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New hotels are making it possible for visitors to explore lesser-known parts of the country in comfort



The Mirante Suite at The Oitavos. Below, from left: the spa pool at Douro 41; a suite at Hotel Martinhal; Vidago Palace Hotel



Not far from Oporto, the century-old **VIDAGO PALACE HOTEL** (00 351 276 990 900; www.vidagopalace.com), once the jewel of the Iberian Peninsula, reopens this month with GLA Hotels at the helm. Its interior design aims to create the feel of a 'palace in the forest', and a Modernist wing, designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning Alvaro Siza, houses a spa where guests can benefit from the mineral waters of the hotel's natural spring. Also in the north of Portugal, on the banks of the tranquil Douro River, the **DOURO 41** (www.douro41.com) is being built. When it opens at the start of next year, this Design Hotel will offer peaceful and elegant accommodation with a spa, a gourmet restaurant and a small marina. Further south on the Atlantic coast, about 20 minutes' drive from Lisbon, **THE OITAVOS** (00 351 21 486 0020; www.theoitavos.com) will open in September. The ultra-sleek hotel, next to Oitavos Dunes golf course (nine years old and ranked in the top 100 in the world), will have an ocean-inspired spa and 142 sea-view rooms, the most spectacular of which is the Mirante Suite, complete with private pool. And in the less-developed south-west corner of the Algarve, **HOTEL MARTINHAL** (00 351 282 620 026; www.martinhal.com) opens this month within a beach resort, and is the area's first five-star hotel. **MARY LUSSIANA**

DEEPEST, HIPPEST PERU



SOUTH AMERICA A decade ago, the only tourists on the rugged shores of southern Peru were intrepid backpackers and adventurers. But with the arrival of several luxury resorts, the once-sleepy peninsula of Paracas has evolved into a Hamptons-esque spot for hip Limeños and, more recently, an international fashion crowd. The epicentre of the buzz is Hotel Paracas (www.luxurycollection.com), a new eco-luxe resort where Kate Moss and Mario Testino were seen in April. Another stand-out hotel is romantic hideaway

La Hacienda Bahía Paracas (www.hotelesla-hacienda.com), and intimate Aranwa Paracas (www.aranwahotels.com) is due to open next year. Paracas itself is stunning – pristine beaches and rock formations jutting into the Pacific – and it makes a good base for trips to the Ballestas Islands ('the Galápagos of Peru', home to colonies of Humboldt penguins and sea lions), the ancient geoglyphs of the Nazca Lines, and some seriously fun sand dunes. With the expansion of nearby Pisco airport underway, now is the time to go, before everyone else does. **VICTORIA DE SILVERIO**

Left: rock formations on the coast of Paracas; a native red-legged cormorant

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