

# SAO LOURENCO DO BARROCAL, PORTUGAL

## FARMHOUSE CHIC FOR FREE-RANGE UNWINDING

The Alentejo in Portugal has long been a weekend escape for Lisbonites lucky enough to have farms there. A land of horses and cows, cork and olive trees, its plains stretch under a vast blue sky. This is the Pampas of Europe. When José António Uva inherited his family's 780-hectare estate at just 26, he devoted the next 14 years to remodelling its ancient village as a hotel. Opened in 2016, it has a barefaced beauty: the whitewashed, brick-floored cottages (with Gaggenau kitchens and bright living rooms), the charming restaurant and Susanne Kaufmann spa are simply dressed with local textiles and crafts. The feel is refined yet relaxed farmhouse. But it's the mementos displayed – black-and-white photographs, a child's shoe, a skipping-rope – that give the place a kick of whimsical nostalgia. Fun and games are cheerfully retro: from treasure hunts to horse-and-trap rides. And all around is this natural playground, with neolithic monumental stones to clamber over, meadows to picnic in, and vineyard trails to explore by bike. This summer, children can dip their potted-shrimp toes into their own newly opened pool (there is a separate, deeply tranquil one for adults). Fish-finger fanatics will be inspired to try the field-to-fork traditional dishes once they've helped chef pluck carrots from the organic vegetable garden. Meanwhile, grown-ups can get a taste of the terroir with the estate's own wines. Barrocal has been home to tight-knit clans for literally ages – prehistoric tribes, Roman settlers, 19th-century farmers and now, in José António's two small children, ninth-generation Uvas. Here is somewhere for families to spend proper time together and get a bit dirty in the dusty earth of one of Portugal's best-kept secrets. A future classic.

**INSIDER TIP** Barrocal is in a dark sky reserve, meaning terrific stargazing. Book an astronomy session at the Alqueva Lake Observatory to scan the moon and Milky Way through its powerful telescopes.

**BOOK IT** Doubles from £150, including breakfast. +351 266 247 140; [barrocal.pt](http://barrocal.pt). TAP Air Portugal flies direct from London to Lisbon from £42 one way. [flytap.com](http://flytap.com)

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