their approach, which combines the restoration of characteristic elements, including windows, finishes, and balconies, with contemporary design and modern materials, they have succeeded in turning old properties into inspiring examples for their surroundings. In 2024, Casa Amor won the 'rehabilitation' category of the annual Algarve Architecture Awards, organised by the Portuguese Architects' Association.

It is no surprise that Casa Amor has been recognised not just here in Portugal, but internationally, picking up accolades that confirm its position as a leader in the boutique hotel category. It has been included in the *Michelin Guide* since 2025, selected by *BoaCama Boa Mesa Guide* since 2025 and by *Guide du Routard* since 2024. Casa Amor was *Conde Nast Traveler Spain's* choice for Best Breakfast in Portugal 2025, and winner of the TripAdvisor Travellers' 2026 Best Boutique Hotel Portugal.

casaamor-olhao.com 📍

These distinctive Cubist guest-houses are featured in 'Cubist Architecture in Olhão'. The booklet, which contains a detailed explanation of Olhão's Cubist architecture and descriptions of 25 projects, includes a walking map, and is available from Clinar bookshop, Avenida da República 112, as well as at O Convento, the Corner Shop at Casa Amor, and at Pinta Roxa at Av. 5 de Outubro 28. It can also be downloaded at architouralgarve.com. For digital enthusiasts, there is the STQRY app which also features various architectural walks in the Algarve.



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