# Up on the roof at the best hotel in the 'world's most romantic city'. Which is Lisbon, apparently.



So, it’s official. Lisbon has just been voted the most romantic city on earth and from where we’re sitting in one of the most beautiful hotels in the hands-down most beautiful area with views right across to the famous bridge and statue, we’re not in any mood to argue.

The views in question come courtesy of the Hotel Bairro Alto, slap bang in the middle of the \*checks notes\* Bairro Alto, the ‘high district’, which might explain those views. It’s one of Lisbon’s top hotels – and we don’t just mean height-wise – a classic that has had a major upgrade and now serves as Lisbon HQ for famous London-based chef Nuno Mendes, who is a local lad.

But let’s start at the bottom. Located right on Praça de Camões, a darling little square with a statue and a kiosk-bar, this is prime real estate with dinky boutiques, ancient grand cafés and big-name stores within minutes. We’re in the big yellow building. The classic one. With the patisserie on the ground floor. That one.

And yes it is grand from the outside but, maybe thanks to award-winning architect Eduardo Souto de Moura, who’s responsible for the recent make-over, inside everything is low-key and gorgeous, from the smiley staff in old-school uniforms to the layers of plants to the modern wood desk… And much cosier than you might think from that grand façade.

Upstairs the rooms go from classically simple to simply stunning – but all with a playful quirk thanks to Eduardo – whether you’re in one of the hotel’s originals or in one of the newer add-ons that came with the refurb. Expect chic non-hotel colours – pale blues, reds – furniture that looks like someone actually went to a shop and chose it rather than put a pin into a hotel furniture catalogue and touches like hand painting on some of the walls. There’s an authentic feel to place. It feels like you’re in a classic hotel, even if it is a very funky old girl by now.

But it’s up on the roof that the real superstar stuff happens. Start with drinks at the 18.68 cocktail bar, where you can get your Aperol Spritz down you while gazing from a cane chair across the rooftops to the most famous view in town: the 25 de Abril Bridge and the Cristo Rei statue, big enough to be seen even from this distance.

When you’ve put a couple of those away, make sure you have your reservations for what is undoubtedly the hottest ticket in town right now, Nuno Mendes’ BAHR on the fifth floor, with its open kitchen and clusters of movers and shakers. Dishes are based on Portuguese classics but done with such panache and with such a modern eye that it’s about as far away as you can get from stuffy. Breakfast in the same room – with those same views – is a delight.

As a lesson in how to reinvent a hotel without throwing the baby out with the bathwater, Bairro Alto is a masterclass. But as with any hotel – of any size! – it’s only as good as the people running it. In this case, they make what was already a very good thing indeed even better. If that was possible.[bairroaltohotel.com](https://www.bairroaltohotel.com/en/)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.portugalresident.com/lisbon-named-one-of-worlds-most-romantic-cities/> - This article reports that Lisbon has been named one of the 'World’s Most Romantic Cities' by Food & Wine magazine, corroborating the claim that Lisbon has been voted the most romantic city on earth.
2. <https://www.bairroaltohotel.com/en/neighbourhood/> - This page provides information about the Bairro Alto Hotel's location in the historic centre of Lisbon, situated between the elegant Chiado and the bohemian Bairro Alto, offering views of the famous bridge and statue mentioned in the article.
3. <https://www.bairroaltohotel.com/en/hotel/> - This page details the Bairro Alto Hotel's history, including its recent renovation by architect Eduardo Souto de Moura, aligning with the article's mention of the hotel's major upgrade and architectural makeover.
4. <https://www.cntraveler.com/hotels/portugal/cais-do-sodre/bairro-alto-hotel> - This review highlights the Bairro Alto Hotel's location on Praça Luís de Camões, a charming square with a statue and kiosk-bar, corroborating the article's description of the hotel's prime real estate.