

## SPOTLIGHT



# IS THIS THE BEST HOTEL BAR IN PORTUGAL?

The **Tempus Lounge** at the Corinthia Hotel Lisbon Keeps Winning Awards. **Mark Orwoll** Finds Out Why.

**A** hotel bar should be discreet: no windows overlooking a busy avenue, and lighting just bright enough to read the drinks menu, but dark enough to let you feel anonymous. And there needs to be a head barman who knows how to make a serious cocktail.

I think I found my bar: The Tempus Lounge in the lobby of Lisbon's five-star Corinthia Hotel.

The Tempus was voted Best Hotel Bar in Portugal two years in a row (2015 and '16) at the Lisbon Bar Show, earning high marks for creativity, service, and overall vibe. The interior is like something from a 1930s glamour movie, with comfy club chairs and settees scattered about the generous space, and Lisbon-themed artwork, riotous and colorful, complementing the otherwise underplayed setting. The most prominent element of all is a massive clock above the bar—the tempus in Tempus Lounge.

But who cares about any of that stuff? What about the drinks? Enter bar manager and innovative cocktail creator Nelson Antunes. And I don't use "innovative" lightly.

Consider the Solera, based on Zacapa 23 rum, mixed with lemon juice, red port wine, cardamom, and vanilla syrup, then topped with creamy egg white and served in a stemmed old-fashioned glass. Or the London Rouge, built on a foundation of Tanqueray No. Ten gin with lime, lemon, and orange juice, Schweppes Rose Pepper tonic, and Grand Marnier, then garnished with a slice of blood orange. (If you're worried about your Vitamin C intake, this one's for you.) Or try an Imperial Dutch, served in a tea mug filled with Ketel One vodka, bittersweet amaro Averna, lime juice, smoked lapsang souchong imperial tea, and ginger beer.

If Antunes stops by to say hello, ask a question or two. In response to mine, he revealed that "at the moment, we're trying to show Portuguese brands and styles, everything local. For example, we might try a martini with the aroma of a Madeira wine. Maybe I'll make a classic cocktail without sugar, or try it with Portuguese liqueurs."

In spending time with Antunes, it became clear that the mark of a great barman is to give a guest not the flashiest cocktail

in his repertoire, but the perfect drink for that moment. "I think you should have a port tonic," said Antunes, seeing that I was overheated from the 90-degree day. "It is so refreshing on a hot afternoon!" I took his recommendation, and was rewarded with simplicity itself: the drink blends white port wine and tonic in a fishbowl-size glass, served with ice cubes galore and topped with orange zest. Antunes didn't try to impress me with his mixology skills or in-depth analysis of nuanced liqueurs—the man just knew what I needed to drink.

So if the Tempus Lounge is the best hotel bar in Portugal—and I don't doubt it—the reason goes beyond mixology skills, unique ingredients, and a striking atmosphere: it's because they serve you the right drink at the right time. Tempus fugit means time flies, but in the Tempus Lounge, time seems to stand perfectly still. At least for a couple of hours.

*Tempus Lounge is in the lobby of the Corinthia Hotel Lisbon, a 518-room deluxe hotel overlooking Lisbon's famous seven hills. [corinthia.com](http://corinthia.com)*