

Hotel Check: Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort and Spa

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HOW MANY ROOMS? 280 rooms and suites

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS This resort property fronts a beautiful golf course and rolling Portuguese hillside that takes your breath away. While it is not beachfront, the pools, golf course views, and exceptional service give away the secret of why so many people love the Algarve region.

PRICE Internet rates for a traditional room on the random dates we checked start at \$205

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VERDICT Come here to relax, but prepare to enjoy exquisite views and service that are part of Anantara's well-recognized service. The guest rooms, all of which have been reworked to serve the modern traveler, are beautiful with the latest technological amenities and open-plan bathrooms. This is quite the spot for a laid-back vacation with delicious food and ample recreation at your fingertips.



BACKGROUND Just a short drive from Faro airport, this resort appeals greatly to European travelers in the know and looking for the kind of property that offers something for everyone: business travelers, families, meeting goers, and honeymooners. The service follows Anantara's spirit of Asian hospitality, and as the only Anantara in Europe, it is quite unique in its offering.

WHERE IS IT? Set alongside a beautiful golf course, this is the kind of place come to daydream. The views from many guest rooms are of the rolling hillside or glistening swimming pools, and the hotel's Asian-inspired tuk tuks are happy to transport guests to nearby towns to visit local markets or Portuguese vineyards.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? When you arrive to the resort, a welcoming staffer greets you before you even make it to a reception desk. Quickly, you are invited to ring the hotel's signature welcoming bell before heading for an arrivals lounge where freshly squeezed orange juice and dried and fresh fruit await. Check-in formalities almost seem forgotten, as the experience is more about calming travelers down after a day of travel. Chilled towels and a small tour are part of the process as you are escorted to your room, and each evening, the hotel hosts a live Fado performance with small snacks to enjoy.

ROOM FACILITIES Each of the accommodations has undergone renovations here to bring them up to a modern standard with more to come in the next year. Tiled floors lead guests past wide foyers to the bedroom where floor-to-ceiling windows provide exceptional views of the grounds.



Flat-screen cable TVs face the pillowtop bedding, and sofas with coffee tables sit in the corner. Wireless Internet access is speedy and available to guests for a fee. Minibars, safes, and coffeemakers are carefully tucked away, and bottled water is provided by housekeeping and replenished and turndown each evening (along with a Portuguese sweet treat). Bathrooms have sliding doors that open to permit natural daylight, even from the vanity, which is stocked with Elemis toiletry products. Glass shower stalls are spacious, and deep soaking tubs help guests to wash away any sense of jet lag.

While the hallways are quite warm, the guest rooms are air conditioned with the flip of a switch, and housekeeping does an exceptional job of keeping the rooms, hallways, and public areas spick and span. At inspection, plans were in place to update various features like improve the wireless Internet speed, install bedside power outlets, and update hallway carpeting among other things.



RESTAURANTS AND BARS There are plenty of dining spots here to enjoy. By the pool, the bar staff stands at the ready to serve cocktails and refreshments. Light meals can also be served here. Victoria dining room unfurls an impressive spread of fruit (try the oranges which make this region famous), breads, pastries, and cooked-to-order dishes. Don't miss the resort's croissant butler that strolls through the dining room with a variety of fresh pastries and croissants for the day (here's a secret: he's actually the head baker). EMO restaurant pairs tasty Portuguese fare with nearly 400 wine choices, and the fine dining atmosphere is made even more appetizing thanks to beautiful golf course views.



This is the only restaurant in Portugal to boast three sommeliers. Ria restaurant, open for lunch and dinner, is the seafood restaurant facing the pool.



Outdoor dining is also an option, but you might miss the beautiful photos along the walls that show off various Portuguese seafont scenes.

The Anantara Lounge and Bar serves light meals and a variety of cocktails and Portuguese wines. It is busiest in the evening hours when people stop in for sunset cocktails. Dining by Design is one of Anantara's signature features where guests can request to set up meals anywhere around the property. Guests can also participate in the Spice Spoons cooking school where the chefs teach a variety of Portuguese and Thai styles of cooking.

LEISURE FACILITIES Don't miss the views from the spa's wraparound terrace, which sits by the indoor swimming pool. There, guests will find a sauna, steam room, relaxation facilities, and service from a doting spa staff. Massage and beauty treatments are a highlight of any stay here, and many of the treatments follow traditional holistic Asian philosophies.



There are four pools here: one large plunge in front of the main building and a quieter adult pool on the other side of the spa. The sounds of soothing water fountains add to the relaxation. In addition to the spa pool, children have their own splash pool and playground to keep them entertained. There's also a supervised children's club and separate offering for teenagers. The resort also has dance and soccer academies for young guests, and outdoor tennis courts for both day and night play.

BUSINESS AND MEETING FACILITIES Meeting space is a big draw here, especially for incentive groups. They have the option to meet in ballroom or conference venue setups while also being treated to function space outdoors on the pool view terrace. Anantara is known for its Dining by Design experiences that are popular with honeymooners and special groups looking for something unique. This can include barbecues by the pool or bespoke meal setups around the nearest green.

Photos by Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort and Spa,
<http://vilamoura.anantara.com/>

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