

Opposite and below top, a concrete canopy, the only element of the house visible in the natural landscape, features a circular skylight and covers an outdoor patio. Below bottom, the house's three bedrooms surround two indoor open-air atriums, which bathe the interiors in natural light



Over the past decade, Portugal's popularity as a tourist hotspot has inspired a burst of architectural creativity in the hospitality industry, resulting in intimate, boutique hotels popping up all over the country by the likes of Pritzker Prize-winner Álvaro Siza and other acclaimed architects such as Manuel Aires Mateus.

Aires Mateus is the mastermind behind the latest opening to season the country's landscape. The fifth property to join the Silent Living collection – a small hotel group that also owns Santa Clara 1728 (W\*216), a beautiful six-room hotel perched atop one of Lisbon's seven hills – Casa na Terra, which means 'house in the land', lives up to its name. Amid the soft rolling hills and sweeping skies of Portugal's Alentejo region, a few steps from the shores of Alqueva – the largest man-made lake in Europe – the subterranean house is buried under the Earth's surface, on the site of a pre-existing property that was submerged when the lake was created. 'The house is located in an area where construction is not allowed,' explains Aires Mateus. 'Our ecological responsibility was also to make the house disappear into the landscape.'

Using concrete as the main material, Aires Mateus smartly inserted the house into the ground like

a bunker. The only visible element is a canopy, with a circular skylight, which conceals the common areas and covers an outdoor patio that offers both sunrise and sunset views of the lake. The three bedrooms, which are set further back, encircle open-air atriums clad in white tiles that reflect the light from above.

The interiors are just as subtle, inspired, as Aires Mateus says, by the idea of silence. The concrete frame is softened by warm natural woods and bespoke furnishings, many of which have been crafted by local artisans using local materials, and these sit alongside Flos lights and Branca Lisboa chairs. 'In this case, the interior design and the architecture is not something to be seen, only to be felt,' he explains.

Local diversions include hiking, water sports or visits to the nearby medieval village of Monsaraz. Coming soon are bicycles and a jetty from which you can hop onto the house's private boat for lakeside meanders. Meanwhile, those looking for a more sedate sojourn can take advantage of a private cook, then sit back, relax and savour the sound of silence. ✱

*Monsaraz, Portugal, tel: 351.932 251 056, [silentliving.pt](http://silentliving.pt). Rates: from €350 (low season)/€600 (high season)*





Checking In

# DEEP IMPACT

Playful shapes and subterranean  
pleasures in rural Portugal

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