

MARIA E IUAYLO

The Bulgarian tourists have rented an apartment in order to feel Lisbon's atmosphere.

Vacation at home

Instead of the hotel room, there are people who prefer to rent an apartment for short-term stays. It is the new tendency in city tourism and it has already arrived in Lisbon.

MIGUEL JUDAS TEXT AND JOSÉ CARIA PHOTOS

Outside, the rain water falls like a cascade through the alleys of Alfama. Comfortably sitting on a modern design sofa, with the heater turned on maximum, the journalist Iuaylo Gaidarov, 28 years old, and veterinary Savova Maria, 31, enjoy at home their last hours in the Portuguese capital.

The Bulgarian couple came for vacation and, as most tourists do, instead of going to a hotel, they chose to rent an apartment in a historical district of the city- a T1 remodeled, with a view to the river. "It was our first time in Lisbon and we wanted to feel the atmosphere of the city", says Maria to VISÃO.

They barely left the district. "The people are very nice and make us feel at home. I don't know why, but the narrow streets and its surroundings remind me of Cuba. I think Hemingway must have enjoyed living here. It is, undoubtedly, one of the best places we have ever been. I will recommend it to my friends" says Iuaylo, who chose the apartment through the Travelling To Lisbon's *website*, a company dedicated to short term rentals. Created in 2006, it has already more than 150 apartments to rent, distributed throughout the main historical Lisbon districts. "The selection criteria are very tight, but there are increasingly interested owners, especially now with the housing market crisis" refers the doctor Alexandra Pauthier, 41 years old, founder of Travelling to Lisbon.

The priorities are quality and location: the apartments are located in the historical center, refurbished, equipped with electrical appliances, cribs and sound equipment. The decoration is, in most cases, in charge of Alexandra.

HOME APARTHOTEL

"I have always liked decoration a lot and traveling. So, I've added this to my passion for Lisbon and this idea came to me. When I traveled I always liked to feel at home and I thought the same thing could be done here", remembers Alexandra Pauthier.

'We run a management company of apartments, but with the advantages of an apart hotel.

The goal is that people feel at home at the same time they experience a typical district," is explained. The check-in is done at the apartment with a member of the team and the guest is monitored 24 hours a day through a special phone service. Cleaning and maintenance are included in the final price, an average between € 65 (apartment for 2 people) and € 120 (for 6 people) per night - the figures vary according to the season of the year and the length of the stay.

The majority of the customers are tourists from Europe, but there is yet another market which also starts to stick to this type of accommodation: people traveling in business or working. This is the case of Lithuanian Justas Brazanuskas, a financial adviser of 27 years old, temporarily in Portugal to develop a project for Nokia / Siemens.

"According to the price-quality connection, it is an interesting alternative to a hotel", he tells VISÃO from the room of his new Lisbon home, with a view to Rossio. "I arrived in August and I first stayed at a hotel. Then, I thought about renting a house, but the majority of the owners wanted very long-term contracts" he recalls. It was through a Swiss colleague that Justas found out about the short-term rental. He moved in, in November.

"I was convinced right ahead. It is cheaper and nicer than a hotel – here I have my own space and I can invite people over. Besides that, there is an equipped kitchen with a washing machine, which is great for a single and lazy guy like me".

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Justas Brazanuskas,
Lithuanian financial consultant