

# Cognoscenti magazine

**Because life is short**

## Casa de Vilarinho de S. Romão Farmstead Casa in the Douro

The **Casa de Vilarinho de S. Romão** is an airy and comfortable house reconstructed from the ruins of an 17<sup>th</sup> century farmstead in the bucolic village of Vilarinho de S. Romão, near Pinhão in the Douro region of Portugal.

The L-shaped farm was in bad shape when Mr. and Mrs. van Zellers bought it 7 years ago. With the help of an uncle and a cousin—both architects—the family embarked upon a project that entailed years of careful work, and the property was opened to tourism in January 2002. As Mrs. van Zeller explained in

spirit of the house.” The striking wood ceiling in the dining room which extends into the four corners is an exact reproduction of the original ceiling, down to the carved design of wheat in the center.

We arrived on a stormy day in late spring. Fresh flowers greeted us—indeed fresh flowers are found everywhere in the house, in pleasant contrast to the synthetic type found at less attentive bed and breakfast establishments. The wind was howling but a fire was burning warmly in the very pleasant living room. Settling in front of crackling logs, we looked out over rain-swept vineyards

There is also a second, large living room, used in summer as its doors open onto the yard, with sofas and shelves of books in French, English, and German, as well as some good books about the Douro region.

The house has 6 rooms, each with a different design and each with modern private baths and phone connections. Pinewood floors are covered with pretty rugs, and large stone walls keep the rooms cool in summer. Heaters on every wall guarantee warmth on cooler days.

In the evening, the van Zellers hosted a meal—they offer dinner to their guests with advance request. We were served a tasty, traditional Portuguese meal of spinach soup, *bacalhau* (the salted cod beloved by the Portuguese) with roast potatoes, and a large salad accompanied with locally-made olive oil.

Unlike some other *casas* in small villages, the Casa de



*Spacious, comfortable rooms*

an interview with **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors, the aim from the beginning was “to retain the old

Vilarinho de S. Romão is as spacious outside as it is inside. Before you leave the house on your way to your next destination, take a morning walk through the vineyards and the groves—cherry, apple, orange, lemon, fig, almond, walnut trees can all be found. A delight!

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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*Typical Douro ceiling in the dining room*