

INTERCONTINENTAL VALE DO LOBO HOTEL  
LOULÉ (ALGARVE), PORTUGAL  
2025–2019

Located in the municipality of Loulé in the Algarve, Vale do Lobo is one of Europe's leading golf and beach-resort destinations. The owner wanted to consolidate the resort by developing a five-star hotel and serviced apartments to be operated by a leading hospitality brand. In terms of programme, the ensemble comprises 125 hotel guestrooms and suites with 27 interconnected serviced apartments, with a total of 318 beds. Other amenities include all-day dining, fine dining, rooftop and pool bars, spa with indoor/outdoor pools, kids club, residents club and a function centre convertible into four meetings rooms.

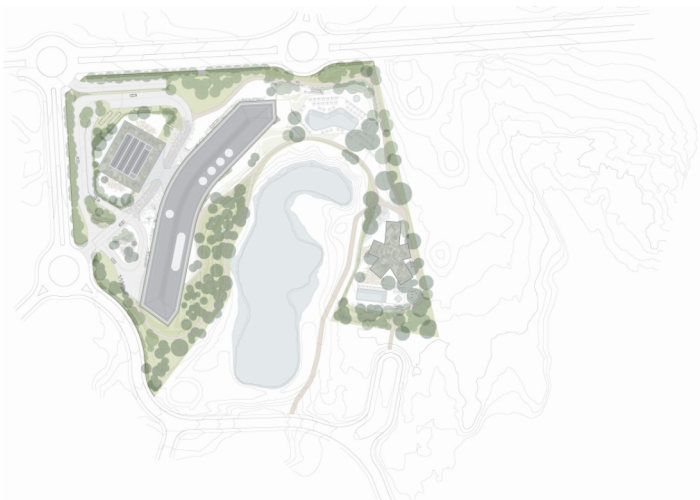
The site is a corner plot located between the wide Avenida Almirante Cabeçadas, which connects Vale do Lobo to Quinta do Lago, and the Avenida das Acácias, the latter starting from the roundabout and descending southwards into the resort. With expansive views of Vale do Lobo's golf course, the new hotel will be the gateway of the resort and an icon of the complex. The site is not without certain conceptual problems, namely its exposure to the north along Avenida Almirante Cabeçadas and its oddly L-shaped polygonal form, set by planning laws. These constraints, and the need for a typical double-loaded floor plan to meet international hospitality standards, made the design extremely challenging in terms of avoiding too many north-facing guestrooms. Other regulatory constraints included issues concerning the maximum number of floors and their respective floor-to-ceiling height.

The hotel is devised as a flowing Y-shaped, four-storey volume, gently curving like an amphitheatre towards the lake, with views to the south and south-east, and the shortest wing of the Y positioned towards the north-west to become the function centre. The latter is joined to the hotel by a wide shared canopy that generates a covered outdoor connection, almost like an exterior reception area. This strategy gives the ensemble separate drop-off points for hotel and event guests, with a circulation loop that mitigates bus traffic while providing a glamorous entrance for both sets of visitors. In terms of arrival experience, upon entering the hotel lobby the guests enjoy unfolding views of the lake and the tee-off point. Outside visitors also use the facilities, including the fine dining and sky-bar on the rooftop, so the reception area is strategically positioned to visually control access to the elevators and the spa. The entrance lobby is positioned slightly above the lobby lounge, providing unobstructed outdoor views and appropriately staging the feeling of arrival. The gentle ramp along the lobby generates a feeling of slowing down and of a *promenade architecturale*.

Devoid of partitions, the ramp nonetheless divides the lobby into two very different atmospheres, namely the busy arrival and check-in area, and the relaxed comfort and serenity of the lounge. Both the lounge and the all-day dining restaurant enjoy a strong continuity with the outdoor landscaping.

The façade concept resonates with an evocative blend of the luminous whitewashed tradition of Algarve's vernacular architecture and the streamlined, late-modernist monumentality of post-war grand hotels. With long and sweeping arches that cast deep shadows on the receded ground level façade, the building is crowned by a setback floor with a shallow cantilevered pitched roof. In the detailing, the guestroom balcony partitions clad in round patterned *azulejo* tiles, and the metal railings and aluminium window frames with their light bronze tint, introduce a material warmth to the ensemble.

Located opposite the hotel, on the lake, the residential club is shaped as a five-star single-storey volume, with each wing serving a distinct function: reception and drop-off, yoga room, bar and dining area, covered terrace and staff and kitchen areas. The ensemble is devised as a landmark garden pavilion on the lawn, with a projecting light steel structure reminiscent of an expanded 'Farnsworth house', topped by a flat green roof system that takes into account the building's high visibility from the hotel guestrooms.



Location: Vale do Lobo Resort, Loulé (Algarve), Portugal

Client: Vale do Lobo Resort

Scope of services: Architecture and landscape architecture

Project brief: 5-star hotel with 125 keys and 27 serviced apartments

Plot area: 15.6 ha

Gross floor area: 30,070 sq. m (28,700 sq. m hotel and serviced apartments, 1,370 sq. m function centre)

Project status: 2019 (competition, 1<sup>st</sup> prize) – 2025 (estimated completion)

Rendering: 4+Arquitectos