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THE LITERARY MAN ÓBIDOS HOTEL (2015)

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"The Literary Man" Óbidos Hotel is located next to the Castle of the medieval town of Óbidos (Leiria, Portugal), near the entrance to the wall where the main tourist attractions are located. Although the hotel opened in 2015, the history of the building in which it is housed dates back to the 19th century. The building was erected in 1831, one year after the prior of *S. Pedro da Vila* de Óbidos, António Gonçalves d'Asseca, acquired the *Casas da Calçada* next to the *Chafariz Novo*, with the purpose of founding a convent for nuns. The work, financed by King D. Miguel, began the following year, and the chapel was concluded in 1883 with the invocation of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

In 1834, during the Portuguese Liberal Revolution, the religious orders were abolished in the country, and their assets were incorporated into the *National Treasury*. The convent was left abandoned until it passed into the hands of owners. Firstly, it was acquired by the Acácio Costa family, then by Bénard Guedes and finally by a French couple named Balivet, who, in 1965, transformed the building into an accommodation unit inspired by that designation "*Estalagem do Convento*". It was into the *Estalagens de Portugal* network, as can still be seen by the presence of the respective sign on one of the walls at the entrance to "The Literary Man". The building of the old convent, with its monolithic and robust structure, prolongs the ancient atmosphere of the town, with great stylistic harmony through the contrast between the white walls and the yellow stripe at the base. The windows, which oscillate between horizontal slits in the ground floor and sash windows, also give rhythm to the façade. When we move inwards, we can see that, although the building has been adapted and reconverted into hotel facilities, the memory of the convent's origin remains in the organic structure of the space, with emphasis on the so-called "nuns' cell corridor", which houses 8 of the hotel's 30 rooms. The rooms of this hotel, which occupy the former private rooms of the convent, are all unique, combining the past with the contemporary in terms of space decoration. Adjectives such as "original" and "comfortable" are some of the most mentioned in guest comments on online platforms (Booking.com and TripAdvisor).



However, what is most striking about the hotel are the different rooms that vary between monastic austerity and the cosiness of traditional wooden “shirt-skirt” ceilings and high ceilings while maintaining the original flooring. This cosy feeling is reinforced by the abundance of the elements that give the hotel its name, books. The common areas – from the lobby to the walls of the bar and restaurant to the corridors with small reading corners – are fully lined with books on different themes and in other languages. This specialised literary offer has national and international works, organised thematically, in a true ode to reading, in an invitation to serenity, reflection, recollection and silence, broken by the background music that is also felt in several areas of the hotel. The size of this collection reaches 70,000 copies, giving it the epithet of “the largest literary hotel in the world”, which can also be considered a library hotel (Quinteiro, 2022). The books can be consulted, read, and even bought by the guests, offering a creative and innovative experience in hospitality. In this sense, we can see the connection between heritage and literature (Agarwal & Shaw, 2018) and the accommodation that this hotel clearly shows. In the Hotel restaurant “Cook & Book”, we are presented with a literary a la carte menu, where the works of Portuguese and international literature inspire the themes of the various dishes. The restaurant also has live cooking in the Japanese Kamado, where the walls are enriched with shelves of cookery books. The site of the old chapel also gives way to a gin bar, “Mr and Mrs Gin”, that could really be a library due to the abundance of copies lining the walls. The hotel also has a central room with a central fireplace, which is the perfect spot for holding events such as lectures, seminars, and book launches, reinforcing the hotel’s connection to the world of culture and literary production.

Geographically contextualised, this hotel fits has an intrinsic connection to the city that hosts it, to the extent that Óbidos was considered a literary village by UNESCO in 2015, thus integrating the Creative Cities Network (UNESCO, 2020), with the opening of a considerable set of thematic bookstores, as *Livraria de Santiago*. This status is also due to the *International Literary Festival of Óbidos*, known as “Folio”, which takes place annually, turning Óbidos into a grand reading room for about one week and *Latitudes – Literature and Travellers*. At these festivals, Portuguese and international authors are invited to talk about their works, among other themes, and where several activities take place, such as literary workshops. In this context, it can be stated that this hotel goes beyond its positioning within the scope of literary tourism to fit into the broader spectrum of cultural tourism (Anjo *et al.*, 2021; Quinteiro & Baleiro, 2019; Herbert, 2001; Vareiro *et al.*, 2020), attracting diversified audiences and contributing to the formation of the destination’s image (Santos *et al.*, 2012).

“The Literary Man” serves entirely the municipality’s mission, being also a stage for these writers and cultural personalities, as attested by the several enlarged and framed, scattered over the various walls of the hotel, but concentrated essentially in the lobby. It allows us to verify the intrinsic connection of the hotel to the events of the place as a literary village, eternalising the highlights of these meetings. This literary hotel fits in a set of other examples in Portugal, spread from north to south of the country that offer a variety of products and experiences to different target audiences (Çevik, 2022), combined with the influence of art, developing a form of special interest tourist able to meet the needs of visitors (Baleiro & Pereira, 2022).



This hotel is part of a local hotel group responsible for one more accommodation unit and one restaurant in a trilogy in which the locations allow an identification with the essence of three characters, "The Maker Man" with the *Rio do Prado*, "The Literary Man" and "The History Man", a restaurant that also presents with a collection of books on culinary tradition and equally located in the centre of the medieval village, thus contributing to highlight literature, not only as a differentiation strategy for the hotel industry (Oliveira, 2022) but as one of the leading forces of economic development of the territory by tourist differentiation.

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