

Portugal's shore thing

A new resort on Portugal's stunning Atlantic coast is being designed by some of Europe's finest architects. By Cathy Hawker

WHEN asked to describe the charms of his region, the young, forward-thinking mayor of the historic Portuguese town of Óbidos is grateful for something. "We don't have the weather of the Algarve — thank God," says Telmo Faria. "And we are creating a new heritage for ourselves in the unique architectural development of Bom Sucesso." Óbidos, less than an hour from Lisbon, is the tourist capital of the Silver Coast — named for its jagged cliffs facing the untamed Atlantic — and has so far escaped the mass development



Sun and sand: Portugal's spectacular Silver Coast

seen on the Algarve. Eucalyptus and fir trees dominate a countryside where 80 per cent of the population work in agriculture.

The infrastructure improvements made across Portugal as a result of hosting the Euro 2004 football tournament, mean that access to this area is much improved. The A8 toll motorway stretches north from Lisbon and directly past the international airport before taking you to the Óbidos region in less than an hour.

Developments are slowly appearing that could tempt buyers into discovering the peaceful joys of the region. Bom Sucesso, the 400-acre design resort described by the mayor, lies about six miles from Óbidos, on the site of an old farm. Here, 14 acclaimed Modernist architects — all Portuguese — have collaborated to produce a

"We are selling art. Each home is like a limited edition"

landmark project showcasing the best contemporary designs, all set within a leisure resort on Portugal's largest natural lagoon. The 600-property development, which incorporates a 100-bed hotel, is based around a championship golf course, designed by the British golf architect Donald Steel.

This €250 million (£170 million) project, where land clearance is well under way, is the inspired vision of José Miguel Roque Martins, director of developer Acordo, who purchased the land two years ago and set out plans to create a "living and unique architectural exhibition".

Each architect involved in the project has been given complete freedom to make the best use of land for their designs, with one stipulation — all properties must have a green (grass-covered) roof, to harmonise the verdant resort. The site's natural gradients will be used to hide houses and open views, and properties will be sited carefully to maximise privacy.

"Simplicity of design, natural light, first-class quality and diversity of houses according to each individual site — these are the main



Steeped in history: Bom Sucesso is about six miles from thriving Óbidos, the tourist capital of the Silver Coast

elements of Bom Sucesso," says Roque Martins. Modern architectural details such as blind walls, clean lines and vast expanses of glass are mixed with traditional, Portuguese-style inner courtyards. Ninety per cent of the properties will be single-storey.

These striking and thought-provoking designs,

incorporating cantilevered walls and geometric lines, are not for everyone, but Roque Martins is unapologetic. "We are a niche market," he admits.

Jonathan Salisbury, head of international new developments at Hamptons, which is launching Bom Sucesso in the UK this month, agrees. "We



£295,000: A four-bedroom villa with a pool in the Bom Sucesso resort. Through Hamptons (0870 458 3631)

The brains behind Bom Sucesso

THE architects involved in the project — all Portuguese — include some of the best-known names in European design.

João Luís Carrilho da Graça (left) has designed 13 of the villas. Each shares a basic L-shape design but varies in the use of plot size and the fall of the land. "Construction along the perimeter of the plots allows for large central gardens and

courtyards and creates more interest," he says.

Eduardo Souto de Moura (left) has designed 42 villas, aiming for "a neutral and anonymous feel — simplicity in all". He designed the Braga Stadium for Euro 2004, a 30,000-seat arena carved into the mountainside.

The work of Souto de Moura and his mentor and fellow Bom Sucesso architect, Álvaro

Siza (below), Portugal's "greatest living architect", will become better known to Londoners this summer when their design for the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion is unveiled.

This prestigious commission has been awarded for the past four years to international designers who "consistently push the boundaries of their architectural practice".



Getting there

● BA flies four times a day from Heathrow to Lisbon. Flight time is two-and-a-half hours. Prices from £129.

● Lisbon is on GMT.

● For details about Bom Sucesso, contact Hamptons on 0870 458 3631, or www.hamptons-int.com.

are selling art. Each home is like a limited edition," he says.

Their courage seems justified. With no advertising whatsoever, Portuguese buyers — mainly professional couples aged between 40 and 50 — snapped up 140 properties in just four months, and now Spanish developers are looking to copy the project.

The range of facilities planned should make it an ideal holiday resort: as well as golf, there will be tennis, a spa, football pitch, watersports club, fishing rights and a fitness trail. The site will also have shops, as well as a shuttle service between Óbidos and the nearby wide sandy beaches.

"Prices are exceptional value in this up-and-coming region of Portugal," says Hamptons' Salisbury. About 20 to 30 per cent less than the Algarve, in fact. And the nearest most of us will

"Prices are exceptional value in this up-and-coming region"

come to affording a house designed by such internationally renowned architects.

Town house prices range from €165,000 (£112,000) for a one-bedroom to €249,000 (£170,000) for a three-bedroom. Villas start from €320,000 (£218,000) for a three-bedroom and €660,000 (£450,000) for a five-bedroom. Most villas will have their own swimming pool, with clusters of town houses sharing a communal pool. Maintenance charges will be €100 (£68) a month for an average three-bedroom home.

Properties can be reserved for €1,000 (£683), with 15 per cent of the price due on exchange, and 25 per cent payable six months later. Stamp duty is 6.5 per cent of the purchase price, and notary and registration fees cost about two per cent. Annual council tax is 0.3 per cent.

Bom Sucesso offers several ownership options. As well as a straightforward freehold route, there is a vacation and hotel-managed investment, where purchasers get either 10 or six weeks' use of the property annually with the remainder of the time used by a rental pool that is managed by the resort or the hotel. The latter has a guaranteed five per cent net return for three years.

The hilltop walled town of Óbidos, with its medieval citadel, is a thriving cultural centre, and the capital city of Lisbon — hopefully described as the next Barcelona — makes for an easy day trip. The new airport to be built at Ota in the next six years (20 minutes from Óbidos), should attract more visitors to the Silver Coast.

"Portugal does two things particularly well," says Roque Martins. "Architecture and football."

Bom Sucesso should unite both because Portugal's most famous living export — Chelsea FC's manager Jose Mourinho — is rumoured to have bought there.



New: what the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2005 will look like