

SOLAR DA REDE HOTEL
MESÃO FRIO, PORTUGAL
2025–2020

Quinta do Solar da Rede is a famous vineyard farm located in Mesão Frio, a district of Vila Real in the heart of the Alto Douro, a wine region listed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site. The practice was commissioned with the master plan and the subsequent design of a hotel and serviced apartments on the 36.7-ha property, in addition to the renovation of its existing buildings.

The vineyard's main building is a baroque manor house located on a hillside overlooking the Douro river. Originally built in the 15th-century, the house was extensively rebuilt in the 18th century by the landed nobleman José Maria Borges Rebello de Queiroz on designs attributed to architect Nicolau Nasoni — an Italian émigré who settled in the north of Portugal and author of some of the most notable buildings of the period in the region. The arrival at the two-storey manor passes through an impressive granite gateway topped by four stone griffins. Framed between portent granite quoins and cornice, and capped by pointed finials, the façade is solemn and austere in a style that has been best described by historian George Kubler as 'Portuguese plain architecture'. Likewise framed in a granite post-and-lintel style, the ground floor and balcony windows contrast with the whitewashed masonry walls. At the east end of the building is a small chapel that subtly disrupts the symmetry of the ensemble. Unusual for the period, at the centre of the façade is a fountain flanked by two doors and symmetrically topped by the 18th-century owners' coat of arms, with a French-inspired bush garden with trimmed boxwood on a terrace below the front yard. Regrettably, due to previous works done in the 1990s to convert the manor into a hotel, the original interiors have been severely marred.

The property, with its meandering topography, faces predominantly south, with a dramatic slope planted with Douro's traditional system of terraced vineyards. In terms of the master plan, and inspired by this type-form, the project comprises two distinct areas: the manor house and its ancillary houses further uphill to the north-east, and the embedded terraces downhill, where most of the guestrooms and suites are located. In terms of the programme, the shared hotel facilities (reception, all-day dining, lobby lounge, back-of-house, technical areas, basement parking, etc.) are located in the manor house and in its vicinity, including the function centre, set in a plateau adjacent to the French garden to the west, and the spa and indoor pool, the latter also sunken towards the east.

Most of the guestrooms and suites are partially concealed in the six half-immersed terraces, echoing the forms of the retaining walls of the stepped vineyards. The roof of these terraces is planted and occasionally interrupted to create private patios for the larger suites. In terms of materiality, the frontal aspect of the levels is executed in piled-up granite blocks, forming a continuity with the tectonic presence of the walls of the traditional terraces yet with a less rustic expression.

In addition, three small buildings are also situated along the village-like pathway that crosses the property from east to west. These hipped-roof structures, also providing guestrooms, are placed on top of the granite walls, evoking a morphology very similar to buildings in the region, but with a compact and monolithic expression. On the western edge of the property, an existing house known as Casa da Peixota is to be renovated and converted into a destination restaurant.



Location: Mesão Frio, Portugal

Client: Private

Scope of services: Architecture

Project brief: 5-star hotel with 110 guestrooms and suites

Plot area: 36,7 ha

Gross floor area: 13,900 sq. m (2,850 sq. m of which are existing)

Parking: 45 places

Project status: 2020 (planning) – 2025 (estimated completion)

Rendering: 4+Arquitectos

