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SOLAR EGAS MONIZ: HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Posted on March 6, 2015 by Gail at Large



Earlier this year, I received an introduction from **We Love Small Hotels**, a Portuguese travel agency that specializes in what they call “unhurried Portugal”: focusing on gastronomy, history, and nature activities, and partnering with cozier, unique properties around the country. Intrigued, I browsed the website and found their collection of tourism companies and services to be in tune with my own style of travel, which is to go small, go slow, and really *savour* everything, from the local food to the environment to making discoveries about the region from the people. With the world becoming more urbanized by the minute everyone could use an escape to peaceful surroundings, and that is something we love to do in Portugal every chance we get.

So when **We Love Small Hotels** extended an invitation to stay at **Solar Egas Moniz**, their B&B near Porto, it was beyond tempting. First of all, I had already come across the Solar’s website perchance in January, **when we went to Penafiel**. We were there on a Sunday, and I was looking online for places to photograph in the area. Solar Egas Moniz kept popping up in the search results and my curiosity was piqued about this place. Secondly, when I asked if we could bring our pooch Ice and they said yes, that won us over before we even arrived. **Ice loves to travel**, too — he’s a member of the Casa Aguiar travelling band :)

When we arrived we were warmly welcomed by Iva, who served us homemade cake and tea before we brought our things up to the room. (Surprise: they have a lift!)



Solar means “manor” in English, and the original building dates from 1892. Named after Egas Moniz, a tutor to the first king of Portugal (Afonso Henriques), it is modernized for function but fashioned with traditional forms (eg., stone walls), repurposing original materials, preserving artistic elements such as reliefs, and decorated with literary messages throughout. The whole house is a tribute to Egas Moniz and his legacy of culture.



The Solar has 10 rooms between two wings. On the upper floor of the main building are the historical rooms, named after tributes: Loyalty, Altruism, Honor, Wisdom. The popular art rooms in the

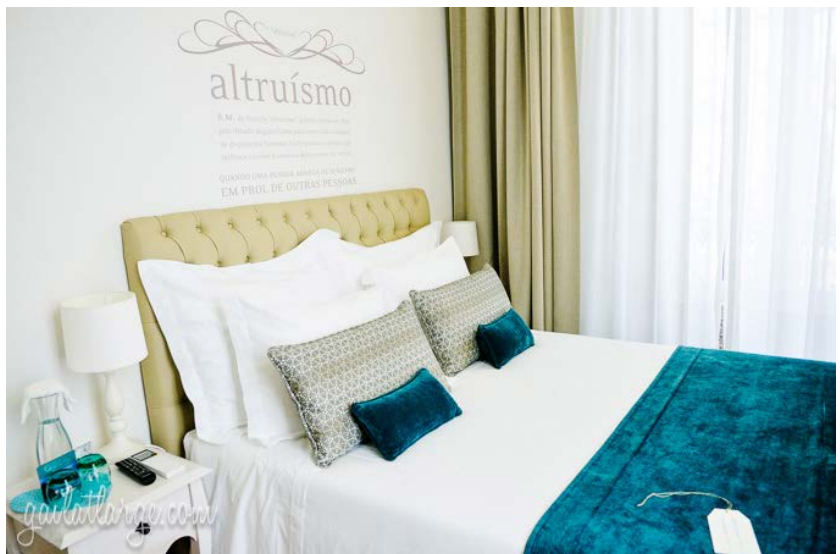
new wing are named after traditions of Portugal: sweethearts (see my post about the [Sweetheart Handkerchiefs](#)), wine, olive oil, and a dance called [vira](#). There are family rooms with couches which convert to beds for children, and they come with spacious bathrooms.

We were given the keys to the Junior Suite (Loyalty) above the main entrance, which has the stained glass window seen in the top picture and a reading area just for Ice!





Because we arrived early, I got to peek into some of the other themed rooms:

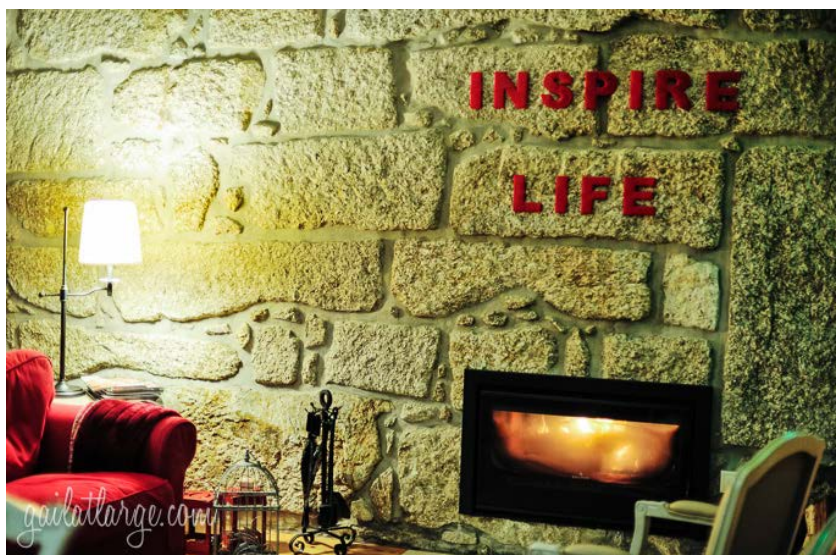




Ice was the only dog present, which meant he was super, *super* spoiled.



Along with the themes of virtue and culture, there are other uplifting messages around the house in places of rest:



Of course, then there's the food. How can I not talk about food??

Dinner is full course, ordered in advance, and charged separately. This being Northern Portugal, the two of us were served portions fit for a king — an extremely ravenous one:



It was a miracle how we managed to fit in desserts and wine. (The bottle doesn't have a label because we chose the one by a local producer without a label, which is a shame only because now I can't tell you who made the wine.)



Chocolate cake AND port! Can't move anymore! Send help!



Now that I've showed you dinner, here's breakfast. I appreciated very much that the Solar serves breakfast from 9:30-11:30. I know for most city hotels this sounds incredibly late, but when the goal is to relax, a lie-in followed by a late breakfast is in order. (Although they do accommodate earlier times, by request.)

The fruit plate is beautiful:



Solar Egas Moniz is a family business, and prior to our invitation what I'd read the most about it is the personalized attention given by the family and the rest of the team. Iva & Co. make the stay a fuller experience, giving as much or as little service as guests wish to receive: airport transfers (Porto Airport is half an hour away), tour reservations, room service, bicycles, laundry, binoculars, picnics — all can be arranged by request with enough notice, even babysitting. There is a contained play area for children by the pool and a play area inside by reception. In the winter it's also possible to book weddings there and the whole manor becomes a self-contained venue, complete with guest rooms.



“Charming House & Local Experiences” is expressed in artful touches around the Solar: flowers in every room (even our bathroom), platters of fruit, colourful linens and embroidery. I also learned from talking with Iva that the Solar’s furniture and linens were made not just in Portugal, but very locally (Paredes and Guimarães). Everywhere I looked, from the toiletries to the towels, said “Made in Portugal” — staying here is a local experience, indeed.







Paulo, Ice, and I want to thank everyone at Solar Egas Moniz for making our stay comfortable and memorable. We felt right at home!

You can find many more photos in the album: [Solar Egas Moniz](#)

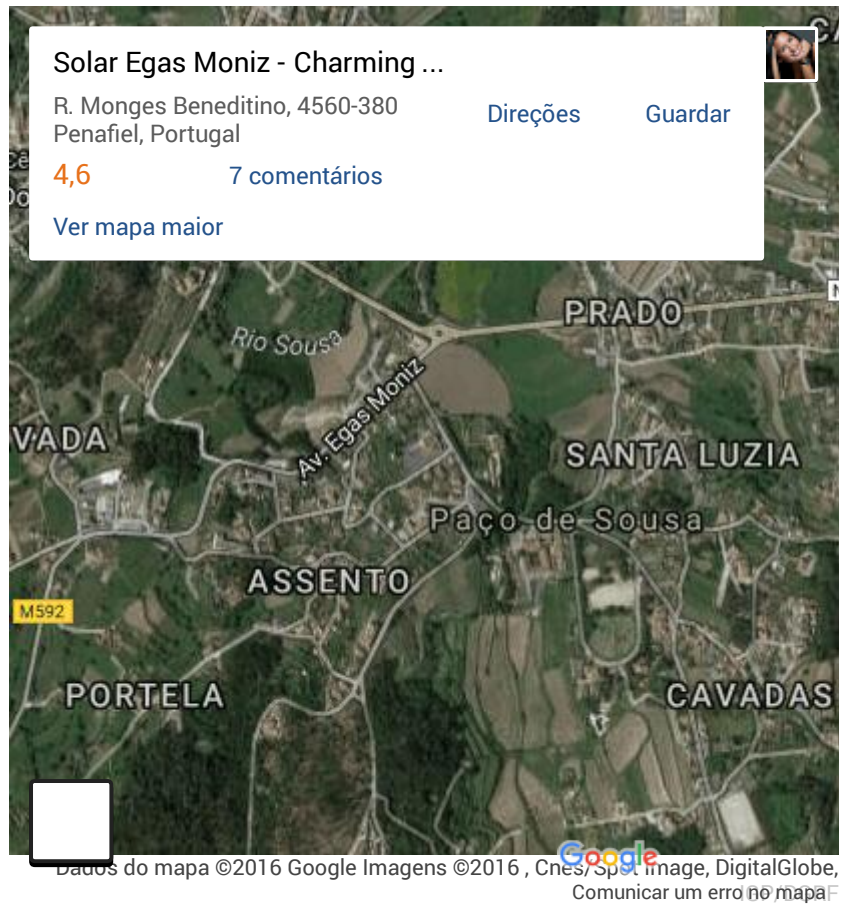
Map and contact information can be found below:



** We were guests of Solar Egas Moniz, but all opinions, words and pictures are mine.*

February 28, 2015

Album: [Solar Egas Moniz](#)



Website: <http://solaregasmoniz.com/>

SOLAR EGAS MONIZ

Rua dos Monges Beneditinos, n.º 158, Paço de Sousa, 4560-380 Penafiel, Portugal

solaregasmoniz@gmail.com

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5 thoughts on “Solar Egas Moniz: Home Away From Home”



Joy Hanford

March 7, 2015 at 9:01 am • Reply

Gail, I do so love reading your blog, but it is getting expensive! Your photos make the Solar Egas Moniz irresistible! We'll be booking soon!



Gail at Large

March 9, 2015 at 12:11 am • Reply

It's been very luxe lately, yes, between Restaurant Week and the weekend! Rather unusual for us, but we do enjoy a splurge now and again.



Solar Egas Moniz

March 7, 2015 at 12:27 pm • Reply

We really LOVE your photos Dear Gail! Many thanks for your amazing passionate work! <3



Gail at Large

March 9, 2015 at 12:08 am • Reply

We truly enjoyed our stay! Thank you for having us!

**Carla Aguiar**

March 7, 2015 at 6:10 pm • Reply

Uau! Such an amazing place. The Solar seems really beautiful and welcoming. I must spend a weekend there one of these days. And your photos are absolutely fantastic! :-)

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