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DONA EMILIA – A Guesthouse in Viana do Castelo

March 22, 2017

We from *Taste of Portugal*. love stories. And most of all, stories about people and their lives. The guesthouse [Dona Emilia](#) sure has a story to tell and when we heard it, we couldn't wait any longer to share it with you. First of all let us state that we haven't stayed at Dona Emilia so far. The guesthouse just opened and we for sure will be planning to visit soon. But as mentioned before, the story of Dona Emilia somehow touched us. Because it's about keeping a family's business alive. It's about knowing how to preserve the best of a brand, of its heritage and further developing it to maintain a successful business. Let us tell you a bit more ...

A century-old three-storey building located in the heart of Viana do Castelo, North of Portugal, was carefully restored and is now the charming new guesthouse named Dona Emilia. With walls and nooks full of stories, art and design, the house was styled like a boutique hotel, but the owners, the couple Nuno Freitas (architect) and Rute Esteves (teacher and performer), wanted to give it a familiar twist, offering to the guests an intimate, very unique and exclusive lodging experience. Consisting of three floors and three fronts, the house has large windows and balconies giving on to Praça da República, the main square in the city, the Costume Museum and Santa Luzia, the famous temple-monument over Viana.

The idea for the name is an homage to Emilia Freitas, 90 years old and a full life. Besides her culinary and sewing skills, Dona Emilia, as she is simply known in the city, is mostly remembered for renting rooms and singing Fado, sheltering the resistance during the dictatorship and fighting for equal rights for women. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherited the family values of social solidarity, democracy and liberty.

For the hosts, the grandson Nuno Freitas, and his wife, Rute, the choice of the name explains the identity that they wanted to give to their project, combining human and affective aspects (here each guest is a friend and may feel literally at home) with a strong cultural dynamic. Exhibitions, workshops and art residencies are part of the activities regularly presented to visitors and open to the public. The aim is to present the city, which is traditionally appreciated for its natural diversity, lifestyle and traditions, as a destination not only directed to the conventional tourist, but also as a place of excellence for the artistic creation.

With three rooms that can be changed according to the specific needs of each reservation (single, double, twin, triple, quadruple or dormitory) and three suites, the house offers different typologies and modalities of accommodation, including medium and long term rental. Prices vary according to the type of room, the time of the year and the chosen service. Pets are welcome. Common areas include, on the ground-floor an art gallery, bicycle garage and shop (resulting from a partnership with artisans and artists from Viana). On the first floor, guests can enjoy a large kitchen and a pleasant lounge with terrace, both retro vintage inspired. The kitchen opens to the public every Friday at the lunch offering limited and private tastings, only using products from local and organic agriculture. The motto is given by a very-well preserved collection of vinyls. Occasionally and according to the schedule of events, there are also special dinners with live music.

The decoration was designed by the hosts to please in comfort and style and had special collaborations from Laranja | Möbel, furniture vintage store; OCR – specialized atelier working with restore; and [GUR](#), local project with a contemporary approach to traditional Portuguese rugs. The reuse of doors, turned into headboards, or the workbench of a secondary school of the city transformed into kitchen benches, are some examples of the owners' care to preserve precious curiosities, combining the past and the present.

A few meters away from the main building, is located the access to Dona Emilia relax area, with swimming pool, garden and a reserved space to support wellness activities such as massages and holistic therapies.

Doesn't this sound amazing?! We definitely think so! So if you are planning your Portugal holiday trip for this summer, don't forget to drive further up north.



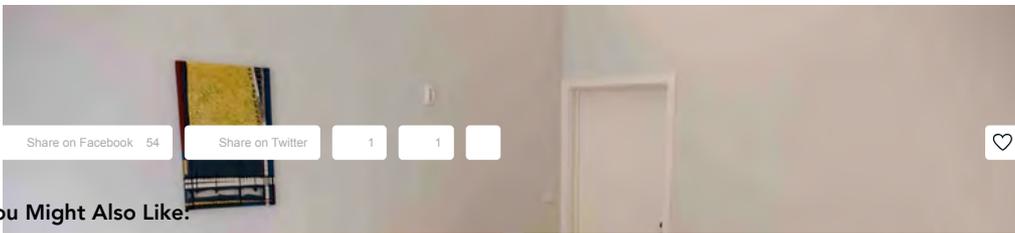
Kitchen



Living Room







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