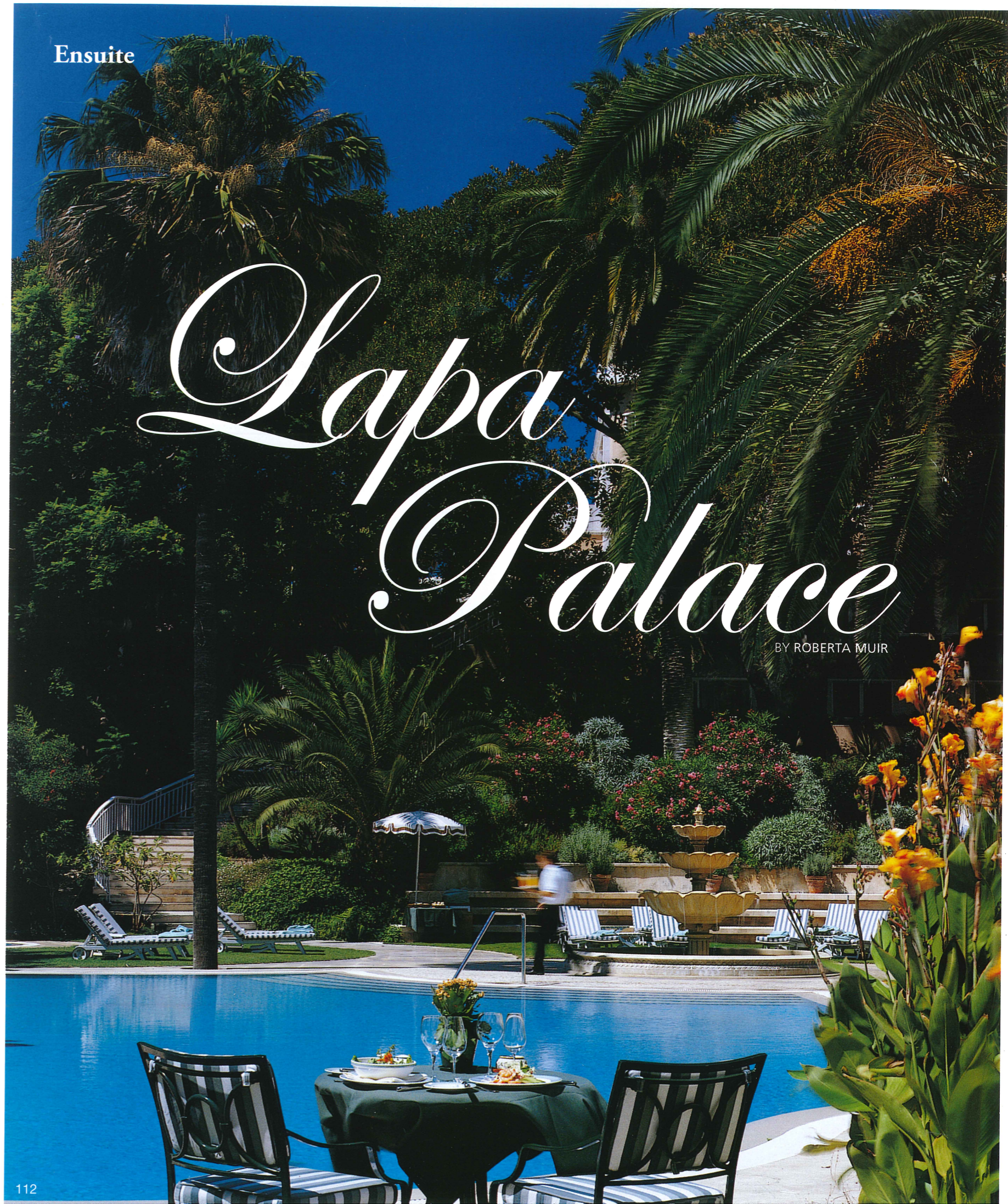


Ensuite

Lapa Palace

BY ROBERTA MUIR





Mis en scène:

Built in 1870 as a private home and converted to a palace in 1887 by the Count of Valenças, the Lapa Palace in Lisbon, Portugal retains many of the original building's features such as ceramic tiles by Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro and frescoes by his brother Columbano, the greatest portrait painter of the day. The palace was a family home until 1988 when it was converted into a hotel. Ten years later, it was purchased by Orient-Express Hotels & Resorts.

Setting:

In typical Portuguese style, traditional ceramics feature in the hotel's public rooms and beautifully appointed bathrooms. Marble, rich fabrics, gorgeous colours, magnificent woodwork, and enormous gilded mirrors all help create the feeling of an 19th-century palace.

Cast:

Catherine Deneuve, Cher and Sting are just a few of the rich and famous who have stayed at the Lapa Palace. The hilltop Lapa district is home to embassies and consulates and the smart residences of Lisbon's wealthy. The Lapa Palace Hotel commands one of the most desirable locations in this regal district, with spectacular views over the Targus River.

Art direction:

The hotel has three wings: the Palace Wing in the original building, the self-contained Villa Lapa and the new Garden Wing, which blends in beautifully with the original structure. On the 5th floor (the noble floor), the Count of Valenças suite and five other deluxe rooms are decorated with furnishings from the original palace, including tiles, frescoes, stained-glass windows, furniture and carpets.

Subplot:

The Wellness Spa's indoor pool, gymnasium, sauna and Turkish steam bath are open to all guests, and treatments such as native American stone therapy and La Prairie facials can be booked in advance.

Narrow, cobbled streets have bars dedicated to fado, the blues music of Portugal. Cafés that sell Portuguese tarts and excellent coffee are a short stroll away. A five-minute car ride brings you to the docklands area, Belém, at the mouth of the Targus River, with its magnificent Jerónimos Monastery and the imposing 52-metre tall Monument to the Discoveries.

Bill of Fare:

Ristorante Cipriani, named after Lapa's famous sister hotel in Venice, features Venetian glass, a regal colour scheme of red and gold, and fine Venetian cuisine. The plush Rio Tejo Bar and the adjoining Terrace with garden views are the places to indulge in a traditional afternoon tea (with 50 different teas and tisanes on offer), or a port tasting that includes a demonstration of the ancient art of port wine bottle opening.

Critic's Choice:

The Tower Room. Count Valenças built the tower in 1877 as his dressing room. From here he could enjoy the views over the Tagus River as he prepared for dinner. Dining atop your own private tower, or on the room's spacious terrace, offers some of the most spectacular views in Lisbon.

The Ticket:

€325 per night for a Garden View Room to €2,500 per night for the Count of Valenças suite.

