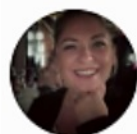


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## Design Talk: Behind The Scenes At Madeira's New Savoy Palace



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Travel

*Chasing the dream: I write about travel and the world around me*

Last year, when **Madeira** was voted Europe's 'Leading Island Destination' in the *World Travel Awards* for the fifth year running, it firmly kissed goodbye to its reputation as destination of choice for sedate retirees. Shaking off its staid reputation further is the fact that travel aficionados are falling over themselves with the 'discovery' that it is actually an interesting part of the world, rather than a dull one – (echoing the iconic writer, and passionate traveller, Ernest Hemingway's love of the island).



The new Savoy Palace is bringing a touch of luxury to Madeira. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

The Portuguese outpost is, in fact, closer to North Africa than Europe, but has its own unique culture and climate, and, while it has its age-old charms, it has recently garnered a reputation for adventure travel. From hiking to canyoning, paragliding to the famous street tobogganing, it's an unlikely destination guaranteed to thrill adrenalin junkies.

Now, the island is looking to make its mark with the luxury end of the travel industry, with the upcoming opening of the five-star **Savoy Palace**, part of the **Savoy Signature** brand of hotels, which is due to open this July 2019.



The new hotel is set to make a splash in Madeira. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

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Found just a short walk from Funchal's Old Town, the property is the island's only member of the **Leading Hotels of the World** and has a bold, curved structure designed by **RH+ Architects**. One of the highlights of the hotel is a lavish destination spa, inspired by the **Laurissilva Forest** – Madeira's UNESCO World Heritage site and the largest surviving laurel forest in the world. Five restaurants, a rooftop lounge and infinity pool will add to the lavish feel. Best of all is the interior design by **Nini Andrade Silva** in collaboration with **RH+ Architects**, inspired by the Belle Époque period. The 352 rooms and suites have customized fabrics, bespoke furniture and traditional Madeiran crafts, such as embroidery and wickerwork, are showcased throughout.



The Terreiro Brasserie has been inspired by the natural world. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)



As one of Portugal's most noted interior designers, Silva has worked on luxury hotels across the world, including the new **W São Paulo**, which is set to open in the Brazilian city next year. Here, she discusses her design concept:



Elegant detailing throughout has a Belle Époque feel. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

## What was the main design inspiration for the Savoy Palace?

It has a timeless feel, and is influenced by the Belle Époque period and the culture of the island. The design brings together a different number of elements: the exuberance of the surrounding landscape, the unique man-made environment of Madeira, particularly the old *levadas* and tunnels, the excellence and mastery of Madeira's embroidery, the centuries-old art of wickerwork and the expertise involved in the production of one of the best fortified wines in the world – Madeira Wine. Together these unique features underlie the metamorphosis between the conceptual inspiration and the interior design.



Bedrooms have a traditional yet elegant aesthetic. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

## Will the opening change the landscape of the island, when it comes to tourism?

It will no doubt be an incredible hotel, with unique values that will offer an unforgettable experience. It is an homage to the customs, idiosyncrasies and special characteristics of the island. There's nothing else like it here.



Marble bathrooms give a sumptuous finish. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

## **Explain the design ethos of the hotel?**

We were inspired by Madeira's traditional art and culture and we wanted to translate these into elegant interiors. The spaces have a very organic feel, highlighted by the use of nature and the curvilinear forms of materials. Luxury touches come with the attention to detail – the softness of textures and the richness of decorative features.



Nini Andrade Silva (CREDIT: NICK BAYNTUN)



## **What is your favourite area of the hotel and why?**

The reception area has a special atmosphere created by the presence of an impressive chandelier and large mirror that give a feeling of space and grandeur.

But being honest, I can't choose just one favourite area because as you pass between the different floors of the hotel, you come across different types of environments, all very inspirational with the emphasis on bright colours, sinuous curves, suggesting plant forms, animals and femininity, as well as ornaments clearly based on Art Nouveau. It's like taking a walk through Madeira.



The spa is one of the standout areas of the hotel. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)



## What are your main design influences?

Entering this hotel will be like entering a poetic world, where colour, textures and iconic objects are all important. With exclusive furniture pieces designed by my team, the main design influence is deeply rooted in Madeira's collective memory, with a great emphasis on elements of nature, which produce a visual interplay between the language of the building itself with the voluptuousness of its interior.



The Terreiro Gastrobar has a quirky feel. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

## Is keeping true to the location important to you as a designer?

Yes, without doubt! I have always been a storyteller, and these stories live in my projects. My design speaks about the memories from the past, of my history and the island of Madeira.



Madeira is the main source of inspiration in the interiors. (CREDIT: SAVOY PALACE)

## What are your highlights of Madeira?

There are so many highlights, but if I have to choose, I would tell you about my main sources of inspiration – the sea, the light and the pebbles of the beaches! Many people know me as ‘Garota do Calhau’ what means ‘Girl of the Pebbles’ due to my strong attraction for the softly-rounded stones found on Madeira Island’s beaches. They are one of my sources of inspiration for my designs. Most of all, Madeira is an amazing island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, on the same latitude as North Africa, and there are things that you wouldn’t expect to find in a European region. The natural landscape, the mountains, the irrigation channels known as *levadas* and the historic and cultural heritage of the region combine to offer something for everyone.



Nini is a world-renowned interior designer. (CREDIT: BERNARDO COELHO)

## **What is your next project?**

I have several projects on the go across different parts of the world. I am also designing my own exclusive collection of outdoor furniture called – *Garota do Calhau Colletion* – inspired by the organic shape of the stones from Madeira's beaches.

## **Where next for your travels?**

I will travel to England, then Switzerland and Italy. After that China, Morocco and Brazil are next on my list.