

## Bucaco and Luso

The forest of Bucaco lies to the north of Coimbra near the Luso Spa, enclosed by a stone wall pierced by several gates. In a vast clearing in the centre of the forest stands the castle-like Bucaco Palace Hotel built in 1900 to an unusual, yet beautiful design. Once the property of the Portuguese Royal family, this palatial hotel certainly lives up to its name. It is every inch a palace, a pastiche of the classic Manueline style, built by the Italian architect Luigi Manini. (to 57 BC), the hotel has a central residential location

The 250-acre forest of Bucaco is Portugal 's most famous and most revered woodland, a monastic domain throughout the Middle Ages. Benedictine monks established a hermitage in the midst of it as early as the 6th century and the area remained in religious hands right up until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1834. The forest's great fame and beauty came when the Carmelite monks took over the monastery in the 17th century. They built the walls which surround the property as well as preserving and developing the forest by planting many new varieties of trees including maples, laurels, English oaks, Mexican cedars and cypress trees. The forest now features over 700 species of trees, rare local and exotic plants (some dating as far back as the 17th century and still standing), waterfalls, lakes and gardens. A setting of extraordinary beauty! Visitors can see the remains of the original 'Mosteiro dos Carmelitas'. Also on show are famous prints by Alfonso Mucha together with a famous sequence of azulejos (painted tiles) depicting the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta and the Battle of Bucaco, the first serious reverse suffered by Napoleon in his campaigns across the Iberian Peninsula .

Offering romantic balconies looking out into the forest. An exclusive dining room serves excellent Portuguese and classic cuisine whilst its wine cellar features the legendary Bucaco wines, 'mis en bouteille au chateau', which are not available anywhere else Not for nothing is this one of the most famous restaurants in Portugal . Pre- and post-dinner drinks should be taken on the romantic terrace overlooking the park or inside in the Lobby Bar with its comprehensive choice of old, rare wines and exquisite spirits

One of the most pleasurable ways to spend a day at the Bucaco Palace Hotel is simply to stroll through the woodland, among beautiful gardens, rare birds, sacred pathways and chapels. Guests can also use, free of charge, a nearby pool, tennis courts and mini golf Fishing is available in the Mondego River: Because of its central location within the country, the Bucaco Palace Hotel is a perfect base for exploring Coimbra, Fatima, Viseu, the Douro Valley and the Atlantic coast, that's if you can bear to tear yourself away from the beauty that greets you each morning. This is a magical, peaceful' atmosphere with which you are sure to fall in love.