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PDF

Portugal



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Portugal



Joana Taborda, Daniel James Clarke, Sandra Henriques, Marlene Marques, Marisa Megan Paska

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ALL ON SPREAD: KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©



Praça do Giraldo (p219), Évora

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***Cachorrinho*, Gazela (p357), Porto**



JUNIOR DAROS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Almond trees, Douro Valley (p377)

PORTUGAL

THE JOURNEY BEGINS HERE

No matter where I am in Portugal, I can always hear the call of the *andorinhas*. Tiny swallows nest in the confines of a house in Fundão, where my grandparents once lived, along the corners of a museum in the Douro Valley, and on the medieval walls of Mértola in the Alentejo. Their song is embedded in my memory, like the taste of fresh barnacles from the coast of Peniche, the intricate stitches of a Portalegre tapestry and the clear starry skies in the Alqueva.

As I see more and more friends returning to Portugal after years of emigrating, I sense a newly found appreciation for what we have at our doorstep: access to fresh ingredients, soft sandy beaches, a cheap glass of wine, and a swallow to remind you that you made it home.

Joana Taborda

@cityodes

Joana is a travel writer with a deep passion for Portugal's artisanal crafts and festival traditions.



My favourite experience is driving along the **EN222** (p375) around springtime, spotting the speckles of almond blooms on my way to the Douro Valley.

WHO GOES WHERE

Our writers and experts choose the places which, for them, define Portugal.



FROM LEFT: DALIU/SHUTTERSTOCK © IURI'S DESIGN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

The Algarve's beaches may shimmer, but the time-capsule-like town of **Silves** (p183) stirs my soul. Sipping wine from a Phonecian-style amphora, gliding along the citrus-perfumed river, snacking on almond-infused treats and following in the steps of Islamic poets to reach the monumental sandstone castle – these are the Algarvian moments I'll always share with visiting friends.

Daniel James Clarke

@danflyingsolo

Daniel is a British-born travel writer who, after a lifetime of holidaying in Portugal, decided to make the Algarve home.



When I moved to Lisbon, I lived in the Avenidas Novas neighbourhood and stayed there through university. Of course, a lot has changed in 20-plus years, but it's still where I feel most at home. If I had to choose just one favourite place, I'd say the gardens at **Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian** (p96). They're my anchor when I need to collect my thoughts.

Sandra Henriques

@sandra.henriques.writer

Sandra is a published author of travel guides and horror short stories. Born in the Azores islands, she relocated to Lisbon in 1997.



FROM LEFT: TPOPOVA/GETTY IMAGES © TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

From the first time I set foot on **Berlengas** (p275), I fell in love with the island. When you arrive at the small dock, it's like a new natural world opens up, from the trail that takes you to the other side of the island, with its wild plants and the sound of thousands of seagulls, to the caves and small coves. It's impossible to remain indifferent to Berlengas and not want to return one day.

Marlene Marques

@marleneonthemove

Marlene is a travel writer and author of marleneon themove.com. You can find her in her hometown, Ericeira, or exploring Portugal's coastline.

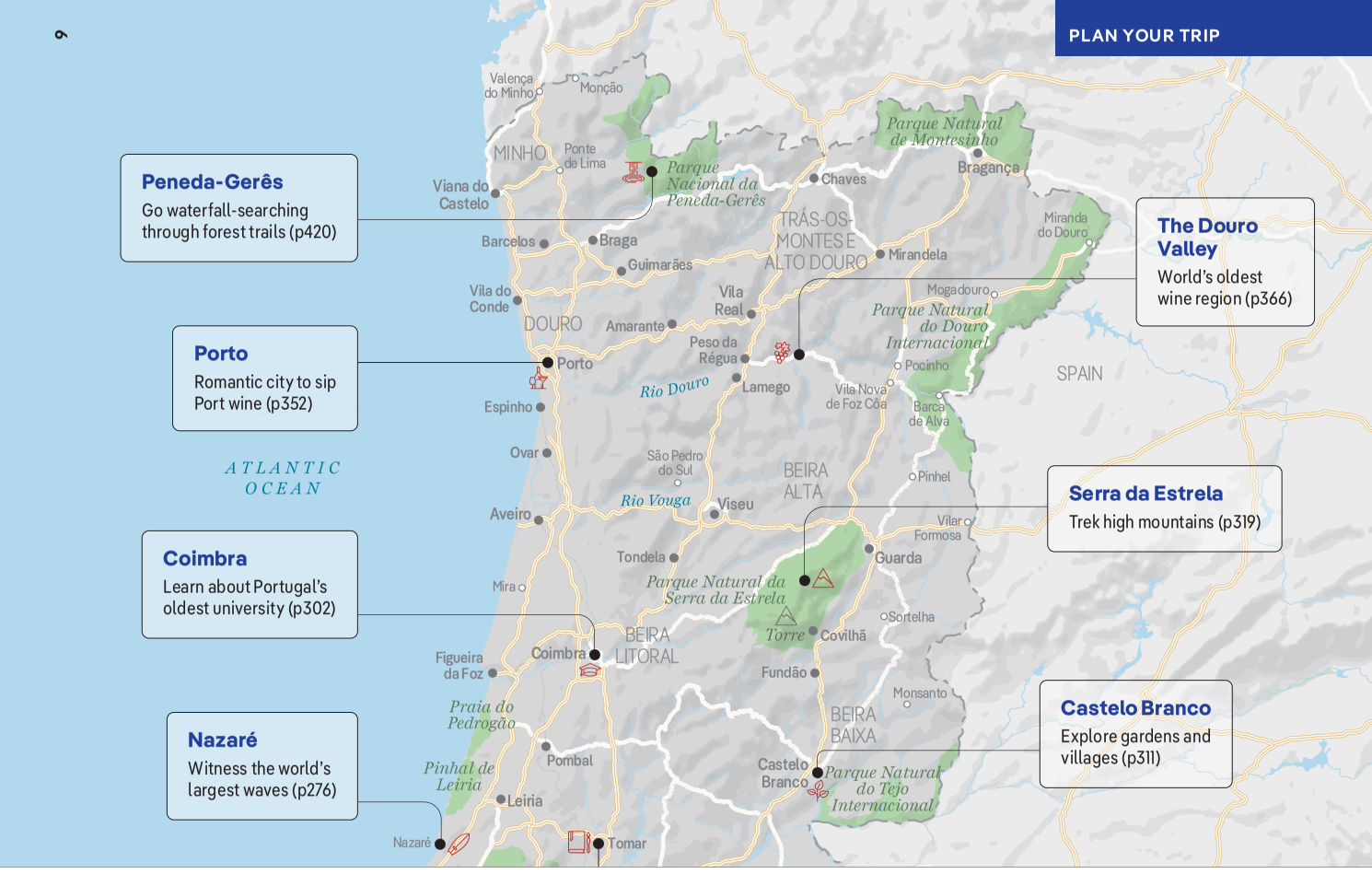


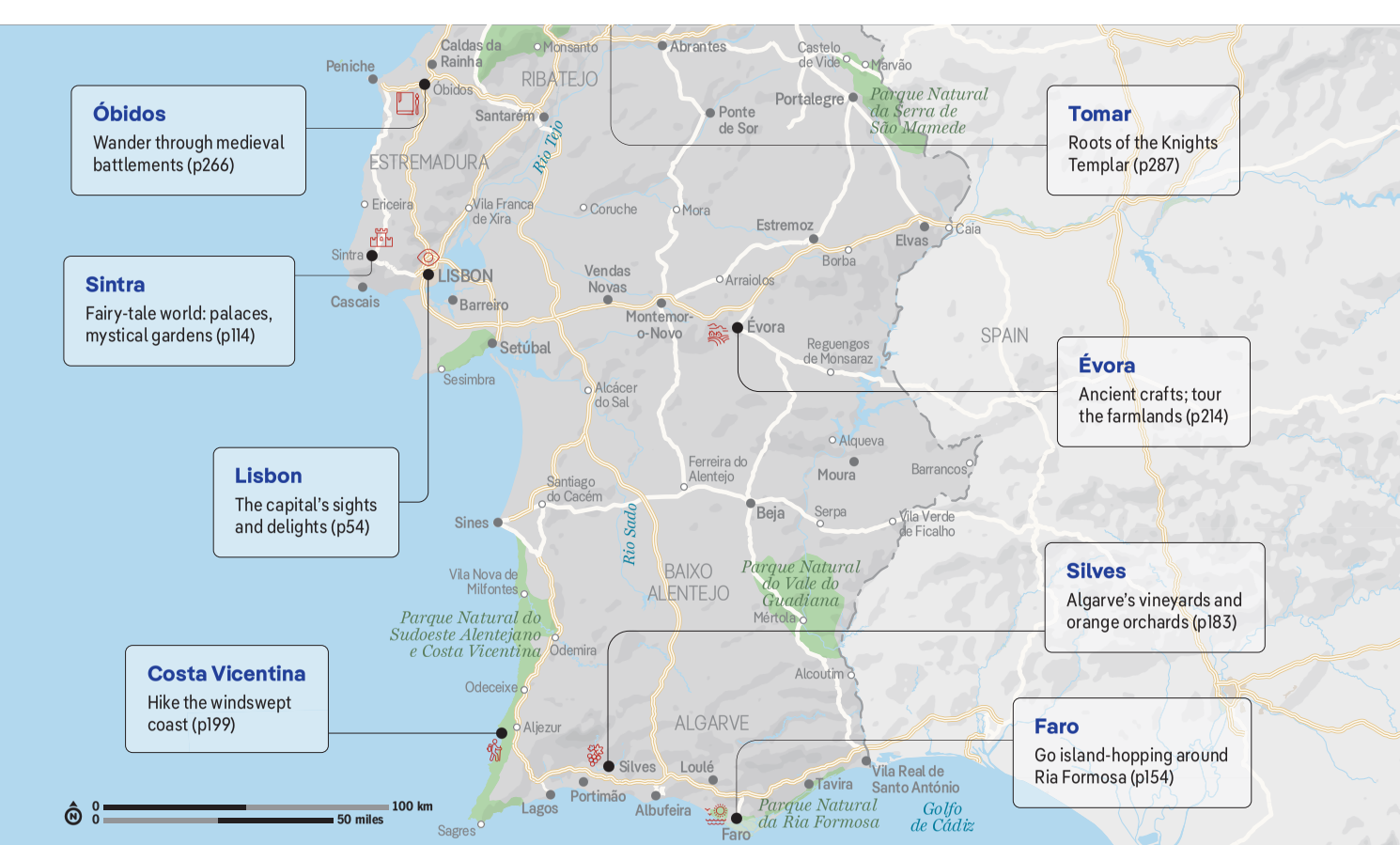
The north of Portugal has the nicest people in the country – life in the north is about the people that surround you, the food you share, the conversations you always have time for. In **Braga** (p396), it's all too easy to spend hours lost in conversation at every shop, cafe or restaurant you visit – which if you're anything like me, pretty much defines the meaning of life.

Marisa Megan Paska

@_marisamegan

Marisa is a travel journalist with a passion for cultural preservation, remote travel and the ocean.


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Vila Franca de Xira
Coruche
Mora
Estremoz
Caia
Elvas
Sintra
Borba
LISBON
Vendas Novas
Arraiolos
Cascais
Barreiro
Montemor-o-Novo
Évora
SPAIN
Setúbal
Reguengos de Monsaraz
Sesimbra
Alcácer do Sal
Alqueva
Ferreira do Alentejo
Moura
Barrancos
Santiago do Cacém
Beja
Serpa
Vila Verde de Ficalho
Sines
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BAIXO ALENTEJO
Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana
Vila Nova de Milfontes
Mértola
Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina
Odemira
Alcoutim
Odeceixe
ALGARVE
Aljezur
Silves
Loulé
Tavira
Vila Real de Santo António
Portimão
Lagos
Albufeira
Parque Natural da Ria Formosa
Golfo de Cádiz
Faro
Sagres
0 100 km
0 50 miles

IN THE WILD

Portugal presents its visitors with dramatic landscapes and varied natural features. You could be up in snow-covered mountains in winter, spend the summer swimming in lakes amid the woodlands or follow migratory trails in river estuaries. Some areas are still nearly untouched, providing natural habitats for endangered species, like the lynx, and rare flora, such as the naked-man orchids. Down south, dolphins swim amid sandy islets; if you're lucky, you may even spot a flamboyance of flamingos.



Animal Sightings

Look for griffon vultures in Portas de Ródão, Iberian lynx in the Guadiana Valley, red squirrels and wolves in Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês, deers through Serra da Lousã.

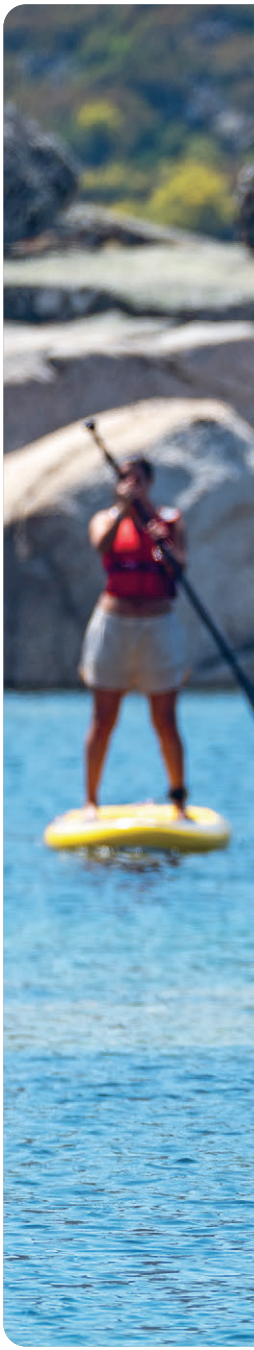


Protected Landscapes

Peneda-Gerês is the country's only national park, but there are a dozen other natural preserves (see natural.pt) bordering the country's mountains, rivers and coastline.

Picnic Break

Many parks offer designated areas for picnics called *parque de merendas* with tables and seats. Take your rubbish with you if there's no bin.



FROM LEFT: DARWIN PINTOS MENESES/SHUTTERSTOCK ®, ANTON GVOZDIKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ®, HOMYDESIGN/SHUTTERSTOCK ®

Lagoa Comprida (p323), Serra da Estrela



BEST WILD EXPERIENCES

Catch the flamingos' annual migration or spot dolphins throughout the year with a boat ride along the ❶ **Peninsula de Tróia** (p139).

Get your adrenaline fix at ❷ **Serra da Estrela** (p319), with its diverse terrain fit for skiing, rock climbing and paragliding.

Venture beyond the ❸ **Parque Natural da Ria Formosa** (p160) in the Algarve to spot cetaceans on a marine-biologist-led boat tour.

Listen to cascading waterfalls and discover remote villages while looking for wild horses roaming through ❹ **Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês** (p420).

Take in the constellations with a stargazing session in the ❺ **Alqueva** (p224), one of Portugal's starlight-tourism destinations.



FILIPE B. VARELA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Grilled bream



REEL CATCH

Historically a fishing nation, Portugal has always turned to the sea for a portion of its fare. The ubiquitous codfish may hail from Norway, but many other treats are caught right off the coast, from barnacles clinging to the rocky cliffs of Berlenga island to the shoals of golden bream on the Algarve coast.

Codfish

There are 365 ways of cooking *bacalhau*. It requires patiently presoaking the salted cod for at least 24 hours and changing the water regularly.

Cast a Line

Acquire a recreational fishing licence via the ICNF *(icnf.pt)*. Children under 16 can fish without a permit, as long as they're with a permit holder.

BEST SEAFOOD EXPERIENCES

Visit the Algarve's oyster farms around ❶ **Ria Formosa** (p161) and get your molluscs even fresher than from the market.

Get hands-on and learn how to cook a *cataplana* (seafood stew) on a working *quinta* in ❷ **Tavira** (p168).

Taste the fish drying in the sun on the beaches of ❸ **Nazaré** (p276) and visit the local museum to learn more about this ancient tradition.

Watch sardines being tucked into small tins by hand in a canning factory in ❹ **Matosinhos** (p364), north of Porto.

Dig into a plate of *choco frito* (fried cuttlefish) with lemon at one of the local restaurants in ❺ **Setúbal** (p137).

SWEET BAKE-OFF

The *pastel de nata* (custard tart) may take the spotlight, but pretty much every town has perfected their own pastry, and in some places, that's reason enough to visit. At Christmas, it's a real feast, with families filling tables with an array of regional desserts, from doughnut-like *filhoses* to a fruit-infused slice of *bolo rei*.





FROM LEFT: LUIS OVERLANDER/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; ANA MARQUES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Pastelarias

Step inside these traditional pastry shops and you'll be spoilt for choice with sweets. Choose whatever takes your fancy or ask for the local speciality.

Spice it Up

During the age of exploration, the Portuguese gained access to many spices, such as cinnamon, a sprinkle of which is still added to local desserts.

Resourceful Nuns & Monks

The scholastic life within the church gave birth to many heavenly sweet delights, often known as *doces conventuais* (traditional convent puddings).



BEST PASTRY EXPERIENCES

Try the original recipe of the *pastel de nata* freshly baked at ❶ **Pastéis de Belém** (p88).

Sample delicious *ovos moles*, sweet egg-yolk treats hailing from the convents of ❷ **Aveiro** (p339) and sold in the town's pastry shops.

Join a workshop at Silves' ❸ **Doçaria do Sul** (p185) and learn how to make the Algarve's signature almond-and-orange sweet treats.

After a hike through Sintra, stop at the ❹ **Casa Piriquita** (p117) for a *travesseiro*, a sweet pillow-shaped pastry, or *queijada* (cheese tart).

Get into the Christmas spirit with the traditional sweets from ❺ **Confeitaria Nacional** (p74) in Lisbon.

MAKE A SPLASH

In Portugal, you're never too far from the coast. The Atlantic bathes half of the country's borders, where wild beaches entwine with calm coves and secluded islands. As the days start heating up, locals crave a dip in the sea. Others hold on till winter to surf the giant waves. Heading inland, rivers and reservoirs invite you to swim or sail under the stars. Expect crowds and heavy traffic in August, especially down south.



Beach Season

The season begins 1 May (in Cascais) until early September. While the lifeguard might be on duty, that doesn't mean the sun is always out.



Sweet Memories

In summer, you'll spot vendors carrying coolers filled with *bolas de berlim*, a doughnut-like sweet stuffed with a delicious eggy custard.

Accessible Beaches

Portugal has over 200 accessible bathing areas (p443), featuring reserved parking, walkways and adapted toilets. Some spots may come with amphibious wheelchairs, allowing easier water access.



FROM LEFT: TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK © WIRESTOCK CREATORS/SHUTTERSTOCK © FAUPINZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



BEST WATER EXPERIENCES

Paddle along the ❶ **Alqueva Lake** (p225) on an evening canoe tour, or relax in the warm waters of the surrounding river beaches.

Swim at serene barrier islands or paddle a kayak through the lagoons of the ❷ **Parque Natural da Ria Formosa** (p160), a stunning nature reserve along the southeast of the Algarve.

Take a class at one of the surfing schools in ❸ **Peniche** (p272) on the west coast.

Experience canyoning amid the waterfalls of ❹ **Serra da Estrela** (p320), an adventure-filled ride combining hiking, swimming and abseiling.

Try whitewater rafting and traverse the Rio Minho at high speed around ❺ **Melgaço** (p425).

MEMORABLE TRAILS

Whether you're yearning for a view of the mountains or can't get enough of that ocean breeze, there's a trail in Portugal for you. In a few hours, you could be walking or cycling along riverside paths overlooking historical landmarks. A few more days on the road and you may wind up in a quiet patch of sand along the coast, a remote medieval village or a well-known pilgrimage site.



Camping & Motorhomes

Wild camping is prohibited in protected areas. Look for official camping sites (*parque de campismo*). Park motorhomes in *áreas de serviço para autocaravanas* (ASA).



Responsible Hiking

Always stick to the signposted trails, respect the wildlife and don't pick plants, especially if you're around protected reserves.

Hunting Season

The hunting season runs from mid-August to late February. When hiking, wear bright colours and veer off areas with red-and-white signs saying *zona de caça*.



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BEST TRAIL EXPERIENCES

Head to the west coast for wild surfing spots and dune-backed beaches along the ❶ **Rota Vicentina** (p205), a network of hiking and cycling trails stretching from the Alentejo to the Algarve.

Follow a craggy coastline trail with caves ripe for kayak adventures at the ❷ **Percurso dos Sete Vales Suspensos** (p191).

Venture through ❸ **Arouca Geopark** (p341), following the wooden walkways of Passadiços do Paiva.

Take on the challenging 12km ❹ **Passadiços do Mondego** (p320), passing through suspension bridges and a dam lake just outside of Guarda.

Cycle along the ❺ **Ecovia de Porto de Mós** (p286) and discover some of Portugal's largest caves.

FABULOUS FESTIVITIES



The Portuguese always seem to find an excuse to party – whether it's grilling sardines in honour of a patron saint, holding a street parade to celebrate graduation or dressing up to recreate a medieval tale. Things really kick off in the summer, with music festivals featuring international acts and small towns hosting their own shindigs.

BEST FESTIVE EXPERIENCES

Dress up and step back to the Middle Ages at the ❶ **Feira Medieval de Silves** (p188).

Celebrate with the university students at ❷ **Queima das Fitas** (p307), when serenades and parades take over the streets of Coimbra in honour of graduation.

Look out for the *caretos* with their fringed suits and devilish-looking masks parading during the ❸ **Carnaval de Podence** (p387).

Capture Porto during the ❹ **Festa de São João** (p352) when the city's skyline lights up with paper lamps and fireworks.

Visit Lisbon in June to feast on grilled sardines and witness neighbourhood dance-offs in honour of ❺ **Santo António** (p76).





FROM LEFT: LUCIA PINTO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; WJAREK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Music Festivals

Summer brings plenty of music festivals to the big cities, but it's worth venturing inland (try Paredes de Coura) to catch gigs in the wild.

Seasonal Celebrations

The grape harvest is in full swing in autumn. *Vindimas* (harvest programs) are held across the country's wine regions, including the Douro, the Alentejo and Palmela.

Música Pimba

Pimba is the traditional soundtrack to festivities. It gets people of all ages dancing – the cheeky innuendo lost on the youngest of revellers.

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

BEST STREET-ART EXPERIENCES

Get lost in the streets of ❶ **Covilhã** (p326) and unravel the wool-themed artworks inspired by the town's old textile industry or visit during the annual WOOL urban-art festival to see freshly painted murals.

Pose in front of stunning tile-covered facades adorning churches and the train station in ❷ **Porto** (p353).

Discover the underground culture of ❸ **Barreiro** (p143) at the ADAO's headquarters, fully decorated with colourful murals.

Spot the mischievous ❹ **caretos of Podence** (p387) in the walls of this tiny village in the heart of Trás-os-Montes.

Dive off Albufeira to discover the ❺ **EDP Art Reef** (p176), an underwater exhibition designed by Vhils.



Joana Vasconcelos tile mural, Porto (p352)

STREET ART

Portugal has a long history of decorating its cities and streets with colourful tiles and creative cobblestone patterns. More recently, this artistic patronage has had a modern makeover. Old neighbourhoods have transformed into open-air galleries, grey underground stations injected with colour, and even small villages are showing off bold murals, thanks to emerging street-art festivals.

Underground Art

From the black-and-white caricatures at the airport to the stained-glass features of Olaias, Lisbon's underground stations are a work of art.

Hall of Fame

Portugal's most famous street artists include Alexandre Farto, aka Vhils, renowned for carved mural portraits, and Bordalo II, who repurposes trash into giant animal sculptures.

THE WINE LANDS

Wine has been a cherished drink around these parts ever since the Romans. Some of the world's oldest vineyards are here, growing anywhere from steep terraces to flatlands and sandy soils. The Douro Valley and the Alentejo may claim most of the shelves, but they're only one part of the 14 wine regions. Whether it's a sweet glass of port, a crisp green wine or a bold red, you'll find something to suit your taste buds.





Wine Stats

The Portuguese are among the biggest wine drinkers in Europe. In 2023 the country consumed 58L per capita, ranking above Italy and France.

Reasonable Deals

While vintage ports can run for hundreds of euros, most Portuguese wine is pocket-friendly, with decent bottles costing less than a fiver at the supermarket.

Wine Quality

Vinho de mesa (table wine) is often the cheapest option on the menu. Meanwhile, the *vinho regional* and Denomination of Origin (DOC) wines are produced under stricter regulations.



FROM LEFT: KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©, AUSTIN BUSH/LONELY PLANET ©, KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Quinta do Tedo (p372), Douro Valley



BEST WINE EXPERIENCES

Play winemaker for a day or stop for a wine tasting amid the steep terraces of the ❶ **Douro Valley** (p372).

Head to the ❷ **Vinho Verde region** (p418) for a firsthand taste of *vinho verde* (green wine).

Tour the port wine cellars across ❸ **Vila Nova de Gaia** (p362) to find your favourite vintage or sample a port-based cocktail at the local bars.

Board a solar boat up the Rio Arade for a spectacular wine tasting at ❹ **Adega Arvad** (p186), still producing wines in traditional amphorae.

Witness traditional Roman winemaking methods of *vinho de talha* around ❺ **Vidigueira** (p257). November features the season's new wine.

ARTISAN SOUL

Handmade crafts are an essential part of Portuguese culture. Here you can still find artisans handweaving blankets on century-old looms, potters spinning ceramic vases on a wheel, and embroidery artists stitching patterns to traditional clothes. While interest in taking up these skills had waned, lately there has been a resurgence, with young creatives returning to their roots and bringing their own style to the craft.



Tiles

Azulejos (hand-painted tiles) arrived in Europe through the Moors. King Manuel I took a shine to them during a Spanish visit in 1498, spurring the Portuguese tradition of tiling.



Craft Fairs

Meet local artisans at monthly *feiras de artesanato* (craft fairs). Barcelos and Vila do Conde put on a good display, but also try smaller urban flea markets.

Cork

Beyond bottle stoppers, cork has become a resourceful material for artists in the Alentejo who craft anything from wallets to bags, and even bikinis.



FROM LEFT: IACOMINO FRIMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; AMNAT30/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; AAMORIM/GETTY IMAGES ©

***Azulejos* craftsperson at work**



BEST CRAFT EXPERIENCES

Tour the diffused museum of artisan workshops in ❶ **Loulé** (p179) for insight into traditional Algarvian crafts using materials such as copper, ceramics and esparto grass.

Watch potters in action or spin the wheel yourself at the workshops around ❷ **São Pedro do Corval** (p226), Portugal's largest ceramic hub.

Surround yourself with forest silence while learning new crafts at ❸ **Cerdeira** (p309), a recovered schist village now a creative retreat.

Paint your own tile inspired by Porto's facades at the ❹ **Gazete Azulejos** (p353) workshop.

See the fruit-shaped bowls of Bordallo Pinheiro, a feature of Portuguese homes, at the local factory in ❺ **Caldas da Rainha** (p274).



DIEGO THOMAZINI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Azenhas do Mar (p120)

AGELESS VILLAGES

Sitting atop a cliff, hugging the coast or strategically positioned within medieval walls, Portugal's villages feel lost in time. Those looking for a quiet respite away from the big cities will find it here, in tiny cottages by the sea or in stone-built villages lost amid the mountains. Keep your camera handy.

Village Trails

If you're keen to hop between villages, check out such routes as the **Historical Villages** *(aldeiashistoricasdeportugal.com)* or the **Schist Villages** *(aldeiasdoxisto.pt)*.

Fantasy Setting

Scenes from *House of the Dragon*, the *Game of Thrones* prequel, were shot in the screen-worthy villages of Penha Garcia and Monsanto.

BEST VILLAGE EXPERIENCES

Take in the dramatic cluster of whitewashed houses clinging to a cliff and enjoy a post-swim seafood treat at ❶ **Azenhas do Mar** (p120).

Meander through the medieval streets of ❷ **Monsaraz** (p225), catch the sunset from the town's castle, then head to the observatory for a stargazing session.

Venture through the valleys of Serra do Açor towards the village of ❸ **Piódão** (p316) to capture its enchanting rows of schist houses.

Marvel at local ingenuity in ❹ **Monsanto** (p315), where houses have been wedged between/under mammoth boulders.

Explore the Templar village of ❺ **Dornes** (p292) set along the margins of the Rio Zêzere.

TIME TRAVELLING

Portugal's cultural identity has been forged over thousands of years. Travelling through the country today, you'll encounter numerous traces of its past, from megalithic settlements to Roman villas and Renaissance palaces. Its colonial heritage and religious persecutions remain a touchy subject for some, but efforts have been made to tell this other side of the story.





FROM LEFT: MARZOLINO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; JOAO SERAFIM/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Age of Exploration

The Age of Exploration is still a glorified topic, but locals are slowly turning a page to acknowledge the country's colonial role.

A Peaceful Revolution

Revolution of the Carnations (25 April 1974) was when Portugal cut ties with the Estado Novo dictatorship that haunted the country for nearly 50 years.

The Great Earthquake

In 1755 Lisbon was struck with a massive earthquake that forever changed the city's foundations and shook the minds of thinkers during the age of Enlightenment.



BEST HISTORY EXPERIENCES

Learn prehistoric crafts and discover the paths of Neolithic people with ❶ **Ebora Megalithica** (p216) as you uncover the lasting megalithic sites on Évora's outskirts.

Admire the well-preserved Roman mosaics at the ❷ **Conímbriga Roman Ruins** (p308), just outside of Coimbra, filled with mythological and geometric motifs.

Uncover centuries of history, including Roman, Islamic and medieval remains, at the museum village of ❸ **Mértola** (p252).

Pass through the lavish halls of the neoclassical ❹ **Palácio Nacional da Ajuda** (p86), complete with fresco ceilings, antique furniture and the crown jewels.

Visit the ❺ **Convento de Cristo** (p290) to follow the Knights Templar's route through Portugal.

REGIONS & CITIES

Find the places that tick all your boxes.

The Minho

STUNNING NATURE, CULINARY CULTURE, WARMHEARTED PEOPLE

Head to medieval Guimarães to discover Portugal's birthplace or step inside Braga's nearly 1000-year-old cathedral. In Citânia de Briteiros, you'll encounter a Celtic settlement, while Viana do Castelo marvels visitors with its hilltop sanctuary. The refreshing *vinho verde* hails from here, produced in vineyards scattered between mountains and river valleys.

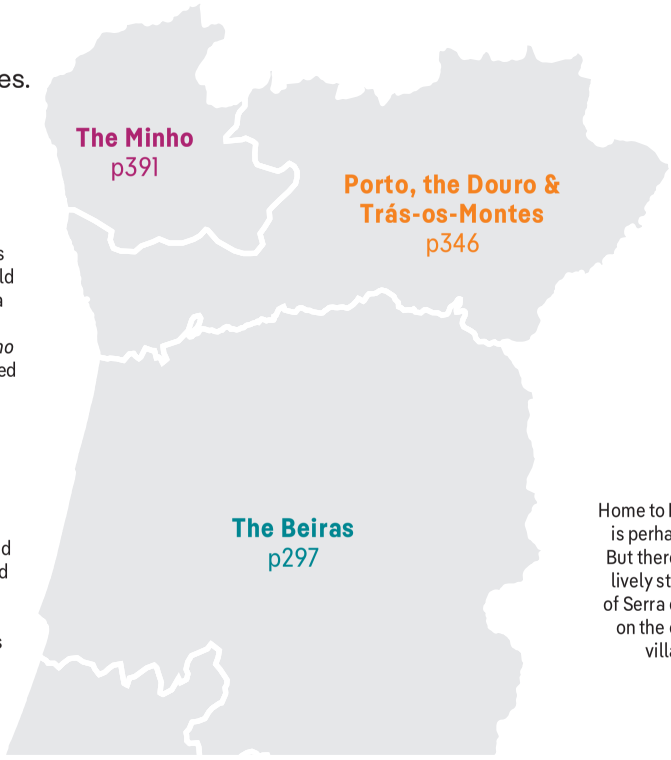
p391

Estremadura & Ribatejo

HISTORY AND NATURE-INSPIRED

Templar towns and castles dot this region sandwiched between the Rio Tejo and the Atlantic, with Tomar and Óbidos leading the way. This region's history dates back far longer, with dinosaur prints found amid its mountains. On the coast, giant waves attract surfers to Nazaré, while inland pilgrims trek to Fátima.

p260



Porto, the Douro & Trás-os-Montes

TILES, WINE LANDS AND AGE-OLD FESTIVALS

Porto captivates with its artistic vibe and riverside setting. You can taste the world's best ports just across its margins in Vila Nova de Gaia, and continue your tasting journey in the Douro wineries. Visit villages with famed festivals, and the prehistoric rock art of Vila Nova de Foz Côa.

p346

The Beiras

COAST, COUNTRYSIDE, CITIES AND SUMMITS

Home to Portugal's oldest university, Coimbra is perhaps the most visited place in Beiras. But there's much more to this region than its lively student city. From the lush highlands of Serra da Estrela, to the sprawling beaches on the coast and Lousã's cinematic schist villages, you'll enjoy every detour.

p297

Lisbon

CITY OF HILLS AND GOLDEN LIGHT

Portugal's capital is booming and it shows no signs of stopping. The warm climate, the welcoming people and the delicious food have made Lisbon a prime spot for nomads over the last decade. Longtime residents fight to keep it authentic, while embracing the city's modern side too.

p54

Lisbon Coast

OCEAN VIEWS AND HERITAGE SITES

Enchanting beaches and seaside villages lie north and south of Lisbon, with Guincho and Ericeira drawing surfers in particular. The wooded hills around Sintra offer some dreamy palaces, while fish-loving Setúbal is the gateway to the secluded coves of the Parque Natural da Arrábida and the offshore Tróia Peninsula.

p109



The Alentejo

RURAL HEARTLAND AND ANCIENT CULTURE

It's all about slowing down in the Alentejo. Spend days on end sampling the region's wineries, gazing at the stars or hiking the wild coastline. History unfolds in every corner, whether it's UNESCO-heritage Évora, the medieval castles in Monsaraz and Marvão or the traditional workshops dedicated to handmade crafts.

p209

The Algarve

SUN-KISSED COASTAL PLAYGROUND

Every summer, locals and tourists flock to the Algarve for a beach holiday. The choice is vast, with party towns (Portimão), surf-worthy waves (Sagres) or quieter shores near Tavira. Award-winning golf courses, fresh seafood and historic inland villages with a crafty heritage also add to the appeal of this region.

p148

ITINERARIES

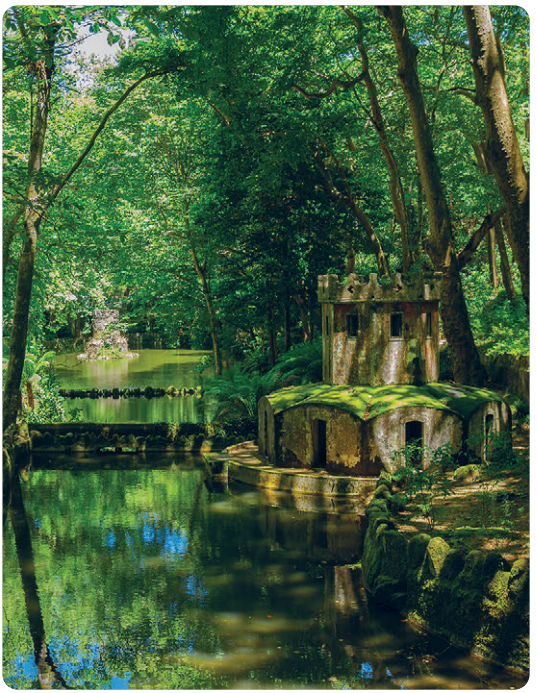
Portugal Highlights

Allow: 10 days **Distance:** 1000km

This grand journey takes you to the country's most renowned sites. From the capital, you'll depart towards the fairy-tale village of Sintra and then venture south to explore the Algarve coast. You'll also have time to visit Portugal's oldest university and sample a glass of port straight from the cellars.



Gardens at the Palácio Nacional da Pena (p115), Sintra



1 LISBON 3 DAYS

Start in **Lisbon** (p54), spending a few days exploring the city's enchanting neighbourhoods. Choose between historic sites or modern art hubs, but don't miss a chance to sample a *pastel de nata*. As the sun sets, head to the riverside or brave the hills to capture the pink-hued skies from one of the city's numerous viewpoints.



2 SINTRA 1 DAY

From Rossio station head towards **Sintra** (p114), where royal palaces and mystical gardens await. Reach some attractions on foot, but you may want a bus or taxi for the castle and the **Palácio Nacional da Pena** (p115) perched on a hill.

Detour: *If time's not an issue, stay a little longer, pairing your visit with a wine tasting in* ***Colares*** *(p122) or a trip down the coast (p120).* ½ *day*

3 LAGOS 2 DAYS

Return to Lisbon on the train and then drive off to **Lagos** (p194) in the Algarve. After visiting the historic centre, spend some time unwinding on the beach. The next day take a boat trip or rent a kayak to reach the rocky formations of **Ponta da Piedade** (p194) or head east towards **Alvor** (p193) to snorkel and discover lesser-visited sea caves than often overcrowded Benagil.

LEFT: NEIRFY/GETTY IMAGES ©
ABOVE: KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©



4

ÉVORA 1 DAY

Step back in time with a visit to the Unesco World Heritage city of **Évora** (p214). Within its medieval walls, you'll encounter striking architectural landmarks, from the cinematic columns of a Roman temple to the pointy spires of the Gothic cathedral.

Detour: *Marvel at the views from the village of* ***Monsaraz*** *(p225), before taking a dip in the nearby Alqueva Lake.* ½ *day*

5

COIMBRA 1 DAY

Students dressed in black capes wander through the streets of **Coimbra** (p302), home to the country's oldest **university** (p306). Explore the school grounds, visit the city's churches or simply get lost in the old cobbled town. Take an evening river stroll to the modern footbridge named after one of Portugal's historic couples.

Detour: *Stop at* ***Batalha*** *(p284) to see one of Portugal's most striking monasteries.* 2 *hours*

6

PORTO 2 DAYS

Colourful buildings line the picturesque riverside of **Porto** (p352). From here, the city rises on a hill, with historic sites dotted throughout. Enjoy tiled facades and one of the world's prettiest bookshops, before tucking into the city's famous sandwich, the *francesinha*. The next day, hit the fishing district of **Matosinhos** (p364) or cross the bridge towards **Vila Nova de Gaia** (p361) to tour the port wine cellars.

ITINERARIES

North to South on the N2

Allow: 8 days **Distance:** 739km

On the N2, away from the highways, you'll stick to the old roads travelling from north to south, starting in historic Chaves and ending by the sea in Faro. In between, you'll pass through valleys filled with vineyards, discover hidden schist villages and swim in river beaches.





Cerdeira (p309)

LUIS PEDRO FONSECA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

1 CHAVES ⏱1 DAY

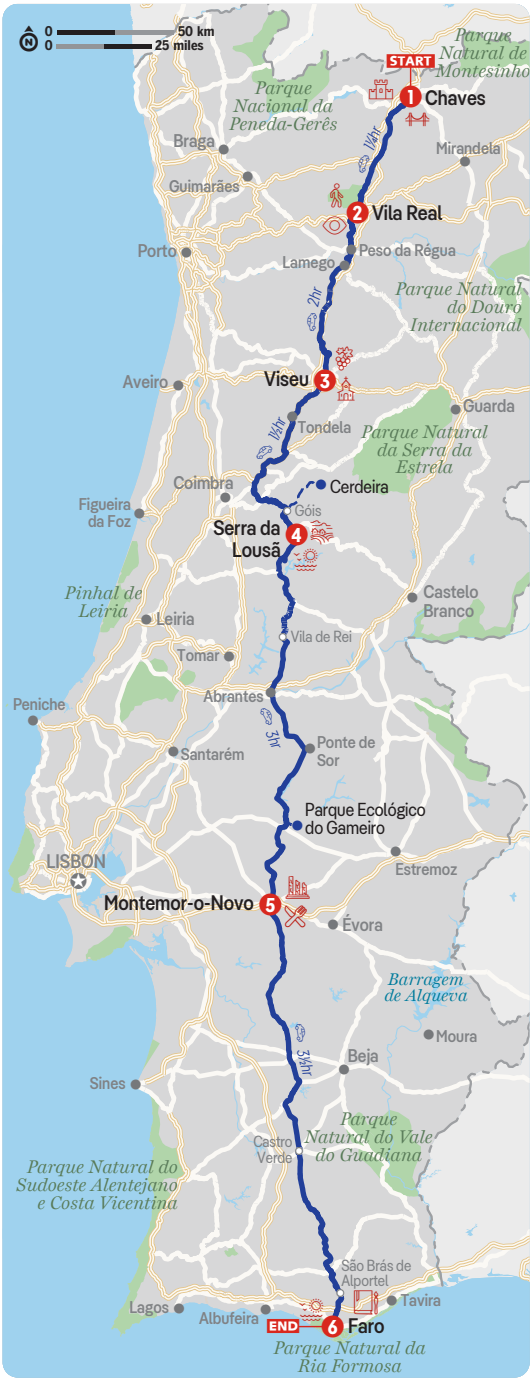
Porto provides the quickest access to **Chaves** (p388), where kilometre zero stands. The city's thermal waters have been enjoyed since the Romans, while its fortifications have played a significant role in defending the country during the Napoleon invasions. Before hitting the road, visit the castle, admire the colourful balconies of Rua Direita and cross the old Roman bridge over the Rio Tâmega.

2 VILA REAL ⏱1 DAY

Enter **Vila Real** (p374) and take in the elegant manor houses. Sample the town's delicious treats and tour the tile-cladded Igreja de São Pedro, before heading to **Passadiços do Corgo** (p374) for a walk amid a lush valley. On the outskirts, visit the **Casa de Mateus** (p371), an iconic baroque building featured on the Mateus Rosé bottles; book ahead for guided tours and tastings.

3 VISEU ⏱1 DAY

Drive along the **Douro Valley** (p366), passing through **Peso da Régua** (p366) and **Lamego** (p374) to visit one of the local **wineries** (p372). Make a quick pit stop at the village of Castro Daire on your way to **Viseu** (p328) in the Beiras region, where you can spend the night. Take time exploring the city's gardens and squares, stopping to take in the **cathedral** (p331) and the remaining medieval gateways.



4

SERRA DA LOUSÃ
2 DAYS

From Viseu, the road takes you through the **Serra de Lousã** (p309), where picturesque schist villages hide among the hills. Drive a short section of the IP3 from Santa Comba Dão towards Livraria do Mondego. Then continue towards the villages of Góis, spotting stone cottages and river beaches like Praia Fluvial da Peneda.

Detour: *Visit* ***Cerdeira*** *(p309), where artists share their crafts through workshops and week-long residences.* ***½ day***

5

MONTEMOR-O-NOVO
1 DAY

It's time to cross over to the **Alentejo** (p209). In between, stop at Vila de Rei to visit the Centro Geodésico and follow the Passadiços do Penedo Furado. Eventually, you'll reach Montemor-o-Novo, where you can visit ancient castle ruins and treat yourself to a traditional **Alentejo meal** (p223).

6

FARO
2 DAYS

Pass through **Castro Verde** (p254) before entering the sinuous roads along **Serra do Caldeirão**, a sign that you've reached the Algarve. At **São Brás de Alportel** (p163), swing by the **Casa Memória EN2** (p164) for an insight into this road's history. Then it's just a few kilometres down to **Faro** (p154). Take a walk in the historic centre then drive or ferry your way to the beach.

ITINERARIES

Coastal Wonders

Allow: 5 days **Distance:** 600km

If you're all about chasing the sea, this route has your name on it. Whether you want to test your surf skills, spot dolphins in the wild or simply rest your feet in the sand, there's a spot for you on this trip covering Portugal's southwest coast.



Praia da Ribeira d'Ilhas (p133), Ericeira



1
ERICEIRA ⏱1 DAY

It's easy to reach **Ericeira** (p130) from Sintra or Lisbon. While many head here for the beach, the town itself is worth exploring – with its whitewashed houses trimmed in blue, and top-notch seafood restaurants. But this is surfers' territory, too, with a well-preserved coastline and renowned breaks making it a World Surfing Reserve.

2
NAZARÉ ⏱1 DAY

The big wave action happens in **Nazaré** (p276) at Praia do Norte, where surfers have broken records riding waves up to 30m high. Watch it all from **Forte de São Miguel Arcanjo** (p276; on competition days, or when the waves are too big, the crowds occupy the cliffs on the right of the fort).

*Detour: Take a break in **Peniche** (p272), before setting off to the **Berlengas islands** (p275) on a ferry, a prime spot for snorkelling and diving.* ⏱*½ day*

3
VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES ⏱1 DAY

Stop at the coastal town of **Vila Nova de Milfontes** (p239) in the middle of the beautiful Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina. Tuck into some super-fresh seafood and enjoy a lazy day at one of the pristine beaches. There are surf schools and stand-up paddle rentals.

*Detour: Swing by **Sesimbra** (p140) for a fun coasteering session amid the Arrábida hills.* ⏱*½ day*

LEFT: KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©
TOP RIGHT: TRAVEL TELLY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©
BOTTOM RIGHT: TANIAARAUJO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



4

SAGRES ⏱1 DAY

Stick to the coast until you hit laid-back Sagres, the most southwestern point in Portugal. Once here, gorge on fresh seafood at **A Sereia** (p202) while peering down on fish auctions; visit the **Fortaleza de Sagres** (pictured below; p201), a 15th-century fort sitting dramatically above a headland; or catch your first wave with **Sagres Natura Surf Camp** (p202) before witnessing a magical sunset from nearby **Cabo de São Vicente** (p201).



5

RIA FORMOSA ⏱1 DAY

Spend your last day exploring the wonders of **Ria Formosa** (pictured below; p160), the Algarve's stunning nature reserve. Look out for flamingos amid the saltpans of **Tavira** (p169), hop on a boat to secluded sandy islets such as Ilha da Culatra (a prime spot for oyster sampling) or go on a dolphin-watching mission alongside a marine biologist. Faro is the closest airport to fly out.



ITINERARIES

Porto & the North

Allow: 7 days **Distance:** 580 km

Starting in Porto, home of port wine and striking architecture, you'll set off to explore the highlights of the north. From medieval cities that gave birth to the nation to UNESCO-listed wine lands, sanctuaries hovering above seaside towns and waterfalls surrounded by forest paths, there's a lot to take in.





1

PORTO 2 DAYS

Playing rival with the capital, **Porto** (p352) has a lot in its favour. Its creative vibe is contagious, with museums such as **Serralves** (p360; pictured above) showcasing regular contemporary art exhibitions and notable buildings like the Leixões Cruise Terminal and Casa da Música attracting architecture fans. Combine that with port wine tastings, riverside walks and a prestigious cuisine, and the competition is fierce.



2

DOURO VALLEY 1 DAY

Zigzag your way through the **Douro Valley** (p366) following the EN222. Stop in **Peso da Régua** and visit the **Museu do Douro** (p366) to learn more about this famous wine region. The road continues to **Pinhão** (pictured above; p370): catch a river cruise or unwind at one of the local estates. In **Vila Nova de Foz Côa** (p376), tap into your inner archaeologist as you discover prehistoric cave paintings.



3

BRAGANÇA 1 DAY

Explore **Bragança** (p380): the castle, the medieval citadel and the Romanesque Domus Municipalis are among the city's most remarkable buildings. Visit **Museu Ibérico da Máscara e do Traje** (p382) to admire the Iberian masks that make an appearance during colourful carnival festivities.

*Detour: Iberian wolves and deer roam free in the nearby **Parque Natural de Montesinho** (p384), a natural park dotted with remote villages. 2 hours*

FROM LEFT: CARLOS NETO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, KITE_RIN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, SERFF79/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





4

GUIMARÃES ⏱1 DAY

Guimarães (p412) was the first capital of Portugal. The medieval lanes have been well preserved, as has the **castle** (p412) where Afonso Henriques, the nation's first king, is said to have been born. Tour the well-preserved **estate** (p412) of the Dukes of Braganza and take in historic squares lined with terrace cafes and colourful houses.



5

BRAGA ⏱1 DAY

In **Braga** (p396), there's a sea of churches. Portugal's oldest cathedral is located here, along with the imposing baroque **Santuário do Bom Jesus do Monte** (pictured above; p399) on the city's outskirts. Save some time to explore the old town.

Detour: *Take a side-jaunt to* ***Gerês*** *(p420) to hike in the wild and visit impressive shrines, such as* ***Senhora da Peneda*** *(p423) and* ***São Bento da Porta Aberta*** *(p423).* ⏱*½ day*



6

VIANA DO CASTELO ⏱1 DAY

Head to the coast and settle for a while at **Viana do Castelo** (p404). Take in the spectacular view from the mountaintop site of **Santuário do Sagrado Coração de Jesus** (p404) and wander through the town's medieval square. With a little more time, you can also squeeze in a beach day along the Costa Verde.

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KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©



Alfama (p76), Lisbon

ITINERARIES

Lisbon & the Midlands

Allow: 7 days **Distance:** 682km

Take on medieval castles, Art Nouveau cities and hilltop villages while circling the centre of Portugal. There's plenty to keep you busy, from neighbourhood jaunts in the capital to *moliceiro* (a type of boat) rides along the river, and hikes amid the mountains.



1

LISBON ⏱ 2 DAYS

Tour downtown **Lisbon** (p54) and visit the ruins of its **earthquake-ravished convent** (p74). Head up to the **castle** (p79) and get lost in the winding streets of Alfama, or hit the bars in Cais do Sodré. Save your second day to tackle the monuments in **Belém** (p83).

Detour: *Explore the palaces in* ***Sintra*** *(p114) or relax at the beaches of* ***Lisbon's South Bank*** *(p142).* ⏱ *½ day*



2

ÓBIDOS ⏱ 1 DAY

Enclosed by medieval walls, **Óbidos** (p266) is a charming town, where bookshops take over every corner and sour cherry liquor is poured in a chocolate cup. While Rua Direita gets all the traction, especially during festive seasons, it's worth venturing outside the main street and climbing up the battlements to fully experience the wonders of this Portuguese village.



3

CASTELO BRANCO ⏱ 1 DAY

Continue driving east until you reach **Castelo Branco** (p311). Wander through the baroque gardens of **Jardim do Paço Episcopal** (pictured above; p313) and tour the city's **Templar castle** (p314), before taking in the modern artworks of **Manuel Cargaleiro** (p311).

FROM LEFT: KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©, KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©, TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





4

COVILHÃ 1 DAY

As you make your way north, you'll hit the borders of **Serra da Estrela** (p319), where you can stop off at **Covilhã** (p325). The whole town is filled with street-art murals dedicated to its wool-producing heritage, and viewpoints overlooking the surrounding mountains. Make this your base to explore the trails around Serra da Estrela.



5

AVEIRO 1 DAY

Enjoy **Aveiro's** (p336) streets lined with Art Nouveau buildings. Take a trip in a *moliceiro* or head down the coast to admire the striped houses of **Costa Nova** (p338). Back on dry land, taste the *ovos moles* from one of the city's many *pastelarias*.

Detour: *Explore the scenic walkways of* ***Passadiços do Paiva*** *(p341), or follow the* ***516 Arouca*** *(p341), one of the world's longest suspension bridges.* ½ *day*



6

TOMAR 1 DAY

Templar flags hang around the streets of **Tomar** (p287). Once the headquarters of the Knights Templar, the **Convento de Cristo** (pictured above; p290) is the main attraction, with its striking mix of Gothic and Renaissance elements. There's also a **medieval synagogue** (p287), forest trails and a quirky **matchbox museum** (p289).

VITOR MIRANDA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, SUSANA GUZMAN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ©, PHOTOGOLFER/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

WHEN TO GO

Whenever you're free. Portugal is more than those summer beach days: every season brings a unique experience.

The sun is quintessential to the Portuguese lifestyle, with locals hitting the beaches up and down the coast. Summers here are long and hot, with sunny days arriving as early as May and, if you're lucky, continuing all the way through November. Beach time aside, this is the season of the much-awaited street parties, with people dining on freshly grilled fish and dancing until the wee hours.

Autumn brings the lingering scent of roasted chestnuts, while wineries in the Douro and the Alentejo prepare for the grape harvest. Winter shows the first signs of snow in Serra da Estrela. Spring is the perfect time to sample cherries and enjoy the blossoming almond trees.

Want a Bargain?

In Lisbon and the Algarve, you'll pay the highest premium for rooms from June to the end of August, with slightly lower prices from May to mid-June and in September. If you travel between November and April, prices are substantially less.

I LIVE HERE

CITRUS COOL

Laima and Fábio, a couple based in Azeitão, share their gardening journey at @uma_casa_verde

The best time to visit Portugal is between September and May. It's an off-peak season for many campsites to stay with our motorhome. The air feels fresher and cooler, fields are green again, and nothing beats a warm, blue-sky day in December in Alentejo. Winter is also the season of some of our favourite fruits – oranges and tangerines. They are the most delicious between January and May.



FROM LEFT: WESTEND61/GETTY IMAGES ©; KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Praia do Malhão (p241), Vila Nova de Milfontes

BLISTERING SUN

The Algarve may be considered one of the sunniest spots in Portugal, but the highest recorded temperatures have been registered in the Alentejo, where it can hit up to 40°C in some places.

Weather through the Year (Lisbon)

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
Avg. daytime max: **15°C**	Avg. daytime max: **16°C**	Avg. daytime max: **18°C**	Avg. daytime max: **20°C**	Avg. daytime max: **22°C**	Avg. daytime max: **25°C**
Days of rainfall: **10**	Days of rainfall: **8**	Days of rainfall: **6**	Days of rainfall: **7**	Days of rainfall: **5**	Days of rainfall: **2**

NORTADA

During summer, the west coast is often hit by a flux of northerly winds, known as the Nortada. It blows stronger in places such as Guincho and Sagres, making them prime spots for watersports activities, including windsurfing.

The Big Carnivals & Parades

Portugal's **Carnaval** features much merrymaking in the pre-Lenten celebrations. Places such as Loulé (p180) and Torres Vedras offer the largest parades, but Podence (p387) and Lazarim have quirkier ancient rites, with devilish-looking characters taking over their streets. **February/March**

Braga honours its religious roots during **Semana Santa** (Holy Week, p398) when thousands of visitors come to witness the church processions like the Procissão dos Fogaréus, when hooded figures light the way with large torches. **March–mid-April**

University students in Coimbra celebrate graduation with a bang by throwing a nine-day-long street party for **Queima das Fitas** (p307). **May**

The Minho's most spectacular festival, **Romaria de Nossa Senhora d'Agonia**, in Viana do Castelo (p404) includes fireworks and lively parades, with people dressed in folk costumes, and others sporting giant papier-mâché heads. **August**

Local & Quirkier Festivals

For a few days only, a floating bridge emerges between Alcoutim (p173) and the town of Sanlúcar across the border in Spain to recreate an old smugglers' route for the biannual **Festival do Contrabando**. **March**

The world-renowned two-week **Fantasporto** international festival in Porto (p352) celebrates fantasy, horror and just plain weird films by screening them in the city's independent cinemas. **March**

Festa de São João (p352) is a favourite up north, where Porto, Braga and Vila do Conde throw elaborate processions, music and feasting, while folks go around whacking each other with plastic hammers just before the fireworks go off. **June**

Every four years Tomar (p287) welcomes the **Festa dos Tabuleiros**, a stop-in-your-tracks parade, with women balancing towers of bread loaves and flowers on their heads. **July**

I LIVE HERE

SEASONAL WAVES

Portuguese Carolina and German-born Paul live and work in Lisbon, but spend their spare time surfing. @carolinaanatal

We see surfing as a form of therapy. Autumn and spring are ideal for advanced surfers. The weather is warm, but the North Atlantic sends over bigger swells, giving excellent surfing conditions with light offshore winds. Ericeira is on fire at this time. For beginners, the months between June and August are the best, as the waves tend to be smaller.



Ericeira (p133)

DIP IN THE OCEAN

Near the capital, the seawater temperature is around 20°C in summer and 15°C in winter. Even on the hottest days, the water can be deceivingly brisk. Expect cooler temperatures in the north and slightly warmer in the south.

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Avg. daytime max: **28°C** Days of rainfall: **1**	Avg. daytime max: **28°C** Days of rainfall: **1**	Avg. daytime max: **26°C** Days of rainfall: **3**	Avg. daytime max: **23°C** Days of rainfall: **8**	Avg. daytime max: **18°C** Days of rainfall: **9**	Avg. daytime max: **15°C** Days of rainfall: **10**



JAZZMONET/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Vila Nova de Cerveira (p411)

GET PREPARED FOR PORTUGAL

Useful things to load in your bag, your ears and your brain

Clothes

Layers With an average of 300 days of sunshine each year, Portugal is renowned for its warm climate. However, it does rain here and even snows up in the mountains. Many houses are poorly insulated, so it gets quite cold inside. You need to experience winter here to understand it. In the evenings, it can get windy, so always carry an extra layer.

Hat Even in winter, that sun is intense – and, on a fresh, windy day, deceptive.

Comfy shoes Unless you're going to a special ceremony, leave your fancy high heels or shiny shoes at home. It will be hard to tackle all those slippery cobblestones with them. Instead, bring flat shoes that you feel comfortable exploring in or even hiking boots if you plan on hitting the trails.

Manners

Portuguese is not the same as Spanish. Even if they don't call you out, some people may get offended if you confuse the two.

There is no need to rush. Go with the flow, enjoying a sit-down meal at a restaurant or lingering at a kiosk with a coffee.

More than the weather, **small talk** here often goes straight to football.

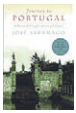
READ



The Book of Disquiet (Fernando Pessoa; 1982) Unedited fragments of text published posthumously.



A Short Book on the Great Earthquake (Rui Tavares; 2020) A journey through the events that shook Lisbon on 1 November 1755.



Journey to Portugal (José Saramago; 1990) Tales of cultural discovery while travelling across Portugal.



The Waltz (Nuno Duarte & Joana Afonso; 2015) Zombie graphic novel set during the dictatorship.

Words

Olá (oh-lah) is how you say 'hello' in Portugal.
Bom dia (boñ dee-uh) literally translates as 'good day', but can also be used to say 'good morning'. If it's later in the day, you can use *boa tarde* (boh-uh taar-de) for 'good afternoon', and *boa noite* (boh-uh noy-te) for 'good evening'.
Tudo bem (too-doo bayñ) is a short way of saying 'how are you?' and can also act as a reply if you want to say 'everything is good'.
Se faz favor (suh fash fuh-vor) is the most common way to say 'please'; you can also use it to call the server's attention at a restaurant.
De nada (deh nah-dah) is the equivalent of 'you're welcome'.
Cafézinho is a cute term for 'coffee.' The Portuguese like to add the suffix 'inho' to many words to express affection or sometimes even sarcasm.
Desculpe (desh-kool-pe) is mostly used to apologise, as in 'sorry', but it can also stand for 'excuse me' when you want to approach someone for directions.
Socorro (soo-koh-roo) is what you should shout if you need to cry for help.
Saying thank you If you identify as a man, you should say *obrigado* (oo-bree-gah doo), while women should say *obrigada* (oo-bree-gah dah). Many words have female and male versions in Portuguese, but this one is probably the first one you'll use. Gender-neutral versions are slowly being introduced by adding an 'e' at the end like so: *obrigade*.

WATCH

Lisbon Story (Wim Wenders; 1994) Drama-musical shot in Lisbon, featuring former Madredeus' lead singer Teresa Salgueiro.

Vitalina Varela (Pedro Costa; 2019) Drama feature following a Cape Verdean immigrant on her arrival to Portugal.

Variações (João Maia; 2019) Biographical film about Portuguese singer and gay icon António Variações.

Glória (Pedro Lopes; 2021) Historical spy series loosely based on true events around small Portuguese town during the Cold War.

Capa de Honras (Rui Falcão, 2023) One of the few representations of the Mirandese language on camera.

LISTEN

O Monstro Precisa de Amigos (Ornatos Violeta; 1999) The final release of the alternative rock band led by Manel Cruz, which occasionally makes a comeback.

Excuse Me (Salvador Sobral; 2016) Debut album of the jazz and soul singer who won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2017.

Mariza Canta Amália (Mariza; 2020) Fado singer Mariza pays tribute to Amália Rodrigues' (the genre's diva) best songs.

2 de Abril (A Garota Não; 2022) Setúbal-born singer, Cátia Mazari Oliveira, aka A Garota Não, sings about prevalent societal issues like the housing crisis.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Estação Ferroviária do Pinhão (p370)

TRIP PLANNER

TRAVEL PORTUGAL BY TRAIN

Portugal's first train ride took place on 28 October 1856, a 37km journey linking the capital to Carregado. Hitting the tracks today allows you to take in the country's changing scenery between the sea, the mountains and the vineyards.

Choose Your Ride

ALONG THE COAST

In a country where half of its borders are surrounded by the ocean, a front-row view of the waterfront is almost always guaranteed. From Lisbon's Cais do Sodré station you can take off towards endless sandy shores along the **Linha de Cascais** (p129). Meanwhile, the **Linha do Algarve** connects Lagos (p194) with Vila Real de Santo António (p170) in the east, passing through beaches and rows of orange groves. You can even take a train to the beach itself, with the **Comboio da Praia do Barril** (p168) operating in the summer. Up north, you can reach the windswept coast linking Porto (p352) to Valença along the **Linha do Minho**.

IN THE DOURO VALLEY

Without a doubt, the most picturesque rides in Portugal are in the Douro Valley (p366) along the **Linha do Douro.** Whether you're hopping on the regular regional train connecting Porto to Pocinho or choosing one of the many seasonal rides (p378) on a historic carriage, you're bound to fall in love with this region.

HEAD INLAND

While there are fewer train connections away from the coast, you can still reach many quaint spots a short distance from the big cities. Whether that's **Évora** (p214), the historic capital of the Alentejo; the Knights Templar town of **Tomar** (p287); or the village of **Covilhã** (p325), hugged by

PORTUGAL'S MOST DISTINCTIVE TRAIN STATIONS

Rossio Stands out with its striking Neo-Manueline facade – a Portuguese late-Gothic style.

Gare do Oriente Designed by Santiago Calatrava, this modern station was completed for Lisbon's Expo '98.

Aveiro Highlights regional landscapes, such as the saltpans.

São Bento Featuring 20,000 tiles by Jorge Colaço, the panels here showcase scenes of Portugal's history and a timeline depicting the evolution of transport.

Pinhão Set along the Douro Valley, this station depicts the different stages of port-wine production, from harvesting the grapes to carrying the barrels up the river to Gaia for ageing.

Vilar Formoso A series of panels depict renowned landmarks across Portugal.

the slopes of the Serra da Estrela. Around cherry season, a special route called **Rota das Cerejas** takes you from Lisbon to the heart of Castelo Branco (p311).

CROSSING BORDERS

The overnight train that once connected Madrid to Lisbon has been on hold since the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the best way to reach Portugal by train is to take the **Celta train** from Vigo to Porto, operated by the Spanish rail Renfe *(renfe.com)*, which takes around 2½ hours. Another option is to travel from Badajoz to Entroncamento on the **Raiano train** and then switch to Lisbon. Tickets are sold online through the Portuguese rail network CP *(cp.pt)*.



ARMANDO OLIVEIRA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Linha do Douro, Douro Valley (p366)

TRAIN MUSEUMS

Train fanatics will enjoy visiting the country's numerous railway museums.

The **Museu Nacional Ferroviário** *(fmnf.pt; adult/child €6/3)* is the main one. Located in Entroncamento (1½-hour train ride from Lisbon's Santa Apolónia station), it has the largest collection of locomotives and carriages in the country.

Other popular ones include the **Museu Ferroviário de Lousado** *(free)*, **Museu Ferroviário de Bragança** *(free)*, **Museu Ferroviário do Arco de Baúlhe** *(free)* and **Museu Ferroviário de Macinhata do Vouga** *(adult/child €2/1)*, all of which work as branches of Entroncamento's national railway museum.

The **Museu Ferroviário de Macinhata do Vouga** is also the last stop of the **Vouga Historical Train** *(adult/child €37/22, including the museum)*. This seasonal ride usually runs on Saturdays from mid-July to the end of August. Led by a blue-and-red locomotive, passengers are whisked away from Aveiro around lunchtime, arriving in Macinhata do Vouga about an hour later. After touring the museum, you'll get back on the train, stopping in Águeda for a while to tour its colourful streets filled with art exhibits, such as the colourful umbrellas hovering above Rua Luís de Camões. It's worth timing it with the **Agit'Agueda** *(agitagueda.com)* for the best display. Around 7pm the train will be ready to take you back to Aveiro just in time for dinner.



YURIY BRYKAYLO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Islamic fishing village ruins, Costa Vicentina (p205)

TRIP PLANNER

THE MOORS IN PORTUGAL

Hailing from North Africa, the Moors ruled this land for nearly eight centuries. After covering up the Moors' trail, knocking down mosques for churches, casting them into separate neighbourhoods and taking back their land, the Portuguese are finally safeguarding ruins of that time, recreating spice-scented souks and embracing crafts handed down by their ancestors.

Origins & Influences

WHO WERE THE MOORS?

Around 711 CE a group of Arab and North African rulers set sail into the Iberian Peninsula, expanding their territory and naming it Al-Andalus. The Moors, as they became known, stayed until 1492 CE, when the Catholic Monarchs took over Granada, the kingdom's last stronghold. However, in Portugal, this happened much earlier, as Afonso Henriques, the nation's first king, conquered Lisbon in 1147. By then, the Moorish culture had already spread through the region's food, architecture and even language, leaving a lasting effect in both countries, though less visible in Portugal. While religion played a crucial role, it was not purely an Islamic movement, and the Muslim rulers of the time often functioned separately from the Islamic empire to the east.

INHERITED WORDS

In 1991, Portuguese teacher José Pedro Machado compiled a list of Portuguese words influenced by the Arabs in his book *Vocabulário Português de Origem Árabe.*

PIECING IT TOGETHER

A small polished stone is how the Moors described the *al-zulaich* or *azulejos*. This material, which is ubiquitous in Portugal today, is perhaps one of the most prevailing traditions inherited by the Moors. Portuguese King Manuel I fell for this art form on a trip around the Andalusian capital, Seville, in 1498. But tile production had already been in place for centuries before that.

It has over 1000 words that go way beyond the 'al-' prefix, such as *açúcar* (sugar) or *azulejo* (tile).

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

When the Moors arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, they mostly settled in Andalucia and what is today the Algarve. You can still find traces of Islamic architecture in Loulé, Aljezur and Mértola (in the Alentejo).

With the rise of the Catholic Church in the 12th century, the Moors were forcefully cast aside. Many were made to live in areas outside the city walls, later known as *mouraria*, which you can still spot in places like Lisbon.

A STYLE COMEBACK

Portugal lost much of its original Moorish architecture, but in the 19th century, a style resurfaced drawing on similar motifs called Neo-Moorish or Moorish Revival. This is what you see in the **Casa do Alentejo** in Lisbon, **Mercado de Loulé** in the Algarve (p180), **Palácio de Monserrate** in Sintra and the **Salão Árabe** in Porto's Palácio da Bolsa (p356).

More recently, hotels are adopting elements of Islamic architecture, bringing back a modernised version of this period; for example, **Casa Riad Yasmin** (p207) in Silves or **Vila Origens** (p206) in Albufeira.



CHRISTOPHE CAPPELLI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Casa do Alentejo, Lisbon

EXPLORING PORTUGAL'S MOORISH HERITAGE

- Join the biannual **Festival Islâmico de Mértola** (p249), when the town hosts a giant souk, welcoming spice traders, food stalls and performances influenced by Islamic traditions.
- Hear music inspired by the Al-Andalus era at the **Al-Mutamid Festival** (p152), one of the biggest Arabic music festivals held outside the Arab world.
- Visit the **Banhos Islâmicos de Loulé** (p180) to witness the only remains of Islamic baths in Portugal.
- Book a guided tour to the **Casa da Cultura Islâmica** (p185) in Silves to learn more about the town's Moorish background and capture the striking Neo-Moorish building.
- Step inside the 12th-century Almohad (Moorish) cistern at the **Museu Municipal de Arqueologia** (p185) in Silves and admire the interesting collection of items from the Umayyad Caliphate.
- See the Tavira Vase, one of the few remains of Islamic Art in Portugal, on display in Tavira's **Núcleo Museológico Islâmico** (p167).
- Spot Moorish vestiges at **Aljezur Castle** (p204) and the ruins of a former cliff-topping Islamic fishing village in **Carrapateira** (p205).
- Follow the footsteps of the Moors across the old Al-Andalus by walking ancient trails such as the **Umayyad Route** (p185) or the **Al-Mutamid Route** (p185).
- Tour the **Museu Nacional do Azulejo** in Lisbon or the **Museu Berardo Estremoz** (p223) to trace back the Moorish designs used in tile-making centuries ago.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Sardines grilling, Alfama (p76), Lisbon

THE FOOD SCENE

Freshly baked sweets, a coast full of seafood delicacies and lively wine festivals will fill your culinary tour of Portugal.

The best way to break the ice with the Portuguese is to talk about food. Folks here are proud of their cuisine, and they'll let you know as they happily guide you to their favourite *pastelaria* (pastry and cake shop) or *tasca* (tavern). Between themselves, they discuss their best codfish recipes (there are more than 300) and where to get the best pastry in town.

Whether you're ordering seafood or meat, it's all about simple flavours here, letting the main ingredient shine through. Sometimes that means sliding a piece of pork into a bun. Other times it's getting the freshest fish and slapping it onto the grill. Add a glass of local wine and you have the foundation of Portuguese cuisine. But there's also room for innovation here, with the country upgrading its traditional markets with gourmet food stalls and local chefs leading its rising Michelin-star restaurants.

A meal is always best enjoyed with family or friends, and ordering a round of *petiscos* – think tapas, only slightly bigger – to pick at and share is the ideal way to experience the diversity of Portuguese cuisine.

Portuguese Home Staples

If you're lucky enough to be invited to somebody's home for a traditional meal, you can expect the staple basket of bread and a bottle of wine laid out on the table. Before the main meal, your hosts will likely offer you a selection of Portuguese cheeses and sausages to nibble on.

Inside the pantry you'll find various cooking essentials: olive oil, used to sautée garlic and onion at the start of most recipes and

Best Portuguese Dishes

AÇORDA
Bread soup typically from the Alentejo.

ARROZ DE PATO
Oven-baked rice dish with duck and chunks of chorizo.

FRANCESINHA
Multi-layered meat sandwich covered in melted cheese and a rich sauce.

BACALHAU À BRÁS
Codfish with potato sticks, scrambled eggs, olives and parsley.

soak seafood dishes like *bacalhau* (codfish) and *polvo* (octopus); parsley and coriander, used interchangeably for fish and meat recipes; bay leaf, for garnishing meat dishes; eggs; and spices like cinnamon, which are integral for regional desserts such as *farófias* (poached meringues) or *arroz doce* (rice pudding).

Of course, you can't forget the canned fish. Beyond tuna, the Portuguese have mastered other tinned fish combos like spicy sardines or squid in tomato sauce. If you have all these ingredients, you're halfway to preparing a Portuguese meal yourself.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Portugal isn't the easiest country in which to be vegetarian. Even the local cheese isn't always meat-free. Until a few years ago, you were stuck with soup, salad or an omelette. Luckily, things are beginning to change. While you'll still struggle to order veg-friendly dishes in traditional *tascas* (taverns), other restaurants are slowly adapting their menus. Some might even go out of their way to cook you something on the spot, like vegetable rice or pasta. Vegans, however, have it harder, as many pastries are egg-based.

Choices significantly increase in the big cities where local chefs are taking traditional recipes and reinventing them into greener alternatives, replacing clams with mushrooms to make *cogumelos à bulhão pato* or ditching the codfish for leek in the *alho à francês*. Burger houses and Indian restaurants can easily cater for vegetarians and vegans too.

Though only 10% of Portuguese are vegetarians, there's a growing movement to reduce meat consumption. Odds are the number will keep increasing, and so will the menu options.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Fava Tonka (p364), Porto



MAGDALENA PALUCHOWSKA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Festival Internacional do Chocolate (p269)

FOOD & WINE FESTIVALS

Festival Internacional do Chocolate (p269; festivalchocolate.cm-obidos.pt; March) Chocolate lovers descend on Óbidos.

Santos Populares (p76; egeac.pt/festas; June) Lisbon's lively street party is your chance to feast on chargrilled sardines and mackerel.

Feira do Alvarinho (p426; feiradoalvarinho.cm-moncao.pt; July) Monção in the Minho pays tribute to its refreshing Alvarinho white wine.

Festival do Marisco (p162; festivaldomarisco.com; August) Seafood festival paired with live music acts hosted in Olhão.

Festival do Moscatel do Douro (p371; September) Toast with a glass of Moscatel in the village of Favaios.

Feira da Castanha (p232; November) Taste roasted chestnuts and sample the season's new wine at this festival in Marvão.

POLVO À LAGAREIRO
Octopus soaked in olive oil.

LEITÃO DA BAIRRADA
Suckling pig dish typical in central Portugal.

CATAPLANA
Seafood stew cooked in a special pan, famous in the Algarve.

CARNE DE PORCO À ALENTEJANA
Surf-and-turf dish, with pork and clams.

CALDO VERDE
Simple, soulful soup of thinly sliced greens, potatoes, onions and garlic.

Local Specialities

Favourite Petiscos

Salada de polvo Octopus salad
Chouriço assado Flamed grilled chorizo
Tábua de queijos e enchidos Sausage and cheese board
Amêijoas à bulhão pato Clams with garlic sauce
Peixinhos da horta Fried green beans
Pica-pau Beef loin strips

Snacks & Street Food

Tremoços Lupin beans
Bifana Pork sandwich
Prego Beef sandwich
Pão com chouriço Chorizo bread
Salgados Savoury treats

Sweet Treats

Pastel de nata Custard tart, ideally served warm and dusted with cinnamon.
Travesseiro Flaky pillow-shaped pastry filled with almond-and-egg-yolk custard. Find them in Sintra.
Ovos moles Aveiro is famous for its eggy, sugary pastries.
Bola de Berlim Sweet doughnut filled with eggy custard, usually eaten on the beach.
Pão de Ló A fluffy cake that is often gooey in the centre.



Tripas à moda do Porto

Torta de Azeitão Sponge cake roll stuffed with a sweet egg yolk paste.

Dare to Try

Tripe People from Porto aren't called *tripeiros* (tripe-eaters) for nothing. Try the surprisingly tasty *tripas à moda do Porto,* made of tripe, beans and sausage.
Arroz de cabidela Rice soaked in chicken's blood may sound foul, but it's a bloody good delicacy. The pork variant is called *arroz de sarrabulho*.
Morcela Sausage made with pig's blood and perhaps rice and pork.
Caracóis Smaller and less fancy than escargots.

MEALS OF A LIFETIME

Euskalduna Studio (p357) Ring the bell to access this intimate Michelin-star restaurant in Porto.
Tasca Zé dos Cornos (p79) Homemade Portuguese meals, and a good platter of ribs, are the speciality at this family-run tasca in the heart of Lisbon's Mouraria.
Mesa de Lemos (p335) Near Viseu, this Michelin-star restaurant takes you on a journey through the Dão region sourcing ingredients from its gardens and surrounding vineyards.
O Peixeiro (p246) Enjoy a delicious seafood feast at this humble spot in Odemira near Alentejo's coast.
Pensão Flávia (p388) A feast fit for kings (but friendly on the wallet) is served at this lively tavern in the centre of Chaves.
G Pousada (p382) Homely Bragança fine-diner with a flair for showcasing local produce.

THE YEAR IN FOOD



SPRING

In late spring and early summer, you'll see signs advertising *caracóis* (snails). These little delicacies are cooked in olive oil, garlic and herbs and are quite tasty. They go nicely with a cold beer.



SUMMER

Head to the market for bountiful fruits and vegetables: plump tomatoes, figs, *nésperas* (loquats) and other delights. Sardines, much loved along the coast, are available from May through October.



AUTUMN

In September the Alentejo and the Douro Valley begin their grape harvest; it's a festive time to visit, and some wineries allow visitors to take part. It's also the season of pomegranates and chestnuts.



WINTER

Portuguese enjoy hearty meals such as *cozido à portuguesa*, a dish of mixed roast meats, potatoes, cabbage and carrots, alongside rich soups like *canja* (chicken soup) or *caldo verde* (potato kale soup).

TOP: NATALIA MYLOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; FROM LEFT: C-R-V/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, GOR PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK © MAGDALENA PALUCHOWSKA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, ARK NEYMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Mercado do Livramento (p137), Setúbal

HOW TO...

Shop at a Local Farmers' Market

The Portuguese love for food begins with the search for quality ingredients. While many have turned to modern supermarkets, others still rely on their local farmers' markets. Families come here for their weekly groceries, and chefs stock up on fresh ingredients for their latest tasting menu. Some markets may specialise in specific products, like a *mercado do peixe* (fish market), but most will offer a mix of things. For organic produce, look out for the *mercado biológico*.

1. Time Your Visit

While market schedules can differ from town to town, the general opening hours are between 7am and 2pm Monday to Saturday. Plan to arrive early to bag the best produce, or come just before closing if you want those last-minute deals. Weekdays are usually calmer. If you want to witness the bustling market vibes, Saturday is the busiest day. Note that if you're planning to buy fish, it's best to skip Monday. Fresh fish doesn't usually come in on Sunday, so you're better off waiting until Tuesday.

2. Choose a Vendor

Before you make a purchase, it's worth taking a lap around the market. This way, you can compare prices and the quality of the produce. If there's a line, it's usually a sign that it's a popular stall. Vendors are a proud bunch, and they will do their best to highlight their products, especially when they notice newcomers passing through. If you're still deciding, you can nod and say: *'Estou só a ver, obrigado/a'* (I'm just browsing for now, thank you).

3. Collect Your Ingredients

So, you've narrowed down your sellers. Now it's time to stock up your basket. For fruit and vegetables, most vendors will offer you a bag to fill up. In some cases, they may fill it up themselves. Some sellers may not speak English, but you can always resort to gesturing. When weighing the products, the vendor will usually do the last check by asking: *'Está bom?'*. That's your cue to add or take out items.

Ordering fish and meat can take a little more time. Quite often, the vendor might ask how you plan to cook it. Then they'll walk you through how best to prepare it. If you don't have any specific dinner plans, the vendor is usually happy to offer their recommendation.

MARKET ETIQUETTE

Queuing Always remember your place in line. The vendor will usually do this, but try to keep track of it, so you don't cut in by mistake.

Testing Avoid touching the products without the vendor's permission, especially fruits and vegetables that are easily bruised. If you want to know if a fruit is ripe, ask the vendor: *'Está maduro?'*, and they will check for you.

Paying Prices are listed by kilo or, on rare occasions, per quantity. It's not common to haggle here. Most markets will have a *multibanco* (ATM) to withdraw cash. While some stalls may accept cards, most prefer cash payments.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Fisherman's Trail (p241), The Alentejo

THE OUTDOORS

Grab a board and ride the waves or stick to dry land to follow the numerous trails crossing Portugal's coastline and valleys.

Facing the Atlantic, Portugal is lucky to have a coastline of nearly 1000km. Surfers make the most of it, hitting the beaches off-season to catch the biggest swells. The oceanfront cliffs are also a magnet for hikers and cyclists eager to explore routes such as the Rota Vicentina, with its endless stretch of wild beaches. Beyond these shores, Portugal's trails take you through vineyards, across rocky mountains and along riverbanks. The country's rivers offer the chance to partake in various water sports, including canyoning and kayaking.

Surfing

People have been riding waves in Portugal since 1926, making it one of Europe's first surfing spots. Big waves are common here, especially around Nazaré, where world records have been broken, but there are swells of all sizes, suitable for surfers of any level. Across the coast, you'll find 30 to 40 major reefs. The country picks up swells from the north, south and west, giving it remarkable consistency. Numerous surf schools in the Algarve and along the west coast offer classes and all-inclusive packages, often featuring accommodation.

The best waves in the south generally occur in winter, from November to March. Further north, spring and autumn tend to be the best seasons. Waves at these times range from 2m to 4.5m high. Summer is ideal for beginners, with waves ranging from 1m to 1.5m.

Outdoor Sports

CANYONING
Jump into the refreshing natural pools formed by the river near **Castro Laboreiro** (p422).

ROCK CLIMBING
Explore the granite peaks of **Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês** (p420).

COASTEERING
Progress between the tides of a rocky shore by swimming, climbing and jumping into the water from the **Algarve** cliffs (p202).

FAMILY ADVENTURES

Look for dolphins – and learn about them from an onboard marine biologist – as you ply the waters off **Ria Formosa** (p160) on a boat trip from Faro.

Kayak with your kids down the idyllic Rio Mondego from Penacova to **Coimbra** (p302).

Catch the narrow-gauge train (p161) to the lovely beach of **Praia do Barril** in Tavira.

Travel back in time to the Jurassic era with a visit to the Dino Parque, a dinosaur-themed park amid the woods in **Lourinhã**.

Stroll along the coast of Lisbon on the **Paredão** (p128) connecting Estoril to Cascais (p123).

Pedal a rail bike down abandoned train tracks with **Rail Bike Marvão** (p230), taking in the serenity of nature and the breathtaking views.

Cycling

Whether you're looking for a leisure cycle along the beach or an intense pedalling workout in the forest, there is a trail for you here. In the north, Rio Lima features a handful of short greenways (ranging from 5km to 16km), while the 49km Ecopista do Dão follows a repurposed train track from Viseu, passing through villages and vineyards. Down south, the ambitious Ecovia do Litoral is a long-distance route across the Algarve that connects Cabo de São Vicente at Portugal's southwestern tip to Vila Real de Santo António near the Spanish border.

Or you can venture down the coast from Lisbon to Faro on Rota Vicentina's Touring Bike trail.

Bike paths are also becoming an urban fixture in Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, along with bike- and scoot-sharing schemes. For a ride along the coast, try Ciclovia da Estrada Atlântica or Ciclovia do Guincho.

BEST SPOTS

For the best outdoor spots and routes, see the map on p50.



C-R-V/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Ecopista do Dão (p328)

Walking & Hiking

The Rota Vicentina is by far one of Portugal's biggest draws for hikers. The route connecting the Alentejo and the Algarve features two long-distance trails: the coastal Fishermen's Trail (226km) and the inland Historical Way (263km). Meanwhile, the Via Algarviana takes you through the southern coast, starting in Alcoutim and ending in Cabo de São Vicente. Those looking to explore the country's historical villages can follow the GR22, a grand walking tour of about 600km. Shorter trails are on the outskirts of Lisbon around Sintra or Arrábida.

The country uses a system of coloured blazes to mark its trails. White and red are used for long routes (GR, *grandes rotas*), while yellow and red represent smaller trails (PR, *pequenas rotas*). Tourist offices can provide maps, but mobile apps (Walkbox and AllTrails) may offer additional guidance.

DIVING
Go diving in the **Berlengas archipelago** (p275) off the coast of Peniche.

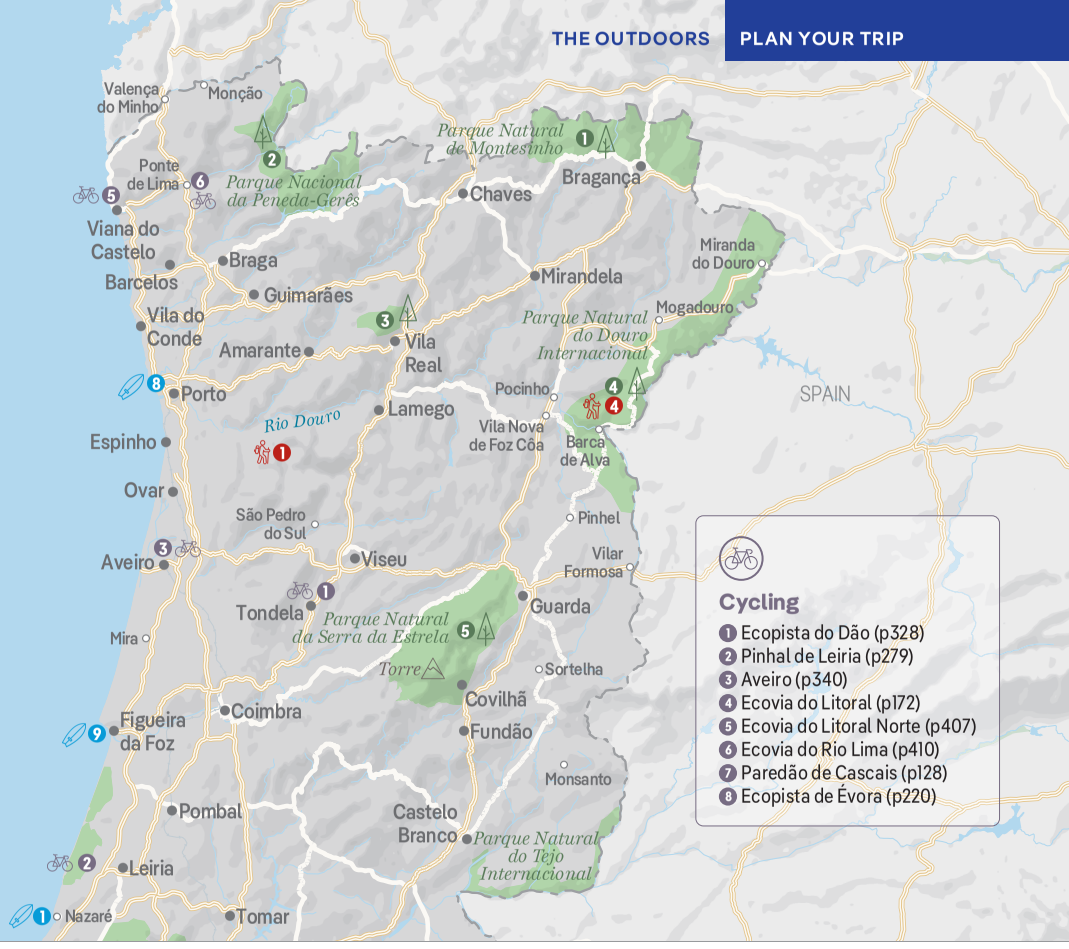
PARAGLIDING
Head inland to the prime launch site in **Linhares** (p319) in the Serra da Estrela.

CAVING
Explore a cave or two in the **Parque Natural das Serras de Aire e Candeeiros** (p286).

WINDSURFING
Praia do Cabedelo (p407) near Viana do Castelo is a world-championship windsurfing site.

ACTION AREAS

Where to find Portugal's best outdoor activities.



Surfing

1. Nazaré (p276)
2. Peniche (p272)
3. Ericeira (p133)
4. Carcavelos (p129)
5. Vila Nova de Milfontes (p240)
6. Sagres (p202)
7. Praia do Guincho (p128)
8. Matosinhos (p364)
9. Figueira da Foz (p310)

Cycling

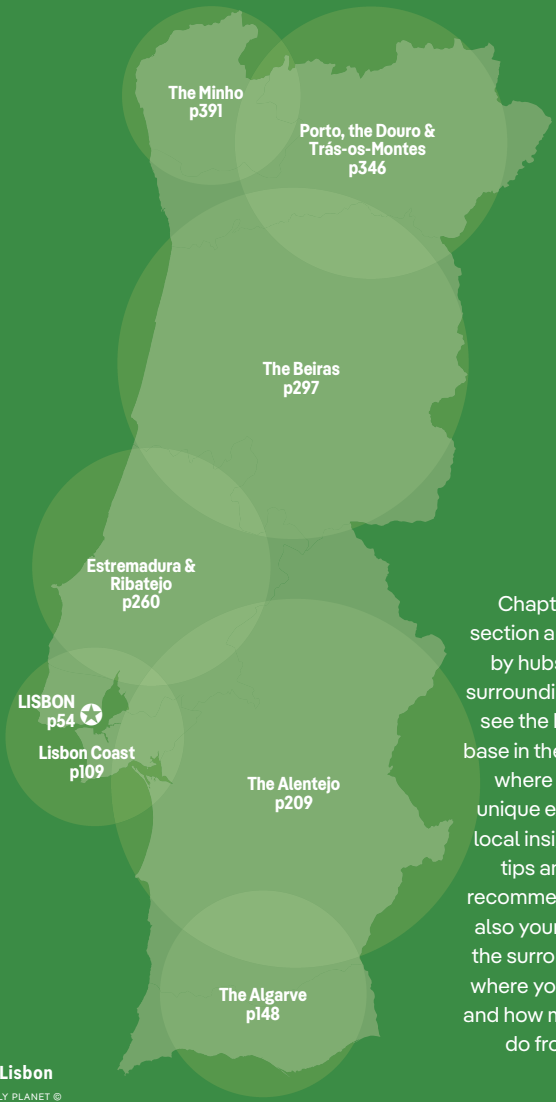
1. Ecopista do Dão (p328)
2. Pinhal de Leiria (p279)
3. Aveiro (p340)
4. Ecovia do Litoral (p172)
5. Ecovia do Litoral Norte (p407)
6. Ecovia do Rio Lima (p410)
7. Paredão de Cascais (p128)
8. Ecopista de Évora (p220)


ATLANTIC OCEAN
Parque Natural das Serras de Aire e Candeeiros
Abrantes
Castelo de Vide
Marvão
Portalegre
Ponte de Sor
Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede
Santarém
Rio Tejo
Peniche
Óbidos
Ericeira
Vila Franca de Xira
Coruche
Mora
Estremoz
Elvas
Caia
Borba
Sintra
LISBON
Montemor-o-Novo
Arraiolos
Cascais
Barreiro
Vendas Novas
Évora
SPAIN
Setúbal
Sesimbra
Alcácer do Sal
Reguengos de Monsaraz
Alqueva
Ferreira do Alentejo
Moura
Barrancos
Santiago do Cacém
Rio Guadiana
Sines
Beja
Serpa
Vila Verde de Ficalho
Rio Sado
Vila Nova de Milfontes
Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana
Mértola
Odemira
Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina
Alcoutim
Odeceixe
Vila Real de Santo António
Aljezur
Portimão
Silves
Lagos
Albufeira
Loulé
Tavira
Sagres
Faro
Parque Natural da Ria Formosa
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0 50 miles
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1 Reserva Natural da Berlenga (p275)
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9 PN da Ria Formosa (p160)


VINHOS

PORTUGAL

THE GUIDE



Chapters in this section are organised by hubs and their surrounding areas. We see the hub as your base in the destination, where you'll find unique experiences, local insights, insider tips and expert recommendations. It's also your gateway to the surrounding area, where you'll see what and how much you can do from there.

Alfama (p76), Lisbon

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Lisbon



CITY OF HILLS AND GOLDEN LIGHT

Effortlessly charming, the Portuguese capital is one of Europe's hottest destinations. Great weather, food, culture and safety top the list of reasons to visit.

In 2016, Lisbon experienced a surge in tourist numbers. Portugal's capital city became one of the top travel destinations in the world. Its fame continues to rise, but not always to everyone's liking.

The old city charm of laundry hanging to dry, the effortless but worldly cuisine, the unique glazed tiles covering buildings in clustered streets and that unique light bouncing off terracotta rooftops had been there for decades – so what changed? More low-cost flights to Lisbon and several awards and inclusion in 'best of' lists explain part of what seemed like an overnight success. It felt too fast for many *lisboetas* (people who live in Lisbon), who feared unsustainable mass tourism. The higher demand for picturesque, refurbished houses for short-term rental in the historic centre has been stripping those neighbourhoods of what makes them unique: the locals.



KERRY MURRAY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Some small pockets of authenticity still subsist where there is a lower concentration of tourist attractions, and newer businesses (openly catering to the well-travelled foreign clientele) seemed to thrive in harmony with the more traditional and established ones. After the tourist crowds to which *lisboetas* managed to grow accustomed (despite the increase in tourist-centred prices), 2023 brought what felt like a tidal wave of digital nomads and expats, causing pressure on the real estate market – locals can't afford the inflated house prices and wonder when (or if) the bubble will burst.

Tourism is seen as a threat and an opportunity, a short-lived workaround for an economic crisis and the best product such a historical city as Lisbon has to offer (and that will never cease to attract more visitors). Warm and welcoming, diverse and artistic, Lisbon is a city for all kinds of travellers: the frugal backpackers and the luxury tourists with unique tastes, the foodies and the cultural travellers, the past-seeking history buffs and the avant-garde contemporary art lovers, the solo urban explorers and the multi-generational families.

THE MAIN AREAS

BAIRRO ALTO & CAIS DO SODRÉ
Nightlife and live music.
p60

BAIXA-CHIADO & ROSSIO
Downtown: sprawling squares and historic shops.
p68

MOURARIA, ALFAMA & GRAÇA
The historic centre.
p76

BELÉM
Grand palaces and Manueline architecture.
p83



KERRY MURRAY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: Arco da Rua Augusta (p68); Above: Mouraria (p76)

PARQUE DAS NAÇÕES & MARVILA
Contemporary architecture and alternative art.
p89

MARQUÊS DE POMBAL & AVENIDAS NOVAS
Urban parks and art museums.
p94

SANTOS, MADRAGOA & ALCÂNTARA
Industrial vibes and local life.
p100

Find Your Way

The historic centre can feel like a maze, and hills can discourage even the most intrepid of explorers, but that also means stumbling upon memorable views. Lisbon feels small and easy to cover in a short time, but there are more sights and stops than you'd realise at first glance.

FROM THE AIRPORT

Aeroporto Humberto Delgado is a 30-minute drive from the city centre. If you're travelling with a large group or heavy luggage, hail a cab or a rideshare service (at the **Kiss & Fly** car park outside Departures). If travelling solo, opt for the Metro (Red Line).

TAXIS & RIDESHARES

Taxi and rideshare companies don't always see eye to eye, and locals use the latter more than the former. The convenience of a fixed route and payment options usually trumps the colourful experience of a taxi ride. Choose your favourite, but only for long distances.

WALKING

Walking is a great way to take in the atmosphere of the city. Mind the slippery cobblestones, especially when it rains, and reserve plenty of energy for steep hills (the views from the top make the climb worth it).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Opt for the urban trains (Cais do Sodré and Santa Apolónia) to get to Lisbon's east and west edges in less time and avoid traffic. In the heart of the city, the Metro is a comfortable and quick way to get around.

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Palácio Nacional da Ajuda

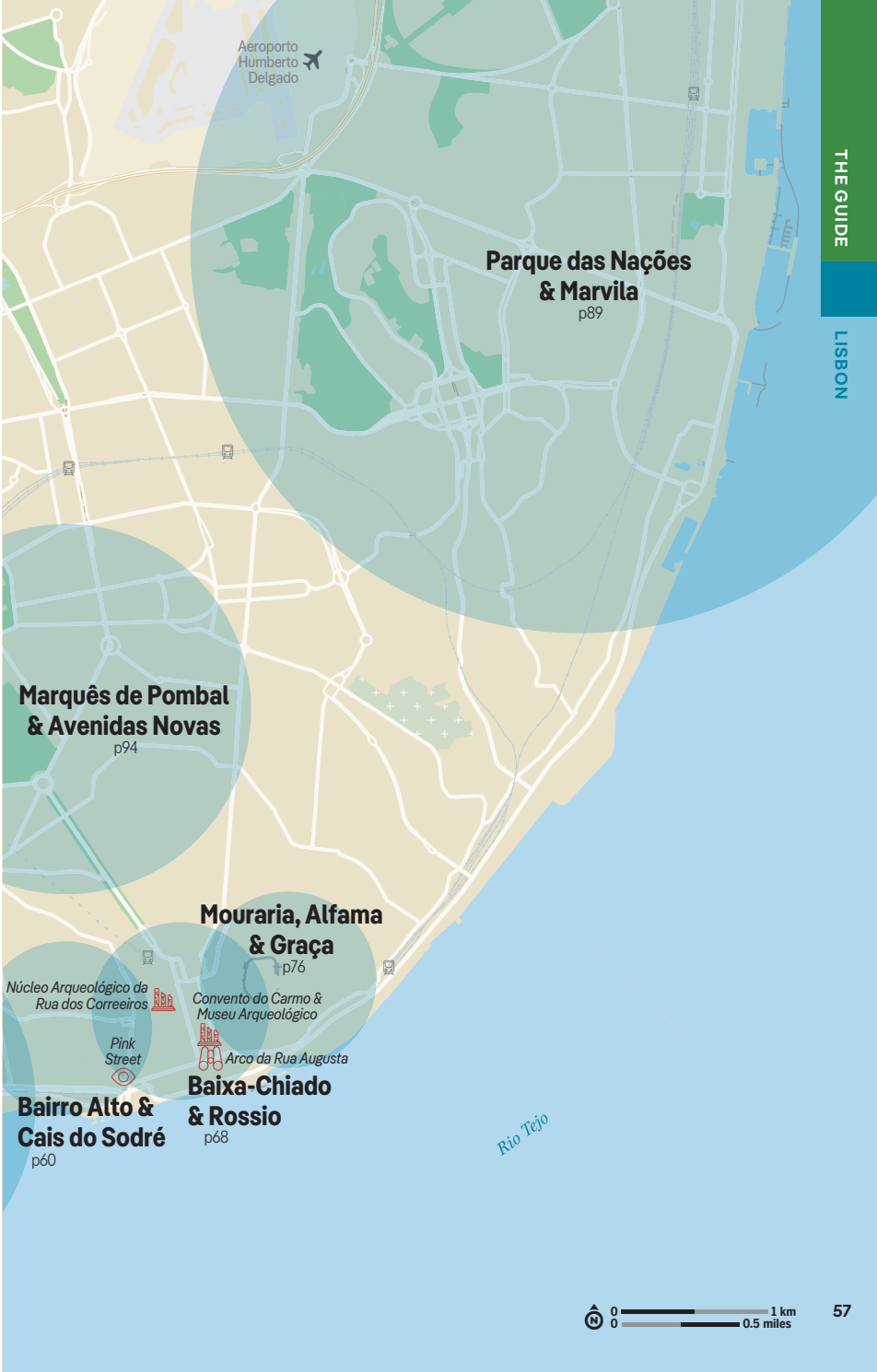
Santos, Madragoa & Alcântara
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Belém
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Mosteiro dos Jerónimos

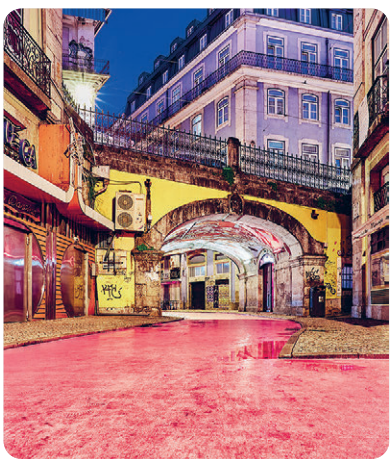
Museu de Arte Contemporânea MAC/CCB

MAAT Gallery


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Parque das Nações & Marvila
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Marquês de Pombal & Avenidas Novas
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Mouraria, Alfama & Graça
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Núcleo Arqueológico da Rua dos Correeiros
Convento do Carmo & Museu Arqueológico
Pink Street
Arco da Rua Augusta
Baixa-Chiado & Rossio
p68
Bairro Alto & Cais do Sodré
p60
Rio Tejo
0 1 km
0 0.5 miles

Plan Your Days

Head to a *pastelaria* (pastry and cake shop) for breakfast, absorb the morning light, explore cobblestone streets, see Lisbon from the top, and discover old and new art.



MAICASAA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Pink Street (p60)

Day 1

Morning

- Start your day at **Castelo de São Jorge** (p79). Walk down the winding cobblestone streets of Alfama to see the view from **Miradouro de Santa Luzia** (p79). Check out traces of Roman Lisbon at **Museu do Teatro Romano** (p77) or pop into the first Catholic Church of Lisbon, the medieval **Sé de Lisboa** (p78).

Afternoon

- After lunch, discover where fado was born in Mouraria: visit **Rua do Capelão** (p81) and **Largo da Severa** (p81).

Evening

- End the day with a fado dinner at a Casa de Fado or head to Graça for a good time at **Damas** (p80).

You'll Also Want to...

Travel across the river, embrace the outdoors, soak up the sun, attend a film festival, and relax with a drink while socialising with locals.

SCAN THE QR CODES

Mind the pavements around Baixa, Chiado, Mouraria and Alfama, and scan the QR codes that unlock details about Lisbon's history and culture. Curious for more? Follow one of the itineraries if you have spare time.

HIKE IN THE PARK

Spend the day at **Parque Florestal de Monsanto**, Lisbon's largest urban park, with playgrounds for kids, and hiking and cycling paths. Pack a blanket and a picnic for a casual brunch outdoors.

GO TO THE BEACH

Lisbon might not have beaches, but an ocean dive is just a short train trip away from Cais do Sodré to Cascais. Or a ferry ride from Terreiro do Paço to Barreiro if you fancy a river beach.

Day 2

Morning

● Take in the view from the top of **Arco da Rua Augusta** (p68) and learn about the city's roots at the **Lisboa Story Centre** (p69) in Praça do Comércio.

Afternoon

● Take tram 15E from **Praça do Comércio** (p69) to grab lunch by the river and admire the Manueline architecture of **Torre de Belém** (p87) or **Mosteiro dos Jerónimos** (p85). Stop for dessert at **Pastéis de Belém** (p88) for a classic *pastel de nata* (custard tart).

Evening

● Finish the day visiting the temporary exhibitions at **MAAT Gallery** (p87) and **MAAT Central** (p87) and have dinner with a view at the **MAAT Café & Kitchen** (p84).

Day 3

Morning

● Admire contemporary architecture at Parque das Nações with a self-guided walking tour or visit the family favourites **Oceanário** (p91) and **Centro de Ciência Viva** (p92).

Afternoon

● After lunch, take the Metro to São Sebastião and spend the afternoon at **Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian** (p96), relaxing in the gardens and browsing the collections at Museu Calouste Gulbenkian and the revamped Centro de Arte Moderna.

Evening

● Descend into **WC** (p94) to see the newest art show or check out the cultural events at **Jardins do Bombarda** (p97). After hours, head for drinks to **Casa do Comum** (p66) in Bairro Alto or Cais do Sodré's **Pink Street** (p60).

ATTEND A FILM FESTIVAL

From horror flicks to documentaries to foreign films, Lisbon hosts plenty of film festivals throughout the year. Miss the classics or neighbourhood theatres? See what's on at **Cinema Ideal** (p67) or **Nimas** (p97).

SEE THE SUN SET

Find your spot in **Cais das Colunas** (p69) or Avenida Ribeira das Naus to watch the sun slowly setting beyond the Ponte 25 de Abril. Need a place with fewer crowds and better views? Take the ferry to **Cacilhas**.

LOUNGE AT AN ESPLANADA

Sometimes the best thing to do is to do nothing at all and just sit at a cafe's *esplanada* (open-air terrace), drinking coffee and people-watching. Look for quieter neighbourhood cafes around Avenidas Novas.

GO TO A FOOTBALL MATCH

A Benfica vs Sporting football match is always an event, even if you don't follow either of the teams. If you want to avoid taking sides for the big ones, check out Lisbon's third team, Belenenses.

Bairro Alto & Cais do Sodré

NIGHTLIFE AND LIVE MUSIC



GETTING AROUND

Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré are best explored on foot, although walking up and down the hills can pose a challenge on rainy days, as the uneven cobblestones of the streets become slippery and hard to navigate. Hop on the funiculars Ascensor da Bica or Elevador da Glória to reduce distances and tackle the hills. Alternatively, you can take the one-stop Metro trip from Cais do Sodré to Baixa-Chiado (Green Line).

TOP TIP

Residents' complaints about noise and late-night disturbances have forced Lisbon's City Council to review opening hours and establishments' licenses to play music outdoors after hours in the Cais do Sodré area. Although nights out here aren't unsafe, unruly behaviour fuelled by one too many drinks has increased police patrols.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Cais do Sodré was where people went to lick their wounds with copious amounts of cheap booze, getting lost among the dancing crowds until the crack of dawn. Bairro Alto was more select, with stricter opening hours and, overall, more orderly, glass-in-hand patrons. But at 2am, when bars in Bairro Alto closed, all roads led downhill to Cais do Sodré.

Since then, *Caishodré* (locals pronounce it as a one-word mashup of syllables) has cleaned up its act, and *lisboetas*, who were teens and young adults in the last decades of the 20th century, miss that grittiness they feel the neighbourhood has lost. Bairro Alto – a residential neighbourhood by day and bar-hopping destination by night – lost some classic bars and made way for new ones but continues to cater to a diverse crowd of partying clients looking for cheap beer and cocktails.

Cais do Sodré's Most Famous Street

Visiting and photographing Pink Street

A coat of bright paint transformed Rua Nova do Carvalho into **Pink Street** in 2013, practically overnight. Or so it seemed to those who knew it before it became the tourist attraction it is today. The goal was to give new life to a neighbourhood that was then working hard to shake off its disreputable past. Since then, some *lisboetas* have dismissed the street as a place for locals, deeming it an overpriced magnet specifically designed for tourists.

Flanked by numerous bars and nightclubs, the narrow pedestrian-only street gets crowded fast at night, and is loud and rowdy, particularly on weekends. During the day, it's Lisbon's famous 'I was here' photo spot, with most people leaving the scene after getting their shot with the colourful umbrellas in the background. Despite its (not entirely fair) fame as a tourist trap, there is a handful of restaurants and cafes where



SANDRA HENRIQUES GAJJAR/LONELY PLANET ©

Menina e Moça

it's worth stopping by for lunch or happy hour drinks, like bar and bookshop **Menina e Moça** (p64) or **Sol e Pesca**, a tapas restaurant that serves only tinned fish.

Offbeat Cais do Sodré

Explore Rua da Boavista

Cais do Sodré seems to quiet down once you leave the bustling centre of the neighbourhood via Rua de São Paulo, pass Ascensor da Bica, and enter Rua da Boavista. Look beyond the boarded-up or under-construction old buildings (a running trend in this part of town) and closed bars (if you explore the street during the day) to discover local shops. **Ementa** (*ementasb.com*) sells streetwear for skaters, **+351** (*plus351.pt*) is known for its gender-neutral organic cotton clothes, and family-run **Portuguese Flannel** (*portugueseflannel.com*) specialises in cotton menswear. For art craves, head to concept store **Lisboa Paper Company** (*lisboapapercompany.pt*), selling locally produced pieces for home decor, or see the latest exhibition at **Galeria da Boavista** (*galeriasmunicipais.pt; free*).

CAOS DO SODRÉ DOCUMENTARY

In 2022, Portuguese actress and musician Carolina Torres launched her debut feature film, *Caos do Sodré*. The personal essay and historical report of the neighbourhood is available for free on YouTube in Portuguese. Sadly, the documentary is not subtitled, but turning on the auto-translate feature helps with the language barrier.

Throughout the 1½-hour movie, Torres engages with a diverse range of individuals who share a deep emotional connection with the bohemian Cais do Sodré of the past. From musicians and bar owners to music journalists and regular customers, their stories, often laced with humour, drama and nostalgia, paint a vivid picture of the city's old nightlife and Cais do Sodré's coming-of-age story.

EATING IN CAIS DO SODRÉ: CASUAL EATERIES

Tricky's: This restaurant serves contemporary dishes (including plant-based options) paired with cocktails and wines. *7pm-midnight Tue-Sat* €€

Collect: Perfect spot off Pink Street for a late-night burger and a cocktail, before or after browsing through its record store upstairs. *noon-1am* €€

O Gaiteiro: Tiny traditional restaurant next to Ascensor da Bica serving generous meat and fish dishes at affordable prices. *noon-4pm Tue-Sat* €

Sol e Pesca: This casual tapas restaurant on Pink Street specialises in tinned fish, with a wide range of brands and types of preserves. *noon-2am* €

HIGHLIGHTS
1 Pink Street

SIGHTS
2 Atelier-Museu Júlio Pomar
3 Galeria da Boavista
4 Galeria de Arte Urbana – GAU
5 Zé dos Bois

SLEEPING
6 Bairro Alto Hotel
7 Dear Lisbon Gallery House
8 Independente
9 Lumiares
10 LX Boutique Hotel
11 Sunset Destination Hostel

EATING
12 Adega do Tagarro
13 Collect
14 Forninho de São Roque
15 O Gaiteiro
16 O Trevo
17 Sol e Pesca
18 Tambarina
19 Tricky's
20 Zapata

DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE
21 A Tabacaria
22 Boavista Social Club
23 Casa do Comum
24 Discoteca Jamaica
25 Finalmente
26 Incógnito
● Menina e Moça (see 17)
27 Musicbox



28 Pavilhão Chinês
29 Pensão Amor
30 the mill
31 Tokyo Lisboa
32 Trumps

ENTERTAINMENT
33 Cinema Ideal

SHOPPING
34 +351
35 Apaixonarte
36 Clube 33
37 Companhia Portugueza do Chá
38 Ementa
● Latoaria Maciel (see 41)
39 Lisboa Paper Company
40 Mercearia Poço dos Negros
41 MOBA
42 Palavra de Viajante
43 Portuguese Flannel

TRANSPORT
44 Ascensor da Bica
45 Elevador da Glória



BEST SHOPS IN 'THE TRIANGLE'

Palavra de Viajante: Nothing but travel and travel-related books in different languages line the shelves of this independent bookstore, organised by geographical areas.

Companhia Portugueza do Chá: This tea store produces its own blends, including the city-inspired Lisbon Breakfast, and is a staple for fans of the brew.

Apaixonarte: One of the businesses responsible for 'the Triangle' birth name, this shop sells and showcases art produced by Portugal-based artists.

Mercearia Poço dos Negros: The whole country seems to fit inside this tiny family-owned grocery store selling artisanal Portuguese products.

Clube 33: A record shop that is also a community hub for vinyl collectors and music lovers.



VIDEO MEDIA STUDIO EUROPE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Quiosque Ribeira das Naus

Iconic Cais do Sodré Music Venues

Attend concerts or go clubbing

In recent years, *lisboetas* have witnessed the closing of iconic music venues due to real estate pressure in the neighbourhood. But some have managed to dodge the trend, such as **Musicbox** (*musicboxlisboa.com*), standing its ground as an eclectic cornerstone of Cais do Sodré's music scene for almost two decades, with a packed calendar of concerts alternating with DJ sets – after midnight, the floor is reserved for clubbing (tickets sold separately; prices vary). **Tokyo Lisboa** and **Discoteca Jamaica**, two other survivors that managed to stay open by relocating, remain classic nightlife hangouts for patrons who enjoy dancing to indie and classic rock hits.

Riverside Cais do Sodré

Afternoon lounging at a cafe

Sun-seeking people cover every free inch of steps, street benches, and walls in sunny late mornings and afternoons, from Almada Negreiro's sculpture Reminiscência to Cais do Gás. The terrace across **Quiosque Ribeira das Naus** is perhaps one of the most coveted places for chilling, especially if you're lucky to secure one of the lounge chairs. Between Cais das Pombas and Cais do Sodré's ferry station, the converted warehouses

DRINKING IN CAIS DO SODRÉ: OUR PICKS

A Tabacaria: Custom-made cocktails on the spot according to clients' tastes at this too-small-to-sit-inside bar. *6pm-3am Fri & Sat*

Pensão Amor: Popular bar in Cais do Sodré at an old brothel. Come for the signature cocktails; stay to explore the different rooms. *noon-3am*

Menina e Moça: Laidback bar and bookshop with jazz jam sessions every Sunday that contrasts with Cais do Sodré's noisy bar environment. *3pm-2am*

Boavista Social Club: Relaxed bar with frequent jazz and soul sets in Rua da Boavista, away from the rowdier central Cais do Sodré. *7pm-2am Tue-Sat*

accommodate a few family-friendly cafes and restaurants with smaller outdoor sitting areas. And if you feel inclined to see Lisbon from the river, get tickets for the **Lisboat** (*lisboat.com; 48hr hop-on/hop-off adult/child €28/14*) tours departing every two hours from nearby Ribeira das Naus pier.

Unofficial Neighbourhood

Explore 'the Triangle'

A cluster of three streets – Poço dos Negros, Poiais de São Bento, and São Bento – forms a perfect triangle on Lisbon's map. This no-neighbourhood wedged between Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré is hardly a secret spot for locals. While the threat of gentrification still hovers over Lisbon's old neighbourhoods, business owners here have been successfully catering to an eclectic clientele of residents, expats and digital nomads in the last decade, and speciality coffee shops like **mill** peacefully share the street with traditional *pastelarias* like **Forninho de São Roque** down the street.

It's perhaps one of Lisbon's few spots where there seems to be less of a drive to obliterate uniqueness in favour of attracting more tourism.

Street Art Gallery

See GAU's newest works

The brightly sprayed walls at **GAU** (Galeria de Arte Urbana) almost go unnoticed as tourists pay undivided attention to **Elevador da Glória** screeching up and down the hill. But the seven panels lining the east side of Calçada da Glória are worth the walk down from the funicular's top stop (with special care for slippery cobblestones on rainy days). A project started by the Lisbon City Council's Department of Culture in 2009, Glória's walls remain open and free to use by any graffiti artist.

The Art of Júlio Pomar

Explore the artist's former workroom

This building near 'the Triangle' in Rua do Vale, across the street from artist Júlio Pomar's home, was once a warehouse. Redesigned by award-winning architect Siza Vieira, it was transformed into a bright and airy two-floor open space, initially intended to be Pomar's workroom. A decade-long construction process cancelled that plan and, in 2013, Lisbon gained a new art museum – **Atelier-Museu Júlio Pomar** (*ateliermuseujuliopomar.pt; adult/child €2/free*).

ECO-FRIENDLY NIGHT OUT

Barhopping with a drink in hand is a deep-rooted habit in Bairro Alto (where most bars are too small to accommodate sitting customers) and a more recent trend in Cais do Sodré. As of May 2024, the sale of drinks in single-use plastic cups for consumption outside bars is banned, following a 2018 Lisbon City Council law enforced for the first time in 2020 during the *santos populares* festivities.

In addition to providing customers with reusable cups, all nightlife establishments will also be responsible for cleaning their business' exterior and surrounding areas and placing ashtrays and trash bins outside their bars for proper waste management.

EATING IN BAIRRO ALTO: TRADITIONAL RESTAURANTS

O Trevo: Home to Lisbon's (allegedly) best *bifana* (pork sandwich), this corner spot is a mix of tourists and regulars. *7am-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Adega do Tagarro: Often loud and full, this is an affordable place for a Portuguese meal before drinks in Bairro Alto. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat* €€

Zapata: Old-school restaurant that still tapes a handwritten menu on the wall. Options for vegetarians are limited. *noon-11pm Wed-Mon* €€

Tambarina: This restaurant serves food from Cabo Verde, including a vegetarian version of its famous *cachupa* (rich stew). *11am-11pm Mon-Sat* €€

THE LEGACY OF FRÁGIL

At 126 Rua da Atalaia, a bar revolutionised Lisbon's nightlife in 1982, when Bairro Alto was the only recommendable partying destination in the city. Eight years earlier, Portugal had risen from a nearly 50-year conservative dictatorship, a tight regime that had set the country back decades regarding culture, women's rights and the LGBTIQ+ community.

At Frágil, everyone was welcome. Well, almost everyone, because the bouncers (both women) still had a say in who was allowed in. Regulars included prominent authors and journalists, poets and musicians, filmmakers and students. And although this iconic bar closed three decades later (there's an Irish pub at that location now), its social impact lives on.

Following the wishes of the Modernist painter, part of his works (the museum owns nearly 500 pieces) are displayed in tandem with newer artists' pieces that Pomar selected. Since his passing in 2018, it's been up to the museum curators to carry on that task. The small exhibitions rotate approximately every six months, typically following a theme or common point between the artists. It takes a little under one hour to experience a fraction of Pomar's work.

Bairro Alto's Artisan Hotspot

Buy art at artisans' workspaces

At Bairro Alto's former produce market, **MOBA – Mercado de Ofícios do Bairro Alto** *(10am-6pm Mon-Fri)* has been home to half a dozen artisans since 2018. Past the sliding door (if stuck, don't be afraid to push it) to the right is **Latoaria Maciel** (*latoariamaciel.com*), specialising in tinwork since the 1800s (they made a lot of the old light fixtures in the streets of Lisbon and they recently did work for Vermelho, Christian Louboutin's hotel in Melides). The family-owned company is now run by Rui Gamito, who readily reminisces about workshops in pre-pandemic times. They've since paused workshops (but haven't completely discarded the idea of reprising them in the future). However, the door is always open to visitors and potential buyers. Of the resident artisans, they've been here the longest, joined by ceramist **Madre Deus** (*madredeusbs.com*) and furniture restorer Rita Boavida.

Drag Shows in Príncipe Real

Visit Lisbon's first gay nightclubs

Open since 1976 and currently owned by well-known local drag artist Deborah Krystall, **Finalmente** (*finalmente club.com*), in the heart of Príncipe Real (less than 1km off Bairro Alto), was officially the city's first gay nightclub. The small club fills up quickly with customers squeezing in to watch the famous drag shows every night at 3am. You'll find **Trumps** (*trumps.pt*) 500m west of here. With two dance floors playing house and pop music, it appeals to a younger crowd. Drag shows happen every Friday, featuring the club's resident performers.

DRINKING IN BAIRRO ALTO: LAIDBACK BARS

Casa do Comum: Bar, cinema and bookstore wrapped in one, three-floor Casa do Comum was architect José Pinho's final project. *2pm-2am Wed-Sun*

Incógnito: Drink beer and simple cocktails while dancing the night away to 1980s and '90s alt rock in 'the Triangle'. Ring the bell to enter. *11pm-4am Thu-Sat*

Zé dos Bois: Known by locals as ZDB, this art centre in the heart of Bairro Alto has a popular terrace bar. *6pm-2am Tue-Sat*

Pavilhão Chinês: Iconic Lisbon bar a stone's throw from Bairro Alto. The zero-blank-space décor is legendary. *6pm-2am*

EXPLORE BAIRRO ALTO BY DAY

Bairro Alto may be loud after sunset, but it's a low-key residential neighbourhood in the morning. Why not stroll its streets after the bars have gone to sleep?

START	END	LENGTH
Igreja de São Roque	Praça Luís de Camões	1km; 1 hour

Bairro Alto is not the most photogenic area in Lisbon, but at a little over 500 years of age, this historic quarter doesn't have to prove its worth.

Across the street from the baroque 1 **Igreja de São Roque**, walk into the heart of the neighbourhood, down Rua do Grémio Lusitano, and let the quiet sink in. Turn left at Rua da Atalaia to number 126 – the former location of 2 **Frágil**, the 1980s bar that revolutionised Lisbon's nightlife culture, bringing the city up to speed with other European capitals.

But Bairro Alto is more than bars. Walk down Travessa dos Inglesinhos and take a left at Rua Luz Soriano. Number 63 (it's the large warehouse door decorated with bright paintings) houses 3 **Teatro do Bairro**, a small theatre in business for a little over a decade.

Continue down the street and take a left on Largo Calhariz. After less than 20m, you'll be at the 4 **Ascensor da Bica** stop, where people gather to see the yellow funicular riding up the hill.

Follow Rua do Loreto, a busy street in Bairro Alto lined with used bookstores, historic shops like Tabacaria Martins, and one of the few remaining neighbourhood cinemas, **Cinema Ideal**.

End at 5 **Praça Luís de Camões**, one of Lisbon's favourite meeting spots.



Baixa-Chiado & Rossio

DOWNTOWN: SPRAWLING SQUARES AND HISTORIC SHOPS

GETTING AROUND

Metro's Blue Line covers all Baixa and Rossio areas, but they are easy to explore on foot, with most attractions within walking distance from one another. Take the shortcut through the Baixa-Chiado Metro station to avoid the uphill walk to Chiado. Enter at Rua do Crucifixo and exit at Largo do Chiado. The only snag with this option is if all four flights of escalators are out of order (unfortunately, frequent). Long queues make it impossible to use Elevador de Santa Justa to reach Largo do Carmo. Instead, take the free lift (10am to 1am) at 68 Rua do Carmo.

TOP TIP

The 'drug dealers' downtown are Lisbon's oldest scam: scammers target tourists on the busiest streets of Baixa, selling fake drugs.

When arriving in Lisbon, travellers flock here first for the spacious squares with black-and-white patterns of *calçada portuguesa* (Portuguese cobblestone pavements) and the golden light bouncing off the Rio Tejo at sunset.

The Baixa-Chiado hub has endured great tragedy but also stands for renovation. Marked by the Great Earthquake of 1755 that devastated Lisbon's downtown, the city's riverside Baixa followed Marquês de Pombal's rebuilding plan of perfectly laid-out streets and squares.

Uphill, in Chiado, where you can find some of the narrower streets and *largos* (smaller squares) of pre-earthquake Lisbon, a 1988 ravaging fire consumed part of the neighbourhood's department stores. The recovered buildings, now housing modern shops, have kept their Art Nouveau facades and the few decor details that remained.

Despite the high concentration of tourist traps, Rossio still bears the mark of old posh socialite soirées, nights at the theatre, and day trips to the countryside of Sintra.

First Stop: Downtown from the Top

Arco da Rua Augusta's miradouro

Before immersing yourself in the confusion of Lisbon's busiest and most touristic area, head up to the *miradouro* (lookout) at **Arco da Rua Augusta** (*visitlisboa.com; adult/child €4.50/free*) to take in the city that unfolds at your feet. With your back to the river, see the contrast between chaotic-but-charming Chiado on your left and, on the right, the Alfama neighbourhood with Castelo de São Jorge (p79) perched on top and the tight cluster of buildings beneath it cascading downhill. Straight ahead, the carefully planned puzzle piece that is post-1755-earthquake Baixa surprisingly fits neatly between the two – stores, restaurants and cafes line crowded Rua Augusta, the main street connecting



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Rua Augusta

Baixa to the squares **Praça Dom Pedro IV** in Rossio and **Praça da Figueira**. Behind you, on the other side of the *miradouro,* the sprawling and bright **Praça do Comércio** marks the path to Lisbon's old gateway: the marble steps and columns of **Cais das Colunas** rising from the Rio Tejo, constantly crisscrossed by the commuter ferries from Lisbon South Bank.

Introduction to Local Culture & History

Learning at Lisboa Story Centre

Before ticking off art museums and iconic sights from your list, start at **Lisboa Story Centre** (*lisboastorycentre.pt; adult/child €7.50/3.50*). With the audio guide (included in the admission fee) pressed against your ear, move slowly through each of the rooms, where you'll find videos reproducing what life was like during the Phoenician, Roman, Moorish and pre- and post-earthquake eras. The experience is immersive and sensorial but without an overwhelming info dumping. Even in the room replicating the sensations of the 1755 earthquake and tsunami, the special effects are just a light vibration under your seat and a swinging (well-secured) chandelier above your head.

THE GREAT LISBON EARTHQUAKE

Almost 300 years later, it's still the city's most talked about event and the one with the most devastating consequences. On the morning of 1 November 1755, Lisbon was devastated by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake followed by a tsunami. A firestorm, caused by the hundreds of candles lit in churches and homes in honour of All Saints' Day, ravaged the city for hours. In addition to the estimated 40,000 casualties, Lisbon lost notable buildings and irreplaceable historical documents.

The Great Lisbon Earthquake influenced 18th-century philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau. The Catholics saw the tragic event happening on a religious holiday and destroying most of the city's churches as divine punishment.

EATING IN BAIXA: PORTUGUESE CUISINE

Merendinha do Arco: At this popular restaurant tucked away in a side street of Rossio, portions are generous. Walk-ins only. *noon-8pm Mon-Fri* €

É Um Restaurante: A project by CRESCER, this casual fine dining restaurant trains and hires unhoused people. *12.30-3pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sat* €€

Solar dos Presuntos: This famous reservations-only restaurant offers friendly and impeccable service. *noon-3.30pm & 6.30-11pm Mon, Fri & Sat* €€€

Beira Gare: Popular for cheap sandwiches served at the counter, this is an affordable option for a quick late-night meal. Cash only. *11.30am-10pm Mon-Sat* €

HIGHLIGHTS
1 Arco da Rua Augusta
2 Convento do Carmo & Museu Arqueológico
3 Núcleo Arqueológico da Rua dos Correeiros

SIGHTS
4 Cais das Colunas
5 Elevador de Santa Justa
6 Lisboa Story Centre
7 Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado
8 Praça da Figueira
9 Praça do Comércio
10 Praça Dom Pedro IV
11 Rua Augusta
12 Rua do Carmo
13 Rua Garrett

SLEEPING
14 Home Lisbon Hostel
15 Hotel do Chiado
16 Lisbon Destination Hostel
17 Martinhal Lisbon Chiado Family Suites
18 My Story Figueira
19 Torel Palace
20 We Love F Tourists Hostel

EATING
21 A Colmeia
22 Ao 26
23 Beira Gare
24 Confeitaria Nacional
25 É Um Restaurante



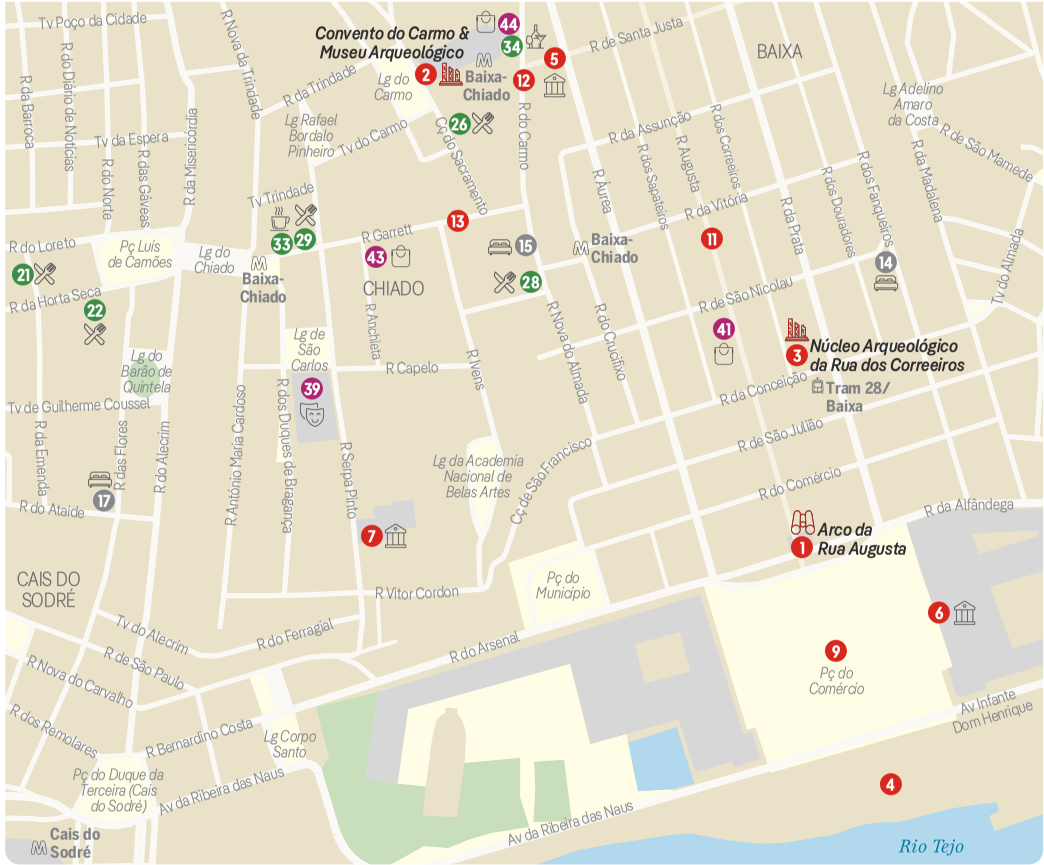
26 Jardim das Cerejas
27 Merendinha do Arco
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29 Pastelaria Benard
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31 Terraço Editorial

DRINKING
32 A Ginjinha
33 Café a Brasileira
34 Carmo Rooftop
- Delirium Café (see 28)
- Entretanto Rooftop Bar (see 15)

35 Ginjinha Popular
36 Ginjinha Rubi
37 Ginjinha Sem Rival

ENTERTAINMENT
38 Teatro Nacional de Dona Maria II
39 Teatro Nacional de São Carlos
40 Teatro Politeama

SHOPPING
41 Casa Pereira da Conceição
42 Chapelaria Azevedo Rua
43 Livraria Bertrand
44 Luvaria Ulisses
45 Manteigaria Silva



1988 CHIADO FIRE

On 25 August, at 5am, *lisboetas* awoke to a hellish scenario as the rest of the country followed the live reports on national television: a violent fire blazed through Chiado's department stores while dozens of firefighters powerlessly tried to control the flames on foot as the fire engines were unable to get close – at the time, Rua do Carmo (p73) was a pedestrian-only street decorated with high, fixed concrete flowerbeds, which obstructed emergency vehicles. The fire quickly spread, destroying most of the area's 18th-century buildings.

Led by Portuguese architect Siza Vieira, the reconstruction started almost immediately and managed to preserve a lot of the original features and facades.



JIMMONKPHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Praça Dom Pedro IV (p69) and Teatro Nacional de Dona Maria II

What Lies Beneath the City

Uncover 2500-plus years of history

Halting construction work in Lisbon for the sake of preserving artefacts is nothing new, but what was discovered underneath the headquarters of a downtown bank in the 1990s was truly mind-blowing. At **Núcleo Arqueológico da Rua dos Correeiros** (*fundacaomillenniumbcp.pt; free*), it's possible to trace the city's history from the Iron Age to the post-1755 downtown (Baixa Pombalina) through a wide selection of archaeological findings that the bank preserved, once the renovation works were completed. Less than 50m from here, under Rua da Conceição, construction workers in 1771 found what was later identified as a 1st-century-AD Roman crypto portico (structures built to support large buildings). **Museu de Lisboa** (*museudelisboa.pt; adult/child €3/free*) organises guided tours once a year, but unfortunately, tickets sell out in the blink of an eye.

Classic Plays & Portuguese Musicals

A night at the theatre

Lisbon hasn't had a bona fide theatre district since Parque Mayer's golden age in the mid-1900s (a cluster of show venues off Avenida da Liberdade), but the major playhouses concentrate in the Chiado and Rossio quarters. Nineteenth-century

DRINKING IN BAIXA: GINJINHA BARS

A Ginjinha: Established in 1840, the habit of drinking sour cherry liquor started here. To many, this is the place to have *ginjinha*. *10am-10pm*

Ginjinha Sem Rival: A popular stop for *ginjinha* or an Eduardino, a fruity drink created by a regular customer on an inspired evening. *9am-midnight*

Ginjinha Rubi: Away from Rossio crowds, it's the quieter place for a *ginjinha*, although space is tight. *7am-10.30pm*

Ginjinha Popular: At Baixa's busier street, prices here are higher, but a *ginjinha* at the *esplanada* saves the day after hours of sightseeing. *8am-midnight*

Teatro Nacional de Dona Maria II (*tndm.pt*) was under structural renovations until the end of 2024, but the plays remain the same: they range from reinvented classics to contemporary creations, both national and international. Within a short walking distance, west of Praça Dom Pedro IV, **Teatro Politeama** (*filipelaferia.pt*) is the place to go for Portuguese musicals and revue theatre. For opera and symphonic music concerts, head to **Teatro Nacional de São Carlos** (*tnsc.pt*) – the 18th-century building will be under structural renovations until 2026, but the scheduled performances will continue in other venues across Lisbon.

Window Shopping & Unique Souvenirs

Explore downtown's commercial streets

Once the classic shopping hub of Baixa-Chiado, in the last decade **Rua Augusta**, **Rua do Carmo** and **Rua Garrett** rapidly became a hotspot for overpriced restaurants (stay away from the laminated, stock-photo menus advertising non-Portuguese dishes like *paella*), souvenir shops and large international retail chains. However, among the unoriginal businesses, you can find **historic shops** (*lojascomhistoria.pt*) surviving the spiking rents in Rua Augusta and side streets. Rua do Carmo has a high concentration of street artisans, most selling handmade accessories. Rua Garrett remains closer to its past life, lined with luxury brand boutiques and a couple of classic *pastelarias*.

HISTORIC SHOPS

Chapelaria Azevedo Rua: The oldest hat-maker in Portugal, in business since 1886.

Luvaria Ulisses: This store sells custom-made gloves at Rua do Carmo. Its tiny space welcomes one client at a time.

Casa Pereira da Conceição: Go for the decor and architecture; stay for the scent of freshly ground coffee. For connoisseurs and first-timers.

Livraria Bertrand: The world's oldest in-business bookstore, in Rua Garrett since 1773, is a must-stop for bookworms and history buffs.

Manteigaria Silva: A family-owned grocery store and one of the top places to buy *bacalhau* (salted cod) and other delicacies.

Portuguese Art from the 19th & 20th Centuries

Spend the morning at MNAC

A small museum in Chiado, **Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado** (*museuartecontemporanea.gov.pt; adult/child €8/free*) showcases works of notable Portuguese artists from the mid-19th century to the late 20th century. The collection includes Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro's *O Grupo do Leão*, depicting several 19th-century intellectuals, writers and artists at their usual hangout, restaurant Leão d'Ouro in Rossio, including his brother, cartoonist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro. Modernist Almada Negreiros' *Varina* and Paula Rego's *Self-portrait in Red* are other highlights. The museum doesn't have a very extensive collection, nor does it attract as many tourists as some of the others in Lisbon, so expect to spend one quiet hour visiting the permanent and temporary exhibitions and the sculpture garden.



PORTUGAL'S FIRST CARTOONIST

Museu Bordalo Pinheiro (p98) in the Avenidas Novas neighbourhood has a rich collection of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro's ceramics and caricatures.



EATING IN CHIADO: VEGAN & VEGETARIAN

Jardim das Cerejas: Small venue near Largo do Carmo serving affordable vegan lunch and dinner buffets. *noon-3.30pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat* €

Organi Chiado: Vegan spot in Chiado serving meals made with locally sourced ingredients. The menu changes daily. *noon-3.30pm & 7-11pm* €€

Ao 26: Varied vegan menu, including plant-based versions of traditional local dishes and a good selection of vegan wines. *12.30-6pm & 7-11pm* €€

A Colmeia: Cafeteria-style lunch-only restaurant where affordable menus include a main, salad and dessert or drink. Cash only. *12.30-3pm Mon-Sat* €

LARGO DO CARMO: REVOLUTION EPICENTRE

On the morning of 25 April 1974, a group of Portuguese military officers and soldiers led by Salgueiro Maia headed to Largo do Carmo, where then-President Marcelo Caetano had sought refuge at GNR's Carmo headquarters. Despite the army's orders for civilians to stay home, as news of success spread, hundreds of people eager to witness the beginning of the end of the 48-year dictatorship flocked to Carmo.

Photographers Mário Varela Gomes and Alfredo Cunha captured the ongoing revolution, showing a packed crowd covering every inch of Largo do Carmo, perched on trees and lampposts, and squeezing in narrow balconies.

Scan the QR code on the square's pavement for a detailed account.

The Downtown Historic Pastelarias

Coffee, pastries and stunning architecture

Early morning, at the historic *pastelarias* in Baixa-Chiado, staff wearing the classic black tie and white shirt attire move swiftly between tables – the pace will increase throughout the day. **Confeitaria Nacional** (in Praça da Figueira since it opened in1829), **Pastelaria Benard** (Lisbon's first tea house established in 1868), and Fernando Pessoa's favourite **Café a Brasileira** (1905) attract so many crowds they seem to be on the verge of becoming tourist traps. They are not quite there yet, though. The chance to admire the architectural details of each cafe is worth the less than €5 (on average) espresso and speciality pastry combo – Benard's croissants, Confeitaria's éclairs (chocolate, caramel or lemon) and Brasileira's *pastel de nata*.

Monthly Themed Markets in Baixa

Shopping at Mercado da Baixa

Downtown's shop and restaurant owners struggled in the early 1990s when shoppers switched old department stores for the convenience of shopping centres. Banding together to improve commerce in the area, they created the business owners' association ADBP, which now organises the monthly **Mercado da Baixa**. Initially, the market happened almost exclusively in Praça da Figueira but has since expanded to Praça Luís de Camões (Chiado) and Praça Dom Pedro IV (Rossio) with different events throughout the year. The Rossio Christmas Market is now practically a staple winter event.

Lisbon's Famous Gothic Church Ruins

Visit one-of-a-kind Convento do Carmo

The running story is that the 1300s **Convento do Carmo** (*museuarqueologicodocarmo.pt; adult/child €7/free*) remains in ruins to remind us of the devastation of the 1755 Great Earthquake. This version indeed looks better on brochure paper, but there's more to it: when Portugal dissolved the monasteries in 1834, the convent's renovations stopped indefinitely. Perfect timing, too, as the Romantic period was starting, and ruins and old medieval monuments were the 19th-century movement's favourite aesthetics. Historical context aside, walking on the central aisle under the arches of a roofless Gothic church is a unique experience. The admission ticket includes visiting the **Museu Arqueológico do Carmo** at the back of the church – the collection of artefacts is small but wide-ranging; expect to spend a little over half an hour visiting.

DRINKING IN BAIXA-CHIADO: BARS WITH A VIEW

Delirium Café: Pub in Chiado with a good selection of beers and friendly service. Arrive early to grab a table on the balcony. *1pm-1am*

Terraço Editorial: The top floor of the homeware store Pollux has had many lives. Currently, it's occupied by this laidback bistro. *noon-midnight*

Carmo Rooftop: Nestled between Convento do Carmo and Chiado, this bar on the three-tiered terrace has one of the best views of Rossio. *10am-1am*

Entretanto Rooftop Bar: Sip a glass of Portuguese wine at Hotel do Chiado's cosy restaurant and bar with a view to the castle. *11.30am-10pm*

FERNANDO PESSOA'S BAIXA

Author Fernando Pessoa lived most of his days in Lisbon, his birth city. Discover some of his favourite hangouts.

START	END	LENGTH
Teatro Nacional de São Carlos	Cais das Colunas	1.5km; 1 hour

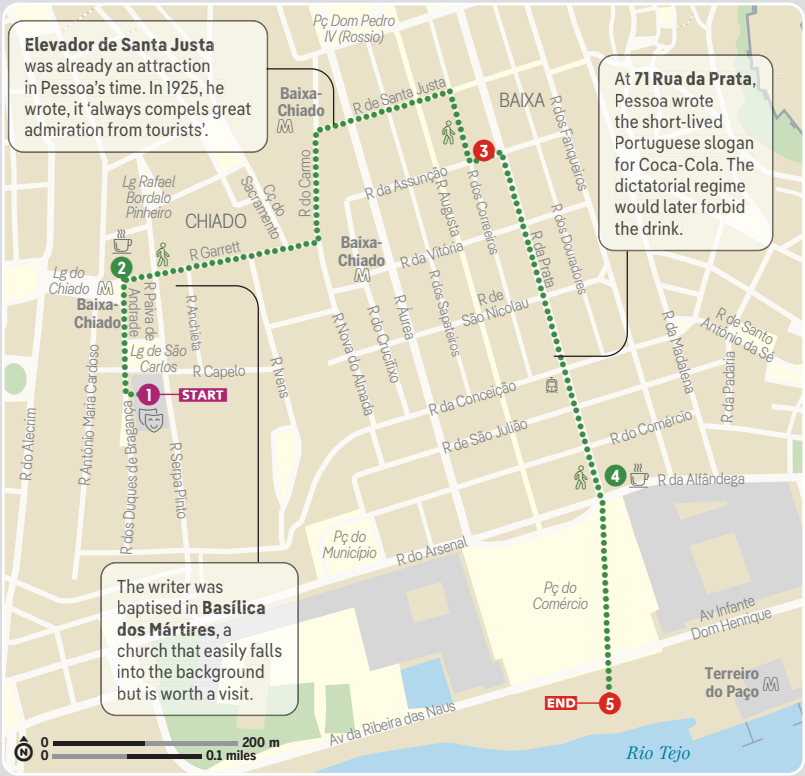
Start at the house where the author was born, across from 1 **Teatro Nacional de São Carlos** (p73). The plaque announcing it sometimes goes unnoticed, but not Jean-Michel Folon's statue portraying the writer with his head in a book.

At Largo do Chiado, you'll find Pessoa's most famous statue outside cafe 2 **Café a Brasileira**, one of his usual hangouts. A bit antisocial, as he preferred to focus on writing, Pessoa is depicted as waving people off, although many see it as an invitation to sit on the empty chair for a selfie.

Immerse yourself in the same streets where the author of *Lisboa: What the Tourist Should See* (1925) roamed and head to 3 **42 Rua da Assunção** where Pessoa met Ofélia Queirós in 1919, the love of his life (but a short-lived relationship), with whom he exchanged dozens of letters (later compiled in the book *Cartas de Amor*).

At the end of Rua da Prata is 4 **Martinho da Arcada**, a cafe where Fernando Pessoa and fellow author and painter Almada Negreiros were regulars. The writer's favourite table in the corner is kept empty as a tribute.

End at 5 **Cais das Colunas** (p69) and take time to admire the Rio Tejo. Bernardo Soares, one of Pessoa's alter egos, wrote, 'When one feels too intensely, the Tagus is an endless Atlantic'.



Mouraria, Alfama & Graça

THE HISTORIC CENTRE

GETTING AROUND

Walking is the best way to get around the historic centre, but uneven pavements can make it a challenging experience, especially when walking downhill. There are a few public escalators (Escadinhas da Saúde) and lifts (Elevador do Castelo, Elevador de Santa Luzia) to improve mobility. Open since 2024, the new Graça funicular connects Mouraria to Miradouro da Graça.

Metro serves Mouraria (Martim Moniz) and the riverside part of Alfama (Santa Apolónia) but rely on trams (28E, 12E), buses (737, 10B) or rideshares to reach Graça and the higher parts of the historic centre.

TOP TIP

'Getting lost' and exploring on foot is great for getting to know the historic centre, but walking alone at night can be unsafe in the poorly lit streets.

Alfama, Mouraria and Graça are Lisbon's traditional neighbourhoods. They are known for their sweeping views of the city and clusters of narrow streets and colourful houses cascading downhill towards the Rio Tejo.

Alfama, the oldest, has seen many versions of Lisbon over the centuries. Parts of it survived the earthquake that devastated the city, so it's one of the few places where you can find medieval houses.

Mouraria, built as a ghetto in 1147 for the Moors as a 'gesture of good faith' from Dom Afonso Henriques, has never truly outgrown its outsider trait, which probably explains why fado, then a marginal music genre, was born here.

Graça is the newest of the three, with its pretty-coloured tile facades and once-enclosed villas, where most of the buildings were made in the 19th century to accommodate the growing population of factory workers who moved to Lisbon from other parts of Portugal.

Feast With Locals at Neighbourhood Arraiais

Join the santos populares fests

It's without much doubt Lisbon's most famed street celebration: *santos populares*. In honour of St Anthony (and St Vincent), Lisbon's historic neighbourhoods fill up with a beer-holding sardine-eating crowd (plant-based options are not easy to find, but not impossible), usually dancing the night away to a particular Portuguese music genre known as *música pimba* (think flashy dancers, high-pitched singers and tunes that mix pop with a folksy beat).

That's the daily (or rather, nightly) top activity during June, peaking on the 12th, the eve of Lisbon's holiday. The feast spreads across the city, but it's stronger in Alfama, Graça and Mouraria – these neighbourhoods will be bursting at the seams.



SIGHTS
1. Casa dos Bicos
2. Castelo de São Jorge
3. Largo da Severa
4. Largo das Portas do Sol
5. Miradouro da Graça
6. Miradouro de Santa Luzia
7. Museu do Aljube
8. Museu do Fado
9. Museu do Teatro Romano
10. Rua do Capelão
11. Sé de Lisboa
12. Tasca Bela

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
13. Renovar a Mouraria

SLEEPING
14. Hotel Mundial
15. Memmo Alfama
16. Palacete Chafariz d'el Rei
17. Patio São Vicente Guest Houses

EATING
18. Cantinho do Aziz
19. Mercado Oriental
20. Mi Dai
21. O Velho Eurico
22. Tasca Baldracca
23. Tasca Zé dos Cornos
24. Zé da Mouraria

DRINKING
25. Botequim
26. Damas
- Terrace (see 15)
27. Típica de Alfama
28. Ulysses Speakeasy

ENTERTAINMENT
29. Cinalfama Lisbon International Film Festival

SHOPPING
30. Centro Comercial da Mouraria
31. Cerâmica São Vicente
32. Conserveira de Lisboa
33. Feira da Ladra
34. Garbags
35. Madalena à Janela
36. XVIII Azulejo e Faiança

TRANSPORT
37. Escadinhas da Saúde

Over the last decade, most of the *arraiais* (improvised temporary partying venues) have evolved from purely neighbourhood-based celebrations to branded social events where all music genres are welcomed. **Arraial da Mouraria**, organised by local NGO Renovar a Mouraria, remains one of the few where community-based socialising is still the most important aspect.

RIDING LISBON'S TRAMS WITH MINIMAL IMPACT

Carris' yellow trams are ubiquitous in Lisbon's historic centre. Riding them has become such a must-do that travellers often mistake them for tourist rides. **28E** is the most popular, but it's also the locals' only public transportation to get across town from Alfama. Hop on the 28E outside of rush hour or later in the evening – the route is just as enchanting at nightfall. If your time to travel around is tight, look for alternatives – same experience, but slightly different itineraries. Tram **12E** travels to and from Martim Moniz via Alfama's viewpoints and the Sé, while tram **25E** connects Praça da Figueira to Campo de Ourique (Prazeres) via Cais do Sodré and Santos.



WILLOWTREEHOUSE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sé de Lisboa

Roman Lisbon

Find traces of Olisipo

In Lisbon, Roman ruins are scarce and scattered, most buried underneath the rubble of the 1755 earthquake and the foundations of the rebuilt city.

In Alfama, the ruins of a 1st-century-CE theatre led to the opening of **Museu do Teatro Romano** (*museudelisboa.pt; adult/child €3/free*). Although the museum's artefact collection is worth the one-hour visit, the old playhouse outdoors draws most of the attention, and it's free admission.

Closer to the river, on the ground floor of the 16th-century Renaissance building **Casa dos Bicos**, a few ruins and artefacts from the ancient Roman era are on display for free.

Looking for the Medieval City

Seeing Sé and Castelo São Jorge

Sé de Lisboa (*sedelisboa.pt; adult/child €5/3*) doesn't go unnoticed on the side of the street leading up to Alfama's *miradouros* (lookouts). Although most admire the medieval church from the outside, behind its austere facade are high vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows, and a small museum of religious art worth visiting. With the archaeological excavations in the cloisters coming to an end after three decades, sightseers will soon be able to access that area. At the time of writing, the cloisters are expected to reopen by the end of 2024.

DRINKING IN ALFAMA: UNIQUE NIGHTCAPS

The Terrace: One of the first rooftop bars before the trend hit Lisbon, it's the perfect spot for casual drinks with views over Alfama. *noon-11pm*

Lux-Frágil: Lisbon's hottest nightclub is a fave for drinks with live music or dancing until dawn. Check its events calendar. *midnight-6am Thu-Sun*

Típica de Alfama: Not all is fado in Alfama's hangouts, which is true at this tiny family-owned bar with eclectic live acts. *7pm-2am Mon-Sat*

Ulysses Speakeasy: This reservations-only, almost-secret micro bar in the heart of Alfama is famous for its customised cocktails. *4pm-midnight Sat-Tue*

A steep walk leads to **Castelo de São Jorge** (*castelodesaojorge.pt; adult/child €15/free*). Some brave the uphill climb just for the sight; others expect to visit the place where the country's first king defeated the Moors. That seen-as-heroic feat fit the conservative dictatorship's rhetoric of national pride, which led to a castle's restoration in the 1940s. It's not entirely authentic, but it is still partly a 900-year-old medieval fortress.

The Gruelling Path to Democracy

Learning Portugal's dark, recent past

Museu do Aljube (*museudoaljube.pt; adult/child €3/free*) tells the story of one of the darkest periods of Portugal's recent history: the conservative dictatorship known as the Estado Novo and the fight for democracy that culminated with the peaceful military coup on the morning of 25 April 1974. Set inside the former political prison, where the opponents to the regime were jailed and tortured, the museum gives a punch-in-the-gut account of the nearly five decades of the totalitarian regime and the colonial agenda that supported it through personal testimonies, documents, and photos of those who perished at the hands of PIDE, the political police.

Classic Viewpoints

See Lisbon from old miradouros

Miradouros in the historic centre are a dime a dozen – but we're just accounting for the four official ones. From windy **Miradouro da Senhora do Monte**, between Graça and Mouraria, you can see Praça Martim Moniz, bits of downtown, and the winding street of Calçada do Monte that will take you down to the heart of Mouraria.

Largo das Portas do Sol in Alfama is all about drinks in the sun at the outdoor cafe looking over the Rio Tejo. Less than 100m down the street, **Santa Luzia** renders the view romantic with its tile panels and pergola. **Miradouro da Graça** is the city's timeless terrace where you can watch Lisbon wind down as the sun sets.

Expect crowds throughout the day as everyone flocks there for that perfect shot of 'authentic' Lisbon.

Film Festival With a Social Impact

See independent films at Cinalfama

In the last decade, a real estate rush driven by changes in national rental laws swept through Lisbon's historic centre, hitting Alfama first and the hardest. The spiking rents affected

HISTORIC CENTRE SOUVENIR SHOPS

XVIII Azulejo e Faiança: Across the street from Miradouro de Santa Luzia, this store specialises in hand-painted *azulejos* (painted glazed tiles) produced with 18th-century techniques.

Madalena à Janela: This store is a tribute to the owners' love for Portuguese-made arts and crafts. Find ethical and local ceramics, tote bags and T-shirts.

Conserveira de Lisboa: Getting a can of sardines with your birth year from a souvenir shop is cute, but it doesn't beat buying gourmet tinned fish from here, one of the oldest stores in Lisbon.

Cerâmica São Vicente: Family-owned ceramics shop selling hand-painted *azulejos* and other pieces. They also organise workshops.

Garbags: Original 'not-another-tile' souvenirs. This store makes accessories out of recycled plastic containers and other materials.

EATING IN ALFAMA & MOURARIA: TASCAS

O Velho Eurico: Named after the former owner, this *tasca*, run by young chefs since 2018, serves classics like *bacalhau*. *12.30-3pm & 8-10.30pm Tue-Sat* €€

Bela: This small and famous fado haunt in Alfama fills up fast. Recommended for late-night *petiscos* (food to share). *8pm-4am Tue-Sun* €

Tasca Baldracca: This unassuming place in Mouraria is proof that fusion cuisine with local inspo is welcome at a *tasca*. *12.30-3pm & 8-11pm Tue-Sat* €€

Tasca Zé dos Cornos: Family-owned Portuguese cuisine *tasca* where space is tight and sharing tables is the norm. Walk-ins only. *noon-4pm Tue-Sat* €

CAN YOU BUY ANTIQUE AZULEJOS?

The short answer would be 'no', but it's not that simple. Selling historic *azulejos* (glazed tiles) is a very lucrative business. The rarer the piece, the higher the profit, which leads to criminal activity – Polícia Judiciária (Portuguese criminal police) has a division dedicated to investigating tile theft (*sosazulejo.com*). A lot of the facades of Lisbon's old buildings are missing dozens of *azulejos*, most of them carefully ripped from the walls (the closer the gaps are to the ground, the more likely it is they were stolen) to be sold later at Feira da Ladra, street markets, or antique stores to unsuspecting tourists. Movement MAPA (*facebook.com/azulejo.patrimonio.em.risco*) does a good job raising awareness for the issue.

tenants and forced local cultural clubs (the backbones of social life here) out of their headquarters. Around that time, the informal project **Cinalfama** (*cinalfama.com*) began screening independent films on the white walls of Alfama in collaboration with Grupo Sportivo Adicense, an institution when it comes to cultural clubs. Any street could be a movie theatre, as long as there was a big enough wall and a place to sit. In July 2022, it officially became the **Cinalfama Lisbon International Film Festival**, showcasing a selection of independent films from all over the world and continuing to attract audiences to Alfama's outdoors while breaking the language barrier (all movies are subtitled in English).

Penny-Pinchers' & Collectors' Paradise

Shopping at Feira da Ladra

Campo de Santa Clara becomes Lisbon's most popular and oldest flea market on Tuesdays and Saturdays. **Feira da Ladra** is a mix of professional vendors, with proper stalls and displays of merchandise, and occasional sellers with a blanket full of scattered objects on the pavement. Although the market happens twice a week, early Saturday mornings are best for rare finds – bring cash and get ready to negotiate (and be prepared to take a loss, too, as some vendors stick more to their prices than others).

Multi-Ethnic Mouraria

Explore Lisbon's most diverse neighbourhood

Since its past as a ghetto (by the ruling of King Dom Afonso Henriques, who forced the Muslim community to relocate here), migrant communities have found their bearings in Mouraria. People of dozens of different nationalities have settled here over the years. It's true that Mouraria is the epicentre of Asian and South Asian markets and shops, cafes and restaurants, but don't reduce it to a 'Portuguese Chinatown' – there's nothing wrong with the moniker; it's just that the neighbourhood is so much more than that.

One way to get to know the place is to shop at **Centro Comercial da Mouraria** or try street food at Mercado Oriental (p82). Another way, if you're travelling slowly, is to book a Migrantour with **Renovar a Mouraria** (*renovaramouraria.pt/en/migrantour_sustainable; adult/child €15/5*) and visit Mouraria in the company of a migrant tour guide.

DRINKING IN GRAÇA: CULTURAL SPOTS

Botequim: Laidback bar located in the space that was previously a business owned by feminist Portuguese writer Natália Correia. *9.30am-1am*

VALSA: A cultural centre and safe haven for independent artists and patrons from all walks of life, with a diverse calendar of events. *6-10pm Wed-Sun*

Damas: Graça's eclectic alternative concert hall located at an old bakery. Check the weekly cocktails menu scribbled on the tiled walls. *noon-4am Fri & Sat*

Drama Bar: Queer bar and cultural venue hosting regular drag shows, lip-syncing events, and flamboyant theme parties. *7pm-midnight Wed-Sun*

HISTORIC CENTRE ON FOOT

This walking tour takes you to the heart of the three neighbourhoods of Lisbon's historic centre.

START	END	LENGTH
Centro Comercial da Mouraria	Largo do Chafariz de Dentro	2km; 1 hour

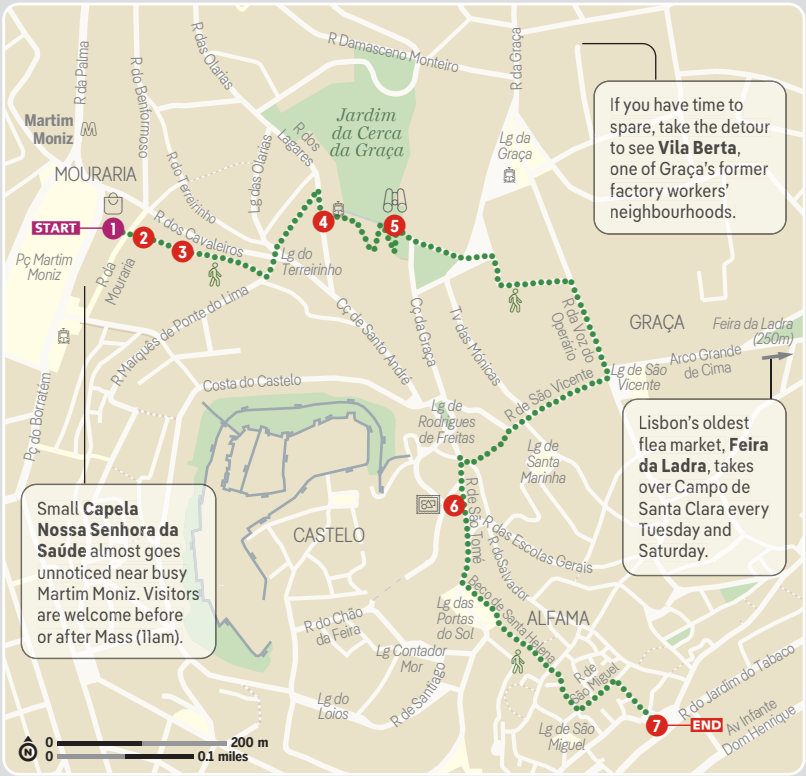
Start the walking tour from 1 **Centro Comercial da Mouraria**. Always busy, this department store is the go-to spot for spices in bulk and Asian food staples.

Head to 2 **Rua do Capelão** across the pavement – a sculpture honouring fado marks the beginning of the street where this music genre was supposedly born. Photos of prominent *fadistas* (fado singers) decorate the wall, a work by artist Camilla Watson.

Walk up to 3 **Largo da Severa**, a quiet square off the crowded streets of central Mouraria named after the first *fadista*.

Continue up the maze of cobblestoned streets to Rua dos Lagares. From here, walk up the zigzagging 4 **Caracol da Graça** and admire street art on the way. Or cut it short and ride the Graça funicular. Both options lead to the popular viewpoint 5 **Miradouro da Graça** (p79).

Cross Jardim da Graça to Rua da Voz do Operário, then right to Rua de São Vicente and down Beco dos Lóios to Alfama. Follow along Rua de São Tomé – see Vhils' 6 **Calçada** dedicated to Amália on the right – and turn left to Beco de Santa Helena. Take in the energy of Lisbon's oldest neighbourhood before walking down to 7 **Largo do Chafariz de Dentro**.



HOW TO EXPERIENCE FADO



Filipa Biscaia (@filipabiscaia), *fadista* in several *casas de fado* in Alfama, shares her tips and love for the genre.

***Casa de fado* or *tasca*?** They are different experiences; one isn't better than the other. *Tascas* are usually more laidback, while some *casas de fado* might require a more respectful behaviour from the audience.

Audience etiquette: Even in a casual *tasca* with live fado, clients must listen in silence. And service is interrupted when we sing. In more informal settings, if the audience is still being loud after the lights dim, we won't start performing until there's silence.

Listening recommendations before going to a *casa de fado*? Amália, our biggest reference. Any fado sung by Amália.



DACE KUNDRATE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Museu do Fado

Learn About Portugal's Urban Popular Song

Visit Museu do Fado

Fado's roots run deep in Lisbon's old quarters. Nowadays, this sorrowful music genre is more associated with Alfama, but it was born in Mouraria's *tascas*. It went from working-class entertainment to famous world music genre in what feels like a heartbeat. During Estado Novo, fado became part of the regime's propaganda, and it took a while for the Portuguese to reconnect with the genre. Its 2011 Unesco World Heritage status helped change the perspective. Before heading to a *casa de fado* or discarding the genre, learn about its nuanced history at **Museu do Fado** (*museudofado.pt; adult/child €5/free*).

EATING IN MOURARIA: MULTICULTURAL CUISINE

Zé da Mouraria: Tradtional Portuguese eatery in the heart of Mouraria. The portions are big enough for two. *noon-4pm Mon-Sat* €€

Mi Dai: This blink-and-you'll-miss-it, cash-only, canteen-style spot is one of Lisbon's most authentic places for Chinese food. *10am-9pm Mon-Sat* €

Cantinho do Aziz: This welcoming venue hidden away in an alleyway is highly recommended for its Mozambican cuisine. *9am-11pm Mon-Sat* €€

Mercado Oriental: The top floor of supermarket Mercado Oriental is a food court with diverse Asian cuisine restaurants. *10.30am-9pm* €

Belém

GRAND PALACES AND MANUELINE ARCHITECTURE

Once the port from where the Portuguese navigators set sail, Belém is forever linked to the age of sea explorations. That time's prosperous 'finds' made Portugal one of the wealthiest countries in Europe. Profits were used to build grand monuments such as the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos.

Far from the city centre, with sprawling gardens, vast squares and grand palaces, Belém feels more like a suburb than a neighbourhood of Lisbon. For the monarchy and the aristocrats of the 18th century, this was their countryside, an affluent riverside land where they summered. Today, the palaces have been turned into museums, the gardens into public botanical parks, and the manors into embassies.

Busy during the day, in the evening, as tourists flock back to the city centre, Belém becomes incredibly quiet and empty, even though it has one of Lisbon's biggest cultural centres with a full calendar of events.

GETTING AROUND

The quickest and traffic-free way to get in and out of Belém is by train. It departs about every half-hour from the Cais do Sodré train station, and the trip takes less than 10 minutes. The train station in Belém is within walking distance of most of the attractions.

Other public transit options include trams 15E and 18E and buses 727, 728 and 714. At the time of writing, there are traffic constraints and temporary changes in stops due to ongoing works to expand the Metro line to Santos and Estrela and improve Lisbon's drainage system.

TOP TIP

Plan for a morning trip, preferably on a weekday, and clear the two main sites (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos and Torre de Belém) out of your must-see list first.

Offbeat Immersive Experience

Quake: understanding Lisbon's greatest tragedy

It might border on morbid curiosity to delve into this part of the past, but perhaps it was only a matter of time until Lisbon's most impactful tragedy had its own attraction. Although the Great Earthquake and its effects are discussed at length in many of the city's sights, **Quake** (*lisbonquake.com; adult/child €29/21*) has been (quite literally) shaking things up since it opened in 2022. Book your tickets in advance and arrive at least 10 minutes before your allotted time. Identified by the coloured RFID wristband provided at the reception, each group of no more than 19 people is led through a series of rooms with interactive exhibitions on quakes until the big one everyone is there for: the 1755 Great Earthquake simulator. A kind word for those who might be triggered by quakes: there's a stationary pew at the back of the replicated church, from where you can see the chain of events without having to be in the middle of it. This experience isn't available for children aged six and younger.



SIGHTS
4 Adega Belém Urban Winery
5 Jardim Botânico Tropical
6 MAAT Central
7 MAAT Garden
8 Museu de Arte Popular
9 Museu Nacional dos Coches
10 Padrão dos Descobrimentos
11 Quake
12 Torre de Belém

SLEEPING
13 Altis Belém
14 Wine & Books Hotel

EATING
15 Confeitaria Nacional
16 Darwin's Café
MAAT Café & Kitchen (see 1)
17 Manteigaria
18 Pastéis de Belém
19 Pastelaria Restelo
20 Pastelaria Versailles
21 Portugália

DRINKING
22 À Margem
23 Gastrobar 38° 41'
24 Wine with a View

Royal Coaches, Carriages & Bullet Holes

Museu Nacional dos Coches' historical vehicles

Museu Nacional dos Coches (*museudoscoches.gov.pt; adult/child €8/free*) is a classic must-visit, although we could add the (probably controversial) qualification: 'if you have one hour to spare and a deep-rooted interest in the topic'. Visitors have 360-degree views of each of the Portuguese Royal Family's coaches, the most notable being the landau in which King Carlos I was assassinated in 1908 (bullet holes included).

Forest Bathing & Escaping the Crowds

Relax at Jardim Botânico Tropical

Behind Pastéis de Belém, there's a not-so-secret 7-hectare tropical garden where you can find refuge or sit in the shade. At **Jardim Botânico Tropical** (*museus.ulisboa.pt; adult/child €5/free*), the only (often loud) distractions are the resident peacocks roaming

EATING IN BELÉM: OUR PICKS

Portugália: This Lisbon classic, located in the middle of a riverside lake, is known for its steaks and seafood-based dishes. *noon-midnight* €€

Darwin's Café: The Champalimaud Foundation's modern cuisine restaurant is famous for its gorgeous views. *12.30pm-1am* €€€

MAAT Café & Kitchen: MAAT Museum's laidback restaurant is a top spot in Belém for brunch on weekends. *11am-midnight* €€

Canalha: Award-winning chef João Rodrigues mixes the homely environment of a traditional *tasca* with a modern cuisine menu. *12.30-11pm Tue-Sat* €€

TOP EXPERIENCE

Mosteiro dos Jerónimos

The Mosteiro dos Jerónimos in Belém is Lisbon's best example of Manueline architecture (as the unique Portuguese approach to the Late Gothic style became known). Funded (and influenced) by the country's age of sea explorations, it was one of the first local monuments to be classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



BENNY MARTY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Take Your Time in the Cloisters

The intricately decorated Mudejar-style arches and columns at the cloisters are worth a close look, and plenty of photographs – everywhere you can notice rope-like elements and maritime creatures (a nod to the sea voyages) and the armillary sphere (used by King Manuel I it became the symbol of the Portuguese empire and, not without controversy, is still part of Portugal's flag today). The marked path around the cloisters takes visitors through three must-see areas of the monastery, but although none of the other two are least valuable architecturally, it's the 16th-century Chapter Room that deserves extra time – the eyes are drawn to the elaborate door first and then to the tomb of 19th-century writer Alexandre Herculano in the centre of the room.

Don't Skip the Church

If you're pressed for time after admiring every inch of the cloisters, instead of skipping the church, carve out a few minutes to at least see the tombs of Camões and Vasco da Gama, sculpted in 1894 by Costa Mota. Design-wise, the building is a combination of styles added over the years, from the 16th-century high vaulted ceilings and detailed decor to the 20th-century stained-glass windows.

TOP TIPS

- Early mornings on weekdays are the best time to visit.
- Buy tickets from the official website ahead of time.
- The time slot on the ticket doesn't mean you can skip the line, nor won't be allowed inside if you miss your schedule.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for opening hours and to buy tickets.

TOP EXPERIENCE

Palácio Nacional da Ajuda Jerónimos

Often overlooked in lieu of other palaces, gardens and monuments closer to the river, as the only visitable royal palace in Lisbon, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda gives visitors a look inside the Portuguese Royal Family's last official residence, where most of the rooms are as they were in the 19th century.



OSCAR GONZALEZ FUENTES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

TOP TIPS

- Palácio da Ajuda is often used for official government ceremonies, which may affect opening hours.
- Instead of walking uphill from Belém, take tram 18E or bus 760 from Cais do Sodré and visit the palace and the museum first.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for opening hours.

The Palace

If the proportions of **Palácio Nacional da Ajuda** (*palacio ajuda.gov.pt; adult/child €8/4*) seem off when you step inside the interior courtyard, your eyes aren't deceiving you – after the Portuguese Royal Family was forced to seek exile in Brazil following the French invasions (1807), construction stopped and never resumed. But after entering the building, the explosion of frescoes, tapestries, heavy velvet drapes and silk-covered walls quickly overrides the thought of being inside a half-finished palace. It's hard to weigh the importance of each room, but when it comes to beauty, the Queen's Chamber takes the prize (despite some wear and tear) – the cobalt blue silk covering the walls was handpicked by King Luís I to compliment the demanding tastes of his future wife, Italian princess Maria Pia.

The Crown Jewels

No other setting would be as perfect to showcase the royal jewels as the palace. The back of the building was closed off, and the interior courtyard now leads to **Museu do Tesouro Real** (*tesouroreal.pt; adult/child €10/7*). Despite Portugal's over 800-year-old history, only jewels from two 19th-century reigns survived. On the bright side, a small collection means more time to see each piece in detail.

around casually among the humans. After the ticket office, visitors can take the first path on the right, lined with palm trees, a lake and perfectly manicured lawns, but there's a certain (controlled) adventurous spirit that leads most down the path on the left, leading to the Asian garden – a favourite spot for many. It's a haven of tall trees and small courses of water and ponds crossed by red bridges, with a pagoda-style sitting area (admittedly in need of upkeep). Then, it's back to the tropical garden and trees and plants brought from all over the world, with a handful of busts inherited from the 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition's 'colonial section', which desperately needs more context for foreign visitors.

Belém's Newest Art Museum

Visit the new MAC/CCB

The 'new' contemporary art museum in Belém may have been rebranded from Coleção Berardo to **MAC/CCB** (*ccb.pt/macccb; adult/child €12/free*), but the namesake collection remains one of the centrepieces, with the same notable works from the 20th century taking over the 2nd floor. Currently managed by the CCB Foundation, this contemporary art museum has three new collections, part of the permanent exhibition 'Object, Body and Space' on floor -1. The ticket also gives access to Garagem Sul, a refurbished garage on the south side of the building dedicated to architecture exhibitions.

Contemporary & Experimental Art Hub

Visit MAAT's three exhibition areas

Shaped like a wave and covered in white, light-reflecting tiles, **MAAT** (*maat.pt; adult/child €11/free*) practically blends in with the riverbank, with its free-access terrace attracting the curious for different views. Each space speaks to diverse audiences and interests, so visitors can choose one building instead of skipping rooms to reach the one that captures their attention. The **MAAT Gallery** showcases works by known contemporary artists, which rotate every six months, with large-scale (often interactive) art installations on the main floor and two smaller rooms for other showcases. **MAAT Central**, set inside the former power station next door, includes a permanent exhibition dedicated to electricity (guided tours for children available on weekends) and Cinzeiro 8, a space reserved for experimental artists invited by the gallery's curators. Open 24 hours, **MAAT Garden** is a frequent stage of performance art events.

THE 1940 PORTUGUESE WORLD EXHIBITION

The building of **Museu de Arte Popular**, **Padrão dos Descobrimentos**, and **Jardim Botânico Tropical** are some of the remains of the 1940 Portuguese World Exhibition – at the peak of the Estado Novo dictatorship and with the excuse of celebrating the 800th anniversary of Portugal, the regime organised a six-month-long vanity fair that covered an area of more than 500,000 sq metres in Belém. It was a show of political propaganda disguised as national pride. Regrettably, plenty of those now must-see monuments continue to convey a message of greatness with poor or nonexistent historical context.

DRINKING IN BELÉM: OUR PICKS

Wine with a View: Spot the red-and-cream-coloured cart parked near Torre de Belém and do a laidback wine tasting. *10am-5pm*

Adega Belém Urban Winery: Organic winemakers Catarina and David opened this winery inside a former car repair shop. *11am-1pm Fri & Sat*

Gastrobar 38° 41': Altis Hotel's riverside sleek and casual bar with classic cocktails and Portuguese wine by the glass. *11am-midnight*

À Margem: Toast to Rio Tejo from the wide-open windows of this casual cafe. Weather permitting, try for a terrace table. *10am-10pm Tue-Sat*

LISBOA CARD

The most visited monuments in Belém are free or reduced price with the **Lisboa Card** (*shop.visitlisboa.com; 24hr card adult/child €27/18*), which also includes free access to all public transit networks that you can use to travel to and from the neighbourhood: train, bus and tram. This side of Lisbon has a higher concentration of must-sees, so if there's one part of the city where this tourist card has benefits, this is it.

Despite what some outdated unofficial websites claim as one of Lisboa Card's perks, card holders can't skip the line in all popular museums and monuments (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos and Torre de Belém, for example).



PELLE ZOLTAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Pastéis de Belém

(Don't) Skip the Tower

The Torre de Belém experience

A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983, the Manueline-style **Torre de Belém** (*bilheteira.museusemonumentos.pt; adult/child €8/free*) is one of Lisbon's most recognisable symbols. That said, and not dismissing the unquestionable beauty of this old defence tower, some wonder if going inside is surrounded by too much hype – a decision that can be left to personal choice or the size of the queue. Indeed, the bare interiors and uneven pavement contrast with the intricate details on the exterior, and most visitors don't spend more than half an hour inside, which includes enough time to climb the 93-step spiral staircase (steep and tight) to the top floor. For most, though, the best way to experience Torre de Belém is from the shoreside stairs with their feet in the sand (weather permitting) or the nearby public garden (preferably in the shade).

Pastries Worth Enduring the Queue

Indulging in Pastéis de Belém

Even in the alternative Lisbon of Yorgos Lanthimos' film *Poor Things*, eating a *pastel de nata* is a must-have experience. **Pastéis de Belém** hold the original (and very secret) recipe since its creation in 1837 by monks at Mosteiro dos Jerónimos. Unless you get there at opening time (8am), there always seems to be a queue outside the *pastelaria*, but the eat-in-one-bite crunchy and creamy custard tarts are worth the wait. Although the gorgeous blue-and-white tiled walls are alluring for a longer stay, the noisier patrons can break your concentration as you decide on the right amount of cinnamon to sprinkle on your freshly baked tart. This culinary experience demands your full attention: why not get a pack to go and eat them elsewhere before they're cold.

EATING IN BELÉM: COFFEE & PASTRIES

Pastelaria Versailles: It's the perfect *pastelaria* for a quiet breakfast before the crowds arrive and start hitting the major sights. *8am-7pm* €

Pastelaria Restelo: The locals vouch for this – croissants here are worth the detour from riverside Belém. *8am-8pm Wed-Mon* €

Confeitaria Nacional: At the second location of Praça da Figueira's historic *pastelaria*, the classic pastries come with a view. *9am-8pm* €

Manteigaria: Not fearful of competition, these *pastel de nata* specialists opened a shop near Pastéis de Belém. Perfect excuse for a blind taste test. *8am-9pm* €

Parque das Nações & Marvila

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND ALTERNATIVE ART

Because of Expo 98, Lisbon expanded east, turning a previous industrial wasteland into the neighbourhood we now know as Parque das Nações – an expanded Metro line and new train station, contemporary flats, office spaces and business hotels grew around the urban park. Thirty years later, the patchy pavements and benches' flaking paint signal the park's unfortunate state of neglect, but this side of town remains a family favourite destination.

Slightly on the edge of town, between Parque das Nações and Santa Apolónia, Marvila was a place of warehouses and factories within the confines of the city but without the appeal of the similar-style buildings of Cais do Sodré or Alcântara – until the hipsters realised the potential gem it could become, possibly driving gentrification to move in as well. Nevertheless, it's particularly welcoming of offbeat contemporary artists.

Lisbon's east side might not be the pretty postcard-perfect city, but it's worth exploring.

Remembering Portugal's Greatest Fadista

Ah Amália's fully immersive experience

Amália Rodrigues (1920–99) was Portugal's most famous *fadista*, responsible for successfully carrying fado abroad and turning it into a world music reference. The newest attraction dedicated to her, **Ah Amália** (*ah-amalia.pt; adult/child €20/17*), occupies a whole warehouse in Marvila, a neighbourhood that has little to do with this type of song. However, the five-room immersive experience requires the kind of space only this part of town could give.

You don't need to be familiar with Amália's work to enjoy the visit. In fact, it's better if you know very little – a fan will probably leave feeling the exhibits hardly scratched the surface. The first two rooms, with photos and newspaper cuts, provide broad strokes of the *fadista*'s career. Then, the video mapping and AR rooms are more form than content. And,



GETTING AROUND

Parque das Nações is served by a public transit hub that includes urban trains, Metro (Oriente, Red Line) and several buses (including long-distance national and international connections).

Marvila is more isolated in terms of public transport, but it's on the route of frequent buses connecting the east side to the city centre (routes 728, every day, and 781, only on working days). Outside office hours, it's more convenient to use a rideshare app.

TOP TIP

In Parque das Nações, get the combined ticket to Oceanário that includes a round trip on the nearby cable car. Use the *teleférico* to see the contemporary architecture from the top or to cut the cross-park trip short between Oceanário and Torre Vasco da Gama (now Hotel Myriad).



SIGHTS
1 Ah Amália
2 Centro de Ciência Viva
3 Oceanário de Lisboa

SLEEPING
4 HI Lisboa – Pousada de Juventude
5 Myriad by SANA
6 Olissippo Oriente
7 Tivoli Oriente

EATING
8 Bar das Colunas
9 Café com Calma
10 D'Bacalhau
11 Luzzo
● MATO (see 17)
12 Sea The Future
13 Trinca Forte
14 ZeroZero

DRINKING
15 Cerveja Musa
16 Dois Corvos Taproom

ENTERTAINMENT
17 8 Marvila

SHOPPING
● insofar (see 16)
18 Coletivo Amarelo
● Galeria Francisco Fino (see 18)
19 Galeria Underdogs
20 Little Chelsea
21 Mercado P'LA ARTE
22 Planta Livre for Home

finally, the room that is perhaps the most impactful – Amália comes on stage to perform two songs and for 10 minutes it's almost possible to forget 'she' is a hologram (the fado song 'Povo Que Lavas no Rio' is responsible).

Newest Culture & Foodie Hotspot

8 Marvila's alternative shopping

A little rough around the edges, with bare walls and high ceilings, uneven footpaths and minimal cosmetic work (admittedly part of its charm), the refurbished Abel Pereira da Fonseca wine warehouses became **8 Marvila** (*8marvila.com*) in late 2023. Family- and dog-friendly, the neighbourhood's new cultural hub gathers nightclubs, padel and pickleball courts, art galleries (Bairro Alto's ZDB opened a second venue here), shops, food trucks and restaurants under one roof, including an outdoor patio as a designated smoking area. The food court area is anchored by a raised concrete platform in the centre, with comfy sofas and floor pillows, lounge chairs, coffee tables, and plenty of potted plants (supplied by onsite store **Planta Livre for Home**).

Lisbon's East Side Art District

Browsing contemporary art in Marvila

Renowned Portuguese urban artist Alexandre Farto, known by his artistic alias Vhils, was one of the first to turn an old warehouse in Marvila into an art gallery. Co-owner of **Galeria Underdogs** (*under-dogs.net*), the space also sells art supplies and merchandise.

Soon, others followed suit, turning Rua Capitão Leitão into the quarter's artistic nerve centre: **Galeria Francisco Fino** (*franciscofino.com*), **Coletivo Amarelo** (*coletivoamarelo.com*), **.insofar** (*insofar.art*), and **Little Chelsea** (*little-chelsea.com*), a multipurpose gallery-meets-vintage-shop.

On the first Saturday of the month, the free-entrance art fair **Mercado P'LA ARTE** takes over Prata Riverside Village's underground car park, where independent artists and fashion designers showcase their work.

Families' Favourite Spot

Spend a morning at Oceanário

Oceanário de Lisboa (*oceanario.pt; adult/child €25/free*) is Parque das Nações's top attraction and one of the main reasons that families visit the east side. It continues the educational and preservation mission that started at the World Expo 1998.

MARVILA'S RENAISSANCE

Lower house prices and empty warehouses waiting to be repurposed turned Marvila into one of Lisbon's most coveted neighbourhoods after the city's historic centre lost part of the battle to gentrification. Known for its industrial look, street art and the Art Nouveau building from the film *Night Train to Lisbon*, Marvila is often compared to New York's Brooklyn. Brand-new Prata Riverside Village flats are now attracting a different crowd to the once almost-forgotten quarter, made relevant again in the early 2000s by craft-beer breweries such as **Dois Corvos** and **Cerveja Musa**. As real estate prices begin to surge here, it's too soon to tell if Marvila will lose its underground edge.

EATING IN MARVILA: OUR PICKS

Bar das Colunas: Established in 1893, this Portuguese cuisine restaurant was revived in 2019. *12.30-3pm Tue-Sun* €€

Café com Calma: Veg-friendly cafe with affordable daily specials menus including soup, mains, drinks and dessert. *noon-3.30pm Tue-Fri* €

MATO: At this vegetarian pizzeria at the 8 Marvila food court, pies are paired with organic red and white Portuguese wines. *noon-midnight Thu-Sun* €€

Trinca Forte: The affordable, all-inclusive lunch menus attract a large crowd on weekdays, but service is swift. *10am-10pm Mon-Sat* €

WORLD EXPO 1998

For four months in 1998, all roads in Portugal led to the newly renovated Parque das Nações (previously a 1940s hydro port, it had become an industrial wasteland used as storage over the years). The theme for the world exhibition was 'The Oceans: A Heritage for the Future', and 143 countries showcased their best exhibits at the individual pavilions that stretched across the urban park built to accommodate Expo '98. People travelled from far away and didn't mind queueing for hours in the sun for a chance to attend the event that was the talk of the town at that time. Three decades later, older *lisboetas* still refer to the newest neighbourhood in Lisbon as Expo.



FOTOKON/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Oceanário de Lisboa (p91)

Before the main room, there are two temporary exhibitions (usually art installations) with a strong awareness-raising message regarding oceans' sustainability. Then, the central tank is ever-present as you move from one replicated habitat to the next. Boards with information about each species highlight the impact of climate change and provide actionable tips on reducing our impact. Four habitats later, kids sit on the carpeted floor as close to the glass as possible – this is the last chance to spend some time near the central tank.

A Science-Based Playground For All Ages

Centro de Ciência Viva's experiments

At **Centro de Ciência Viva** (*pavconhecimento.pt; family/adult/child €30/14/free*), kids are allowed and encouraged to touch all displays. New temporary exhibitions take over the ground floor's open space every year or so. Head to the Dòing room in the back if you have time to partake in one of their workshops. If time is short, take the kids to the 1st floor for scientific experiences (Explora) or an immersive and creative learning experience (Fishanário), or to blow off steam in various circus-inspired activities (Tcharan!). The adventurous can try the flying bicycle (talk to a monitor for assistance). Before leaving, browse the list of Portuguese women in science on the digital display between Explora and Fishanário.

EATING IN PARQUE DAS NAÇÕES: FAMILY-FRIENDLY OPTIONS

D'Bacalhau: Salted cod is the star, but it also serves vegetarian dishes. The kids' menu includes a mini *bacalhau à Brás*. *noon-4pm & 7-11pm* €€

ZeroZero: This riverside pizzeria has plenty of options, including plant-based. The menu for kids is more limited, with a pasta or pizza. *noon-midnight* €€

Sea The Future: This restaurant at Oceanário serves simple, seasonal dishes, with plenty of plant-based options. *10am-7pm* €

Luzzo: This Portuguese chain makes Roman- and Napolitana-style pizzas, with veg alternatives and a special menu for children. *noon-3pm Mon-Thu* €€

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE WALKING TOUR

See contemporary architecture and urban art created by renowned national and international artists in Parque das Nações.

START	END	LENGTH
Gare do Oriente	Jardim Garcia de Orta	2km; 1½ hours

Following the ocean theme of World Expo 1998, most of the pieces and buildings in the urban park pay tribute to the Portuguese navigators, life at sea and mythical marine creatures.

Start at Santiago Calatrava's 1 **Gare do Oriente**. The iron and glass structure mimics a forest of trees or maybe underwater plants. Across the street, walk around the right side of the Vasco da Gama shopping centre and turn right at Alameda dos Oceanos towards the oceanarium.

Here you'll see three Portuguese creations: Siza Vieira's 2 **Pavilhão de Portugal**, with its distinctive sail-shaped roof; Carrilho da Graça's 3 **Pavilhão do Conhecimento**, which now houses Centro de Ciência Viva; and artist Pedro Proença's 4 **Monstros Marinhos** made in *calçada portuguesa* (Portuguese cobblestones) on the pavement outside Oceanário.

Weather permitting, take the scenic walkway connecting Passeio Neptuno to Passeio das Tágides and notice two more unmissable spots: Regino Cruz's UFO- or turtle-shaped events venue 5 **Altice Arena**; and sculptor João Cutileiro's 6 **Lago das Tágides**, a riverside water feature with marble statues of Camões' mythological muses bathing.

End at 7 **Jardim Garcia de Orta** to relax and to admire the magnificent Ponte Vasco da Gama.



Marquês de Pombal & Avenidas Novas

URBAN PARKS AND ART MUSEUMS



GETTING AROUND

This area is served by all Metro lines (the main stops are the Blue and Red line's São Sebastião, Yellow line's Saldanha, Campo Pequeno, Entrecampos, and Green and Yellow line's Campo Grande); long-distance and urban trains (CP and Fertagus); and frequent buses. Many locals who live or work here get around by walking or riding a bicycle or electric scooter.

TOP TIP

Avenidas Novas is Lisbon's closest version of a 15-minute neighbourhood concept, where essential services are always within walking distance. Mostly flat and with wide tree-lined avenues, it's easy to explore on foot or bicycle (the area's bike lanes are some of the best in the city).

At the end of the 19th century, when Lisbon's population increased during industrialisation, the city expanded to the north of the Marquês de Pombal statue. Avenidas Novas (new avenues) had carefully planned streets and building blocks, with squares and gardens for optimal neighbourhood life.

Mobility is the best here. You're never too far from a bus or Metro stop, restaurants and cafes, shops and supermarkets – most within a short walk from one another. This part of the city never feels hurried or crowded, even at rush hour. And if it does, the nearest public park where you can find refuge is a couple of blocks away.

Between this flat, easy-to-navigate area and Baixa sits the Marquês de Pombal roundabout, with its majestic namesake statue in honour of the master planner behind the post-1755 earthquake reconstruction. In a way, Avenidas Novas is the continuation of his vision 200 years later.

Underground Exhibitions & an Artsy Garden

Visit new alternative art venues

It's frequent for new galleries to repurpose buildings or organise pop-up events in unusual locations, but months ago, when an illustrator told me she was preparing her exhibition at a deactivated underground public restroom, I did a double take. **WC** (yes, there was no attempt to clean up the name) is a minuscule place underneath Jardim Camilo Castelo Branco, owned and managed by the local parish government. Opening hours are limited (10am to 7pm Tuesday to Saturday) and entrance is free. Without a dedicated website, it's hard to keep track of the agenda, but check the advertising cube at the garden for ongoing events, ranging from art shows to live music concerts.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

SIGHTS
2 Centro de Arte Moderna
3 Fundação Arpàd Szenes-Vieira da Silva
4 Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima
5 Jardim Amália Rodrigues
6 Jardim Augusto Monjardino
7 Jardim do Palácio das Galveias
8 Jardins do Bombarda
9 Parque Eduardo VII
10 Parque Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles
11 WC

SLEEPING
12 Chalet d' Ávila Guesthouse
13 Evolution Lisboa Hotel
14 Hotel White
15 Jupiter Lisboa Hotel
16 Lisboa Central Hostel
17 Maxime Hotel
18 Room00 Lisboa Hostel
19 WOT Lisbon Patio

EATING
20 Cafetaria do Museu Gulbenkian
21 Choupana Caffé
22 Confeitaria Marquês
23 Croissants da Serra
24 Galeto
25 Laurentina
26 Pastelaria Versailles
27 Suzana

ENTERTAINMENT
28 Cinema Nimas
29 DocLisboa

SHOPPING
30 Bookshop Bivar
31 El Corte Inglés
32 Linha de Sombra
33 Photo Book Corner
34 Tantos Livros, Livreiros
35 Under the Cover

TOP EXPERIENCE

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian is a cultural hub and quiet urban park that *lisboetas* hold dear – on weekdays around lunchtime, students and workers occupy the lawns, shaded tables and benches. Both museums hold Portugal's most important art collection from the namesake Armenian-born founder. And although the city's most famous gardens surround the foundation, it never feels crowded.



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TOP TIPS

- The closest Metro stop is Blue Line's São Sebastião.
- Download the Museu Gulbenkian free mobile app for audio guides.
- Following incidents with climate activists, security confiscates water bottles. Visitors can leave their personal belongings in the free cloakroom.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan the QR code for events, exhibitions, prices and opening hours.

Museu Calouste Gulbenkian

If you're here for the famous artists, including Rubens and Degas (rooms 6 and 10) and René Lalique's jewellery (room 11), don't feel guilty about rushing through the first five rooms – the collections can easily be admired in a short time and, with all honesty, it's the original paintings that draw visitors.

Centro de Arte Moderna

After four years of renovations, expectations around Centro de Arte Moderna's reopening were high. Designed by Kengo Kuma, the new museum builds on the original project, blending in with the new South Garden created by landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic. The new flow allows for a more immersive experience with the art exhibitions. CAM now also has a new space for performance art and a room dedicated to drawings.

The Gardens

Jardim Gulbenkian offers a cool summer breeze and a surprisingly cosy atmosphere in the colder weather. It is mainly frequented by families and students on their breaks from class at nearby universities. The gardens attract diverse fauna by design, so bring a book or a picnic and relax in the company of the resident birds (but don't feed the ducks, no matter how much they pester you).

Jardins do Bombarda (*largoresidencias.com*) is Lisbon's newest cultural space, still in a sort of soft opening mode at the time of writing. Community-focused art project Largo Residências took over the gardens of former mental health hospital Miguel Bombarda: there's an art shop, a cafe, a restaurant, workrooms for artistic residencies, and a community vegetable garden in the back of the romantic gardens.

Movie Night Out Like a Local

Big theatres and independent cinemas

There are only two surviving independent cinemas in Lisbon, and one is in the Avenidas Novas neighbourhood. **Cinema Nimas** (*medeiafilmes.com; from €5*), owned by Portuguese film producer Paulo Branco, is an institution. Focusing more on curated cycles dedicated to a specific director or a genre, this one-room theatre in the basement of an apartment building is the place to go for the classics you haven't seen on the big screen yet (or in a long time).

For blockbusters and kids' films (look for the VO indication for the non-dubbed version), multi-screen **El Corte Inglés**' **UCI Cinemas** (*ucicinemas.pt; from €8*) has a surprisingly 'neighbourhood cinema' vibe for a department store movie theatre.

Head to **Culturgest** for **DocLisboa**, Lisbon's independent documentary film festival, in October.

A Lesser-Visited Almada Negreiros' Art Piece

A must-see 1938 Modernist church

A little of the work of Modernist Almada Negreiros, a prolific and multi-genre artist, can be found all over Lisbon, but one of the most surprising and lesser-known places is the church **Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima** (*paroquia nsrfatima.com; free*), designed by Pardal Monteiro, near Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. The 1938 Catholic temple features Negreiro's stained-glass windows and mosaics, and those alone are worth the visit. Enjoy the calming atmosphere surrounded by the works of some of the most accomplished artists of the same period, including Barata Feyo's *Christ on the Cross*. The church is open to all visitors for free, but be mindful of ongoing religious services.

INDEPENDENT BOOKSHOPS

Under the Cover: A curated selection of independent magazines lines the walls of this small bookshop right across the street from Gulbenkian.

Photo Book Corner: In 2020, this shop, which specialises in selling photography books online, moved to the tiny space next door to Under the Cover.

Tantos Livros, Livreiros: Look for new releases and rare used books at this neighbourhood women-owned bookstore with a small cafe.

Bookshop Bivar: Off-Saldanha, this small family-owned shop sells only secondhand fiction and nonfiction books in English.

Linha de Sombra: Cinemateca Portuguesa's bookstore where you can find (sometimes rare) DVDs and film-related books.

EATING IN AVENIDAS NOVAS: NEIGHBOURHOOD CAFES

Versailles: The stocked showcase at this classic *pastelaria* is heaven for those with a sweet tooth and torment for the indecisive. *7am-10pm* €

Choupana Caffé: Two of the reasons why locals flock to this casual cafe are the Mafra bread toast and the brunch menu. *8am-8pm* €

Confeitaria Marquês: The location attracts tourists, and the price for an espresso reflects that. But the friendly service pays off. *7am-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Croissants da Serra: At this croissant-only cafe, there are five different chocolate fillings and plenty of other delicious options. *9am-7pm* €

ESTILO PORTUGUÊS SUAVE

The second wave of city expansion in Avenidas Novas in the 1930s followed the Estado Novo-sanctioned aesthetics: austere-looking buildings where the function was above form, and the (subtle) embellishments made a political statement. The dictatorial regime called it 'truly Portuguese' – architects mocked the lack of creativity and called it 'Estilo Português Suave'. The name was an insult but stuck.

At a glimpse, the buildings look mid-century Modernist (straight lines, colourful walls), but the subtle traditionalist and nationalist details are there: terracotta shingles and weathervanes suggest the simple life of the countryside, stained-glass windows and wrought iron reminiscent of the medieval era when Portugal became a country, and caravels evoking the age of sea explorations.



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Feira do Livro de Lisboa

Outdoor Events & Different Views

Stop by Parque Eduardo VII

Unlike other gardens in Lisbon, **Parque Eduardo VII** is best for short visits, especially on hot summer days when there are not enough benches in the shade, which makes most of it a little unwelcoming. Seeing the park and the city all the way to Rio Tejo from the north-end viewpoint is worth stopping there for a few minutes, though. Over the years, this urban park in Marquês de Pombal has become more popular as a venue for large events than one of Lisbon's top gardens. **Feira do Livro de Lisboa** (Lisbon's Book Fair) in June gathers large and independent publishers and attracts book-lovers every year with author signings, book launches and concerts.

Know the Father of Portuguese Comics

Museums with Bordalo Pinheiro's works

Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro is a lot more than the 19th-century Realist artist who designed vegetable-inspired tableware – although his cabbage-looking dishes and salad bowls are perhaps his most popular creations, alongside his Zé Povinho (a caricature of the Portuguese of that time, poor and resigned to their fate). He was also a cartoonist, a journalist, an illustrator and a ceramist. At the two-floor **Museu Bordalo Pinheiro** (*museubordalopinheiro.pt; adult/child €3/free*) in Campo Grande, discover his early life as a satirist, known for his sarcasm and sharp sense of humour. He often turned the joke on himself, becoming one of the characters in his comic-book-style stories.

Walk across the park to **Museu de Lisboa Palácio Pimenta** (*museudelisboa.pt; adult/child €3/free*), where large-size ceramic plants and animals take over Jardim Bordallo Pinheiro (a project by contemporary Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos).

Maria Keil's Artistic Foresight

First Metro stations' tile panels

You will probably notice that all Metro stations in Lisbon have unique art, and their tiles are a sort of trademark. There's a visionary woman responsible for that.

In Avenidas Novas, entering a Metro station is like walking into a free museum. The first Lisbon underground network was built in 1959 and had only 11 stations. If you happen to catch the Metro in **Parque**, **São Sebastião** or **Praça de Espanha**, know that you have the privilege to see the work of Maria Keil in each one of those tile panels with geometric patterns in the lobby, by the staircases and decorating the platforms.

Keil's husband was the architect responsible for designing the first Metro stations, and when confronted with budget cuts he refused to let the buildings be all cement and stone. It was the Modernist painter's idea to cut costs and decorate them with *azulejos* (glazed tiles), against all critical voices telling her that working with such cheap material (tiles were used in bathrooms, then) was beneath an artist.

Art in the Old Silk Factory

Vieira da Silva's detour-worthy museum

Fundação Arpad Szenes-Vieira da Silva (*fasvs.pt; adult/child €7.50/free*) isn't the kind of place you stumble upon 'in the neighbourhood'. Dedicated to the life and art of Lisbon-born Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and her husband Arpad Szenes, the small museum is a short walk (1km; 15 minutes) uphill from Marquês de Pombal (if you jump on the Metro Yellow line there and get off at Rato it's more comfortable, but not necessarily faster). Plan for a one-hour visit but expect to stay for longer. It's very easy to lose track of time here.

Vieira da Silva chose the old silk factory across from Jardim das Amoreiras to house the museum: she wanted to maintain the space's bare walls and minimalism so that only her and others' art should pop (although it's hard to ignore the high ceilings and wooden beams). In a way, the museum's design was her last creation (FASVS opened in 1994, two years after her passing).

AVENIDAS NOVAS' BEST GARDENS

Parque Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles: The once-eye-sore hub of buses and traffic was transformed into a green haven of trees, lawns and bike trails.

Jardim Amália Rodrigues: This relaxing garden north of Parque Eduardo VII is popular among locals for the views and the lakeside cafe.

Jardim Mário Soares: Several statues dot this small urban park in Campo Grande with a lake where you can rent small boats.

Jardim Augusto Monjardino: The tiny garden between Marquês de Pombal and Saldanha almost goes unnoticed and is a welcome relief for sore feet.

Jardim do Palácio das Galveias: The interior garden of one of Lisbon's public libraries in Campo Pequeno is ideal for reading books.

EATING IN AVENIDAS NOVAS: NEIGHBOURHOOD RESTAURANTS

Laurentina: Make reservations here if you want to try *bacalhau* (salted cod) in a variety of versions. *noon-4pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat* €€€

Cafetaria do Museu Gulbenkian: Popular for the all-inclusive lunch menus, but with á la carte options available. *10am-5.30pm Wed-Mon* €

Suzana: There is love here behind each Portuguese dish with a contemporary twist, without being pretentious. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Fri* €

Galeto: A Lisbon institution, this open-late restaurant welcomes customers from all walks of life and their out-of-hours cravings. *7.30am-3am* €€

Santos, Madragoa & Alcântara

INDUSTRIAL VIBES AND LOCAL LIFE

GETTING AROUND

Several buses and trams serve this part of the city, but the quickest way to navigate the three main areas of the neighbourhood is by taking the urban train to Cascais from Cais do Sodré, particularly if you're going to Alcântara, the furthest area from the city centre. Santos and Madragoa are next to each other and best explored on foot.

TOP TIP

At the time of writing, Metro's Green line expansion was reaching its final stages, and the new Santos and Estrela stations were expected to open in the first quarter of 2025.

Alcântara, markedly industrial and business-oriented, has a quiet riverside space for walking or cycling. It has also managed to use what could be seen as the lesser appeal of rust and iron to its advantage, turning a bridge and an old factory into tourist attractions and old warehouses into bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

Once known as the design district (at a forgotten point when Lisbon attempted to rename its neighbourhoods after their most famous traits), Santos swings between being a nightlife hot spot and a deserted quarter. Without 'much to see', except people-watching and experiencing local life, it's possibly the first to drop from most visitors' lists.

And, finally, the jumble of narrow cobblestoned streets that is Madragoa, the old quarter that doesn't show up on the map – founded in the 17th century by fishermen who moved from Ovar near Aveiro and enslaved Africans – is one of the most underrated neighbourhoods in Lisbon.

Art Deco & Moscatel Wine

B-MAD's private art collections

A project from collector and entrepreneur Joe Berardo, **B-MAD** (*bmad.pt; adult/child €6/free*) houses his private collections of Art Deco and Art Nouveau furniture and art. It's ideal for those who love these styles, but all visits are guided and pre-scheduled. The one-hour duration, especially with larger groups, leaves little room to appreciate the details. The tour ends with a wine tasting (included in the ticket, but optional), provided by Berardo's Setúbal-based wine estate **Bacalhôa**. The tasting is paired with a sales pitch – if you feel inclined, grab a bottle of Moscatel from the museum's wine shop.

SIGHTS
1 B-MAD
2 Experiência Pilar 7
3 LX Factory
4 Museu da Carris
5 Museu da Marioneta
6 Museu de Macau
7 Museu do Oriente
8 Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga
9 Tapada das Necessidades

SLEEPING
10 Emerald House
● LX Hostel (see 3)
11 Palácio Ramalhete

EATING
12 Catch Me
13 Fauna & Flora
14 Mila
15 Parra Wine Bistro
16 Restaurante Doca de Santo
● Therapist (see 3)
17 Último Porto
18 Varina da Madragoa

DRINKING
19 Bar A Barraca
20 Comida Independente
21 Cossoul
● Esperança Atlético Clube (see 5)

SHOPPING
● Art Studio Lisbon (see 3)
● BAM and BOO (see 3)
● Corredor (see 3)
● Ler Devagar (see 3)
● LX Market (see 3)
22 Mustique
23 Reuse
24 Reverso
25 Salted Books
● Tinta nos Nervos (see 13)



BEST SHOPS IN LX FACTORY

BAM and BOO: This Azores-born brand sells sustainable and eco-conscious skincare products made with ingredients sourced on the islands.

LX Market: Every Sunday, this artisans and vintage market takes over the back lot. It's one of Lisbon's top alternative shopping spots.

Corredor: Five local artists sell their creations and cool original souvenirs in the corridor between two warehouses (summer season only).

Art Studio Lisbon: Part gallery and part workshop, selling art originals by owners Portuguese Jo Seixas and Ukrainian-Estonian Pavel Grebenjuk.

Ler Devagar: One of the world's most beautiful bookstores, go in for books and a photo of the flying bike.

The Bridge Experience

Viewing Lisbon from Pilar 7

When, in 2017, a viewpoint opened at the top of the bridge's seventh pillar, Alcântara gained a new attraction worth a visit. While engineering enthusiasts will appreciate the interactive exhibition on the history of the **Ponte 25 de Abril** at **Experiência Pilar 7** (*shop.visitlisboa.com; adult/child €5/free*), most rush through it on their way to the top to view Lisbon's industrial quarter, the river and Belém. Although completely safe, the small glass-encased platform and the proximity to the bridge's rushing traffic might feel overwhelming for some.

Alcântara's Lesser-Known Urban Park

Enjoy quiet Tapada das Necessidades

Tapada das Necessidades isn't what you'd call a well-kept secret, but perhaps you'll notice locals using it more than tourists. The gated dog-friendly park (the south entrance, closest to Alcântara, has a broader schedule from 8am to 8pm in the summer) has a few friendly resident ducks, geese and peacocks, lakes and lots of different nooks and areas to explore, with a large lawn near the old greenhouse, ideal for picnics (perfect for families). When it comes to maintenance, though, this urban park on the north side of Alcântara still needs a little love – an improvement project funded by the tourist tax is underway and should be completed by 2027. In the meantime, mind the uneven pavements, loose cobblestones, and rogue tree roots poking out of the dirt paths.

Old Factory Turned Alternative Hotspot

LX Factory: shopping and sightseeing

Although some businesses have come and gone since 2008, the complex at the former fabrics and threads factory known as **LX Factory** (*lxfactory.com; free*) remains a must-see on the west side. Mind the uneven cobblestones and the occasional traffic as you stroll through the industrial-looking, slightly run-down buildings housing restaurants, cafes, alternative shops, tattoo parlours, art stores and galleries, and one of the world's most beautiful bookshops. With the ever-present bridge over your head, rush hours are always noisier because of the trains and the heavy traffic above, but it just takes a few minutes to get used to.

EATING IN ALCÂNTARA: MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Último Porto: Hidden away at the docks, this locals' secret serves simple grilled fish paired with top regional wines. *noon-4pm Mon-Sat* €

Therapist: Vegan and vegetarian Mediterranean-style cuisine restaurant at LX Factory with lots of gluten-free options. *9am-7pm Wed-Mon* €

Restaurante Doca de Santo: Portuguese food, great views and a relaxed ambience; reservations recommended. *noon-3.30pm & 7pm-midnight* €€

Catch Me: After a morning at next-door MNAA, enjoy a relaxed lunch with a view of Rio Tejo. *12.30pm-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat* €



ANASTASIIA LOZYNSKA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Tapada das Necessidades

Public Transit's History (With a Ride)

Travelling at Museu da Carris

Carris has been part of Lisbon's history since its first lifts and American-style trams arrived in the late 19th century, and it is now one of the city's trademark images. As expected from this type of museum, the first section of **Museu da Carris** (*museu.carris.pt; adult/child €4.50/free*) traces the company's timeline with a selection of documents, photos and old tickets. And then comes the treat of riding an old tram to the second and final section – a warehouse with all the buses and trams, old and new, on display. And although the tram driver on duty doesn't mind answering questions on the way to or from section two and perhaps sharing a few personal anecdotes about his experience driving a tram through Lisbon's traffic, consider booking a guided tour, especially if you're travelling with kids.

BEST SHOPS IN SANTOS

Reverso: Contemporary jewellery store with a bright decor selling founder's Paula Crespo creations. Hosts several exhibitions each year featuring other jewellers.

Reuse: Committed to sustainable fashion from the start, it's one of Lisbon's most popular vintage and secondhand shops.

Tinta nos Nervos: Gallery, cafe and neighbourhood bookstore focusing on visual arts. Check its website for upcoming events and book launches.

Salted Books: This independent bookshop in the heart of Santos sells English-language books and hosts frequent book-related events.

Mustique: Lisbon-based clothes shop's second location, a colourful and easy-to-wear fashion project by Portuguese designers Vera Caldeira and Pedro Ferraz.

EATING IN SANTOS & MADRAGOA: CASUAL RESTAURANTS

Mila: A well-established Santos all-day brunch cafe with light meals that started as a neighbourhood organic grocery store. *9am-5pm* €

Varina da Madragoa: This traditional restaurant serving hearty Portuguese dishes is a local institution. *12.30-3pm & 8-10.30pm Tue-Sun* €

Parra Wine Bistro: Ideal place for a casual meal prepared with local ingredients and paired with meticulously selected wines. *5pm-midnight* €€

Fauna & Flora: This health-conscious cafe in Santos became an instant classic for affordable light meals and brunch. *9am-6pm* €

MOCAMBO

No visible, easy-to-find signs reveal Madragoa's 16th-century name: *Mocambo* (the word for a small village in Umbundu, one of the languages spoken in Angola). Enslaved Africans were allowed to live here, have a home address (but not own a house), and engage in religious and cultural activities that marked their identity without fear of persecution (allegedly).

Portuguese history is whitewashed, and most attempts to tell it from diverse perspectives are often delayed or dismissed as not critical. Projects like Goethe Institut's ReMapping Memories (*re-mapping.eu*) helped build a more accurate portrayal of Portugal's capital city. However, physical evidence of Mocambo's existence is nowhere to be found.

Two Museums Dedicated to Asian Art

Macau and Oriente museums' collections

Insisting on focusing on the Portuguese 'presence' in Asia without a less one-sided perspective needs to be reviewed, but unfortunately, Portugal is still debating the importance of the debate. With that in mind, at **Museu do Oriente** (*foriente.pt; adult/child €8/2.5*), one can choose to visit only the temporary exhibitions on floors 0 and 1, which are more dedicated to Asian art and culture. Off the sightseeing route, the government-managed **Museu de Macau** (*cccm.gov.pt; adult/child €3/free; cash only*) focuses more on the cooperation between Portugal and Macau. Its ground-floor exhibition tries to provide a more neutral historical framework.

Puppets Tucked Away in a Convent

Museu da Marioneta's family-friendly experience

Compact and cosy, **Museu da Marioneta** (*museudamarioneta.pt; adult/child €5/free*) at Convento das Bernardas is one of *lisboeta* families' favourite places. It is great to keep kids entertained for an hour on a rainy morning or scorching summer afternoon. The collection is small but diverse and includes Asian and African masks, Punch and Judy and Sicilian puppets, and theatre props. It also dedicates an exhibition to the typical Portuguese-made marionettes, 18th-century *Bonecos de Santo Aleixo,* and pays tribute to local artists and puppet companies with permanent displays of their work.

Mingling With Classics (& Their Fans)

Spend a morning at MNAA

There is no 'right' way to visit **Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga** (*museudearteantiga.pt; adult/child €10/free*), but everyone has theirs – many spend the longest time on floor 1 with the European paintings (Hieronymus Bosch's *Temptations of Saint Anthony* is a major lure) and do a quick round of floor 3 (Portuguese paintings and sculpture). Behind a glass wall, *Painéis de São Vicente*'s restoration work seems to be painfully delayed. 'It's a complex job', says the room's caretaker (recognisable from the museum's 'In Our Care' series on social media), before proceeding to discuss some of his favourite works.

MNAA now has wider passageways between artworks, an improvement for visitors with reduced mobility, and a rule to leave all personal belongings at the lockers by the reception (€1, refundable).

DRINKING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: OUR PICKS

Bar A Barraca: The bar at this historic local theatre often hosts live music concerts and other cultural events. *9pm-2am Thu-Sun*

Esperança Atlético Clube: One of the few local cultural centres that hasn't disappeared; if it's open, have a drink with the locals. *hours vary*

Comida Independente: Walk-ins only bar with wine by the glass highlighting small-scale winemakers. *4-11pm Tue-Fri, noon-11pm Sat*

Cossoul: Popular cultural centre a short walk up from Rua da Esperança. On event nights, the cash-only bar closes at 11pm. *3-7pm Tue-Sat*

HEART OF MADRAGOA & SANTOS

Discover what Madragoa and Santos are about on this walking tour through two neighbourhoods that are hard to pinpoint at first sight.

START	END	LENGTH
Chafariz da Esperança	Jardim Nuno Álvares	1km; 1 hour

In this part of the city, you won't find an overabundance of monuments and museums – here, the place is the attraction. Life in Santos revolves around restaurants and bars, while Madragoa remains a traditional quarter.

Start at 1 **Chafariz da Esperança**, the 18th-century baroque water fountain that unofficially marks the entrance to Madragoa. Go up Rua da Esperança and take the first right to Travessa do Pasteleiro, a steep side street leading into the heart of this historic quarter.

Turn left on 2 **Rua das Madres**. This pedestrian-only street hits all the marks of a classic Lisbon neighbourhood: *calçada portuguesa* pavement, laundry drying on clotheslines in windows, small houses with colourful trimmings, and mostly locals.

Follow the quiet street, making a left at Calçada Castelo Picão and then another on 3 **Rua da Esperança**. This street, lined with cafes, restaurants and shops, is a sort of borderline between Madragoa and Santos.

Walk down the staircase on the right, Travessa dos Barbadinhos, and then Calçada Marquês de Abrantes. At the end of the street, walk around the corner on your right, and the change in the atmosphere is almost immediate – you're in the busy heart of Santos, between Largo de Santos and 4 **Jardim Nuno Álvares**.





Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Bairro Alto p60

Stay Inn Lisbon Hostel € Affordable hotel, with a shared kitchen and brightly decorated individual rooms in the heart of Bairro Alto.

Dear Lisbon Gallery House €€ Boutique hotel in one of 'the Triangle' central streets, with uniquely designed rooms. Breakfast included.

Independente €€ Cool and casual hotel between Bairro Alto and Príncipe Real with shared dormitories and individual rooms.

Lumiares €€€ Five-star boutique hotel in the heart of Bairro Alto, but surprisingly quiet, with a rooftop bar and restaurant.

Bairro Alto Hotel €€€ Luxury boutique hotel between Bairro Alto and Chiado with a rooftop bar and restaurant.

Cais do Sodré p60

Sunset Destination Hostel € Affordable and stylish hostel with dormitories and shared bathrooms, inside the Cais do Sodré train station.

LX Boutique Hotel €€ Hotel in Cais do Sodré that is walking distance to the bars, but far enough away to avoid the noise.

Corpo Santo Hotel €€€ Five-star hotel between Cais do Sodré and Baixa. The reading room incorporates a preserved portion of the 13th-century city walls.

Baixa-Chiado & Rossio p68

Home Lisbon Hostel € One of the oldest hostels in Lisbon, this affordable option in the heart of Baixa was rated the best in the world for four years straight.

Lisbon Destination Hostel € Inside Rossio's train station, this hostel is popular for its winter garden. Has dorms, twin rooms and family rooms.

We Love F Tourists Hostel € Hostel in the heart of Baixa, with shared and private rooms. Breakfast included for an extra fee.

My Story Figueira €€ The four-floor hotel's architecture blends in perfectly with Praça da Figueira across the street.

Torel Palace €€€ Luxury boutique hotel in refurbished historical buildings next to Jardim do Torel near Baixa, and with great views.

Hotel do Chiado €€€ Luxury hotel in the Chiado near shops and restaurants, and with one of the best rooftop bars in the city.

Martinhal Lisbon Chiado Family Suites €€€ Family-friendly, luxury apartment-hotel in the heart of Chiado, with baby-sitting services and activities for kids.

Mouraria, Alfama & Graça p76

Memmo Alfama €€ Four-star design hotel in the heart of Alfama, with views to Rio Tejo and the historic centre.

Hotel Mundial €€ This four-star hotel in the heart of Mouraria, near Praça Martim Moniz, has one of the city's most popular rooftop bars.

Patio São Vicente Guest Houses €€ Refurbished, independent cottage houses in Alfama with a private interior courtyard.

Editory Riverside €€ This hotel in riverside Alfama is located inside a remodelled part of the Santa Apolónia train station. Optional breakfast included.

Palacete Chafariz d'El Rei €€€ Set inside a recovered mansion in the heart of Alfama, it's perhaps Lisbon's most beautiful five-star boutique hotel.

Belém p83

Wine & Books Hotel €€€ Culture-driven five-star hotel in Belém near Mosteiro dos Jerónimos. For bookworms and wine lovers.

Altis Belém €€€ Five-star hotel with views to Rio Tejo and contemporary decor. Breakfast included. Has one of the best bars and high-end restaurants in the city.

Parque das Nações p89

HI Lisboa – Pousada de Juventude € Youth hostel with very affordable shared rooms and dorms close to Moscavide Metro station. Breakfast included.

Tivoli Oriente €€ Four-star, dog- and cat-friendly, non-smoking hotel near Oriente train station, with a rooftop bar. Breakfast included.

Olissippo Oriente €€ Central and affordable four-star hotel in Parque das Nações, close to Oriente's major sites and public transit. Breakfast included.

Myriad by SANA €€€ Luxury hotel with river views in one of the most iconic contemporary buildings in Parque das Nações: Torre Vasco da Gama.

Marquês de Pombal & Avenidas Novas p94

Chalet d' Ávila Guesthouse € Cute and brightly decorated rooms in an early-20th-century building in Saldanha. Single, family or double rooms with shared bathrooms.

WOT Lisbon Patio € Hostel in central Lisbon with individual and family rooms, dorms, and a shared kitchen and lounging area.

Lisboa Central Hostel € There's a surplus of extra activities to choose from at this affordable hotel at Marquês de Pombal. Dorms and twin rooms, with shared bathrooms. Breakfast included.

Room00 Lisboa Hostel € Small, but affordable and comfortable rooms close to Marquês de Pombal. Buffet breakfast included.

Hotel White €€ Four-star hotel in Avenida da República with a rooftop pool. Popular with business travellers and folks on short trips.

Evolution Lisboa Hotel €€ Exuberantly colourful four-star hotel with 24-hour self check-in, in Saldanha next to the Metro station.

Jupiter Lisboa Hotel €€ Four-star hotel in the heart of Avenidas Novas, with classic decor and a rooftop pool.

Maxime Hotel €€€ Former cabaret turned boutique hotel near Avenida da Liberdade, with uniquely designed rooms.

Santos & Alcântara p100

LX Hostel € Mixed and female-only dorms, and private rooms at the heart of LX Factory. Pet-friendly and with a rooftop bar. Breakfast included.

Emerald House €€ Four-star hotel with beautifully decorated rooms between Alcântara and Santos, across the street from Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga.

Palácio Ramalhete €€€ This refurbished 17th-century palace near Santos is one of Lisbon's most popular five-star design hotels.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Mouraria (p76)



SEAN PAVONE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Above: Castelo dos Mouros and Palácio Nacional da Pena (p115), Sintra
Right: Praia da Ribeira, Cascais (p123)

Lisbon Coast



OCEAN VIEWS, HERITAGE AND ARTSY CITIES

Sprawling beaches and tourist resorts, excellent surfing conditions, picturesque villages and edgy cities, unique art and architecture: Lisbon Coast is full of surprises.

The region we decided to call Lisbon Coast doesn't technically exist as political, perfectly designed boundaries on a map. However, each city and town on this stretch of roughly 120km of rugged rocks – bathed (ferociously, in some months) by the Atlantic Ocean and within easy reach from Portugal's capital city – have enough in common to be lumped together into one area. Diverse landscapes and cultural identities are all a short drive from Lisbon.

Cascais, Ericeira and Sesimbra went from small fishing villages to burgeoning resort towns and beach destinations, the first two appealing more to aristocratic families. Sintra has always been the land of romantic palaces and dramatic landscapes, where every exuberant building seems to take your breath away, and yet the town is tranquil, too. Setúbal, industrial at its core, has a country lifestyle quality which, surprisingly, doesn't clash with its status as the capital city of the district of the same name. The cities on Lisbon South Bank are unapologetically offbeat but not completely off-the-grid.



LUIS PEDRO FONSECA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Lisbon Coast is romantic manicured gardens and protected natural parks, surfing hotspots and pristine tranquil beaches, extravagant palaces and simple whitewashed houses, dramatic coastal views and cobblestone streets to lose yourself in. It's ideal for a day trip or a weekend escape, for outdoors enthusiasts and urban explorers, for solo travellers and large families.

THE MAIN AREAS

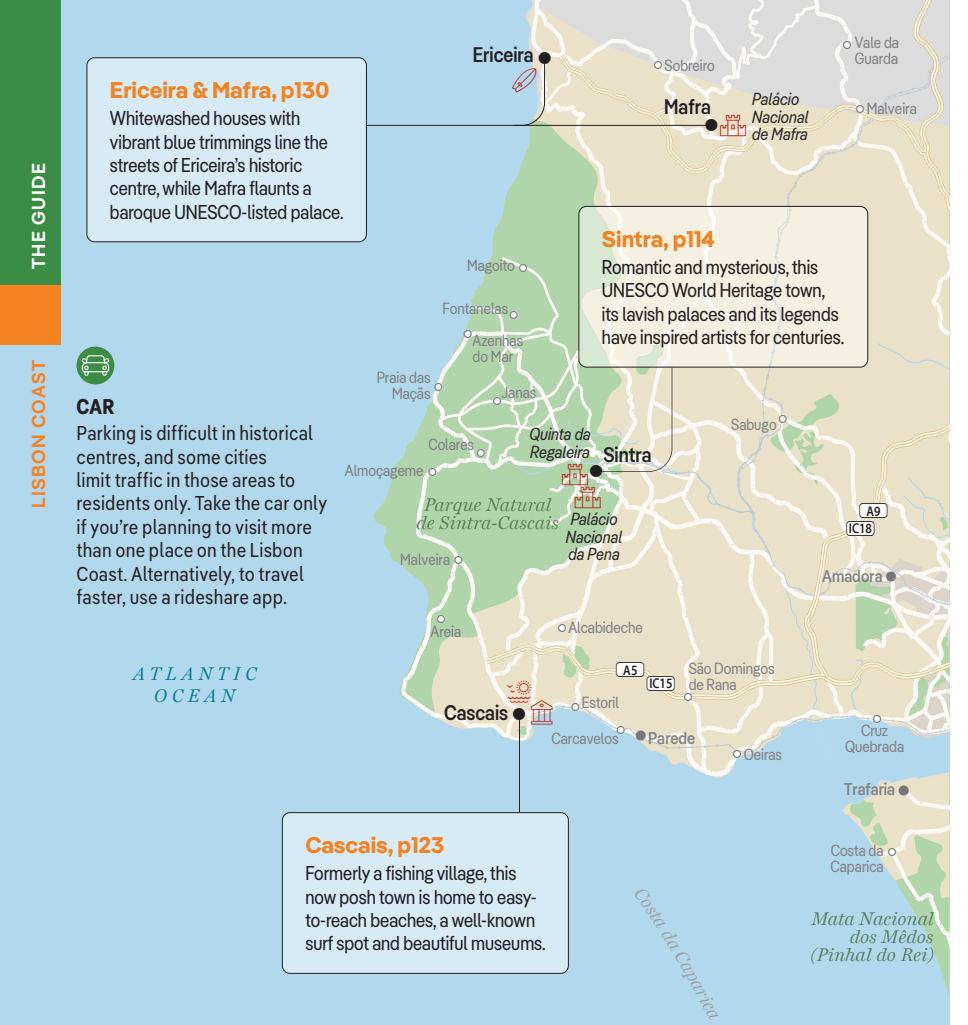
SINTRA
Mystical and romantic.
p114

CASCAIS
The Portuguese Riviera.
p123

ERICEIRA & MAFRA
Surfers' paradise.
p130

SETÚBAL
Industrial heritage and mountain beaches.
p135

LISBON SOUTH BANK
Underground and edgy.
p142



Ericeira & Mafra, p130

Whitewashed houses with vibrant blue trimmings line the streets of Ericeira's historic centre, while Mafra flaunts a baroque UNESCO-listed palace.

Sintra, p114

Romantic and mysterious, this UNESCO World Heritage town, its lavish palaces and its legends have inspired artists for centuries.

Cascais, p123

Formerly a fishing village, this now posh town is home to easy-to-reach beaches, a well-known surf spot and beautiful museums.

CAR

Parking is difficult in historical centres, and some cities limit traffic in those areas to residents only. Take the car only if you're planning to visit more than one place on the Lisbon Coast. Alternatively, to travel faster, use a rideshare app.

FERRY

Several ferries connect Lisbon to Barreiro and Almada in the South Bank several times a day, which makes it the best way to travel across Rio Tejo. Tróia is also a short ferry ride away from Setúbal.

TRAIN

Sintra, Cascais and Setúbal are within easy reach by train from Lisbon. They're served by different lines so keep in mind that you won't be able to travel by train between them. There is no railway connecting Lisbon to Ericeira.

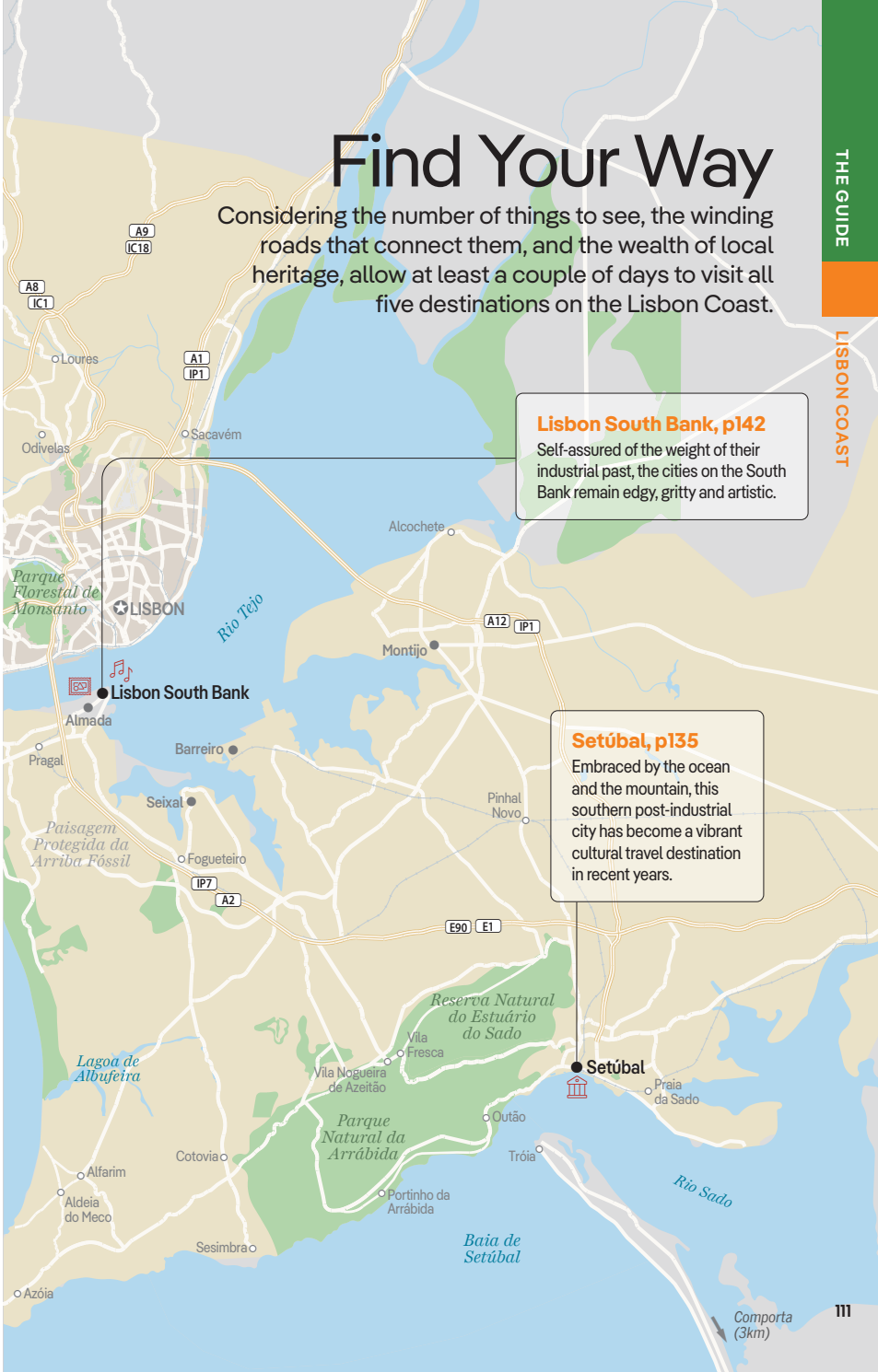
BUS

Since 2023, Carris Metropolitana operates all urban buses in Ericeira, Mafra, Sintra, Cascais, Setúbal and Sesimbra. It's become easier to travel by bus between all these destinations. However, some routes have fewer buses on weekends and outside office hours.

0 10 km
0 5 miles

Find Your Way

Considering the number of things to see, the winding roads that connect them, and the wealth of local heritage, allow at least a couple of days to visit all five destinations on the Lisbon Coast.



Lisbon South Bank, p142
Self-assured of the weight of their industrial past, the cities on the South Bank remain edgy, gritty and artistic.

Setúbal, p135
Embraced by the ocean and the mountain, this southern post-industrial city has become a vibrant cultural travel destination in recent years.

Plan Your Time

Approach Lisbon Coast as a series of day trips, but expect (and embrace) the surprises. Sintra, Cascais, Ericeira and Setúbal aren't destinations to see in a hurry. Lisbon South Bank cities fit in one morning.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Mercado do Livramento (p137), Setúbal

If You Only Have One Day

- Catch an early train to **Sintra** (p114) and hop on the bus from the town's train station to head straight to **Palácio Nacional da Pena** (p115) and **Castelo dos Mouros** (p114). Both sites can take up a whole morning to visit.

- Walk to the historical centre via the path that cuts through the **Villa Sassetti** (p117) property to see one of Sintra's most offbeat and romantic palaces. Refuel with a light meal at **Romaria do Baco** (p118; preferably paired with a glass of Colares wine). Skip dessert at the restaurant and stop for coffee and a *travesseiro* (almond-and-egg dessert) at **Casa Piriquita** (p117).

- Spend the afternoon exploring the mystical **Quinta da Regaleira** (p116) and the **Palácio Biester** (p117) next door. Bid Sintra farewell by walking down Volta do Duche back to the train station.

Seasonal Highlights

Spring, autumn and winter are balmy and welcoming, while summer's long, hot days call for time at the beach, from sunrise to sunset.

FEBRUARY

Carnaval (Mardi Gras) is celebrated nationwide with different levels of enthusiasm. For traditional celebrations and a flashy seaside parade, head to Sesimbra, near Setúbal. It's still winter, but the days are growing longer and spring is on the way.

MAY

Setúbal welcomes another edition of its **International Music Festival**. Temperatures rise, and the need to spend time outdoors, too. Many head to the beaches at the first sight of sunshine, but the ocean is still cold and tricky.

JUNE

On 29 June, Sintra celebrates one of the three *santos populares*, **São Pedro** (St Peter). June is the first official month of beach season: lifeguards take their positions, seasonal bars open doors, and seaside evening strolls resume.

Weekend Getaway

- On day one, take the train from Lisbon to **Setúbal** (p135). Explore the city centre on foot and visit iconic sights like **Mercado do Livramento** (p137) or **Convento de Jesus** (p135). Wrap up the morning with a plate of *choco frito* (fried cuttlefish) at **Casa Santiago** (p137) for lunch.

- Spend the afternoon at Arrábida's beach, **Praia de Albarquel** (p140) a short drive from Setúbal's historic centre. If you prefer resort-style beaches, hop on the ferry to **Tróia** (p139).

- The next day, have an early start and head to **Sesimbra** (p140) for a quiet morning enjoying this old fishing village or spending the day at the beach. End the day with a visit to **Cabo Espichel** (p141). Return to Sesimbra for dinner at family-friendly **O Velho e o Mar** (p140) before returning to Setúbal.

Three Towns in Three Days

- Head to **Cascais** (p123) on the first day. Spend the morning visiting **Bairro dos Museus** (p123) and **Boca do Inferno** (p126). Lunch at **Taberna da Praça** (p125) and browse the bookstores at **Cidadela de Cascais** (p126). In the afternoon, take your pick: visit **Quinta do Pisão** (p127) or explore Roman ruins at **Villa Romana de Freiria** (p129).

- Spend day two in **Ericeira** (p130), taking in the town's slow pace and epic ocean views. Grab lunch at one of the seaside restaurants. Reserve the afternoon for a dip at **Praia dos Pescadores** (p134) or just soak up the sun.

- On day three, head to **Mafra** (p130) in the morning, visit **Palácio Nacional de Mafra** (p132) and grab lunch in town. End the day with a drive to Cheleiros and tasting rare wines at **Manzwine** (p130).

JULY

Ericeira welcomes another yearly edition of the **Portuguese Surf Film Festival** (p133). Cascais welcomes visitors to the music festival **Ageas Cool Jazz**. Almada spends three days celebrating theatre with its annual **Festival de Almada**.

AUGUST

It's the peak of beach season, school holidays and local festivities – the best time for refreshing dips. Cascais celebrates **Festas do Mar**, and Barreiro hosts a two-week-long festival in honour of the city.

SEPTEMBER

It's back-to-school season. Expect more traffic, but less crowded sights. Setúbal celebrates local poet Bocage on 15 September. The weather is still great for swims, and people head to urban beaches in Cascais and Arrábida.

NOVEMBER

The month for the **Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival** and the beginning of the surf season in Ericeira. Daylight Saving Time ends, days are shorter again, and street vendors switch from selling ice creams to roasted chestnuts.

Sintra



FAIRYTALE PALACES | CHARMING HERITAGE | MYTHS & LEGENDS

Mysterious and picturesque, Sintra is one of the top one-day trip destinations for those visiting the Portuguese capital. This mountain-nestled town and UNESCO World Heritage Site compels visitors to stay longer than a few hours.

Famous for its microclimate, the weather here is unpredictable and often misty, but that just adds to Sintra's beauty. Plus, it explains why most of the majestic romantic palaces and the top-of-the-hill Moorish castle are shrouded in urban legends and ghost stories.

Portuguese Romantic-era writers Almeida Garrett, Alexandre Herculano and Eça de Queirós were inspired by Sintra and travelled there frequently in the 19th century. Others, including poet Lord Byron and composer Richard Strauss, were also influenced by the atmosphere and let it permeate their art. Staying at Lawrence's, a hotel that still exists today and is practically a Sintra institution, Byron would immortalise the village in his 1812 poem 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage'.

Secrets of the Mystic Mountain

Guided night hikes in Sintra

A lot of the official hiking trails in Sintra combine the mountain's unique landscape and humanmade monuments. Although hikers can tackle the trails on their own during the day (depending on their level of experience, of course), the experience of combining a hike with stops along the way to hear stories about Sintra's lore at night gives travellers a deeper sense of the area's mythological pull. On full moon nights, **O Caminheiro de Sintra** (*miguelboim.com; from €14*) guides a small group (15 people maximum) uphill, via must-see monuments like **Castelo dos Mouros**, often through wooded areas, and back to the start in time to catch the last train to Lisbon. All of it in absolute silence for most

GETTING AROUND

The easiest way to reach Sintra is by taking the 40-minute train trip from Lisbon's Rossio station. Sintra Line is one of the busiest, so avoid travelling during rush hour. The town's centre is best explored on foot. Hop on a bus at the station for the hilltop sights – number 434 covers Palácio Nacional da Pena and Castelo dos Mouros, and number 435 serves Quinta da Regaleira and Palácio Biester. Parking near the historic centre is limited to four hours. If you find a spot, it costs approximately €3, but only drive to Sintra if you plan on travelling beyond the village.

TOP TIP

There is a lot to see in Sintra, and your visit shouldn't be rushed. Pick one or two must-sees, take your time in each attraction, and include a third site with smaller queues if you have space in your itinerary.



of the way so as not to disturb the mountain and its night creatures. Parts of the route are demanding, and walking in the dark among trees when you don't know the way might be a little anxiety-inducing (resort to your mobile's flashlight only if necessary), but each stop to rest comes with the reward of a story.

Medieval Castle & a Romantic Palace

Visit the classic hilltop sites

Rising from a thickly wooded peak and often enshrouded in swirling mist, **Palácio Nacional da Pena** (*bilheteira.parquesdesintra.pt; adult/child €20/free*) is Sintra's crown jewel. Here, you can easily lose track of time admiring the gardens, the colourful architecture and each room's intriguing decor details (a nod to the trending Manueline-style revival).

Castelo dos Mouros (*bilheteira.parquesdesintra.pt; adult/child €12/free*), the 10th-century fortress next-door, might be less visually appealing than its next-door neighbour, but don't underestimate it: explore the walls, see the views and imagine what medieval life was like here.

TOP EXPERIENCE

Quinta da Regaleira

If there is one place that wholly captures the romantic atmosphere of Sintra, it's Quinta da Regaleira. It's the site where all visitors dash first (literally) from the moment they step off the train. Designed by Luigi Manini, the over-the-top decor of the gardens and the palace (he was a set designer, after all) has become one of Sintra's trademarks.



ULDIS LAGANOVSKIS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

TOP TIPS

- For convenience, you can buy tickets online, but they don't allow you to skip ahead. Lines move fast, though.
- There are always crowds at Regaleira, but arriving closer to opening time means the crowd size is more tolerable.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for prices and opening hours.

Start with the Palace

There's a recommended direction to follow when you visit Quinta da Regaleira, but no one chases after you for going the 'wrong' way. Therefore, while everyone is turning right to Poço Iniciático (Initiation Well), turn left to the chapel (under renovation at the time of writing, but still viewable from outside) and the palace. There are so many decor details drawing your attention on the way, but time hovers when you step inside the palace. Because most visitors will be waiting at the well or skipping the palace altogether, it's like having the house to yourself: sensor lights turn on leading the way, info boards in English provide context, and, although you can't enter the rooms, there's enough space to see every intricate detail. Manini sure knew how to design to impress.

Poço Iniciático

The reality is, big or small, there's always a queue at **Poço Iniciático** (Initiation Well) – waiting in line for half an hour is considered 'not bad'. Descending is optional (let the employee know you just want to see it from the top), and you shouldn't skip it, but visit it last after you have explored all other corners of Regaleira.



MAURO RODRIGUES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Palácio Biester

Offbeat, Romantic & with Manini's Design

Explore Biester and Villa Sassetti

After being left abandoned for years, **Palácio Biester** (*biester.pt; adult/child €12/free*) opened for the first time in early 2022, beautifully restored. Visitors rush past on the way to neighbouring Regaleira, and it's a shame this palace decorated by Luigi Manini gets a portion of the attention compared to the set designer's other creations.

The other Manini creation, **Villa Sassetti** (*parquesdesintra.pt; free*), is in the middle of the walking path connecting Sintra's historic centre to Palácio da Pena and Castelo dos Mouros – a much lovelier way to get to the uphill monuments, with the excuse to see the house and the gardens.

Free Art Museum Away From Crowds

A quick tour of MU.SA

Visit **Museu das Artes de Sintra** (*cm-sintra.pt; free*) to discover new contemporary art or for a break from the extravagant palaces and the long queues. MU.SA dedicates one room to selected works by Portuguese artist Dorita Castel-Branco (1936–96). The other two rooms are for temporary exhibitions by young or emerging contemporary artists.

SINTRA'S LORE IN FICTION

Sintra's atmosphere conjures all sorts of spooky tales.

The 1999 horror movie *The Ninth Gate* was primarily filmed in Sintra. Many parts of the town are easily recognisable from the film, including rooms of the Palácio Biester (a semi-abandoned property at the time).

SINtra (Escorpião Azul, 2018), a Portuguese graphic novel written by Tiago Cruz and illustrated by Inês Garcia, takes on the town's lore to create a scary tale around a mother and three daughters who turn out to be not what they seem. The abandoned house featured in the book exists (the authors prefer not to reveal its location) and was built by Quinta da Regaleira's former owner. The creatures were inspired by local fauna.

WHERE TO EAT IN SINTRA: LOCAL PASTELARIAS

Casa Piriquita: A Sintra classic, this *pastelaria* in the historic centre was the first to bake *travesseiros* – the top reason people come here. *10am-6pm* €

Fábrica das Verdadeiras Queijadas da Sapa: Refuel here with coffee and *queijadas de Sintra* on the way to the train station. *9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun* €

Dona Estefânia: Away from the crowds in the centre, this quiet local caf near MU.SA makes a decent version of *travesseiros*. *8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun* €

Tulipa de Sintra: Busy and lively, this under-the-radar *pastelaria* is the kind where staff know each customer's 'usual'. *7am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun* €

WHY I LOVE SINTRA



Sandra Henriques, Lonely Planet writer

No matter how many years pass or how intermittently I return, Sintra will always feel like my home away from home – her moody weather and stormy beaches, her lushness and winding roads are a balm for my Azores' homesickness.

And I can't help but feel the lure of whatever myths, legends and ghost stories she conceals.

We have a bond, a secret form of communication that makes me smile even when I'm navigating the groups of mesmerised visitors walking towards the centre from the station – I like to see the look on their faces on that last bend of Volta do Duche. Time stands still. And we are all in awe while we catch our breath.



TURISMO DE LISBOA ©

Sintra Mitos & Lendas

Interactive Lore

Visit Sintra Mitos & Lendas

First impressions at the ticket office of **Sintra Mitos & Lendas** (*sintramitoselendas.pt; adult/child/family €4/2.50/11.50*) can be a little off-putting – the interaction feels automated ('here's the audio guide and the 3D glasses, entrance is through there, you start from the top floor'), but most people sympathise once they realise the experience is built for independent visitors who prefer to be left to their own devices. The audio guide starts automatically every time it picks up a station, and there are plenty of interactive displays for extra learning. It's a great pit-stop for families before hitting the other attractions in Sintra – allowed to roam free and encouraged to touch screens and push buttons, kids will be entertained for at least an hour.

EATING IN SINTRA: CASUAL RESTAURANTS

Tascantiga: *Petiscos* and light meals in a laid-back space with an outdoor terrace in the historic centre. *12.15-4.15pm Mon-Thu, 7-10pm Fri & Sat* €€

Romaria de Baco: Busy Mediterranean restaurant and wine bar near Palácio Nacional de Sintra. *noon-11.30pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat* €€

Casa do Fauno: Atmospheric medieval pub a short walk from Quinta da Regaleira. *4pm-1am Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat* €

Taberna Criativa: Chef Vitor Rocha's restaurant features traditional cuisine with a contemporary twist. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€€

DISCOVER SINTRA'S HISTORIC CENTRE ON FOOT

Begin your immersive Sintra experience when you step off the train. See beautiful buildings and urban art while walking to the picturesque historic centre.

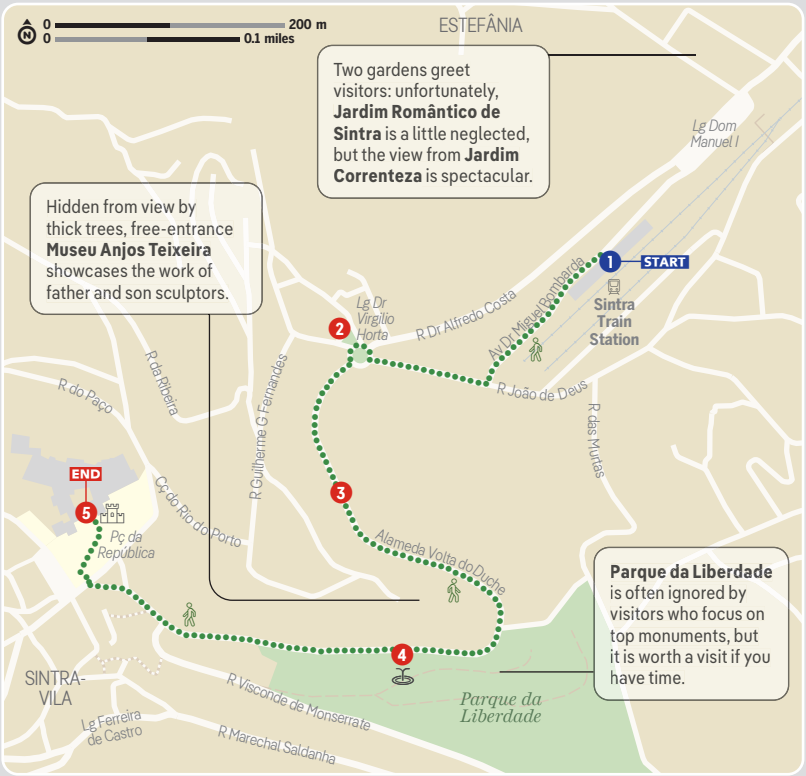
START	END	LENGTH
Sintra train station	Palácio Nacional de Sintra	1km; 1 hour

Start from 1 **Sintra train station** and head down road N249 until you reach a small roundabout. Cross the street to have a closer look at the beautiful 2 **Câmara Municipal de Sintra** on your right.

Continue ahead, walking on the right side. As it starts to twist, the N249 becomes 3 **Volta do Duche** – the winding street among trees and gardens leading to the heart of the town is lined with several pieces of public art. Soon, as you get closer to the centre, the neo-Moorish style 4 **Fonte Mourisca** will catch your eye from across the street (cross safely if you want a closer look).

The white twin chimneys of the walk's final stop, 5 **Palácio Nacional de Sintra**, have been making themselves noticed along the route. After you finally reach the palace, and if the square in front of it isn't too busy, stand on the steps to view the colourful houses clustered against the mountain, with Castelo dos Mouros peaking at the top. Behind them is the spiderweb network of staircases, streets and narrow cobbled alleys that take visitors up the hill.

And if it's a misty morning and Sintra doesn't reveal herself in full, take it as an invitation to return one day.



Beyond Sintra



Dramatic North Atlantic coast, an offbeat royal palace, a thriving wine region, picturesque villages and slow-paced mountain life.

Places

Colares p120
Janas p122
Queluz p122

GETTING AROUND

It doesn't take more than a half-hour drive, often via winding and charming secondary roads, to travel around the region. Doing it car-free is possible but requires heavy doses of planning and patience, so hiring a car is the best option when time is tight. Rideshare options have become increasingly more dependable, even if waiting times are higher in more remote areas. Sintra has a decent network of buses, but there are fewer options on weekends.

All the majestic palaces and romantic scenery you covered in Sintra were just the start. Find the time to go beyond the heritage town and you'll find a landscape of contrasts: the cool, misty and evergreen mountain is juxtaposed against the sunny and windy coast, which is permanently exposed to the never-temperate North Atlantic.

Despite the region's always-growing reputation, parts of it remain under the radar (even for locals) – a former royal palace semi-hidden among apartment blocks in one of Sintra's suburbs, an abandoned hilltop church with views that rival the more popular Cabo da Roca (the westernmost edge of Portugal's mainland) and a scenic postcard-perfect village hanging on a cliff above the sea.

Colares

TIME FROM SINTRA: **20 MINS**

Hit the beaches

Typically windy and chilly, the beaches around Sintra are best enjoyed by surfers more than folks looking for a relaxed day in the sun. But the natural beauty of two of these beaches are worth the trip, even if you visit outside of beach season or don't care for a swim.

Golden-sand **Praia das Maçãs** is a local favourite, particularly with families in the summer, and to have Sunday lunch at one of the restaurants with ocean views. Make the trip to the beach more special with a 45-minute scenic ride on the tram **Elétrico de Sintra** (*visitsintra.travel; one way adult/child €5/2.50*).

Azenhas do Mar is the most photogenic of the two, with its clifftop houses all facing the sea. The beach here, at the bottom of the cliff, is quite small, but there's also a natural saltwater pool right next to it to cool off in.

Hilltop views from an abandoned church

May you be graced with good weather and the strength to endure fierce winds because the view from **Santuário da Peninha** (*parquesdesintra.pt; free*), almost 500m high, will be worth each step of the couple of stairways you have to climb (and the mild inclination of the 250m walk from the free car park).



XINOVAP/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Santuário da Peninha

The site will feel a little inhospitable at first; it surely doesn't help that the church and the palace are closed, some parts covered in graffiti and litter, and that the place isn't swarming with tourists (which you can take as a blessing). You need to spend a good 10 minutes of your morning visit (recommended) acclimatising, hopefully without rain (at the top of Sintra mountain, this is hit and miss, and unfortunately there isn't a place where you can take cover if it starts to pour).

Download a map of Portugal on your phone, and on a clear day, while you keep an eye on that (potentially) menacing rain cloud, see how much of the coastline you can spot.

Step on mainland Europe's westernmost point

Wild and wonderful **Cabo da Roca** (Rock Cape) is a sheer 150m cliff facing the roaring sea, 18km west of Sintra. It's mainland Europe's westernmost point and a terrific sunset spot. The famous Sintra microclimate is always intense here, so prepare for a cold breeze that can quickly grow into a chilling wind. Wait for the crowds to clear and take that selfie in front of the cross that marks the spot: the westernmost point of mainland Europe. And then enjoy the view, salt in the hair and all. Weather permitting, of course.

TRAVELLING BY BUS

A lot of the must-see attractions and experiences beyond Sintra are easy to reach by bus, the rule of thumb being 'the more visitors, the higher the frequency of buses and the more routes'. Most times, a bus stop will look as such and you'll be able to identify it easily. In other circumstances, though, your drop-off point might be by a post with a plaque attached to it, on the side of a road without pavements, with rushing traffic, in the middle of nowhere, and that short walk from there to your destination might be a little different from what you anticipated based on your mobile phone's map app.

EATING AROUND SINTRA: MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Água e Sal: Fish is the speciality at this Azenhas do Mar restaurant, best enjoyed with a glass of young house wine. *12.30-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Azenhas do Mar: This restaurant perched above the saltwater pool has plenty of seafood dishes and local wines. Kids' menu available. *12.30-10pm* €€

Neptuno: This restaurant at Praia das Maçãs is a local classic, best known for its catch-of-the-day dishes. *12.30-4pm & 7.30-9.30pm Wed-Mon* €€

Aldea Coop: This organic produce store in the heart of Janas serves meals made with local ingredients. *9am-8pm Sat-Thu, to 11pm Fri* €€

SUGGESTED COLARES WINES



Alexandre Guedes, a winemaker at Quinta de San Michel (@quintadesanmichel), suggests three must-try local wines.

Viúva Gomes Ramisco (1965): This winery is one of the oldest in Portugal and has kept some of the oldest harvests despite changing owners over time. This 1965 Ramisco perfectly represents the Colares wine region. Truly precious.

Arenae Malvasia (2021): Produced by Portugal's oldest cooperative, Adega Regional de Colares. Malvasia de Colares is a grape native to this region. This wine is one of the best examples of a typical Colares wine.

Quinta de San Michel Malvarinto (2021): And, finally, our exclusive Malvarinto de Janas. We created this unique blend by mixing two local grapes: Malvasia and Arinto. Both very different, but perfect combined.



PYNA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Palácio Nacional de Queluz

Janas

TIME FROM SINTRA: **15 MINS**

Colares' region wine tasting

Tasting the Colares' region's unique wines is an excellent reason for a detour. Influenced by the mountain and the nearby ocean, Colares' wines (mostly white) are a little dry and bitter, which might not appeal to every palate. They also need at least 18 months to age, therefore production is usually small and slow.

To fully understand and appreciate this wine, book one of the boutique-sized experiences at **Quinta de San Michel** *(quintadesanmichel.pt; from €25)*. At this family-owned winery in Janas, the touring groups are small (minimum of two people) and private (you won't share the experience with strangers). After a visit to the vineyards and the unexpected-looking cellar, the tour ends in the wine-tasting room with an envy-inducing view of Sintra mountain.

If you have less free time, or you're a more impromptu 'since we're here' traveller, head to **Adega Regional de Colares** *(arcolares.com; from €6)*, which welcomes walk-ins during business hours.

Queluz

TIME FROM SINTRA: **30 MINS**

A former royal palace

The azure-and-white **Palácio Nacional de Queluz** (*parques desintra.pt; adult/child/family €13/10/35*) receives a fraction of visitors compared to other palaces in Sintra. Upon entry, two grand ballroom-style lounges with floor-to-ceiling mirrors and dramatic chandeliers but no furniture set the tone for your visit. As expected from an 18th-century palace, all that glitters is gold, and each square inch of wall is covered in frescoes and gold-plated wood moulds. After you've tallied up all the decor idiosyncrasies of the palace (the ceiling fresco in the Ambassadors Room, the honeycombs in the Picnic Room), a tiled corridor depicting mythological scenes and the seasons leads you to the gardens – planned and designed like a romantic private park, with manicured hedges, lakes and marble statues.



Cascais

URBAN BEACHES | POSH ARCHITECTURE | ART MUSEUMS

After the fishing village Cascais became a town in the 14th century by royal decree, it began to attract the national and foreign aristocratic elites who flocked to this seaside place for the summer, following the example set by the Portuguese royal family. Modern-day Cascais, dubbed the Portuguese Riviera, remains posh with its seaside manors (some turned into hotels), carefully curated galleries and museums, and a well-known sunny refuge for the famous and wealthy.

At the end of the Cascais Line, its proximity to Lisbon by train makes it one of the top beach destinations in the summer, with a patch of sand for every taste. With that popularity comes crowded beaches, but it's worth the hassle for most day-trippers. Laid-back urban beaches, monuments and Roman traces, sprawling parks and natural wonders to entertain the kids, picturesque lighthouses and grand mansions for the image-perfect memory all await.

Art, History & Iconic Buildings

Exploring the museum quarter

Bairro dos Museus (*bairrodosmuseus.cascais.pt; from €3; 24hr pass €15*) covers 13 museums and galleries. It's unlikely you'll get to them all on a day trip, so perhaps visit three sites a short walk from one another. Start with free-entrance **Museu da Vila** for a glance at Cascais' history: it takes less than one hour to do a complete tour.

Less than 1km away is **Museu Condes de Castro Guimarães**, a former summer house that makes a memorable first impression when you enter the estate and see the fountain's tile panel and the 16th-century chapel. Pace yourself because taking in every detail of this decorative arts museum will take time.

Finally, **Casa das Histórias** – the hard-to-miss building with the terracotta-coloured pyramids designed by Portuguese architect Eduardo Souto de Moura – houses Paula Rego's art (1935–2022). Whatever the theme of the ongoing showcase

GETTING AROUND

Consider driving to Cascais only if you plan to visit remoter places. Trains to Cascais depart frequently from Cais do Sodré in Lisbon throughout the day, and it's the best option to reach this coastal town. The historic centre is best explored on foot, but around lunch, it starts to get crowded and navigating the narrow streets (especially the ones with slippery cobblestones) becomes a little tiring. To visit outside town, hire a car. Rideshare apps and a reliable network of public buses are a good alternative for those without a car.

TOP TIP

Exploring the city centre on two wheels isn't a comfortable experience, but Cascais has a good and frequently used cycling path by the sea. To rent electric scooters or bikes, head to the Mobi Cascais kiosk at the train station.



SIGHTS
1. Casa das Histórias Paula Rego
2. Cidadela de Cascais
3. Museu Condes de Castro Guimarães
4. Museu da Vila
5. Parque Marechal Carmona
6. Praia da Conceição

SLEEPING
7. Cascais Boutique Hostel
8. Pestana Cidadela Cascais
9. Villa Cascais

EATING
10. Emma
11. Lusophonica
12. Mercado da Vila
13. Santini
14. Taberna da Praça



SANDRA MORAES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Museu Condes de Castro Guimarães (p123)

(the exhibitions rotate every six months), her art is unapologetically feminist and pro-women's and abortion rights. Most of her pieces are raw and open to personal interpretations, leaving you with a punch-in-the-gut sensation.

Cool Down With an Italian Gelato

Get a scoop at Santini

It may sound surprising, but eating Italian ice cream is one of the most local experiences to have in Cascais. **Santini** artisanal ice-cream shop, established in 1949 by an Italian immigrant, is a classic stop. No one can quite pinpoint what makes them special because the recipes are kept under wraps. The signature Marabunta (cream with dark chocolate chips) is one of the top-selling flavours, but new ones pop up frequently. Expect long lines in the summer; to be one of the first clients of the day, consider gelato for brunch (the shop opens at 11am).

Family Fun & Music Festivals

Relaxing at Parque Marechal Carmona

Sprawling lawns, large trees, ponds and a picnic area make **Parque Marechal Carmona** the most popular urban park in Cascais. Central and family-friendly, it's easy to reach if you need a cooling escape on hot summer afternoons. In July, the park becomes one of the venues for **Ageas Cool Jazz** (*ageascooljazz.pt; tickets from €30*). The music festival sets two more stages at nearby Hipódromo Manuel Possolo and the Casa das Histórias' gardens.

RAUL LINO'S SEASIDE MANORS

In the 19th century, wealthy Portuguese families began to choose Cascais as their summer destination, which meant an increased need for proper homes for the season.

Architect Raul Lino designed many of the seaside manors (two are visitable museums) along the shore between Cascais and Estoril in the early 1900s. He added glamorous decor elements inspired by his trips around Europe to the so-called 'Portuguese house' style, although when you see these buildings from the outside, they don't immediately stand out as rich mansions – you must notice the little details like Moorish-inspired arches, classic tile panels, or the turrets. More than Lino's trademark design style, these houses became a symbol of wealthy Cascais.

EATING IN CASCAIS: CASUAL RESTAURANTS

Casa da Guia: A refurbed historic mansion, with shops and several restaurants and cafes near the road to Guincho. *8am-midnight* €€

Mercado da Vila: The town's market food court near Cascais' bus terminal features several cafes and restaurants with varied cuisines. *8am-midnight* €€

Lusophonica: Famous for the views, the lighthouse and brunch. A locals' fave and family-friendly spot for light meals. *10am-6pm Tue-Sun* €

Taberna da Praça: Laid-back atmosphere, Portuguese *petiscos* (tapas), and wine by the glass in the Cidadela Art District. *12.30-10.30pm* €€

STROLL THROUGH CASCAIS' HISTORIC CENTRE

Charming Cascais upholds her status of posh town. Stroll down pedestrian-only streets leading to pristine urban beaches and seaside trails.

START	END	LENGTH
Cascais train station	Boca do Inferno	2km; 1 hour

On the train trip from Lisbon, if you managed to get one of the window seats on the left side of the car, most of the journey will have been graced by ocean views. As soon as you start the walk at 1 **Cascais train station**, you'll notice the ever-present sea.

Walk down 2 **Rua Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo** and follow the street's wavy pattern of *calçada portuguesa* (Portuguese cobblestones), turning right on Rua Frederico Arouca, a busy pedestrian-only street that leads to an avenue lined with palm trees. Then, it flows down to coastal Passeio Dom Luis I via the main square, museums and small beaches, with the calm waters of 3 **Baía de Cascais** by your side.

Next, continue along Avenida Rei Humberto II de Itália through museums, seaside manor designed by Raul Lino 4 **Casa de Santa Maria**, and the lighthouse. On your left, the North Atlantic's rugged coast and an often-busy bicycle and walking path; on your right, five-star hotels and high-class mansions.

And then, your final stop 5 **Boca do Inferno**. From the viewpoint (always stay on the allowed areas), even on good weather days when the water barely ripples against the cliffs, you'll see a sample of the ocean's might here.



Beyond Cascais



Explore the beaches around Cascais, give surfing a try, explore Roman ruins, or take the kids to a forest park.

Unsurprisingly, the ocean is the focus of most activities around Cascais. There are urban beaches a stone's throw from some of the train stations, with plenty of seaside restaurants and cafes. And then there's Praia do Guincho. Frequently windy and a little on the cooler side in the summer, it's the ideal beach for windsurfing and kitesurfing.

But there is more than sea, sun and sand here. A short drive from the city centre, there are two free-entrance archaeological sites with remains of ancient Roman villages. And a massive forest park for kids (and grownups) with hiking trails, sustainable animal rides, educational activities and guided walking tours.

Alcabideche

TIME FROM CASCAIS: **15 MINS**

Enjoy nature at Quinta do Pisão

Picnic areas, hiking trails, a prehistoric cave, animal stables and a vegetable garden – there is a lot of ground to cover at the forest park **Quinta do Pisão** (*ambiente.cascais.pt; free*) and walking between sites can take more than 10 minutes, so don't spread yourself too thin.

After you park the car (beyond the car park at the entrance of the park only service cars are allowed), stop by the interpretation centre first to get your bearings, buy some local organic products or vegetables grown onsite (the kinds of produce available changes every week), or rent a bike. Then, if you don't have plans, let the kids explore freely – although the entrance is close to a busy road, the centre of this walled park is inland and away from traffic. The resident donkeys like visitors and the park organises sustainable donkey rides for children only (from €25; book in advance).

From June to September, Quinta do Pisão hosts **LandArt Cascais** – a free-entrance exhibition displaying art pieces among nature.

Places

Alcabideche p127
São João do Estoril p128
Guincho p128
São Domingos de Rana p129

GETTING AROUND

It's easier to walk to the urban beaches along the coast between Cascais and Estoril. While the trains are a faster and more comfortable alternative, not all beaches are close to the stations. If you're not pressed for time, there's a good bus network (operated by Mobi Cascais and Carris Metropolitana) with routes that include sights further from town. To reach them more quickly, it's best to hire a car or use a rideshare app.

SPIES & AGENT 007

A safe and sunny haven for Portuguese royalty in the summer, Estoril was also used as a refuge for high-status escapees from WWII in the 1940s – royal families from Spain, Romania and Italy were among them. But that meant that spies and double agents would follow. And (allegedly) they did, checking into Hotel Palácio Estoril.

It's believed that Ian Fleming, perhaps the most famous secret agent of them all, wrote his first James Bond novel, *Casino Royale*, in Estoril. A lot of places beyond Cascais and Estoril were featured in the 1969 James Bond movie *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, the most notable being Praia do Guincho in one of the opening scenes.



BEKETOFF/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

São João do Estoril

TIME FROM CASCAIS: **6 MINS**

Walking the Paredão from Estoril to Cascais

Stretching for almost 3km by the sea, **Paredão de Cascais** is a walking and cycling path between Estoril and Cascais highly used by locals – expect more foot traffic on weekends and warm summer evenings. Lined by various cafes and restaurants, with plenty of benches in the shade and water fountains (dog-friendly, too) along the way, there are loads of spots to take breaks and enjoy the ocean views. If you feel like taking a dip, there are different beaches to choose from (watched by lifeguards only during the official beach season).

You can start your walk on the Paredão from either direction, but my recommendation is to take the Cascais train in the morning and exit at the São João do Estoril station to start the path at **Praia da Azarujinha** (about 350m south of the train station). Notice how the scenery changes, from slightly wild and rocky shores to stretches of fluffy golden sand – it's almost like the beaches get classier the closer you get to Estoril and Cascais.

Guincho

TIME FROM CASCAIS: **15 MINS**

Surfing at Praia do Guincho

Unless the ocean here is surprisingly calm that day, you'll hardly hear someone mentioning **Praia do Guincho** and relaxing at the beach in the same sentence.

The scenery is stunningly dramatic for sightseers: the rough sea, the wavy dunes, the Mediterranean vegetation peeking through the sand, and the hills of Sintra in the backdrop.

In addition to the views, experienced surfers and windsurfers head to Guincho to ride waves not too far from Lisbon. First-time practitioners can book private or group lessons – there are plenty of surf schools on the beach, open all year long.



Praia do Guincho

Outside of the beach season, or if you aren't interested in trying out surfing or attending one of the surf-related sports events (usually in the winter), head to popular Bar do Guincho above the beach for drinks with a view.

São Domingos de Rana

TIME FROM CASCAIS: **15 MINS**

Walking among ruins at Villa Romana de Freiria

Tucked away in a field, practically in the middle of nowhere, **Villa Romana de Freiria** (*cultura.cascais.pt; free*) hasn't (yet) become a crowded tourist attraction. The place looks a little untended at first glance, making the archaeological remains look like piles of scattered rocks among tall grass. But that impression disappears once you start following the wooden paths through the ruins, learning about the history of this farm founded by the first Roman colonisers.

You'll get to roam around rather freely but you're still not supposed to cross the barriers into the fields – except for the portion of an old Roman road you can walk on. The final stop is a roofed porch with benches and several informational boards about the site, a kind of contemplative place where you have an overview of the ruins.

The site is open from 10am to 6pm, and without a caretaker in sight, one might have the wrong impression of trespassing, but walk in with confidence.

BEST BEACHES AROUND CASCAIS

Praia da Azarujinha: Small and quiet beach, great for families and senior beachgoers, a short walk from São João do Estoril train stop.

Praia do Tamariz: Split into two areas, the roped one with the sun loungers (from €18 a day) screams exclusivity and private club vibes.

Praia de Carcavelos: One of the largest and most famous beaches, has loads of space for beachgoers who enjoy playing sports between swims.

Piscina Alberto Romano: Technically not a beach, but this ocean pool closer to Cascais is heaven-sent for beachgoers who aren't fans of sand.

Praia da Conceição: Urban beach in Cascais perfect for day-trippers who packed light and prepared for a swim in case of extra time.

EATING AROUND CASCAIS: BEACH RESTAURANTS

Emma: This family-friendly casual restaurant at Praia da Conceição in Cascais is perfect for light meals and *petiscos*. *9am-8pm Mon-Wed, to 10pm Thu-Sun* €€

Surpresa: Family-owned snack bar known for zero frills and fresh fish (grilled over coals). Good for casual, affordable meals with a view. *9am-midnight* €

Windsurf Café: At Praia de Carcavelos, consistent service isn't guaranteed at this always-busy spot, but affordable meals with a view are. *11am-10.30pm* €

Tamariz Summer Lounge: With bright and breezy decor this place is ideal for sunset dinners and cocktails. *9am-11pm* €€

Ericeira & Mafra



BEACHES & SURFING | HERITAGE | RARE WINES

GETTING AROUND

Increasing tourism numbers here led to local governments establishing priority parking zones for residents only, and paid car parks with limited maximum time for visitors. Although hiring a car is best for sightseeing at your own pace, consider public transit to Mafra or Ericeira and use a rideshare app to travel between towns.

Buses to Ericeira and Mafra depart from Campo Grande in Lisbon. The trip takes about one hour, but the routes with fewer stops are 2801 to Ericeira and 2802 to Mafra.

TOP TIP

Since January 2023, Carris Metropolitana (*carrismetropolitana.pt*) operates all bus routes within Greater Lisbon. This change has made reaching Mafra and Ericeira by bus simpler, more intuitive, and easier to plan.

Ericeira was presumably named after *ouriço* (the Portuguese word for sea urchin). In the 1800s, the small coastal town became the royals' favourite summer destination for therapeutic baths, and other aristocratic families followed. Its source of income shifted from fishing to seasonal tourism in the 1950s, and it has remained pretty much the same since then. Despite all the coming and going of the summer crowds, this small town has remained genuine, where the connection to the ocean is an overarching identity trait.

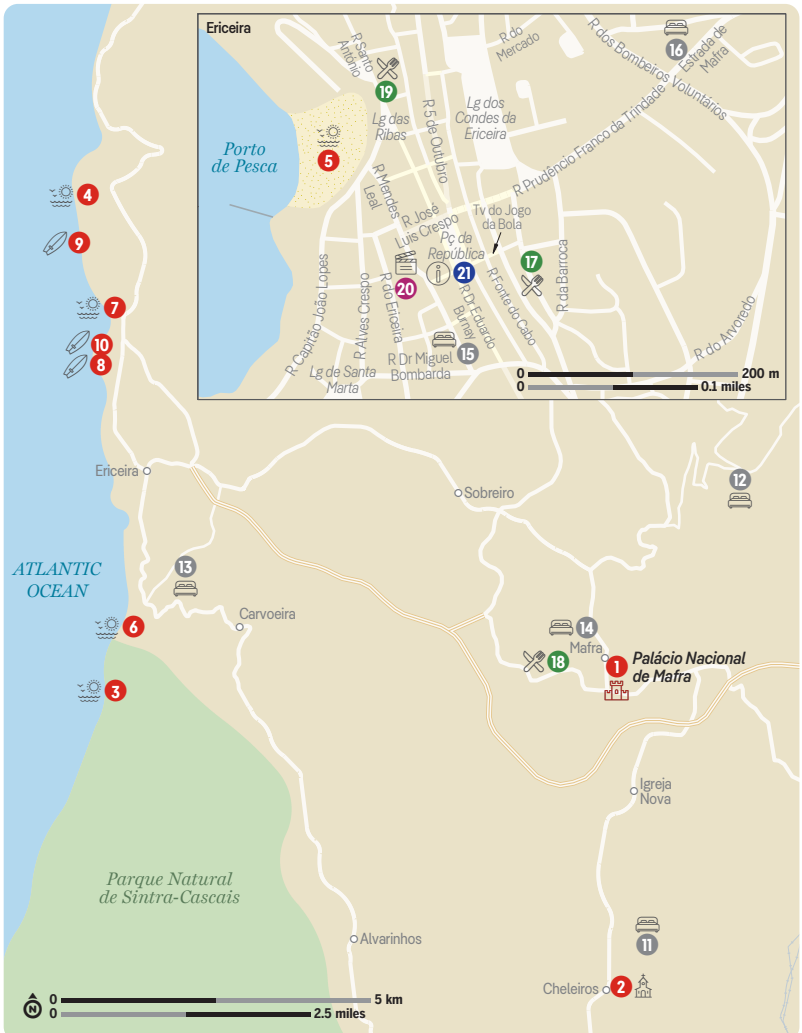
But it's not all surf and sand in this region. Nearby Mafra has a rural atmosphere where nature and heritage are essential values for the community. That ambience of *vila saloia* (small countryside town) is ever-present, not a bit overshadowed by the majestic Palácio Nacional de Mafra and its adjacent convent immortalised by Nobel-winning Portuguese writer José Saramago in his 1982 historical novel *Baltasar and Blimunda*.

Discover a Rare, Almost-Extinct Wine

Wine tasting in Cheleiros

Cheleiros is on the map for the wine tasting, but this small village with a population of under 2000, a 15-minute drive from Mafra, delivers some other surprises. If you have some time to kill before your booking at **Manzwine** (*manzwine.com; tastings from €20*), a short walk from the winery reveals the Manueline-style **Igreja de Cheleiros** and the perfectly intact medieval **Ponte Antiga de Cheleiros**.

Cheleiros was the first official village of Portugal (1195) and the region's county seat for more than six centuries, but all many visitors expect to find here is ruins.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Palácio Nacional de Mafra

SIGHTS
2 Igreja de Cheleiros
- Manzwine (see 2)
- Ponte Antiga de Cheleiros (see 2)

3 Praia de São Julião
4 Praia dos Coxos
5 Praia dos Pescadores
6 Praia Foz do Lizandro
7 Praia Ribeira d'Ilhas

ACTIVITIES
8 Backdoor
9 Crazy Left
- Pedra Branca (see 8)

10 Reef

SLEEPING
11 Aldeia da Mata Pequena
12 Casa do Salabredo
13 Ericeira Surf House
14 Mafra Hotel
15 Reserva FLH Hotels Ericeira
16 Selina Boavista Ericeira & Surf School

EATING
17 Café Salvador
18 João da Vila Velha
- Ribeira d'Ilhas Surf Restaurant (see 7)

19 Tasquinha do Joy

ENTERTAINMENT
20 Portuguese Surf Film Festival

INFORMATION
21 Centro de Interpretação da Reserva Mundial de Surf

TOP EXPERIENCE

Palácio Nacional de Mafra

A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2019, Palácio Nacional de Mafra is the country's largest and most important baroque monument. Its library, considered to be one of the most beautiful in the world, is partly responsible for the palace's must-see status and perhaps the number one reason why people visit, although it's not yet affected by mass tourism.



APPRECIATE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

TOP TIPS

- The route inside the palace is set. You can't skip a room or turn back. If you lose your way, the employees will nudge you in the right direction.
- In the library, bats protect the books by eating insects, but it's unlikely you'll see them.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for prices and opening hours.

Quick Tour of the Basílica

Most people skip the church (Basílica) and head straight to the palace. But, if you're not in a hurry, visit the church first. It won't take more than 30 minutes. Notice the Italian Carrara marble statues as you walk towards the entrance. In addition to the typically baroque white and red marble interiors and pastel-colour frescoes, the six organs here are the main attraction.

The Palace & the Library

Return to the palace and make your way through grand salons, private chambers and long corridors. The rooms are sparsely furnished, but you can still imagine what 18th-century royal life was like from the few pieces available at this favoured summer residence. Besides, in most areas, it's the ceiling frescoes that demand your attention. And when it comes to attention-grabbing features, the hunting lounge is very much on theme with dead animal heads used for decoration, and you can't avoid walking through it. The final room, and the one everyone wants to get to as soon as possible, is the library (pictured above), one of the most important in 17th-century Europe. Admire the long, book-filled corridors from behind the velvet rope at the entrance.

Manzwine is Portugal's sole certified producer of wine made from a local varietal called Jampal. Found by accident on the property, it turned out to be a type of grape thought to be extinct. The resulting white wine, award-winning Dona Fátima, might not appeal to all palates (salty, acidic, almost bitter), but perhaps to convince the more sceptical, it's included in all the wine-tasting experiences. A friendly tip: it helps to intersperse each sip with a piece of the complimentary local bread drenched in olive oil.

Ride Top Waves

Enjoying a World Surfing Reserve

A World Surfing Reserve since 2011, Ericeira is one of Portugal's top destinations for surfers. For learners and first-timers, locals advise to stick to calmer beaches, **Foz do Lizandro** and **São Julião**. But for seasoned surfers, this town is a dream come true. **Coxos**, **Crazy Left**, **Pedra Branca**, **Backdoor** and **Reef** are some of the most famous waves. And then there's **Ribeira d'Ilhas**. Consistent waves and picture-perfect views make this beach one of the most famous in Ericeira and frequently the chosen stage for significant national and international surfing events. For surf enthusiasts who prefer to stay on firm land and watch others skilfully ride the North Atlantic waves, head to **Centro de Interpretação da Reserva Mundial de Surf** to learn about the local biosphere and the history of Ericeira's surfer community.

The Cultural Side of Surfing

Attend Ericeira's Surf Film Festival

For over a decade, Ericeira has hosted the **Portuguese Surf Film Festival** (*portuguesesurffilmfestival.com; free*) in the summer (late July to early August). Films that focus on sustainability, the oceans and, of course, surfing are at the core of the festival, but it's a full-on cultural event with art shows and live music. Most screenings and events happen indoors at **Casa da Cultura da Ericeira**, but **Praia dos Pescadores** continues to be the chosen venue for outdoor cinema, usually showcasing classic or out-of-competition films.

MUST-EATS ERICEIRA & MAFRA

Fresh fish abounds in Ericeira, of course. And, for the seafood fans, there's no better post-beach-day meal than the catch-of-the-day grilled over coals. For those with a sweet tooth, don't leave without trying the local pastry *ouriços* – a small, dense cake made with sugar, eggs and almonds.

Mafra is famous for its trademarked rye and wheat bread, Pão de Mafra. It goes well with... everything, really. As for traditional dishes, they're mostly game-meat-based, with ingredients sourced from Tapada de Mafra – the former royal hunting grounds are open to locals with a license during a specific period of time under very tight rules as a way to manage the wildlife population.

Vegetarian and vegan options are more limited in these towns.

EATING IN ERICEIRA & MAFRA: CASUAL EATERIES

Tasquinha do Joy: Laid-back and busy restaurant with a view to Praia dos Pescadores, simple food, and light meals. *noon-3pm & 7-9pm Wed-Mon* €€

Ribeira d'Ilhas Surf Restaurant: Popular cafe-bar by the beach, with veg options and local wines. *9am-10.30pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat* €€

Café Salvador: Super friendly, family-owned cafe in the centre of Ericeira and a great spot for the famous pastries *ouriços*. *8am-7pm Wed-Mon* €

João da Vila Velha: This traditional restaurant a short walk from Palácio de Mafra specialises in game-meat dishes. *noon-3pm & 7-9.30pm Fri-Wed* €

EXPLORING ERICEIRA'S HISTORIC CENTRE

On the way to the beach, discover Ericeira's characteristic blue-trimmed houses, seaside chapels and historic churches.

START	END	LENGTH
Mercado Municipal da Ericeira	Largo do Jogo da Bola	2km; 1 hour

Start your walk at the town's produce market, 1 **Mercado Municipal da Ericeira**, and slowly start to immerse yourself in the narrow streets as you head to see the views from 2 **Ermida de São Sebastião**. It is often windy and overcast, but locals are easygoing, and the moody weather is just part of the lifestyle.

Follow the street along the coast to 3 **Capela da Boa Viagem**, the tiny chapel from where the surviving members of the Portuguese royal family escaped to Brazil after the regicide in 1910. If it's open, check out the temple's interior, entirely covered in *azulejos* (glazed tiles), except for the terracotta floor.

Head to the seaside promenade overlooking 4 **Praia dos Pescadores**. Small but central, it's a popular beach for visitors during peak season. Take in the views or a small detour down to the shore if time isn't tight.

Then, head through the maze of quiet, cobble-stoned streets, absorbing every architectural detail of this undeniably picturesque town. The tour ends at 5 **Largo do Jogo da Bola**, a square that is the heart of the village. Sit on one of the benches under the trees, perhaps side by side with a seasoned local, to feel Ericeira's genuinely relaxed lifestyle.





Setúbal

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE | DOLPHIN WATCHING | ART & CULTURE

Considered a city within the urban area of Greater Lisbon, Setúbal is, geographically, already a part of Alentejo in the Portuguese south. It's the birthplace of 18th-century Portuguese poet Bocage and world-famous football coach José Mourinho (self-titled 'the special one'). Both have streets and squares named after them.

Once a fishing village, 19th-century Setúbal became the home of several tinned fish factories, including one of the largest in Portugal. The last plant closed permanently in 1985.

Nestled between the Arrábida hills and the Atlantic Ocean, this small seaside city (roughly 125,000 people live here) flaunts baroque churches, picturesque facades, narrow car-free streets and gardens, and squares with wavy patterns of *calçada portuguesa*.

It's worth a day trip from Lisbon, but it has enough charm to convince visitors to stay overnight. Beaches, urban gardens and Arrábida's natural park are less than a 10-minute drive from Setúbal's historical centre.

Rich Heritage

Exploring the museums in Setúbal

None of Setúbal's museums and notable buildings should be seen in a rush. Therefore, and accounting for walking time between them, expect to dedicate half a day to discovering the city's heritage.

If **Convento de Jesus** (*visitsetubal.com; adult/child €3/free*) strikes you as familiar when you see it, it's because this is the first Manueline-style convent built in Portugal. Restoration work on this 15th-century monument was completed recently, and it's an absolute delight to linger inside the renovated church, the cloisters, and the high choir.

GETTING AROUND

Setúbal is a 40-minute drive from Lisbon, via Ponte 25 de Abril. However, parking might prove difficult during high season (especially around the Tróia ferry station). Catching the Fertagus train in Entrecampos is a simpler way to travel.

Within the city, walking is the best option for getting around. To reach areas further from the historic centre, Setúbal is served by a decent public bus network, including frequent buses to the beaches in the summer (*carrismetropolitana.pt; one-way ticket €2.60*) as part of the city's car-free project Arrábida 02.

☑TOP TIP

If you're staying in Setúbal for lunch or dinner, carry cash. Many restaurants in the historic centre don't accept card payments, and finding a (working) ATM can be a mission.

SIGHTS
1. Convento de Jesus
2. Museu de Arqueologia e Etnografia
3. Museu do Trabalho Michel Giacometti

ACTIVITIES
4. Dolphin Bay

SLEEPING
5. Day Off Hostel
6. HI Pousada da Juventude
7. RM Guesthouse

EATING
8. Adega dos Garrafões
9. Botequim du Bocage
10. Casa Santiago
11. Mercado do Livramento
12. O Miguel



Museu de Arqueologia e Etnografia do Distrito de Setúbal (*maeds.amrs.pt; free*) is a pleasant surprise if you have the time. At first, the museum's curation seems all over the place – rooms stuffed with apparently unrelated paintings, crafts and archaeological relics – but after a while, those pieces start to come together.

Museu do Trabalho Michel Giacometti (*visitsetubal.com; adult/child €1.50/free, cash only*), set inside a former fish-tinning factory, introduces Setúbal's industrial heritage in broad strokes – you'll get the idea of how things worked in about one hour or less.

Fresh Fish & Tiles

Going to Mercado do Livramento

Mornings are busy at **Mercado do Livramento** in Setúbal's historic centre. Glistening fresh fish rest on beds of ice while fishmongers trade recipes with regular customers, often disagreeing on the best seasoning. Speedy service and the need to get to the next client kill any attempts to bring sports or politics into the conversation.

But beyond people-watching (or buying fresh fish), there's one more reason to go inside. At the back of the market, a panel of *azulejos* covers the entire wall – all of Setúbal's ways of livelihood are represented in blue and white.

Sado Estuary's Most Cherished Family

Watching dolphins on the river

Setúbal is proud to be the home of a pod of dolphins, but some may be apprehensive about this kind of tour: are they treating wildlife like a tourist attraction?

You may board the **Dolphin Bay** (*dolphinbay.pt; adult/child €35/40*) hybrid boat as a sceptic, but there's certainly comfort in knowing that this company is dedicated to reducing their carbon footprint. It can also seem like there are too many other boats out on the water, but there are engagement and proximity rules that all operators are required to follow.

And then there are the dolphins. For those who've observed these animals before from smaller boats and closer to the sea surface, the experience might feel underwhelming. But this is truly unique: seeing a pod that has lived here for decades.

ON SUSTAINABLE DOLPHIN WATCHING



Patrícia Mota, marine biologist and co-founder of **Dolphin Bay** (@dolphinbaypt).

These approximately 27 dolphins chose Sado as their home – a pod of resident dolphins is very rare, but they live here and come close to shore frequently. They are very loved and cared for, and that's why rules for dolphin watching are strict: no more than three boats near the pod simultaneously, no abrupt course shifts, and we must always follow the pod from behind. It's not mandatory, but all tour boats should have at least one marine biologist on board. On our tours, the crew voluntarily registers and reports which dolphins they saw and where every day. It's a way to keep track and look out for them.

EATING IN SETÚBAL: CASUAL RESTAURANTS

Casa Santiago: This busy restaurant is famous for Setúbal's signature dish, *choco frito* (deep-fried cuttlefish). *11.30am-3pm & 6-9.45pm Mon-Sat* €€

Botequim du Bocage: A treasure-find in a part of the city crawling with overpriced cafes. Perfect for breakfast or a light meal. *8am-7pm Mon-Sat* €

O Miguel: Grilled fish is the speciality at this family-owned restaurant by the bay. Make reservations. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10pm* €€

Adega dos Garrafões: Traditional restaurant with affordable meals and a fixed menu. *noon-3pm Mon-Sat, plus 7-10pm Fri & Sat* €

WANDER THROUGH SETÚBAL'S HISTORIC CENTRE

The city of Setúbal has the heart of a seaside village. Unveil its charm on this historic centre walking tour.

START	END	LENGTH
Mercado do Livramento	Sé de Setúbal	1km; 1 hour

In a city where fish is the king of staple foods, there is no better starting point than 1 **Mercado do Livramento** in the morning. Soon, the greasy aroma of *choco frito* (fried cuttlefish), Setúbal's signature dish, will start to permeate the air.

But for now, cross the leafy Avenida Luísa Todi to 2 **Praça do Bocage**. The statue of a local-born poet marks the centre of the namesake square, a social hub lined with cafes and restaurants and with an unusual pink and white pavement.

Leave the wide avenue and sprawling plaza behind and plunge into the heart of the city through the cobblestoned, narrow, pedestrian-only Rua Serpa Pinto. The street leads to a smaller square, where benches blend in with the 3 **Dolce Vita** statue.

Then head to quaint and leafy Largo de Santa Maria, across from the city's cathedral 4 **Sé de Setúbal**. Take a look inside if you reach it between 5pm and 7pm on a weekday (the church has tight opening hours).

If your schedules don't align, sitting at the square and admiring the church from outside will have to do. Keep track of the time because those bells toll every hour with a force that catches first-timers off-guard.



Beyond Setúbal



Ocean dips, a day in a summery town, nature walks, and beach-lounging afternoons are a short trip away from Setúbal.

Península de Tróia is a 25km long and 1.5km wide sandbank – and, in some parts, even less than that. With the North Atlantic Ocean on the west side and the Rio Sado on the east, it was only natural it would become a beach and tourist haven. The beach resorts (for paying guests only) appeared in the final couple of decades of the 20th century. The marina, other hotels and restaurants, the casino and the ferry ports followed soon after.

But not all places beyond Setúbal are pay-to-play. Nearby Arrábida has quiet beaches and hiking trails for the outdoorsy. Drive 30km to the west, and you'll find Sesimbra, a pocket-size fishing village and summer destination.

Península de Tróia

TIME FROM SETÚBAL: **15 MINS**

A day in Setúbal's famous beach resort

Tróia doesn't try to be something else, so expect the expected: a tourist resort with expensive seaside hotels, a casino, a marina full of private yachts, and boat tours advertising sunset trips.

In the summer, the beaches closest to the marina and the passenger ferry stop are always the busiest, as car-free beach-goers rarely plan to stay for more than a couple of hours. The view of the bay and the hills of **Parque Natural da Arrábida** is the payoff for the lack of peace and quiet.

For more secluded sandy shores, walk until **Praia Tróia Mar** (10 minutes), **Praia da Questa** (20 minutes) or **Praia da Costa da Galé** (about a half-hour away). And if you get to Tróia by car (take the car ferry from Setúbal, which arrives at the southern port), you can explore beaches further south in Comporta.

Places

Península de Tróia p139
Arrábida p140
Sesimbra p140

GETTING AROUND

The best way to get around the greater Setúbal area is by combining a hired car with public transit. If you plan to explore Tróia only on foot, park the car near the Setúbal terminal and catch the passenger-only catamaran to the sandy peninsula (return ticket is free).

The fastest way to reach Arrábida and Sesimbra is by car, but local governments have been pushing for sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives such as public buses and beach shuttles.

CAR-FREE ARRÁBIDA

Parque Natural da Arrábida (p139), the protected area surrounding the city of Setúbal, is home to rare local species of orchids and the chosen nesting location for the Bonelli's eagle. It's also a popular beach destination in the summer – so the local city council limits car traffic from 1 June to 15 September as part of the sustainable mobility project Arrábida 02.

Beachgoers can travel by bus (there are four different routes, depending on which beach you're going to) every day (July and August) or on weekends and national holidays (June and September). Tickets are sold onboard (one way €2.60) but topping up a Navegante travel card with cash is the best option.

Arrábida

TIME FROM SETÚBAL: **5 MINS**

Arrábida's urban beaches

Warm waters, tranquil bays, and the mountains in the background. That's Arrábida's urban beaches in a nutshell.

Closer to Setúbal city centre, there's **Praia de Albarquel**. For travellers with kids or pressed for time, this beach hits the sweet spot between urban advantages (faster to reach, close to cafes and restaurants) and Arrábida's typical beach (the mountain backdrop, crystal clear waters). Being close to Setúbal, though, might be a turn-off for those looking for quiet time.

Midway, **Praia da Figueirinha** is perfect for families: a large stretch of sand, warmer waters, and a public bus that stops right at the beach.

And finally, the furthest away, is **Portinho da Arrábida** – crystal clear waters, a quiet bay and nearby restaurants are what fans say makes it one of the best beaches in the area and one of the most beautiful (no argument there).

Walking to Forte de São Filipe

Serra da Arrábida has wonderful hiking trails, if you have the time to explore. For those visiting Setúbal on a whim (or not as used to hiking but who still want the Arrábida outdoors experience), there's a walk that hits all the marks: a little bit of the mountain's greenery, local heritage, and great views from **Forte de São Filipe**.

The official trail (PR1 STB) starts from **Praia de Albarquel**, but if you're close to the city centre, starting midway from the *choco frito* statue at Avenida Luísa Todi is easier.

Sesimbra

TIME FROM SETÚBAL: **35 MINS**

Spend a morning in Sesimbra off-season

Despite the summer beach-seeking crowds (and they will come throughout the day), Sesimbra preserves some of its relaxed town vibes on weekday mornings just before the season peaks and the vacationers take over.

Around that time, the **beach** is still pretty much for families with young children, older folks who prefer a short but invigorating swim over hours basking in the sun, or kids strapped for cash who will probably return home before lunch time.

Then, the best way to bid Sesimbra farewell, preferably after a comforting meal, is to stroll along the seaside avenue and then explore the side streets of the historic centre in search of the newest **Arte na Rua** (*artenarua.sesimbra.pt*) street-art pieces.

EATING AROUND SETÚBAL: SEASIDE RESTAURANTS

Café Galé: Relatively under-the-radar cafe in Sesimbra, with great views and quick meals. Good for post-beach snacks. *9.30am-10pm Thu-Mon* €

O Farol: Popular for the views and seafood dishes, near Portinho da Arrábida. Kids' menu available. *10am-5pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun* €€

O Velho e o Mar: Locals' go-to restaurant for eating fresh fish in Sesimbra. Has a few vegetarian dishes on the menu. Make reservations. *11am-11pm* €€

Casa Mateus: Restaurant in the centre of Sesimbra for seafood aficionados. Make reservations. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€



LUIS PIZARRO RUIZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Praia de Albarquel

Heading west: a trip to Cabo Espichel

Windy capes and picturesque lighthouses are nothing new on Portugal's west coast. Half an hour from Sesimbra, though, **Cabo Espichel** brings something new. But before driving there, hailing a cab or using a rideshare app – access by bus is possible, but very time-consuming – be mindful this isn't a site for quick trips.

Stunning views are a given, even if you don't get to see them from the top of **Farol do Cabo Espichel** (*free*) – it's open 2pm to 5pm Wednesday. But it's **Santuário do Cabo Espichel** that marks this experience once you overlook the state of neglect of some parts, unless exploring abandoned buildings (proceed with care) is the goal.

TRAVELLING AROUND SESIMBRA

An increasingly popular summer destination, it doesn't take much for small Sesimbra to fill up fast. If you're driving and reach the town mid-morning on a weekday, the paid car parks closer to the city centre are already overflowing.

Public transit isn't always the most comfortable option and it's surely not speedy – it's popular with teens who have all the time in the world. The fastest bus from Setúbal takes one hour to reach Sesimbra's bus terminal. Fortunately, from there, the closest beach is 350m down the street.

Residents and workers get priority parking and lower rates. For visitors, the local government offers free shuttle rides during the summer from the free car park Moagem de Sampaio to the bus terminal.

Lisbon South Bank



URBAN ART | ALTERNATIVE MUSIC | CHARMING RIVERSIDE

GETTING AROUND

The best, most comfortable, and cheapest way to reach Lisbon South Bank is by ferry. Catch the boat from Terreiro do Paço to Barreiro (20 minutes) and from Cais do Sodré to Cacilhas (10 minutes).

In Barreiro, walking is the best option (under 2km from the boat station to the beach) for getting around. In Almada, the ferry station is in the centre of Cacilhas, and you can walk everywhere. If you want to explore other areas in the city, Almada has a decent light rail network, although hailing a cab or using a ride-share app on weekends and outside of working hours is quicker.

TOP TIP

Lisbon South Bank's cities are a stone's throw from the capital, but they have more of a small-town vibe.

First, a disclaimer: the Lisbon South Bank area is much bigger than just Barreiro and Almada. But these two cities are within easy reach of Lisbon's historic centre, inevitably attracting curious visitors who want to see the 'other side'.

The 19th-century wave of industrialisation brought Portugal's largest CUF (national health network) industrial complex to Barreiro and a wave of migrants from Alentejo and Algarve followed. Apartment buildings for the new workers grew like mushrooms and without much of a plan – 'picturesque' isn't often used to describe Barreiro. Although the old chemicals' plant closed in 1975, Barreiro remains industrial in character.

On the other hand, shipbuilding was the core of the local economy in Almada – the Cacilhas neighbourhood has all the vibes of a coastal town.

Until the early 2000s, there was a ruggedness that kept outsiders out. Locals thrived in their microcosmos of alternative culture. Even though Lisbon South Bank is growing as a tourist destination, it will never be mainstream.

Summer Vibes, Experimental Tunes & Quirky Culture

Lisbon South Bank art festivals

Sol da Caparica (*festivalosoldacaparica.pt; August; tickets from €28*) gives stage to Portuguese pop music bands in a sunny and relaxed setting. It's not a beach festival; it's a music festival at the beach – the distinction is important.

OUT.FEST (*outfest.pt; October; festival pass €40*), a festival dedicated to experimental music since 2004, could probably have been born elsewhere, but it would not thrive as it has in Barreiro. Local music enthusiasts and festivalgoers don't reject the more commercial and mainstream artists, but they will always carve out space for the outcasts. Besides, Barreiro is home to a successful jazz music school.



SIGHTS
1. ADAO
2. Avenida da Praia
3. Faces
4. Plastic Jellyfishes
5. Praia da Alburrica

EATING
- àPortuguesa (see 2)
6. Hamburgueria Fidalgo
7. Porta 36
8. Tasca da Galega

ENTERTAINMENT
9. OUT.FEST
10. Sol da Caparica

At the end of the year, Barreiro's artistic organisation **ADAO** gives room to underground creators, gathering all artistic forms of expression under the roof of its headquarters (a re-converted fire station downtown). These Open Day events with live music, exhibitions and workshops have become a regular happening in the city's calendar.

Street Art & Underground Culture

Tracing urban art in Barreiro

Street artists have always used Barreiro's walls as a canvas – maybe they weren't all masterpieces, but it was a show of character in a borderline fringe city. Then, close to a decade ago, the local city council joined forces with cultural organisation ADAO to create ART IN TOWN (*artintown.pt*). This recurrent event features works that somehow relate to the local history and cultural identity.

On the way to the beach, you can see ADAO's headquarters fully decorated (works and artists rotate) and Bordalo II's **Plastic Jellyfishes** (2022). Vhils' large-scale **Faces**, a tribute to CUF's workers (the artist's workshop is in a part of the old factory), wasn't part of the event, but is worth the detour if you have the time.

BARREIRO'S CHRISTMAS GINJINHA

On Christmas Eve, locals gather around **Tasca da Galega** to share shots of *ginjinha*. Sour cherry liquor doesn't sound much like a holiday's customary drink, but it's a way to honour a tradition started by the city's former factory workers. At the end of their shift, before heading home for Christmas dinner, stopping at a tavern for a *ginjinha* became a habit.

Not everyone agrees on this origin story's version, but they still never skip a year. It was a simple local event until current Portuguese president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa became a regular and the tradition outgrew the borders of Barreiro. It's now a selfie-inducing affair with media coverage, although residents are unfazed by the popularity.



BRAVO FERREIRA DA LUZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Praia da Alburrica

Windmills at the Beach

Exploring riverside Barreiro

On high tide, river beach **Praia da Alburrica** is no more than a sliver of sand. On some days, the low tide reveals an unattractive mush resembling sludge. And, yet, there's always someone at the beach (if not for swimming – the constant ferry traffic produces some short-lived but annoying waves; a few choose to surf them – get there for the picture-worthy windmills with Lisbon in the background).

Explore further and take the walkway to **Avenida da Praia** (1.5km). Enjoy the view from the riverside gardens or get a glimpse of local life at one of the nearby cafes.

EATING IN BARREIRO: OUR PICKS

àPortuguesa: This family-friendly cafe with outdoor seating near the river is ideal for light meals and tapas. *11am-1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat* €

Hamburgueria Fidalgo: Popular artisanal burger restaurant with river views. Vegetarian and vegan options available. *noon-midnight* €

Tasca da Galega: Barreiro's most popular restaurant specialises in traditional Portuguese cuisine. *noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight Tue-Sat* €€

Porta 36: This restaurant on the way to the river beach specialises in fusion cuisine. Reservations recommended. *12.30-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Mon* €€

STROLL THROUGH CACILHAS' TOP SIGHTS

Stroll through Almada's famous and colourful borough, spot picturesque small-town houses, and discover a thriving cultural scene.

START	END	LENGTH
Cacilhas ferry station	Rua Cândido dos Reis	2.3km; 1½ hours

Start from 1 **Cacilhas ferry station** and turn right towards Rua do Ginjal. Stroll alongside Rio Tejo, admiring the views to Lisbon on your right. On the derelict walls on your left, spot some pieces of 2 **street art**.

Close to the end the street starts to narrow; although it's not dangerous, for some it might feel scarier on windy days (mind your step). Take a break at 3 **Jardim do Rio** before walking uphill to 4 **Casa da Cerca**. This cultural centre hosts contemporary art exhibitions frequently, although most visit for the view from the cafe's terrace.

Head down through the maze of streets that will lead you to the end of your tour at 5 **Rua Cândido dos Reis**. Perhaps Cacilhas' most famous pedestrian-only street, with bars, cafes, restaurants and shops. At the end of the street, check out Igreja do Bom Sucesso and its azure facade (an unusual colour for a church).

Then, choose your favourite restaurant, grab a seat at a table outdoors, and soak up the laidback but lively energy of Cacilhas.



Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Sintra p114

Pousada de Jovens Sintra € Modern and comfortable hostel with a rooftop terrace, 24-hour reception and private and shared rooms, close to Sintra's historic centre.

Chalet Saudade €€ This classic 19th-century manor in Sintra's historic centre was transformed into a vintage guesthouse.

Chalet Relógio Guesthouse €€ Six-room boutique guesthouse in the heart of Sintra and lush greenery, close to major sites. Breakfast included.

Lawrence's Hotel €€€ A Sintra institution established in 1764, this five-star historic hotel was the accommodation of choice for notable writers, including Lord Byron.

Colares p120

Aldeia da Praia € Hostel near beaches in Colares with private rooms and dorms with shared bathrooms.

WOT Sintra Ocean €€ Hotel with breakfast included and ocean views near Praia das Maçãs in Colares.

Quinta Vale da Roca €€€ This vineyard close to Cabo da Roca in the Colares wine region has eight unique rooms with ocean views.

Cabana do Mar €€€ Clifftop three-room beach house with ocean views in Azenhas do Mar – whole house for rent.

Cascais p123

Cascais Boutique Hostel €€ Affordable five-room accommodation with two shared bathrooms near the Museum Quarter.

Pestana Cidadela Cascais €€€ Luxury hotel in the Cidadela Art District, near art galleries, cafes and restaurants.

Villa Cascais €€€ A four-star boutique hotel in a 19th-century restored manor with views of Cascais Bay.

Estoril p128

Estoril Vintage Hotel €€€ Award-winning family manor turned boutique hotel five minutes from the train station.

Hotel Inglaterra Estoril €€€ This four-star hotel within walking distance from Estoril train station was once the favourite accommodation of WWII spies and secret agents.

Ericeira p130

Selina Boavista Ericeira & Surf School €€ Pet-friendly hostel with private and shared rooms, just five minutes from Praia dos Pescadores.

Reserva FLH Hotels Ericeira €€ Two-star boutique hotel in the heart of the historic centre, a stone's throw from Praia dos Pescadores.

Ericeira Surf House €€ A 10-minute drive from the town centre, this weekly-rent B&B also offers surf lessons.

Mafra p130

Casa do Salabredo € Seven-room house at the former royal hunting grounds Tapada Nacional de Mafra. For rent in full or separately.

Aldeia da Mata Pequena €€ Restored rural village near Mafra with independent, fully equipped houses for rent and breakfast included.

Mafra Hotel €€ Central three-star hotel near major sites in Mafra and a short drive from Ericeira. Breakfast included.

Setúbal p135

HI Pousada da Juventude € Youth hostel in Setúbal close to the city centre and beaches. Guests can choose dorms with shared bathrooms or private rooms.

Day Off Hostel € Affordable private and shared rooms at a hostel with a rooftop terrace in Setúbal's historic centre.

RM Guesthouse €€ Fashion-inspired four-star boutique hotel with seven suites in Setúbal's historic centre.

Tróia p139

Editory By The Sea €€ Four-star hotel a 10-minute walk from the ferry port near the marina in Tróia.

Tróia Design Hotel €€€ Five-star hotel in Tróia with deluxe rooms and apartments next to the casino and the marina.

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

The Algarve



CRAGGY COASTLINES AND HUSHED HINTERLANDS

Portugal's southernmost, sun-kissed coastal playground brags barrier islands, cliff-backed bays and dune-ribboned beaches. Inland, tranquil trails weave together enduring traditions, towns and whitewashed villages.

Boasting 300 days of annual sunshine, some of Europe's most heart-stopping sea caves, gorgeous craggy golden beaches and good-time-promising resorts, it's little surprise that the Algarve's 1960s tourism boom came thick and fast. Slumbering fishing villages sprawled into resort towns. Fishers traded catching for cave tours. And the significantly shifting seasonal economy changed coastal communities forever. Later, holidaymakers turned homemakers and an influx of European retirees, international school-seeking families and, more recently, wealthy remote workers and digital nomads gave the Algarve an international air – one some would argue robbed the region of 'authenticity'.



ALVARO GERMAN VILELA/GETTY IMAGES ©

But beyond the more brash resorts, the Algarve of old – and its millennia-worth of pre-tourism arrivals – endures. The *litoral* (coast) still unites around seafood steamed in centuries-old copper pans. Stories of Spanish aggression, smuggling and Roman towns are retold in the *sotavento* (leeward east). And menhirs, dinosaur tracks and Age of Discovery fortresses dot the *barlavento* (windward west). Then there are the overlooked hushed hinterlands: the birdsong-soundtracked *barrocal*, with its Mediterranean scrub, oaks, citrus groves and contemporary vintners adopting ancient Phoenician practices, and the mountainous trail-laden *serra* shrouding Roman-revered thermal springs and firewater-brewing villagers. Unfurling across it all are the legacies of Moorish Al-Gharb, which gifted the region its name and plenty more.

Boundless beautiful beaches might be the Algarve's modern-day allure, but its age-old ways still linger just around the corner.

THE MAIN AREAS

FARO
Regional capital flanked by idyllic islands.
p154

TAVIRA
Traditional architecture and authentic flavours.
p165

ALBUFEIRA
Beaches, nightlife, water sports and resorts.
p174



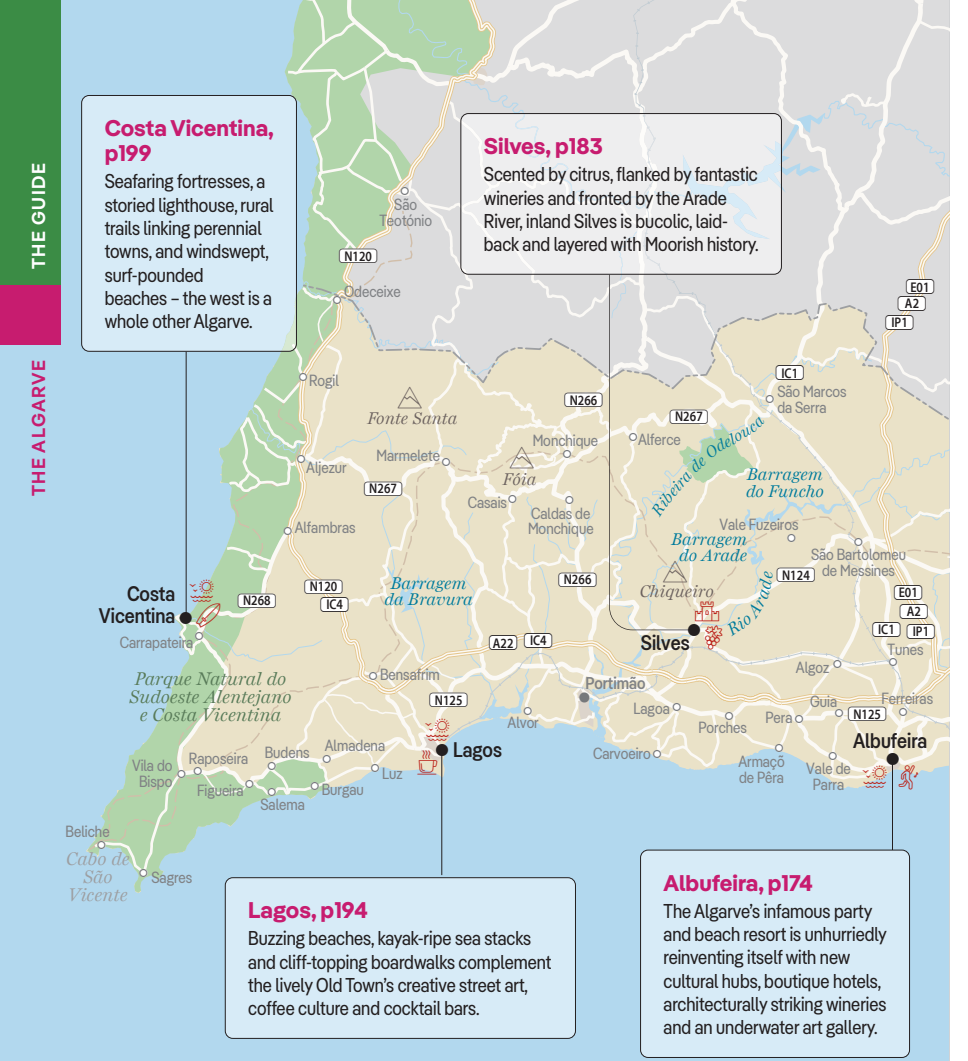
MAURO RODRIGUES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: Praça Luís de Camões (p197), Lagos; Above: Carnival (p180), Loulé

SILVES
Moorish castle, wineries and citrus groves.
p183

LAGOS
Cinematic coastline meets creative Old Town.
p194

COSTA VICENTINA
Surf, seafaring legends and serene trails.
p199



Find Your Way

You could cross the region in two hours by car. But ditch the inland highway, detour down meandering mountain roads, cycle along dirt tracks to near-secret shorelines and amble towards lost-in-time villages, and you'll soon uncover an unwavering Algarve.



Faro, p154

With its medieval walled Vila Adentro, magnificent cathedral, superb restaurants and plentiful connections, the Algarve's capital city is an excellent base for island and inland adventures.

Tavira, p165

Slow down and savour storied cobbled streets, concert-hosting churches, creative cuisine, bite-size museums and island beaches before exploring the laid-back Eastern Algarve.

BUS

Vamus buses *(vamusalgarve.pt)* beat trains to reach most beaches, towns and villages; rural schedules are mainly weekday-commuter-focused. Pay cash on board or create a discounted pre-pay app account. Vehicles are raised coaches limiting accessibility. Cities have additional operators.

TRAIN

Trains *(cp.pt)* trundle between Lagos and Vila Real de Santo António. Faro and Tunes connect with Lisbon. At staffed stations, buy tickets before boarding; otherwise pay with cash on board (or purchase online). Trains are elevated with stairs; few stations offer accessibility support. Some stations, like Albufeira, aren't within walking distance.

CAR

Driving is essential in the rural Algarve, though GPS times are often optimistic inland. In summer, the N125 occasionally becomes gridlocked making the A22 preferable (removal of tolls is scheduled for 2025). Rideshares, including Uber and Bolt, are readily available around main coastal destinations.

Plan Your Time

Bountiful beaches and compact, walkable cities make sunbathing and sightseeing seamless in one day. Maximise time and avoid missing out by studying attraction opening schedules in advance, especially between November and March and on weekends.



TONY MILLS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Chameleon, Ria Formosa (p160)

Weekend Escape

- No car is needed to combine the Algarve's culture and coast into a two-day visit. Start in **Faro** (p154) by strolling the medieval walls of the Vila Adentro, the oldest part of the city. Pass under Arco da Vila to visit **Sé** (p156), the monumental cathedral, and admire archaeological discoveries and a splendid Roman mosaic in the **Museu Municipal** (p154). After lunch, bus inland to the **Roman Ruins of Milreu** (p159) or pre-book a private wine tasting at **Vinhas de Nexe** (p157).

- The next morning, join a boat tour to **spot dolphins in the wild** (p158) before hopping on a ferry to lounge on the barrier island beaches of the **Parque Natural da Ria Formosa** (p160) or **Praia de Faro** (p157). End the day with a sunset **seafood cataplana** (p168).

Seasonal Highlights

Soaring temps, prices and crowds define summer, while spring and autumn welcome hike-friendly climes, calmer beaches and better deals.

FEBRUARY

Cooler days call for cultural celebrations, including **Loulé Carnival** (p180), the Algarve's biggest; **Al-Mutamid Festival**, featuring Arabic music performances; and Alta Mora's **Almond Blossom Festival** (p173).

MARCH

Spring arrives with migratory birdsong, humpback and fin whales passing through and seasonal businesses starting to reopen. Alcoutim hosts its smuggling-focused **Festival do Contrabando** (p173) every other year.

APRIL

Wildflowers brighten the Costa Vicentina's trails, orange blossoms perfume Silves and Ameixial hosts its **walking festival**. Easter events include Loulé's **Festa da Mãe Soberana** procession and São Bras de Alportel's **Flower Torches Festival**.

A Week-Long Western Road Trip

● After two days around Faro, set off early towards **Carvoeiro** (p190) to beach-hop while hiking the **Percurso dos Sete Vales Suspensos** (p191) arguably the Algarve's most scenic clifftop trail, or visit the **Benagil Cave** (p191). Pre-book your afternoon reward: a winery tasting in **Silves** (p186). After breakfast, visit the **Moorish Castle** (p183), then drive north to the Algarve's highest peak, Fóia, in the **Serra de Monchique** (p189).

● Spend the next day surfing around Aljezur or slowly driving between the **Costa Vicentina's untamed beaches** (p202), arriving at **Cabo de São Vicente** (p201) for sunset. Stroll around **Sagres Fortress** (p201) the following morning, have lunch at the fish market, and then continue to **Lagos** (p194) to kayak around the **Ponta da Piedade** (p194) rock formations.

Seven Days East & Inland

● See the Algarve's less-developed side by starting (or extending) your road trip through the rural villages bordering the **Serra do Caldeirão** (p181), complete with waterfalls and castle ruins. Then, base yourself in **Loulé** (p179) for two days, ambling around the neo-Arabic market and traditional artisan workshops.

● Drive east through cork groves for a morning at the small museums of **São Brás de Alportel** (p163) before following the scenic inland roads to **Alcoutim** (p173). The following day, track the **Guadiana River** (p173) south to hear about smuggling routes, harvest salt in **Castro Marim** (p171), and perhaps even kayak to Spain.

● Finish with two days enjoying the Islamic relics, cooking classes and olive oil factories of **Tavira** (p165) before some final fresh oysters in picturesque **Cacela Velha** (p170).

JUNE

Join summer-welcoming celebrations such as Carvoeiro's colossal **Black and White Night**, Loulé's **Festival MED** (p180) and Praia da Rocha's mega festivals, including **Afro Nation**. Official lifeguarded beach season begins.

AUGUST

Olhão's **Festival do Marisco** (p162) and Portimão's **Sardine Festival** celebrate seafood, Silves (p188) and Castro Marim (p172) hold **Medieval Fairs** and Lagoa hosts the **FATACIL**. Wine harvests usually begin in late August.

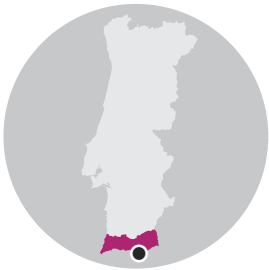
OCTOBER

The spotlight turns west to Sagres for its **Birdwatching Festival** and growing waves for more experienced surfers. Faro holds its family-friendly, centuries-old **Feira De Santa Iría**, and Porches' Biergarten hosts a mini Oktoberfest.

NOVEMBER

Prices and crowds shrink as some seasonal businesses in resort towns shut for winter. **Migratory flamingos** increase the chance of sightings in Alvor (p193) and Tavira (p169). Aljezur hosts its three-day **Sweet Potato Festival** (p204).

Faro



HISTORIC CENTRE | ISLAND BEACHES | REGIONAL MUSEUMS

GETTING AROUND

Faro Airport is under 20 minutes from the centre; taxis are usually plentiful. Proximo, Faro's main bus operator, has regular services between the beach, airport and downtown (*line 16; €2.70; cash/contactless onboard*). Vamus' Aerobus links towns to the west (bus stop ticket machine). Faro train station (with Lisbon services), Próximo's bus terminal and the Vamus/long-distance bus station are clustered near the flat and walkable downtown. A large free car park at Largo de São Francisco backs the Old Town walls.

TOP TIP

Consider the Vamus bus tourist pass, including the inter-city Aerobus (from €35 online) or CP Trains Algarve Pass (from €21.90 in ticket offices) if you're planning multiple trips or to travel the Algarve's breadth.

Flourishing as Roman Ossónoba, remembered as the Moors' last stronghold, and conquered by King Alfonso III in 1249, Faro doesn't lack historical credentials. And that's not to mention the Phoenicians, plunderings, earthquakes or tsunami. Yet for many visitors to the Algarve, Faro is little more than a fleeting plane window glimpse before being whisked along the coast. Lacking the fanfare of the more famous resorts and devoid of beaches on its doorstep – though paradisiacal island sands are a short ferry away – most sunseekers skipped the regional capital for decades.

But in recent years, Faro has cemented its city-break credentials. Creative cultural associations, elevated restaurants, marina-facing rooftop bars, urban vineyards and renovated museums now complement the majestic cathedral and Cidade Velha (Old Town). Regeneration, rather than gentrification, has polished Faro's edges without stripping it of personality, making this lived-in city contemporary Algarve's best year-round base for inland and island exploration.

An Algarve Introduction

Museums of tales, traditions and treasure

Faro's two principal museums, visitable in a few hours, narrate the city's and region's history. Ethnographic **Museu Regional do Algarve** *(cm-faro.pt; €1.50)*, closed on Sundays and Mondays, is a mishmash of chronology, displaying exhibits on traditional economic practices such as palm weaving, cork harvesting and embroidery, alongside recreations of typical Algarvian rooms, ancestral outfits and fishing boats – a translation app is helpful. Faro-focused **Museu Municipal** *(cm-faro.pt; adult/concessions €2/1)*, closed Mondays, is housed in and around the cloisters of the city's former convent. Leaning more into archaeology, Islamic artefacts, Roman finds from Milreu (p159), and the mesmerising and well-preserved Mosaic of Oceanus steal attention from the religious paintings.



SIGHTS
1. Arco da Vila
2. Arco do Repouso
3. Centro Ciência Viva do Algarve
4. Galeria Trem
5. Igreja da Misericórdia
6. Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo & Capela dos Ossos
7. Igreja de São Francisco
8. Igreja de São Pedro
9. Lands
10. Museu Marítimo Almirante Ramalho Ortigão
11. Museu Municipal
12. Museu Regional do Algarve
13. Paço Episcopal de Faro
14. Sé

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
15. Animaris
16. Ocean Vibes

SLEEPING
17. 3HB Faro
18. Hostellicious
19. Lemon Tree Stay

EATING
20. Cantinho
21. Epicur
22. Los Locos
23. O Chalavar
24. O Recife
25. Outro Lado
26. Pastelaria Coelho

DRINKING
27. Associação Recreativa e Cultural de Músicos
- LAB Terrace (see 3)
28. Varandas

ENTERTAINMENT
- Fado na Igreja (see 5)
29. Teatro Lethes

SHOPPING
30. GAMA RAMA

TRANSPORT
31. Cais das Portas do Mar

CIDADE VELHA EXPLAINED

Faro's Cidade Velha (Old Town) covers three neighbourhoods, the oldest being **Vila Adentro** (Inside Village), circled by 8th-century Moorish walls. Enter via the later-added, Italian-style **Arco da Vila** – where you can see a rare Porta Árabe (Arabic Door) – and exit at **Arco do Repouso** for the best-preserved fortifications. More hidden are the closed underground tunnels (one is Vila Adentro Restaurant's basement) and the scarcely remaining Moorish Castle, a former beer factory in its place. Beyond is the Mouraria (district for expelled Moors), a crisscross of colourful *calçadas* (Portuguese patterned pavements) snaking away from marina-facing, market-hosting Jardim Manuel Bívar. To the west, bus stations and bars now define the former Bairro Ribeirinho (Fishing Neighbourhood).



SOPOTNICKI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sé

The Old Town's Centrepiece

A cathedral-dominated citrus square

Orange-tree-lined Largo da Sé is the Vila Adentro's nucleus, flanked by history-weighted buildings. Dominating the square is Faro's cathedral, **Sé** *(cm-faro.pt; adult/concessions €5/3.50)*, officially Igreja de Santa Maria, which closes on Sunday for Mass. A Roman temple, and later a mosque, once stood in its position; the current blend of Renaissance, Gothic and baroque resulted from post-earthquake restoration. Tickets include access to four areas: the church, a sacred art museum, the bell tower – with sweeping views across the Ria Formosa – and a small bone chapel. The three-nave main hall is the show stealer, especially the individually decorated side chapels (all explained on an included pamphlet), an 18th-century organ and the ornately gilded altar.

Churches & Chills

Sacred spaces, skulls and spirituality

Faro isn't shy of historic places of worship, although with variable hours, peering inside is down to well-timed luck. The twin-tower-fronted, 18th-century **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo** *(€2)* has regular hours, closing for visits only on Sunday Mass. The heavily gilded interior is bewitching, yet the creepy **Capela dos Ossos**, built with over 1000 exhumed skulls and bones of Carmelite monks, leaves lasting memories.

EATING IN FARO: LOCAL FLAVOURS

Pastelaria Coelho: Friendly snack bar serving breakfast *tostas*, lunch specials and traditional dinners. *7.30am-midnight Sun-Fri* €

O Recife: Long-standing *churrasqueira* (grill restaurant) and takeaway serving chicken piri-piri by the half or whole. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue* €

Vó Bela: Intimate family-run restaurant specialising in *petiscos*, seafood and Portuguese recipes. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* €

Cantinho: Algarvian dishes on a peaceful pavement or in the characterful interior, including fantastic *cataplana* (seefood stew). *noon-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Also worth trying to visit are **Igreja de São Francisco**, for its *azulejos* (painted glazed tiles) interpreting of the saint's life, and the ornately decorated **Igreja de São Pedro**.

Urban Vines

Verdant wine tastings and tours

Growing grapevines on Faro's fringes, **Vinhas de Nexe** *(vinhas denexe.com; from €28)* is only a 15-minute taxi ride from the centre. The vineyard (production is offsite) is one of the Algarve's youngest (first bottled in 2022), and Mónica's 90-minute tours will guide you through the vines before a tapas-paired wine tasting of their blends, including Touriga Nacional. Book private weekday visits at least 48 hours in advance.

Typically Portuguese Performances

Fado, football and theatre

Faro's various cultural venues host concerts, sports and traditional Portuguese performances. Fado, Portugal's hauntingly melancholic guitar-accompanied musical genre, can be appreciated at **Fado na Igreja's** *(facebook.com/fadonaigreja; from €10)* one-hour, Wednesday to Friday afternoon concerts inside the **Igreja da Misericórdia**, or at occasional recitals inside the city walls booked and accessed via the tourism office. The city's most elegant venue is the 17th-century Jesuit college turned **Teatro Lethes** *(teatrolethes.com; adult/child €5/3)*, visitable on backstage tours twice a month. Portugal's beloved game isn't overlooked thanks to the **Estádio Algarve** *(estadioalgarve.pt)*, constructed for the 2004 UEFA Euros.

Island or Beach?

Sweeping sands by boat or bus

It takes a little effort to reach Faro's beaches, but the almost endless sands are the reward. The city's main beach, **Praia de Faro**, has an island-like feeling, although it's a sandy peninsula. Accessible in 20 to 30 minutes by bus, road (there's parking across the bridge, but the main car park is before), or ferry from **Cais das Portas do Mar** *(cm-faro.pt; adult/child from €2.30/1.10 one way)*, the inhabited beach has plenty of bars, facilities and space to spread out – though flights landing nearby can disrupt the peace. **Animaris** operates ferries to **Ilha Deserta** *(ilhadeserta.com; from €5)*, officially Ilha da Barreta, one of the Ria Formosa's five islands. Blissfully uninhabited and relatively wild, the only permanent structure is the solar-powered, daytime-only Estaminé (p159) restaurant.

BEST RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES

Alongside Faro's larger museums, these smaller attractions will fill a rainy day.

Paço Episcopal de Faro: Visit this former bishop's palace and seminary *(€2.50)* for the small but mighty collection of wall *azulejos*.

Centro Ciência Viva do Algarve: Entertain the kids at this interactive science museum *(adult/child €5/3)* covering coastal ecosystems.

Galeria Trem: Temporary art displays in a former Vila Adentro military building turned teeny gallery.

GAMA RAMA: This small gallery-cum-shop has contemporary designs and creative workshops.

Museu Marítimo Almirante Ramalho Ortigão: Small but informative space dedicated to the Algarve's maritime history and model ships.

EATING IN FARO: SOMETHING SPECIAL

O Chalavar: *Azulejo*-decorated restaurant where you can select your fresh seafood from the ice counter. *noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Los Locos: Delicious and imaginative Portuguese fusion dishes using market-fresh ingredients with occasional live jazz. *5-11pm Tue-Sun* €€

Outro Lado: Vegetarians can taste adapted versions of Portuguese favourites at this laid-back restaurant. *7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€

Epicur: Join Jorge for an innovative fusion degustation paired perfectly with exceptional wines. *6-11.30pm Mon-Sat* €€€

BEST REGIONAL SEAFOOD DISHES

Faro's 11-day, seafood-celebrating **Festa da Ria Formosa** takes place over July and August. Try these regional seafood specialities alongside *cataplana de marisco* (p168).

Conquilhas à Algarvia: Conquilhas, small clams pulled from the sand at low tide, cooked with garlic, coriander, lemon and oil.

Arroz de lingueirão: *Arroz de marisco,* seafood rice stews, are plentiful, but this traditional razor clam version takes top billing.

Muxama: This salt-cured tuna speciality is a delicious, hard-to-find appetiser.

Xerém de conquilhas: Moorish-influenced cornflour dish comparable to porridge; Olhão's clam recipe is most celebrated.

Sardinhas assadas: Charcoal-grilled, salt-seasoned sardines are a summer favourite, especially during celebrations.



KRISTOF BELLENS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Ludo Trail

A Breezy Birdlife Boardwalk

Stroll a serene coastal trail

Birdlife thrives on the lagoon side of Praia de Faro. Colourful long-beaked Eurasian hoopoe, flamingos and, on lucky occasions, the rare purple gallinule are just a few of the potential sightings along the **Passadicos de Loulé** *(passadicosloulelitoral.pt)* boardwalk, a 4.9km, low-intensity linear trail beginning in Vale de Lobo, but joinable from Quinta do Lago, or via the dirt track **Ludo Trail** extension (entered near Praia de Faro's primary car park). To create a circular shoreline-returning route, cross at Quinta do Lago's bridge.

Responsible Cetacean Sightings

Marine biologist–led boat tours

Dolphin pods play in the deep blue beyond the barrier islands, and, increasingly in recent years, whales, including orcas, are sighted. Multiple boats depart the marina seeking cetaceans, with the marine biologist–led **Ocean Vibes** *(oceanvibesalgarve.com; €50)* being one of the most environmentally conscious operators. While wild animal sightings are never guaranteed, chances are high year-round on its three-hour RIB tours, with the particular species (common, striped or bottlenose) depending on the season. Migratory March and April are best for whales, while August might bring hammerhead sharks.

DRINKING IN FARO: BEST BARS

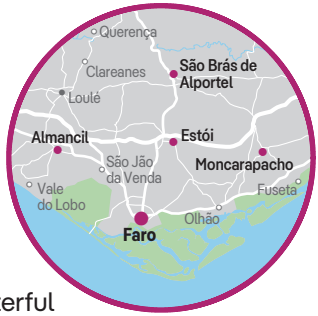
Associação Recreativa e Cultural de Músicos: DJs and bands perform in this lively, late-night open-air courtyard inside a former beer factory. *hours vary*

Varandas: Three-floor cocktail bar with a snug rooftop along the outer Old Town walls, mixing interesting cocktails to great tunes. *9pm-3am*

Algarve Rock: Outside the centre, the taproom of this craft brewery serves classic and more interesting infused brews. *10am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri*

LAB Terrace: Arrive early to snag a front-row deckchair at this chilled-out sunset bar with top Ria Formosa views and regular jazz trios. *4-10pm*

Beyond Faro



Head inland to hop between Roman ruins, olive oil factories, cork groves and characterful museums before relaxing on blissful barrier islands.

Travel half an hour in any direction of Faro, and you'll encounter the Algarve's many faces – the city's fringes couldn't be more contradictory. Flanked by the celebrity-staying Quinta do Lago resort to the west and the cubist, lived-in, fishing-focused town of Olhão to the east, sardine shacks and seafood markets are as available as Michelin-recognised restaurants. Fronting it all is the Ria Formosa, a bewitching coastal system of flamingo-frequented salt pans, boundless barrier island beaches and wildlife-sheltering refugees. Venture inland, and you'll traverse a time capsule: a lavish Roman villa and road, time-honoured crafts, and hushed cork grove trails to perennial communities. Combine these contrasting cardinal points to experience both the enduring and evolving Algarve.

Places

Estoi p159
The Ria Formosa p160
Almancil p163
Moncarapacho p163
São Brás de Alportel p163

GETTING AROUND

From Faro, much of the Algarve is reachable without needing to hire a car; four wheels will, however, allow you to explore the interior fully, including reaching Moncarapacho. Vamus buses, departing from Faro's long-distance bus station, have fairly regular connections to Estoi, Almancil and São Brás de Alportel – weekend timetables are more restrictive. The train is best to reach Olhão, the Ria Formosa's gateway.

Estoi

TIME FROM FARO: **20 MINS**

Roman ruins and mosaics

When archaeologists unearthed the vast **Roman Ruins of Milreu** *(patrimoniocultural.gov.pt; adult/concessions €2/1)*, they were confident they had discovered a village, but in fact it's the site of an extensive, luxurious villa. Inhabited by high-society families from the 1st to the 10th centuries CE before becoming a cemetery under Moorish rule, the mostly open-air site has some well-preserved details. The intact fish-depicting mosaics and former temple are particularly fascinating, filling an hour's visit, helped by a recently added series of panels portraying how the crumbling walls and pools would have looked in their heyday. Closed on Mondays; some of the site's marble sculptures and artefacts are displayed in Faro's Museum and the Palácio de Estoi.

EATING AROUND THE RIA FORMOSA: SEAFOOD SUPREME

O' Sardines, Olhão: Unfussy, local spot for fresh sardines and fish grilled out front with well-priced house wine. *noon-9pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat* €

chá chá chá, Olhão: Healthy takes on traditional dishes with vegetarian choices and unfiltered wines. *12.30-2pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€

Lanacosta, Ilha da Armona: With dune views, this island cafe-restaurant has great fresh fish, salads and refreshing cocktails. *10am-5pm Tue-Sun* €€

Estaminé, Ilha Deserta: This solar-powered architectural stunner of a restaurant plates sensational seafood dishes. *noon-5pm* €€€



GONZALO AZUMENDI/GETTY IMAGES ©

Ilha da Barreta, Parque Natural da Ria Formosa

TOP EXPERIENCE

The Ria Formosa

Encompassing flamingo-visited salt pans, birdlife-rich wetlands, swirling inlets and a handful of barrier islands, the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa is phenomenal. Extending 60km between Quinta do Lago and Cacela Velha (p170), it's also daunting to know where to start. Bountiful boat trips traverse the lagoons, but many experiences can be approached DIY, especially from Olhão, the park's de facto gateway.

BEST EXPERIENCES

- Barrier island beaches
- Clam harvesting with a fisher
- Spotting salt-pan flamingos
- Floating in the 'Dead Sea'
- Birdwatching in the lagoon
- Olhão's seafood market

Island-Hopping & Boat Trips

Five car-free, silky sanded and dune-laced barrier islands separate the lagoon's slightly warmer waters from the ocean. From west to east, they are **Barreta** (often called Deserta), **Culatra** (including **Farol**, frequently presented as distinct islands), **Armona**, **Tavira** and **Cabanas** – all reachable by ferry, some from Faro (p157) and Tavira (p168). The inhabited central two, Ilha da Culatra and Ilha da Armona, with restaurants, facilities, undersized bungalow-style settlements and water sports, are best accessed by Olhão's public ferries *(adult/child from €2/1 one way, cash ,only)* departing **Cais de Embarque** every two to three hours (season dependent) during daylight. To buy tickets for the 20- to 30-minute trip, queue at the correct hut – there are two separate, adjacent ticket desks – opening around 30 minutes before departure. It can get crowded over summer weekends. From Faro, summer-only public ferries *(cm-faro.pt; adult/child from €3.50/2 one way)* depart to Culatra, but



SIGHTS
1. Ilha da Armona
2. Ilha da Culatra
3. Ilha de Cabanas
4. Ilha de Tavira
5. Ilha Deserta
6. Ilha do Farol
7. Lands
8. Praia da Cacela Velha
9. Praia da Fuseta Ria
10. Praia de Faro
11. Praia do Barril
12. Quinta de Marim
13. Quinta do Lago
14. Salinas do Grelha

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
15. Artur's Watersports

SHOPPING
16. Mercados de Olhão

TRANSPORT
- Cais de Embarque (see 1)
- SeaHorse Bike Rental (see 1)

not Armona, alongside a year-round hop-on/hop-off service *(ilhadeserta.com; adult/child €17.50/€35)*. Don't miss the last return; water taxis are pricey.

Boat-Free Beaches

For ferry-free Ria Formosa beaches, Praia de Faro (p157) has road access, Praia do Barril (p168) can be reached on foot via a footbridge or a teeny tourist train, and at low tide you can paddle to **Cacela Velha**. One of the finest lagoon-side beaches is **Praia da Fuseta Ria** (take the train to station Fuseta-A), especially at low tide when swirling sands and shallow cyan waters allow licensed fishers to hand dig for clams – stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and kitesurfing rentals are available.

Seafood

Olhão is the Algarve's largest fishing port, and in the early hours at the two-building, lagoon-facing **Mercados de Olhão** (closed Sundays), you'll see the fishers delivering their catch. Licensing controls fishing in the Ria Formosa for bass

GOOD TO KNOW

- Ferries don't have step-free access. **Ria Formosa Boat Tours** *(riaformosaboatours.com)* operates a customised, wheelchair-accessible vessel with a water hoist.
- Olhao's new large car park on Avenida 16 de Junho is near the pier.
- If you've time before departure, Olhão's Caminho das Lendas (Path of Legends) is a quick, fun city tour.
- Stay overnight at Armona's Orbitur, Ilha de Tavira's campsite, or on an Armona houseboat, such as Barco Casa (p206).

VISIT RESPONSIBLY



Alfredo Rodrigues, a marine biologist, researcher and founder of Ocean Vibes Algarve, shares tips on Ria Formosa sustainability. *@oceanvibesalgarve*

When choosing a tour, a little research can make a big environmental difference. Consider responsible operators using local guides or biologists, electric or solar boats for shorter trips, and avoid swimming with seahorses, as almost 90% of their population has been lost in the Ria Formosa. If you can, try to visit in autumn as the wildlife is better – dolphins can be spotted year-round beyond the Ria Formosa – and with fewer boats, the pressure on the environment is reduced. Finding tours with a related research project means you'll support tourism and environmental studies.

and bream, harvesting clams and cockles by hand at low tide, and oyster farming. **Artur's Watersports** *(arturwatersportsacademy.pt; prices vary)* offers a Faro-departing day trip on a traditional fishing boat to pick clams and sample Culatra's oysters. Olhão's lively **Festival do Marisco** *(festivaldomarisco.com)* combines seafood street food with live music in August.

Salinas

Working *salinas* (salt pans) speckle the Ria Formosa's mainland side, providing economic benefits and birdlife havens. Certain combinations of minerals and algae occasionally turn the tapestry of rectangles vivid colours, including pink. Hire a bike or join a tour from **SeaHorse Bike Rental** *(seahorsebikerental.com; from €14)* to explore Olhão's *salinas*. **Salinas do Grelha** *(salinasdogrelha.pt; from €8)* has salt production tours and a floatable Mar Morto (Dead Sea) between May and October.

Birdwatching & Wildlife

Flamingos, curlews, seahorses, Mediterranean chameleons, spoonbills and the purple swamphen, the park's symbol, are sighted across the Ria Formosa, especially in migration season from October to March. Roman-founded **Quinta de Marim** *(icnf.pt; €3)*, including the **Centro de Educação Ambiental** (closed weekends), is an excellent starting point to learn about the park and wildlife. The centre's extensive English information panels pair with a 2.5km trail through the protected area to encounter mixed ecosystems and birdlife. Hiring a kayak is a good DIY way to see lagoon birdlife, while guided boat trips afford more expert insights. **Lands'** *(lands.pt; from €40)* quieter, less birdlife-disturbing solar boats depart from Faro.



TONY MILLS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Purple swamphen

A pink palace and grand gardens

Constructed in the 18th century, **Palácio de Estoi** *(pousadas.pt; €3-5)* is an eye-catching former nobleman's palace. Blending baroque and rococo with Moorish hints and a salmon-hued facade, the stately home is now a luxury hotel – though it's equally known for its well-manicured, **decorative gardens**. There are two ways to visit the grounds: free and paid. The no-charge option is to access the municipal-managed gardens via the green entrance gate, found on the pedestrianised road left of the church. While this won't give you access to the upper garden's fountains or exterior rooms, you'll see the sculptures, fountain and *azulejo*-decorated staircase, and can peek into the hotel's grounds – except on Sundays when both gardens are exclusively for palace guests. Alternatively, visit via the palace between 11am and 6pm, which allows access to the upper gardens and a nose around inside. Three regal halls, the chapel, and a few other areas displaying historical items are visitable with the admission ticket. Guided tours (€15) are more in-depth, and access is complimentary if you make a lunch reservation.

Almancil

TIME FROM FARO: **20 MINS**

The *azulejo*-adorned church

Diminutive **Igreja de São Lourenço** *(diocese-algarve.pt; €2, cash only)* may appear underwhelming, but hidden beyond its unassuming exterior are floor-to-ceiling spellbinding *azulejos*. The work of the two master brickmakers who constructed the church, the hand-painted tiles depict religious scenes, battles and events of São Lourenço's life – context provided by the included pamphlet. A highly detailed gilded altar adds to the spectacle. Closed on Sundays and Monday mornings and known for shutting over leisurely lunches, friendly **Pastelaria São Lourenco** nearby is a reliable coffee and cake stop while waiting for the doors to reopen.

Moncarapacho

TIME FROM FARO: **30 MINS**

Olive grove tours and tastings

Bucolic, elegant and accoladed, **Monterosa** *(monterosa-oliveoil.com; adult/child €14/7.50)* is one of the Algarve's premier producers of extra virgin olive oils. To learn more about Portugal's liquid gold, book a 75-minute morning tour and tasting from Tuesday to Friday. Beginning with a guided stroll through the olive trees while hearing about Monterosa's award-winning harvesting methods, the tours finish in the olive pressing factory, where you'll witness the magic happening while tasting three distinct olive oils.

São Brás de Alportel

TIME FROM FARO: **40 MINS**

Museums tracing time

Spending a few hours in the unhurried inland town of São Brás de Alportel and its small museums will shine a spotlight on the Algarve of old and new. **Museu do Traje** *(museu-sbras.com; €2.50)*, closed on weekend mornings, is an excellent starting

GOLF & THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

The expanse of luxury hotels, villas, golf courses and fine dining west of Faro is collectively called the Golden Triangle. It includes the two closest resorts of **Quinta do Lago** and **Vale do Lobo** (the Algarve's first, since 1962), Portugal's largest marina and resort of Vilamoura (p180), and the inland town of Almancil, known for its clutch of well-regarded restaurants. While much of the land surrounding the resorts is privately owned, self-contained districts, the beaches, restaurants and most roads are publicly accessible.

With over a dozen of the Algarve's esteemed golf courses and academies (some with PGA pros) in and around the Golden Triangle, it's a terrific place to tee off or improve your game.

DROUGHT, EROSION & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

In 2023 the Algarve welcomed over five million visitors, more than 10 times its population. And in a region with a severe drought situation, erosion concerns and a delicate ecosystem, the impact is noticeable. Local authorities took action with the closing of Benagil Cove – which has since reopened, though time limits, restrictions and a ban on alighting on the cave's beach were introduced in August 2024 – and launched a tourist-focused 'Save Water' campaign with participating hotels.

Individual actions all add up, and being mindful of water consumption, opting for non-motorised water activities, seeking out less-visited sea caves, following camping laws, sticking to well-trodden trails and not walking on dunes are all easy, environment-supporting actions.



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Igreja de São Lourenço (p163), Almancil

point. Housed within a former cork tycoon's mansion, the primary collection presents Algarvian costumes and outfits from the 19th and 20th centuries. There's an informative audio tour and plenty of historical context beyond the garments, especially in the original barns decked in weathered agricultural equipment. Continue the walk down memory lane, quite literally, at the **Centro Explicativo da Calçadinha** *(cm-sbras.pt; free)*, a small exhibit about the town's old Roman trade road. Its hours vary, but the main attraction is walking the overgrown Roman stones yourself, freely accessed behind the centre. **Casa Memória EN2** *(cm-sbras.pt; €2)*, open Tuesday to Saturday, is worth a brief peek to learn about Portugal's longest road, the north-to-south spanning **N2**, before driving the wending, viewpoint-dotted road yourself to the regional Alentejo border. Displays are in Portuguese, but ever-helpful Sonia will email you translations.

Cork crafts and countryside trails

Cork-coated countryside surrounds São Brás de Alportel, and many trails travel deep into rural scenes. The nearby, easy-going 9km **Promenade to the West** and the further inland 7km **PR3 SBA** trail (commencing near Lajes village) are soothing introductions to a land where donkeys still work, cork is carved, and hamlets hum at their own pace. To witness the cork's production process, book a tour of **Eco-fábrica de Cortiça** *(eco-corkfactory.com; €16.50)*, where you'll learn about the hardy trees' long lives and harvesting methods, and see final products from traditional wine corks to contemporary fashion items.



Tavira

EXCELLENT EATS | ISLAMIC ARTEFACTS | ISLAND SOJOURNS

Thirty minutes before Tavira's Municipal Market opens, the area is already awake. Fishers sink 'end-of-day' beers at early-door cafes, Luís unloads prime Iberian pork, wise-looking ladies lug cases of the cooperative's olive oil, and fragrant spices are stacked souk-style. It's a version of a scene as old as the town itself. Since the Phoenicians introduced their complex, tuna-catching *almadrava* nets millennia back, Tavira has been steadily stacked with the maritime methods, monuments and legacy of all who have been and gone.

Pinnacling as the Algarve's most populated town, thanks to a flourishing 16th-century North African trade, Tavira's eminence was slowly eroded by earthquakes, a plague, and the dying bluefin tuna fishing industry – now memorialised in bite-size museums and a beachfront anchor graveyard. But thanks to its handsome whitewashed streets, riverside garden squares, concert-hosting churches, Islamic relics and idyllic islands, Tavira's age-old, laid-back Mediterranean lifestyle lives on well beyond the market.

Faith & Fado

Churches and concerts

With more than 30 churches, Tavira's title as the 'City of Churches' is well deserved. Renaissance-facaded, *azulejo*-adorned 16th-century **Igreja da Misericórdia** is the centrepiece, selling combined entrance tickets *(one/three/five €3/7/10)* to the town's main churches; its museum-like displays and accessible bell tower are the main draw. On Saturday afternoons the main hall hosts concerts by **Fado Com História** *(fadocomhistoria.com; €10)*, a break from their regular weekday one-hour performances in the next-door auditorium. Another highlight is the Sacred Art Museumof the **Igreja de Santa Maria do Castelo**. However, some of the smallest, sporadically opening (all close for Sunday Mass) churches are most surprising. I adore **Ermida de São Sebastião** for its intricately hand-painted wooden panels and intimate Saturday-evening fado performances.

GETTING AROUND

Tavira is an excellent car-free base. The centre is compact, walkable and fairly flat, with some stairs and slopes towards the castle ruins. Two train stations, Tavira and Porta Nova, are under 1km from the centre. The Ilha de Tavira ferry terminal and bus station are riverside, with Vamus buses departing to Santa Luzia, Luz, Cabanas and Faro. Marked road cycling lanes to Santa Luzia and the Ecovia route through salt pans and citrus groves to Cabanas make cycling delightful; Abílio is a reliable bike rental shop. Large, free car parks can be found around the Mercado Municipal and bus station.

TOP TIPS

Tavira's sandy shores are on barrier islands accessed by ferry, so factor in the extra time and cost if planning to use the town as a beach base.



SIGHTS
1. Casa Alvaro De Campos
2. Casa das Artes
3. Casa Fotografia Andrade
4. Castelo
5. Ermida de São Sebastião
- Fado Com História (see 6)
6. Igreja da Misericórdia
7. Igreja de Santa Maria do Castelo
8. Núcleo Museológico Islâmico
9. Palácio da Galeria
10. Ponte Velha
11. Pousada Convento Tavira
12. Ruínas Fenícias de Tavira

SLEEPING
13. Bea's Bed & Breakfast
14. São Paulo Boutique Hotel

EATING
15. A Ver Tavira
16. Lá Calha
17. Ponto de Encontro
18. Romba

DRINKING
19. Café Biblioteca Álvaro de Campos
20. Clube De Tavira
21. Rooftop Nomad Bar

SHOPPING
22. Atelier Carmo Saúde
23. Casa do Artesão

Islamic Artefacts

A mini Moorish museum

Constructed around a 12th-century, rammed-earth Moorish wall, the **Núcleo Museológico Islâmico** *(cm-tavira.pt; €2)* displays Islamic artefacts uncovered during excavations. Allow 30 minutes to see the collection (closed on Sundays and Mondays), including the prized 11th-century Tavira Vase, a red clay vessel adorned with mini figurines depicting a ceremonial bridal abduction. Request a translated booklet from reception.

Glimpses of the Past

Amble around Tavira's layered history

Museums aside, Tavira's history is told through archaeological sites, three practically side by side. The **Ruínas Fenícias de Tavira** confirm the Phoenicians' presence; a 13m stretch of their 8th-century BCE wall is visible through a fence. Nearby, the Moorish crenellated **Castelo**, reconstructed in the 17th century, now shelters a botanical garden while the unguarded walls and tower afford far-reaching views. Behind is where the Almohad Quarter would have been, and part of the excavated neighbourhood is visible in the **Pousada Convento Tavira** hotel's tiny museum.

Meet the Makers

Olive oil and firewater tastings

There's no need to leave Tavira to taste the local liquid gold. **Hélder Madeira Olive Oil Cooperative** *(heldermadeira.com; €17.50)* runs 90-minute tours and tastings with typical local produce at 4pm daily (excluding Thursdays and Sundays) in its central factory. For the full grove experience, drive 20 minutes to the Monterosa estate (p163). Also producing in town, André opens his intimate, small-batch *aguardente*-brewing **Atelier Medronho** *(ateliermedronho@gmail.com)* studio for pre-scheduled 45-minute visits, explaining the fermentation process of the *medronho* tree's red berries while serving samplings of the firewater.

The Mediterranean Diet

Bite-size museums and memories

As Portugal's representative for the cross-nation Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Mediterranean Diet, Tavira abounds with age-old culinary practices. **Palácio da Galeria** *(cm-tavira.pt; €2)*, closed on Sundays and Mondays, hosts a UNESCO

THE ROMAN CITY OF BALSA

While Tavira's seven-arched **Ponte Velha** was reconstructed in the 17th century, it's thought that the original formed an integral trade route to the Roman port city of Balsa, located in present-day **Luz de Tavira**. Discovered by archaeologist Estácio da Veiga in 1866, much of the roughly 46-hectare city remains buried and hidden, though it's believed the base of visitable Torre de Aires, a Moorish stone watchtower, is Roman. Periodically ongoing excavations have unearthed glassware, coins, tanks for producing *garum* (fish sauce), necropolises and fish-depicting mosaics. Sadly, many artefacts remain in storage while others live in various museums, though following Tavira's temporary Balsa exhibition in 2024, it's hoped the growing collection will eventually earn a permanent home.

EATING IN TAVIRA: LAID-BACK DINING

Lá Calha: Join traders and fishers at this simple snack bar outside the market for beers and *bifanas* (pork sandwiches). *6.30am-5pm Mon-Sat* €

Romba: Mediterranean meat and fish dishes presented with flair; grab a countertop seat for some local tips. *noon-3pm & 6-9pm Mon-Sat* €

Jorge e Lia: This tranquil, restaurant is worth the walk from the centre for top-notch tuna steaks and wholesome hospitality. *noon-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Ponto de Encontro: Long-standing fave for octopus, steak and whole grilled fish on one of Tavira's prettiest squares. *noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Mon* €€

THE CATAPLANA

The *cataplana* is arguably the Algarve's most distinctive dish. However, the standalone word refers to the clam-like, airtight cooking pot used to slowly steam various recipes, mainly with a tomato, onion, pepper and herb base. *Cataplana de marisco* (with seafood), usually served to share, is the most prevalent.

While historical records are lacking, it's generally believed the Moors introduced the signature cooking utensil due to its cooking method's similarities with Morocco's tagine. The most illustrious *cataplanas* are hand-crafted from copper – witnessable in Loulé's museum workshop (p179) – though modern versions are lined with tin or stainless steel to avoid toxins.

Expect at least a 30-minute wait for a fresh *cataplana* and avoid restaurants serving quicker.

Mediterranean Diet exhibition, explaining why this Atlantic country is culturally Mediterranean. Beyond, two routes trace Tavira's famous fishing industries – tuna and octopus – which include visits to the teeny **Arraial Ferreira Neto Museum** (inside the Hotel Vila Galé Albacora) displaying models of boats and the Phoenicians' complex *almadrava* nets, which were used up until tuna fishing collapsed in the 20th century, and **Santa Luzia** – Portugal's unofficial octopus capital – where centuries-old *alcatruzes* (octopus-catching clay pots) are still occasionally used.

Cooking in a Quinta

Lessons in Algarvian cuisine

Dive deeper into regional recipes at **Taste Algarve's** *(taste algarve.com; from €110)* cooking classes, hosted in a fourth-generation family farm a 10-minute drive from the centre. Led by ever-knowledgeable Inês, the experiences include a tour of the farm's Algarvian staples, including vines, carob and fig trees (morning classes include a market visit) and a brief hello to Malha, their adorable donkey, before entering the kitchen and learning how to prepare a traditional three-course meal, usually featuring a *cataplana*. Hard work done; savour your creations on the panoramic terrace overlooking Tavira and the ocean. The family also hosts class-free lunches and dinners.

The Island Life

Beaches by boat, train or on foot

Trade sightseeing for sunbathing on the 20-minute ferry to **Praia da Ilha de Tavira**, an idyllic, dune-laced island beach backed by pine forests. Ferries *(silnido.com; adult/child €2.50/1.10 return)* depart roughly every hour in daylight from the central, spring-through-autumn Old Market Ferry Terminal, while Quatro Águas' terminal is year-round. On the beach, there's a handful of restaurants and a seasonal concession renting beds and parasols *(€14)*. Similarly priced seasonal ferries connect Cabanas (p160) and Santa Luzia to their respective island beaches. **Praia do Barril** can be reached via a 1.5km bridge and trail on a **Mini Train** *(€2)* or by foot, where a curious collection of ageing anchors honours the extinct tuna fishing industry. Pricier water taxis are usually available.

EATING AROUND TAVIRA: RESERVATION-WORTHY

Noélia, Cabanas: Chef Noélia Jerónimo crafts first-class, good-value authentic Algarvian seafood dishes. *12.30-3pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue* €€

Casa do Polvo, Santa Luzia: Octopus countless ways in an institution of a restaurant overlooking the water. *noon-2.45pm & 6.30-9.30pm Wed-Mon* €€

A Carpintaria, Luz: Worth the drive for excellent, elevated Algarvian cuisine on the terrace or in the homely dining room. *11am-10pm Tue-Sat* €€

A Ver Tavira: Luís Brito's Michelin-starred restaurant is a treat, but there's also a rooftop bar for cocktails and snacks. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€-€€€



JOAQUIN OSSORIO CASTILLO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Mini train to Praia do Barril

Salina Strolls & Cycles

Salt pans and flamingo sightings

Tavira's *salinas* flank both sides of the Gilão River, with records dating salt production to the 4th century BCE. On the **Quatro Águas** side, small ridges allow for closer inspection outside Rui Simeon's salt-piled production area. Across the river, the **Ciclovia de Tavira** cycling route leads to Cabanas passing *salinas*. Depending on the season, juvenile flamingos (families settle here year-round), terns and spoonbills can be sighted, and vivid pink pools appear when the algae concentration aligns.

TAVIRA'S BEST CULTURE & CRAFTS

Casa Fotografia Andrade: In this small museum *(€5)* above a photo studio, fourth-generation Miguel Andrade shares his great-grandfather's vintage equipment and images capturing the Algarve of old.

Atelier Carmo Saúde: Step into Carmo's artisanal small shop to buy her hand-crafted *azulejos* and ceramic souvenirs.

Casa Alvaro De Campos: Compact gallery and cultural venue hosting musical recitals and occasional English-language talks.

Casa do Artesão: You'll know the artist's name at this association-run shop selling typical ceramics, weaving, embroidery and produce towards the castle.

Casa das Artes: Appreciate after-dark art at this evening-only gallery hosting temporary exhibitions.

DRINKING IN TAVIRA: COFFEE & COCKTAILS

Café Biblioteca Álvaro de Campos: Once a jail, now an attractive library, pause in the cafe for an espresso and a peek inside. *10am-5pm Tue-Fri*

O Ferreira: This seasonal Ilha de Tavira restaurant is also great for beachside cocktails and coolers on the dune-facing chairs and rattan swings. *9am-7pm*

Clube De Tavira: Behind an easy-to-miss door, an ornate staircase leads to old-school dance halls, board games and a funky terrace. *hours vary*

Rooftop Nomad Bar: Settle in for sunset drinks and sweeping views over Tavira and the Ria Formosa from this elevated hotel bar. *5pm-midnight*

Beyond Tavira



Slow down in the Eastern Algarve, lounge on sweeping beaches, trace smuggling stories upstream and sample regional specialities at source.

Places

Cacela Velha p170
Vila Real de Santo António p170
Castro Marim p171
Alcoutim p173
Alta Mora p173

GETTING AROUND

A car is best for exploring inland and along the Guadiana; download GPS/maps in advance due to unreliable internet inland. Driving times are often over-optimistic on the narrow, hilly rural roads. Trains terminate in Vila Real de Santo António, and it's easier to alight here for Castro Marim (than at its namesake station) and walk across the scenic bridge to the *salinas*. Vamus buses reach most towns but mainly on weekday-only, commuter-focused schedules.

For decades, most tourists beelined to the western beaches, leaving the Eastern Algarve far less developed. Sure, there are a handful of resort towns along the pine-forest-backed swathe of sand that tapers at Vila Real de Santo António, the frontier city stamped with Marques de Pombal's signature grid-style design. But beyond that? Serenity. Amble along birdsong-soundtracked trails to megalithic monuments, Roman ruins and medieval castles. Stroll through Spain-facing salt pans to harvest your own Flor de Sal. Then, track the Guadiana River upstream to be absorbed by accounts of smugglers and Spanish aggression before paddling a kayak across the water-defined border. But most importantly, take it slow – life is unhurried out here.

Cacela Velha

TIME FROM TAVIRA: **15 MINS**

The panoramic pocket-sized village

Some Algarve panoramas are unforgettable, and cliff-crowning Cacela Velha's low tide vista of swirling sands laced with all shades of blue is one of them. Take it all in from the white-washed walls fronting the teeny, time-capsule-like village – the closed 17th-century fort adding to the photogenic appeal – before descending the stairs beside the cemetery to wade over to **Praia de Cacela Velha**. Small fishing boats also cross to the sandbar when water levels allow. Back in the village, there's little to visit, and it only takes 10 minutes to admire the former well, whitewashed church and houses hemmed in azure blue. But that's very much Cacela Velha's charm: a brief but unforgettable moment lost in time.

Vila Real de Santo António

TIME FROM TAVIRA: **30 MINS**

Tours along the Guadiana

Separating Portugal and Spain, the Guadiana River and the ocean have long defined Vila Real de Santo António – the original town essentially swallowed by the sea. It was reconstructed in the 18th century using aspects of Lisbon's post-earthquake grid, most noticeable around Praça Marquês de Pombal. But the water still plays its part, and VRSA is an excellent jumping-off point for upstream exploration.



STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Reserva Natural do Sapal de Castro Marim

At **818 Centro Náutico** *(818.pt; prices vary)*, skipper Max and his loyal Portuguese water dog Nó, currently learning to hear dolphins, offer private boat tours, kayak rentals and jet skis year-round. Organised boat excursions along the navigable Guadiana section are bookable with **Transguadiana** *(transguadiana.com; adult/child €63/43)*, which operates full-day tours to Alcoutim, and **Riosultravel's** *(riosultravel.com; adult/child €58/32)* shorter sailings to a Foz de Odeleite farmhouse lunch.

Castro Marim

TIME FROM TAVIRA: **30 MINS**

Harvest and scrub in sea salt

Between Castro Marim and the Guadiana River, the **Reserva Natural do Sapal de Castro Marim** is a tapestry of Spain-facing salt pans and mainland Portugal's oldest nature reserve. Join Jorge at **Salmarim** *(salmarim.com; prices vary)* to learn how to harvest premium Flor de Sal by hand, gathering the floating crystals with an ancestral wooden net. Then, after a hard morning's work, cross the road to **Agua Maé** *(aguamae.pt; from €8)*, closed Monday, Tuesday and in winter, for a salty mud spa experience or massage.

BEST BEACH EXPERIENCES BEYOND TAVIRA

Accessible shores: Altura's Praia de Alagoa has flat boardwalks, shore-accessing walkways and seasonal amphibious wheelchairs.

Sunset horse rides: Trot through the low tides on a guided horse ride with Tavira Equestrian Tourism.

Verdant strolls: Less-developed, forest-backed Praia Verde is dreamy for long, scenic strolls.

Pine-backed sands: Forested trails lead to Praia de Santo António, the Algarve's easternmost beach.

Clothing-free vitamin D: Aptly named Praia do Homem Nu (Naked Man Beach) is an official nudist beach at Ilha de Tavira's far end.

Inland bathing: Relax and refresh inland at Alcoutim's river beach, Praia Fluvial do Pego Fundo, complete with a beach bar.

EATING ALONG THE EAST COAST: COASTAL CUISINE

Dois Irmãos, Altura: Back from the beach, this popular and often packed local favourite is the go-to lunch spot for grilled fish. *9am-5pm Mon-Sat* €

Casa da Igreja, Cacela Velha: Arrive pre-opening to snag an outside table for freshly delivered seafood delights. *4.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat* €€

Chá Com Água Salgada, Manta Rota: Sandra and Paulo's romantic dune-facing restaurant excels at local seafood specialities. *noon-10pm* €€

Prime Beach Club, Monte Gordo: Seasonal spot with ocean views, good vibes and varied dishes at the quieter end of the beach. *10am-10pm* €€

BEST HIKING & CYCLING TRAILS

Pego do Inferno: A short mud track leads to this small waterfall and pool, often parched in summer.

Masmorra Trail: Moderate, circular, 6km trail between Mealha's ancient conical slate buildings and the Anta da Masmorra dolmen.

Grande Rota do Guadiana: Hike or mountain bike one of the four sections (with occasional bus connections) of this 66km loosely Guadiana-tracking trail.

Via Algarviana: This challenging, mountainous 300km hike traverses the Algarve. The one-day Furnazinhas to Vaqueiros stretch is spectacular and silent, with almost forgotten hamlets en route.

Ecovia do Litoral: A multi-day, largely coastal, 215km bike route all the way to Cabo de São Vicente.



TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Alcoutim

Experience medieval castles and celebrations

Surveying the *salinas* and previously standing up to Spanish might, the 13th-century **Castelo** *(cm-castromarim.pt; adult/child €1.10/0.55)* is the town's hill-topping medieval defence. Inside the walls, you can visit the original, four-towered castle, housing a miniature but suitably alarming medieval torture museum, and see the 14th-century church. It's rustic and slightly overgrown; in summer, watch for snakes. On the opposite hill is 17th-century **Forte de São Sebastião**, only open during the **Medieval Days of Castro Marim Festival**. The festival, hosted in the last weeks of August, is an excellent time to visit as the garrison town steps back in time with mead-pouring stands, flame-wielding dancers and period-costumed performances.

The Blue Dragon River

Nicknamed for its appearance from above, the **Barragem de Odeleite** is far less dramatic than its moniker implies. A calm body of water, devoid of development other than Odeleite's small hamlet, it's a peaceful place for rural rambles and SUP sessions, which can be arranged, including transfers from Tavira, with **Eolis** *(kitesurfeolis.com; €80)*. However, if the dragon-like river has piqued your interest, you'll want an aerial view, something **SkyXpedition's** *(skyxpedition.com; from €99)* brief and scenic gyrocopter flights can provide.

EATING ALONG THE GUADIANA RIVER: OUR PICKS

Tá-se Bem Beach Club, Alcoutim: Seasonal beach bar on the inland Praia Fluvial with simple dishes, cold beers and live bands. *10am-10pm* €

O Camponês, Odeleite: A decent pit stop by the Barragem de Odeleite for filling, unfussy Portuguese dishes. *noon-9pm* €

O Contrabandista, Alcoutim: Popular inland dishes such as *arroz de pato* (duck rice) in a homely restaurant. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

Velho Cavalinho Taberna Medieval, Castro Marim: Candles, costumes and medieval song give this tavern charm. *11am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 9.30pm Sat* €€

Alcoutim

TIME FROM TAVIRA: **55 MINS**

On the smuggling trail

For centuries, trade between Spain and Portugal flowed relatively freely. Then came the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Suddenly, smuggling was rife. A booming contraband business exploded with the likes of tobacco, coffee, cognac and perfumes being hauled across the river in sacks during the dead of night. Many *contrabandistas* were caught, bribes were paid, and the sister towns of Alcoutim and **Sanlúcar de Guadiana** – where the river is at its narrowest – developed a unique, smuggling-based relationship. Every other year, in March or April, this shared history is relived over the three-day **Festival do Contrabando** *(cm-alcoutim.pt)*, when thousands flock here to cross a temporary floating bridge complete with 'custom controllers', watch reenactments and feast on traditional dishes. The **River Museum** *(museudealcoutim.pt; €3)*, a drive south of Alcoutim, shines a spotlight on this smuggling trade with videos, interviews and displays dedicated to river vessels and illegal methods. Closed Mondays and Sundays; a translation app will come in handy.

Paddle and fly across an international border

How many international borders and time zones can be crossed by both kayak and zipline? Only one. And it's right here in Alcoutim. There's no need to smuggle your way across these days; **Fun River** *(fun-river.com; €1.50 one way)* rents kayaks and runs a ferry roughly every hour between 8am and 8pm. For more adrenaline, return from the Spanish side on **Limite Zero's** *(limitezero.com; from €25)* seasonal zipline, which zooms across the border from a nearby hilltop at 70km/h.

From castle to castle

Festival aside, Alcoutim is the Algarve's least-populated town, making it an excellent showcase of rural life. However, if you spend a few hours here, you'll soon see that its historical role isn't undersized. The 14th-century **Castelo Archaeology Museum** *(museudealcoutim.pt; €2.90/1.80)* is especially worth a visit, both for its panoramic rampart walls and to see a fascinating collection of Islamic board games excavated nearby, including from the **Old Castle**, reached by a 1km walk and uphill climb.

DAY TRIPS TO SPAIN

Continue east along the A22 and you'll soon enter Spain, but there are a few considerations before crossing the Guadiana. Firstly, Spain's time zone is one hour ahead. Secondly, check International Driving Permit (IDP) requirements and car rental agreements – US citizens, for example, need an IDP in Spain but not Portugal. Thirdly, though the Schengen Area has no official border checks, you must carry suitable ID. On foot or by bike, take the 15-minute ferry from Vila Real de Santo António to Ayamonte, departing from the pier behind the PSP station roughly hourly in daylight. Buy tickets in cash *(€2.30 one way)* from the hut opposite. From Alcoutim, you can also cross by boat or kayak.

Alta Mora

TIME FROM TAVIRA: **40 MINS**

When the almonds blossom

Alta Mora is a true rural hideaway. Yet that all changes for a few weeks over January and February when the surrounding almond trees blossom, and the 11.5km **Caminho da Amendoeira** (PR8) becomes one of the region's most sought-after trails. The villagers host a fantastic three-day celebration, the **Algarve Almond Blossom Festival** *(facebook.com/festivalamendoeiras; €3)*, with guided walks, performances and traditional craft exhibits – the baking of a huge almond pie almost overshadows the flowers.

UPSTREAM ALENTEJO

Continue by road across the regional Alentejo border to **Mértola** (p252), a heavily Moorish-influenced town with a handful of museums. **Beira Ria Náutica** *(beirarionautica.pt)* can occasionally arrange private boat transfers from Alcoutim to Mértola.

Albufeira



BOUNTIFUL BEACHES | OLD TOWN | PARTY SCENE

GETTING AROUND

Albufeira's Old Town is walkable and pedestrianised. The train station is unhelpfully 5km from the Old Town; there's an hourly bus connection, but it's best avoided unless travelling longer distances. The Terminal Rodoviário (bus station) serves long-distance coaches and inter-city Vamus services, including Faro; it's a 2km walk or bus from downtown. Albufeira's Giro buses (most have accessibility ramps) have stops nearer the Old Town that connect to the marina, Oura, Olhos de Água and Galé; buy tickets or daily passes with cash on board.

TOP TIP

Your Albufeira experience is defined by where you stay. Oura's late-night strip is 2km east of the Old Town. Pick Galé, São Rafael or Olhos de Água for more serenity.

In the 1960s, Albufeira seized the sun, sea and sand package holiday boom with both hands. Quickly, the traditional fishing village faded, and by 1986 its metamorphosis into a fully fledged city and the Algarve's most developed beach resort was complete. Continuing to sprawl outwards to accommodate every kind of sunseeker, new neighbourhoods of affordable all-inclusives, lavish resorts and the (in)famous stag-party-pleasing strip sprung up, cementing a sometimes brash and boozy reputation.

But as the city has reinvented itself before, following the fall of Moorish Al-Buhera and the devastating tsunami triggered by Lisbon's 1755 earthquake, the current mayor is on a culture-establishing mission. New creative hubs, boutique hotels and an underwater art gallery have arrived. The Algarve's only year-round lifeguarded beaches lure visitors to a more tranquil winter Old Town. And architecturally pleasing vineyards and fine-dining wine cellars provide alternatives to animated pubs and clubs. Albufeira is the Algarve's animated jack of all trades.

Craggy Coves & Footprint-Free Sands

Kayaking tours and coastal trails

Albufeira's shorelines are famed for a reason, and you don't need to stray beyond the Old Town's Praia dos Pescadores unless you want to. Still, for a wilder string of beaches, set your sights west to **Praia dos Arrifes** and **Praia da Galé**, which can be ambled between on a beach-hopping, cliff-topping trail visiting handkerchief-sized coves and peering down on impossible-to-access sands – well, without taking to the waters at least. Hire a kayak, and these otherwise closed-off shores become reachable. **Albufeira Surf Sup** *(albufeira surfsup; from €35),* based at **Praia de São Rafael**, offers

SIGHTS
1. Museu Municipal de Arqueologia
2. Praia da Falésia
3. Praia da Galé
4. Praia de São Rafael
- Praia dos Arrifes (see 4)
5. Quinta do Canhoto

ACTIVITIES & COURSES
- Albufeira Surf Sup (see 4)
6. Art Reef by Vhils
7. Centro de Artes
8. Easy Divers

SLEEPING
9. Casa dos Arcos
10. Casa Malpique
- Homeboat Company (see 8)
11. Vila Origens

EATING
12. 20age
- A Sardinha (see 4)
13. Café In-certo
14. Casa da Fonte
15. Solgamba
16. Veneza
- Vila Joya SEA (see 3)
17. Windmill

DRINKING
18. Oura's Strip

SHOPPING
19. Pau de Pita



two- to three-hour group tours by kayak or SUP for those who would prefer to explore the coast supported, accompanied by a boat to assist first-time kayakers who might need a break.

The Underwater Art Gallery

First-time scuba diving

Boat trips of all kinds depart from Albufeira's candy-coloured marina – from dolphin watching to booze cruises and everything in between. But you can also take another type of boat trip from here that will set you on your scuba diving path. Whether you're already qualified or looking for a first-time dive experience, there are two reasons to submerge yourself in Albufeira: Portugal's largest natural reef, and **Art Reef by Vhils**, sunk in 2023. Containing sculptures fashioned from a decommissioned power station, the work by Portuguese street artist Vhils is Albufeira's newest artificial reef – shallow enough to be seen on a first-time discovery dive. **Easy Divers** *(easydivers.pt; €100)*, with its inside marina training pool, does exactly as the name promises, providing introductory classes in the pool before everyone lugs their tanks to the spacious boat and heads for the waters. With one instructor per pair of learners and extra attention given to ensuring children also enjoy the experience, it's a professional and long-standing outfit with which to spend the afternoon.

When booking, confirm the dive site schedule if you're committed to the art reef, keeping in mind ocean conditions on the day dictate the final decision.

Boutique Vines

Winery tours, tastings and picnics

There's no need to travel far to trade Albufeira's bars for wine barrels. **Quinta do Canhoto** *(quintadocanhoto.com; from €25)*, a 15-minute taxi from the Old Town, is a true family affair – even the striking, white-lined, bioclimatic building was designed by a family member. Better still for parents, families are especially welcome in summer when the team hosts kids' painting activities so parents can fully appreciate their tasting. Tours through the vines are held on weekdays, ending with a four-wine tasting in the breezy interior or shaded garden. Visiting for a picnic among the vines is also possible, but as with the tours, these should be pre-booked.

PHOTOGENIC ALBUFEIRA



Mathias Fernandes, an Albufeira-based photographer offering photo shoots and workshops, shares his favourite scenic and serene spots. *@mathias.explores*

Albufeira has something for everyone. The Old Town, especially in the narrow streets around **Igreja de São Sebastião**, has a more local feel, and you'll find great Portuguese seafood restaurants like **Casa Da Fonte**. I really recommend the area around **Olhos de Água**, a 12-minute drive away, as it's still quiet. For beaches, I love **Praia da Falésia** at sunset or for taking reflection photos at low tide; even in summer, you'll find a quiet spot. My other favourite beach recommendations are the cave-like **Praia do Ninho de Andorinha** and the 'natural pools' at **Praia do Evaristo** or **Praia Manuel Lourenço**.

EATING IN ALBUFEIRA: OLD TOWN FAVOURITES

Café In-certo: Peaceful tapas bar for sharing boards and light bites, well-made sangria and local beers. *9am-midnight Mon-Sat* €

Solgamba: Reliable spot serving international cuisine and authentic Algarvian specialities at reasonable prices. *noon-10pm Tue-Sun* €

Casa da Fonte: This long-standing place with various different dining areas is a central pick for traditional dishes. *noon-11pm* €€

Windmill: Splurge on the three-course Mediterranean menu served inside a romantic windmill. Reservations required. *6.30-10pm* €€€

EXPLORE MIRADOUROS, MOORISH MEMORIES & MUSEUMS

Albufeira's history may appear faded, but you'll still encounter its traces on this scenic Old Town walking tour.

START	END	LENGTH
Albufeira Observation Deck	Miradouro do Pau da Bandeira	1.8km; 3 hours

From 1 **Albufeira Observation Deck**, contemplate the cliffs before you that split the golden sand in two. It's hard to imagine today, but these once-castle-topped rocks gave the city its Arabic name, Al-Buhera, meaning 'Castle on the Sea'. Set off in search of the relics that remain, tracking the elevated path past a tiled mural depicting knights of yore towards the 2 **Museu de Arte Sacra**.

After a short visit, follow the road downwards, peeping into the 3 **Centro de Artes**' teeny exhibition en route to Jardim Público de Albufeira, the Old Town's main square, and the compact 4 **Galeria de Arte Pintor Samora Barros**.

Turn left towards the 5 **Albufeira Tunnel**, but rather than head for the shoreline, climb the stairs to see the small clutch of archaeological discoveries inside teeny 6 **Museu Municipal de Arqueologia** and, in front, 12th-century remains of low Moorish-built walls, part of the former castle.

Walk along the ocean-facing path towards shell-adorned 7 **Porta de Sant Ana**, one of three former gates destroyed in the 1755 earthquake. Turn right, and pause at the former fish market and fishermen-dedicated 8 **Monumento ao Pescador**. Then, take the outside cliff escalator to 9 **Miradouro do Pau da Bandeira**, and perhaps now, if you squint, you'll imagine that castle.



THE ALGARVE'S BEST SPAS

Algarve Spa Week: *(algarve-spa-week.com)* Usually in late October, some of the region's premium spas offer up to 50% discount.

AWAY Spa: Day passes to the W Hotel, Albufeira, include the full wet lounge: tubs, ice therapy, sauna and steam room.

7 Seven Spa: Extensive spa inside Vilamoura's Hilton with the works: Turkish baths, a zen garden, thermal pools and facials.

Vila Vita Spa by Sisley Paris: Holistic and signature treatments using botanical extracts in a five-star Porches hotel.

Bela Vista Hotel & Spa: Premium spa in Praia da Rocha's cliff-topping boutique hotel with locally infused (almond and orange) products and treatments.



ALEXEMARCEU/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Albufeira

Reigniting Creative Culture

Craft workshops and cultured spaces

Albufeira's constant growth as a tourism hotspot meant many of its downtown spaces were turned into bars and restaurants. The repurposing of the city's former courthouse as the **Centro de Artes** *(cm-albufeira.pt)* in late 2023 aims to fill the cultural void and bring Algarvian artistic heritage back to the Old Town. Inside, there's a small temporary exhibition space and shelves selling hand-crafted wares from local artisans, and Anna, on the desk, is always happy to explain the heritage of the craft methods used. The centre, which is closed on Sundays, hosts various workshops throughout the year, ranging from one-day ceramic classes to multi-day weaving lessons; check schedules online and reserve spaces in advance. Around the corner, **Pau de Pita** is one of the town's best gift shops for locally produced fabrics, ceramics and souvenirs.

The Infamous Strip

A beach-hopping, cinematic clifftop trail

Brash, neon-blazing, and certainly not for everyone, **Oura's Strip** is Albufeira's most infamous road where beers flow freely. But among the lively, overspilling bars, there are a few calmer picks such as **Connection**, Albufeira's main gay bar on a 1st-floor balcony, **Libertos**' tree-shaded cocktail garden (before midnight, at least) and **Longo Lounge Bar**, a short walk away, with a far more local and relaxed vibe and terrace.

EATING AROUND ALBUFEIRA: WORTH A TRIP

20age: Close to Albufeira train station, the extensive *petiscos* menu allows for a sampling of all Portugal's flavours. *11am-11pm Thu-Mon* €

Veneza: Near Paderne, the traditional dishes are secondary to one of the country's best wine cellars. *noon-2.30pm Fri & Sun, 7-10pm Wed-Mon* €€

A Sardinha: Praia dos Arrifes' beach restaurant brags sensational seafood and stupendous rock formation views. *11am-9pm, closed in winter* €€

Vila Joya SEA: As classy as beach bars come, the 'little sister' to the hotel's accoladed restaurant is fusion-menu heaven. *noon-9pm Wed-Sun* €€€

Beyond Albufeira



Stay coastal for Roman ruins, marina resorts and birdwatching boardwalks, or head inland to whitewashed villages, trails and creative market towns.

Strap on hiking boots, grab a car, quad or mountain bike, and venture north to find Albufeira's antithesis around the rugged, eagle-swooping Serra do Caldeirão. Awash with trails weaving whitewashed townlets, waterfalls, *fontes* (streams) and mud-packed Moorish castles together, the fringes of this low-slung range tick at their own pace – there's even an unexpected Buddhist stupa fluttering with prayer flags beyond. But it's the rural communities that make the *serra* special: tradition-defending villages operating one-room museums, teeny hamlets hosting homemade wine festivals, villagers unlocking otherwise closed churches, and market town Loulé's dedication to preserving age-old crafts. Back on the coast, Salgados' birdwatching boardwalk, Armação de Pêra's ever-evolving dining scene and Vilamoura's Roman ruins await.

Places

Loulé p179
Vilamoura & Quarteira p180
Armação de Pêra & Salgados p182

Loulé

TIME FROM ALBUFEIRA: **30 MINS**

Traditional crafts and workshops

Loulé has long led the preservation of ancestral Algarvian crafts. In 1291 the town established its first trade fair, and today **Loulé Criativo** *(loulecriativo.pt)* promotes time-honoured techniques, especially those highlighted in the recent 'Red Book' documenting local crafts at risk of vanishing. Hosting myriad workshops, from tile painting and palm weaving to embroidery and esparto grass braiding, it's worth consulting the schedule to book a class ahead. Temporary exhibitions are held at **ECOA**, its 18th-century manor headquarters, and seven visitable weekday workshops are spread around town where you can witness crafts, such as palm weaving at **Casa da Empreita** or *cataplanas* being hammered at the **Copper Shop**.

Artefacts, azulejos and Islamic baths

Crammed with historic sights, Loulé's compact centre is essentially a diffused museum, though they all close on Mondays. Introduce yourself to the town's history at the **Museu Municipal** *(museudeloule.pt; €1.60)*, housed in part inside the reconstructed Moorish Castle; the ground floor focuses on Roman and Islamic archaeological discoveries, while upstairs has a recreated traditional Algarvian kitchen and access to the external castle tower. Opposite, the teeny

GETTING AROUND

Given Albufeira's bus and train station are far from downtown, use the Vamus bus lines that circle closer to the Old Town. The 13 to Armação de Pera calls at Avenida do Ténis, and the 10 or 66 to Vilamoura stop near the Câmara Municipal. Loulé is best reached by bus (its train station requires a connecting bus), where connections continue to inland villages. However, renting a car is best for exploring the hinterlands.

BEST INLAND ADVENTURES

Loulé Rock Salt Mine: *(techsalt.pt; adult/child €25/15)* Don a hard hat and descend 230m to tour this working salt mine.

Fonte Férrea: This river-sliced picnic park in the Serra do Caldeirão has three levels of leisurely trails.

N2 Road Trip: Drive the Algarve's wooded, wending stretch of Portugal's longest road (p164) to Amexial for various viewpoints.

Amexial's Hiking Trails: This rural village links a handful of tranquil trails for all abilities and hosts a walking festival in April.

Rooster Quad Tours: *(roosterquadtours.com)* Explore offbeat, rugged terrain and river beds on an adrenaline-fuelled quad tour.

azulejo-adorned **Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Conceição** is worth a peek. Most noteworthy is the **Banhos Islâmicos de Loulé** *(museudeloule.pt; free)*. Opened in 2022 following extensive excavations, this is the only (known) example of Islamic baths in Portugal, now covered by the museum constructed around the archaeological site.

Neo-Arabic market mornings

Opened in 1908, Loulé's **Mercado Municipal**, with its arched Moorish doorways, onion-dome-topped towers and a fluttering rainbow of fabrics, is the region's most famous. Fresh, local produce is always plentiful, alongside a few food-market-style restaurants. However, it's Saturday mornings when the market is most animated, spilling onto the streets with local traders selling everything from fruit-infused honey to homemade cheeses. Parking can be chaotic, so it's worth waking up early; on Sunday, the traders take a day off.

Carnival, festivals and celebrations

Loulé's event calendar is cultured and crowded. It starts with the Algarve's largest, loudest and most colourful **carnival** in February or March (depending on Lent), which takes over the main boulevard with huge floats, dance troupes and marching bands. Over Easter, the more solemn **Festa da Mãe Soberana** is one of Portugal's largest processions. **Festival MED**, a celebration of world music, arrives in June, followed by July's **Jazz Festival**.

Vilamoura & Quarteira

TIME FROM ALBUFEIRA: **40 MINS**

Explore the modern marina's history

Side by side, Vilamoura, the country's **largest marina** and luxury coastal resort established in the mid-20th century, and the city of Quarteira are two opposites – but they share history. The informative **Quarteira History Museum** *(free)*, closed Mondays, dives deep into the area's previous 6000 years, displaying archaeological finds, but more interestingly, a narrative from the local community about long-lost fishing huts and Vilamoura's construction. Behind the glitzy marina, the resort's original lavish villa is the Roman archaeological site of **Cerro da Vila** *(vilamouraworld.com; adult/child €4/2)*. Less impressive than Milreu (p159), the base walls are visible alongside some mosaics, with further discoveries displayed in the small museum.

EATING IN LOULÉ: TYPICAL & TRADITIONAL

Café Calcinha: Opened in 1927, this cafe is wonderful for a coffee, light lunch or to watch occasional fado performances. *8am-11pm Tue-Sun* €

Bocage: Cosy, sociable and dimly lit, with excellent ever-changing *pratos do dia* (daily specials). *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Pregaria: Take your pick of Portugal's signature steak sandwiches with international twists. *noon-4pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Casa dos Presuntos, Cortelha: Sprawling roadside restaurant and bar popular with locals, serving hearty meals and snacks. *7am-11pm* €

RURAL VILLAGES & VESTIGES ROAD TRIP

Savour this bucolic driving route between castle ruins, rural towns and pocket-sized museums on the Serra do Caldeirão's fringes.

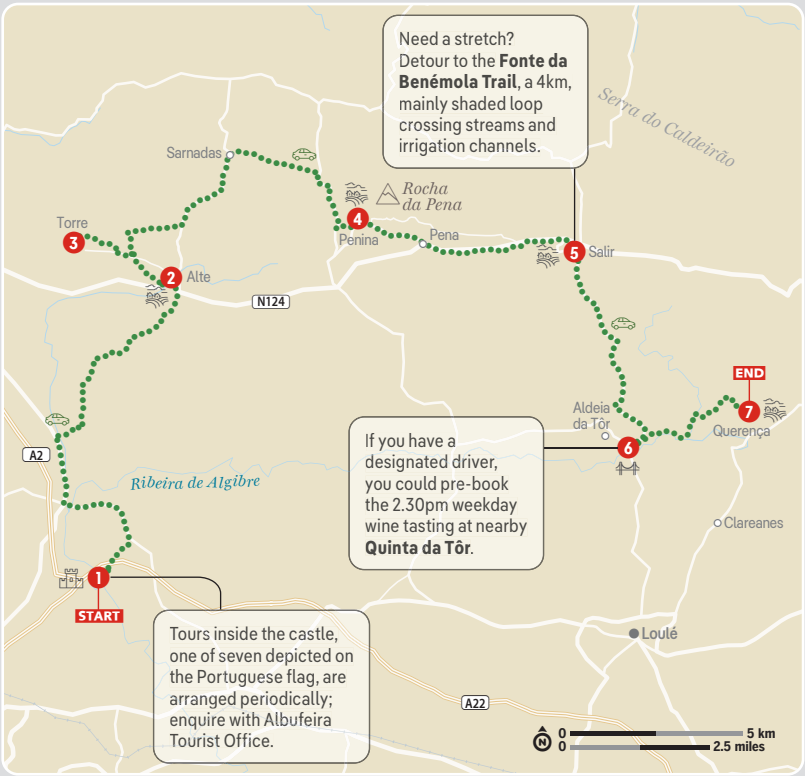
START	END	LENGTH
Paderne	Querença	50km; 6–8 hours (2 hours driving)

Start your inland tour wandering around the walls of 1 **Castle of Paderne**, a 12th-century Moorish rammed-earth fortification. It's a dusty, dirt-road drive up. Alternatively, park under the A22 bridge and climb on foot; there's a 3km looped trail that includes the three-arched medieval bridge, visible from the castle.

Continue to 2 **Alte**, conceivably the Algarve's most quintessential rural village, to see *fontes* (streams), mills and the Queda do Vigário waterfall (bring swimmers). A brief, pretty drive – pause for a panoramic coffee at Hotel Alte – follows to the 3 **Fabrica de Brinquedos** (closed weekends), a wholesome, wooden toy factory.

Take the scenic route via Sarnadas to reach 4 **Penina**, a teeny village with a two-room typical rural home 'museum'. Drive with the Rocha da Pena rocky outcrop to your left towards 5 **Salir**. See the remains of the 12th-century Moorish castle via the small Pólo Museológico de Salir (closed at weekends, but you can still access the side path).

Next, relax on the grassy bank overlooking the renovated 15th-century bridge, 6 **Ponte de Tôr**, before continuing to 7 **Querença**, an endearing hilltop village. The Polo Museológico da Água (closed weekends) displays regional waterway traditional equipment.



BEST ALGARVE ACTIVITIES WITH KIDS

Aquashow: *(aquashowpark.com; adult/junior €33/24)* Quarteira's colossal water park with rides, slides and a year-round indoor area.

Parque Aventura: *(parqueaventura.net; from €13)* Teens can tree climb and zip at this Albufeira high rope course.

Albufeira Riding Centre: *(albufeiraridingcentre.com; €30)* Over-sixes can join the Saturday Pony Club.

Family Golf Park: *(familygolfpark.pt; from €11)* Vilamoura has two themed 18-hole mini-golf courses.

SandCity: *(sandcity.pt; adult/child €9.50/4.70)* Giant sand sculptures depicting celebrities and landmarks in Porches.

Zoomarine is also popular, however due to it keeping dolphins in captivity, we recommend trying to spot them in the wild (p158) instead.



DENNIS DIRKSMA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Capela da Nossa Senhora da Rocha

Armação de Pêra & Salgados

TIME FROM ALBUFEIRA: **35 MINS**

Boardwalks and birdwatching

Beyond Albufeira's craggy beaches, **Praia Grande de Pêra** is an almost endless swathe of sand. Backed by the **Lagoa dos Salgados'** freshwater wetlands, this is one of the region's most crucial birdlife havens. Flamingos, terns, warblers, weavers and a variety of rarely seen species can be sighted depending on the season from the viewing platforms threaded by an extensive boardwalk.

The craggy chapel trail

Long separated by the **Ribeira de Alcantarilha**, Salgados's beaches and Armação de Pêra's beaches were linked by an expansive new boardwalk and river-crossing bridge inaugurated in 2024. Keep walking (or drive) to the town's far west for a postcard-perfect panorama: whitewashed **Capela da Nossa Senhora da Rocha** atop a ragged headland splitting two beaches below. From here, you could continue (mostly) along the cliffs to the Percurso dos Sete Vales Suspensos (p191).

EATING IN ARMAÇÃO DE PÊRA & SALGADOS: OUR PICKS

Restaurant D'Mestres: This wholesome, hospitable spot plates outstanding traditional recipes. *noon-10pm Thu-Tue, closed Sun dinner* €

Os Salgados: Glass-fronted and ocean-facing, this restaurant has been serving esteemed seafood for over 40 years. *11am-9pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun* €€

Inevitável Wine Bar: Exemplary traditional dishes like *muxama* (cured tuna) with first-class service and wine pairings. *4-10pm Fri-Wed* €€

Olivalmar: One of the best *marisqueiras* (seafood restaurants) in the Algarve, pairing heaped shellfish platters with rolling-wave views. *noon-10pm* €€€



Silves

MOORISH MONUMENTS | WINERY VISITS | CITRUS GROVES

From Silves' hulking sandstone castle, do as Moorish kings would have centuries ago: peer through the crenellated russet walls and survey the citrus-scented scene. Spot their carob and almond trees; the latter, according to legend, planted by Ibn-Almundim for his beloved snow-missing Princess Gilda. Visualise bygone trading ships gliding along the Rio Arade. View the vines first planted by Phoenicians, perfected by Romans, and now robustly returning under a new wave of vintners. Then, close your eyes. Imagine the call to prayer reverberating through the valley – not that imagination is needed during August's Medieval Fair.

Welcome to Xilb, as it was called during centuries of Moorish rule, a period impossible to separate from Silves' contemporary story. The final capital of Al-Gharb and, later, the Algarve Kingdom, its chronology is recounted across Islamic poet murals, Moorish museums, and inside these castle walls, while modern life, markets and birdsong invigorate the inviting town below.

The Algarve Crowning Castle

Explore a mega Moorish monument

Imposing and mindfully renovated, Silves' **Castelo** *(cm-silves.pt; €2.10, including museum €3.90)* is the Algarve's most impressive. Constructed in the 10th century over a likely Roman fortress, its upkeep is testimony to Silves' importance as the ancient capital. Spend an hour circling the ramparts, peeking in towers and relishing the far-reaching panoramas. Then, walk through the ruined Almohad dwelling walls, with signs showing how the internal village would have once looked. The descendible cisterns, now dry, display information on the nearby Iberian lynx reintroduction centre. In July, concerts are hosted in the grounds.

GETTING AROUND

Silves' centre is compact and fairly flat, with a steeper climb to reach the castle. The central bus stop near the market connects with Albufeira and Portimão. Silves' train station is a 2km walk from the centre. There's a small car park near the castle, but the extensive free public parking near the Piscina Municipal is usually a safer bet. Cycling around the area is pleasant; most bike rentals are provided by guesthouses. Taxis, and rideshares, including Uber and Bolt, may take a little longer than on the coast.

TOP TIP

Silves is enchanting in spring. Almond blossoms usually arrive in February, followed by orange blossoms in March. If you're in the Algarve in August, the excellent Silves Medieval Fair is worth attending.



SIGHTS
1. Castelo de Silves
2. Centro de Interpretação de Património Islâmico
3. Museu Municipal de Arqueologia
4. Portas da Cidade
5. Sé

ACTIVITIES & COURSES
6. Doçaria do Sul

SLEEPING
7. Casa Riad Yasmin
8. Silves History Guest House

EATING
9. Churrasqueira Valdemar
10. Nova Mesquita

DRINKING
11. Café Inglês
12. DaRosa
13. Segredo dos Mouros

Reflect on the Reconquista

Silence inside the church

Following the Reconquista, Xilb's mosque was replaced with a Gothic cathedral, **Sé** *(cm-silves.pt; €2)*. Earthquake-damaged and regularly reconstructed, much of today's structure is from the 18th century, leading to a less impressive interior than the hulking exterior suggests. Still, it's worth a brief visit (wear suitable clothes; shawls otherwise provided) to see the soaring sandstone columns; just don't expect overly elaborate embellishments.

ALONG THE ARADE

In Moorish times, the Arade River was navigable for trade ships. Now silted, only small **sightseeing boats** (p192) depart from either side of the estuary in **Ferragudo** or **Portimão** at high tide.

Wells, Walls & Islamic Relics

Inside the archaeology museum

Anchored around an excavated, 18m-deep Almohad cistern-well, accessed via internal stairs, the **Museu Municipal de Arqueologia** *(cm-silves.pt; €2.10)* is a Moorish time capsule. Closed Mondays, the space traces the town's history, from prehistoric tombstones to Roman coins. Silves' Muslim period takes the spotlight, with collections covering the Umayyad, Caliphate, Taifa, Almoravid and Almohad periods. The top floor accesses a walkable section of the old walls.

A Deeper Moorish Dive

Routes, tours, gates and trails

To follow the Algarve's Moorish trail further, visit the weekday-only **Centro de Interpretação de Património Islâmico**, on the square facing **Portas da Cidade**, the sole-surviving upper door and tower of a former gateway. Brief Moorish history is shared inside, where the team provide maps for two region-crossing, Moorish-tracing itineraries, the **Umayyad** and **Al-Mutamid Routes**, alongside arranging tours to Silves' **Casa da Cultura Islâmica** *(cm-silves.pt; hours vary)*, a neo-Mudéjar building tracing Arabic words and culture in Portugal.

Silves' Signature Sweets

Typical treat workshops

Join Silvina and her team for a traditional, handmade sweet workshop at **Doçaria do Sul** *(docariadosul.pt; prices vary)*, an adorable cafe and shop serving Silves flavours, from carob coffee to fig sweet treats. Over two-hour sessions, you'll be taught to prepare typical *doce fino* (almond sweets) or *torta de laranja* (an orange roll), depending on the season, using fresh local ingredients. The classes are low-key and fun, ending with a box of your creations to take away.

Into the Orange Groves

Fresh fruit and citrus trails

The Moors planted Silves' first bitter oranges (the Portuguese word for quince paste, *marmelo*, precedes what the British call marmalade), with sweet oranges from Asia arriving during the Age of Discovery. Now, four varieties of orange from November until August and clementines in autumn provide a year-round supply. For a 90-minute farm tour with

Continues on p188

WHY I LOVE SILVES



Daniel James Clarke, Lonely Planet writer

When I was six, a stranger in Silves picked and handed me an orange, and somehow, I've managed to treasure that holiday fruit ever since. Thirty years on, that orange is as wrinkled as the hand that gifted it, but my childlike joy still returns whenever I spot Silves' magnificent castle, bite into an almond pastry under the jacaranda trees outside Café DaRosa, or regularly ramble the surrounding sweet-scented citrus-grove trails now I live down the road. Having avoided heavy tourism development, Silves remains effortlessly endearing, with smiles and conversation easy to find. Slow down, glide along the river, sip the local amphora-fermented wine and savour every sweet orange – there's little reason to rush here.

EATING IN SILVES: LOCAL FLAVOURS

Churrasqueira Valdemar: This Silves Market terrace fills fast and serves mixed grills and chicken piri-piri. *noon-3pm & 6.30-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Clube Nautico: It's a dirt-track drive to this cheerful riverside BBQ and bar with upstream Silves views and a summer pool. *noon-5pm Fri-Mon* €

Nova Mesquita: Home-style cooking makes this a reliable everyday option; book for Thursday-night fado performances. *noon-3pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Recanto dos Mouros: Authentic and beloved, this Algarvian restaurant with rear castle views deserves a reservation. *noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue* €€

HELP ME PICK:

Wineries Around Silves

The Algarve wine region isn't as internationally recognised as the Douro, but it has precedent: it's believed the Phoenicians cultivated vines here as far back as the 8th century BCE. Silves' location inside Lagoa's Controlled Denomination of Origin (DOC) wine region and near Portimão's DOC (two of four in the Algarve), coupled with its ever-growing group of passionate vintners and small-batch, family-operated wineries, make it an excellent vineyard-hopping base. Far from exhaustive, these are some of our favourites.

Where to sip if you're seeking...

Historic & Impressive

Quinta de Mata Mouros *(conventodoparaiso.com; from €20)* Join Laura at this historic forested estate for a private tasting or vineyard tour in a 1980s Land Rover. With an on-site 15th-century convent and winery, legends of Moorish tunnels, and only 50,000 bottles produced annually, it's exclusive and unforgettable.

Morgado do Quintão *(morgadodoquintao.pt; from €42.50)* Settle under the shade of a 2000-year-old olive tree for a tasting or lunch before (a different) Laura leads you through the vines of this expansive estate founded by the Count of Silves in the early 19th century.



MAJAFOTOZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Contemporary & Creative

Quinta dos Sentidos *(qds.pt; from €30)* With an experimental vineyard, numerous varietals, and a well-manicured garden planted with hundreds of native and international plants, the private and personable tours and tastings at this forward-thinking winery and olive oil producer are led by winemaker André or the international owners.

Quinta dos Santos *(quintadossantos.com; from €45)* Come for the tastings and tours of contemporary amphorae production and stay for the restaurant. The Santos family has created a striking space, with co-owner Greg brewing Dos Santos Craft Beers and distilling gin out the back.

Unique Experiences

Adega Arvad *(arvad.pt; tastings from €30)* Sail up the Arade River by eco boat from Portimão *(algarvesunboat.com; €68)* for a tour and tasting of 100% Negra Mole produced in Phoenician-style amphorae. The modern, panoramic winery also offers picnics and lively sunset sessions.

Quinta dos Vales *(quintadosvales.pt; from €36)* Open-air art and sculptures decorate the vines of this upscale winery, visitable for afternoon tours and tastings. Upgrade to one of the Winemaker Experiences to blend, bottle, label and cork your own personalised wine.

Intimate & Low-Key

Monte de Salicos *(montedesalicos@gmail.com; from €15)* Tours and tastings are incredibly personal and laid-back at this intimate winery near Carvoeiro, where the sea breeze influences the mainly Portuguese varieties.

Quinta do Francês *(quintadofrances.com; from €13.50)* Rural and rustic-feeling tours of this five-strong-teamed, French-owned winery are quick yet informative, finishing with tastings on the sunny, vineyard-viewing terraces. Try the unusual five-grape blended rosé.



HOW TO

Book ahead While some wineries have open tasting rooms or shops, many are only visitable by weekday appointment. Book at least two days in advance.

Winter visits With grapes cut for the autumn harvest and Silves quietening down, some wineries close in winter while others continue with tastings only.

Confirm directions Don't rely on GPS directions to make your visit on time, especially when reaching more rural vineyards. Ask for accurate directions when booking.

Getting there Most wineries are not within walking distance or connected by bus. It's best to pre-book taxis; rideshares can have longer waiting times inland.

Plan & Upgrade Your Winery Experience

Most wineries only offer one or two daily tours, usually lasting between one to three hours, so those providing private appointments allow more flexibility if you wish to visit a few in one day. If you'd prefer to book a tour with a driver, **Algarve Wine Tours** *(algarvewinetours.com.pt)* is one of the rare operators offering excursions to more than one winery in a day. **Algarve Gourmet** *(happyvan.pt)* arranges tasting transfers and picnics or private dining experiences among the vines. Most wineries offer some form of light food, such as typical cheese boards, but unless you're attending one of the memorable dining experiences like Morgado do Quintão's weekday lunches under the ancient olive tree, it's best to eat before arriving.

Wine harvest experiences are the calendar highlight, especially if you're grape treading in Quinta de Mata Mouros or Quinta dos Santos. Sadly, scheduling is getting harder as dates shift due to drought and changing climate. Historically, the harvest was mainly in early September, perhaps into October. However, some recent harvests have commenced in early August. Ask the wineries or consult **Algarve Wine Tourism** *(algarvewinetourism.pt)* for dates. Harvest aside, it's always worth studying website event calendars. Some wineries host bands, fado performances, banquet dinners, and even late-night parties with DJs. Silves municipality organises the multi-winery **Jazz nas Adegas** *(cm-silves.pt)* concerts in winter and spring.

BEST REGIONAL SWEET TREATS

Most of the region's sweet treats contain Algarvian flavours, such as figs, carob and almonds.

Doce Fino do Algarve: Small, colourful marzipan dough delicacies shaped like fruits or animals.

Dom Rodrigo: These 18th-century sticky, sweet egg and cinnamon treats come wrapped like a shiny gift.

Queijo de Figo: Figs and almonds (usually with brandy) are combined to create dense, diminutive circular cakes.

Morgadinho: Dome-shaped, white fondant coated and bursting with eggy almond paste.

Torta de Alfarroba: Carob flour replaces chocolate in this rolled honey and almond cake.

Bola de Berlim: Custard-stuffed doughnuts are a summer staple sold on beaches.



MAURO RODRIGUES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Feira Medieval

Continued from p185

fruit picking, book a visit to José's **Quinta de Santo Estevão** *(quinta-santo-estevao.pt; from €15)*, a centuries-old working farm with donkeys, horse riding and citrus groves. The **Rota da Laranja** *(visitalgarve.pt)* app highlights other citrus-focused experiences.

Celebrating the Former Capital

A medieval spectacle

For nine days every August, Silves steps back in time for the annual **Feira Medieval** *(feiramedievaldesilves.pt),* an all-encompassing explosion of sounds, sights and flavours. Every year has a different theme, but historical reenactments – both from Islamic and Christian times – costumed performers, veiled flame-juggling dancers, music, jousting tournaments and 'Berber tents' hawking traditional wares are all constants. Children are entertained at the evening Xilb dos Pequenos' pottery and *azulejo* workshops.

DRINKING IN SILVES: CAFES & CAKES

DaRosa: With blue and white *azulejos*, this cafe's interior is as pretty as its shaded fountain-facing terrace. *9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat*

Segredo dos Mouros: Easy to miss, this quaint cafe and wine bar has a 'no smoking' balcony overlooking the rooftops. *11am-5pm Thu-Mon*

Chapim: On the grassy riverbank, this cafe serves coffee, drinks and snacks and is great for families thanks to the playground next door. *9am-7pm*

Café Inglês: Lively bar-restaurant on the steps to the castle with local beers, wines, sangria and Sunday-afternoon music sessions. *10am-11.30pm Tue-Sun*

Beyond Silves



Meander inland for mountain trails and thermal springs or hike atop coastal cliffs between caves, bays and former fishing villages.

Inland, the sprawling Serra de Monchique range can be appreciated in numerous ways. Follow in Roman footsteps at thermal spring spas, amble along the easy-going suspension bridge, or tackle some of the more challenging treks. You won't even need hiking boots to relish the panoramas from the Algarve's drivable highest peak, Mt Fóia, or to meet the mountain villagers distilling fiery local liquor. Downstream, the Arade's estuary is flanked by Portimão, a big city with shipwreck scuba diving and sardines in its soul, and the fetching fishing village of Ferragudo. From here, Lagoa's spectacular clifftop trails begin. The most cinematic stretch, crossing wave-lapped bays and craggy coves, links Carvoeiro to the tourism-blighted Benagil Cave.

Serra de Monchique

TIME FROM SILVES: **40 MINS**

Where thermal waters flow

Revered since Roman times, Monchique's thermal waters are renowned for their restorative high alkaline (9.5pH) levels. Anchored around **Caldas de Monchique**, a whimsical mountain village, the **Termas de Monchique Resort** *(monchiquetermalresort.com; prices vary)* offers treatments and spa circuits. For a less pampered experience, follow the **Parque Fonte dos Amores**' short, uphill trail tracking trickling streams to spot locals picnicking and filling up their supermarket-sold branded bottles from the source.

Relaxed rambles and tough trails

From **Mt Fóia**, the Algarve's highest point at 902m, the Serra de Monchique spills outwards, the ocean glistens beyond and rugged trails begin. The 6.8km, circular **Trilho da Fóia** is a well-rounded introduction to the *serra's* endemic flora, wild stock and the region-crossing Via Algarviana; a 10km forested extension reaches **Cascata do Barbelote** waterfall. To the east, in Alferce, the 1km **Passadiços Barranco do Demo** *(vila-monchique.com)* is an easy-going boardwalk with stairs and a valley-crossing suspension bridge; a 7.8km extension crosses the valley's streams on foot. Various companies operate guided hikes, including Silves-departing **AlgarvianRoots** *(algarvianroots.com; prices vary);* its most interesting excursion combines trails with mountain olive oil mills or pottery workshops.

Places

Serra de Monchique p189
Carvoeiro p190
Ferragudo p191
Portimão p192
Alvor p193

GETTING AROUND

Other than Portimão, which has direct bus (113) and train connections, you'll need to utilise connecting Vamus bus services to reach the coast or mountains. Transfer in Lagoa for the twice-weekday-only line 77 to Benagil and Praia da Marinha or travel via Portimão for the more regular 94 Monchique service. Driving offers much more freedom, but be prepared for parking difficulties around Benagil (there's a dusty car park at the top of the hill) and Marinha.

PORCHES POTTERY

Clay has been an integral part of Algarvian history for millennia. But it was the arrival of the Romans and later the Moors that elevated it to an art form. In typical restaurants across the region, you'll spot glazed clay bowls, terracotta plates, wine jugs and animal-adorned wall art.

Some of the Algarve's best modern producers are based in Porches. At **Porches Pottery**, witness artisans at work before shopping for their signature designs. Nearby **Olaria Pequena** produces some more contemporary pieces.



TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Algar Seco

Meet the mountain makers

The *serra's* silence isn't just for hiking; creatives have long been harboured in these mountains. Begin your 'meet the makers' tour in Monchique at **Studio Bongard**'s ceramic workshop. Much more than a shop, the colourful and creative pieces are displayed across a characterful garden. Driving west, **WoodSpirit Gallery** is adorned with José's artistic carvings using typical Algarvian and Portuguese woods. Ready for a refreshment? Swing by the village of Marmelete, where the weekday-only **Casa do Medronho** *(casadomedronho.com; €1.50)* shines a spotlight on the local *aguardente* (firewater). If it's production season, you might even be invited to visit one of the villagers' home distilleries.

WILDFIRES & SAFETY

The eucalyptus-heavy landscape around the Serra de Monchique makes the area prone to wildfires. Take precautions (p444) and check weather and fire reports before setting out on hikes.

Carvoeiro

TIME FROM SILVES: **25 MINS**

Rock pools and viewpoints

Pretty **Praia do Carvoeiro** has become the Algarve's beach poster child. Yet climb the hill left of the beach, and you'll find the village's best feature: **Algar Seco**. From the church-cum-lighthouse overlooking the beach, the brief and step-free **Carvoeiro Boardwalk** crosses the cliffs, steps detouring down to rocky flats popular with fishers. But the most aesthetic part is at the end, where a

EATING IN MONCHIQUE: HIKING FUEL

Alecrim: After reaching Fóia's viewpoint, descend a little to this food truck for a well-deserved burger, beer and deckchair rest. *1-8pm* €

Restaurante Malhada Quente: Get your freshly grilled chicken piri-piri fix at this roadside stop. *11.30am-3pm & 6.30-9.30pm Tue-Sun* €

Jardim das Oliveiras: A detour-worthy bucolic setting and meat-heavy regional specialities. *noon-3.30pm & 6.30-9.30pm Wed-Mon* €€

O Parque: Central, wholesome restaurant grilling hearty mountain meat dishes such as boar, black pork and lamb. *11am-11pm Fri-Wed* €€

rock-carved staircase descends to Algar Seco's natural pools, ocean-framing caves and picturesque **Boneca Bar**. You can start an extended version of the Seven Hanging Valleys Trail from the car park.

A beach-hopping, cinematic clifftop trail

No other Algarvian trail is better for beach-hopping than the cliff-tracking **Percurso dos Sete Vales Suspensos** (Seven Hanging Valleys Trail). The roughly two-hour, 6km, moderate linear route between Vale de Centeanes to jaw-droppingly beautiful **Praia da Marinha** climbs and descends on shingle-like ground between pocket-sized bays, crosses pine-shaded picnic areas and peers inside caves. Set off early for breezy, golden light, or plan to finish for a sensational sunset – either way, allow additional time for swimming stops. The trail can be extended by following a less defined, sometimes detouring path to Capela da Nossa Senhora da Rocha (p182), while **Caminho dos Promontórios** links Carvoeiro with Ferragudo.

Visiting (overly) beloved Benagil Cave

A victim of its own beauty, the natural skylight-illuminated beach of **Algar de Benagil** has become congested and controversy-prone. Briefly closed due to erosion and crowding concerns, authorities implemented new visiting regulations in August 2024. At the time of writing, swimming to the cave and unguided kayak visits/rentals were prohibited, as was accessing the grotto's beach. Licensed, guided SUP or kayak tour operators, such as Benagil-based **Clear Emotions** *(clearemotions.pt; from €25)*, can take you for an eight-minute interior peek; boat tours are limited to two minutes inside. To avoid the often overcrowded area, I'd advise boat trips departing further away, like **Carvoeiro Caves** *(carvoeirocaves.com; from €25)*. For an alternative coast and cave tour, consider skipping Benagil's chaos altogether and embark on a four-hour paddle from Ferragudo with marine biologist-led **Algarve Freedom Kayaks** *(algarvefreedomkayaks.pt; €30)*.

Ferragudo

TIME FROM SILVES: **25 MINS**

Fish canning and consuming

Towering red brick chimneys topped with stork nests dot the skyline on either side of the Ria Arade, pinpointing former canning factories. These were the estuary's economic lifeblood for centuries until the final factory closed in 1994. Twenty-ish years later, inspired by Portimão's sardine-focused museum, Vincent from Belgium teamed up with Portuguese Miguel to

FRANGO À GUIA

Chicken piri-piri, the famed Algarvian dish, has a story steeped in colonising history. During the Age of Discovery, fiery bird's eye chillies were transported from South America and then grown in the Portuguese colonies of Cabo Verde and Mozambique, where the spicy sauce is believed to have first appeared. In the 1970s, as Portuguese settlers returned from these colonies, the chillies were infused with more European ingredients, such as garlic, olive oil and lemon.

Churrasqueiras are the best place to sample true spatchcocked and charcoal-grilled chicken, especially in Guia, 'Portugal's Churrasco Chicken Capital'. **Restaurante Ramires** is considered to have imported and established the recipe. Order it *com* (with) or *sem* (without) piri-piri.

EATING AROUND LAGOA: LOCAL PICKS

Rolha Wine Bar, Porches: Intimate bar for fine wines, *petiscos* and chit-chat with the sociable owner. *6-11.30pm Thu-Sun* €

Tapas da Vila, Carvoeiro: Come for sunset beach views, plump garlic prawns and jugs of sparkling sangria on this tiny terrace. *noon-9.30pm Thu-Tue* €

Casa Algarvia, Carvoeiro: Long-standing restaurant serving traditional dishes at fair prices in a homely dining room. *noon-10pm* €€

O Charneco, Estômbar: No menu, family-run restaurant offering eight-course tastings, including wine, for less than €40. *6.30-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

SCUBA DIVING IN PORTIMÃO



Arlindo Serrao, an experienced diver and founder of Portugal Dive, shares why the city's coastline offers excellent diving. *@portugaldive*

The Algarve offers diverse underwater scenarios, such as reefs, swim-throughs, wrecks and caves. Offshore from Portimão, you can experience complex dives or enjoy open-water courses with various fish species, attractive underwater flora and the beautiful seabed, then relax at the beach afterwards. The **Ocean Revival Project**, which started in 2012, is incredible, with four Navy ships lying underwater. I love to swim through the engine rooms and imagine how it was when the ship was sailing and protecting our coast. Don't expect to be underwater with dozens of others because Portugal remains a relatively new diving destination.

revive the canning industry, opening **Conserveira do Arade** *(conserveiradoarade.com; adult/under 12 €10/free)*. Visitable on a one-hour weekday morning tour, Elisa and the team explain the process, including cleaning, cooking, canning and labelling, before an artisan fishy flavour tasting.

Paint an inspired azulejo

Unlike most former fishing villages, Ferragudo has clung to its traditions. Nets, baskets and colourful fishing boats still line the harbour, feeding the daily seafood market. It's an art-inspiring backdrop, especially when paired with the private-castle-crowned public beach and bougainvillaea-shaded streets – so where better to master the craft of hand-painting *azulejos*? At **Arti Arte Azulejar's** *(arti-arte-azulejar.pt; €35)* three-hour workshops, Carla will impart *azulejo* knowledge while guiding you through painting your design. Due to the three- to five-day turnaround for tile glazing, classes are best pre-booked at the start of your trip.

Portimão

TIME FROM SILVES: **25 MINS**

The sardine city

Much of Portimão's growth came from the canning industry that lasted around a century from 1890. Today, sardines are still in the city's soul, especially at the end of July when the **Sardine Festival** *(festivaldasardinha.pt)* takes over the waterfront Zona Ribeirinha. For an informative, year-round fishing overview, spend an hour in **Museu de Portimão** *(museudeportimao.pt; €3)*, closed on Mondays. Established inside a renovated canning factory, original features, including extended fish-washing sinks, complement modern exhibitions, videos, and human-size statues 'working' on the fishing process.

Eco boat sailings to Silves

The **Rio Arade** was an important tide-dictated trade route as far back as Phoenician times. Nowadays, it's only navigable by smaller boats. For a half-day sailing, including a 90-minute Silves visit, join **Algarve SunBoat** *(algarvesunboat.com; adult/child €36/23)* from Portimão Marina. On board the solar-powered vessel, it's a near-silent journey while António points out Portimão's cannery chimneys, a crevice-hidden fishers' chapel and the vineyards and estates en route. **Ferragudo Boat Trips** *(ferragudoboattrips.com; €40)*, captained by Luis on board a traditional Algarvian fishing boat, offers alternative Ferragudo departures.

EATING IN PORTIMÃO: SNACKS, SARDINES & SEAFOOD

Pastelaria Snack Ruby: Relaxed cafe serving all the staples and well known for its *francesinhas*, Porto's meat-heavy sandwiches. *8am-7pm Mon-Fri* €

Ú Venâncio: For seasonal grilled sardines alfresco, with a view of the Arade River estuary, this is a trustworthy choice. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €

A Casa da Rocha: Arrive early for your pick of fresh fish and seats affording views of Praia dos Três Castelos' rock formation. *noon-10pm* €€

AllGarbe: One of the city's premier seafood restaurants displaying its fish on ice, this central spot fills fast. *11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat* €€



SOFOTNICK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Grilled sardines

Alvor

TIME FROM SILVES: **30 MINS**

A flamingo-facing boardwalk

Alongside laid-back Alvor town and behind the dune-backed beach, the **Ria de Alvor Nature Reserve** teems with birdlife, including black-winged stilts and Caspian terns best spotted from the accessible **Passadiços de Alvor**, one of the Algarve's longest boardwalks. It's especially majestic from November to March when a flamboyance of flamingos often flies above. An oyster farm (p196) operates on the estuary's far side.

Snorkelling quiet caves and coves

Around **Praia de Boião**, the coastline is awash with cliff-backed bays, grottoes and inaccessible beaches. While you could attempt to snorkel the caves, tackling the incredibly narrow and almost missable grottoes with a guide is advised. Inês and Pedro, marine biologists and founders of **Zip&Trip** *(zipandtripalgarve.com; adult/child €60/20)*, know this crevice-crammed coastline inside out and their half-day snorkelling tours are adventure-packed while preserving the ecosystems frequently disturbed by boat tours.

BEST ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

Skydive Algarve: *(skydivealgarve.com; from €139)* Book a tandem parachute jump at Portimão Aerodrome for a free-fall followed by dazzling ocean views.

Autódromo Internacional do Algarve: *(autodromodoalgarve.com; from €195)* Get your speed kicks in a supercar on this one-time Formula 1 track.

Quadsexperience: *(quadsexperience.com; from €125)* Spend half a day bouncing between Monchique's rugged highlights on a quad bike tour.

Wildwatch: *(wildwatch.pt; adult/child €45/30)* Depart from Ferragudo with passionate marine biologists to spot dolphins.

Slide & Splash: *(slidesplash.com; adult/child €27/20 with online discount)* Ride and refresh on many slides at this large, long-established water park.

DRINKING ALONG THE COAST: BEST BEACH BARS

Club Nau, Ferragudo: Praia Grande views from the fusion restaurant or beach bucket chairs with sunset DJs and excellent cocktails. *10am-10pm*

Edd's Beach, Ferragudo: Enjoy sun loungers and cocktails surrounding an artificial beach or the restaurant just back from Pintadinho. *10am-11pm*

NoSoloÁgua, Portimão: Pick from the ocean-facing pool bar, beach cabanas or terraced restaurant at this electric beach club. *11am-7pm*

Caniço, Alvor: Step into a cliff-built lift and descend to a secluded bay for beach drinks or summer parties; skip the so-so restaurant. *9.30am-2am*

Lagos



CRAGGY COASTLINE | WATER SPORTS | NIGHTLIFE

GETTING AROUND

Lagos' walkable, pedestrianised centre and easy-access beaches make it a fantastic car-free base. Lagos train station, the western terminus of the Algarve's train line, is located behind the marina. The central bus station has connections across the Algarve and inter-city coaches to Alentejo and Lisbon. The city's Onda bus network extends to Meia Praia, Luz and the nearby interior. Paid and unpaid parking is plentiful, and there's a new car park approaching Ponta da Piedade. Scooters, bikes and e-bikes can be rented from several local businesses.

TOP TIPS

From street art and exhibitions to contemporary theatre, there's always something creative occurring in Lagos; visit *cm-lagos.pt* for an updated events calendar.

When a naval fleet set sail to conquer Ceuta in 1415, Lagos' story became forever entwined with the Age of Discovery. Over the following decades, caravels embarked on colonising missions and returned with enslaved Africans. Growing in affluence and influence, Lagos was crowned regional capital in 1576, though tides turned in 1755 when a tsunami tore through, overwhelming the Moorish-built walls. The Atlantic Ocean, which had given the city prominence, took it back in one fell swoop.

Fast-forward to today, and a new wave is sweeping the Old Town: one of own-roasting coffee shops, organic wine bars, and street art. But the lure of the Atlantic still shapes Lagos. Boats depart the marina seeking dolphins rather than discoveries. Surfers, sunrise yoga sessions, sunbathers and wakeboarders share the shoreline. And when the crimson sun sinks into the deep blue beyond, there's no better place to be than wave-chiselled Ponta da Piedade.

A Craggy, Dramatic Headland

By boat, boardwalk or kayak

The outlandishly dramatic headland and cinematic coastline of **Ponta da Piedade** begs to be explored, and myriad boat tours depart the marina. However, appreciating the sandstone cliffs, sea stacks and salty breeze on foot is dreamy, thanks to a roughly 2km boardwalk inaugurated in 2024 to improve access and reduce pressure on eroding cliffs. The closest joining point is above **Praia do Pinhão** – the beach closed due to a cliff collapse in 2024 – which leads to **Praia da Dona Ana** and restarts across the car park. A step-free boardwalk section begins near Praia do Camilo's gravel car park. Detours to unshaded viewing platforms dot the route. Ponta da Piedade's stone-carved stairs are the dramatic finale, descending to a small water-splashed landing cocooned by rock formations.



SIGHTS
1. Antigo Mercado de Escravos
2. Armazém Regimental
3. Igreja de Santo António
4. LAC
5. Meia Praia
6. Museu de Lagos
7. Ponta da Piedade
8. Praia de Porto de Mós
9. Praia do Camilo
10. Praia dos Estudantes

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
11. Kayak Explorers
12. Praia da Dona Ana Boardwalk Stairs
13. Praia do Pinhão Boardwalk Entrance

SLEEPING
14. Hotel Lagosmar
15. Lagos Avenida Hotel
16. Olive Hostel

EATING
17. Café Vádio
18. Cantinho de Minas
19. Mercado Municipal
20. Repolho Gastrobar
21. Tasca do Kiko

DRINKING
22. Collab
23. Forbidden Door
24. Studio

ENTERTAINMENT
25. Centro Cultural

SHOPPING
26. Casa da Bli
27. Joalharia Santo Antonio
28. TEIAS

EUROPE'S FIRST SLAVE MARKET

In **Praça do Infante Dom Henrique**, Prince Henry the Navigator's statue overlooks the **Antigo Mercado de Escravos** *(cm-lagos.pt; €3)*, the likely location of Europe's first slave market, opened in 1444 during Portugal's Age of Discovery. Prince Henry drove early exploration and colonisation, supposedly establishing Sagres' School of Navigation; in reality, the caravels sailed from Lagos rather than cliff-defined Sagres.

In 2009 over 150 African skeletons were uncovered in Lagos' centuries-old landfill, investigated in the 2023 essay-like film *Tales of Oblivion* directed by Angolan-born Dulce Fernandes. The market, now a two-storey museum, acknowledges the lives of those enslaved via stories, facts, maps and digital displays. Still, in some areas, it lacks depth, delivering certain details from a colonialist viewpoint.

For a closer inspection, kayaks offer better manoeuvrability than a boat. **Kayak Explorers'** *(lagoskayakexplores.com; €35)* two- to three-hour town-departing tours include otherwise inaccessible caves and a shoreline snorkelling stop.

Beeline to the Beach

Surf, SUP, sunbathe or kiteboard?

Lagos' beaches are as much about water sports as sunbathing. Sweeping **Meia Praia** is a popular kitesurfing spot, with numerous schools offering lessons. It's also accessible and has an amphibious wheelchair available. Pocket-sized **Praia do Camilo** is the place to get your steps in via the 200-plus stepped staircase descending to the cliff-hugged cove. If you'd prefer to paddle at your own pace, hire a SUP board and set out from **Praia dos Estudantes** to see the Roman-style bridge spanning two rocks from all angles. Beyond the headland, **Praia de Porto de Mós** is the city's nearest reef break surf spot.

From (Oyster) Farm to Fork

Just-harvested oysters

Freshly caught fish is abundant on the ground floor of Lagos' **Mercado Municipal**. Yet, even fresher oysters await at **OstraSelect** *(+351 919 463 570)* on the Meia Praia side of the Ria de Alvor. A working farm rather than an attraction, it's best to call or email ahead to ensure Miguel or another team member is around for a low-tide visit. If so, they'll happily explain more about their Japanese Crassostrea Giga oysters while collecting you a surprisingly affordable bag – just wear shoes suitable for wet sands.

The Dazzling Church Collection

Museum treasure, traditions and prayers

The city's main museum, **Museu de Lagos** *(museu.cm-lagos.pt; adult/child €3/1.50; closed Mondays)*, also affords access to the astonishing **Igreja de Santo António**. With an assorted collection, mainly from amateur archaeologist Dr José Formosinho, each room covers a separate period. Ornate *azulejos*, religious canvases and triptychs, and Algarvian history, including costumes, crafts and typical home recreations, are all tourable within an hour. Ending with the showstopper, the 18th-century church is awash with blue and white *azulejos*, crowned with a trompe-l'oeil ceiling, and dazzles with baroque gilding, depicting Roman soldiers and Moorish characters.

EATING IN LAGOS: PETISCOS, PLATES & PERFORMERS

Cantinho de Minas: Enjoy a filling Brazilian feast at this unfussy restaurant, with quality *picanha* (steak). *11am-11pm Wed-Mon* €

Tasca do Kiko: Behind the boatyard, this tucked-away tapas restaurant has sharing plates crammed with flavour. *noon-3pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Café Vádio: One of Lagos' only places to feel fado, the performances on Tuesday and Friday evenings trump the included meal. *noon-midnight Mon-Sat* €€

Repolho Gastrobar: Intimate restaurant with wine-stacked walls. The small plates are phenomenal. *4-11pm Tue-Sun* €€

STROLLING STREET ART & SEAFARING STORIES

Discover Lagos' contemporary creativity and age-old maritime links on this Old Town amble, which easily feeds into the headland boardwalk.

START	END	LENGTH
Boa Esperança Caravel Ship	Forte da Ponta da Bandeira	2.8km; 2 hours

Lagos' prominent role in Portugal's nautical history shaped the city, so start your walking tour at the replica 1 **Boa Esperança Caravel Ship** before crossing the bridge linking 2 **Marina de Lagos** with palm-lined Avenida dos Descobrimentos.

Follow the wide promenade, often decked with market stalls, then cross the road to admire the annually changing collection of 3 **street art** posters while climbing the Rua da Marombeira steps. Pass Igreja de Sao Sebastiao to reach the art-fronted 4 **Centro Ciência Viva de Lagos**. From here, stairs descend into the produce and seafood-selling 5 **Mercado Municipal**.

Exit into the Old Town and cross the two pretty squares of Praça Gil Eanes and 6 **Praça Luís de Camões**, with its particularly photogenic green tiled building. Then, follow the *calçadas* (Portuguese patterned pavement) of Rua Infante de Sagres towards the 16th-century 7 **city walls**.

Returning to downtown, more street art appears near the 8 **Lagos Cultural Centre**, which faces visual artist Add Fuel's blue-and-white *azulejo*-inspired mural. Pause at history-defining 9 **Praça do Infante Dom Henrique** and peek inside Igreja de Santa Maria before tracking the sturdy walls of the 17th-century Castelo dos Governadores to the tower-flanked 10 **Arco de São Gonçalo** entranceway. Cross the road and then the drawbridge of 11 **Forte da Ponta da Bandeira** to finish with the fort's rooftop views.



LAGOS' BEST ARTS, CRAFTS & CULTURE

TEIAS: Established by nine local artists, this contemporary and creative crafts shop sells cosmetics, art and ceramics. They also host monthly craft workshops.

Casa da Bli: Selling a wide range of handmade and typically Portuguese gifts, this is one of Lagos' best souvenir shops.

Joalharia Santo Antonio: Small boutique dedicated to fine gold and silver Portuguese filigree jewellery.

Centro Cultural: Theatre, song, dance and activities year-round in the city's main cultural hub.

Armazém Regimental: This former 17th-century military warehouse now holds free, temporary art exhibitions.

LAC: Responsible for much of Lagos' street art, this 'creative laboratory' hosts contemporary exhibitions and workshops.



NIKONKA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Fisherman's Trail between Lagos and Luz

Among the Vines

Rustic wine tastings

Lagos isn't shy of wine bars, but if you'd prefer sipping organic wines with those that harvested them, cycle or take a 12-minute taxi to **Monte da Casteleja** *(montecasteleja.com; from €25)* for a pre-booked Tuesday to Thursday tasting. While production occurs offsite, walking through the vines – parts of the Roman city of Lacobriga buried beneath – and relishing a relaxed two-hour tasting on the shaded table is a treat, especially if it includes its hard-to-find-elsewhere organic orange wine.

Follow the Fishermen

A volcanic-cliff topping hike

The final 11km leg of Rota Vicentina's Fisherman's Trail (p204) links Lagos with the small beachside town of **Luz**, reducing to 6km if joined at Ponta da Piedade. Following a well-marked track, the reasonably easy route ambles atop **Rocha Negra**, a volcanic and sandstone cliff packed with fossils and traces of the Middle Cretaceous period. There's one short ascent at the end, though it's more gradual when approached from Lagos. On arrival to laid-back Luz, peer at the gated **Roman ruins** and 17th-century **Fortaleza**, now a restaurant, before returning on foot or by bus.

DRINKING IN LAGOS: COFFEE TO COCKTAILS

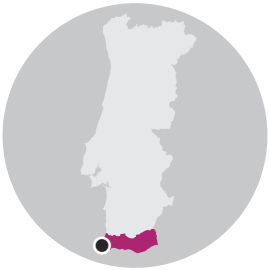
Studio: Modern cafe and photo gallery with in-house roasted coffee, homemade cakes and co-working. Second branch in Luz. *7.30am-5.30pm*

Forbidden Door: Ring the bell to enter this dimly lit speakeasy where the owner will mix you uniquely Portuguese flavour-infused cocktails. *6pm-2am Thu-Tue*

Bar Quim: Laid-back beach bar at Meia Praia's peaceful far end for beers on the sand or coffee and snacks on the terrace. *9am-6pm Mon-Sat*

Collab: With local craft beers, like Lagos' Man!a, organic wines and bao buns, the ample terrace is sundowner perfection. *noon-11pm*

Costa Vicentina



WILD BEACHES | EPIC TRAILS | SERIOUS SURF

Ocean-shaved sheer cliffs, footprint-free sands, dune-blotted beaches and surf-pounded shores are only a fragment of the windswept west coast's magnetism. Juniper-scented tracks ramble through perennial villages. Death-defying crustacean harvesters set out at daybreak. Islamic fishing village ruins perch precariously. And reintroduced ospreys and migratory birds set the slow soundtrack. Stretching from Burgau to Odeceixe's regional-border-slicing Seixe River, the Algarve's piece of the protected Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina is almost unfathomable.

Stand at mainland Europe's most southwesterly corner, the barren, ragged, gale-ravaged Cabo de São Vicente, and you'll soon see why Sagres is the stuff of legends. But it's also absolute in its authenticity. Out here, surf camps and rural stays supersede resorts, paragliding and coasteering replace water parks, and conversations flow freely from farmers to fishers. The Costa Vicentina is the Algarve's untamed coastal Eden, its wild orchard-lined trails and ocean-spilling rivers calling out to be savoured.

Step Back in Time

Menhirs, millstones and fossilised footprints

In this land, dinosaurs wandered, Neolithic people erected menhirs and the Romans established fishing outposts – the remains of all still visible today. From Salema's **fossilised Early Cretaceous footprints** and easy-accessed **Menhir do Padrão** – the area has multiple prehistoric monuments – to the predominantly hidden Roman ruins of **Praia da Boca do Rio**, part of which is observable underwater, there's a lot to study. **Vila do Bispo Museum** *(museuviladobispo.pt; adult/child €5/2.50),* housed in the modernised granaries of the Algarve's former bread basket, is the best jumping-off point for historical context.

GETTING AROUND

Limited bus schedules and no railway make a car essential to freely and fully explore remote bays, rural villages and inland lakes – unless you're unhurried or planning multi-day hikes. Inland, GPS-suggested driving times are often underestimated. Most beaches have small car parks. Off-roading and wild camping are banned. Vamus service 47 links Sagres and Cabo de São Vicente with Salema, Burgau and Lagos. The weekday-only 79 connects Odeceixe and Aljezur with Lagos, and the 74 runs between Aljezur and Arrifana. Taxis and rideshares are in short supply.

TOP TIPS

Portugal's biggest nature-focused event is the activity-packed Sagres Birdwatching Festival every October.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Cabo de São Vicente
2 Fortaleza de Sagres

SIGHTS
● Castelo (see 5)
● Fossilised Dinosaur Footprints (see 10)
3 Menhir do Padrão
4 Museu do Mar e da Terra da Carrapateira
5 Museu Municipal
6 Povoado Islâmico de Pescadores
7 Praia da Amoreira
8 Praia da Boca do Rio
9 Praia da Bordeira
10 Praia da Salema
11 Praia de Odeceixe
12 Praia do Castelejo
13 Ribat da Atalaia
14 Vila do Bispo Museum

ACTIVITIES, COURSES & TOURS
15 Arrifana Surf School
16 Burros & Artes
17 Coastline Algarve
18 Divers Cape
19 Sagres Natura Surf Camp
20 South Kayaks
● Water Element (see 11)

SLEEPING
● Aldeia da Pedralva (see 29)
21 International Surf School
22 Monte João Roupeiro
23 Pontalaia
● Sol Mar (see 26)

EATING
24 A Sereia
25 Adega dos Arcos
26 Altinho
27 Bossa Brew House
28 O Sargo
● Os Amigos da Carrapateira (see 4)
29 Sítio da Pedralva
30 Three Little Birds

ENTERTAINMENT
31 Salema Eco Camp

TOP EXPERIENCE

Fortaleza de Sagres & Cabo de São Vicente

Myths, legends, shipwrecks and sailors, Sagres' two end-of-the-world-feeling storied fortresses are the Algarve's most foreboding yet fascinating sights, commandeering two separate, sheer headlands around 6km apart. A few hours spent between the pair affords insights into Portugal's maritime might.



MARTIN SC PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sagres Fortress Promontory

Approaching the formidable, reconstructed, walkable ramparts of **Fortaleza de Sagres** *(pictured above; promontorio desagres.pt; €3)*, one imagines a robust defence system beyond. In reality, it's a barren headland hosting some 15th-century structures that survived the 1755 tsunami. Thankfully, an interactive Age of Discovery exhibition centre opened in 2023, providing historical context via nautical charts and presentations on the fortress, caravels and trade routes. Outside, there's a sealed 16th-century chapel, cistern tower, and a remarkable, overgrown, 43m-wide floor-level stone compass. Trails (some accessible) and information boards spread across the weathered promontory towards cliff-perched fishers and the maze-like A Voz do Mar installation, echoing the waves below.

The Lighthouse on the Edge of Europe

Crowning an ocean-ravaged headland, 16th-century **Cabo de São Vicente** denotes mainland Europe's southwesternmost point. Only open on Wednesday afternoons in summer, the lighthouse, initially constructed in the 18th century, operates as a small museum (at the time of research, it was closed indefinitely). Named after Spanish-born martyr São Vicente, torched alive by the Romans, the Portuguese version of the legend claims his remains were buried here before being exhumed and taken to Lisbon. There's little more to witness besides the boundless ocean, and that's the attraction: a desolate corner for reflection and rambles soundtracked by bellowing waves and fierce winds.

TOP TIPS

- The sunset seen from the cape is arguably the Algarve's most indelible.
- Three bus connections run daily; afternoon schedules provide a better length of visit.
- A 7km scenic, windswept walk links the pair; marked bike lanes follow the road. Parking at the cape often overflows.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan the QR code to check Cabo de São Vicente's up-to-date visiting details.

SURF CONDITIONS IN SAGRES



Sara Sousa, co-founder of Sagres Natura surf school, explains why and when Sagres is best for all surfing abilities. *@sagresnaturacamp*

Sagres is one of Europe's best surfing destinations due to having both southern and western coasts, meaning winds all the time. Conditions from June to August are great for learning, and every day we can choose spots with the best conditions. September and October bring bigger waves, ideal for experienced surfers, and the conditions have recently been good until December. March is a quieter time, usually with good weather returning. My connection to the sea stems from my father being a fisherman here, and Sagres' simple quality of life is something very special to share with travellers.



SONIA BONET/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Catch Your First Wave

Surf camps along the coast

The Costa's combination of serious surf sites and beginner-friendly bays makes it a wave-riding destination for all levels. Schools span the coast, with package prices dependent on the number of lessons, gear rental and accommodation. Expect to pay around €60 for a full-day group lesson. Sara and Celso run the slick, long-standing **Sagres Natura Surf Camp** *(sagres natura.com)*, an ideal learning base thanks to west-facing beaches and more sheltered bays nearby, while upcoast **Arrifana Surf School** *(arrifanasurfschool.com)* holds classes on a wilder, volcanic cliff-backed beach.

Atlantic Ocean Adrenaline

Coasteering, caving and scuba diving

Adventurers flock here not just to surf but to face the fierce, shipwrecking Atlantic Ocean in countless ways. Sagres' **Divers Cape** *(diverscape.net; prices vary)* provides PADI-certified courses and dives, including to the *L'Ocean* wreck sunk in the

EATING IN SAGRES: CLASSICS & CONTEMPORARY

A Sereia: Atop the fish market with a window looking down at the catch arriving, seafood doesn't get fresher. *8am-5pm Mon-Fri* €

Adega dos Arcos: Queue for a table at this fisher-run chargrill restaurant to choose the freshest catch from the counter. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€

Three Little Birds: Craft beers, quality brunches, stacked burgers and veggie options in a trendy surf-style bar and garden. *10am-11pm Thu-Mon* €€

Bossa Brew House: Microbrewery with a changing collection of beers, a tasty menu and occasional live music jams. *noon-11pm Mon-Sat* €€



Paraglider, Costa Vicentina

1759 battle of Lagos, its skeleton and cannons now a flourishing artificial reef. Coasteering between caves and cliffs is best experienced around Raposeira's rock formations and overlooked grottoes with Lagos-born Nelson, who knows the coast inside out and operates **Coastline Algarve** *(coastlinealgarve.com; from €55)*. For calmer cave and goose-barnacle-clad rock exploration, paddle away from Praia da Ingrina with **South Kayaks** *(southkayaks.com; from €30)*.

A Bird's-Eye View

Paragliding and ballooning

Soaring above swell and ocean-sculpted cliffs, the area's abundant birdlife observes the coast's best panoramas. Why not join them on your first paragliding foray? World Cup competitor **Nelson Pacheco** *(flytripalgarve.webnode.pt; from €100)* offers introductory, 10- to 15-minute tandem paragliding experiences around Praia da Cordoama alongside lengthier courses. Alternatively, **Algarve Balloon Rides** *(algarveballoons.com; adult/child €195/149)* take off from Lagos, allowing for a calmer aerial view of the west coast.

EATING ALONG THE COSTA VICENTINA: OUR PICKS

Os Amigos da Carrapateira: Unfussy, and community-driven, this cafe has a good choice of pastries, snacks and specials. *9am-4pm* €

Sítio da Pedralva: Worth the detour alone to see the restored typical white-washed village, before dining on local ingredients. *noon-2pm & 7-10pm* €€

O Sargo, Aljezur: The Japanese-fusion menu, paired with ocean views, makes this more than just another beach restaurant. *12.30-4pm & 6-9pm* €€

Altinho, Odeceixe: Climb the hill to this snug venue for friendly service, top share plates and delish desserts. *noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue* €€

COSTA VICENTINA'S MEMORABLE BEACH-BASED EXPERIENCES

Praia da Salema: See Early Cretaceous-period fossilised dinosaur footprints from the western staircase of this accessible beach.

Praia do Castelejo: Drive to the Cordoama Viewpoint for far-reaching panoramas before sinking into this slightly sheltered bay.

Praia da Bordeira: Cross cinematic rolling dunes to reach the shore of this vast, remote-feeling beach.

Praia da Amoreira: Follow the sandy estuary inland to spot frolicking river otters before sunbathing.

Praia de Odeceixe: SUP on the scenic Seixe River, which calmly wraps around the beach before meeting the ocean. **Beachfront Water Element** *(water-element.pt)* rents boards.

Moorish Monuments & Museums

Explore Aljezur's history

The Moors' legacy lives on in **Aljezur**, its Arabic-derived name meaning 'the island' due to the rivers once surrounding the small Moorish town. Visit the weekday-only **Museu Municipal** *(cm-aljezur.pt; €2.20)*, where one room spotlights Moorish Aljezur, before climbing the steep, narrow streets flanked by whitewashed houses to the preserved walls of the visitable 10th-century **Castelo**. A short drive in either direction will bring you to more open-air Moorish ruins: remains of **Ribat da Atalaia**'s Islamic fortress and **Povoado Islâmico de Pescadores**' cliff-topping fishing village.

Coastal Creativity

Craft classes and concerts

From venerable crafts to contemporary concerts, there are plenty of cultured ways to experience the Costa. To learn upcycled basketry with traditional and ancient weaving methods – the Algarve's dwarf palm tree is Europe's only native species – join one of Ysaline's periodic **weaving workshops** *(atelierbalance.net; prices vary)*, hosted in various pop-up locations. If pottery is more your passion, **Burros & Artes** *(burrosartes.com; from €60)* host traditional clay-shaping classes. After dark, **Salema Eco Camp** *(salemaecocamp.com)* is the place for summer parties and performances by the likes of Raposeira Dub Collective under a starlit sky.

Fishy Festivals & Potato Parties

Join the local celebrations

Much of day-to-day life here is defined by fishing and agriculture, from traditional farming – **ProactiveTur** *(proactivetur.pt)* can arrange farm experiences – to modern producers formulating Acayú vegan cheese and operating pick-your-own strawberry farms. But the death-defying *percebes* (goose barnacle) fishers, who hand chisel the crustaceans from wave-ravaged rocks, deserve the most credit. Their celebration comes at **Vila do Bispo**'s three-day **Festival do Perceve** *(cm-viladobispo.pt; June or September)*, demonstrating picking methods in barnacle-serving tents. November's **Aljezur Sweet Potato Festival** *(festival-batatadoce.cm-aljezur.pt)* is another calendar staple honouring the potatoes that legends say laced the potion that aided the Christians in conquering Aljezur.



INTO THE ALENTEJO...

The Rota Vicentina continues north across the Alentejo border to the **Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano** (p241), home to more paradisiacal beaches such as **Praia da Samoqueira** (p244; not to be confused with the Algarve's name-sharing rocky spot).

TOP EXPERIENCE

Costa Vicentina's Trails

The Costa Vicentina's primary draw for hikers is the **Rota Vicentina**, two 13-day trails traversing the Algarve and Alentejo sections of the natural park. But you don't need to pack an overnight bag for a get-away-from-it-all adventure thanks to the additional shorter and circular trails, both coastal and inland, and the two 'big ones' easily breaking down into day hikes.



IRYNA SAVINA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Rota Vicentina's Two Multi-Day Hikes

The Algarve's side of the mostly coast-hugging **Fisherman's Trail** (227km) has eight one-day sections between Odeceixe and Lagos. All excellent day hikes, the final leg between Luz and Lagos (p198) is the easiest intensity and public transport-wise. The moderate **Aljezur to Arrifana** (17km) trail, via Monte Clérigo Beach and **Ribat da Atalaia's** ruined Islamic fortress, also impresses and has weekday bus connections. The inland **Historic Way** (263km) contains five Algarvian sections, concluding in Sagres. **Carrapateira to Vila do Bispo** (21.4km) is a long, reasonably leisurely walk. For community-focused rambles, check for 'maintenance days' when volunteers join locals managing trail upkeep.

The One-Day Culture-to-Coast Walk

The roughly 11km circular **Pontal da Carrapateira Trail** *(pontaldacarrapateira.com)*, starting at **Museu do Mar e da Terra** (closed weekends), is an informatively signed, almost open-air museum. The route includes dune-backed Bordeira, Islamic fishing village ruins, glimpses of Zimbreirinha's working fishermen and compelling coastal views on a low-intensity clifftop hike or bike-friendly dirt road.

Animal-Accompanied Rural Rambles

Donkeys were once integral agricultural workers, but now, most live in sanctuaries. At **Burros & Artes** *(burrosartes.com; from €60)*, you can accompany their well-cared-for furry friends on a verdant valley walk.

TOP TIPS

- Wildflower-speckled spring is the best time to tackle the trails. Avoid summer.
- For baggage-free through-hikes, **Nature Trekks** *(naturetrekks.com)* provides luggage transfers.
- Pack plenty of water, especially in the low season when businesses may be shut; call restaurants or planned stops ahead to confirm.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan the QR code to see trails, guided tours and download maps on the Rota Vicentina website.

Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Faro p154

Hostellicious € Dorms and private rooms in a modern, squeaky-clean hostel with a well-equipped kitchen, 24-hour reception, and sociable dinners.

Lemon Tree Stay €€ Cosy rooms and a communal kitchen complemented by a sun-kissed terrace and lemon tree courtyard.

Glamping Camp Ilha de Faro €€ These colourful glamping yurts, complete with fridges and decks, offer easy beach access.

3HB Faro €€€ Modern, comfortable and upscale, this city-centre hideaway has an indulgent spa, rooftop pool and quality restaurant.

Estoi p159

Quinta dos Poetas €€ Rooms and apartments cocooned by greenery and soundtracked by birdsong with a pool, spacious grounds and restaurant.

Palácio de Estoi €€€ Elegant furnishings, frescoes and French-style gardens ensure this palatial historic hotel remains one of the Algarve's most memorable stays.

Olhão & the Ria Formosa p160

Stork Hostel € Bright dorms, private rooms and a rooftop terrace make this friendly hostel an excellent-value Olhão base.

Pure Formosa Concept Hotel €€ Contemporary and chic rooms and restaurant, with show-stealing Ria Formosa views from the rooftop pool and bar.

Barco Casa €€€ These handful of ecological houseboats permanently anchored off different islands are the ultimate Ria Formosa slumber, accessed by dinghy transfer at high tide.

Tavira p165

Bea's Bed & Breakfast € Centrally located opposite Jardim do Coreto, Bea's kind welcome and quaint rooms provide the perfect home away from home.

Quinta dos Perfumes €€€ A brief bike ride from Tavira, this fourth-generation family home hemmed by orange groves offers a city-yet-countryside stay with a serene saltwater pool.

São Paulo Boutique Hotel €€€ Five soothing suites, with a peaceful private patio and small pool, make this converted historic home a central bolthole.

Monte do Álamo €€€ Soak in the elevated views over Tavira and the Atlantic from the gorgeous pool or quiet gardens of this slightly inland, family-run farm with first-class hospitality.

Vila Real de Santo António p170

818 Centro Náutico €€ Simple but well-equipped bungalows on the edge of town with boast-worthy infinity pool views of the ocean, estuary and Spain beyond.

Grand House €€€ This lavishly renovated belle-époque-style building is all class, especially if you snag a suite. Guests have access to the hotel's separate pool beach club.

Alcoutim p173

Hotel D'Alcoutim €€ With two pools, quiet gardens and a laid-back restaurant, it's worth booking a riverside room to enjoy peaceful views.

Recanto d'Aldeia €€ At this pair of beautifully restored schist houses in Giões, a 20-minute drive inland, you'll experience the Algarve of old thanks to kind hosts and the village community.

Albufeira p174

Casa Malpique €€ Centrally located guesthouse with modern if compact rooms balanced by the rooftop pool and sun-kissed breakfast terrace.

Casa dos Arcos €€ *Azulejo*-lined staircases, shaded courtyards, and a mix of modern amenities and historic knickknacks make this 18th-century stately home a characterful, central stay.

Vila Origens €€€ An unexpected find in the Old Town, this luxurious, Moorish-inspired, adult-only hotel is personality-packed with patterns, tiles and cabanas around the inviting pool.

Homeboat Company €€€ These permanently docked premium houseboats in Albufeira Marinha, sleeping up to six, offer an alternative stay for those planning multiple boat trips.

Loulé p179

Loulé Coreto € Both a guesthouse and hostel, this central, family-run accommodation provides excellent value for money and a full communal kitchen.

Casa Brava €€€ Further inland, this serene, eco-conscious renovated farm blends original details and contemporary touches with organic breakfasts and a naturally filtered pool.

Silves p183

Casa Riad Yasmin €€ Inspired by Morocco's riads, this boutique hotel conceals chic rooms and a dreamy courtyard pool.

Silves History Guest House €€ Intimate guesthouse with soft furnishings, a fireside lounge and a swimming pool garden against the historic castle walls.

Quinta da Luz €€€ A beautifully renovated farmhouse, this adult-only boutique B&B is a short bike ride from town. It is surrounded by orange groves, a tempting pool and garden hammocks.

Monchique p189

Monchique Resort & Spa €€ Extensive, modern and health-focused, this suite hotel offers a range of 'all-inclusive' wellness activities, a quality spa and an indoor-outdoor pool.

VilaFoia €€ Elevated Atlantic views, a spectacular swimming pool and the wooded location make these suites with kitchenettes and standard rooms an idyllic mountain bolthole.

Carvoeiro & Ferragudo p190

O Castelo €€ Recently renovated rooms, most with balconies overlooking Carvoeiro beach, and decadent breakfast hampers are this castle-esque hotel's highlights.

Caneiros Luxury House & Suites €€€ Upscale ocean-view rooms and suites near Ferragudo with an attractive spa, two pools and a walkable beach club.

Portimão p192

Aloha Hostel € Renovated, well-kept and affordable city-centre dorms (including women only) with a well-equipped kitchen.

Mirachoro Praia da Rocha €€ Apartment hotel with pool access and a complimentary shuttle service benefiting from a quieter location between the beach and downtown.

Lagos p194

Olive Hostel € Laid-back dorms and private rooms with colourful decor, welcoming hosts and a sociable terrace.

Monte da Casteleja €€ Experience Lagos' laid-back side at this working farm and vineyard with plenty of quiet, shaded corners and rustic, cosy rooms.

Hotel Lagosmar €€ Central family-operated hotel with clean yet somewhat old-school rooms, reflected in the reasonable prices.

Lagos Avenida Hotel €€€ The rooftop infinity pool overlooking the marina and accoladed restaurant are the stars of this stylish and sophisticated hotel.

Costa Vicentina p199

Sol Mar € Simple rooms and a friendly welcome await at this family-run guesthouse popular with hikers.

Aldeia da Pedralva €€ Almost once abandoned, this rural village has been given a new lease of life as a diffused hotel offering rustic whitewashed home rentals in a typically Algarvian setting.

Monte João Roupeiro €€ Bucolic stay with spacious grounds, a pool, delicious breakfasts on the terrace, and wooden-beamed rooms.

Sagres p202

International Surf School € Friendly hostel with private rooms, triple dorms and quality breakfasts offering surf packages or simply a place to slow down.

Pontalaia €€ Quiet and spacious self-catering apartment hotel centred around a communal pool.



IRINASEN/GETTY IMAGES ©

Sagres (p202)



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Above: Castelo de Beja (p253); Right: Praça do Giraldo (p219), Évora

The Alentejo



RURAL HEARTLAND AND ANCIENT CULTURE

Welcome to Portugal's largest region, where dolmens dot the endless countryside, trails wind toward unspoiled beaches and creativity sparks from age-old workshops.

One has to admire the patience of the *alentejanos*. There's a saying here: if you plant a cork tree, you're thinking about your grandchildren. And this rings true today. It takes 25 years to grow a single *sobreiro* and another decade for it to be ready to harvest the first layer of cork. Everything takes its time here, from the handmade textiles and ceramics crafted by local artisans to the wine produced in clay amphorae following ancient Roman traditions. This is slow living at its core, and those craving it have left the city behind in exchange for a peaceful plot of land here.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

The Alentejo is also the backbone of Portugal's gastronomy: the birthplace of Delta coffee, the country's biggest wine producer, and the grazing fields of the Iberian black pig. Having lost much of its population over the years, this fruitful region is now attracting a younger generation eager to become self-sustainable.

As you head east and south from Lisbon, the change of scenery strikes you. You'll see resourceful storks nesting atop utility poles, bare red-ochre trunks from the most recent cork harvest, and endless plantations of vines and olive trees. At the heart of it all is the historic capital of Évora with its Roman heritage. Up north, medieval castles and mountains await, while river dams and farmlands fill the centre and the south. And who can forget the west? Home to some of the wildest beaches in the country and an iconic coastal trail.

THE MAIN AREAS

ÉVORA
Alentejo's historic capital.
p214

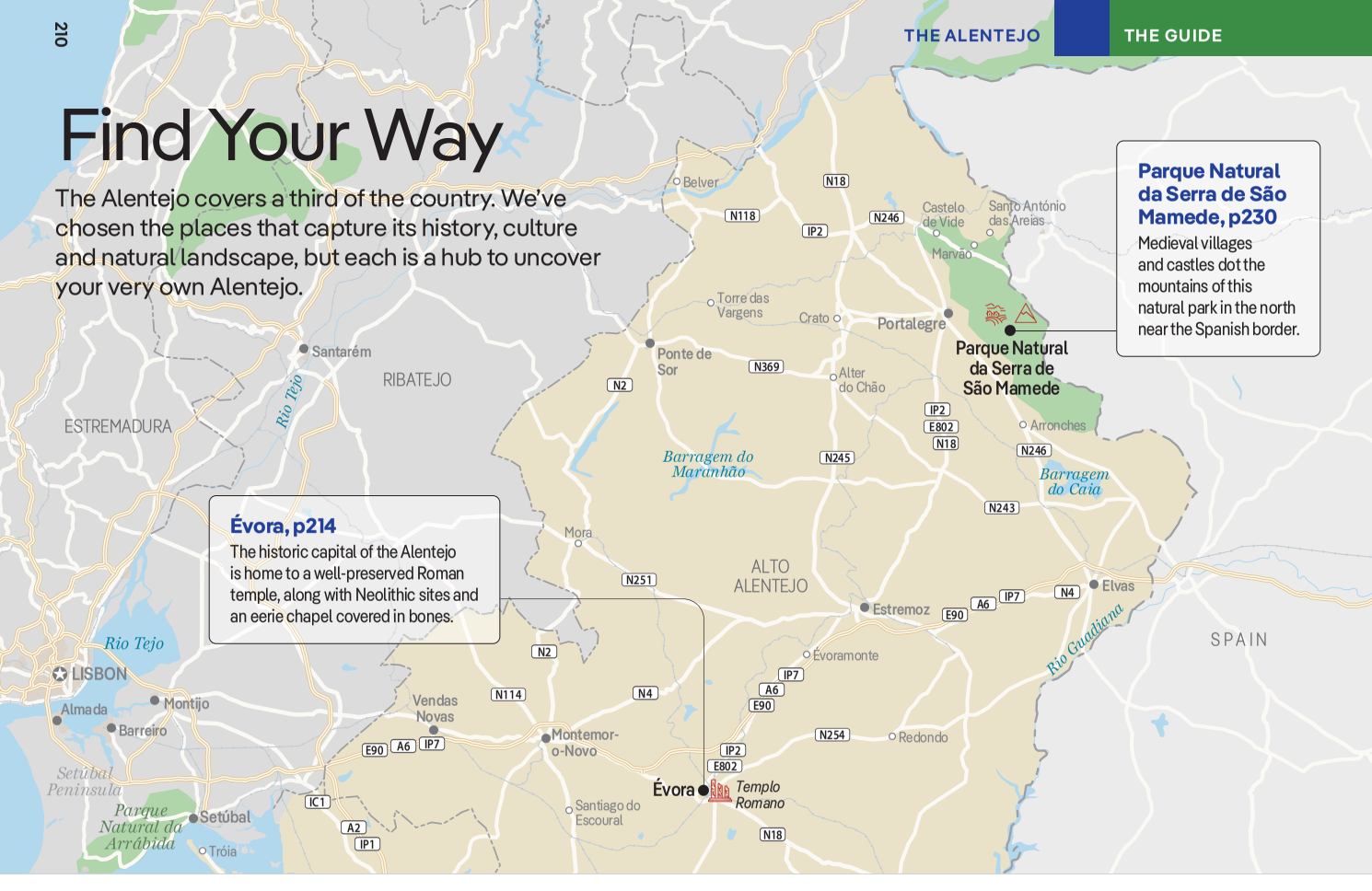
PARQUE NATURAL DA SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE
Fortified towns and mountain views.
p230

VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES
The wild coastline.
p239

BEJA
Islamic gems, ancient wine and farmlands.
p249

Find Your Way

The Alentejo covers a third of the country. We've chosen the places that capture its history, culture and natural landscape, but each is a hub to uncover your very own Alentejo.





Vila Nova de Milfontes, p239
This port on the Alentejo coast is the perfect jumping-off point to explore the region's wildest beaches, follow its scenic nature trails or chase the waves.

Beja, p249
Retrace the region's Islamic past and savour the flavours of the countryside, including artisanal cheeses, Iberian black pig and ancient wines.

CAR
Hitting the road is the best way to explore the Alentejo. This way, you can discover its secluded beaches and castles, and easily tour the wineries scattered across the countryside. Free parking is available in most towns.

BUS
Without a car, buses are best for reaching smaller towns, like Mértola or Marvão. Rodoviária do Alentejo covers these, while Rede Expressos and FlixBus connect the big cities and the coast, departing from Lisbon, Évora and the Algarve.

TRAIN
A train takes you from Sete Rios railway station in Lisbon to the region's main hubs: Évora and Beja. The slow-paced journey invites you to take in the rows of cork trees and olive groves along the way.

Plan Your Time

The Alentejo is a place to drift. You can wander through its wild coast, stopping for a swim in the sea, or venture inland in search of ancient sites, wineries and crafty towns.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Sé (p216), Évora

If You Only Do One Thing

- Head straight to **Évora** (p214) to delve into Alentejo's historical roots. Treat yourself to a pastry at **Pastelaria Violeta** (p218) before setting off on a walking tour to take in the city's **hidden art gems** (p219) and exploring ancient monuments like the **Roman temple** (p214) and the **Gothic cathedral** (p216).

- Spend the afternoon at the **Igreja de São Francisco** (p216) for an insight into how 17th-century Franciscan monks solved the problem of the town's overflowing graveyards. For something less chilling, you can explore the spectacular **megalithic sites** (p216) or tour the **farms and wineries** (p220) on the outskirts of town. Then return to the city to grab dinner at **Taberna Sal Grosso** (p216).

Seasonal Highlights

Summers in the Alentejo can be *hot*. Luckily, you can always retreat to the beach. Spring and autumn are ideal for hiking and wine tastings.

FEBRUARY

In late February, dozens of local cheesemakers showcase their produce at the **Feira do Queijo do Alentejo** in Serpa.

MARCH

The mild temperatures and blooming fields make this the perfect month for **hiking** the Alentejo trails.

JUNE

At the end of June, Évora throws a huge party at Rossio de São Brás with street food and live gigs to celebrate **Feira de São João**.

Weekend Getaway

- After exploring **Évora** (p214), head south towards the **Alqueva** (p224) and settle in at one of the villages along the lake, such as **Monsaraz** (p225). Take your time wandering through this whitewashed village, stopping to peek at the hand-woven blankets produced at Fabricaal. Afterwards, join a boat tour or enjoy a swim at one of the nearby **river beaches** (p225).

- Take in the sunset from one of Monsaraz's rooftops like the **Ervideira wine shop** (p225). At night, find an **observatory** (p225) to gaze at the stars as this is a certified Starlight Tourism Destination. Don't leave without sampling a glass of **wine or gin** (p226) from one of the nearby producers.

Slow-Paced Adventure

- Start up north with a visit to the medieval villages of Castelo de Vide and Marvão set amid the lush **Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede** (p230) and admire the intricate tapestries of **Portalegre** (p234). Then make your way to **Elvas** (p235), a fortified city near the Spanish border. Spend a day here and then drive inland to tour the marble towns of **Vila Viçosa** (p222) and **Estremoz** (p223) and the traditional rug shops of **Arraiolos** (p226).

- Do an overnight in **Évora** (p214) and then continue south until you reach the **Alqueva** (p224). Stop by **Mértola** (p252) to admire its Islamic ruins before setting off to **Vila Nova de Milfontes** (p239) to take in the coast.

JULY

Alentejo rolls into summer with people hitting the beaches, and events like the **Marvão Music Festival** or **Festival Músicas do Mundo**.

SEPTEMBER

Grape harvesting is in full swing, with many wineries inviting visitors to join the action.

OCTOBER

It's time to **handpick olives** in the countryside or **spot flamingos** migrating to the Península de Tróia .

NOVEMBER

On the second weekend of November, Marvão comes alive with a **chestnut festival**, which includes samples of the season's new wine.

Évora



ROMAN HERITAGE | STARGAZING | ANCIENT CRAFTS

GETTING AROUND

You can tackle the city centre on foot, but you'll need to hire a car or book a tour to explore the nearby megalithic sites and vineyards. Taxis hang around the train station and Praça do Giraldo, but ridesharing apps are equally popular. It's also possible to cycle through the city's surroundings following the Ecopista de Évora (p220). Companies like Portugal Best Cycling and Galácio Bike offer bike rentals. If you are driving, it's best to leave your car outside the city walls as some streets can be narrow or closed to traffic.

TOP TIP

In summer, Évora comes alive with several festivities, like the Feira de São João in late June. You can find the latest events by checking Évora's cultural program at facebook.com/AgendaCulturalEvora.

Three rivers flow through the Alentejo: the Tejo, the Sado and the Guadiana. At the heart of their confluence is Évora. The city's strategic position has made it a coveted spot for communities since prehistoric times.

During the Neolithic period, people erected menhirs and dolmens across Évora's hills. Centuries later, the Romans made Évora – or Ebora Liberalitas Julias, as they called it – part of their vast empire. We can thank them for introducing winemaking and creating the original roads to nearby villages. The maze of streets in Évora's Mouraria neighbourhood is one of the few lasting traces of the Moors' occupation, while the medieval palaces remind us of a time when the city was a retreat for the Portuguese crown.

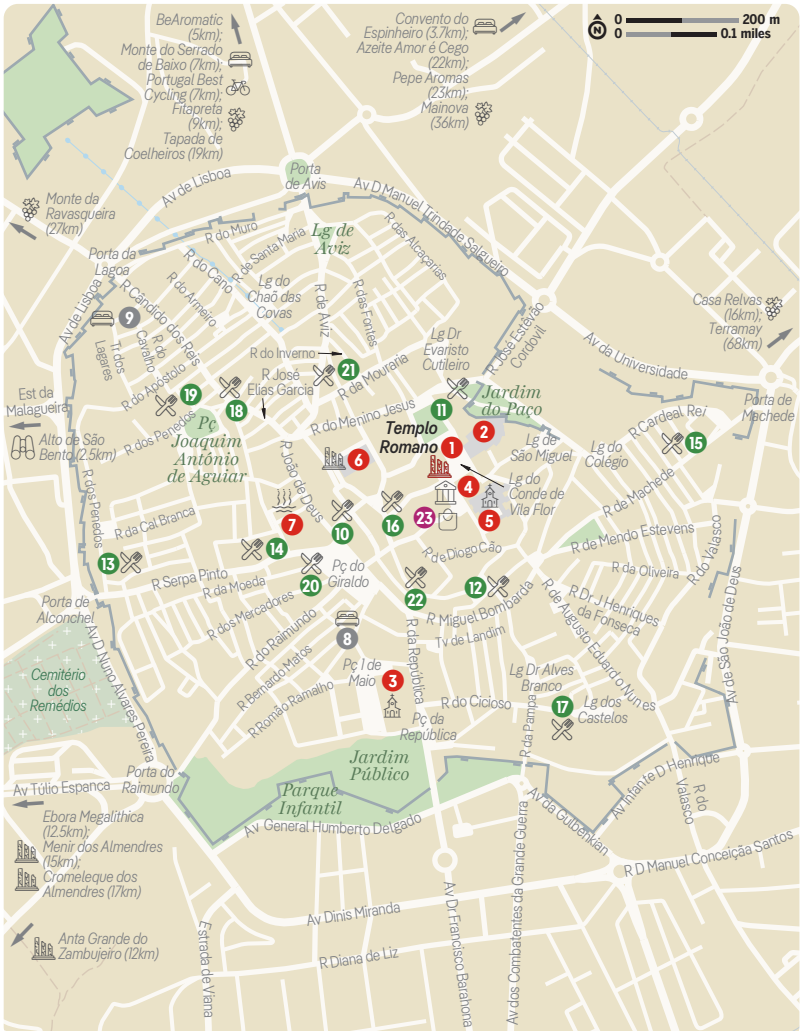
It's these historical chapters that have made Évora a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But the capital of the Alentejo also has a young soul thanks to its vibrant student community, modern art galleries and creative culinary scene.

Roman Ruins & Iconic Churches

Tracking gems of the past

Évora's most iconic site is the **Templo Romano**. This former Roman temple dates back to the 1st century BCE. Curiously, it only survived because it was a makeshift butcher in medieval times. Traces of the Romans are also visible in the arch at **Rua de Dona Isabel** and underneath the town hall, where you'll find a set of **Termas Romanas (thermal baths)**. If you feel like experiencing a Roman-style bath, the **In Acqua Veritas** *(inacquaveritas.com; from €43)* spa has carefully recreated a circuit featuring a tepid, hot and cold plunge pool.

The temple sits on Largo do Conde de Vila Flor, from which you can access the **Convento dos Lóios** *(adult/child €5/free)*, a striking 15th-century church adorned with blue-and-white tiles (closed Monday and Tuesday). To learn more about the region's history and archaeological finds, including Roman



HIGHLIGHTS
1. Templo Romano

SIGHTS
2. Convento dos Lóios
3. Igreja de São Francisco
4. Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáculo
5. Sé
6. Termas Romanas

ACTIVITIES
7. In Acqua Veritas

SLEEPING
8. Heaven Inn Évora Hostel
9. Hotel Albergaria do Calvario

EATING
10. Café Arcada
11. Cavalariça
12. Do Largo
13. Dom Joaquim
14. Hibrido
15. O Combinado
16. Origens
17. Pastelaria Conventual Pão de Rala
18. Pastelaria Violeta
19. Restaurante O Fialho
20. Taberna Sal Grosso
21. Taberna Típica Quarta-Feira
22. Tua Madre

SHOPPING
23. O Cesto

THE PORTUGUESE INQUISITION

Thousands of people were persecuted during the Portuguese Inquisition, which began in 1536. King Manuel I had already signed an order forcing all Jews to convert to Catholicism or leave Portugal. Those who couldn't leave were forcefully baptised, turning into the so-called New Christians. However, after the Inquisition, these people became the main target as they were suspected of practising Judaism in secret. For the first few years, the Inquisition Court functioned in Évora, where the royal family was based. Crowds gathered at Praça do Giraldo for the public penance rituals known as *autos-da-fé*. In 2016, a memorial was added here to honour the victims of this tragic chapter.

sculptures, you can pop by the **Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáculo** *(adult/child €8/free)* on the same square (closed Monday).

A short walk from here is the **Sé** *(€4-5),* a striking Gothic cathedral providing incredible views of the town from its rooftop. Another church worth visiting is the **Igreja de São Francisco**. You can access the church for free, but it's worth paying a little extra (adult/child €6/free) to tour its eerie chapel covered with thousands of bones.

Megalithic Évora

Capture prehistoric wonders

There are megalithic sites dotted all over the Alentejo, yet it's in Évora that you'll find the earliest traces of the Neolithic Age. The city was an ideal settlement for these early communities thanks to its connection to the region's main watercourses and the abundance of granite outcrops.

About 4km northwest of the city centre is the **Alto de São Bento**, once one of the largest prehistoric villages in the area. Little remains from that era, but the hill is still a beloved spot for residents who head here to witness the sunset.

Other iconic sites can be found near Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe, a 30-minute drive from Évora. This includes the most famous monument in the city's megalithic circuit, the **Cromeleque dos Almendres**. It's roughly 2000 years older than the famous Stonehenge, yet it receives way fewer visitors. Historians think this area might have been the gathering place of its time, much like our present plazas. The nearly one hundred stones are actually not placed in a circle, like most cromlechs, but in a horseshoe shape. While there are a few informative plaques nearby, it's best to book a guided tour for some historical background.

Ebora Megalithica *(eboramegalithica.com; €30)* provides regular tours with local archaeologists and workshops on prehistoric crafts. The meeting point is the Centro Interpretativo dos Almendres, but hotel pick-ups can also be arranged. The Cromeleque is the first stop, followed by the **Menir dos Almendres**. This standalone menhir is said to indicate

EATING IN ÉVORA: OUR PICKS

Tua Madre: Alentejo delicacies are paired with homemade pasta in this Italian-Portuguese hybrid. *1-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sun* €€

Taberna Sal Grosso: Choose from a range of tasty *petiscos* on the chalkboard of this lively *tasca* (tavern). *noon-4pm & 7-11pm* €€

Hibrido: Old Portuguese recipes have been reinterpreted into a modern fusion of dishes. *7-10pm Tue-Fri, 12.30-3pm & 7-10pm Sat* €€

Cavalariça: Ingredients from across Portugal get a contemporary twist at this colourful spot overlooking Cadaval Palace. *1-2.30pm & 7-10pm* €€

O Combinado: Take advantage of the daily menu or order à la carte at this affordable restaurant. *noon-3.15pm & 7-10.15pm Thu-Mon* €€

Dom Joaquim: Local pork, wines and delicious traditional convent pastries are the highlights here. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat* €€

Taberna Típica Quarta-Feira: There's no menu here, instead, let the chef pleasantly surprise you. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Tue-Sat* €€€

Restaurante O Fialho: This family-run restaurant has been serving classic Alentejo dishes since 1986. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sun* €€€



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Alto de São Bento

the sunrise during the summer solstice. Finally, there's the **Anta Grande do Zambujeiro**, a megalithic burial chamber uncovered only in the 1960s. Relics found here are now on display at the **Museu Nacional Frei Manuel do Cenáculo**.

Feasting on Regional Delicacies

Must-try dishes and recipes

Fresh ingredients are always within hand's reach in the Alentejo. After all, this is a region of shepherds, farmers and bakers. In Évora, history isn't just in the city's buildings, but also in the century-old recipes handed down over generations.

Pork, lamb, bread and olive oil are the top ingredients used in the Alentejo. A quintessential dish is the *açorda à Alentejana*, a bread soup topped with garlic, poached eggs and a dash of coriander or pennyroyal. Other famous soups include the *sopa de cação* (dogfish soup) and the *gaspacho alentejano*. Unlike the Spanish version, this one is often served with ice cubes and does not require blending. It is even better when paired with tiny fried mackerel. *Porco preto* (black pig) is another prime delicacy. You'll find it in a variety of cuts including *secretos* (behind the shoulder) and *lagartos* (rib-loin strip). It is slightly fatter than your average pork but tastes more like beef.

WHAT IS PORCO PRETO?

The Iberian black pig is a prime breed found across Portugal and Spain. In the Alentejo, these pigs graze freely in the *montado* (oak tree fields) for 18 to 24 months, mainly feeding on acorns. It's this special diet that contributes to the meat's marbled texture and juicy flavour. Try sampling a *porco preto* ham or sausage or order one of the many fresh cuts featured across the region's restaurants. If you're cooking it at home, you don't need much seasoning, but it's worth grilling it for the best tasting experience.

WALKING WITH THE PIGS

If you fancy seeing a black pig or Alentejo pig *(porco Alentejano)* in person, head down to **Ourique** (p257), where most farmers are based. Private tours can be arranged to local properties for a small fee.

ALENTEJO'S BELOVED GRAPES



António Maçanita and **Alexandra Leroy** are reinstating forgotten grape varieties at Fitapreta *(p221; @fitapreta.vinhoswinery)*

Alentejo's most famous red grapes are Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet, Trincadeira and Antão Vaz, while Arinto and Roupeiro are used for the whites. However, some Alentejo grapes are hidden in the old vineyards, a mixture of grape varieties, some of which have practically been lost, such as:

Reds Moreto (produces wines with black fruit aromas and woodland notes), Castelão (fruity, light wines) and Tinta Carvalha (known for its freshness and purity).

Whites Alicante Branco (white-fleshed fruit aromas and good depth) and Trincadeira das Pratas (an intense fresh nose and citrus notes).



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Tua Madre (p216)

A popular side dish is *migas*, bits of bread mashed with garlic, olive oil and other ingredients such as pork fat or vegetables. Dom Joaquim (p216) serves a delicious version of this with asparagus to accompany one of their black pork dishes.

For something sweet, keep an eye out for *queijada de Évora*, small cheese tarts sold across the city's cafes, such as **Café Arcada** or **Pastelaria Violeta**. Other sweet treats worth trying include *pão de rala* and *encharcada*, both made with a base of eggs, almonds and sugar. **Pastelaria Conventual Pão de Rala** is the best place to sample these.

If you fancy learning the basics of Alentejo cuisine with a local chef yourself, sign up for a workshop at the **Origens restaurant** *(origensrestaurante.com; €70)*. Chef Gonçalo Queiroz and his team organise regional cooking workshops with dinner for a minimum of two people.

EATING IN ÉVORA: COFFEE & PASTRIES

Pastelaria Conventual Pão de Rala: Conventual sweets fill the counter of this traditional bakery. *8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun* €

Café Arcada: Overlooking Praça do Giraldo, this is a great spot to sample *queijadas de Évora. 8am-8pm Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, to 6pm Sun* €

Do Largo: Organic and seasonal ingredients make up the menu at this brunch staple. *9.30am-4pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun* €

Pastelaria Violeta: This century-old pastry shop makes some of the best sweets in town, including Christmas cakes. *7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat* €

EXPLORING ÉVORA'S ART GEMS

Wander through the streets of Évora in search of frescoes, Renaissance architecture and handmade crafts.

START	END	LENGTH
Praça do Giraldo	Jardim Público de Évora	2.2km; 2½ hours

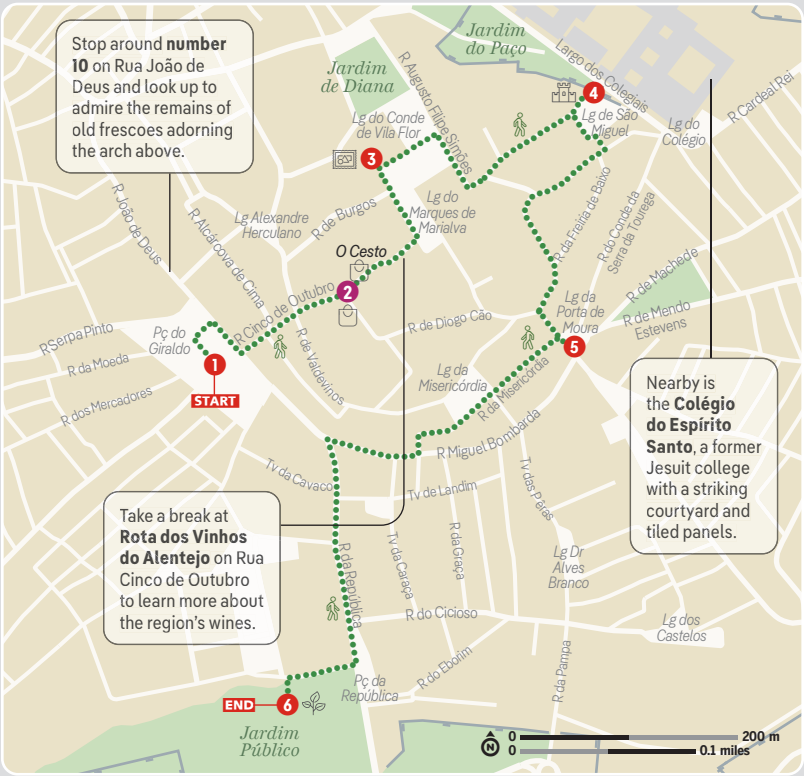
From 1 **Praça do Giraldo**, set off on a walking tour of Évora's art gems. Spend a while admiring the neoclassical buildings here before stepping into 2 **Rua Cinco de Outubro**, a street lined with craft shops like O Cesto.

Next, make your way to Largo do Conde de Vila Flor, where you'll find the free 3 **Centro de Arte e Cultura**. Check out the latest contemporary art exhibit on the top floors and follow the arrows to the Gabinete do Inquisidor to capture the stunning painted ceiling. Before you leave, drop by the garden downstairs, which hides a fresco mural filled with creatures like a mermaid, a peacock and a dragon.

Continue your tour at the 4 **Paço de São Miguel**, opposite Évora's cathedral. Each room of this 15th-century palace is decorated with stunning fresco ceilings, period furniture and colourful tiles.

Afterwards, walk around the back of the cathedral towards the 5 **Largo da Porta de Moura**. Wealthy families used to live on this square, and you can still spot some of their residences, including the Casa Cordovil.

From here, follow Rua da Misericórdia and walk down to the 6 **Jardim Público**. Inside, look for the Palácio Dom Manuel, a palace with Neo-Moorish motifs and the Ruínas Fingidas, fake ruins made with remains of other city buildings.





HARVESTING SEASONS

Cork: Around June, cork is carefully stripped off oak trees with an axe. The year of harvest is then painted on the tree's trunk.

Prickly pears: August is peak season to harvest prickly pears. This is done during the evenings to avoid the heat and the spontaneous release of spikes.

Grapes: From late August to September, the grape harvest begins. Many wineries offer harvest programs, allowing you to handpick grapes and join the traditional stomping.

Olives: October is the ideal season to harvest the Alentejo's olives. Visitors are invited to see the milling process and taste freshly made olive oil.

Chasing Adventure

Breathtaking views and trails

Évora is home to a series of walking and cycling trails collectively known as **Percursos Ambientais** *(evora.net/percursos)*. These itineraries first emerged in 2005 and are still growing today. The old railway line that once connected Évora to Mora has transformed into a cycling route. Starting at Rua de Timor, the **Ecopista de Évora** stretches for around 21km, crossing the city's outskirts and ending near the medieval manor house Solar da Sempre Noiva in Arraiolos.

The **Percursos de Monfurado** takes you along the west of the city, passing through megalithic sites (p216) and small villages, while the **Percurso da Água da Prata** follows a section of Évora's 16th-century aqueduct. This 8km-route passes near the **Alto de São Bento** (p216) and features stunning panoramic views along the way. Adventurous folks will enjoy the **Percursos do Alto de São Bento**, a trail with a steep terrain ideal for downhill mountain biking.

Portugal Best Cycling *(portugalbestcycling.com; per day from €16)* rents bikes and can also arrange half-day to one-day tours that cover many of these routes, as well as trips around the whole Alentejo region.

If you're looking for a longer hike, you can take on a section of the **Santiago pilgrimage route** *(caminhosdesantiagoalentejoribatejo.pt)*. The Caminho Nascente covers part of Évora, connecting you to towns such as Viana do Alentejo (p227) to the south and Estremoz (p223) to the north.

For adventure from a different angle, slowly glide above Évora in a hot-air balloon or put your adrenaline to the test with a skydiving experience. Several companies offer balloon rides, including **Balonissimo** *(balonissimo.com; from €180)* and **Up Alentejo** *(upalentejo.pt; from €170)*. For tandem jumps, reach out to **Sky Dive Portugal** *(skydiveportugal.pt; from €179)*, located at the Aeródromo de Évora.

The Rural Lifestyle

Farm tours and harvest seasons

The Alentejo has long been considered Portugal's breadbasket, a nickname that gained even more significance during the Campanha do Trigo, a state-sponsored wheat campaign imposed during the country's dictatorship era. Those golden wheat fields are still part of the landscape, but olive groves and vineyards are plentiful.

About a 25-minute drive from Évora is the **Azeite Amor é Cego** *(azeiteamorecego.pt; €35)*, a small olive oil production farm run by João Rosado. Maths teacher by day, João has made it his mission to preserve his grandad's land and make the best olive oil despite only having a little more than 200 trees – a small portion compared to Alentejo's vast crops. He offers olive oil tastings and regional lunches at his property.



JOAO MANITA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Ecopista de Évora

Cork is another essential resource in the Alentejo and one of Portugal's biggest exports. This sustainable material is harvested from the *sobreiro* (cork oak trees) and used to produce construction materials, crafts and, of course, the traditional wine stoppers. It takes 25 years for a tree to produce cork, and from there, it can only be collected every eight to 10 years.

The organic farm **Pepe Aromas** *(pepearomas.com; €24.60)* in Vale do Pereiro explains the cork transformation process quite well during their guided tours along an oak forest. But it's their colourful 20-hectare prickly pear plantation that draws the most attention. At the end, guests are invited to visit the factory and taste the tropical cactus fruit.

If you like tea and spices, don't miss **BeAromatic** *(bearomatic.com; €30)*, an organic farm along the Ecopista de Évora working with dried herbs typical from the Alentejo. A bit further is the **Tapada de Coelheiros** *(coelheiros.pt; from €23)*, where you can drive amid walnut trees looking for deer, and **Terramay** *(terramay.com; from €60)*, a picturesque farm working with regenerative agriculture.

BEST WINERIES NEAR ÉVORA

Fitapreta: *(antoniomacanita.com; from €30)* Winemaker António Maçanita is spurring a change in the Alentejo wine world by bringing back long-lost grapes like Tamarez and Alicante-Branco.

Casa Relvas: *(casarelvas.pt; from €20)* The vines from the Relvas family are planted across three estates. Close to Évora, the granite soils stand out, resulting in fruity, fresher wines.

Mainova: *(mainova.pt; from €40)* Twenty hectares filled with Portuguese grapes, with a partially organic production.

Monte da Ravasqueira: *(ravasqueira.com; from €14.50)* Dating back to 1943, this estate is known for its Vinha das Romãs, a single-vineyard wine named after the pomegranate orchard that once stood here.

Beyond Évora



Venture beyond the walls of Évora to discover Alentejo's crafty villages, swim in river beaches and gaze at the stars.

Places

Vila Viçosa p222
Estremoz p223
The Alqueva p224
São Pedro do Corval p226
Arraiolos p226
Viana do Alentejo p227

GETTING AROUND

There are bus connections from Évora to major towns like Vila Viçosa and Estremoz, with fewer options on weekends. Buses depart from the Central de Camionagem to the west of the city. Tickets can be bought on-site for Rodoviária do Alentejo or online for Rede Expressos buses. Many tour companies also have their headquarters in town. São Pedro do Corval, Arraiolos and the villages around the Alqueva are easier to reach by car.

Évora's surroundings offer you a chance to dive deep into the region's artistic heritage. Towns like Arraiolos, Estremoz and São Pedro do Corval have been producing handmade crafts like ceramics and textiles for centuries, and you can still see artisans at work here today. Marble is also a prominent feature on the footpaths and buildings in this area, especially near Vila Viçosa, where you'll find some of Portugal's main quarries. But perhaps the most iconic site here is the Barragem de Alqueva. Open in 2002, this dam changed Alentejo's landscape forever and created Europe's largest artificial lake. Call in to visit the surrounding castles and dip your toes in its idyllic river beaches.

Vila Viçosa

TIME FROM ÉVORA: **45 MINS**

The marble route

The quarries of Central Alentejo have made a strong impact on the architecture of the surrounding towns. Start in Vila Viçosa and admire the marble columns of the **Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Conceição** *(free)* within the castle walls. Then, walk down to Praça da República, stopping to capture the rows of orange trees and the statue of Florbela Espanca before making your way to **Terreiro do Paço**. This illustrious square is home to the **Paço Ducal** *(fcbraganca.pt; €8)*, one of the most iconic palaces in Portugal (it's closed on Mondays and on Tuesday mornings). The square leading up to the entrance is paved with white marble stones, and even the palace walls use this regional resource. Tours run every hour and are mostly available in Portuguese, but the guard is usually happy to translate his comments into English.

The **Rota do Mármore** *(rotadomarmoreae.com; from €30)* offers a walking tour around the city and other marble towns like Estremoz. Don't miss the Marble Tour, which includes a visit to a local quarry and an artisanal workshop where marble is still carved by hand.



TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Vila Viçosa

Estremoz

TIME FROM ÉVORA: **40 MINS**

Iconic sites and market day

An ideal tour of Estremoz begins in **Rossio**, the town's central square. It's worth coming on a Saturday morning to catch the weekly market. The free car parking fills up quickly as vendors gather around the surrounding streets to sell anything from fresh produce to leather goods and cork items. From here, it's a short walk to the **Museu Berardo** *(€3.50)*, which holds one of the largest private tile collections in Portugal (closed Monday). After browsing the exhibit, walk up the hill towards the **Estremoz Castle** to admire its bright marble tower. The building has been converted into a hotel, but visitors are welcome to climb up the tower for free.

The UNESCO figurines

Estremoz is known for its colourful ceramic figurines called *bonecos de Estremoz*. These have been on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list since 2017. The **Museu Municipal** *(€1.50)* near the castle traces the origins of this craft, while the **Centro Interpretativo do Boneco de Estremoz** *(€1.50)* focuses on more modern interpretations (both are closed Monday). You can buy a couple of these figurines here, but if you want a wider choice, you're best off visiting a local atelier like **Irmãs Flores** (closed Sunday).

FLORBELA ESPANCA

Born in Vila Viçosa, Florbela Espanca (1894–1930) was a Portuguese poet and one of the first outspoken feminists in Portugal. At eight years old, she began writing her first poems like 'A Vida e a Morte' (Life and Death), revealing a sombre theme she would later be known for. Florbela lived most of her short life in the Alentejo, where she worked as a teacher and journalist. Her troubled relationship with her father and later the death of her brother influenced her work and sadly contributed to her death by suicide. But she stays in our memories through poems like 'Ser Poeta' (Being a Poet), a classic covered by the band Trovante in 1987.

EATING NEAR ÉVORA: OUR PICKS

Venda Azul: Waiters rush between tables with trays of Alentejo pork at this friendly restaurant in Estremoz. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* **€€**

A Ribeira: The fried eel and the asparagus *migas* are a must-try at this lively tavern near Montemor-o-Novo. *noon-3pm Tue-Sun, plus 7pm-10pm Fri & Sat* **€**

A Tasca do Gigante: For a round of regional *petiscos* and wine, head to this cosy spot in Mora. *noon-3pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sat* **€€**

Craft BBS: Delicious burgers paired with local craft beer are the highlight at this informal pub in Vila Viçosa. *11am-midnight* **€**

THE ALQUEVA IN NUMBERS

The 250-sq-km Alqueva reservoir covers land in both Portugal and Spain. In 1968 the two countries signed a deal to allow both the use of the river waters. Work on the dam began in 1976 and, after several interruptions, was finished in 2002. More than 20 years on, the Alqueva supplies water to 200,000 residents and can irrigate more than 1000 sq km. Nearly €2.4 billion has gone into this project since its construction.

The **Museu da Luz** *(museudaluz.org.pt)* tells the story of one of the towns submerged by the dam. Leading up to the event, houses were ripped apart and residents were reallocated to a new village nearby, built from scratch. Everything was replicated including the local church.



ANALISSGADGETS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Milky Way over the Alqueva

On the wine trail

A car (or a bike) gives you the freedom to explore the surrounding vineyards. Popular wineries nearby include the **João Portugal Ramos** *(jportugalramos.com)*, a large group with vineyards across the country, as well as **Adega Monte Branco** *(adegamontebranco.com)* and **Herdade dos Outeiros Altos** *(herdadedosouteirosaltos.pt)*, which produces one of Alentejo's first organic wines. Meanwhile, **Tiago Cabaço** *(tiagocabacowinery.com)* is part of a new generation of winemakers highlighting monovarietal wines. If you'd rather stick to the town, you can always pop by **Howard's Folly** *(howardsfollywine.com)*, an urban winery founded by a businessman from Yorkshire with a keen appreciation for Alentejo wine. However, its main vineyard is in Portalegre within the Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede. Prices for wine tastings in either of these vary but start at around €20.

The Alqueva

TIME FROM ÉVORA: 1 HR

Above the clouds

Soaring above the Alqueva is the best way to feel the immensity of this iconic artificial lake in the east of the Alentejo. **Up Alentejo** *(upalentejo.pt)* and **Roteiro do Alqueva** *(roteirodoalqueva.com)* organise balloon rides around the area (from €170). Flights take place at sunrise or sunset, depending on the season. Roteiro do Alqueva is also a great source for finding other types of tours, as well as hotels and restaurants near the reservoir. If you're driving, be sure to stop by the **Miradouro do Monte** on the way for an incredible shot of the dam.

Stargazing sessions

At night, your eyes will inevitably turn to the stars. The lack of light pollution has made this area one of Europe's first Starlight Tourism Destinations. Two observatories provide regular

stargazing sessions (from €20) in Portuguese and English. Near Monsaraz is the **Observatório do Lago Alqueva** *(olago alqueva.pt; closed Sunday)*. Its privileged location allows you to capture the town's hilltop castle and the stars in a single shot. It also hosts astronomy and astrophotography classes. Meanwhile, the **Dark Sky Alqueva** *(darkskyalqueva.com; closed Sunday & Monday)* is hidden further inland in Cumeada, where there's literally nothing in front of you except stars. Dark Sky has partnered with other local businesses, allowing you to combine your session with a glass of gin or wine, or a canoe ride.

Along the margins

More than a resource, the Alqueva has become a haven for water activities. Its banks have slowly been adapted into river beaches that are still somewhat of a secret. Unlike the cold waters of the Atlantic, the temperatures here can reach up to 30°C. **Praia Fluvial da Amieira**, **Praia Fluvial de Monsaraz** (accessible for people with disabilities), **Praia de Azenhas d'El Rei** and **Praia Fluvial de Mourão** are some of the best beaches in the area, all of which offer facilities such as cafes and changing rooms. **Praia do Lago** is the most recent addition, added in 2024.

For water sports, head to the **Centro Naútico de Monsaraz** *(centronauticomonsaraz.pt)* or the **Amieira Marina** *(amieiramarina.com)*, where you can practise stand-up paddleboarding, waterskiing and canoeing. Paddling at night and gazing at the stars is one of the best experiences you can have here. **Alentejo Break** *(alentejobreak.com; adult/child €40/20)* combines these trips with a picnic.

If you want to try your hand at fishing, several companies offer half-day and full-day trips. Black bass, pike-perch and barbel are a few species you might catch.

Alternatively, you can book a trip on the Dutch sailboat **Sem-Fim** *(sem-fim.com; from €10)* or enjoy the sunset on a small trawler with **Alqueva Tours** *(alquevatours.com; €20)*. You don't even have to leave the dam at the end of the day. There are **houseboats** available at the Amieira marina that can take two to 12 people.

Castle views and handmade rugs

The Alqueva is dotted with medieval villages and castles, and its crowning glory is **Monsaraz**. This fortified town has been considered one of Portugal's seven wonders, and you'll understand why once you step inside its walls and witness the views of the lake and the Alqueva islands. You can easily explore Monsaraz in half a day, but it's worth staying overnight to capture the clear, starry skies. Outside on Rua dos Celeiros, you'll spot the colourful blankets of Monsaraz (now mostly used as rugs), weaved by hand in the nearby **Fabricaal factory** *(fabricaal.com)* in Reguengos. **Casa Tial** sells gourmet treats such as ginger liquor and pastries, while the **Ervideira wine shop** offers tastings from its fantastic terrace.

ADVENTURES IN THE ALQUEVA



Marcelo Pinto spends half his time as a national guard and the other half as a distiller at Alqueva Lake Gin *(@alquevagin)*. Here he shares his favourite experiences around the Alqueva.

Ilha Dourada: The Alqueva Lake is a magical place in the interior of the Alentejo. It's home to several islands, but the most well-known is the Ilha Dourada (Golden Island). It gets its name from the golden specks from the degradation of the rocks. The island offers a privileged view over Monsaraz castle.

Boat trips: You can also embark on an adventure with a variety of boat trips and water sports. Sample a glass of gin on board and marvel at the wonderful landscape.

CERAMIC HERITAGE IN THE ALENTEJO

Pottery has been around the Alentejo since prehistoric times. Large clay deposits in the region contributed to the development of this craft. Men were responsible for collecting the clay and spinning the wheel, while women added the final decorations. The process may not be as physical today, but the gender roles are still very much in place. It's rare to see a woman spinning the wheel here, but new artists are moving in and changing things up. Beyond São Pedro do Corval, popular ceramic towns include Estremoz, Redondo and Viana do Alentejo.

The local brews

Reguengos de Monsaraz near the Alqueva is the biggest wine-producing region in the Alentejo. In the town itself is the **Adega José de Sousa** *(jmf.pt)*. Don't expect to see many vines here. Instead, you'll find a room full of clay amphorae. This is where they age the *vinho de talha* (p256), a wine that was introduced during the Roman age. Most vineyards are located deep in the countryside, with producers such as **Ervideira** *(ervideira.pt)*, **Carmim** *(carmim.eu)*, and **Esporão** *(esporao.com)*. Tastings range from €5 to €30.

The town of **Alqueva**, which gave its name to the dam, houses a museum dedicated to *medronho,* a strong liqueur made from the strawberry tree. At the **Museu do Medronho** *(museu domedronho.pt; adult/child €2/1.50; closed Monday and Tuesday and 1pm to 2pm)*, visitors can tour a distillery and taste a glass of this boozy drink at the store. Gin has also entered the Alentejo market with big labels such as **Sharish Gin** *(sharishgin.pt)*, but also with smaller creators like **Alqueva Lake Gin** in São Pedro do Corval. The signs in town point to 'Destilaria Alqueva'. If the doors are closed, give Marcelo a ring *(966 070 451)* and he'll be on his way. Alternatively, you can call ahead of your visit.

São Pedro do Corval

TIME FROM ÉVORA: **45MINS**

The ceramic village

Arriving in São Pedro do Corval, you'll see a big sign announcing *O maior centro oleiro de Portugal* (Portugal's biggest ceramics hub). It seems every door here leads to a ceramic workshop. Before you reach into your pocket, it's worth visiting the **Casa do Barro** *(free)*, where you'll find samples of each artisan's style. The building in the back takes you through the history of the region and its connection with clay. You can also grab a map with all the potteries here. Among the most popular ones are the **Olaria Patalim** and **Olaria Bulhão** *(olariabulhao.com)*. The latter often hosts ceramic workshops too.

Arraiolos

TIME FROM ÉVORA: **25 MINS**

History unfolds

The first thing you see when you reach Arraiolos is its **circular castle** *(free)* dominating the town's hill. But before you climb up there, you should venture through the town centre where locals have been busy producing intricate rugs since at least the 16th century. The **Tapetes de Arraiolos** (Arraiolos rugs) are a trademark of the town and its motifs, care-

DINING IN MONSARAZ: OUR PICKS

Sem Fim: Reservations are a must at this traditional restaurant housed inside an old olive oil mill. *noon-10.30pm Thu-Tue* €€

Herdade do Esporão: Chef Carlos Teixeira leads Alentejo's only Michelin-star restaurant at this famous local winery. *12.30-3pm Tue-Sat* €€€

Sahida: Head straight to the terrace for unbeatable views of the Alqueva Lake paired with a round of *petiscos*. *5pm-1am Wed-Sun (kitchen to 11pm)* €€

Os Amigos de Monsaraz: Rui Patalim, a ceramicist in Corval, is one of the friends running this casual restaurant in the heart of Monsaraz. *10am-10pm* €€



LIANEM/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Arraiolos

fully embroidered by hand, are said to be influenced by the Moors who settled here after being expelled from Lisbon's Moorish quarter. Several shops line **Rua Alexandre Herculano**, but in early June the whole town is covered in large rugs in an event promoted by the council known as **O Tapete está na Rua** (The rug is on the streets). To learn more about the history of this craft and take home a mini rug kit, visit the **Centro Interpretativo do Tapete de Arraiolos** *(tapete dearraiolos.pt; €1; closed Monday and 1pm to 2pm)*. If you have a bit more time, it's worth driving to the **Convento dos Lóios** *(free)*. While part of this 16th-century convent has been turned into a hotel, you can still tour the adjoining church covered in stunning *azulejos* (painted glazed tiles).

Getting crafty

Córtex Frontal *(cortexfrontal.org)* is a cultural association in the heart of town that welcomes artists from across the world for residences, exhibitions and workshops. Visitors are welcome to join the workshops, which have previously included topics like embroidery and natural inks.

Viana do Alentejo

TIME FROM ÉVORA: **30 MINS**

Touring ateliers

Viana do Alentejo was home to one of the first ceramic schools in Portugal, founded in 1893. Today only a few workshops remain, like the **Olaria Mira Agostinho** (Rua Cândido dos Reis 17). Recently the town started **FICO**, a festival held in May that aims to promote creativity in ceramics by bringing together older and new generations of artists. Not far from Viana is another atelier that is famous for its cowbells. At **Chocalhos Pardalinho** *(chocalhospardalinho.com)* you can still see artists shaping these metal instruments by hand, which UNESCO considered a Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

A HORSEBACK PILGRIMAGE

Mounted on horses, hundreds ride from Moita to Viana do Alentejo on a large equestrian pilgrimage held in late April. The **Romaria a Cavalo** started in the 19th century when Moita's farmers rode to the **Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Aires** in Viana praying for good crops. The Baroque sanctuary (closed Mondays and lunchtime 1pm to 2.30pm), with its lemon-yellow facade, shows similar traces to the Palácio Nacional de Mafra on the outskirts of Lisbon. It takes about five days to cover the 150km trail across the rural fields, with breaks in between to sleep and fuel up. Upon arrival, participants are welcomed with live music and flamenco and sevillanas performances.

HELP ME PICK:

The Alentejo Wineries

The Alentejo has been a prime spot for vineyards for centuries, but it's had its ups and downs, from a dry spell during the Moorish era to the uprooting of vines in exchange for wheat during a dictatorship campaign. But production never died off completely, thanks to the will and persistence of small producers. Today, almost half of the country's production comes from here. Vineyards are scattered between lush mountains, dry flatlands and coastal plots washed by the Atlantic breeze, giving a diverse profile to its wines.

Where to sip if you like...

Classic & Historic

Cartuxa This renowned winery takes its name from the nearby Cartuxa monastery. Its Pêra-Manca wine produced in exceptional harvest years has made the world's best wine list. *cartuxa.pt*

Dona Maria Wines Traditional foot treading in marble mills and old *castas* (grape varieties) result in potent red wines at this winery on the outskirts of Estremoz. *donamaria.pt*

Quinta do Mouro A dentist-turned-winemaker, Miguel Louro has produced high-rated reds in mostly unirrigated schist soils in Estremoz since 1998. *quintadomouro.com*

Herdade do Mouchão Said to have introduced the Alicante Bouschet grape to the Alentejo, Mouchão makes tannin-heavy reds from this original French variety that age pretty well. *mouchao.pt*

Organic & Sustainable

Herdade dos Outeiros Altos Using sustainable agriculture practices, this Estremoz winery strives to use indigenous varieties to produce its organic wines, including some aged in *talhas* (p256). *herdadedosouteirosaltos.pt*

Monte da Bonança Vines planted in the '80s paired with sustainable farming are the base for this family-owned winery, which occasionally opens its doors in the summer. *montedabonanca.pt*

Dona Dorinda French grapes like Syrah and Viognier take centre stage at this small organic winery with a shop inside a former chapel. *donadorinda.com*

Breathtaking Views

Quinta do Quetzal Whether you're standing outside or atop its restaurant's panoramic terrace, you can expect fine views of sloping vineyards with lonesome pine trees above. *quintadoquetzal.com*

Exceptional Food & Wine Pairings

Herdade do Esporão Wine and olive oil tastings come together at this famous winery that houses Alentejo's only Michelin-star restaurant (p226). *esporao.com*

Herdade do Cebolal After a tour of his family's vineyards, Luís will produce an assortment of cheeses, charcuteries and a loquat-marmalade combo (when in season), all showcasing local producers. *herdadedocebolal.pt*

Sleeping Amid the Vines

São Lourenço do Barrocal Stroll through the vineyards or cycle amid the estate's olive grove before settling down for the day. *barrocal.pt*

Herdade da Malhadinha Nova Special packages are offered during the harvest season, including a three-day program featuring tastings, themed dinners and the chance to join the traditional grape stomping. *malhadinhanova.pt*



HOW TO

When to go Tastings are available all year round but if you want to participate in the harvest you're best off coming between late August and September.

Book ahead Call ahead or book tastings online to guarantee a place. For harvest programs, reach out at least a month in advance.

Do your research Vinhos do Alentejo *(vinhosdoalentejo.pt)* has compiled a map of wineries across the region, allowing you to quickly spot what's in your vicinity.

Budget Wine tastings can range anywhere from €20 to €60 (or more) depending on how many glasses you're having and the quality of the wine.

DIY or Guided Tour

You can visit many wineries on your own by hailing taxis or using ridesharing apps like Bolt, especially around Évora where you'll find **Cartuxa**. That said, driving around gives you a lot more freedom to reach out-of-the-way spots like **Herdade do Cebolal** or **Quinta do Quetzal**. The only downside is that you're stuck with small samples and can only fit one or two wineries a day. To get around that, you can either invite a friend and take turns being the designated driver, or book a guided tour.

The **Alentejo Wine Route** headquarters in Évora can help you pick and choose your wineries while giving you a rotating sample of the region's top tipples (all in the name of research, of course). It's also possible to cycle along the Ecopista de Évora (p220) and stop off at a couple of wineries.

Some companies provide week-long wine and bike tours departing from the Alentejo or Lisbon, including **Portugal Bike Tours** *(portugalbiketours.com)* and **Portugal Nature Trails** *(portugalnaturetrails.com)*, for around €1500 including accommodation and hotel transfers. If you'd rather rest your legs, **Portugal By Wine** *(portugalbywine.com)* organises a series of tours and tastings with pick-ups straight to your hotel door, including tailor-made options.

Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede



FORTIFIED TOWNS | FRESH MOUNTAIN AIR | CULTURAL HERITAGE

GETTING AROUND

Driving from Lisbon, you'll reach most towns in Serra de São Mamede in around 2½ hours. You can also get a bus from the Sete Rios terminal in Lisbon to Portalegre (the biggest regional city), which can take up to three hours. From Portalegre, you can hop on a bus to Marvão (35 minutes) and Castelo de Vide (20 minutes) with Rede Expressos or Rodoviária do Alentejo, but this last one can take a lot longer.

TOP TIP

Every year in July, the town of Marvão hosts the **Festival Internacional de Música de Marvão** *(marvaomusic.com)*, a classical-music festival held inside the castle walls. The idea came from the German conductor Christoph Poppen, who hosted the festival's first edition in 2014.

Most people think of the Alentejo as a region of dry flatlands. But head north, and you'll encounter the mountains of Serra de São Mamede. Here, nature thrives, with lush fields lining the roads with oak, ash trees and chestnut woods, the fruit of which is melded into local sweets.

History is visible in the remains of an old Roman villa and medieval strongholds like Marvão, with its striking castle clinging to a rocky ridge. It was here that Ibn Marwan founded his independent Moorish kingdom back in the 9th century before battles ensued between Portugal and neighbouring Spain.

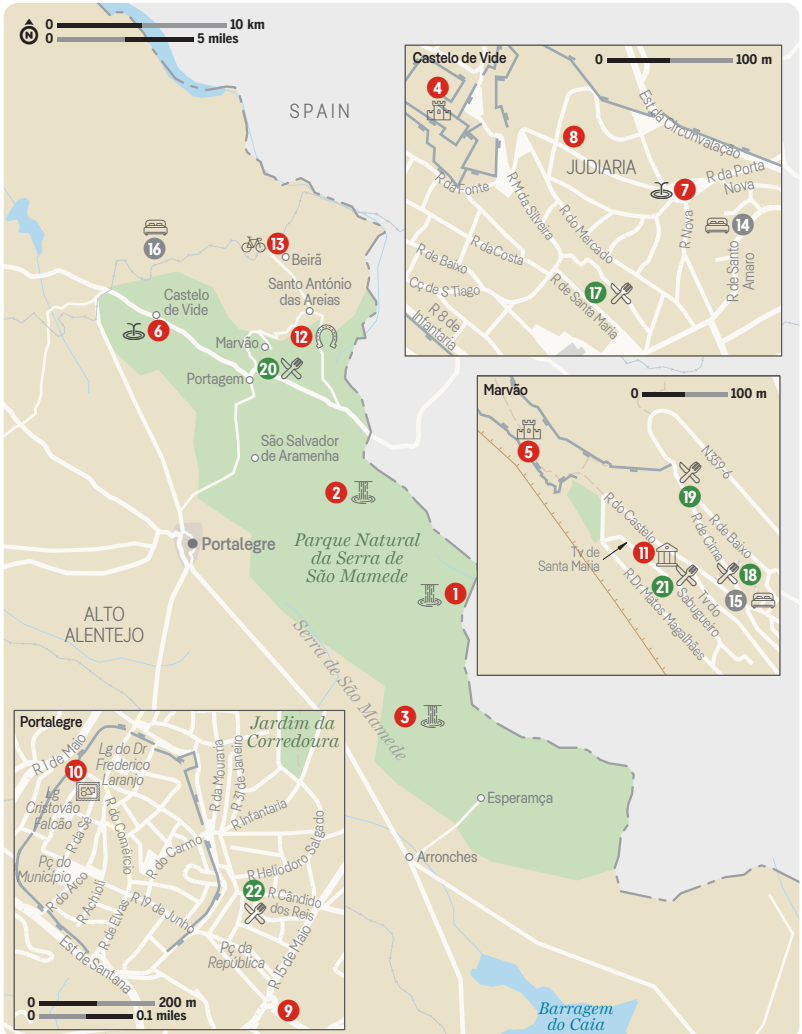
In Portalegre, the region's largest city, weavers have become masters in turning paintings into stunning hand-woven tapestries that pictures don't do justice. From here, you can set off on a trail to discover hidden waterfalls that flow in the mountain's valley at the height of spring.

Adventures in the Mountains

River beaches and nature trails

The old train tracks that once connected the medieval villages of Marvão and Castelo de Vide have been converted into a **rail bike route** *(railbikemarvao.com; from €20)*, allowing visitors to pedal right through the middle of the Serra de São Mamede. **Caballos Marvão** *(caballosmarvao.com; from €30)* offers horseriding tours around the area, and there are several paths to uncover on foot too.

From Marvão, you can follow the **old medieval road** (PR1 MRV) towards Portagem. The 8km circular trail takes you through the villages of Abegoa and Fonte Souto, passing through the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Estrela and the river beach of **Portagem**, where you'll find an old Roman toll bridge. Meanwhile, the **PR3 MRV** connects Marvão to Castelo de Vide (p232), on a 9.6km route that passes through a forest of oak and chestnut trees.



SIGHTS
1. Cascata da Cabroeira
2. Cascata de São Julião
3. Cascata do Pego do Inferno
4. Castelo (Castelo de Vide)
5. Castelo (Marvão)
6. Fonte da Mealhada
7. Fonte da Vila
8. Judiaria
9. Manufactura de Tapeçarias de Portalegre
10. Museu da Tapeçaria de Portalegre Guy Fino
11. Museu Municipal
- Synagogue & Museum (see 8)

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
12. Caballos Marvão
13. Rail Bike Marvão

SLEEPING
14. A Burguesa Guest House
15. Estalagem de Marvão
16. Quinta das Lavandas

EATING
17. A Confraria
18. Fago
19. Marvão com Gosto
20. Mil-Homens
21. O Castelo
22. Solar do Forcado

THE BEST ALTO ALENTEJO FOOD



Diogo Branco (pictured) and **Daniel Boto** run **Fago**, a restaurant in Marvão, where they share their love for the Alto Alentejo. Here are their top food spots and producers.

The organic olive oil from **Azeitona Verde**, the melt-in-your-mouth black pig charcuterie from **Beloteiros**, and the soft wines of **Cabeças do Reguengo** are among our favourite ingredients. Going to **Filip.é** to eat dishes with harvested mushrooms from Serra de São Mamede is a must on our days off, as is the hare rice from **Pompílio** in Elvas. The biggest secret, however, is probably the traditional Alentejo bread and the *boleima 'sola de sapato'*, olive oil cake cooked daily in the wood-fire oven of the hidden **Padaria do Porto da Espada**.

A Walk in the Soaring Village

Medieval roads and chestnut treats

Peeking through the hills of Serra de São Mamede, the medieval stronghold of **Marvão** appears built into the rocks with a dramatic mountainous backdrop that continues beyond the country's borders. Portuguese writer José Saramago felt this immense landscape when he wrote: 'From Marvão, you see the whole world' in his book *Journey to Portugal*.

The **Porta do Rodão** is one of the main entrances to the town. From here, take a wander towards the **Praça do Pelourinho**, where you'll spot monuments like the Câmara Velha with its clock tower and Manueline-style facade. Then head to the Igreja de Santa Maria, a 14th-century church housing the **Museu Municipal** *(adult/child €3.30/free)*. From here, it's only a few steps to the **Castelo**. Enjoy a walk along the 13th-century battlements, climb up to the keep and hear your voice echo in the cistern. In summer, watch out for the *rapas* (earwigs) that fly over in their thousands around the castle area. They're harmless creatures, but a hat comes in handy if you don't want them to stick to your hair.

Afterwards, settle down with a local craft beer at **O Castelo** or try a *pastel de castanha* (chestnut pastry) from **Marvão com Gosto**. In mid-November, Marvão welcomes the **Feira da Castanha** *(facebook.com/feira.castanha.marvao)*, a two-day festival dedicated to chestnuts and the season's new wine.

A Doorway to History

Scenic views, Jewish heritage and national heroes

Driving through the **Alameda dos Freixos**, a boulevard lined with ash trees, is the best entryway to **Castelo de Vide**. This peaceful village was once home to a large Jewish community, and you can still find traces of it in the old **Judiaria** (Jewish Quarter), around Rua da Judiaria and Rua Nova. This last one is where the New Christians (Jews who converted to Christianity) lived.

If you follow Rua da Judiaria, eventually, you'll end up at the old **synagogue** *(free)*, which has been converted into a small museum (closed Monday and 12.45pm to 3pm). Ask for a leaflet in English (€0.50) before entering the two-storey building, which tells the history of the Jews in the town, including how they helped establish a wool industry. In one of the rooms, you can hear a song in Ladino, the language of the Sephardic Jews, which is a mix of medieval Portuguese and Castilian with hints of Hebrew.

EATING AROUND SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE: OUR PICKS

Fago: A creative seasonal menu and a glass of local *ginjinha* await you here within Marvão's castle walls. *7.30-11pm Thu-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sat & Sun* €€€

Mil-Homens: This family-run *tasca* in Portagem has been serving homemade Alentejo dishes since 1967. *12.30-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

A Confraria: Located in Castelo de Vide, this place serves delicious pork and game dishes. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun* €€

Solar do Forcado: Wild boar skewers are the speciality at this lively Portalegre restaurant. *12.30-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat* €€



STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Marvão

Up on the hill are the remains of a **medieval castelo**, which offers breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and the whitewashed houses below. Inside is the **Casa da Cidania Salgueiro Maia** *(free; closed Monday and 12.45pm to 3.15pm)*, a museum dedicated to the Portuguese military officer who led the revolutionary troops on 25 of April 1974.

As you make your way to the castle, look out for the **Gothic doorways** with their pointed arches. There are about 60 of these, mostly concentrated around the Jewish Quarter and the Rua de Santa Maria de Cima. In many of them, you can find sculpted symbols and small indents that used to hold the *mezuzot*, a small parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses.

Castelo de Vide is also known for its natural resources. In the 1940s a resort was built here to take advantage of its thermal waters, which worked until the '90s. A project is now in place to turn the former building into a centre dedicated to Garcia de Orta, a famous New Christian who worked as a physician and naturalist. There are still a few fountains scattered across town today, where you can fill your water bottle, including **Fonte da Vila** and **Fonte da Mealhada**. Though be warned, there's a saying that if you drink from the Fonte da Mealhada you will return to Castelo de Vide to get married.

THE JEWS IN CASTELO DE VIDE

The presence of Jews in Castelo de Vide dates back to at least the 14th century, but it was in 1492 that they arrived in great numbers. The bridge in nearby Portagem was one of the entry points for Jews who had been expelled from Castile and Aragon in Spain following a decree by the Catholic Monarchs Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II. According to some accounts, 15,000 Jews crossed this Portuguese toll bridge in that year alone. Today, there's a memorial here dedicated to these refugees. These Sephardic Jews camped outside the castle walls giving rise to a small Jewish district which would become known as the Judiaria, where the synagogue is currently placed.

THE STORY OF THE PORTALEGRE TAPESTRY

In 1946 two friends, Guy Fino and Manuel Peixeiro, set off to revive the art of hand-knotted carpets in Portalegre. Together they came up with a special stitch (inspired by Peixeiro's studies in France) that allowed a detailed replica of any artwork. It took a while for the tapestries to gain recognition worldwide, but when French artist Jean Lurçat saw his work recreated as a tapestry, he was immediately impressed, commissioning pieces from Portalegre weavers for years to come.

Today, the factory is regularly in touch with modern artists working together to keep this tradition alive. Rotating exhibits take place in Portalegre's museum and at the art gallery Galeria Tapeçarias de Portalegre *(mtportalegre.pt/en/galeria)* in Lisbon.



TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Portalegre

Iconic Tapestries & Tempting Trails

Dive into traditional crafts and waterfalls

Portalegre may not have the cinematic feel of the surrounding mountain villages, but it does have its own charm. Set in the middle of the natural park, this is the biggest city in Northern Alentejo, yet you can easily cover most sites in half a day. The city is renowned for its tapestries produced by the **Manufactura de Tapeçarias de Portalegre** *(mtportalegre.pt)*. It's worth coming here just to see the **Museu da Tapeçaria de Portalegre Guy Fino** *(€2.10; closed Monday and 1pm to 2.30pm)* – it's the ideal place to get a real sense of this craft. The collection features giant handwoven versions of paintings by the likes of Picasso and Jean Lurçat, as well as Portuguese artists such as Almada Negreiros. Temporary exhibits showcase collaborations with young creators, inviting you to revisit the space.

Beyond Portalegre, deep into the mountains of Serra de São Mamede, you'll find idyllic waterfalls flowing in spring, and the city is the ideal base to explore these natural wonders. The **Cascata do Pego do Inferno** is located on the way to the town of Mosteiros, just off the M517. Other waterfalls require a bit of a trek, like **Cascata da Cabroeira** (near the Spanish border) and **Cascata de São Julião** (near Monte Sete). The **Grande Rota das Cascatas da Serra de São Mamede (GR61)** is a 32.5km trail that crosses the park's main waterfalls, but you can use it as a guideline for shorter hikes too.

Beyond Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede



The north of the Alentejo hides many other secrets, from riverside walks overlooking castles to iconic high-breed horses.

Past the valleys of São Mamede lies another section of northern Alentejo. One with riverside trails, inland castles and hidden dams. The biggest city here is Elvas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its ring of fortresses that once defended Portugal against invaders. Crato stands out with its medieval monastery turned *pousada* (historic hotel), while Alter do Chão is home to the prestige Alter horse breed. And then there's Campo Maior, home to a coffee centre and a traditional flower festival that happens according to the residents' will. As you travel through these highlands, you'll find yourself nearly touching the borders of Ribatejo and Spain.

Elvas

TIME FROM SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE: **1 HR**

Sweet treats and historic sites

Of the many culinary exchanges between the Portuguese and the East, some say the best is the *sericaia*, a soufflé-like pudding made with eggs, sugar and cinnamon. Former governor D Constantino de Bragança (1528–75) is said to have imported the recipe in the 16th century to Elvas, and the nuns living in the city's convents at the time put their own spin to it, mixing and matching ingredients and topping it up with *ameixas d'Elvas* (local confit plums).

Baked in a terracotta dish, this staple sweet is usually sold as a whole or by the slice in most Alentejo restaurants. Head for **Pastelaria Canhão**, which has been making *sericaias* on a wood-fire oven since 1981, to tuck into a whole one, or try the restaurant across the street, **Snack-Bar Dinis**, which they also supply. The owner will ask if you want it *com ou sem ameixa* (with or without plum). If you want the extra sugar hit, go for it with, though watch out, it comes with a pit.

Places

Elvas p235
Alter do Chão p236
Gavião & Nisa p238
Campo Maior p238

GETTING AROUND

Rede Expressos has daily bus connections from Lisbon to Elvas, Ponte de Sor, Nisa and Campo Maior. The journey takes around three hours. For Alter do Chão and Crato, there is only one service from Lisbon per day, arriving in the evening. With a car, you can reach most places in around two hours. You'll also have much more freedom to explore the trails along the Tejo and the monuments on the outskirts of towns.

THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM

'The key to the kingdom' was how people referred to Elvas in the 17th century, at the start of the Portuguese Restoration War. Back then, the city that is only 8km from the Spanish border provided the easiest access to the capital Lisbon, so it had to be protected at all costs. This resulted in the biggest concentration of bulwark fortresses in the world, a sight that helped maintain the country's independence and turned Elvas into a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012.

Among the most iconic strongholds today are the **Forte de Santa Luzia** *(€3)* and **Forte de Nossa Senhora da Graça** *(€5)*. Both are closed on Monday.

Beyond its sweet treats and bulwark fortresses (see sidebar), Elvas is also home to a **castle** *(closed Monday and 1pm to 2pm)* with Islamic roots (though most of the layout dates back to the 16th century) and the **Aqueduto da Amoreira**, considered the largest aqueduct on the Iberian Peninsula.

Museums and sacred spaces

Where once was a military bakery is now the **Museu de Arqueologia e Etnografia** *(adult/child €5/free)*, a museum that takes you through the origins of Elvas, but also covers the history of Alentejo's cuisine, ceramics and festivities like the Festas de São Mateus, which takes over Elvas in late September. The display also includes a small carriage collection and audio testimonials by rural workers and former bakers. It's closed Mondays and Tuesday mornings.

For contemporary art, head to the **Museu de Arte Contemporânea** *(€5, cash only; closed Mondays and Tuesday mornings)*, where you may find works by the likes of Joana Vasconcelos, a renowned Portuguese artist.

Similar to Castelo de Vide, Elvas is a part of the **Rede de Judiarias de Portugal** *(redejudiariasportugal.com)*, a network of cities and towns with old Jewish quarters. The **Casa da História Judaica** *(free; closed Monday and 1pm to 3pm)*, is housed in what might have been the city's synagogue (later converted into a slaughterhouse).

The city is also home to a variety of churches, though only a few are regularly open. That includes the former cathedral, **Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Assunção** *(closed noon to 3pm)*, at Praça da República, and the **Igreja das Domínicas** *(closed Monday)*, an octagonal-shaped church adorned with blue and yellow tiles.

Alter do Chão

TIME FROM SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE: **30 MINS**

Touring the stud farm

It was King Dom João V who first established the **Coudelaria de Alter** *(alterreal.pt)*, one of the oldest stud farms in Portugal, created in 1748 and home to the Lusitano thoroughbred horse.

Visits to the farm take place at 10.30am and 3pm sharp *(adult/child €17/12, closed Monday)*. Arrive early, or you'll risk not getting in. From the reception, you'll set off to the fields where you may spot the mares' herd. The tour continues at the stable and ends at the falconry. Riding lessons can be arranged too (by appointment only; prices vary per duration and number of people).

EATING IN ELVAS: OUR PICKS

Taberna do Adro: Squeeze inside this cosy tavern in Vila Fernando to sample the delicious toasted hen. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm Fri-Tue* €

Luís Cobra: This pleasant spot near Elvas' art museum serves up delish portions of seafood rice and veal stew. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Acontece: Prawn and codfish are the highlights at this modern spot with a slightly extravagant decor. *noon-3.30pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat, to 3.30pm Sun* €€

Adega Regional: Enjoy hearty portions of classics like *migas* and tomato soup paired with regional wines. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun* €€

DRIVING AROUND ALTO ALENTEJO

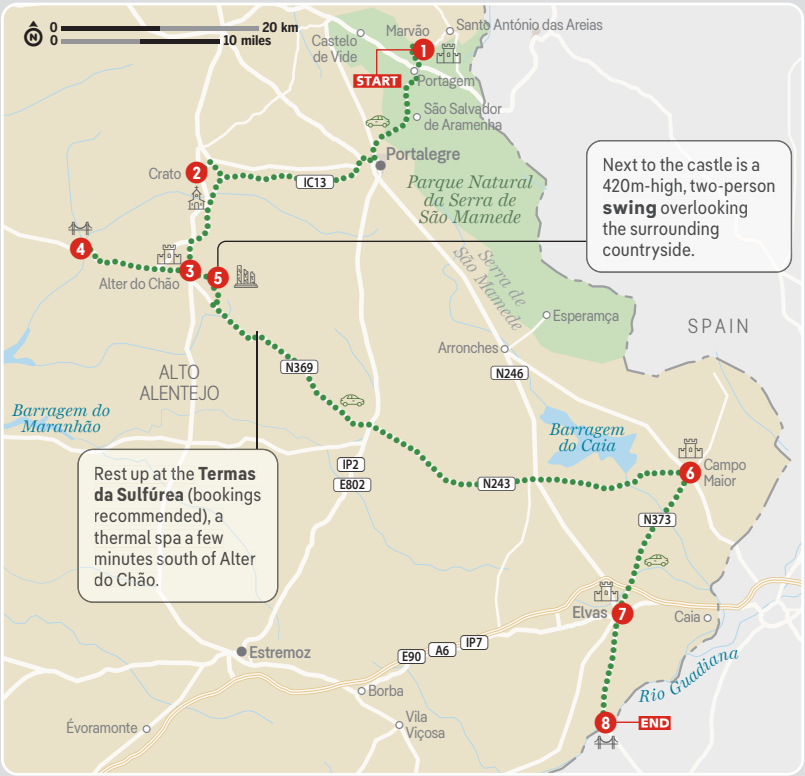
Hit the road to discover the north of the Alentejo, a land filled with castles, vineyards and iconic bridges.

START	END	LENGTH
Marvão	Ponte da Ajuda	181km; 4 hours

Start in 1 **Marvão** (p232) taking in the views of the Serra de São Mamede from its hilltop castle. Then head to 2 **Crato**, where you can visit the Monastery of Santa Maria de Flor da Rosa. Part of the building has been converted into a luxury hotel, but it's still possible to wander through the Gothic-style church.

After exploring the monastery, take a trip south towards 3 **Alter do Chão**. Be sure to arrive on time for a tour of the Coudelaria de Alter to learn more about the renowned Portuguese horse breed. Still in Alter, you can visit the town's medieval castle, which houses the municipal museum. Other attractions on the outskirts include the Roman bridge 4 **Ponte de Vila Formosa** and the ruins of the 5 **Castelo de Alter Pedroso**.

Continue to 6 **Campo Maior** (p238). In the centre of town is a medieval castle and the Lagar Museu do Palácio Visconde d'Olivã, a museum dedicated to olive oil production. Take a detour to the outskirts for a wine tasting at the Adega Mayor or a freshly brewed coffee at the Centro de Ciência do Café. From here, head straight to 7 **Elvas** (p235) for a glimpse of the fortress city before continuing to the 8 **Ponte da Ajuda**, the ruins of a 16th-century bridge that once connected Elvas to Olivenza in Spain.



A TOWN IN BLOOM

Carefully folded paper flowers decorate the streets of Campo Maior during the flower festival, **Festas do Povo**. For this festival to go ahead, everyone in the village has to be on board, so there's no set date. Preparations usually begin in January with the election of the *cabeça de rua*, the person in charge of the event. Then it's off to work, with adults and children getting together to make all the tulips, roses and carnations that will hang above their houses later in the year. The last edition took place in September 2015, but with its UNESCO recognition in 2021, there's bound to be a party underway soon.

Gavião & Nisa

TIME FROM SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE: **40 MINS**

Riverside trails and beaches

The Tejo river separates the Alentejo from the neighbouring Centro region. Its margins offer the perfect setting for a hike, and there are several *trilho* (trails) worth following around here. Near Gavião is the **Passadiço do Alamal**. The 2km trail connects the river beach, **Praia Fluvial do Alamal**, to the Ponte de Belver. Standing on this bridge, you can spot the imposing **Castle of Belver** on the other margin. The path is mostly flat, making it accessible for families with little ones.

In Nisa, you'll find the **Trilhos do Conhal**. It encompasses two trails, the **PR4 NIS** (10km) and the **PR9 NIS** (8.5km), which can be combined into one. The first trail is a bit more intensive and features some steep climbs. That said, it comes with many rewards, including breathtaking views of the Portas do Rodão, a rocky formation that acts like doors to the river. If you're lucky, you might even spot a griffon vulture soaring above you. While in the area, you can also check out the **Trilho da Barca d'Amieira** (**PR11 NIS**). Opened in 2021, this path features a wooden walkway, a suspended bridge, and a skywalk, a glass platform that looks down into the river.

A crafty street

The town of Nisa is famous for its ceramics embedded with little bits of quartz in a style that resembles embroidery. So much so that the women who make it are known as the *bordadeiras* (embroidery artists). In 2021 a street in Nisa was redesigned with red and white cobblestones as a homage to this craft. Look for Rua de Santa Maria, and you'll encounter one of the prettiest streets in Portugal.

Campo Maior

TIME FROM SERRA DE SÃO MAMEDE: **45 MINS**

Coffee meets wine

Businessman Rui Nabeiro (1931–2023) was responsible for giving a push to Alentejo's economy. In 1961 he started his own coffee brand in a small office in his hometown of Campo Maior. Delta coffee grew to become a staple in Portuguese homes and cafes across the country and abroad. A wine lover at heart, he opened his own winery in 2007 in the exact same spot: Herdade das Argamassas.

Start with a wine tasting at **Adega Mayor** *(adegamayor.pt)*, designed by award-winning Portuguese architect Siza Vieira. Guided tours run from 10am to 1pm and 3pm to 6pm (from €12.50), but it's best to book in advance.

Then head on over to **Centro de Ciência do Café** *(centrocienciacafe.com)*, a museum dedicated to coffee. The 3500-sq-metre space includes interactive exhibits about coffee as well as a barista academy where you can learn how to recreate your favourite brew. A visit to the exhibits is around €10, but you can also just stop by for a coffee.

Vila Nova de Milfontes



WILD BEACHES | SEAFOOD FEASTS | SURFING

Long gone are the days when corsairs raided the port of Vila Nova de Milfontes. The constant threats made it an unattractive place to live. These days, everyone wants a slice of the coast, but back in the 15th century, King João II issued a decree to convince people to move here. Milfontes started as a retreat for fugitives, and it took a while for others to find their way here. Today it is the heart of the Alentejo Litoral, a wild coast dotted with secluded beaches and fishing towns. It's also an entry point to the trails of Rota Vicentina and everything that the west coast brings: surf, fresh seafood and gorgeous sunsets.

Where the River Meets the Sea

Surf, sunsets and boat rides

Vila Nova de Milfontes is that sweet spot between the city and the coast. It has enough attractions to keep you busy, but it doesn't feel as crowded as the south. It's easy to feel at ease here walking along the waterfront, facing the Mira river in the south or the Atlantic in the west. **Praia da Franquia** may be the closest beach to town, but if you're up for a hike (p241), there are many more hidden in the dunes. In the summer, boats whisk you from **Cais da Fateixa** and other ports to the other side of the river, where you'll find **Praia das Furnas**. A boat taxi has been doing this crossing since the 1970s, before the bridge's construction, and is still in place today. You can contact Maria from **Maresia do Mira** *(964 200 944)* to book your trip (no service in December and January; around €5 per person). Access to the port is via a set of stairs next to the town's fort. For longer boat rides, you can reach out to **MilEmotions** *(milemotions.pt; from €20)*.

It's also possible to rent stand-up paddles and kayaks. **SW SUP** *(swsup.pt)* organises SUP lessons (from €25) and two-hour sunset tours (€35), or you can go off on your own with the board (€15/50 per hour/full day). Meanwhile, **Areias do Mar** *(kayakmilfontes.com)* does kayak experiences that cover between 5km and 31km (from €20). For rentals, prices start at €10 for half an hour.

GETTING AROUND

Driving is the best way to conquer the whole coast and explore the most remote beaches. Rede Expressos provides direct buses to Vila Nova de Milfontes from Sete Rios in Lisbon, but it's much faster to reach it from Lagos in the Algarve. If you're up for an adventure, you can base yourself in Milfontes and tackle the Rota Vicentina on foot or by bike. Bring your own or rent one from companies such as Cycling Rentals. If you want to rest your back, Vicentina Transfers can arrange luggage transfers to your next destination.

TOP TIP

Even on warm days, the Atlantic breeze hits the coastal towns in the evenings. Be sure to bring a coat if you plan on staying after sunset. Some areas are often a target for mosquitos, so come prepared with repellant.



SIGHTS
1. Praia da Franquia
2. Praia das Furnas
3. Praia do Farol
4. Praia do Patacho

ACTIVITIES & TOURS
5. Águas Vivas
6. Areias do Mar
7. Bture
8. Cais da Fateixa
9. Club Vagabond
- Maresia do Mira (see 7)
- MilEmotions (see 5)

10. SurfMilfontes
11. SW SUP

SLEEPING
12. Raminhos Guest House

EATING
13. Alento
14. Mabi
15. Tasca do Celso

If you want to unwind and catch the sunset, head to **Praia do Farol** or **Praia do Patacho**, where you may spot the remains of the *Klemens* shipwreck. Access to the beach is steep, so not advisable for people with mobility issues.

For those who wish to heed the call of the waves, there are a number of surf schools based around Vila Nova de Milfontes. **SurfMilfontes** *(surfmilfontes.pt; from €50)* offers lessons and vacation packages with accommodation, while **Club Vagabond** *(club-vagabond.com; from €45)* provides lessons and rentals, as well as a small co-working space overlooking the dunes. For underwater experiences, reach out to **Águas Vivas** *(aguasvivasapneia.com; from €45)*, which organises snorkelling and free-diving sessions around the coast.

Playing with Clay

A ceramic retreat

On the outskirts of Vila Nova de Milfontes, an old primary school has been converted into a ceramic workshop. The **Oficina na Escola**, run by the Vida na Vila team *(vidanavilaalentejo.pt)*, offers regular classes and intensive workshops in the summer (from €40 per person).

Take on the Coast

Hiking and cycling trails

Portugal's southwestern border is defined by the **Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina**, a natural park that stretches from Porto Covo all the way to Burgau in the Algarve. There lies a wild coast of beaches, rugged cliffs and nesting spots for numerous birds, like the iconic white storks that hover above the towns. The best way to explore this side of the Alentejo is by following the trails of the **Rota Vicentina** *(rotavicentina.com)*.

From Vila Nova de Milfontes, you can take on a section of the **Fisherman's Trail** up towards Porto Covo. The 20km coastal stretch passes through a variety of beaches, from **Praia do Farol**, with its towers of pebbles, to the sandy shores of **Praia do Malhão** and the island-facing **Praia da Ilha do Pessegueiro**.

Another option is to head south to Almograve. You can cross the bridge over the Mira or hop on a boat towards Praia das Furnas (p239) and then hike from there. If you choose the bridge, be careful, as the path is right on the verge of the road and crosses a property with livestock. Then, it's around 15km to Almograve. If you prefer something a little shorter, you can follow the route from Praia das Furnas to **Cascata das Furnas**, a tiny waterfall hidden amid the trees.

Soaring the Coast

Birdwatching in the Mira Estuary

Black-headed gulls often fly over the Mira Estuary in winter, their distinct black-like hood setting them apart from their white body. But they're not alone: the sandwich tern and grey plover often join in on their migratory route towards Praia das Furnas (p239). The area around **Moinho da Asneira** further inland is particularly popular for spotting grey herons and great cormorants. September to March is the best season for birdwatching. Bring your binoculars and set off on your own adventure or reach out to **Bture** *(bture.pt; from €35)* for a guided birdwatching tour on a boat.

Living the Wild Life

Campsites and wild beaches

Time to get away from it all? Pack the tent or hop in a caravan and spend the night amid Alentejo's wild coast. There are several camping sites dotted around Vila Nova de Milfontes, but the best one is perhaps the **Sitava Milfontes** *(orbitur.pt/pt/destinos/alentejo/orbitur-sitava-milfontes; from €8.60 for a tent in high season),* which provides direct access to Praia do Malhão. Didn't bring a tent? That's alright, they've got bungalows too, or you can rent one from a Decathlon shop *(aluguer.decathlon.pt/campismo)* near you. Further north, between **Praia dos Aivados** and the Cercal mountain range is **Quinta do Rossi** *(quintadorossi.wixsite.com/quintadorossi; from €9 per person a night),* a farm with a caravan park and a cosy bar.



BEST SURFING SPOTS ON THE ALENTEJO COAST

Praia dos Aivados: Ideal for experienced surfers, as the currents can get strong and there is no supervision.

L-Point: Hidden in Porto Covo (p244), this spot is a favourite for goofy footers.

Praia de São Torpes: On the south end of this beach is the Pico Louco, a peak with consistent waves that attract surfers of all levels.

Lagoa de Santo André: You'll have to combine the winds and swell with the opening of this lagoon and the sea for the best tubes.

Praia do Malhão: A wide choice of peaks makes this beach a great spot for beginner surfers.

WHY I LOVE VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES



Joana Taborda, Lonely Planet writer

Growing up, I spent my summers camping around Vila Nova de Milfontes. The walk to the beach was my favourite part, passing through the pine trees to reach the rocky trails of Praia do Malhão. In the evenings, we would go into town to dine at one of the local restaurants. The years have passed, and Milfontes still feels like a quiet retreat. I feel at ease here, eating freshly baked croissants from Mabi, paddling along the waters of the Mira river or watching the sunset at Praia do Farol. The hardest part is leaving.



VACLAV SONNEK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Praia do Malhão (p241)

Feel like baring it all to nature? You can do so but in designated areas only. Praia do Malhão (p241), for instance, has a section for naturists on its north end. Just follow the arrows saying *'praia naturista'* and you'll soon find your people.

Galloping Through the Countryside

Horseriding tours and lessons

About a 20-minute drive east of Vila Nova de Milfontes is the Quinta da Samoqueirinha. This is where Joana Junkermann runs her horseriding farm, **Natura Horses** *(naturahorses.com)*. Book a guided tour, or if you already have some experience, get riding on your own through the rural trails. Both lessons and tours start at €20 per person for group rides and €30 for private.

Fresh Catch

Visit Porto das Barcas for the freshest seafood

North of Vila Nova de Milfontes is the small fishing port of **Porto das Barcas** (not the one in Zambujeira do Mar). Searching for the restaurant with the same name usually helps narrow it down. This is a great spot to sample the region's shellfish selection and watch the fishermen arriving with their catch. The earlier you arrive, the better. Otherwise, come around lunch or dinner and pick a fish straight from the restaurant counter, which the staff will promptly throw on the grill.

EATING IN VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: OUR PICKS

Tasca do Celso: Reservations are a must at this iconic seafood restaurant in the town centre. *1-3.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm Tue-Sun* €€€

Alento: A contemporary twist on traditional Alentejo dishes, using only seasonal ingredients. *noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Thu-Tue* €€

Porto das Barcas: With a fishing port at its doorstep, you can expect the freshest catch to land on your plate. *12.30-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Mon* €€€

Mabi: Savoury and sweet croissants are the specialities at this breakfast staple. *8am-8pm Tue-Sun* €

Beyond Vila Nova de Milfontes



Luxury retreats, wild beaches and marine life await you in the southwest.

There's much more to uncover on the Alentejo coast. Heading north from Vila Nova de Milfontes, you'll encounter diverse scenery, from the historic towns of Sines and Santiago do Cacém – with their hilltop castles and traditional festivals – to the natural reserve of Santo André and the rice paddies of Alcácer do Sal. You can sail to a deserted island in Porto Covo, spot dolphins and flamingos on the way to Tróia, or ride a horse along the beaches of Comporta and Melides. To the south are calmer beach towns like Almograve and Zambujeira do Mar, and picturesque villages like Santa Clara-a-Velha with their blue-and-white houses.

Sines

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **35 MINS**

Underwater treasures

The Alentejo Coast is a prime spot for snorkelling and diving. But wildlife isn't the only thing you can spot here. For the last couple of years, local producers have been ageing their wines underwater too – a process that is said to highlight the wine's mineral properties. You can find out for yourself by diving with **Ecoalga** *(964 620 394; from €60 per person)*.

The **Adega do Mar** (Sea Winery) is based in Sines, but depending on the season, you may end up exploring Porto Covo (p244) or heading off to Ilha do Pessegueiro (p244). If you'd rather stay on the surface, you can always book a tour with a wine tasting instead (from €75 per person). Ecoalga also organises fishing trips (from €40 per person) and snorkwalking (from €15 per person), an activity that combines a hike along the coast with a break for snorkelling.

Sweet treats and history

The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama was born in Sines, and many of the town's sights are named after him. Take a wander through the city's historic streets before heading inside the **Castelo de Sines**. Climb up the castle battlements and enjoy the panoramic views over the bay. Inside the walls is the **Museu Municipal** *(free)*, a small museum dedicated to the history of the town (closed Monday and 1pm to 2.30pm), while outside is a statue of Vasco da Gama overlooking the sea.

Places

Sines p243
Porto Covo p244
Comporta p245
Alcácer do Sal p245
Santiago do Cacém p246
Odemira p248

GETTING AROUND

Departing from Lisbon or Lagos, you can take a direct bus to most coastal towns, including Porto Covo, Sines and Zambujeira do Mar. To reach Alcácer do Sal from the capital, you need to change buses in Setúbal. Setúbal also has the ferry to Tróia, from which you can take the bus to Comporta. Driving will save you a lot of time if you plan on covering several towns in one day.



A CELEBRATORY SWIM

The **Banho de São Romão**, held in August, is a traditional festivity in Sines that recreates an early-20th-century bathing tradition when countryfolk would go to the beach only once a year. Like in the old days, locals ride horse carriages (though some come by car) and dress up in traditional attire, making their way to the sea around the Costa de Santo André.

The event starts on the 9th of August and lasts for about three days with concerts, lunch feasts ending with slices of refreshing watermelon and folk dancing taking over the sandy shores of Praia da Costa de Santo André. There's also a fair selling crafts and regional sweets set up on the way to the beach.

Be sure to stop by the family-owned bakery **Vela D'Ouro** near the castle, where you can sample local pastries like the *vasquinhos*, a sweet tart made with an almond, egg and fig-leaf squash filling. A 10-minute walk north from here is the **Jardim da Alameda da Paz**, where you can spot Sines' old train station with its well-preserved tiles.

Artisanal fishing and beach walks

Wake up early and head to the **Porto da Pesca de Sines**, the town's fishing port. Here, fishermen still use artisanal methods to capture species like sardines and octopus. Most of their catch ends up at the **Mercado Municipal de Sines** in the centre of town.

The coast of Sines is also home to a series of beaches. The most central one is **Praia do Vasco da Gama**, but it's worth heading south towards **Praia de São Torpes**, the official start of the Fisherman's Trail, or north, where you'll find the **Passadiço da Costa Norte**, a wooden walkway that takes you along the dunes ending at **Praia do Canto Mosqueiro**.

Porto Covo

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **25 MINS**

A song to remember

Porto Covo will forever be associated with Rui Veloso's song. His 1986 hit, named after the town, describes the region's peacefulness and its legends. Before heading to the coast, take a moment to explore the town centre, passing through the **Largo de Marquês de Pombal**, a small square lined with trees and cafes. Here you'll find the **Igreja de Porto Covo**, a tiny 18th-century church that holds the image of Nossa Senhora da Soledade, the town's patron saint. Every year on 29 August, this becomes the centre stage for the **Festa Nossa Senhora da Soledade**, which honours the saint with religious processions, but there are also concerts and other festivities.

Hidden coves

Walk down **Rua Vasco da Gama** and you'll soon reach the waterfront. To the left is the town's fishing port with its colourful boats. To the right are nothing but small coves surrounded by cliffs. Some of the best beaches on this stretch include **Praia dos Buzinhos**, **Praia do Banho** and **Praia do Espingardeiro**. End the day with a walk along the cliffs of **Praia Grande**, equipped with all the facilities. Further north there are even more spots, including the naturist beach **Praia do Salto**, and **Praia da Samoqueira**, famous for its crystal-clear waters.

Island trip

From June to September, you can hop on a boat to **Ilha do Pessegueiro**, a small island off the coast of Porto Covo. Boats depart from the fishing port in the morning and afternoon, but make sure to call ahead (965 535 683) to arrange the trip. Take a walk along the island and admire the 17th-century fortress. If you want to explore the local marine life, contact **Ecoalga** *(ecoalga.com)* for a diving session. Another way to



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Praia do Banho, Porto Covo

explore the island is to book a horseriding tour with **Herdade do Pessegueiro** *(963 320 898; from €70)*

Comporta

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **1½ HRS**

Horses, high-end villas and sandy beaches

Unless you want to peruse the endless (and slightly overpriced) beachwear shops in the village, skip it and head straight to the beach. The closest one is **Praia da Comporta**, a 20-minute walk from town. To save time, you can rent a bike with **Comporta Electric Bikes** *(938 295 365)*. En route, you can stop at **Adega da Comporta** *(adega.herdadedacomporta.pt; from €20)* for a wine tasting. As the sun sets, head to **Cais Palafítico da Carrasqueira** (a 15-minute ride) to see the old fishing pier balanced on wooden stilts.

For an equine-based experience, **Cavalos na Areia** *(cavalos naareia.com; from €70)* lets you gallop along the beaches of Comporta, following in the footsteps of Madonna, who rode here back when she lived in Portugal. You might even spot a dolphin in the distance. Further south, in Melides, there is also the opportunity for a horseriding lesson on the sand with **Passeios a Cavalo Melides** *(passeiosacavalomelides.com; from €60)*.

Alcácer do Sal

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **1½ HRS**

Riverside trips, castles and villages

Alcácer do Sal was once one of the biggest centres of salt production in Portugal. Big galleons *(galeão do sal)* would sail through the Sado river carrying salt up and down the country. Few of them remain today, but if you're lucky, you may catch one of the annual trips of the **galeão do sal** (check with the tourism office on 911 794 685).

RUM FOR ALL

The small Alentejo island of Ilha do Pessegueiro and its pirate tales inspired the creation of a local rum. Most Portuguese rum comes from Madeira, but in 2019 the Black Pig Distillery (p246) launched the first rum of mainland Portugal. The molasses still comes from Madeira but it's infused with coffee grains, peaches, tobacco leaves and vanilla, all grown on-site. To replace the sugar, they also use natural peach fructose. It's essentially a blend between the fruits and botanicals of the Alentejo and the spices obtained in trade routes established during Portugal's Age of Exploration. The distillery also makes their own gin and *medronho* using only artisanal methods.

LUCKY SIGHTINGS

Comporta provides easy access to the **Península de Tróia** (p139), a departing point for dolphin-watching tours and a migratory stop for flamingos. A golf course and a casino complete the entertainment options here.

A CHANGING VILLAGE

In the 20th century, **Comporta** was nothing more than rice fields and dunes, with no luxury properties in sight. Instead, there were small sheds where the *ceifeiras* (rice pickers) would retreat after a long day's work. The book *Comporta Aberta* by Cidalisa Guerra (in Portuguese) gives a great portrait of the arduous life of residents in those days.

Over the last decade, Comporta has turned into a trendy coastal town. And it didn't take long for the famous folks to arrive, with people like Madonna and Christian Louboutin holidaying here. Louboutin soon grew tired of Comporta, though, and ended up opening a hotel slightly further south in Melides, predictably called Vermelho Hotel (Red Hotel), after his iconic red-sole shoes.



SCARABEA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Cripta Arqueológica do Castelo, Alcácer do Sal

Alternatively, you can contact **Sunrice Tours** *(sunrice.pt; from €30)*, which hosts regular trips on its solar boat.

For a riverside walk, start at **Largo Luís de Camões** and follow the road towards the bridge, passing a tight cluster of houses along the way. The best views are on the other side of the river near **Parque do Sado**, where you can capture the village framed by the rice paddies.

Rising on the hill is the medieval **castle**. The building was converted into a *pousada*, but it's still possible to walk around the battlements for free. Nearby you'll find the **Cripta Arqueológica do Castelo** *(€3.50)*, an archaeological site featuring traces of Alcácer's diverse communities, from the Iron Age to the Roman and Arab occupation (it's closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm). There's also the humble 13th-century church **Igreja de Santa Maria**. Beyond the city, it's worth visiting the small whitewashed villages of **Santa Susana** and **Torrão**, both of which overlook a dam.

Santiago do Cacém

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **1 HR**

Safari trips and gin tastings

Around Santiago do Cacém is the **Badoca Safari Park** *(badoca.com; adult/concession €21.90/17.90)*, a 90-hectare property where buffalos, giraffes and zebras roam. It's also around here that you'll find the **Black Pig distillery** *(blackpig.pt)*, a gin-themed park featuring a bar and a botanic trail.

EATING ALONG THE ALENTEJO COAST: OUR PICKS

Porto Santana: This cosy Alcácer do Sal spot makes great pork cheeks and dory fillets. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon, Tue, Fri & Sat, lunch only Wed & Sun* €€

O Beijinha: Fresh fish straight from the port lands on your plate at this lunch staple in Sines. *noon-5pm Mon-Sat* €€

Restaurante Dona Bia: Classic Comporta restaurant famous for its rice dishes. *12.15-3.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Wed-Sat, lunch only Sun & Mon* €€€

O Peixeiro: You can smell the grilled fish as you near this hidden spot on the outskirts of Odemira. *noon-3pm & 6.30-10pm Tue & Thu-Sun* €€

THE ATLANTIC COAST ON WHEELS

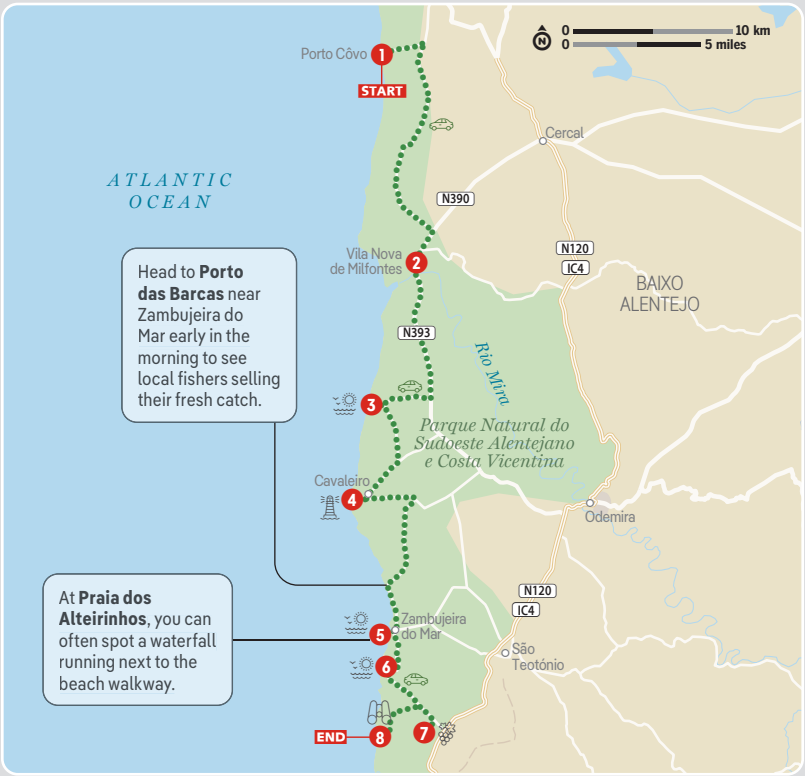
Feel the ocean breeze as you drive through Alentejo's wild coast in search of beaches and seafood feasts.

START	END	LENGTH
Porto Covo	Miradouro da Azenha do Mar	64km; 4 hours

While hiking the Rota Vicentina (p248) is a worthy experience, if you're running short on time, you can cover part of the stretch with your own wheels.

Start off in 1 **Porto Covo** (p244), just a few miles south from the start of the hike, and enjoy the sea breeze that will accompany you throughout this trip. Make a pit stop for lunch at 2 **Vila Nova de Milfontes** (p239), before getting back on the road towards 3 **Praia do Almograve**. This wide beach offers two distinct stretches, one with rocks and the other with soft white sand backed by dunes.

Continue south until you reach the 4 **Farol Cabo Sardão**, a 20th-century lighthouse on a cliff overlooking the sea. From here it's only a few minutes to 5 **Praia da Zambujeira do Mar**, where you can enjoy a refreshing swim. Then continue towards 6 **Praia do Carvalhal**, the last stretch of the Alentejo coast (not to be confused with the village next to Comporta), stopping for a wine tasting at nearby 7 **Vicentino** *(vicentinowines.com; closed Sunday and Monday)*. Finish off at 8 **Miradouro da Azenha do Mar** just in time for sunset.



A PERFECT DAY IN SANTO ANDRÉ



Former nurses **Inês** and **Zé** traded their jobs in the UK for a quieter life on the Alentejo coast where they run the plant-based restaurant **Prana Lounge Bar** *(@prana.loungebar)* and walking tours across the reserve with **Natours** *(@natour.passeios)*.

The **Lagoa de Santo André** is a mandatory stop for those looking to connect with nature and feel the calmness of the Alentejo. Our ideal day starts with a hike along the different pedestrian trails of the lagoon. The Percurso do Salgueiral is our favourite because it has a wooden walkway crossing the forest and an observatory ideal for spotting the local flora and fauna. To finish the day, there is nothing like drinking a gin at the Black Pig Distillery.

Lost in the lagoons

Towards the coast is the **Reserva Natural das Lagoas de Santo André e Sancha**, a natural reserve featuring two large lagoons and sandy beaches, such as **Costa de Santo André** and **Fonte do Cortiço**. Many birds migrate to these wetlands. The **Lagoa de Santo André** welcomes the red-crested pochard and the Eurasian reed warbler, while the **Lagoa da Sancha** is a favourite spot for red herons. **Birdwatching Alentejo** *(birdwatchingalentejo.com)* organises birdwatching sessions in the region. Prices vary per duration and distance covered (minimum two weeks' notice).

Odemira

TIME FROM VILA NOVA DE MILFONTES: **35 MINS**

Riverside adventures

Like Vila Nova de Milfontes, Odemira is located on the margins of the Mira river. Rent a canoe and enjoy a sunset paddle with **Ecotrails** *(ecotrails.pt; from €20)*.

Deep in the valley is the **Pego das Pias**, a hidden stream surrounded by striking rock formations. To reach it, follow the N120 road towards São Luís until you get to the Torgal bridge. From here, it's about 2km to this idyllic swimming spot.

Further east is the picturesque whitewashed village of **Santa-Clara-a-Velha**. It's worth wandering around its narrow streets before settling at the waterfront where dragonflies often fly through.

Inland trails

Odemira is also a stop along the **Historical Way of the Rota Vicentina** (p205), a route that stretches for 263km connecting Santiago do Cacém to Cabo de São Vicente. The easiest section from here is the 19km stage connecting you to São Teotónio, which follows the riverside. Dragonflies are common here, but if you're lucky, you may spot an otter too. The landscape is made up of strawberry trees which give the infamous *medronho* (p226). You can sample it at the **Junior Jacques Distillery**, where Afonso is preserving this age-old liqueur.

Artisanal fishing

Fishing has always been a part of the culture in Odemira. Local fishers still head out to sea (mainly in summer) from tiny ports like **Lapa de Pombas** in Almograve and **Entrada da Barca** in Zambujeira do Mar. It is a craft that uses only small-scale boats and traditional fishing techniques with rods or cast nets.

Chocolate cravings

Born in Bariloche, an Argentinian town known for its Swiss-style chocolate, Beatriz settled in Odemira where she runs the small chocolate shop **Chocolates de Beatriz** *(chocolatesdebeatriz.com; closed Sunday and Monday)*. You can fill a box with her artisanal chocolates or enjoy a delicious brownie on the terrace.



Beja

WHITEWASHED VILLAGES | RIVER BEACHES | ANCIENT WINE

There is a sense of calm in Beja. Perhaps that's why the Romans called it Pax Julia ('pax' meaning 'peace', and Julia, after emperor Julius Caesar). Even now, the city still retains this sense as you walk through its old Moorish and Jewish neighbourhoods or step inside a hidden chapel.

This is the capital of southern Alentejo, the birthplace of the region's polyphonic UNESCO heritage song, and home to numerous nature trails and a sea of whitewashed villages, each with its own charm. From riverside Mértola with its streets packed with museums to walled Serpa and its delicious trademark cheese.

While there are a few Roman relics about, it is their ancient method of producing wine that stays with you as you visit the cellars up in Vidigueira. Or you can head south to Ourique to follow the paths of the Iberian black pig.

Beja's Sacred Sites

Explore medieval and Renaissance churches

Many sweets have come out of Portuguese convents (just look at all those egg-based pastries), but some were also a stage for love tales. At age 11, Mariana Alcoforado was forced into the Convento da Conceição in Beja to become a nun. Her life story is briefly told in the **Museu Regional de Beja** *(museu regionaldebeja.pt)* housed in the former convent. She is said to be the author of the *Lettres Portugaises,* released in 1669, a collection of love letters dedicated to the French officer Noël Bouton. Her words displaying an unrequited passion touched many artists, including Matisse, who dedicated a series of lithographs to her.

Another city convent founded in the 14th century was turned into a hotel. You can walk around the cloisters of **Pousada Convento de Beja** for free, visit the Gothic chapel and step

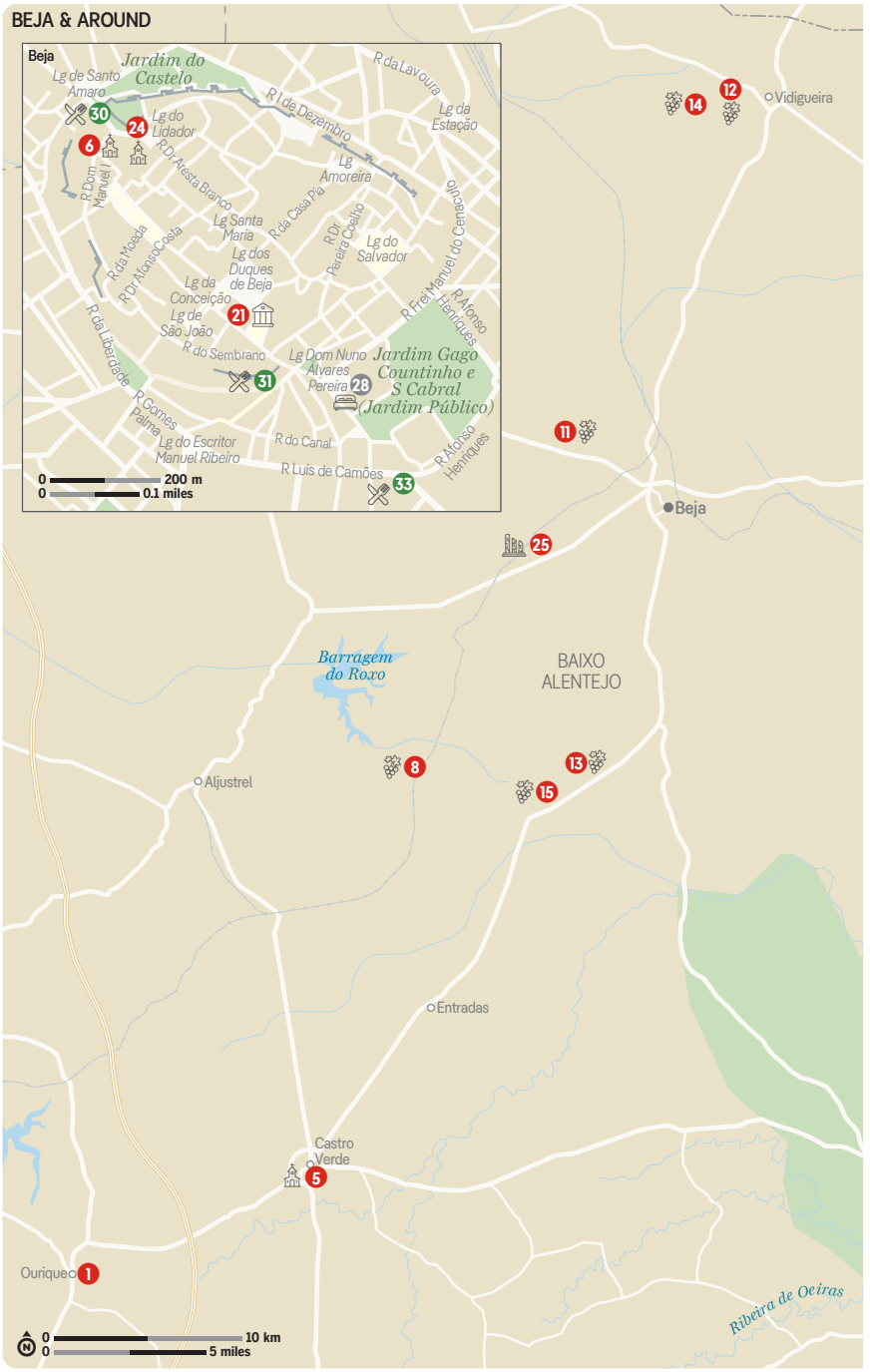
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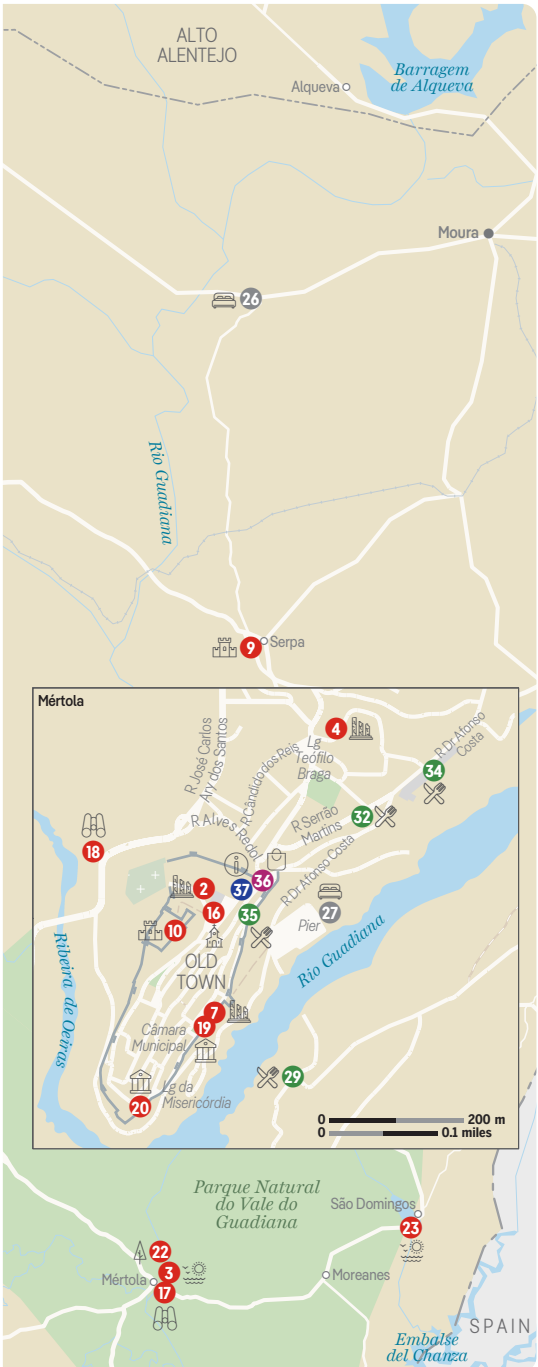
GETTING AROUND

You can take a train from Lisbon's Sete Rios terminal directly to Beja and get there in about two hours. Once there, you can hop on a bus to surrounding towns like Vidigueira (30 minutes), Serpa (35 minutes) and Mértola (one hour). In most cases, you'll have to stay overnight or cut your visit short to make it back in time for the last bus, especially on weekends when there are fewer connections. To save time, you're best off renting a car. Beja has a free parking lot next to the castle.

TOP TIP

Every two years around May, Mértola celebrates its Islamic roots with the **Festival Islâmico** *(festivalislamicodemertola.com).* A large souk takes over the streets and you'll hear music performances ranging from Arab-Andalusian influences to flamenco and even Cante Alentejano (p257).


BEJA & AROUND
Beja
Jardim do Castelo
Lg de Santo Amaro
R 1 de Dezembro
R da Lavoura
Lg da Estação
Lg do Lidador
R Dr Aresta Branco
R Dom Manuel I
Lg Amoreira
R da Casa Pia
R Dr Pereira Coelho
Lg Santa Maria
R da Moeda
R Dr Afonso Costa
Lg do Salvador
Lg dos Duques de Beja
Lg da Conceição
Lg de São João
R Frei Manuel do Cenáculo
R Afonso Henriques
R da Liberdade
R do Sembrano
Lg Dom Nuno Álvares Pereira
Jardim Gago Countinho e S Cabral (Jardim Público)
R Gomes Palma
Lg do Escritor Manuel Ribeiro
R do Canal
R Luís de Camões
R Afonso Henriques
0 200 m
0 0.1 miles
Vidigueira
Beja
Barragem do Roxo
BAIXO ALENTEJO
Aljustrel
Entradas
Castro Verde
Ourique
Ribeira de Oeiras
0 10 km
0 5 miles



SIGHTS
1. ACPA
2. Alcáçova
3. Azenhas do Guadiana
4. Basílica Paleocristão
5. Basílica Real de Nossa Senhora da Conceição
6. Capela de Nossa Senhora da Piedade
   - Casa Dona Maria (see 5)
7. Casa Romana
8. Casa Santa Vitória
9. Castelo (Serpa)
10. Castelo (Mértola)
11. Figueirinha
12. Gerações de Talha
13. Herdade da Mingorra
14. Herdade do Rocim
15. Herdade dos Grous
    - Honrado (see 12)
16. Igreja Matriz
17. Miradouro de Mértola
18. Miradouro Moinho da Bruxa
    - Museu da Lucerna (see 5)
19. Museu de Arte Sacra
    - Museu do Cante Alentejano (see 9)
    - Museu do Relógio (see 9)
20. Museu Islâmico
21. Museu Regional de Beja
22. Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana
    - Portas de Beja (see 9)
23. Praia de Mina de São Domingos
    - Praia Fluvial da Tapada Grande (see 23)
24. Sé de Beja
    - Talha Mafia (see 12)
25. Villa Romana de Pisões

SLEEPING
- Aljana Guesthouse (see 24)
26. Burrico d'Orada
27. Hotel Museu
28. Pousada Convento de Beja

EATING
29. Casa Amarela
30. Dom Dinis
31. Luiz da Rocha
    - Molhó Bico (see 9)
32. PREC
33. Sabores do Campo
34. Tamuje
35. Vila Velha

SHOPPING
36. Oficina de Tecelagem

INFORMATION
37. Turismo

BEST WINERIES NEAR BEJA

Casa Santa Vitória: *(santavitoria.pt; from €7)* Modern winery combining advanced winemaking technologies with a touch of tradition.

Herdade da Mingorra: *(mingorra.com; from €20)* Old vineyards with at least 40 years of growth result in complex wines like the award-winning Vinhas da Ira.

Herdade dos Grous: *(herdade-dos-grous.com; from €10)* Known for its well-rounded reds like the 23 Barricas and the Moon Harvest.

Figueirinha: *(figueirinha.pt; from €20)* Better known for its reds, but also does good quality whites like Tã Sómente.

Herdade do Rocim: *(rocim.pt; from €10)* Choose between *vinho de talha* and single-varietal wine tastings.



JOHN COPLAND/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sé de Beja

Continued from p249

into the Sala do Capítulo, where you can admire 16th-century frescoes. Little remains from the old church though, which was converted into a lounge.

Other noteworthy religious sites include the 16th-century **Sé de Beja** *(open 6:30pm to 7:30pm Monday to Friday),* and the hidden **Capela de Nossa Senhora da Piedade** *(closed 1pm to 2pm),* covered in gilded carvings.

A Day in the Museum Village

Where religions intersect

Mértola is the crowning jewel of the south. Housing over 14 museum units, it has been nicknamed the Museum Village. The best way to reach the town's historic centre is from **Rua da Igreja**. Here, you'll spot the **Turismo**, where you can request a map of the village, which includes the **Museu de Mértola** *(museudemertola.pt; closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm)*, a network of free museums spread across town.

Back outside, you'll often hear the sound of looms working at the **Oficina de Tecelagem**, a weaving workshop where women still craft the traditional Mértola blankets. From here, it's only a few steps to the **Igreja Matriz**, passing through benches adorned with colourful crochet covers. The church's interior reveals its past as a mosque with its well-preserved mihrab and horseshoe arches.

A TIMELESS WALK IN BEJA

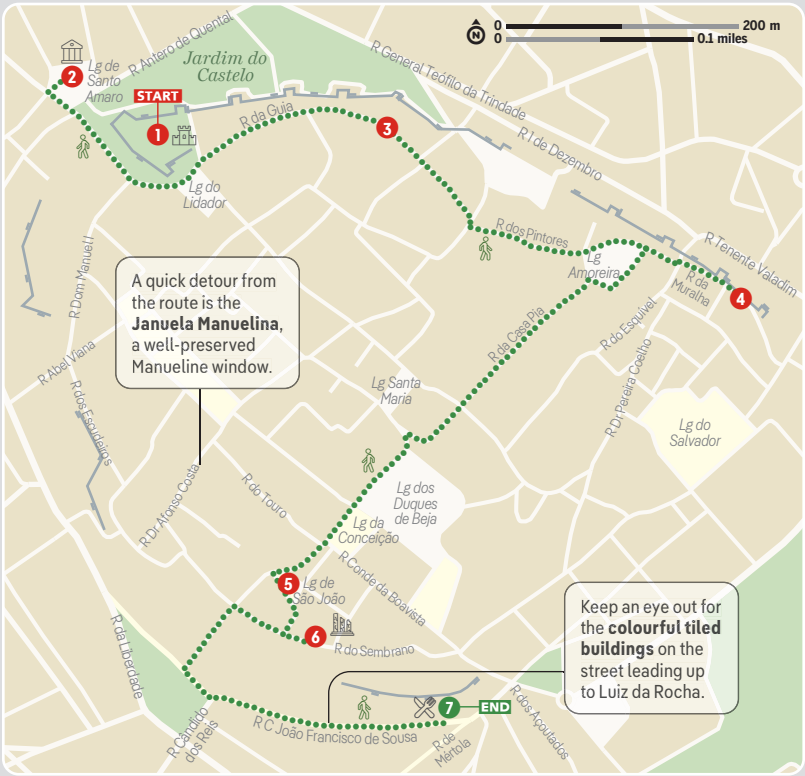
Take a trip across different eras in this walking tour though Beja's historic sites, museums and iconic facades.

START	END	LENGTH
Castelo de Beja	Luiz da Rocha	1.8km; 1 hour

The 1 **Castelo de Beja** is the best place to get your bearings before setting off on your walk. Take a moment to explore the battlements and climb up to the keep *(€2)* for the best city views. The epic music playing in the background makes you feel like you're about to go on a battle, but all you need to do is take a breath and enjoy the 360-degree view of the surrounding terracotta roofs and whitewashed houses. Back on the streets, take a small detour to the 2 **Núcleo Visigótico** *(€2)*, a tiny museum showcasing pieces from the Visigothic era found mostly around Beja.

Continue your time travel by wandering through the picturesque 3 **Judiaria** at Rua da Guia, the city's former Jewish quarter. Nearby, around 4 **Rua da Muralha**, you'll find remains of the Moorish quarter and the city's medieval wall.

Slowly make your way to Largo de São João, where you'll spot 5 **Portu-galo**, a giant cockerel made of recycled trash by the renowned Portuguese artist Bordalo II. Just opposite this piece is the 6 **Núcleo Museológico da Rua do Sembrano** *(free)*. Put on the plastic shoe covers before walking across the museum's glass platform, which hides a set of Roman thermal baths. Then wrap up at nearby 7 **Luiz da Rocha** with a coffee and a regional pastry like *porquinhos de doce* or *queijadas de requeijão*.



A LUCKY FIND

Around 1964, a local farmer came across the remains of a Roman villa while digging his agricultural land a few miles west of Beja, but it took three years for it to be taken seriously.

Occupied from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD, the **Villa Romana de Pisões** *(call ahead on 266 740 875)* is still partially covered, but among the exposed sections is a manor house with 48 rooms, many featuring ornate mosaics, as well as old thermal baths and a section for a water mirror. Like most of the Alentejo, the area was once filled with vineyards and olive groves, the fruit of which would later supply the city's markets.

Continue towards the **Castelo**. While there's evidence of fortifications here since Moorish times, the castle you see today dates back to the 13th century, when the Order of Santiago took over. It showcases a small collection of items, but it's the views of the Guadiana river and the village that make it worth the trek.

Near the castle is the **Alcáçova**, where archaeologists discovered traces of an Islamic neighbourhood. South of here, inside the town hall, is the **Casa Romana**, the remains of a Roman house uncovered in the 1980s. A small exhibit showcases items like coins, amphoras and sculptures.

Nearby **Museu Islâmica** and **Museu de Arte Sacra** are two museums featuring exhibits on Islamic art and sacred art, respectively. These reveal the different faiths that Mértola has welcomed through the ages. Finally, head east to see the **Basílica Paleocristã**, an old funerary basilica.

Road Trip Gem

Explore the historic heritage of Castro Verde

At the last stages of the N2 (p28), Portugal's infamous road trip, just before you hit the Algarve, you'll reach **Castro Verde**. From the road, this inconspicuous town might not look like much, but step out and you'll uncover plenty of hidden gems. Park up at Largo da Feira and take Rua do Fialho de Almeida. Keep your eyes on the right, where you'll spot **Casa Dona Maria**. The back of this manor house looks somewhat out of place here, but it's a fine example of neo-Gothic, neo-Manueline and neo-Islamic architecture, all made with concrete when this material was all the rage in the 1920s.

Stop by the **Museu da Lucerna** *(free; closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm)* to see a fantastic collection of Roman oil lamps and then wander to the **Basílica Real de Nossa Senhora da Conceição**, passing through a series of picturesque tiled buildings. The blue and white tiles depicted in the 18th-century basilica depict the Batalha de Ourique, a Portuguese battle where Afonso Henriques is said to have defeated five Moorish kings, proclaiming himself as the first king of Portugal.

EATING AROUND BEJA: OUR PICKS

Luiz da Rocha: Sample traditional pastries like the pig-shaped cake *porquinhos doces* at this Beja bakery. *8am-8pm* €

Molhó Bico: Take a seat at this traditional restaurant in Serpa serving black pork staples. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Thu-Sun* €

PREC: This food hub in Mértola doubles as a shop and restaurant serving top-notch vegetarian meals. *9am-5pm Mon-Fri* €

Dom Dinis: Grilled meats are the speciality at this traditional spot near Beja's castle. *12.15-3pm & 7.15-10pm Thu-Mon, lunch only Tue* €

Tamuje: Order the grilled cheese, then sample the array of game dishes like wild boar at this Mértola restaurant. *12-3pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Casa Amarela: For a dinner overlooking Mértola, head to this restaurant on the other side of the river. *12-3pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun* €€

Vila Velha: Mértola spot combining local ingredients with Arab and Portuguese flavours. *11am-10.30pm Thu-Sun, 6.30-10.30pm Wed* €€

Sabores do Campo: Delicious veggie dishes are sold by weight at this Beja spot, a rare find in meat-eating Alentejo. *12.15-3pm Mon-Fri* €€



RUDIERNST/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana

The Fresco Route

Cultural workshops and tours

Established in 1998, the **Rota do Fresco** was the first project of what would become **Spira** *(portugalheritagetours.com)*, an organisation focused on connecting people with Alentejo's cultural patrimony. As the name suggests, the route takes you to chapels and churches adorned with frescoes all across Évora and southern Alentejo. They've since increased their offer to include other experiences like harvesting cork (from €135), breadmaking (from €85), and even weaving (prices vary).

Nature Calls

Riverside walks, beaches and wildlife watching

Head southeast from Beja to reach the **Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana**, a natural park that encompasses the Guadiana river, waterfalls and wildlife. Several walking trails allow you to explore this protected area. From the centre of Mértola, you can take the **PR1 MTL**. The Poço dos Dois Irmãos is the starting point of this 10km circular trail. Along the way, you'll be greeted with superb views of Mértola and the river. The **PR9 MTL** is a bit harder to reach without a car. It begins at Monte das Pias and passes through the Moinho do Escalda before leading you to the Pulo do Lobo waterfall. This last stretch is quite demanding, with rocky cliffs that can be slippery, so proceed carefully. Around the Mina de São Domingos, an abandoned mining complex, you can follow the **PR10 MTL**, a 16km trail that passes through the village of Santana de Cambas and the old contraband routes.

SLOWING DOWN IN BAIXO ALENTEJO



Rita Valadas owns the country lodging **Burrico D'Orada** (p259; @burricodorada) in the heart of Baixo Alentejo. Here are her favourite experiences in the south.

These things can be experienced all year long, in a stunning, off-the-beaten-track region with sun nearly every day, where time does go slowly, or as we say here: *com vagar.*

Wine Tastings: Tour the wine estates and sample the *talha* wines (produced in clay amphorae).

Slow Food: We have a unique gastronomy based on natural ingredients, from top-quality extra-virgin olive oils to DOP sheep cheese and black-pig cured meats.

Slow Living: Our picturesque white-washed villages and cities – Moura, Serpa, Vidigueira, Vila de Frades, Beja and Mértola – have an ancient history that deserves discovering.

THE STORY OF VINHO DE TALHA

The Alentejo is one of few places that still produces *vinho de talha*, a type of wine created using a process introduced by the Romans. Instead of wooden barrels, these wines age inside clay amphorae, giving them more mineral touches. There are several ways of making *vinho de talha*. The classic technique involves throwing the grapes directly onto the floor, which is tilted to allow the juice to run into an underground cistern, or *talha*. Some winemakers like to throw in the stems, while others prefer to leave these out. During the fermentation process, the must (grape juice) is stirred with a large wooden paddle at least twice a day.



AITORMMFOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Serpa

For a different perspective, take in the valley views from the lookout **Miradouro Moinho da Bruxa** or cross over the bridge in Mértola for a postcard view of the town from the **Miradouro de Mértola**. You can also visit the village of **Pomarão**, near the Spanish border, to capture the Guadiana river and the neighbouring country.

Summer is ideal for a swim at the park's river beaches, such as **Azenhas do Guadiana**, **Praia Fluvial da Tapada Grande** and **Praia de Mina de São Domingos**. The water here is among the warmest in the country, often reaching 30°C.

As you enter the natural park, you'll see signs warning you to slow down due to lynxes possibly crossing the road. The endangered species was reintroduced here in 2015, following a Spanish-Portuguese breeding program. While it's rare to spot one, it's much more common to sight birds like black storks or Bonelli's eagles. **Birds & Nature** *(birds.pt)* organises one-day and week-long tours (from €300) around the area, and **Visit Mértola** *(visitmertola.pt)* has a section dedicated to birdwatching trails. Strangely, the park is also one of Portugal's biggest hunting areas. Hares, wild boars, partridges and deer are among the animals hunted here. Fishing is also allowed. Contact **Wild Fishing Portugal** *(wildfishingportugal.co.uk; prices vary)* for a guided tour.

Flavours of the Countryside

Black pig, Roman wine and cheese tastings

Ourique is proud to be the capital of the *porco Alentejano* (Alentejo pork). You can tour a local farm by contacting **ACPA** *(porcoalentejano.com; €15 per person without transport)*, an association of Alentejo pig farmers. A guide will take you around a nearby property, giving you exclusive access to the pigs in different stages, from the maternity ward to the adult phase before the *montanheira,* when the pigs go on an acorn diet.

Wine has been produced in this region for thousands of years, but it was the Romans who really gave it that extra push. In **Vidigueira**, you can still find people making wine using those same ancient methods, which is known as *vinho de talha*. **Honrado** *(honrado.pt)*, **Gerações de Talha** *(geracoesdatalha.com)* and **Talha Mafia** *(talhamafia.com)* are some of the local producers recreating this type of wine. Visit Vidigueira around the **Abertura das Talhas** between November and December to taste the wine straight from the tap.

For victuals, and a side serving of culture, it's worth stopping in the village of **Serpa** and getting lost in its maze of whitewashed streets. If you're driving, park the car outside the walls and enter through the city's medieval gates at **Portas de Beja**. Pop into one of the local cafes to sample the *queijadas de Serpa*, made with the local DOP sheep cheese or a sample cheese board at a restaurant like **Molhó Bico** (p254).

At Rua dos Cavalos, you'll find the **Museu do Cante Alentejano** *(free; closed Monday and 1pm to 2pm)*, a museum dedicated to the polyphonic songs that once echo through the fields of Alentejo but are now heard mainly in taverns. The museum walks you through the history of this choral movement, showcasing a few groups that are still active today.

A few streets down from here is the **Museu do Relógio** *(€2)*, which holds the private clock collection of the late António Tavares d'Almeida, a local business owner who loved watches. The guided tour is worth it if you want to get a real sense of the collection, which features over 2000 mechanical clocks (don't worry, they don't all ring at the same time). Highlights include the Edward East 400-year clock, which only rings at Christmas time, and a bracelet watch said to be designed by Picasso meant for ladies to use on their upper arm. The unconventional location meant they had to ask someone else for the time, like some sort of icebreaker. The tour ends at the workshop, where a watchmaker can fix all kinds of clocks. The museum is closed Mondays, and mornings Tuesday to Friday.

Afterwards, it's a short walk to Serpa's medieval **Castelo**. Climb up to the battlements for a bird's-eye view of the surrounding countryside and visit the small archaeological museum inside the walls.



THE ALENTEJO SONG

In the south of Alentejo, choral groups get together to sing the Cante Alentejano: slow-paced, a capella singing that features distinct lyrics and themes associated with love, rural life or contemporary issues. Perhaps the most well-known song is 'Grândola, Vila Morena', the anthem of the Revolution of the Carnations written by José Afonso.

In 2014 the Cante Alentejano was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. You can still hear it occasionally in local taverns and associations, but mostly during special festivities.

Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Évora p214

Heaven Inn Évora Hostel € Choose between a double room with a terrace or shared dorms at this friendly hostel with a cosy lounge facing the Igreja de São Francisco.

Monte do Serrado de Baixo €€ Cyclists love this country house on the outskirts of Évora with spacious rooms and bike tours. A delicious homemade breakfast is included, as is a tour of the on-site classic car museum.

Hotel Albergaria do Calvário €€€ Custom-made wool headboards, exposed stone walls, and old millstones dot this central hotel with 22 rooms and an apartment with a fully equipped kitchen.

Convento do Espinheiro €€€ Set in a 15th-century convent, this pet-friendly hotel offers a mix of traditional and modern rooms. Facilities include two swimming pools, a tennis court and a gym.

Estremoz p223

Bubulcus & Bolotas €€ Electricity and water are supplied by solar panels at this camping retreat half an hour from Estremoz. Bring your own tent or rent the on-site bungalow.

Solar dos Mascarenhas €€ Pets are welcome at this bright and airy hotel in the centre of Vila Viçosa. Guests can chill in the seasonal outdoor pool surrounded by regional marble cobblestones.

Casa do Gadanha €€€ A touch of the countryside in the centre of Estremoz, this minimalist hotel features 12 rooms, a bar, a swimming pool and a restaurant serving wood-fired pizzas.

Reflexos d'Alma €€€ Just off the EN372, Reflexos da Alma is a peaceful farmhouse surrounded by olive groves and pine trees. There are six themed suites, including one with a jacuzzi.

The Alqueva p224

Dom Nuno € One of the first guesthouses in Monsaraz, Dom Nuno occupies a typical whitewashed house with rooms overlooking the sprawling countryside.

Herdade dos Delgados €€€ At the foot of the Alqueva, Herdade dos Delgados offers a range of activities, including stargazing, boat tours and horse riding. Rooms face the lake or the Mourão castle.

Montimerso Skyscape €€€ Sleep under the starry skies at this sustainable property on the outskirts of Monsaraz. Cycling and hiking trails take you along the lake, with guided tours available.

Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede p230

Estalagem de Marvão €€ A mix of double and twin rooms are available at this traditional guesthouse in the heart of Marvão. Breakfast includes regional produce also featured at the on-site grocery shop.

Quinta das Lavandas €€ Nestled amid lavender fields, this farmhouse has that sweet flower scent wherever you go. Guests are welcomed with a glass of homemade *ginjinha* and treated to a pool and delicious breakfast.

A Burguesa Guest House €€ A cosy guesthouse in the centre of Castelo de Vide featuring seven rooms and an apartment. The staff can organise activities, such as birdwatching, wine tasting and mushroom walks.

Elvas p235

Elvas the Queen Residence € Double and single rooms with private and shared bathrooms are available at this self-catered accommodation in the heart of Elvas.

Hotel Vila Galé Elvas Spa & Conference €€ On the edge of the city walls is this upscale hotel with spacious rooms, two restaurants, a spa and an outdoor pool.

Gavião & Nisa p238

Gavião Nature Village €€ Set near the Alamal River beach, this large nature retreat features a camping area, cork shelters and glamping tents with sustainable decor.

A Saboeira Turismo Rural €€ A short walk from the Belver train station, this country house has rooms that can take up to four people and a lush terrace overlooking the Rio Tejo.

Vila Nova de Milfontes p239

Sitava Milfontes € No-frills camping site amid pine trees with a walking trail leading straight to Praia do Malhão.

Raminhos Guest House €€ A small guesthouse with only four rooms featuring minimalist decor and colours that evoke the landscape of Vila Nova de Milfontes.

Três Marias €€ Between Vila Nova de Milfontes and Porto Covo is this serene country house featuring 15 rooms, a swimming pool and a sauna. Bikes are also available for rent.

Monte do Zambujeiro €€€ A prime spot for birdwatching, this 70-hectare property offers one- and two-bedroom villas. Additional facilities include a saltwater pool and a gastro bar.

Porto Covo p244

O Lugar €€ Inês and Pedro run this cosy guesthouse with simple features and decor inspired by the surrounding sea. Breakfast includes homemade bread, honey and jams made by their family.

Porto Covo Praia Hotel & SPA €€€ With direct access to the beach, this seaside hotel is the perfect spot for a summer getaway. Amenities include two pools, a spa and a gym.

Comporta p245

A Serenada €€ Amid a sea of vineyards is this contemporary property half an hour south of Comporta. Wine tastings, bikes and guided walks can be arranged with the staff.

B.Hostel €€€ Not a hostel, but a luxury lodging with a lower price point than most featuring nine rooms, kitchen, living room and swimming pool.

Odemira p248

Figueirinha Ecoturismo €€ Rent a cabin or a tent at this sustainable property featuring an organic pool and a vast garden. Volunteering programs are available in exchange for a stay.

Cerro da Fontinha €€ Stay in one of the six traditional Alentejo houses and enjoy breakfast delivered to your door. Bikes, canoes and fishing rods can be rented directly at the property.

Beja p249

Hotel Museu € Facing the Guadiana River in Mértola, the Hotel Museu comes with its own museum and a swimming pool. Boat trips and kayaks can be booked at the reception.

Aljana Guesthouse €€ Just opposite the Beja Castle is this peaceful guesthouse with minimalist rooms and a secluded lavender-lined patio with a pool. Breakfast is included in the stay.

Burrico d'Orada €€ Close to Serpa, this rural property provides houses for short- and long-term stays. These can be combined with experiences like *talha* wine tastings, boat trips and grape harvest.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Évora (p214)

Estremadura & Ribatejo



HISTORY AND NATURE-INSPIRED

Medieval castles, World Heritage monasteries, and traditions that lead from the sea to the river: Estremadura and Ribatejo pack together incredible stories and magnificent nature.

Estremadura and Ribatejo are regions that convey a feeling of timelessness. Their historic towns already generate an awe-inspiring legacy, such as when various monarchs chose them as wedding gifts (Óbidos) or as the grounds for establishing great religious orders (Batalha or Tomar). Stories of kings, knights and conquests come to life here against the backdrop of extraordinary architecture.



TRABANTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Water has always played a central role in the development of these populations. The coastline of Estremadura saw the birth of generations of fishers who, braving the waves of the Atlantic, created traditions that continue to this day in the vast stretches of sand now sought after by surfers.

The Rio Tejo has also marked and continues to shape a territory that grows on its banks. In Ribatejo, the old royal hunting grounds have given way to centuries-old vineyards, olive trees and the famous Lusitano horses. The river, which once welcomed fishers from the north of the country, is still popular for fishing, boat trips, and now birdwatching.

Although tourism is growing year on year, life remains calm in Estremadura and Ribatejo. This is a more contemplative side of Portugal, where you can get into the rhythm of rural life, indulge in the richness of regional cuisine, and uncover the many layers of history that have shaped the country.

THE MAIN AREAS

ÓBIDOS
Picturesque medieval town.
p266

LEIRIA
Beautiful castle and literary heritage.
p277

TOMAR
City of the Knights Templar.
p287

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

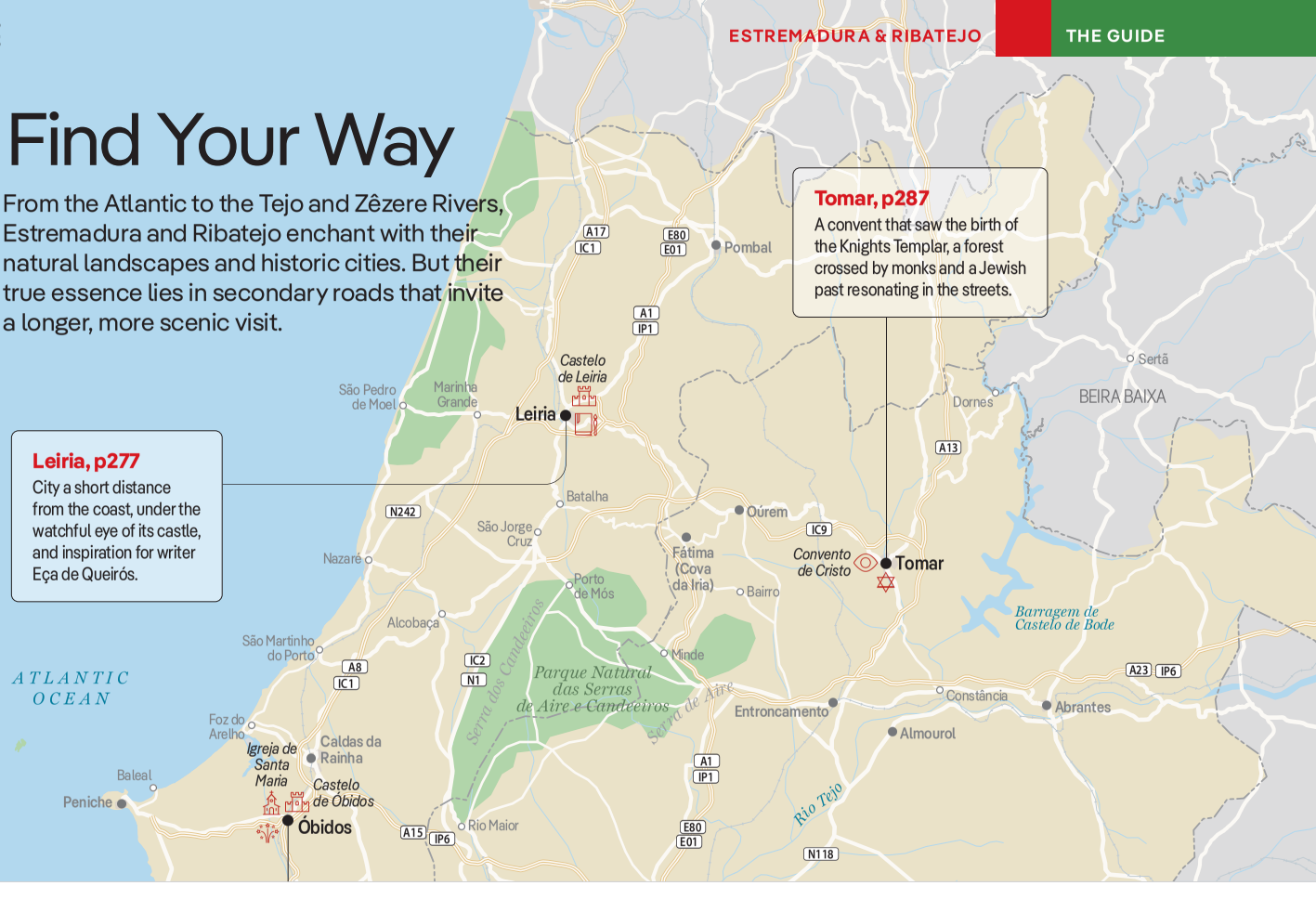
Left: Leiria (p277); Above: Porta da Vila (p271), Óbidos

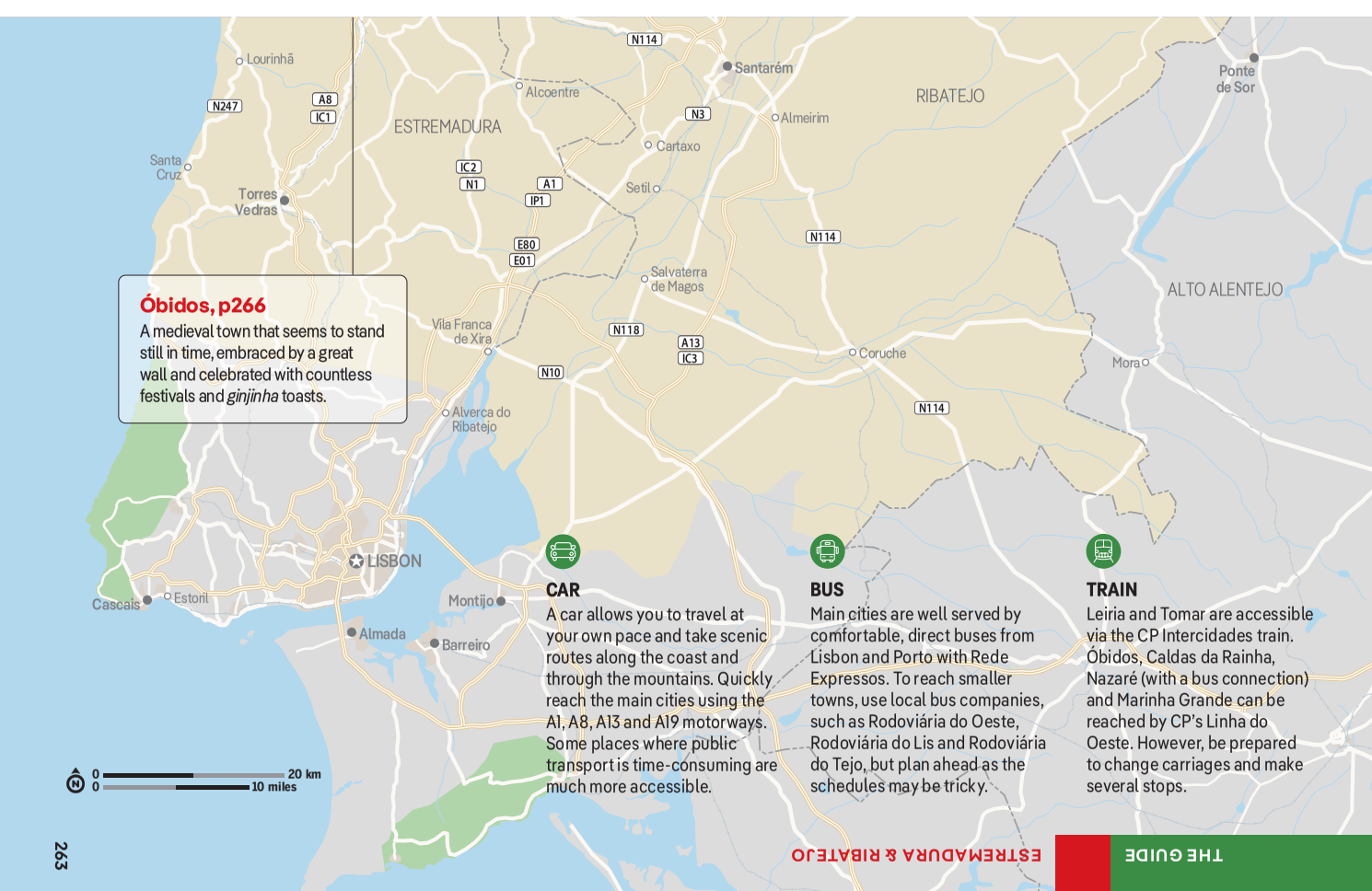
Find Your Way

From the Atlantic to the Tejo and Zêzere Rivers, Estremadura and Ribatejo enchant with their natural landscapes and historic cities. But their true essence lies in secondary roads that invite a longer, more scenic visit.

Tomar, p287
A convent that saw the birth of the Knights Templar, a forest crossed by monks and a Jewish past resonating in the streets.

Leiria, p277
City a short distance from the coast, under the watchful eye of its castle, and inspiration for writer Eça de Queirós.





Óbidos, p266
A medieval town that seems to stand still in time, embraced by a great wall and celebrated with countless festivals and *ginjinha* toasts.

CAR
A car allows you to travel at your own pace and take scenic routes along the coast and through the mountains. Quickly reach the main cities using the A1, A8, A13 and A19 motorways. Some places where public transport is time-consuming are much more accessible.

BUS
Main cities are well served by comfortable, direct buses from Lisbon and Porto with Rede Expressos. To reach smaller towns, use local bus companies, such as Rodoviária do Oeste, Rodoviária do Lis and Rodoviária do Tejo, but plan ahead as the schedules may be tricky.

TRAIN
Leiria and Tomar are accessible via the CP Intercidades train. Óbidos, Caldas da Rainha, Nazaré (with a bus connection) and Marinha Grande can be reached by CP's Linha do Oeste. However, be prepared to change carriages and make several stops.

Plan Your Time

Hit the main historical monuments and museums, but leave time to discover the beautiful natural scenery of this region. Enjoy the beaches, travel through the mountains or explore the riverbanks of the Tejo and Zêzere.



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Mosteiro de Alcobaça (p283)

If You Only Have One Day

- Head to **Óbidos** (p266) to discover Portugal's most beautiful medieval village. Start with a tour of the **town's churches** (p271), which are art museums in themselves, followed by a visit to the **castle** (p266) and a walk around the medieval walls. Along the way, enter the unique **bookshops** (p270) that gave Óbidos the name 'literary village'. Don't leave town without visiting the local **ceramists' shops** (p269) and wandering through the more-hidden and charming little streets.

- After a light lunch at Óbidos' vegetarian restaurant, **Avocado** (p268), head to the coast. At Foz do Arelho, go on a **kayaking adventure** (p274) in the beautiful Lagoa de Óbidos and learn more about this aquatic ecosystem. Finish the day with a gorgeous sunset over the Atlantic at the **oceanic viewpoints** (p274).

Seasonal Highlights

The region hibernates during the winter but bursts back to life in the spring and summer. This is the perfect time to enjoy the seaside and wander through the streets.

FEBRUARY

With vibrant parades, colourful allegorical cars and lively street parties, **Carnival** is celebrated in Leiria as one of the city's most fun and anticipated annual festivities.

MARCH

Óbidos is home to the delicious **Festival Internacional do Chocolate** (p269), which attracts countless people every year to taste the best chocolates made in Portugal and enjoy impressive chocolate sculptures.

MAY

On 13 May, Fátima welcomes thousands of pilgrims from all over the world to celebrate the first apparition of **Our Lady** (p286) to the three little shepherds with masses and processions.

Three Days to Go Around

- After a visit to **Óbidos** (p266), head to **Peniche** (p272) to visit the Fortaleza de Peniche, reborn as Museu Nacional Resistência e Liberdade, and then try a **surf lesson** (p273).

- The next day, take a boat to **Berlengas Island** (p275) to walk its trails. In the afternoon, hit the road and head to **Caldas da Rainha** (p274) to take the Bordaliana Route and spend the night.

- On the third day, with renewed energy, stop in **Batalha** (p284) to visit the incredible monastery – Mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitória (or Mosteiro da Batalha), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Then, head north to **Leiria** (p277) and stroll through the city-centre streets, which inspired the famous book by Eça de Queirós (p281), *O Crime do Padre Amaro*.

One Week or More to Spare

- Start in **Leiria** (p277) and visit the **city museum** (p279) to learn about its history. Climb to the **castle** (p277) to see the views and follow the **Crime do Padre Amaro Route** (p280), which will take you through the streets of the historic centre.

- It will take you a day to visit the monasteries of **Alcobaça** (p283) and **Batalha** (p284). Leave another to explore the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros trails and enter the famous **Mira de Aire Caves** (p286).

- After stopping at the **Santuário de Fátima** (p286), head to **Tomar** (p287) to explore the impressive **Convento de Cristo** (p290), wander through the historic streets and visit the ancient **synagogue** (p287). If you have more days, continue travelling along the picturesque banks of the Zêzere and Tejo Rivers.

JUNE

Santarém hosts the **National Agriculture Fair**, the country's largest event combining agriculture, gastronomy and entertainment. The fair attracts visitors from all over, with exhibitions, tastings and folklore shows.

JULY

It's time for the **Templar Festival** in Tomar. This historical reenactment celebrates the city's Templar heritage with parades, medieval fairs, tournaments, theatre performances, guided tours and plenty of music.

AUGUST

Summer is ideal for enjoying the trails and **birdwatching** in the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros (p286), home to various bird species, such as the round-winged eagle and the barn owl.

NOVEMBER

The **big wave season** begins in Nazaré, and fans of the sport start to keep a close eye on the ocean forecasts to see the best big wave surfers in action.

Óbidos



MEDIEVAL CHARM | BEAUTIFUL SCENERY | FESTIVALS

GETTING AROUND

Take the one-hour bus ride from Lisbon with Rodoviária do Oeste, which leaves from Campo Grande and drops you off at the village entrance (adult/child €9/4.50). Alternatively, if you prefer the flexibility of driving and don't mind paying tolls, you can rent a car and take the A8 highway. There is a large parking lot right next to the village.

Cars are not allowed inside the medieval walls, but even if that weren't the case, walking through its beautiful streets and alleys is always the best way to experience this place.

TOP TIP

The cobblestone pavement may be one of the biggest dangers for visitors in Óbidos. The stone, polished by time, becomes extremely slippery, especially on steeper streets or rainy days. Make sure you wear comfortable shoes with good grip.

No matter how many pictures you see of Óbidos, the feeling you get when entering the walls of this medieval town is always unique. It's like stepping through an open portal on a timeline, being transported to a scene that could be the setting for a historical movie.

Óbidos enchants with its cobbled streets and white houses trimmed in blue and brightened with the red of the bougainvilleas. Its history lurks around every corner, told by ancient churches or the skilled hands of the artisans who keep the local traditions alive.

Life buzzes along on Rua Direita under the imposing presence of the castle, with many souvenir stores and small stalls selling the famous *ginjinha* (cherry liqueur). However, to truly experience the town's charm, you must wander the inner streets to enjoy the pleasant silence and understand why this village was a wedding gift for many Portuguese queens.

Embrace Óbidos

Visit the castle and ramparts

As much as there is to see in Óbidos, the **Castelo de Óbidos** seems to speak the loudest. As you approach the structure, the incredible walls and towers rise imposingly, an invitation to explore its historic past. Entering through the large arched gateway, you come across the fortress initially built by the Moors in the 12th century and later enlarged under the Portuguese crown, featuring a mixture of architectural styles that reflect this heritage.

Climb the stone steps to the **Muralha de Óbidos** – next to the Pousada do Castelo (p294) or beside the **Porta da Vila** – and you'll get stunning panoramic views of the surrounding countryside, dotted with small villages, agricultural fields and beautiful hills. On the inside of the walls, the roofs of Óbidos' houses and churches spread out below, creating a beautiful image that seems frozen in time. Walking along the 1.5km of the old walls that embrace the town, following the narrow, uneven paths, and climbing the watchtowers, you can almost imagine the medieval life that once existed here.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Castelo de Óbidos
2 Igreja de Santa Maria
3 Muralha de Óbidos

SIGHTS
4 Mariquinhas Experience
5 Museu Abílio de Mattos e Silva
6 Museu Municipal de Óbidos
● Porta da Vila (see 3)

SLEEPING
7 Casa das Senhoras Rainhas
8 Hotel Josefa d'Óbidos
9 Hotel Real d'Óbidos
10 Literary Man
● Pousada do Castelo de Óbidos (see 1)
11 Pousada Vila de Óbidos

EATING
12 Avocado Coffee & Healthy Food
● Book & Cook (see 10)
13 Já!mon Já!mon
14 Real Casa do Petisco

DRINKING
15 Arco da Cadeia
16 Bar Ibn Errik Rex
17 Cafetaria da Moura
18 Letraria

ENTERTAINMENT
19 Festival Internacional do Chocolate
20 Folio
21 Mercado Medieval de Óbidos

SHOPPING
22 Casa dos Azulejos
● Livraria Artes e Letras (see 12)
23 Livraria de Santiago
24 Livraria do Mercado
25 Óbidos Market
● Oficina do Barro (see 6)

JOSEFA D'ÓBIDOS

Born in Seville in 1630, Josefa d'Óbidos was an important baroque painter and one of the few recognised female artists of her time.

After a brief passage through religious life, she spent most of her time in Óbidos, where, after learning the art from her father – the painter Baltazar Gomes Figueira – she produced an extensive portfolio marked by religious themes, still lifes and portraits. Her artwork significantly enriched Portugal's cultural heritage and brought recognition to Óbidos.

Today, she is a symbol of local pride, with her creations on display in museums and churches all over the village and also across the country.

Framed Past

Getting to know Óbidos' museums

Hidden between the various souvenir shops on Óbidos' main street, the **Museu Municipal de Óbidos** *(turismo.obidos.pt; free)* is a treasure trove of religious art from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Housed in an elegant 18th-century manor, the museum's collection includes not only objects of religious worship but also sculptures and paintings. The works of the renowned painter Josefa d'Óbidos are a highlight of this museum, but don't miss the striking pieces by André Reinoso, Baltazar Gomes Figueira or Belchior de Matos that also adorn the walls.

Leaving the museum and turning right towards the Igreja de Santa Maria, you will find the **Museu Abílio de Mattos e Silva** *(turismo.obidos.pt; free)*. What once was the town hall, courthouse and jail is now the stage for the works of the great 20th-century Portuguese painter Abílio de Mattos e Silva, who was also a set and costume designer. Three floors display various approaches to the artist's work, where there is no shortage of colours and details of Óbidos; after all, he lived in the town and drew inspiration from it. Make sure you don't go on a Monday, as both museums are closed.

Get Local

Tour the medieval village with an expert

Immerse yourself in Óbidos by following in the footsteps of a local. Silver Coast Travelling's guide will take you on a two-hour tour of **Medieval Óbidos** *(silvercoasttravelling.com; adult/child €30/10; two-person minimum)*, going through the main sights, sometimes along lesser-known paths, and revealing the stories and curiosities that make this a unique place. You'll learn how the Romans used sour cherry before the first Portuguese monks developed the famous liqueur; see five original paintings by the baroque painter Josefa d'Óbidos, considered a true national treasure; and visit the church that was deconsecrated and turned into a bookstore, a unique case in Portugal.

Time Travelling

Experience the annual medieval market

Voices fill the air, shared with the smoke coming from the grills and the sound of bagpipes. There's a lot of excitement on the grounds of the Castelo de Óbidos, just like in the Middle Ages. This journey back in time takes place every year in July with the **Mercado Medieval de Óbidos** *(mercadomedievalobidos.pt; adult/child €10/8)*. Here, you can sample ancient

EATING IN ÓBIDOS: OUR PICKS

Avocado Coffee & Healthy Food: For lighter meals/veg dishes, this is the place. In summer, opt for a seat on the terrace. *10am-6pm Wed-Sun* €

Real Casa do Petisco: *Petiscos* (tapas/snacks) are king here. Indulge in the royal meat pastry, or try the crunchy pig belly. *noon-10.30pm Tue-Sun* €

Já!mon Já!mon: This restaurant with a lovely terrace offers excellent tapas, including good veg options. *12.30-3.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

Book & Cook: Dine in the library of the Literary Man (p294), with dishes inspired by Portuguese book titles. *noon-3pm Fri-Sun, 7-10pm Mon-Sun* €€

delicacies in one of the many taverns and watch role-plays, demonstrations, and musical performances. And even be part of the **King's Court** *(adult/child €79/39)*, watching a historical reenactment up close and tasting a royal banquet.

Ceramic Lovers

See the artists at work

The **Oficina do Barro** *(lcmarialourenco@hotmail.com)*, near the Museu Municipal de Óbidos, attracts attention as soon as you enter for the colours and details of the pieces on display and for sale, but the real appeal is often in the centre of the room, with local artists creating live. Just 30m away, in a small lane, is the **Casa dos Azulejos** *(azulejosobidos@gmail.com)*. Here, traditional tiles fill the small atelier from floor to ceiling, and you can watch part of the creative process. And why not book a tile-painting workshop?

Sweet Festivities

Indulge in this unique chocolate festival

Chocolate doesn't pair well with heat, so every spring, between March and April, Óbidos gets sweeter with the **Festival Internacional do Chocolate** *(festivalchocolate.cm-obidos.pt; adult/child €10/8)*. Held for more than 20 editions, this festival brings the best cocoa products made in Portugal to the streets of the medieval town. Count on chocolate sculptures, live demonstrations with chefs and various exhibitors, where you can taste (and take home) the best pieces of chocolate, bonbons and tablets. There's also a workshop where kids can get their hands dirty…with chocolate.

Showcasing the Cherry

Dive deep into Ginja de Óbidos

The sour cherry–coloured red awnings are a clue, as are the large glass jugs on the back wall as soon as you walk in the door. The **Mariquinhas Experience** *(licobidos.com)* in Rua Direita was created to showcase the famous Óbidos liqueur and all the history behind one of the region's oldest producers. Here, you can taste the main products made from sour cherries – try the liqueur aged in French oak barrels, accompanied by delicious chocolate truffles – and learn about the history of this family-run business, which is now in its third generation. If you are eager to know even more about Ginja de Óbidos, you can also book a visit to the Mariquinhas factory and cellars *(visitas@licobidos.com)* in Gaeiras.

GINJA DE ÓBIDOS

Originating in the 17th century, Ginja de Óbidos is a traditional Portuguese liqueur and a local speciality. The recipe, passed down through generations, is made with sour cherries, produced and harvested by hand in the Óbidos region. It includes fruit, alcohol, sugar and water, resulting in a sweet and aromatic drink.

Óbidos has always played an important role in popularising *ginjinha* (the term used by locals), a drink that has transcended its regional origins to be enjoyed all over Portugal and even abroad. It is often served in edible chocolate cups, a delightful twist that enhances the unique flavour of this drink. Ginja de Óbidos is celebrated for its delicious taste and as a testament to the traditions of the Óbidos region.

DRINKING IN ÓBIDOS: OUR PICKS

Arco da Cadeia: History fills the atmosphere of this bar under the arcade of Óbidos' old town jail. Enjoy the medieval decor. *11am-8pm Mon-Sun*

Bar Ibn Errik Rex: Former antique store transformed into a pub. Ask for the house *ginjinha* and try a grilled *linguiça* sausage. *11am-midnight Wed-Mon*

Letraria: Next to the walls of Óbidos, perfect for enjoying a good craft beer. There are 12 different ones to choose from. *noon-3pm & 6-11pm Wed-Sun*

Cafetaria da Moura: Have your first taste of *ginjinha* here next to Porta da Vila, or celebrate the last one of your trip. *9am-7pm Tue-Sun*

WHY I LOVE ÓBIDOS



Marlene Marques, Lonely Planet writer

When I had the opportunity to visit Óbidos during the COVID-19 pandemic, I found an empty town where only a few locals had their doors open in an attempt to welcome those few passing through. I thought I was living the dream: Óbidos all to myself. But something was missing. It lacked the excitement of people walking along Rua Direita, making toasts with *ginjinha* and buying flower crowns, or the actors dressed in medieval costumes and the debates over books at local festivals; it was also missing the silence of the churches disturbed by the occasional 'ahhh' or 'ohhh' of admiration. All this and the people who keep the flame of tradition burning in this town are why I love Óbidos.

Between Books

Explore the literary village

As you climb the stairs of the **Livraria de Santiago**, inside the 12th-century Igreja de São Tiago and right next to the castle's entrance, an unexpected surprise awaits. Once filled with devout worshippers, the benches have been replaced by tables and shelves filled with books. This sacred space, once a place of religious activity, now hums with the quiet joy of reading.

But this is just the beginning of your literary adventure in Óbidos. Member of UNESCO's **Creative Cities Network** *(turismo.obidos.pt/en/obidos-city-of-literature)* since 2015, the village is home to various unique bookshops.

In the **Livraria do Mercado**, on Rua Direita, secondhand books are infused with the scents of fresh produce from local farmers sold in-store.

Also, at the village entrance, next to the collaborative space Espaço Ó, lies the **Livraria Artes e Letras**, a century-old wine cellar that has been reborn as a sanctuary for old books.

Celebrating the Written Word

Experience the International Literary Festival

Since its first edition in 2015, the **Folio** *(Festival Literário Internacional de Óbidos; foliofestival.com; free)* has brought into town big names in national and international literature, including Nobel Prize winners. From book launches to readings, talks with authors, autograph sessions and even concerts, every door in Óbidos seems to open to welcome booklovers during October.

A Special House

Finding local gems in Óbidos

There are many stores in Óbidos, but this one stands out with the bright colours of its bougainvillea flowers and the musical chords coming from the top floor. As you walk up the stairs, you will enter the **Óbidos Market** *(obidosmarket@casadabuganvilia.pt)*. This place prides itself on selling only Portuguese products, many of which come from the art and imagination of the locals. The market extends to every room in the house, where you can find everything from handmade clothes to jewellery, ceramics, and even wines and gastronomy products. It's worth spending half an hour or so browsing, where you could stumble across a special souvenir.

DISCOVERING ART & RELIGION IN ÓBIDOS

Discover some of Óbidos' most remarkable painters on a walking tour of the village churches.

START	END	LENGTH
Igreja de São João Baptista	Igreja de Santa Maria	1km; 1½ hours

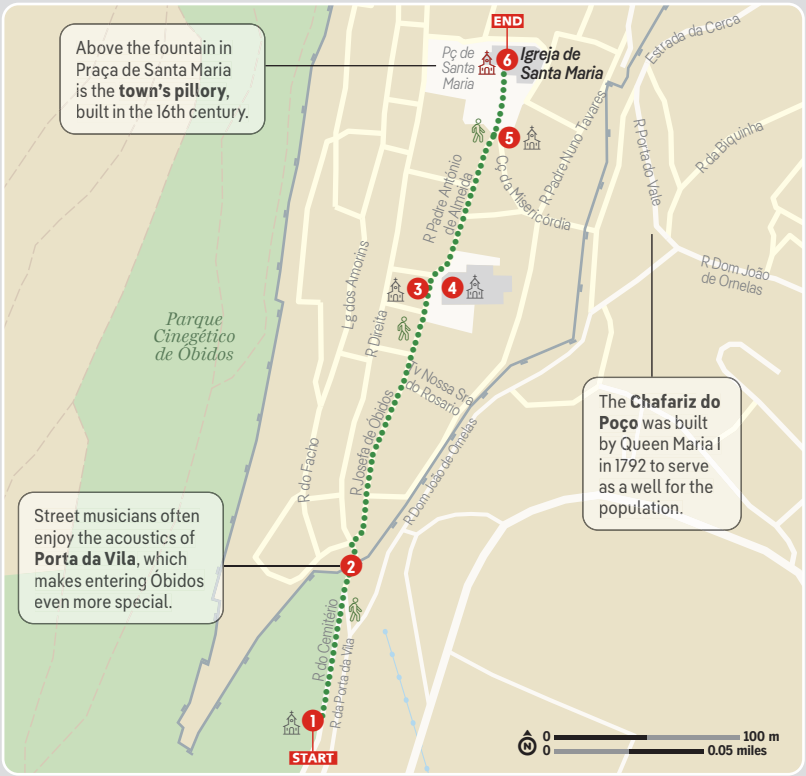
Each church in Óbidos is a testament to the town's amazing history, but they also pay tribute to saints and operate as museums.

Start with the 1 **Igreja de São João Baptista**. Founded in 1309 by Queen Santa Isabel, it is now the Museu Paroquial de Óbidos. It houses pieces of religious art, each a masterpiece in its own right.

Head inside the village walls, past the 2 **Porta da Vila**. Pause, look up, and marvel at the images depicted in the 18th-century blue-and-white tiles that fill the oratory chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, the town's patron saint.

Walk along Rua Josefa d'Óbidos to Largo de São Pedro to visit the 3 **Capela de São Martinho**, a 14th-century Gothic tomb, and the 4 **Igreja de São Pedro**, just opposite. This is the final resting place of painter Josefa d'Óbidos.

Take Rua Padre António de Almeida to reach the 5 **Igreja da Misericórdia**, which showcases creations by the painter André Reinoso. Right next door, in Praça de Santa Maria, is the 6 **Igreja de Santa Maria**, one of the most important churches in Óbidos, with paintings and panels from the 17th century by Josefa d'Óbidos, João Costa, André Reinoso and Marcos da Cruz. Ask one of the church caretakers to walk you through the art.



Beyond Óbidos



Now that you have explored every corner of Óbidos, head to the coast to find unique traditions and immerse in nature.

Places

Peniche p272
Foz do Arelho p274
Caldas da Rainha p274
Nazaré p276

GETTING AROUND

Rodoviária do Oeste *(rodoviariadooeste.pt)* offers direct bus connections between Óbidos and nearby towns. However, at certain hours, you may have to make a connection with a Rede Expressos *(rede-expressos.pt)* bus in Caldas da Rainha. To fully explore the area, a car is your best bet. Keep in mind that parking can be a challenge during the summer months, and some car parks have parking meters, so take some coins with you.

It's time to venture out of the village of Óbidos and explore the surrounding region, which is full of natural attractions and also traditions and stories that make the fabric of this land.

From the fishers of Peniche to the shellfish gatherers in the Lagoa de Óbidos to the women of the seven skirts of Nazaré: the people you'll meet are strong and straightforward, with skin wrinkled by the sun and a tireless desire to continue the crafts passed by their grandparents.

And then there's nature, wild and untamed, challenged by modern-day surfers, or calm and serene, providing sanctuary for the migratory birds that make their home here. This is a land of contrasts that invites you to explore.

Peniche

TIME FROM ÓBIDOS: **30 MINS**

A story of resistance

The **Fortaleza de Peniche**, once a formidable defence against pirates, underwent a profound transformation in 1934. It was repurposed into a prison, a symbol of oppression under the Portuguese dictatorial regime.

The Revolution of the Carnations in 1974 led to the release of the prisoners and, 50 years later, in 2024, the fortress was reborn as the **Museu Nacional Resistência e Liberdade** *(museunacionalresistencialiberdade-peniche.gov.pt; adult/child €8/free)*.

After coming across a long mural filled with 2626 names of the men who were imprisoned, the Parlatory is the first stop on this visit. On a less busy day, silence fills this cold, white-tiled room, but it is broken by the strong sentences written on the glass. You can almost hear the guards shouting.

Next is the old prison block, where the leading exhibition tells the story of fascism in Portugal and the resistance against the regime.

As you ascend the original staircase, each step takes you closer to the cells, small rooms that once held the men who fought against oppression. The visit culminates with the echoes of revolutionary chants and the flickering light of old videos, transporting you to the heart of the revolution that changed the country forever.



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Bobbin-lacemaking

Ancestral lace

The windows of the **Escola da Renda de Bilros** are large and attract the attention of passersby in Peniche's central garden. Inside, the lacemakers handle the small wooden pieces – the bobbins – that intertwine the threads that make one of Portugal's most famous laces. Open during school hours, go in to see the details of this handicraft, which has more than four centuries of history. And if you're visiting in July, in this same park, you can attend the **Mostra Internacional de Renda de Bilros de Peniche** *(museu.rendabilros@cm-peniche.pt)*, a three-day event with more than 100 bobbin-lace artisans working live.

To delve deeper into the art of bobbin-lacemaking, a mere 400m away, behind the Igreja de São Pedro, lies the **Museu da Renda dos Bilros de Peniche** *(cm-peniche.pt/visitar; free)*.

Surf capital

Every year, surf fans turn to **Praia de Supertubos** to watch one of the best **World Surf League events** *(worldsurfleague.com/events; free)*. But Peniche's surfing potential goes so much further, offering amazing surf spots such as **Molhe Leste**, **Cerro**, **Baía**, **Cantinho da Baía**, **Prainha** or **Lagide**.

If you want to test your surfing skills, Peniche is one of the best destinations in Portugal to do so. Most hotels, hostels and surf camps have a surf school, and you can also go to a beach bar, such as **Bar do Bruno** *(balealsurfcamp.com)*, and ask to take a lesson (€35 to €90) or rent a surfboard (€10 to €25).

PENICHE'S BEST PHOTO SPOTS



Angela Santos, photographer and author of the *Blonde Around the World* travel blog, suggests the best places to photograph her hometown. *@blonde.aroundtheworld*

Berlengas: The islands are a photographic paradise! The seabed is rich in natural beauty but also in shipwrecks. And as you walk along the island's hiking trails, you'll be amazed by every landscape that comes your way.

Bairro do Visconde: One of the city's most photogenic places. Next to the cliffs near the fortress, and with an incredible colour palette, the neighbourhood is a real 'postcard', full of delightful details.

Baleal Island: It has its own surf vibe and energy. If you're lucky enough, you'll see the sun descend over the horizon as it hides behind Berlenga Grande.

EATING IN PENICHE: OUR PICKS

HOWM Baleal: For breakfast or a light meal, enjoy the surfer vibes in this restaurant. Live music on the weekend. *8am-11.30pm Mon-Sun* €

Tasca do Joel: Even the locals consider it the best restaurant in Peniche. Ask for the *ovos rotos* with codfish. *noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Tue-Sun* €€

Taberna do Ganhão: Go for the appetisers with a cold beer and look out on lovely Prainha beach in Baleal. *12.30-3.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

Mirandum: In this small restaurant, you can savour the freshest seafood in Peniche, caught locally. *12.30-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Thu-Tue* €€€

GO BIRDWATCHING



Photographer **Tiago Pinto** shares the newest birdwatching spot to visit in the Lagoa de Óbidos. *@tiagophotos*

The Braço da Barrosa is one of the most important indentations in the **Lagoa de Óbidos**, and it's here that you can find the **Cais Palafítico da Barrosa**. This pier on stilts, surrounded by the peaceful landscape of the lagoon, was rebuilt in 2023 and now has a beautiful footbridge. Just a few metres away, you also have the **Observatório da Barrosa**, a wooden structure resembling the prow of a boat, built as a birdwatching spot. You can get here by car or walk the trail from Foz do Arelho, which will take about an hour or so.

Foz do Arelho

TIME FROM ÓBIDOS: **15 MINS**

Kayak around the lagoon

What better way to explore the **Lagoa de Óbidos** than by navigating its waters? Departing from Praia da Foz do Arelho, next to the trailer park, **Intertidal's guided kayak tour** *(intertidal.pt; adult/child €35/20)* will take you paddling through the lagoon's calm waters for three hours, learning about the local biodiversity. Maybe even taste the glasswort or have a chat with some of the local shellfish gatherers.

Play with art

On the south side of Lagoa de Óbidos, tucked away in a residential area, 30 minutes away from Foz do Arelho, is **Natasha Faria's atelier**. The papier-mâché artist channels her art and love for shapes and colours into the **Brinquedaria** *(+351930581688; atelie.natashafaria@gmail.com; minimum three participants)* workshops. In these two-hour sessions for children and families, Natasha takes the little artists through the different stages of creating traditional toys, from recycling materials to painting the toys that come to life and can be taken home at the end.

Catch the sunset

Already darkened by the sea breeze, the **Passadiços Oceânicos** *(centerofportugal.com/poi/foz-do-arelho-wooden-paths; free)* offer one of the most beautiful views in the west. The 800m wooden path, designed by landscape architect Nádia Schilling, follows and protects the cliffs north of Lagoa de Óbidos. Go at the end of the day for an unforgettable sunset.

Caldas da Rainha

TIME FROM ÓBIDOS: **15 MINS**

On Bordalo's trail

Walk through the streets of Caldas da Rainha on the **Rota Bordaliana** *(cityguide.cm-caldas-rainha.pt/#download)*, a one-hour independent tour from the city's train station to **Parque Dom Carlos I**, celebrating 19th-century Portuguese artist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro. Marvel at his creativity and love for human caricatures and animal figures, like the character Zé Povinho in Praça 25 de Abril or the snails adorning the tourism office. As you pass through Praça da República, known as **Praça da Fruta**, enjoying Bordalo's masterpieces, take in the vibrant colours and scents of the **daily market**, offering fresh fruit, flowers and a genuine taste of local life.

EATING IN CALDAS DA RAINHA: OUR PICKS

Cais do Parque: Enjoy a pleasant meal while enjoying the beautiful surroundings of Parque Dom Carlos I. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Fri-Tue* €

Real Balcão 5: This restaurant was established in a historic hardware store, and it is celebrated for its *petiscos*. *noon-midnight Mon-Sat* €

Maria dos Cacos: A modern restaurant dedicated to the art of ceramics, offering lovely *petiscos*. *12.30-2.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat* €€

Solar dos Amigos: Hearty portions of Portuguese dishes are served, ranging from codfish *tiborna* to *cascos à Ribatejo*. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Thu-Tue* €€

EXPLORING NATURE AT BERLENGA GRANDE

Follow the trail along Berlenga Grande, a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, to discover its natural beauty.

START	END	LENGTH
Bairro dos Pescadores	Bairro dos Pescadores	4km; 2–3 hours

Take a boat from the **Marina de Peniche** to visit **Berlenga Grande** *(berlengaspass.icnf.pt; €3)*, the main island of the Berlengas archipelago.

Upon arrival, the trail starts near the ❶ **Bairro dos Pescadores**, following ❷ **Carreiro do Mosteiro**, the hillside where the Mosteiro da Misericórdia once stood.

As you follow the trail to the left, towards the lighthouse, pause to observe the ❸ **Carreiro dos Cações**. This gap was once a popular spawning spot for dogfish and is proof of the island's rich biodiversity. Together with Carreiro do Mosteiro, it forms the narrowest part of the island.

The path to the ❹ **Farol da Berlenga** is steep. After all, you're reaching the highest point on the island: 92m above sea level. From here, follow the dirt track to the island's ❺ **southwestern tip**. It is a privileged spot to see Cova do Sono, a bay where fishers shelter their boats from storms.

Before heading back, make the descent to the ❻ **Forte de São João Baptista**, one of the island's landmarks. And if it's a hot day, why not take a dip off the small pier? Bring your goggles!

Once back at Carreiro dos Cações, you can return to Bairro dos Pescadores and finish the official trail or detour and walk around the Ilha Velha.



THE SEVEN SKIRTS OF NAZARÉ

When you pass by Sítio da Nazaré, you will encounter vendors dressed in the traditional seven skirts. Local women have long worn this garment, and many stories surround it. One links to the mystical number seven. As the local community says, there are seven colours in the rainbow, seven waves in the sea, seven days of the week, seven musical notes...and seven Nazarene skirts.

Another tale ties the skirts to the community's fishing heritage. Fishers' wives would wait on the beach at night, using half their skirts to sit on and the other half to stay warm while awaiting their husbands' return, ready to help with the catch.



HAKANYALICIN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Praia da Nazaré

Nazaré

TIME FROM ÓBIDOS: **30 MINS**

Drying in the sun

The fish-sellers with aprons around their waists and cloths on their heads, their skin as dry as the fish in front of them, are an everyday occurrence at Praia da Nazaré – selling their wares as part of the **Museu (Vivo) do Peixe Seco** *(centerofportugal.com/entity/dry-fish-museum-of-nazare; free)*. Start by engaging with them and observing the *paneiros* (wooden racks), where horse mackerel, sardines and octopuses are left to dry in the sun. Despite the fishy smell, it is not as unpleasant as one might expect. The dried fish can be purchased and tasted, although it may not suit everyone's palate.

After immersing yourself in this fishing scene, cross the street and step into the Cultural Centre. This second part of the museum is a gateway into the history of this tradition and the people of Nazaré.

Searching for big waves

Between November and February, the giant wave season opens in Nazaré, and the best place to see them is next to the **Forte de São Miguel Arcanjo** *(cm-nazare.pt; adult/child €2/free)*, housing the **Centro Interpretativo do Canhão da Nazaré**. From here, you can experience the force of the waves crashing on the rocks and beach and even feel the salty breeze they generate. On the way down to the fortress, don't miss the statue of the **Surfista Veado**, a mighty tribute to Nazaré's greatest legend and to the surfers who bravely face the world's biggest waves.



Leiria

LITERARY HERITAGE | MUSEUMS | SCENIC RIVER

Leiria is a blend of history, culture and nature. As you walk through its streets, the echoes of a literary heritage whisper around every corner, inspired by the Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós, who found his muse in this city.

Perched atop a green hill, the Castelo de Leiria stands as a sentinel, a reminder of the city's historical significance. From this vantage point, the panoramic view that unfolds before you is extraordinary. In 1835 Leiria was designated a district capital, and the city that has since grown between the old medieval fortress and the beautiful Rio Lis is sure of itself, bringing modernity to places that still hold ancient stories.

So, immerse yourself in the city's charm where, as the local folklore says, there is 'a river that runs uphill, a tower that has no cathedral, a cathedral that has no tower and a Rua Direita (Straight Street) that isn't'.

The Best View in Town

Explore the Castelo de Leiria

Constructed in 1135 by Portugal's first king, Dom Afonso Henriques, the **Castelo de Leiria** (*visiteleiria.pt; adult/child under 10 €2/free*) is among the most well preserved in the country. Following the rehabilitation works in 2021, Leiria's iconic monument is now more inclusive and accessible for visitors with reduced mobility.

The one-hour visit begins in the old cisterns, where the distinct scent of dampness mingles with the vibrant lights of the art installations that transform this place during cultural events, such as the Ágora, held between July and October.

From here, the dirt road leads to the keep, next to the Door of Betrayal, a hidden little entrance in the walls used to access the fortress without attracting attention.



GETTING AROUND

Leiria's historic centre is the starting point for the major city attractions. Although you can drive through the streets leading to the castle, exploring them on foot is best. This will allow you to wander through some more hidden and picturesque alleys. However, there are free street elevators to help with the climb, next to the Sé de Leiria and the Complexo de Piscinas Municipais. Most parking near the centre is paid, but you can park for free in the Mercado Municipal car park and walk from there for about 10 minutes.

☑TOP TIP

Buy a €3 ticket that grants you access to all of Leiria's cultural venues, saving money on the ones that charge entry fees. This pass can be used until the end of the year, so you don't have to visit all the museums on the same day.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Castelo de Leiria

SIGHTS
2 BAG – Banco das Artes Galeria
3 Centro de Diálogo Intercultural de Leiria
4 Jardim Luís de Camões
5 m|i|mo – museu da imagem em movimento
6 Museu de Leiria
7 Parque do Avião
8 Praça Rodrigues Lobo

SLEEPING
9 Forest Villas
10 Hotel Leiria Classic
11 Porta 20

EATING
● Ao Largo (see 10)
12 Atlas

DRINKING
13 Monkey Business
14 Os Filipes
15 Paddock
16 Stereogun



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Museu de Leiria

Passing the collegiate ruins and the Igreja de Santa Maria da Pena, you arrive at the most popular spot in the castle: the New Palace – built in the 14th century by King João I. Look at the exhibition on the lower floor and climb to the balcony for the most beautiful view over Leiria.

From Archaeology to Contemporary Art

Get in the Museum of Leiria

Once inhabited by monks, the rooms of the 16th-century Convento de Santo Agostinho gave way to the archaeological pieces and artistic collections of the **Museu de Leiria** *(visiteleiria.pt; adult/child under 10 €2/free).*

As you enter the permanent exhibition, you are stepping into a natural setting where the sounds of the forest invite you to explore the region's geological history and the archaeological objects found over time.

A representation of the Leiria Pine Forest follows this, with the sound of waves reminiscent of the region's beaches filling the air. You'll find yourself in a forest of pressed wood columns, each one recollecting events, people and elements that define local identity. On the other side is religious Leiria, represented by a collection of works donated by local churches; and contemporary Leiria, under the eye and brushstroke of native painter Lino António.

PINHAL DE LEIRIA

The Pinhal de Leiria (Leiria Pine Forest), officially known as Mata Nacional de Leiria, is the largest and oldest national woodland. Its history dates back to the 13th century, with King Dinis I as the main driving force behind a sea of pine trees as far as the eye can see.

However, in 2017 a severe fire devastated 86% of this area, turning the once 11,000 green hectares into a desolate scene.

Despite the immense loss, signs of recovery are beginning to appear. New pine trees are taking root on the white sandy terrain through natural regeneration and planting initiatives. A slow recovery, but with hope that the Pinhal de Leiria will one day regain its former glory.

EATING IN LEIRIA: OUR PICKS

Atlas: This restaurant on Rua Direita offers world flavours and decor. Every month it holds themed dinners. *12.30-3pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat* €

Ao Largo: Relaxed spot, perfect for unwinding with *petiscos*. The chevre puff pastry with figs is a great choice. *12.30-3.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €

Foco: Focusing on seasonal ingredients, this restaurant's menu changes frequently. *noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri* €€

Muralhas: In this former fortress, the dishes have a modern twist. Enjoy the views from the summer rooftop. *12.30-4pm & 7.30-midnight Tue-Sun* €€

TURNING THE PAGES IN LEIRIA

Follow in the steps of the famous Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós on a walk through Leiria's historic centre.

START	END	LENGTH
Praça Rodrigues Lobo	Viewpoint near the police station	640m; 1 hour

At age 25, the Portuguese writer Eça de Queirós was appointed administrator of the municipality of Leiria, a small town at the time. His days in this picturesque town, the places he visited, and the people he met inspired one of his most emblematic works: *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (The Crime of Father Amaro). The book mentions several places in Leiria, which can be found in the historic centre's streets.

Start at 1 **Praça Rodrigues Lobo**, the city's main square. Notice the houses around it and the cafes under the arcades, as the writer mentions in the novel. From there, head towards the 2 **Igreja da Misericórdia**. Just before you reach it, on the right, you will find 3 **Casa do Arco**, a meeting place for the characters in the book and a gateway to 4 **Travessa da Tipografia**. At number 13, in this very spot, Eça lived during his time in Leiria.

Continue to the 5 **Sé** and up the steep street to the 6 **Torre Sineira**. There is an elevator, but do as Eça did and walk. Finally, reach the 7 **Largo de São Pedro** viewpoint, which, as the author says, will allow you to talk about 'the beautiful landscapes of Leiria, the good views'.

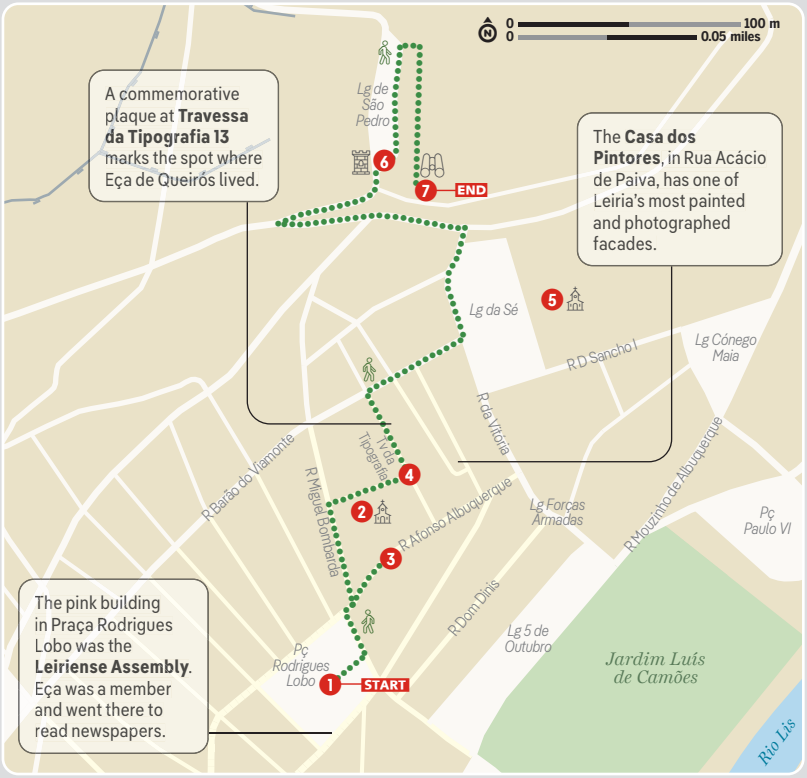


Image in Motion

The magic of cinema at m|i|mo

Created in 1996, on the occasion of the centenary of Portuguese cinema, the **m|i|mo – museu da imagem em movimento** *(visiteleiria.pt; adult/child under 10 €2/free)* showcases the evolution of cinematography in Portugal and around the world, with a collection that appeals to everyone's imagination.

From shadow theatres to magic lanterns or obscure cameras from the 19th century, cinema comes to life among the images, inventions and machines on display in this museum. On the 2nd floor, step into the Oficina do Olhar, an interactive place for exploring concepts such as projection, animation and visual illusion.

The First Paper Mill

Follow the river at Moinho de Papel

The sound of running water passing the large wooden wheels accompanies you throughout your half-hour visit to the **Museu do Moinho de Papel** *(visiteleiria.pt; free)*. Initially intended for grinding cereals using the waters of the Rio Lis, this place became the first Portuguese paper mill in 1411.

The history of paper in Portugal and across the world is the first thing you will learn as you enter this museum, followed by a small room with old mills and a balcony to see the mechanisms that moved the gears, exposed to the force of the current.

In the paper section, sheets with a rough texture and uncertain corners are left to dry in multiple racks. The instruments used to make them, from the copper vat to the moulds and press, are also on display.

Intercultural Dialogue

Explore different religions at the CDIL

The Igreja da Misericórdia, built in 1544 over Leiria's synagogue, has ceased to be Catholic-only to give way to the **Centro de Diálogo Intercultural de Leiria** *(CDIL; visiteleiria.pt; free)*, a place where Christianity, Judaism and Islam coexist.

The Christian saints are still on the walls, but luminous panels, opened like pages of holy books, tell us about the foundations of the three religions that have shaped Leiria over time.

This is also the starting point for the **Leiria Jewish Route** *(visiteleiria.pt/en/cultural-routes)*, so enter the sacristy to learn more about it before starting the tour. Also, go to the choir to appreciate the church's details and get a privileged view of the castle.

EÇA DE QUEIRÓS

Born in 1845, Eça de Queirós is considered one of the greatest novelists in Portuguese literature.

He studied law at the University of Coimbra but started as a writer in journalism, founding and collaborating with various publications throughout his life.

In 1972 Eça began his diplomatic career as a Portuguese consul in Havana, followed by Newcastle, Bristol and Paris. It was during his time abroad that the novelist wrote most of his work, much of it dedicated to criticising Portuguese society, such as *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1875), *O Primo Basílio* (1878), *A Relíquia* (1887) and *Os Maias* (1888), considered to be his great masterpiece.

DRINKING IN LEIRIA: BEST BARS & CLUBS

Stereogun: Known for its electronic music, Stereogun features some of the best national and international DJs. *11pm-5am Fri & Sat*

Os Filipes: Open since 1987 in Terreiro, this is still the local meeting point for a beer at the end of the day. *noon-2am Mon-Sat*

Paddock: DJ sets and live music spark up the evenings at this nightclub that features motorsport details. *11pm-5am Thu-Sat*

Monkey Business: This intimate bar welcomes you with signature cocktails and good conversation. Ask for help choosing your next drink. *6pm-2am Wed-Mon*

WHAT TO DO IN LEIRIA



Francisco Agostinho, founder of the travel agency 100 Rota, shares three things to do in his hometown. *@francisco.m.agostinho*

Visit Auditu: Auditu is not just any music store. It has been selling CDs and records for over 30 years. The service is still personalised, in the good old-fashioned local style.

Meet up in Praça Rodrigues Lobo: It's the reference point for anyone wanting to meet in Leiria. Even today, if we can't think of a place to go, we go to this square. You will understand why.

Go to Parque do Avião: I love walking here by the river, under the watchful eye of the castle. It's comforting to be here and observe the city's multiculturalism, which goes unnoticed by many.

Go Gothic

Dance to the sound of Extramuralhas

Every year, Leiria becomes the centre of Gothic culture with **Extramuralhas** *(fadeinfestival.com; tickets from €10, some free).* Held in various venues across the city, such as Jardim Luís de Camões, Teatro Miguel Franco, Igreja da Misericórdia or Stereogun, this festival celebrates the Gothic lifestyle and music, welcoming thousands of fans during August.

Bridge-Hopping

Stroll along the Lis

The **Jardim Luís de Camões** is the perfect starting point for a leisurely stroll along the banks of the Lis, where the sound of frogs, birds and water drowns out the city's noise. This area, also known as **Parque do Avião**, is a haven for families with children, with many things to keep them entertained, from a children's playground to a skatepark. There's even a Portuguese Armed Forces twin-engine aeroplane. If you want to go hiking even further, check out the **Leiria Walking Route Network** *(visiteleiria.pt/en/footpaths; free).*

From City to Heaven

Climb up to Leiria's shrine

After ascending 162 steps to the top of Monte São Gabriel, you are rewarded with a breathtaking view and the **Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Encarnação** *(visiteleiria.pt; free).*

As you make your way up the stone staircase, leaving the city behind, take a moment to appreciate the beauty of the natural surroundings. On 15 August, this 16th-century temple hosts the **Feast of Nossa Senhora da Encarnação**, the city's patron saint.

Korrodi's Works

Get into Leiria's architecture at BAG

A visit to **BAG – Banco das Artes Galeria** *(visiteleiria.pt; free)* next to Jardim Luís de Camões, will take you through the life and work of Ernesto Korrodi. This Swiss architect based in Leiria was responsible for the city's architectural development, bringing an innovative combination of styles to the existing local architecture at the beginning of the 20th century. Korrodi was involved in some of the city's most emblematic projects, such as the reconstruction of the Castelo de Leiria or the rehabilitation of other iconic buildings, such as the town hall or the Mercado de Santana.

On the premises of the former Banco de Portugal, which also had Ernesto Korrodi's intervention, there is a series of portraits, projects, objects, and an awarded interactive table that allows you to get acquainted with this architect's work.

Beyond Leiria



From monuments to natural landscapes, explore a territory that has earned a place in Portugal's history and faith.

From the UNESCO monumental sites – such as Batalha and Alcobaça – to the Atlantic coast, where surfers and fishers share their passion for the ocean, and the green of the Serras de Aires e Candeeiros, which holds secrets older than humankind, history and nature go hand in hand here.

Every church, museum and castle around Leiria tells stories that have shaped the fabric of this region and its people: glassmakers, farmers, people of faith, but also a new generation, proud of its origins and looking towards the future.

Marinha Grande

TIME FROM LEIRIA: **15 MINS**

Learn about Portuguese glass

Alfredo Poeiras' workshop is opposite the **Museu do Vidro** *(museu.vidro@cm-mgrande.pt; adult/child €1.50/free)*, next to the Edifício da Resinagem. The glassmaker, who has been working with his family for over a decade, creates intricate glass objects with his fellow artisans, and on order days, you can witness the team working on-site.

Marinha Grande is known for its glass industry, which began and flourished here. The museum, housed in the Stephen Palace, tells this story through a one-hour guided tablet tour. This neoclassical building, characterised by simple lines, symmetry and little decoration, amazes with its high-ceilinged rooms decorated with stucco arabesques and a beautiful central wooden staircase. It's a simplicity that lets the spotlight fall on the museum's main protagonists: the glass pieces.

Nearby is another workshop, that of **Adriano Mesquita**. You'll find him handling glass over the fire: 'I've been burning my fingers since I was 10!'

Alcobaça

TIME FROM LEIRIA: **30 MINS**

In search of eternal love

The **Mosteiro de Alcobaça** *(mosteiroalcobaca.gov.pt; adult/child €10/free)*, a World Heritage Site, is not just a historical monument but a place that holds one of Portugal's most captivating love stories, that of King Pedro and Inês de Castro.

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Places

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Alcobaça p283
Mosteiro da Batalha p284
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Serras de Aire e Candeeiros p286

GETTING AROUND

From Leiria's bus station, next to Jardim Luís de Camões, you can travel with Rodoviária do Lis *(rodoviariadolis.pt)* to nearby towns, such as Marinha Grande or Batalha. To reach destinations like Fátima, you can also go directly with Rede Expressos *(rede-expressos.pt)*. If you prefer to drive, the A1, A8 and A19 highways serve the region, but remember that they all have tolls.



TOKAR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for prices and opening hours.

TOP EXPERIENCE

Mosteiro da Batalha

The Mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitória, or Mosteiro da Batalha, as it is best known, was built in the 14th century by King João I following his triumph in the Battle of Aljubarrota. In this architectural marvel, a symbol of Portugal's independence, every window, column and ceiling is filled with a unique visual richness.

DON'T MISS

- Founder's Chapel
- Church
- Chapter House stained-glass window
- Imperfect Chapels
- Tomb of King Duarte and Queen Leonor
- Cloister of King João I
- Fountain by the Refectory

The Monastery Church

A visit to the Mosteiro da Batalha starts right outside, looking at the monument's incredible facade. Whether it's early morning or late afternoon, when the light is softer, and the building's limestone takes on a golden hue, its magnificence will not leave you indifferent. As you pass through the large church portal filled with religious iconography, it becomes impossible to disguise the effect this church has; partly because of the verticality of the central aisle, 32m high, and the play of light caused by the incredible stained-glass windows.

Founder's Chapel

While entry to the church is free, a ticket is required to access the Founder's Chapel. This chapel, a highlight of the monastery, serves as a pantheon, housing the magnificent tomb of King João I and Queen Filipa de Lencastre, along with those of other royal members who have shaped Portugal's history.

Despite its morbid function, the space is filled with light and a serenity that commands respect. In the centre, on the large white limestone chest resting on lions, the statues of the former monarchs rest side by side in what was an innovation in the funeral art practised in the Middle Ages. These, too, are often bathed in colour from the stained-glass windows on the walls.

The Cloisters

As is characteristic of this type of building, the monastic cloisters were simple places that invited the monks to meditate, pray and socialise. But the **Royal Cloister** doesn't stand out for its simplicity. Its grandeur, with rich architectural elements and decorative motifs, is based, in this case, on naturalism.

The **Afonsino Cloister**, more focused on the needs of the Dominican monks who lived there, was also a novelty for its time. It was the first to be built with two floors instead of a simple ground floor. Unlike the first, this cloister takes on a more austere appearance, and you can almost feel the presence of the former monks.

Chapter House

In the middle of the Royal Cloister, just beyond the sacristy, is the Chapter House. In contrast to the brightness you find in many parts of the monastery, around here, you walk in semidarkness, illuminated by a single window containing the best-preserved set of stained-glass windows (dating from the 16th century) in the Mosteiro da Batalha.

Due to its prestige and solemnity, the Portuguese state chose this place to pay homage to the soldiers who died in combat. A permanent military guard keeps the remains of two unknown soldiers from the Great War here.

The Imperfect Chapels

Your visit to the Mosteiro da Batalha leads to one last stop, before going back outside. This is where you will find the entrance to the Imperfect Chapels, a newer pantheon, this time commissioned by King Duarte. This unfinished structure (hence the name), aligned with the church, unfolds in an octagon with seven chapels, including the tomb of the monarch himself and his wife, Queen Leonor, where you can see the two statues holding hands.

THE MASTERS

The Mosteiro da Batalha owes its complex construction and beauty to two masters: Afonso Domingues and Huguet. Domingues led the work from 1386 to 1402, conceiving the overall project. After his death, Huguet continued the work for 36 years, introducing his own architectural innovations.

TOP TIPS

- Avoid weekends and holidays. Choose a weekday visit, ideally around lunchtime, to avoid the crowds.
- To skip the queues at the box office, buy your ticket online at bilheteira.museu semonumentos.pt.
- There is access for visitors with reduced mobility throughout the tour.
- Guided tours must be booked in advance *(+351 244 765 497)*.
- There aren't many restrooms along the route. You can use the one in the square outside before entering or the one next to the store on your way out.
- Some places, such as the Imperfect Chapels, are outdoors. Remember to check the weather and prepare.

A DAY EXPLORING NATURE



David Samuel Santos, author of the travel blog *Dobrar Fronteiras*, grew up in Porto de Mós. *@dobrar.fronteiras*

Starting from the iconic **Porto de Mós** castle, wrapped in legends and history, head out to discover the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros.

Rent a mountain bike in **Alvados** and cycle to **Fórnea**, exploring the trails surrounding this valley. Nearby, visit the **Santo António caves**, which, although smaller than the ones in Mira de Aire, are still extremely beautiful.

Heading south, get a geology lesson at **Olhos de Água do Alviela**, where the karst landscape reaches its full splendour. End the day at the **Serra de Santo António** viewpoint.

Continued from p283

In the 14th century, Prince Pedro fell in love with Inês de Castro, his wife's lady-in-waiting. His father, King Afonso IV, condemned the relationship and had Inês murdered in 1355. This death led Pedro to rebel, and he took the crown two years later. The new king then executed those responsible for the murder and, swearing that he had married Inês in secret, imposed her recognition as Queen of Portugal.

The tombs of these lovers can be seen (for free) in Mosteiro de Alcobaça's main church. But don't stop there. Enter the monastery to be enchanted by one of the most remarkable and well-preserved examples of Cistercian architecture.

Fátima

TIME FROM LEIRIA: **25 MINS**

Inner search in Santuário de Fátima

Whether you're a believer or not, the **Santuário de Fátima** *(fatima.pt; free)* will leave a lasting impression. As you step onto its vast grounds, you'll be entering one of the world's largest Christian shrines. Its grandeur is particularly evident on 13 May and 13 October, with the celebrations of the apparitions of Our Lady. The enclosure, which holds 300,000 people, is filled with countless candles and echoes of prayers in an impressive religious scene.

Outside these commemorative dates, the Little Chapel of the Apparitions, built on the spot where the Virgin is believed to have appeared to three shepherd children in 1917, and the Basílica da Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Fátima, containing their tombs, are the places to visit.

Serras de Aire e Candeeiros

TIME FROM LEIRIA: **40 MINS**

Into the earth's core

The descent is made along 683 steps (some steep and with no option for visitors with reduced mobility or strollers) that take you through the main galleries of what is the greatest discovery of speleology in Portugal: the **Grutas de Mira de Aire** *(grutasmiradaire.com; adult/child €8.20/4.90).*

The cool, humid air, the rhythmic drops of water shaping the limestone into stunning stalactites and stalagmites, and the colourful lights illuminating the 600m of the cave (out of a total of 11km) will leave you feeling like you have entered another world.

EATING IN FÁTIMA & OURÉM: OUR PICKS

Casa Plátano: Next to Santuário de Fátima, on the 1st floor of a souvenir shop, this place serves typical Portuguese food. *11.30am-6pm Mon-Sun* €€

O Convite: At the Dom Gonçalo Hotel, even nonguests can enjoy tasty dishes, such as rabbit Count D'Ourem. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

O Rito: Run by the Rito family for over 50 years, start with a rice black pudding, followed by fried mackerel. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sun* €€

Tia Alice: Still following recipes by Alice Marto, who opened this more than 35 years ago. Try wood-fired oven stew in red wine. *noon-3pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sun* €€



Tomar

TEMPLAR HISTORY | JEWISH PAST | PUBLIC GARDENS

Tomar is a unique city with a lively atmosphere that accompanies its rich historical heritage. Located in the north of Ribatejo, it was a key site for the Order of the Templar and the place where Prince Henry the Navigator, governor of the Order of Christ, initiated plans for the Maritime Discoveries, one of the most important chapters in Portugal's history.

The rich tales of Tomar's past echo throughout the city, immortalised in the Convento de Cristo, a World Heritage Site, and in the remarkable transformation of old buildings into museums.

As the city makes an effort to preserve and honour its heritage, it is also embracing the present and opening doors to new activities and businesses.

The best way to visit Tomar is to go through the interconnected streets of the historical centre, uncovering more of its history every step of the way.

A Jewish Past

Explore the old Jewish quarter

In the heart of the old Jewish quarter, on Rua Dr Joaquim Jacinto, lies **Museu Luso-Hebraico Abraham Zacuto** *(cm-tomar.pt; free)* – the Synagogue of Tomar, Portugal's only Gothic-style Hebrew temple. Start at the interpretive centre next door to explore the history of the Jewish community in Tomar.

Entering the synagogue, silence envelops you. This small square room with a vaulted ceiling, now a museum, no longer holds services, due to Tomar's small Jewish population.

Spend some extra minutes admiring the street's low houses and flower-flanked doors, with the castle looming above.

GETTING AROUND

Rede Expressos buses and CP trains connect Tomar to major cities, but renting a car is the fastest option. There are various parking areas to choose from, but you can park for free at the Municipal Market or near the Convento de São Francisco.

Walking is the best way to get around, as Tomar's main attractions are easily accessible on foot.

Despite the steep climb, you can also take a scenic walking route to the Convento de Cristo.

TOP TIP

Start your day early to avoid crowds in places like the Convento de Cristo. You will also experience the historic centre at a more leisurely pace and benefit from cooler morning temperatures. Remember to wear comfortable shoes.



SLEEPING
6 Casa dos Ofícios
7 Hostel 2300 Thomar
8 Hotel dos Templários
9 Hotel República
10 Thomar Boutique Hotel
11 Thomar Story

EATING
12 A Bela Vista
13 Casa das Ratas
14 Insensato
15 Taverna Antiqua

Powered by the River

Discover Tomar's oldest industries

The **Levada de Tomar** *(visit-tomar.com; free)* is a cultural complex that invites you on a sensory journey through the city's industrial past. First comes the **Power Station**, where ancient machines tell the tales of when Tomar was among the first Portuguese cities to enjoy public lighting. The hum of electricity echoes through the museum, and large panels provide detailed information. Just a few steps away lies **Fundição Tomarense**. Here, the voices of former workers and their descendants narrate the history of this old foundry via video. Wander through the workshops, where timeworn furnaces, tables and instruments vividly depict the past artisanship.

EATING IN TOMAR: OUR PICKS

Insensato: Grab a healthy meal while browsing books at this literary cafe in the historic centre. *noon-4pm Wed-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun* €

Casa das Ratas: Traditional restaurant adorned with old photos. Dish of the day is always a good option. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sun* €

A Bela Vista: Take advantage of the terrace by the river to try one of the regional dishes. Go for the roasted lamb. *noon-3pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Mon* €

Taverna Antiqua: Medieval-themed tavern, where even the staff dress up. Try the beef with witch sauce. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sun* €€



ARK NEYMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Levada de Tomar

Up your Matchbox Game

Exploring the Museu dos Fósforos

You'll be surprised at first, but then curiosity will take over when you enter the **Museu dos Fósforos** *(visit-tomar.com; free)* in the Convento de São Francisco. Arranged in six rooms, this is a collection of around 80,000 matchboxes donated by Aquiles da Mota Lima. The number of boxes on display is overwhelming at first glance, but you will have fun discovering the images of these objects from 127 countries.

On Convent Grounds

Strolling the Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes

Between the Convento de Cristo and the city centre lie 39 hectares of gardens and forests within the **Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes** *(centerofportugal.com; free)*. When you enter this natural setting that runs along seven hills, you are walking the paths once followed by the Knights Templar and the monks who inhabited the convent.

The noises of the city will be left behind as you become more immersed in nature. Either follow the Alameda dos Freixos until you reach the Charolinha (an imitation of the Charola found inside the convent) or opt for the Cadeira D'El Rei trail, crossing beautiful cypress, pine and oak trees.

TOMAR'S BEST NATURE SPOTS



Gabriel Mendes, owner of the vegetarian restaurant and bookshop Insensato, shares his favourite go-to nature spots. *@insensato cafelivraria*

Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes: It's a small forest where you can find silence and peace (and squirrels). It's my almost daily refuge.

Açude de Pedra hiking trail: An almost secret path that takes you through leafy trees to a beautiful mini dam. The trail starts at the town's camping site.

Parque da Capela das Lapas: Another little corner practically unknown to nonresidents. During the summer, it's a pleasant small river beach.

Praia Fluvial das Barreiras: This is the best river beach in the area for me. It's on the Castelo de Bode lake, and the water has an excellent temperature in the summer.



LAMARTINE DIAS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for prices and opening hours.

TOP EXPERIENCE

Convento de Cristo

The Convento de Cristo is one of Tomar's most iconic places, as the Order of the Templar established itself here in the 12th century. The impressive architectural complex includes the Templar Castle, the Convento da Ordem de Cristo, the Mata dos Sete Montes and the Pegões Aqueduct.

DON'T MISS

- Charola
- Chapter House window
- Main Cloister
- New Sacristy
- Large Dormitory
- Castle walls
- Convent Aqueduct

Inside the Convent

From a very young age, the Portuguese are taken to the Convento de Cristo to see what is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And no wonder. There are many stories and architectural styles here that have been engraved forever.

This was the place where, in the 12th century, the Order of the Knights Templar established itself, and it was in these same rooms that Prince Henry the Navigator drew up the first plans that began one of the most famous periods in Portuguese history: the Maritime Discoveries.

When the Templars first settled here, it was little more than a hermitage. Over it, they built the **Charola**, a Romanesque temple inspired by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Years later, and by order of King Manuel, the Convento de Cristo began to grow around this primitive temple, arriving at the magnificent architectural structure you see today.

This is still one of the most fascinating places you'll visit inside the convent, even after passing through the **New Sacristy** and marvelling at its size and elaborate ceiling. During the 16th century, the Charola was enriched with altarpieces, murals,



JOAQUIN OSSORIO CASTILLO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: Charola; Above: Chapter House window

carvings and wooden sculptures. The details are impressive, and just as the Templars did, you will be drawn to walk around this octagonal space, not in prayer, but in perfect fascination.

The Chapter House Window

The various architectural styles found in the Convento de Cristo bear witness to the different eras that this monument has lived through. Still, none is more striking than the **Manueline window** on the church's western facade.

This is one of the most outstanding examples of late Manueline Gothic, dating from the 16th century. Between the weathered stone, you can make out hyperrealistic motifs symbolising the Tree of Life or other elements from the Holy Scriptures.

Although you can see the window from several balconies around it, you will get the biggest effect in the **Great Dormitory** from a small cell just opposite, where little more than one person can fit.

Go Outside & Beyond

Convento de Cristo is one of the convents in the world with the most cloisters. There are seven in total, each with its own function. The 16th-century **Main Cloister** has a large fountain fed by the aqueduct waters and is considered a masterpiece of the European Renaissance.

Following the path of that water will be your next challenge after finishing your visit inside the convent, but only after climbing the walls of the **Templar castle** and appreciating all the surrounding land that belonged to the complex, and today constitutes the Mata Nacional dos Sete Montes.

Next stop is one of the most imposing aqueducts in the country. Built similarly to the aqueducts of Elvas and Évora, the **Convent Aqueduct** had the task of bringing to it water from four springs near the city. It stretches for 6km; climb one of the towers to get a glimpse of the size and grandeur of this construction and the Pegões valley that surrounds it.

ZÊZEREARTS FESTIVAL

Between July and August, the Convento de Cristo becomes one of the stages for the classical music festival **ZêzereArts** *(zezerearts.pt)*. The convent's main cloister is an extraordinary venue for the free concerts. Check the festival's website for this year's program and the days to go.

TOP TIPS

- For a less crowded experience, consider visiting on weekdays, right when it opens.
- Visitors with reduced mobility can only access the ground floor, and the entrance is next to the exit.
- The car park is small and has a meter. Remember to go early and bring coins.
- The ground in the castle ramparts is uneven and unsuitable if you have reduced mobility or ill-suited footwear.
- To reach the Aqueduct, leave the city centre through Avenida Marquês de Tomar, passing Largo do Pelourinho. At the end of Rua de Leiria, turn left and follow the arrows indicating the Pegões Altos Aqueduct.

Beyond Tomar



Templars and Portuguese kings passed through this territory and left their mark, from medieval castles to Gothic churches and falconry.

Places

Ferreira do Zêzere p292
Vila Nova da Barquinha p292
Santarém p293
Salvaterra de Magos p293

GETTING AROUND

The CP regional train will take you from Tomar to Santarém in an hour. Tickets can be bought online at cp.pt. To explore Ferreira do Zêzere, Vila Nova da Barquinha or Salvaterra de Magos, it's best to use a car, as public transport can get expensive and take longer. Remember that this region can get quite hot during the summer, so it's wise to avoid visiting at the peak of the day.

Step away from the cradle of the Knights Templar and go deeper into their legacy in Ribatejo. From Dornes to Almourol, these knights strategically fortified the Rio Tejo, leaving a lasting mark on the landscape and history of the region.

In fact, the river is extremely important for the towns and cities you will cross, as it is a driving force for the local economy. It serves as a scenic backdrop for tourism and nautical activities, but it also nurtures the fields and vineyards that produce the famous Tejo wines.

Churches and little chapels, scattered all over, also gain importance as shining examples of Gothic architecture, as in the case of Santarém.

Ferreira do Zêzere

TIME FROM TOMAR: **30 MINS**

A walk in Dornes

Perched on a peninsula stretching into Rio Zêzere, **Dornes** is considered one of Portugal's most beautiful villages. The Knights Templar passed through and left behind a **Templar Tower** *(opctj.pt/torre-de-dornes; free)*, which has become a must-see for visitors. The village is small, and an hour is enough to take a leisurely stroll through the worn stone streets and see the tower and the **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Pranto** right next to it.

Vila Nova da Barquinha

TIME FROM TOMAR: **30 MINS**

Visit the castle in the river

Head to Vila Nova da Barquinha to learn the history of the Templars of Almourol. At the **Centro de Interpretação Templário de Almourol** *(+351 249 720 353; €4)*, discover who these knights were and their role in Portugal while getting a glimpse of their clothing, insignias and weaponry.

However, the highlight of this trip is the **Castelo de Almourol**, about a 10-minute drive away. From the small pier next to the castle, a boat takes you to the fortress' entrance in the middle of the Tejo. The ticket for the interpretive centre includes access to the castle and the boat.

Santarém

TIME FROM TOMAR: **1 HR**

Take the Gothic route

Start your walking visit to Santarém, Portugal's Gothic capital, at the impressive **Igreja de Santa Clara**. Its imposing size stands out, as it belonged to a former monastery of Clarisse nuns. Then, pass by the **Convento de São Francisco**, just a few metres away, which dates back to the 13th century. Let yourself be enveloped by the timeworn walls and the historical aura of this place. Finish at the **Igreja de Santa Maria da Graça**, where the light shines through one of the most beautiful rose windows in the country and where Pedro Álvares Cabral, the navigator who discovered Brazil, found his resting place.

Salvaterra de Magos

TIME FROM LEIRIA: **1 HR 15 MINS**

Tour the Avieira culture

A 15-minute drive from Salvaterra de Magos, **Aldeia Aviera do Escaroupim** is a testament to the people who have settled by the Tejo since the 18th century. Learn more about their story in **Escaroupim e o Rio**, a museum in the old elementary school, and embark on a 1½-hour guided tour along the Tejo with **Rio-a-Dentro** *(rio-a-dentro.pt; adult/child €20/10)* to explore the natural surroundings.

Grow your wings

Falconry in Portugal was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2016, and you can explore this art that brought kings to Salvaterra de Magos in the **Falcoaria Real** *(falcoariareal.pt; free)*. During the one-hour visit inside the 18th-century Pombaline building, which once served as the headquarters of the falconers in the king's service, you can also see up close some falcons and learn more about these fascinating birds.

TEJO'S BEST WINE ESTATES

Falua: This 42-hectare vineyard is planted on pebbles where the Tagus once flowed.

Quinta da Alorna: Over 300 years have shaped this estate's history, renowned for its wines and Lusitano horses.

Fiuza: The winery's modern walls, painted by young graffiti artists, blend wine tradition with contemporary art. The idea came from an 80-year-old 'young lady'.

Casa do Cadaval: Over 400 years old, it was the residence of Queen Leonor de Austria and has been managed by women for five generations.

Quinta do Casal Branco: Over 300 years old, with an extraordinary palatial house on ancient royal hunting grounds.

EATING IN SANTARÉM: OUR PICKS

Amassa: Relaxed atmosphere and good wine list; Italian dishes feature a twist of regional ingredients. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm Mon-Sun* €

Taberna do Quinzena: Over 150 years old; if you like meat grilled to perfection, this is the place. *10.30am-3.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sun* €

Blackfrog: The matured meats are the highlight here. Stay a little longer to enjoy a house cocktail. *noon-3pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat* €€

Ó Balcão: Enjoy chef Rodrigo Castelo's talent at this Michelin-starred restaurant by opting for a tasting menu. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €€€



Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Óbidos p266

Hotel Josefa d'Óbidos €€ Comfortable, stylish rooms and warm service right next to the castle walls and away from the confusion.

Literary Man €€ In this former convent, modern rooms decorated with wood and close to 100,000 books make the difference.

Casa das Senhoras Rainhas €€ Overlooking either the courtyard or the medieval ramparts, this historic house's elegant rooms are dedicated to the Portuguese queens.

Pousada Vila de Óbidos €€ Small but charming rooms in this boutique inn that occupies the old 18th-century building next to the Misericórdia Church.

Hotel Real d'Óbidos €€ Historic building with rooms named after kings, exquisite decoration and a swimming pool to cool off on hot days.

Pousada do Castelo de Óbidos €€€ Sleep like a king inside the Óbidos castle, in rooms with stone details and antique tiles.

Peniche p272

Selina Peniche €€ Dorms and private rooms with a surf vibe. With a shared kitchen, co-working space, and a mini half-pipe for practising your skateboarding tricks.

Star Inn €€ With modern, surf-inspired decor, all rooms have a balcony overlooking the harbour or the beach just a few metres away.

MH Peniche €€ Rooms with balcony and sea view, decorated with tributes to traditional local arts; also an outdoor pool, garden and spa, at a 20-minute walk from Supertubos beach.

Surfers Lodge €€€ Rooms with vintage decor in this eco-friendly hotel inspired by surf culture. With a rooftop pool and Jacuzzi for the sunset.

Foz do Arelho p274

Quinta da Foz €€ Classic rooms, with century-old furniture, a beautiful garden with peacocks, and friendly service in this 16th-century farmhouse.

Água d'Alma €€ Clean-looking rooms in a tranquil, family atmosphere in this contemporary hotel halfway between the Óbidos lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean.

Rio do Prado €€€ Eco-friendly design, completely immersed in nature, with luxurious suites, sometimes with a fireplace and others with a relaxing bathtub and floor-to-ceiling windows.

Caldas da Rainha p274

Bordallo's Prime Apartments €€ Well-equipped two-bedroom flats with vintage decor inspired by the works of Rafaelo Bordallo Pinheiro and a view over the traditional Praça da Fruta.

19 Tile Ceramic Concept €€ Rooms, suites and flats with the signature of 13 local artists mark this hotel that celebrates Portuguese ceramic art.

Nazaré p276

Hotel Magic €€ The history and people of Nazaré live on in the decor of the rooms at this small hotel five minutes from the beach.

OHAI Nazaré €€€ Glamping and luxury bungalows set in the largest pine forest reserve on the Iberian Peninsula, with a swimming pool and water slides perfect for kids.

Leiria p277

Hotel Leiria Classic € Designed by Ernesto Korrodi in 1932, combines some details of the original building with modern elements in comfortable rooms.

Forest Villas €€ Comfortable dorms and private rooms decorated with images of local nature in this cosy guesthouse overlooking the castle.

Porta 20 €€ Rustic walls and wooden elements meet contemporary decor in the rooms of this boutique guesthouse.

Marinha Grande p283

Glass Boutique €€ Modern rooms, a fully equipped communal kitchen, and a small patio for enjoying the evenings, just a five-minute walk from the Museu do Vidro.

Hotel Cristal Marinha €€ Spacious, modern rooms and a good breakfast at this hotel, where the geometric features of the decor stand out.

Batalha p284

Hotel Lis Batalha €€ Privileged location next to the Mosteiro da Batalha (a UNESCO World Heritage site), with comfortable rooms and solemn decor.

Casa do Outeiro €€ Just a few minutes' walk from the Mosteiro da Batalha. With an indoor and outdoor pool, this boutique hotel is ideal for families.

Serras de Aire e Candeeiros p286

5ª Vigia €€ Within Porto de Mós city park, this small guesthouse in the old watermill offers spacious rooms with hydromassage showers and a good breakfast.

Cooking & Nature Emotional Hotel €€€ Cinema classics inspire the decor of the rooms in this hotel, which fuses innovative design with nature. Cooking lessons with the local chef are available. Operating separately from the same hotel, The Nest By Cooking & Nature has rooms and pet-friendly flats decorated with natural materials and a communal lounge in an old granary.

Fátima p286

SDivine Fátima Hotel, Congress & Spirituality €€ Located in the former Seminary of the Divine Word, it offers over 100 elegantly decorated, pet-friendly rooms.

Steyler Fátima Hotel €€ Spacious and bright rooms, suites and flats, with a children's playground and chapel, a five-minute walk from the Santuário de Fátima.

Hotel Dom Gonçalo €€ Contemporary or vintage-inspired rooms, with a wellness centre and kids' room, as well as a great breakfast.

Tomar p287

Hostel 2300 Thomar € Dorms and private rooms have different modern decorations inspired by Portuguese popular culture. It also has a communal kitchen and a pleasant patio.

Thomar Story € In a 19th-century building, this guesthouse, next to the Levada de Tomar, brings the city's history to the decoration of the rooms.

Thomar Boutique Hotel €€ Comfortable rooms that take you on a journey through different eras of Tomar, from the Portuguese Discoveries to the time of the Templars.

Casa dos Ofícios €€ Some architectural elements still reside in the decor of this 18th-century building, where the rooms pay homage to the city's historic trades, and the library invites relaxation.

Hotel República €€ Elegantly decorated rooms and a Jacuzzi and sauna at the top of this hotel located right in the heart of the historic centre.

Hotel dos Templários €€ Spacious rooms, a large swimming pool and a children's playground right next to Mouchão Park and the Rio Nabão, ideal for taking the family.

Santarém p293

A Casa Brava €€ Modern, well-decorated rooms and flats inspired by Ribatejo. With a small pool and patio for relaxing right in the city centre.

Casa da Amieira €€ Modern rooms and spacious cork-covered villas, with indoor and outdoor pools, a spa, an organic vegetable garden, and a small farm with animals to show the kids.

Quinta da Cabrita €€€ Fully equipped and elegantly decorated one- and two-bedroom houses in an 18th-century Ribatejo farmhouse, with a swimming pool and surrounded by countryside.



BOOFAMILY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Nazaré (p276)



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Above: University of Coimbra (p306); Right: Aveiro (p336)

The Beiras



COAST, COUNTRYSIDE, CITIES AND SUMMITS

From the sprawling shores of the Silver Coast to mainland Portugal's highest peak, the Beiras are speckled with cultured cities and hidden villages etched with traditions.

Portugal's central region is a cornucopia of natural and cultural offerings. The Rio Mondego, the longest river in Portugal, flows through Coimbra, home to one of the world's oldest universities. A short drive away you'll find one of the country's largest and most intact Roman ruins, as well as the windswept sandy beaches of the Silver Coast, which delight holidaymakers and attract surf fanatics.



AUSTIN BUSH/LONELY PLANET ©

The Beiras region was one of the original six historic provinces of Portugal, dating back to the Middle Ages, although the demarcation changed over time. The territory, which includes Portugal's exact geographic centre, was further divided into Beira Alta (high), Beira Baixa (low), Beira Litoral (coastal), Beira Interior (inland) and Beira Transmontana (mountains) – although these days we typically refer to only the first three (or four).

Together they are 'the Beiras', comprised of the districts of Castelo Branco, Viseu, Guarda, Coimbra, Aveiro and part of Leiria (although for the purpose of this guide, we've left Leiria intact in the Estremadura & Ribatejo chapter).

Wander through picturesque historic villages; hike snow capped mountains; dig into hearty local cuisine and sample wine from ancient vines. You'll explore castles and immerse yourself in history, admiring the work of sheep herders, landscape architects and textile artisans alike; and then be stunned by the modern creations of the younger generation, who are spurring a new-renaissance of art, sport, gastronomy, music and beyond.

THE MAIN AREAS

COIMBRA
Roman history meets university culture.
p302

CASTELO BRANCO
Baroque gardens, fine embroidery, excellent views.
p311

SERRA DA ESTRELA
Breathtaking views and fabulous hiking.
p319

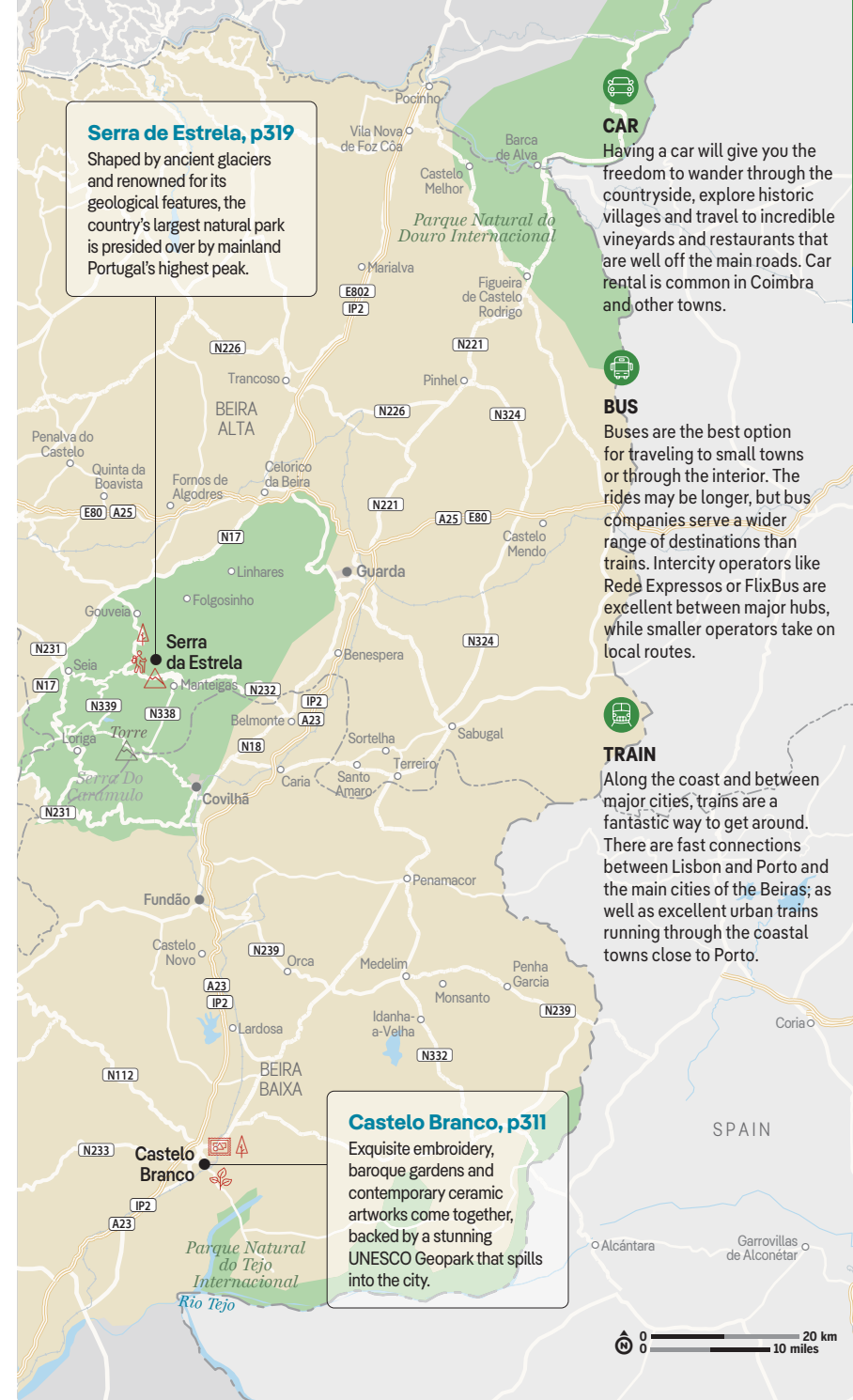
VISEU
Heart of the Dão wine region.
p328

AVEIRO
Colourful canal boats and beaux arts buildings.
p336



Find Your Way

The Beiras cover nearly a third of continental Portugal, so getting around can be time consuming. Major cities have fast trains, but having your own wheels will make trip planning simpler and open up your options for exploring.



CAR

Having a car will give you the freedom to wander through the countryside, explore historic villages and travel to incredible vineyards and restaurants that are well off the main roads. Car rental is common in Coimbra and other towns.

BUS

Buses are the best option for traveling to small towns or through the interior. The rides may be longer, but bus companies serve a wider range of destinations than trains. Intercity operators like Rede Expressos or FlixBus are excellent between major hubs, while smaller operators take on local routes.

TRAIN

Along the coast and between major cities, trains are a fantastic way to get around. There are fast connections between Lisbon and Porto and the main cities of the Beiras; as well as excellent urban trains running through the coastal towns close to Porto.

Plan Your Time

Slow down, breathe deeply and let the Beiras' secrets slowly unravel as you travel along this expansive region's long and winding, view-filled roads.



OBATALA-PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Castle walls, Monsanto (p315)

Just for a Weekend

- If you only have a day or two between Lisbon and Porto, stick to the coastal regions, where you'll make the best of your time. Start from the south in **Figueira da Foz** (p310), where you can explore the old town, take a surf lesson or simply soak up some sun on the windswept beaches of the Silver Coast.

- Head inland to discover **Coimbra** (p302), a beautiful, historic city with a unique, ancient **university** (p306). Visit the Joanina Library and the **Sé Velha** (cathedral; p305), wander through the commercial streets and catch a Coimbra-style fado show. Check out the nearby **Ruins of Coimbringa** (p308), then spend a few hours cycling through **Aveiro** (p336), where colorful canal boats, soothing salt flats and beautiful beaux-arts buildings set the stage.

Seasonal Highlights

The Beira is a true four-season destination with something to offer every month of the year.

FEBRUARY

The highest peaks are covered with snow and it's officially time for **skiing** and **winter Carnival** in the Serra da Estrela. Hearty stews such as *chanfana* (goat stew) are go-to meals to keep the cold at bay.

APRIL

In the region around Fundão cherry trees are in full bloom, while **Semana Santa** (Easter week) events are on across the Beiras – the faithful will prefer Aveiro or Viseu.

MAY

Join the University of Coimbra's students in celebrating the **Queima das Fitas** (p307), then head for some hiking in the Serra da Estrela before temperatures start to soar.

A Week-Long Jaunt

● After passing through Coimbra and Aveiro, make your way inland, stopping at the **Arouca Geopark** (p341) for a hike along the Passadiços do Paiva or across the 516 bridge, before heading to **Viseu** (p328). The city's exceptionally well conserved historic centre has buildings from across the eras of history; the **Sé** (p331) and the **Casa do Miradouro** (p330) are two of the most impressive, while the **Grão Vasco Museum** (p33131) is a must-stop for seeing magnificent Renaissance-era artwork.

● If you're not off to cycle the Ecopista, then it's time for a trip along the **Dão wine trail** (p333). Stop at the **Santar Gardens** (p335) before making your way up to the **Serra da Estrela** (p319) for beautiful hikes, relaxing spas and exuberant natural surroundings. Don't miss the nearly 360-degree views from **Torre** (p322), the highest point in continental Portugal.

Two Weeks or Longer

● If you have the time, wander slowly through the countryside and mountains of the Beiras' interior. The adventure-minded might take on some of the Serra da Estrela's more challenging **trails** (p321), mountain-bike through the **Serra da Gardunha** (p318) or try their hand at parasailing; while foodies can join in for oil making, cherry picking or a culinary festival in the **Castelo Branco district** (p311).

● Stop by Monsanto's otherworldly **castle** (p315), then learn Shephardic Jewish history in **Guarda** (p326) and **Belmonte** (p316). Art lovers can't miss **Covilhã** (p325), a unique mountain town that's been turned into an outdoor art gallery, or Castelo Branco's **Cargaleiro Museum** (p311). The rest of your days should be spent exploring historic villages, swimming in crystal clear river beaches and sampling the region's gastronomic specialties.

JUNE

School is out and beach season is officially on. Crowds flock to the coast or head inland for Covilhã's Urban Art Festival, Coimbra's Medieval Fair or the **Cherry Festival of Alcongosta** (p317).

JULY

July is the perfect time to explore the interior's many river beaches, while the biannual **Boom Festival** will turn the Beira-Baixa interior upside down.

AUGUST

Hot summer days end in festival nights – Viseu's six-week long **Feira de São Mateus** will be in full swing, along with music festivals from Aveiro to the Serra.

SEPTEMBER

At the vineyards surrounding Viseu, the **Dão Wine Harvest Festival** invites you to join in; in Castelo Branco, it's time for the annual **Sabores de Perdição** (p317) gastronomic festival.

Coimbra



REGAL LEGACY | GRANDIOSE ARCHITECTURE | UNIVERSITY CULTURE

Located along the Rio Mondego (Portugal's longest river at 234km), Coimbra is one of Portugal's most ancient and important cities. Formerly known as Aeminium, back when the town was a centre for Roman commerce, Coimbra went on to become Portugal's first capital city and residence to its royals after Dom Alfonso Henrique declared himself king.

Later, the city found itself at the heart of the Portuguese Renaissance, where baroque art and architecture thrived during the 16th and 17th centuries – the famous Joanina Library is a prime example.

Coimbra has no greater claim to fame, however, than its UNESCO-listed university, one of the oldest and most prestigious in the world. The intellectual culture, which prevailed in the city since the mid 1500s, has given a start to a number of Portugal's best known literary, music, artistic and scientific geniuses across the decades – and continues to do so to this day.

GETTING AROUND

Exploring the city is easily done on foot, but the old town has some steep hills. On the public bus system, the electric blue line connects the upper and lower parts of the city, while the Linha do Botânico takes you past the Botanical Garden. You can also opt for the tourist Coimbra Yellow Bus; daily and single-use tickets can be bought at most newspaper kiosks. If arriving by long distance train you'll end at Coimbra-B station, while short distance trains arrive at Coimbra-A station near the city centre.

TOP TIP

To get the true feel of the city, visit while the university is in session, as much of the city's atmosphere is thanks to the student population. If you're into festas, plan your trip for May, during the Queima das Fitas (p307).

Sacred Art

Touring the Santa Cruz Monastery

The **Mosteiro de Santa Cruz** holds an important place in Portugal's history. Besides hosting the tombs of Portugal's first two kings, this beautiful, 12th-century Manueline structure (thanks to a major restoration in the 1500s – it was formerly the city's school), helped turn Coimbra into Portugal's intellectual epicentre. Santa Cruz's most famous student went on to become Portugal's first saint, São Teotônio, or St Anthony.

Check out the 4000-pipe organ (which reportedly only four people in the country can play) and marvel at the *azulejo* (Portuguese tile) paintings and elaborate cloister, before heading to the Sacred Art Museum, where you'll find an impressive collection of both Renaissance and baroque art.

Behind the Santa Cruz Monastery is a part of the original cloister, now known as the Jardim da Manga (Manga Cloister). The bright-yellow arched garden with a central fountain is a quiet, relatively unvisited oasis in the middle of the city,

HIGHLIGHTS
1. Mosteiro de Santa Cruz
2. Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro
3. Universidade de Coimbra

SIGHTS
4. Capela de São Miguel
5. Jardim Botânico
6. Joanina Library
7. Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Nova
8. Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Velha
9. Museu da Ciência
10. Sé Nova
11. Sé Velha

SLEEPING
12. AQ 188 Guest House
13. Luggage Hostel & Suites
14. Serenata Hostel

EATING
15. Mercado Municipal Dom Pedro V
16. No Tacho
17. Zé Manel dos Ossos

DRINKING
18. Café Santa Cruz

ENTERTAINMENT
19. àCapella
20. Fado ao Centro



THE CITY OF LOVERS

Coimbra was the stage for one of Portugal's most beautiful and tragic love stories – the forbidden passion between Dom Pedro of Portugal and Dona Inês de Castro, a Galician noble. Legends say that the two lovers would meet in hideaways across the city – like at the Fonte dos Amores (fountain of lovers) – until Dona Inês was brutally killed by order of Dom Pedro's father, king Dom Alfonso IV. According to the story by poet Luís Vaz de Camões, on the day of her execution, Dona Inês cried at a fresh water spring, now named the Fonte das Lágrimas (fountain of tears). After her death, the water began to run red, stained with the eternal blood of Dona Inês.

and although this 14th-century construction was originally part of the monastery, it's no longer directly accessible from the church itself.

What's in a Cryptoporticus?

Historical patrimony and subterranean galleries

Housed in the former Bishop's Palace, on what was most likely the site of the Roman forum (back when Coimbra was the Roman city of Aeminium), is one of the country's most unique museums. Named after renowned Portuguese sculptor Joaquim Machado de Castro, the **Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro** first opened in 1913 and holds an impressive collection of religious art – including the most extensive collection of sculpture in the country – along with ceramics, textiles and precious metals from as early as the Roman era. Once you've seen all that's above ground, head down to the subterranean galleries to see the Cryptoporticus, the vaulted 1st-century Roman passageways located underneath the museum.

Santa Clara, Old and New

A lovely pair of monasteries

There are two Santa Clara monasteries – the old and the new – both on the west bank of the Mondego. The **Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Velha** dates back to the 14th century, when it was founded by São Teotônio, Portugal's first saint. By the 17th century, however, the building was in a state of ruin due to the river's frequent flooding, and abandoned for the **Mosteiro de Santa Clara-a-Nova**, an incredible ornate tribute to Queen Saint Elizabeth, built nearby. It wasn't until the late 20th century that the old monastery was excavated and restored, a twelve year process you can learn about when visiting the site.

A City Divided

The highs and lows of Coimbra living

Coimbra is divided into two main parts: *a cidade alta*, aka the upper city, which is home to the university, the former nobleman's estates, student housing and residential areas; and *a cidade baix*a (the lower city), where narrow labyrinth-like streets are lined with shops, restaurants and traditional taverns. The **Baixa de Coimbra**, which was once the lower income area with commerce, artisans and riverfront housing, is now considered to be the city's historic centre, and includes sites like the **Mercado Municipal Dom Pedro V** and the city's main commercial street, **Rua Ferreira Borges**.

EATING IN COIMBRA: OUR PICKS

Café Santa Cruz: A Coimbra institution in a 1264 chapel, perfect for a drink and a pastry and afternoon fado. *8am-12am Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm Sun* €

Zé Manel dos Ossos: Tiny *tasca* serving local cuisine in a room wallpapered in hand-written notes. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri, 12.30-3pm Sat* €

O Palco: Top-tier eatery where everything served is produced within 100km of Coimbra. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Mon & Thu-Sat; 12.30-3pm Sun* €€€

No Tacho: This family-run *tasca* serving traditional dishes is a favorite among the locals. *7.30-10pm Mon & Tue, 12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Sun* €€



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Coimbra

Musical Legacy

Coimbra's student fado

One of the first things that comes to mind when you think of Portugal is inevitably fado. This unique music styling was born in the taverns of Lisbon, followed closely by a second genre of fado that's native to Coimbra University. Groups of students would gather in the streets to sing of love, longing and their beloved university, eventually creating the style of music that's often called *fado de estudante* (student fado)

In Coimbra fado is meant to be sung outdoors, not in taverns, and the guitar is tuned lower to better fit the outdoor acoustics. The lyrics are typically more hopeful than the *lisboeta* style, and performers (only men allowed) still wear the requisite black university dress and cape to this day. Check out **àCapella** or **Fado ao Centro** for the real deal.

Tale as old as Time

...and a cathedral that's even older

Coimbra's 12th century **Sé Velha** (old cathedral) is the only Romanesque cathedral still standing in the country, although it's more reminiscent of a small castle than a church, with some clear Islamic influences. The Sé's construction dates back to the birth of the nation, shortly after D Alfonso Henriques declared himself king and named Coimbra his capital city. Additions were made over the centuries, such as the 13th-century Gothic cloisters and its Renaissance-style three-storey entryway, the **Porta Especiosa.** Built in 1530 by architect João de Ruão and sculpture artist Nicolau de Chanterenne, the doorway was inspired by Italy's Renaissance works. Wander around the cathedral's impressive interior, marvelling at the intricate mosaic and ceramic tilework, as well as the expansive collection of religious artifacts, then enjoy a coffee in the cathedral's square, a de facto town centre and meeting point for the start of Coimbra University's most famous festival, the Queima das Fitas (p307).

LOCAL SPECIALITIES

While every region has its own popular gastronomy, the Coimbra region might win the prize for strange concoctions. Some of the local specialties include *sarrabulho*, a stew-like dish where pieces of goat or pork are cooked in their own blood, which dates back to the middle ages; *chanfana*, a traditional dish made with old goat's meat (the older the better), marinated in red wine for at least a day then cooked in black clay pots over a wooden fire; and *lampreia*, a jawless, prehistoric fish with a funnel-like mouth (don't look it up if you want to eat one) that's usually cooked in its own blood, and is the star of its own culinary festival held annually in Pencova.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for more information on visiting the university

TOP SIGHT

University of Coimbra

The Universidade de Coimbra, first founded in 1290, is considered to be one of the oldest universities in the world. While the university got its start in Lisbon, the faculty was moved to Coimbra in 1537 to the grounds of the former royal palace, now a UNESCO World Heritage site still occupied by the university.

DON'T MISS

- Palace of Schools
- St Michael's Chapel
- Joanina Library
- Sé Nova
- Jardim Botânico
- Science Museum
- Queima Das Fitas

Palace of Schools

Royal Palace

The Palace itself was built at the end of the 10th century as the Governor's quarters during Islamic rule. In 1131 it became the first residence of the Portuguese monarchs until 1537, when Dom João III had the university permanently transferred from Lisbon to Coimbra, then installed in the Palace in 1544. The Palace of Schools is divided into three main spaces: the Armory; the Private Examination Hall and the Great Hall of Acts.

Great Hall of Acts

Formerly the Throne Room, the Great Hall of Acts was once the main hall of the university, where you'll find beautiful architectural relics from the 17th century, like the *azulejo* (tile) walls, and gargoyle motifs on the wooden ceiling.

The Armory

Originally the weapons storage for the Academic Royal Guard, this yellow-silk-clad room is now primarily used for solemn ceremonies like the swearing in of the Rector and the opening of the academic year.

Private Examination Hall
Once the king's private quarters, this hall later became the final exam room for soon-to-be graduates until the age of Enlightenment.

St Michael's Chapel
Also of Moorish origin, the **Capela de São Miguel** is noted for its 16th- and 17th-century decor, as well as a still-functioning organ with more than 2000 pipes. The chapel is used for ceremonies and concerts.

Joanina Library

One of the most beautiful baroque libraries in the world is the University's Joanina Library (pictured left). Named in honor of Dom João V, the Joanina Library was completed in 1728 and functioned as the University's library from 1777 until the mid 1900s. Some of its 60,000 books date back as far as the 16th century, and the library itself is designed to preserve the works, with 2m (7ft) thick walls, oak shelves and two resident colonies of bats living onsite who are 'employed' to eat insects that could potentially damage the pages. The building has three floors, is decorated with intricate carvings and gold works, and until 1834, duly served as the academic prison.

Sé Nova

This 16th-century baroque and neoclassical cathedral was originally the city's Jesuit College until 1759, when the Marquês de Pombal expelled the Jesuits. In 1772, the city's episcopal seat was transferred from the Igreja de Santa Maria (aka Sé Velha) to this newer, more spacious building. The two churches now jointly hold the city's bishop's seat.

Botanical Garden

The University's Botanical Garden is a 13 hectare (32 acre) preserved natural area dedicated to conservation, education and botanical research. Founded in the 18th century, the space is divided into two parts – the **Classical Garden**, with geometrically placed flower beds in a neoclassical style; and the **Arboretum**, which encompasses two thirds of the Garden and hosts a huge diversity of trees including tropical species, a bamboo forest, a citrus grove and even a medicinal plant nursery. Free entry.

Science Museum

Inside a neoclassical building you'll find the **Museu da Ciência** housing the oldest collection of Portuguese natural history and antique scientific instruments, including some original machines once used in the study of physics – an interesting immersion into the history of science.

UNIVERSITY DRESS

Coimbra University has a very old, traditional uniform that's still used by students today. The outfit includes a black suit and tie (skirt suit for women), along with a heavy black cape and a black cane – it's said to be the inspiration for Hogwarts robes in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

UNIVERSITY CELEBRATIONS

Coimbra's University has two important traditions. The **Festa das Latas** is a week-long celebration full of cultural, musical and festive events that takes place at the start of term in October, and culminates in a parade through the city to the Rio Mondego, where the new students are ritually baptised into the academic community. At the end of the school year is a bigger celebration, the **Queima das Fitas** *(facebook.com/queimadasfitascoimbra)* in May. The week-long party includes parades, ceremonies, street parties and a music festival, as well as the ritual burning of ribbons by the students who've graduated that year.

Beyond Coimbra



Roman Ruins, windswept beaches and charming, historical mountain villages set the scene in the region surrounding the Berias' largest city.

Places

Conímbriga p308
Serra da Lousã p309
Figueira da Foz p310
Montemor-o-Velho p310

GETTING AROUND

If you don't have a car, the Ruínas de Conímbriga can be accessed by Transdev bus, with morning departures going directly to the museum and the last return around 1pm. Later departures only go as far as Condeixa, so you'd need to get a taxi from there. Figueira da Foz is on the regional train line, while the Metro Mondego, Coimbra's light rail, serves Lousã, from where you could meet a taxi or tour driver to visit the villages of the Serra da Lousã.

The areas around Coimbra are exceptionally varied, so there's a perfect city side-trip for every taste. History buffs will swoon over a visit to one of the largest Roman ruins in the country, paved in exceptionally intact colorful mosaics, while nature and art lovers can wander through adorable, historical hillside villages being lovingly revived by creative culture. Stay for a Dark Sky stargazing experience, then head west to windswept beach towns along the famed Silver Coast. Where the Rio Mondego meets the sea you'll find a casino-town that has been attracting beachgoers, gamblers and wave-riders since the 19th century, though it's somehow still blissfully undiscovered by the tourist hordes.

Conímbriga

TIME FROM COIMBRA: **25 MINS**

Roman ruins

While it wasn't Portugal's largest Roman city, **Conímbriga** is easily the best preserved of the era's settlements, and visiting this extensive and well-excavated ruin is a unique highlight to any itinerary.

Located 16km (9.9 mi) from Coimbra (known as Aeminium in Roman times) on the outskirts of Condeixa-a-Nova, the extensive ruins are estimated to have been occupied since the 9th century BCE. The indigenous Conii people who lived here were peaceful, so the town's Romanisation happened without conflict. Conímbriga quickly became prosperous, as is evident by the extensive public constructions as well as the size and variety of private houses – the **Casa de Cantaber**, **Casa dos Repuxos** and **Casa da Cruz Suástica** are some of the most notable examples. You'll find exceptionally preserved intricate mosaics around the settlement, along with three different bathhouses within the city's walls, an amphitheater and huge archway entrances to the city. Visit the museum for more history and to see smaller artifacts discovered onsite.



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Conímbriga

Serra da Lousã

TIME FROM COIMBRA: 1 HR

Get creative

In the hills the of Serra da Lousã surrounding Coimbra you'll find a collection of tiny villages built of shale that have been restored with public funding to promote tourism efforts in the rural areas. The Aldeias do Xisto (Shale Villages) are an eco-tourism initiative that allows an immersion into local living – along with access to myriad hiking and mountain biking trails, regional cuisine, river beaches and more. Of the 12 **Aldeias do Xisto** *(aldeiasdoxisto.pt/en)* in the Serra da Lousã, **Cerdeira** stands out for its development into a creative community. The village-turned-hotel **Cerdeira Home for Creativity** *(cerdeirahomeforcreativity.com)* offers creative courses, workshops and immersions into local art and artisan techniques, which are accessible both to the village's hotel guests and anyone staying nearby.

DARK SKIES

In the Aldeias do Xisto, where there's almost no light pollution, locals have been enjoying starry night skies for generations. Now, thanks to an initiative called the **Dark Sky Project**, led by the municipality of Pampilhosa da Serra at the heart of the region's 27 villages, the Aldeias do Xisto have been recognised as a Starlight Tourist Destination. Dark Sky destinations are renowned for their remote landscapes, clean air and nocturnal silence, making them the ideal locations for observing the night sky, learning about space and counting constellations. The development of this type of tourism also helps to promote natural conservation, by keeping the conditions ideal for nocturnal fauna to thrive.

MORE STARGAZING

The Aldeias do Xisto join the **Alqueva** (p224), a zone located near Évora in Alentejo, which was Portugal's first accredited Dark Sky destination.

EATING IN THE SERRA DE LOUSÃ: LOCAL BITES

Sabores da Aldeia: Roadside restaurant where local specialties are served family style. *weekends, holidays & by reservation* €€

Ti Lena: Local refuge for traditional cuisine in the Aldeia do Xisto Talasnal. Hearty dishes, friendly owners. *weekends, holidays & by reservation* €

À Terra: High-end gastronomy by chef Miguel Silva at the Octant Boutique Hotel in the old Palácio da Lousã. *1-2.30pm & 7.30-9pm* €€€

Café Meeple & Co: Cute café in Lousã for light meals, coffee and boardgames. *10am-7pm Tue-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat, to 2pm Sun* €

A SURF CELEBRATION

Portugal's coolest alternative surfing festival takes place just south of the Mondego, across the river from Figueira's old town on Cabedelo Beach. Here, in a refurbished fishing warehouse, is the headquarters of the decade-old (and counting) classic surf festival **Gliding Barnacles**. Started in 2014 by local surfer Eurico Gonçalves, the surf-art-music festival brings together classic longboarders from around the world for a laid-back cultural celebration every September, transforming Figueira's southern beaches into a creative hub for five days of concerts, street food, board shaping, mural painting, exhibitions and of course, surfing.

Figueira da Foz

TIME FROM COIMBRA: **45 MINS**

Take a gamble

Just 40km from Coimbra are the extensive white-sand beaches that have been attracting holidaymakers for centuries. Figueira da Foz has been an important port city since the Moorish empire and saw huge development during the 19th century as a centre for the construction of naval vessels. In 1884, Figueira da Foz's **casino** was inaugurated, making it the oldest still-operating casino on the Iberian Peninsula.

Surf till you drop

Figueira da Foz has an undeniable surf culture that dates back to some of the earliest days of Portuguese surfing, when pioneers took to the waters at surf spots like **Buarcos** and **Cabedelo** for never ending right-hand waves (in really cold water). While surf culture has grown in this laid back town, it luckily hasn't gotten out of hand – perhaps thanks to the frigid water and not-always beginner-friendly conditions. There are, however, plenty of places to learn to surf without the crowds. Check out **iSurf Club** on Cabedelo beach or **We Surf House** over the headlands at Murtinheira, while a bit further north **Sea Natives Surf Camp** at Praia da Tocha is the go-to surf and glamping site for families.

Don't worry about flat days – the town boasts not only an **ocean-front skatepark** with exceptional sunset views, but an in-town **pump track** hidden in a forest that's a favourite for mountain bikers and families alike.

Montemor-o-Velho

TIME FROM COIMBRA: **35 MINS**

Marvellous medieval castle

The **Castle of Montemor-o-Velho** is easily one of the most impressive medieval fortifications in the country, and it's only a short 30-minute drive west of Coimbra. Sitting atop a hill with views of the surrounding rice-paddies, this picture-perfect castle was once occupied by the Romans, before becoming a Muslim stronghold, and later, property of the Portuguese crown. Although the modern-day castle is similar in layout to the days in which King Alfonso VI used it as one of his royal residences, the building has since undergone extensive reconstruction. These days, all that you'll find beyond the battlements is a small part of the 13th-century palace and the Igreja de Santa Maria de Alcáçova, a 16th-century church. If you're in the area however, it's very much worth a visit.

EATING IN FIGUEIRA DA FOZ: A MODERN TAKE

Volta e Meia: Colourful restaurant with delicious modern dishes and great wine. *7-11pm Tue-Fri, noon-3pm & 7-11.30pm Sat, noon-3pm Sun* €€

Tasca Maria: Tasty local specialties with modern presentation. *7.30-10.30pm Wed-Fri, 12.30-2.30pm & 7-11pm Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun* €€

O Xiringuito: Bar right on the sand in the Costa De Lavos, serving modern seafood and after-beach fare. *11am-6pm Sun-Thu, 11am-10pm Fri & Sat* €€

MAR Bistro: Unique fusion flavors at this Med-inspired seafood restaurant at Praia de Quiaios. *12.30-3pm & 7-10 pm Fri-Sun, 12.30-2.30pm Mon* €€

Castelo Branco



GEOLOGIC MARVELS | BAROQUE GARDENS | ELABORATE EMBROIDERY

Castelo Branco and its surrounding regions are full of beautiful landscapes, delicious food and rich cultural heritage, but this this inland city is too often overlooked by travellers. For those in the know, it's more than worth a visit its arts, parks and gardens.

The municipality is known for its artisanal embroidery, an important legacy that led the city to be declared a UNESCO Creative City in 2023, although some visit the region for the exemplary natural surroundings alone. The majority of the region sits within the Naturtejo Geopark, a UNESCO conservation area littered with impressive geologic formations, highlighted both in the urban zone and beyond.

To reverse its demographic decline, Castelo Branco began to invest in its own quality-of-life offerings, and is now considered to be one of the most attractive and liveable of any Portuguese urban centre – blissfully one that's still without the usual crowds. You might even say that Castelo Branco is a reminder of what the country was like before it lit up the tourist trail.

Ceramics with a Twist

Ceramic art that's more than *azulejos*

Opened in 2005, the **Manuel Cargaleiro Museum** has quickly become one of the most important museums for contemporary ceramic works in the country. The collection – which also includes paintings, sculpture and tapestry – was endowed by the Manuel Cargaleiro Foundation and features many of the renowned Portuguese artist's own works. In case you haven't heard of him, Cargaleiro (born in 1927) is considered one of the most important contemporary ceramic artists in the nation, and one of the first to experiment with modernist style painting on traditional *azulejo* ceramics.

GETTING AROUND

The city is well connected both nationally and internationally by train *(cp.pt)* and bus (Rede Expressos, Transvia and Flixbus); and once you're in town, there is an urban and interurban bus system called Mobicab *(mobicab.pt)*, offering one-way rides within the city for just €1 (or €3.80 for a day pass). In the name of sustainability, the local government invested in a large network of bike paths, and also offers shared E-bikes via the BINAS system – simply download the app and get riding.

TOP TIP

Since it was named a UNESCO Creative City in 2023, the local government has been investing in tourism, and has created a number of themed tourist routes that can be downloaded from on the municipality's website *(cm-castelobranco.pt)*.



HIGHLIGHTS
1 Jardim do Paço Episcopal
2 Manuel Cargaleiro Museum

SIGHTS
3 Castelo
4 Centro de Bordado
5 Museu de Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior

SLEEPING
6 Casa 92
7 Meliá Castelo Branco Hotel

EATING
8 Bar Ponto Wine
9 Mãos de Horta
10 Piso Risco
11 Tabuas.Come

The museum's collection also features more than 300 different national and international artists, and is held in two contiguous buildings in the city's historic centre – a 17th-century palace called the Solar dos Cavaleiros, and a modern building, added in 2011, to house the expanding collection.

Architectural Parks

Biodiversity in the city centre

Integrated into the lands of the UNESCO Naturtejo Geopark, the 40-hectare **Parque do Barrocal** is rife with exceptionally beautiful landscapes and impressive biodiversity, just steps away from the city's urban centre.

The park won a number of European architectural and conservation awards after its opening in 2020, and includes geographic formations that were dated back 310 million years. This is as much an open-air natural history museum as it is an urban park, but you won't be disappointed: even a leisurely stroll rewards with amazing views. The park features raised pedestrian trails, a suspension bridge, an exceptional kids' playground and seven lookout points from where you can enjoy views of the surrounding valleys.



ARK NEYMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Jardim do Paço Episcopal

Baroque Gardening

Soothing symmetry and personified seasons

One of the most beautiful baroque gardens in Portugal is located behind the Paço Episcopal, the former bishop's palace dating from the 16th century. The **Jardim do Paço Episcopal** was later added in the 18th century by bishop João de Mendonça in honor of Saint John the Baptist, for whom the gardens were originally named. Back then, the garden included two olive groves, a vineyard and a food garden, as well as a forest, along with the baroque gardens themselves. The verdant complex completely surrounded, and protected, the bishop's residence.

These days, all that remains are the baroque gardens with two calming water features, but a visit is still a highlight to any trip to the city. Entry is €3 to the gorgeously symmetrical cultivations, lined with centuries-old sculptures of kings, saints and personified seasons, thought to be have been added over the years.

BORDADO

When Castelo Branco was named a UNESCO Creative City in 2023, it was much in thanks to the city's rich tradition of embroidery. The region, which holds the perfect conditions for silkworms to flourish, has been producing brightly coloured silk-thread embroidery for hundreds of years (some beautiful ancient examples are on display at the town's Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior Museum, p314).

Explore the origin of embroidery, its history and the techniques used both centuries ago and in modern day at the **Centro de Bordado** (the Embroidery Centre), where you'll learn everything from how to extract silk from silkworms to the symbolism behind different traditional designs. There's also an onsite workshop-school, where you can see both masters and apprentice embroiderers in action.

EATING IN CASTELO BRANCO: LOCAL FAVOURITES

Tabuas.Come: Modern takes on traditional plates served in style with family options. *9am-3pm & 6.30-10pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun* €€

Mãos de Horta: Grab a seat in the unique dining room or courtyard and enjoy the delicious dish of the day. *12.30-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat* €€

Bar Ponto Wine: A wine bar with tapas on tap, delicious desserts and some solid dinner offerings to boot. *noon-2am Mon-Sat* €€

Piso Risco: A traditional Portuguese *tasca* offering local cuisine, generous portions and exceptional prices. Cash only. *6.30am-midnight Mon-Sat* €

A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

Besides the hill climb that takes you to the castle, Castelo Branco's historic centre is exceptionally walkable.

START	END	LENGTH
CCCCB	Parque Da Cidade	2.4km, 40 minutes

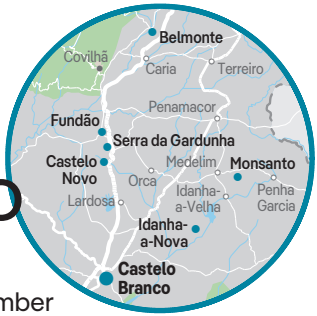
Start at the 1 **Castelo Branco Center for Contemporary Culture** (CCCCB), an exceptional building housing a modern art museum, concert hall and synthetic ice-skating rink, whose design by architects Josep Luís Mateo and Carlos Reis de Figueiredo was nominated for the Mies van der Rohe architecture prize in 2015.

Then, head over to the 2 **Torre do Relógio** (Clock Tower), a 19th-century still-functioning clock that's an icon of the historic centre, before starting your climb up to Castelo Branco's 3 **castle**, a medieval fortress perched on the city's hilltop. Gaze at the view from the 4 **Miradouro de São Gens** lookout point, then make your way back down the hill to the 5 **Sé Cathedral**, also known as the Igreja de São Miguel, which originally dates from the 13th or 14th century but was reconstructed in the 17th century in a comparatively minimalist style.

Next, head to the Paço Episcopal, the 16th century former bishop's palace that now houses the 6 **Francisco Tavares Proença Jr Museum**. Check out the museum's collection of ancient tapestries, ceramics, sculptures and traditional embroidery, before heading across the street to the 7 **Parque da Cidade**, a relatively simple but lovely city park where you can rest your legs from the morning's walk.



Beyond Castelo Branco



Wander your way through the Naturtejo Geopark, the Serra da Gardunha and a number of beautifully restored historic villages.

The Beira Baixa has quite a varied history, and the marks of the past are visible everywhere you turn. Trilobite fossils imprinted on rocks tell the area's ancient undersea story, while the ruins of Templar castles nod to the Christian Reconquista. High on hilltops, defensive villages remind us of centuries of Spanish aggression, a far cry from today's calm farmlands and rolling plains. Trails for hikers and cyclists provide an intimate exploration through oak forests and olive groves, granite-lined hilltops and protected parklands. In the sweltering summers, delicious river beaches provide sweet relief, although the region truly shines in spring, when nesting birdlife and cherry blossoms liven the landscape.

Monsanto

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **50 MINS**

A dragon's castle

Once named the 'Most Portuguese Village', this mountaintop town with Roman, Visigoth and Arab history, is actually one of the more unique places you'll visit. Climbing its way up a nearly 760m mountain with houses set into the gigantic granite stones, Monsanto culminates at a hilltop **castle**. Built by the Knights Templar, the castle is integrated into a landscape laden with 5m-plus tall boulders, giving it the impression it was constructed by giants.

It's one of the Beira's 12 *Aldeia Históricas*, or historical villages, and recently Monsanto gained new fame as a filming location for the *Game of Thrones: House of Dragons* series, attracting a new breed of tourism but doing nothing to steal from the village's charm.

A simple walk through the village from top to bottom can fill half a day with ease (consider taking a picnic and enjoying the incredible views from the top). Follow it with a short drive over to Monsanto's tiny neighbor, **Idanha-a-Velha**, another *Aldeia Histórica*; or opt for an afternoon swim at nearby **Penha Garcia River Beach.**

Places

Monsanto p315
Castelo Novo p316
Belmonte p316
Idanha-a-Nova p316
Fundão p317
Serra da Gardunha p318

GETTING AROUND

Castelo Branco's countryside is best explored by car but even without a rented vehicle there are options for getting around. The Mobicab Interurban system *(mobicab.pt)* can get you as far north as the Serra Da Gardunha, west to Sarzedas and as far south east as Monforte da Beira, close to the Spanish border. Trains run north to Covilhã, and if you get off at Castelo Novo, Alpedrinha e Fundão, you can get a free electric rental car from the municipal government.

ALDEIAS HISTÓRICAS

As Aldeias Históricas de Portugal (the Historic Villages of Portugal) are a network of small towns in the Beiras region joined together in a tourism and development project for their unique cultural patrimony. The majority of the villages are fortified, situated on high ground and have history dating back to at least the Roman period.

Of the 12 villages in the project, four – Idanha-a-Velha, Castelo Novo, Monsanto and Belmonte – are located in the Castelo Branco district, while seven of the others – Sortelha, Linhares, Castelo Mendo, Almeida, Trancoso, Castelo Rodrigo e Marialva – are in the Guarda district. **Piódão**, the odd one out, is situated on the other side of the Serra da Estrela from the rest of the villages.

Castelo Novo

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **25 MINS**

A tiny town of wonders

This tiny, beautifully restored village is the perfect place to relax and enjoy some country living. Start your day with a hike through the **Serra da Guardinha**, located just behind the town, for beautiful views of the surrounding valleys, then cool off at Castelo Novo's **river beach**. Head for lunch at **O Lagarto** (the town's only restaurant), followed by a walk up to Castelo Novo's **castle** for sunset. The town is the perfect base to enjoy the surrounding areas – it's a short drive to everywhere, and thanks to a partnership with Renault, you can organise an all-electric rental car from the **Aldeias Históricas** *(plataformaaldeiashistoricas.com/mobility/renault-mobilidade)* group for free.

Belmonte

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **50 MINS**

Resilience and discoveries

Belmonte is a town almost as old as the country itself, although its main claim to fame isn't its age. One of the 12 *Aldeia Históricas*, the village is renowned as the birthplace of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the first known Portuguese to set foot in Brazil, and as the home of a particularly resilient group of Sephardic Jews who maintained their religious traditions even throughout the Inquisition – when practising any non-Christian religion was punishable by death.

These days, the fortified town with an exceptionally well conserved Templar castle has museums that tell the story of both Cabral's and the Jewish communities – check out the **Museu dos Descobrimentos** (Museum of the Discoveries) and the **Museu Judaico de Belmonte** (Jewish Museum), respectively. If you're less into history, opt for a stop at the **Museu do Azeite** (Olive Oil Museum) for an in-depth look at the town's most famous agricultural offering.

Idanha-a-Nova

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **30 MINS**

Go boom boom

Portugal's largest psychedelic trance festival takes place just a short drive from both Idanha-a-Nova and Idanha-a-Velha, transforming the normally peaceful area into the epicentre of one of the best-known festivals in Europe. **Boom Festival**, founded in 1997 in Aguas de Moura, found its home at the **Barragem da Idanha**, Idanha-a-Nova's lake, in 2002. The move became permanent when the festival's collective bought the Herdade da Granja property on the shores of the

EATING IN THE ALDEIAS HISTÓRICAS: BEST TASCAS & TABERNAS

Casa da Velha Fonte: Creative takes on local dishes with top service near Idanha-a-Velha. *1-4.30pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri, 1-7pm Sat* €€€

Petiscos e Granitos: Enjoy traditional fare with sunset views from a terrace in Monsanto's centre. *10.30am-10pm Wed-Sun, 1-9pm Mon & Tue* €€

Taberna Lusitana: Restaurant/bar serving tapas, local plates and themed drinks with a view over Monsanto. Cash only. *10am-5pm Wed-Sun* €€

O Lagarto: Castelo Novo's only restaurant serves delicious local dishes using fresh ingredients. *noon-3pm Tue-Sun* €€



VITOR MIRANDA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Cherry tree, Fundão

barragem (lake) in 2016. This alternative culture celebration takes place every second summer during a full moon (with the exception of 2023, the first contiguous edition – the next is 2025), and has won several 'Green Festival' awards for its sustainability practices.

Fundão

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **30 MINS**

On the cherry trail

Fundão isn't a particularly remarkable city (true, it's better known for its IT sector than tourist offerings), however every spring the surrounding areas come alive thanks to a tiny red orb that's the pride of the region. Fundão cherries are renowned across the country, and if you're around in spring or early summer you can enjoy the cherry blossoms, help with a harvest, or simply taste all of the creative gastronomic offerings made with this delicious little fruit. Take a ride on the **Rota de Cereja**, a special train service leaving Lisbon on the national rail, and if you're still around in June, don't miss the **Festa da Cereja**, or Cherry Festival of Alcongosta, where entertainment and tastings abound. Outside of the season, check out the **Casa da Cereja** in **Alcongosta**, a primary-school-turned-museum dedicated to the region's beloved fruit.

GASTRONOMIC TRADITIONS

The *Aldeias Históricas* of Portugal are rife with culinary traditions, as well as delectable fresh ingredients native to the area. Dip some freshly made bread into silky, deep green olive oil from Belmonte. Snack on a handful of blueberries from the zones around Monsanto and Idanha-a-Velha, or the famous sweet cherries from Fundão. If you're around in early summer, stop by the **Sabores de Perdição** annual food festival in Castelo Branco to get a taste of all the local gastronomic goodies; or try your hand at cooking your own regional specialities during a cooking immersion with Miguel Inácio, who offers **cooking classes** (by reservation) at his guesthouse Pedra Nova (p344) in Castelo Novo.

EATING ON THE ROTA DE CEREJA: BEST MOUNTAIN CUISINE

Casa Cunha Lea: This recently inaugurated restaurant in Alcaide is as mouth watering as it is chic. *12.30-10.30pm Wed-Sat, 12.30-9pm Sun* €€

Taska Da Vila: Friendly Traditional *tasca* and meaty BBQ joint in Tortosendo. *10.30am-11.30pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun* €

Pecado do Convento: Creative tasting menu served in a dining room at one of Fundão's boutique hotels. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Mon* €€€

O Boguinhas: The perfect stop in Fundão for hill country cuisine and wine at good prices. *noon-2.30pm Mon, noon-2.30pm & 7-9.30pm Wed-Sun* €

ADUFEIRAS

When Idanha-a-Nova was named one of UNESCO's Creative Cities for its musical heritage, everyone knew that the *adufeiras* were to be thanked. These heritage holders play a square, handheld percussion instrument, made from a seed-filled wooden box covered in goat or sheep's skin, called an *adufe*. These days, there are only about 50 or so *adufe* players in the area and, as many of them are in or past their seventies, there are several projects in place in the city to ensure the traditional art won't be forgotten. The **Oficina de José Relvas** *(José Relvas Workshop; 962 692 887)* and the **Centro de Artes Tradicionais** *(Centre for Traditional Arts; 277 201 023)* teach how to play, and how to make, this emblematic instrument.



TANIAARAUJO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Serra da Gardunha

Serra da Gardunha

TIME FROM CASTELO BRANCO: **45 MINS**

Two-wheeled exploring

Less than an hour's drive from Castelo Branco is a particularly special geological zone called the Serra da Gardunha, or Gardunha mountains. It's an outdoor paradise full of incredible views and home to 350km of pedestrian trails and more than 460km of BTT (mountain biking) routes.

There are multiple BTT centres around the area, including **BTT Center Serra da Gardunha** where you can find trail maps for the eight different routes of four difficulty levels which start at the centre, including two that interconnect (maps are also available online). There are more trails leaving from the **Louriçal do Campo BTT center** further south, as well as from the **Parque de Campismo do Fundão** (Fundão campground).

Rollin' on the river

Some of the most relaxing river beaches in the area run down through the towns in and around the Serra da Gardunha. **Praia Fluvial de Almaceda** is located in the centre of the village. This well-maintained swimming hole is adorned by a charming rustic olive mill and offers easy access for swimmers of all speeds, and plenty of sunny and shady spots for lounging. **Praia Fluvial de Sesmo**, located in the adorable village with the same name, has grassy and sandy sections, a children's park, snack bar and picnic area, and swimming area so extensive you could practically train for the Olympics.

Serra da Estrela



BREATHTAKING VISTAS | EXCEPTIONAL HIKES | WINTER WONDERLAND

Some 65 million years ago, the Eurasian and African tectonic plates collided, creating the the Serra da Estrela, the tallest mountain range in continental Portugal. It's highest point, Torre, is 1993m but altitude alone isn't an adequate measure of the region's grandeur.

Extending 115km from Guarda até Lousã, the Parque Natural Serra da Estrela (also a UNESCO Geopark), was the first natural park in the country and remains the largest conservation zone in Portugal. Its geographic isolation has allowed for the continued development of a diverse range of flora and fauna, including the Iberian wolf and the European buzzard eagle; and it's also the source of four of Portugal's rivers, including the Mondego, which passes through Coimbra, and the Zêzere, a tributary of the Tejo.

The mountainous region is also rich with human culture, whose traditions and gastronomy are alive, well and waiting to be discovered.

High in the Sky

Take an unforgettable mountain flight

With clear skies and days of incredible visibility, the Serra da Estrela is one of the most popular places in the country for paragliding. There is a main convergence of two air masses along the mountain range which creates enough lift for flying all the way to Spain. The take-off points include Azinha and Vale de Amoreira in Manteigas, Vila do Carvalho and the historic village of Linhares da Beira. Linhares da Beira is also home to the final event of the Portugal Paragliding Championships, organised by the local flying club, **Clube Vertical** *(clubevertical.org)*, who along with **Montanae** *(montanae.com)* are the best people to contact for a flight of your own.

GETTING AROUND

You'll need a car to explore the park as there is no public transport. There is a plan in place to create tourist transport from the gateway towns to Torre by 2026; until then, taking a taxi is your best bet. Manteigas' municipal website lists taxi numbers, and there's also a taxi stand in town. Otherwise, you can explore by leg power following one of the numerous hiking and mountain-biking routes across the park (electric mountain bikes can be rented in Manteigas).

TOP TIP

Although nature is the top priority here, some of the most beautiful souvenir artisan products in the country come from the Serra da Estrela – think sheepskin slippers, wool blankets and creamy cheese that's to die for.



ACTIVITIES
8 Clube Vertical
9 Montanae
10 Serra da Estrela Ski Resort
11 Vale do Zêzere

SLEEPING
12 Abrigo da Montanha
13 Casa de São Lourenço
14 Casa do Baloiço
15 Casas da Lapa Hotel
Hotel Berne (see 2)
16 Hotel da Fábrica
17 Parque de Campismo Rural Vale do Beijames

EATING
18 Cova da Loba
19 Lenda Viriato
20 Truticultura do Aguincho
21 Vallécula

Get Wet

The Serra isn't all hiking trails

Contrary to the snowy winters, summer in the Serra da Estrela can be quite sunny and hot, and there's no better way to cool down after a long day of hiking than with a refreshing swim in one of the area's exceptional river beaches. Many of these river beaches find their home in ancient glacier valleys, like the **Praia Fluvial de Loriga**; or at the origin of some of the country's most important rivers. Some have cafes and onsite services, like the **Poço da Broca da Barriosa**, or the **Praia Fluvial do Vale do Rossim**, which also has sandy shores for sunbathing. The **Praia Fluvial da Barragem de Verdelhos** boasts a small waterfall, however it's nothing compared to the **Cascata do Poço do Inferno**, more famous for the waterfalls than the pool itself (and a popular spot for canyoning).

More than a Hike

Wooden walkways and rural roads

The **Passadiços do Mondego** is a 12km pedestrian route which connects the town of Videmonte to the Barragem do Caldeirão, a dam lake just outside of Guarda. The trail follows



LUIS PEDRO FONSECA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Passadiços do Mondego

the Rio Mondego along 7km of wooden walkways, 5km of rural roads and across a few suspension bridges, with plenty of stair climbing if you choose to start from Videmonte. Its not a particularly difficult trek if you're regularly trekker, although you can opt to hike a shorter section if you're coming with small children or without much time – there is a 2km, completely flat 'family section' that runs from Videmonte to Açude dos Trinta. Either way, tickets must be bought online *(passadicosdomondego.pt)* prior to arriving, as there are no onsite ticket sales.

Down the Slopes

Yes, you can ski in Portugal

Two kilometres from **Torre** are the country's only ski slopes. The **Estância de Ski** *(skiserradaestrela.com)* opens from December to April, although your best chances for consistent snowfall are in January and February. Equipment rentals and lessons are available at the resort (although snow gear is not); entrance tags to the slopes must be bought online prior to arriving. Runs are limited to three green, two blue, four red and one black.

BEST HIKING TRAILS IN THE SERRA

Rota da Garganta de Loriga: A moderate 9km one-way trail with views along Loriga's glacier-shaped valley.

Rota do Maciço Central: One of the most beautiful but most difficult hiking trails in the Serra, this 12km circular route takes around nine hours.

Rota da Levada: A moderately difficult 16km trail connecting Cabeça and Loriga, dotted with swimming holes, waterfalls and old mills.

Rota do Poço do Inferno: Be rewarded by a rock-shrouded waterfall on this 2.5km circular route – a green, easy trek.

Percurso Interpretativo da Geodiversidade: This 72km trail tracks the geographical history that earned the Serra da Estrela a UNESCO Geopark classification.

EATING IN THE SERRA DE ESTRELA: LOCAL FAVOURITES

Lenda Viriato: This historic spot takes you on a delectable journey through time. *7.30-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm Fri & Sat* €€

Cova da Loba: Mod twist on local flavors served in a wine-filled dining room or on the sunny terrace. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Fri-Tue, 7.30-10pm Thu* €€

Vallécula: One of the most sought-after eateries in Serra for more than 20 years. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun* €€

Truticultura do Aguincho: Hidden in a tree-filled valley at the edge of a river, this restaurant serves only one dish daily. *8am-9pm* €

ROAD TRIP

Winding Roads & Local Culture

Having your own wheels is hands-down the best way to explore the Serra da Estrela, and with only a few roads, it's pretty easy to get around. The biggest downside can be the crowds – most roads have only one lane each way, and with heaps of curves, passing isn't ideal. The incredible views and magnificent geologic formations, however, make sure that even if you're going slow, it'll be an excellent trip.

1 Manteigas

Start off in Manteigas, often called the 'heart of the Serra da Estrela', where charming mountain houses line narrow stone streets, and you'll find plenty of local hiking, wool factories (p324), the Caldas de Manteigas hot springs and some of the country's best *queijarias* (cheese shops).

The drive: On the way you'll enjoy incredible views over the **Vale do Zêzere**, a 13km U-shaped valley that's a biodiversity hotspot and the cradle of the Rio Zêzere.

2 Covão d'Ametade

Covão d'Ametade is a green, forested park located at the end of the Zêzere Glacier Valley where the waters from the Rio Zêzere get their start. With picnic tables and barbecues areas, this mostly flat zone is both an ideal stop for a picnic lunch and a popular place for camping.

The drive: Follow the winding roads up in altitude – on your right, keep an eye out for the 7m-tall sculpture of **Nossa Senhora da Boa Estrela**, the patron saint of pastors.

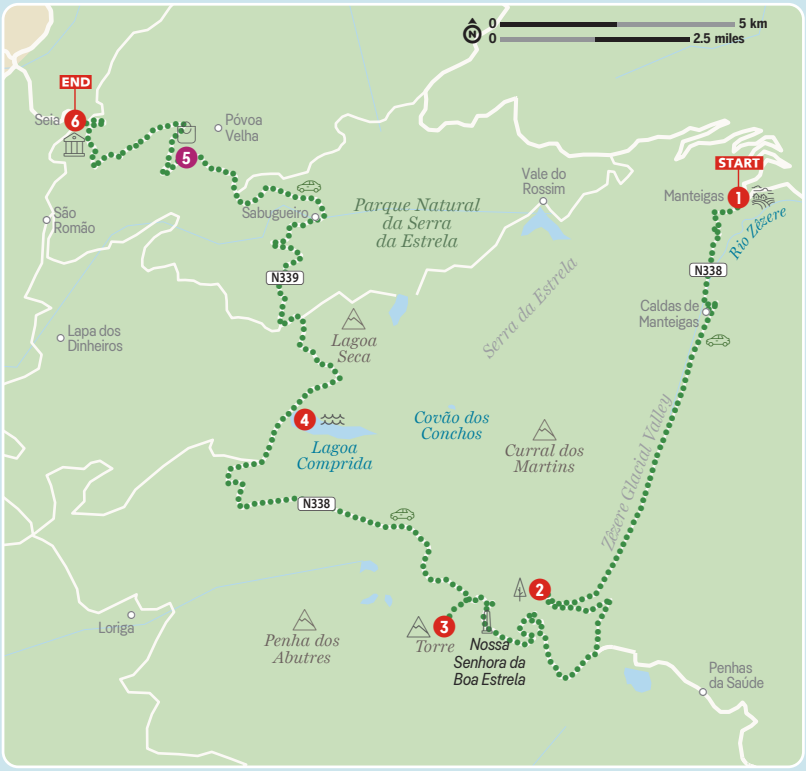
3 Torre

At 1993m above sea level, and marked by a 7m-tall observatory-like tower, is the highest point in the Serra da Estrela, aptly named Torre (tower). The panoramic views stretch nearly 360-degrees around, and there's a restaurant, a market selling local products, the **Chapel of Our Lady of the Air** and,



ELENA ESTELLES/GETTY IMAGES ©

Rio Zêzere, Manteigas



about 200m down the road, a small ski resort (p321) – the only one in Portugal.

The drive: It's just a 10-minute drive from Torre to Lagoa Comprida, although the route is so full of curves and panoramic viewpoints it's easy to stretch out the trip.

4 Lagoa Comprida

The largest hilltop lake in the region has its origins in glacial history, although its main job these days is electricity production (along with being a spectacularly beautiful tourist attraction). The nearly 1.6km-long lake can be walked around, and in the summer it's perfect for swimming or stand-up paddleboarding. Trekkers can opt for the 10km round-trip walk to the **Covão dos Conchos**, an artificial 'drain' that's part of the hydroelectric system, which became famous thanks to its sci-fi look.

The drive: This short but windy drive takes you through one of the country's highest altitude villages, **Sabugueiro**, whose in-town river beach is a worthy dip during the summer months.

5 Cabana do Pastor

While there are plenty of shops in the region, Cabana do Pastor is the hands-down best for buying gifts to take home. Sheepskin and leather coats, wool blankets and Serra da Estrela cheese are some of the region's specialties, and this roadside store has the widest range of high quality items from local producers. Prices are excellent.

The drive: It's all downhill from here. You're leaving the high-altitude zones and heading down to a city that sits at only 550m above sea level.

6 Seia

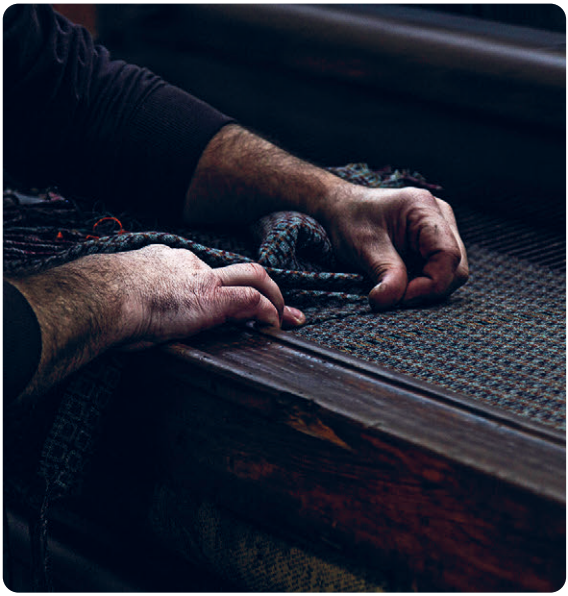
End your drive in Seia, a city that's one of the main gateways to the Serra da Estrela. There are several cool little museums to visit, like the **Toy Museum** if you're with kids, although the true standout is the **Museu do Pão** (Bread Museum), where you'll learn about the bread making cycle, the art of bread making, as well as bread's social, political and religious significance.

QUEIJO DA SERRA

Portugal's oldest cheese is likely its most famous. Queijo da Serra is a creamy sheep's cheese first introduced to Portugal by the Romans that quickly became popular in the region.

In 1287, King Dom Diniz opened the first official cheese factory in Celorico da Beira (now known as the capital of cheese), and the hearty cheese was an important source of nutrients during the 'Age of Discovery'.

These days, to be considered a DOP cheese, only milk from free-range sheep that graze in mountains will do. The cheese can be produced only in the winter, and is then set to cure for 60 to 120 days, exactly as it's been made for hundreds of years.



RICARDO VALVERDE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Burel Factory

A Sheep's Life

A story of wool

There are two types of sheep from the Serra da Estrela: the Bordaleira, and the Churra Mondegueira. Come spring, the herds get their yearly haircut, and the cuttings are then used to produce the Serra's flagship product: wool. Wool from the Bordaleira sheep makes Burel, a rough-textured, particularly durable fabric that's been used to make shepherd capes and fieldworkers clothes since the Middle Ages. It's a thermal insulator, almost waterproof and difficult to burn, and is one of the region's main economic offerings. The wool from the Churra sheep is used to make the Cobertor de Papa, a once nearly forgotten artisanal blanket from the Guarda region that's recently been making a comeback. Manteigas is home to the **Burel Factory** *(913 286 420; factory@burelfactory.com)* and **Ecolã** *(914 926 065; ecolaportugal@hotmail.com)*; you can book a guided tour at either. Manteigas also hosts the **Wool Innovation Week Festival** *(land-week.com)*, an annual event focused on the creative development of the modern wool industry.

DINING IN THE SERRA DA ESTRELA: BEST HOTEL RESTAURANTS

Casas da Lapa Hotel: Classy restaurant with a tasting menu of creative dishes made from regional products. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm* €€

Abrigo da Montanha: For modern takes on age-old traditions, try one of this restaurant's beautifully plated meals. *open daily by reservation* €€

Casa de São Lourenço: Savour traditional Beiras cuisine while enjoying views over the Zêrzere Glacier Valley. *1-3pm & 8-10pm* €€

Hotel Berne: Generous portions and genuine flavors – traditional dishes with a great view. *noon-2pm & 7-9pm Tue-Sat, noon-2pm Sun* €

Beyond Serra da Estrela



Just outside the Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela you'll find a number of creative cities and historic villages that are well worth exploring.

Centuries-old settlements cling to ridges, while charming villages cascade down mountains. From Guarda, a medieval stronghold with a cathedral that still impresses, to Covilhã, a UNESCO Creative City that's been turned into an outdoor art gallery (thanks to one particularly cool urban art festival), you'll find a unique mix of sites and cultures to explore in the areas surrounding the Serra da Estrela. History buffs won't be short of castles to climb; the more artsy types will be surprised by the number of creative offerings in the highlands; and there's even a Michelin-star tavern hidden away for foodies hunting for the next hidden gem. If you have a car, these creative cities make the perfect base to explore the parklands.

Covilhã

TIME FROM THE SERRA DA ESTRELA: **15 MINS**

Textile history

The southern gate to the Serra da Estrela, Covilhã is a mountain city known for its public university, gastronomic culture and as an open-air art gallery, although it's mostly known for its wool.

Sheep were historically the main livelihood of local families and the wool textiles they produced became sought-after across the country. By the late 1600s, the town had a textile production factory-school, joined by a larger Royal Textile Factory in the mid-18th century.

Textiles still represent half of the city's GDP, supplying brands like Marks & Spencer, Calvin Klein, Armani and more. Retired factories have been given a new life as classrooms for the University of Beira Interior, while the old Royal Textile Factory hosts the **Museu de Lanifícados**, a particularly interesting factory-museum.

Places

Covilhã p325
Guarda p326
A Raia p327

GETTING AROUND

All the main cities around the Serra da Estrela have intercity, Rede Expresso buses *(rede-expressos.pt)* and train options *(cp.pt)*, and most are connected by Transdev routes. There are a few local public transport operators with seasonal timetables; ask at the bus station for additional route options if you can't find what you need. Note that Guarda's train station requires a sharp uphill climb, making the bus station a slightly more appealing option.

BEST FOR ART IN COVILHÃ

Galeria António Lopes: Named after the renowned professor and journalist, this gallery, in the old magistrate's house, hosts rotating exhibitions by local and international artists.

Museu de Arte Sacra: Sacred Art Museum has a contemporary art exhibition and hosts temporary exhibitions (and performance art), along with its permanent historic collection.

Teatro Municipal: Newly renovated Municipal Theater hosts theater, orchestra, dance and other performing arts

Teatro das Beiras: An internationally-performing theater company dating back to 1974, headquartered in a resorted wool factory.

New Hand Gallery: The art gallery of New Hand Lab, principally hosting exhibitions by those who work in the creative space.

A very creative city

In 2021, Covilhã was named a UNESCO Creative City for design in recognition of its history and innovation in the arts and, particularly, in the textile industry. The city was also recognised for its intellectual legacy, thanks in large part to the city's **University of the Beira Interior**, which helps to induce a more cosmopolitan population (over 8% of the city are students, 22% of whom are international, mainly from Africa and Brazil). The moniker has helped to encourage the growth of other creative projects such as **New Hand Lab**, a unique space for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in the 17th-century Estrela wool factory.

Open-air art

Although you might not expect it from this traditional mountain town, one of Covilhã's claims to fame is its urban art. Dozens of murals are scattered around the city, the results of one of the country's oldest art festivals, **WOOL** *(woolfest.org)*. Founded by a local trio (sister, brother and sister-in-law), the annual festival invites national and international artists to adorn the city with new murals, as a way to bring economic development and promote social transformation and community in the country's interior. See the website for a map of the murals, or you can pick up a physical copy at **A Tentadora**, a hipster-chic shop in the historic centre hawking all-Portuguese made goods; you'll often find the festival's founders contently working away here.

Guarda

TIME FROM THE SERRA DA ESTRELA: **15 MINS**

High altitude

Guarda sits at the northern end of the Serra da Estrela. At 1056m above sea level, it's considered to be Portugal's highest-altitude city and has some of the cleanest air in the country. It also was home to Portugal's first local radio station, the aptly named Radio Altitude.

Most visitors head straight to the **Sé**, the very impressive, (mostly) Gothic cathedral that crowns the medieval historic centre. Have a coffee in the **Praça Luís de Camões**, once the heartbeat of the city, then climb up to the **Torre de Menagem**, what's left of the old Guarda Castle, before heading down to the **Old Jewish Quarter,** one of the oldest and most important Jewish neighborhoods in the Beira Interior. Climb the **Torre dos Ferreiros** for exceptional views over the city and surrounding countryside (get a QR code from the tourism office for access).

EATING IN COVILHÃ: INSPIRED CUISINE

Taberna A Laranjinha: Rustic tavern with local dishes and a Michelin Bib Gourmand rating. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-10pm Sat* €€

Casa das Muralhas Bistro Bar: Delightful modern dishes crafted from regional flavours. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm* €€

Alkimya: Contemporary restaurant in a light-filled dining room with a number of vegetarian options. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun* €€

Restaurante Açafrão: Inspired by explorer Pêro da Covilhã, spices from the Age of Discoveries feature. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat* €€



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Trancoso

A Raia

TIME FROM THE SERRA DA ESTRELA: **1 HOUR**

The oldest border

The historic A Raia is a rural area in the northeastern Beiras, sandwiched between the Serra da Estrela and the Serra da Malcata, marking one of the oldest geopolitical borders in the world. Also known in Spanish as *La Raya*, the zone is marked on the Portuguese side by a string of fortified towns, built to protect the republic from the Spanish kingdom. The area is now a low density rural zone which relies heavily on agriculture, yet is actively investing in tourism. **Almeida**, **Castelo Mendo**, **Castelo Rodrigo** and **Marivalda** are all tiny, castle-sporting, fortified towns considered to be part of the A Raia and of the 12 *Aldeias Históricas* (historic villages).

Fortified cities

Although it's just 30 minutes from Guarda, a visit to the medieval town of **Trancoso** will transport you back in time. Enter the walled city and make your way along a web of narrow cobbled streets, framed by flowers, to what is considered by many one of the loveliest little castles in Portugal. Visit the **Centro de Interpretação da Cultura Judaica** to learn about the town's jewish history, and stop by the **Casa do Gato Preto**, which is decorated with symbolic Jewish carvings of the area. This fortified town brings the past into the present during its **Medieval Festival** in June, while in August, the **Feira de São Bartolomeu** (dating back to 1274) is in full swing.

SEPHARDIC HISTORY

Until the 1400s, there was a thriving Jewish community in the Beira Alta and Beira Interior. Towns like Guarda, Trancoso and Belmonte all had a high population of Sephardic Jews (Jewish communities from the Iberian Peninsula) until 1493, when the Inquisition decreed Judaism illegal in Portugal. The government declared that all Jews who didn't flee the country would be enslaved, and several hundred (primarily children) were actually deported to São Tomé, where they perished. Those who remained became 'New Christians', converting in public but practicing their religion in secret. Some, like the community in Belmonte, were a radical example of Jews who kept a strict secret religious practice called crypto-judaism in order to keep their traditions alive.

CROSSOVER: ALDEIAS HISTÓRICAS

Trancoso is one of Portugal's 12 *Aldeias Históricas* (p316), or historic villages, situated in the Beira Interior. Castelo Rodrigo and Almeida, two other towns in the A Raia, also make the list.

Viseu



RENAISSANCE ART | VINEYARD TASTINGS | COUNTRYSIDE CYCLING

GETTING AROUND

Although the city is quite spread out, Viseu's historic centre is easy to walk around. If you're arriving by car though, parking can be a nightmare. Most of the public transport (primarily urban buses) is organised by MUV, which now has an app with routes, timetables and tickets and point you to nearby parking lots, as well as to the network of urban bike paths that connect to the Dão Ecopista. Both the train and main bus station are just a short walk from the city centre.

TOP TIP

Download Walk Viseu, an app that offers both written and audio guides to some of the city's main sites in multiple languages – a big help at museums with only Portuguese placards.

Like many great cities, Viseu's story starts with a hero. The city was once the home of Viriato, the chief of the Lusitani tribe, who valiantly defended his people during the Roman invasion. Unfortunately, this hero wasn't successful, but the town's Romanisation brought fast development and it became an important economic centre for the Romans, Visigoths, the Moors and, later, for the Portuguese crown.

Since the time of heroes, Viseu has grown into a modern city with a charming historic centre, verdant gardens and a nearly unmatchable artistic legacy, thanks to one incredible Renaissance-era master painter.

In 2019, the city was declared a gastronomic destination, thanks to its wide selection of highly regarded restaurants, and Viseu has been named the Portuguese city with the best quality of life on several occasions. It's a nomination that's visible in the city's population – Viseu's temperature may change drastically with the season, but the warmth of its residents is unwavering.

A Countryside Cycle

Get two wheels and go

One of Viseu's most recent attractions has also become one of its most popular, especially for lovers of sports and the outdoors. The **Ecopista do Dão** is a 49km cycling trail that connects Santa Comba Dão and the city of Viseu. It's easy to walk, run or cycle, as it has no significant up or downhill sections and no motorised traffic. The Ecopista also encompasses some of the most beautiful areas in the region, with standout stops including the **Rio Nagozela Beach** and the **Rio Paiva valley**.

Abelenda Bike Rental, in Santa Comba Dão, is the Ecopista do Dão's bicycle rental partner, offering transfer services for those looking to pedal partially or just one way.



SIGHTS
1. Casa do Miradouro/ Coleção Arqueológica de José Coelho
2. Museu Almeida Moreira
3. Museu de História da Cidade
4. Museu Nacional Grão Vasco
5. Porta do Soar
6. Sé de Viseu

SLEEPING
7. BeMyGuest Jardim das Mães lofts
8. Hotel Grão Vasco
9. Palácio dos Melos
10. Viseu Roykan Japanese Hotel & Spa

EATING
11. Aromatic 54
12. Flora
13. Mesa d'Alegria
14. O Cortiço
15. Palace
16. Prema

A second trail connects Viseu with Sernada do Vouga, however this 65km stretch is considered much more difficult, is somewhat poorly signed, and some sections require that you have a mountain/off-road bicycle.

Get Artsy

Centre for contemporary art

Head just 10 minutes out of town to **Quinta da Cruz**, a beautiful country villa transformed into a contemporary art museum. Opened in 2014, this municipal museum is set on rolling grounds, with hiking trails, views of the Rio Paiva and sculptures embedded in the gardens. Exhibitions and other family-friendly programming (all free) are located inside the main house.

FRANCISCO ANTÓNIO DE ALMEIDA MOREIRA

Best known as the founder and first director of the Grão Vasco Museum, Francisco António de Almeida Moreira (1873–1939) was one of Viseu's most important figures in his time. Although he was a career military man, Almeida Moreira was a multifaceted figure who highly valued art, which he himself studied in his spare time. He was known to be good friends with artists of the era, such as Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro, and also worked as a professor at the Liceu Alves Martins. Almeida Moreira kept his own vast art collection, which is displayed in his former home, now the **Museu Almeida Moreira**, funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, along with his furnishings, books and ceramics. Entry is free.



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Sé of Viseu

A Unique Collection

Historical artifacts and notable architecture

In the **Casa do Miradouro**, one of the most notable buildings in Viseu's historic centre, is the **Museu de Achados Arqueológicos José Coelho** (Museum of the Architectural Findings of José Coelho), dedicated to an illustrious 20th-century intellectual from Viseu. Coelho's collection includes Roman artifacts that piece together the city's former importance to the Roman Empire. Entry is free, and it's worth visiting for the gardens alone, however Coelho's unique curation of the items he and his contemporaries found over time also provides interesting insight into the province's history.

EATING IN VISEU: VEGAN, VEG AND HEALTHY PLATES

Flora: This contemporary bistro in the historic centre is a creative oasis with a Bib gourmand shout-out. *7-11pm Wed-Fri, 12.30-2.30pm & 7-11pm Sat* €€

Prema: In contrast to typically meaty dishes, Viseu's longest-standing vegan offering caters to a different crowd. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €

Aromatic 54: Enjoy soups, salads and bistro fare in an adorable restaurant on the edge of the historic centre. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun* €€

daTerra Viseu: A clean, contemporary vegetarian lunch spot serving homemade healthy food, buffet style. *noon-3pm* €

City Centrepiece

It's just like they Sé

The **Sé (Cathedral) of Viseu**, also known as the Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Assunção, began life in the 12th century, thanks to the lobbying of bishop Dom Odório, although renovations would continue over the centuries. Excavations have shown that the cathedral sits on the site of what was most likely a primitive temple from the Visigoth era. The fortified-looking cathedral sits imposingly in the main square of Viseu's historic centre, principally sporting Gothic and Roman architecture. In the cloister there is a religious artifacts **museum** displaying items from the 13th-century. The cathedral continues in use for its original purpose.

A Renaissance Master

Grão Vasco shows his worth

In the old Bishop's Palace next to the cathedral in Viseu's historic centre is a museum dedicated to the greatest painter of the Portuguese Renaissance – Vasco Fernandes (c 1475–1542), better known as Grão Vasco. The **Museu Nacional Grão Vasco**, founded in 1916 as a way to preserve the paintings in the cathedral, was originally inside the cathedral vestry, before founder and director Francisco de Almeida Moreira managed to amplify the collection and secure it a space next door. The museum principally focuses on the work of the Renaissance master, but also houses works by Grão Vasco's contemporaries, such as Gaspar Vaz and his son Antônio Vaz; along with sculpture and devotional art from the Middle Ages.

Mysterious Fortresses

Adorned with a statue of a legend

Near the Largo da Feira de São Mateus in Viseu is a giant fortress of mysterious origins. It's known as the **Cava de Viriato**, due to the statue of Viriato (a hero of the indigenous resistance against the Romans) that adorns the space, however the construction apparently has nothing to do with Viriato himself. Some archaeologists, such as Viseu local Bernardo Brito, attribute the 30-hectare walled space with sophisticated hydraulic engineering to the Romans, while others argue that the configuration has more similarities to the Islamic building style. Whoever you believe, this construction shrouded in mystery makes a unique addition to Viseu's historical offerings.

A 39-DAY FESTIVAL

The **Feira de São Mateus**, Viseu's 39-day-long summer festival held in August and September, has roots that date back to 1392, when king Dom João I founded the annual Feira Franca de Viseu, an annual tax-free market instituted to spur the local economy. Along with its counterpart, the Feira de Março (March fair) in Aveiro, the Feira de São Mateus vies for the title of the oldest festival on the Iberian Peninsula. Over the years, the Feira Franca adapted itself into a municipal holiday and was moved to coincide with São Mateus' day (the patron saint of Viseu) on September 21. The six-week-long festival is now the region's largest and most anxiously awaited celebration.

EATING IN VISEU: BEST LOCAL BITES

O Cortiço: Traditional *tasca* serving all the best local flavors in the heart of the city's historic zone. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* €

Mesa d'Alegria: Local flavors served tapas-style from a daily menu with great house wine. Friendly and delicious. *noon-3pm & 7.15-11pm Mon-Sat* €

Restaurante O Monte: Local dishes with a twist in this modern restaurant. Top service. *noon-3.30pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-3.30pm Sun* €€

Palace: Well-portioned tapas and an excellent wine list with friendly service. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* €€

HISTORIC VISEU IN AN AFTERNOON

Viseu's historic centre is compact and walkable, and a stroll around town is one of the best ways to appreciate the centuries-old architecture.

START	END	LENGTH
Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo	Solar Do Dão Wine	3km; 40 minutes

Start at the 1 **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo**, whose *azulejo* (Portuguese tile) interiors and opulent altar are worth a stop. Then, head to the 2 **Mercado Segundo de Maio**, a covered central cafe-lined meeting space that hosts concerts and events through the summer. Continue on to the Praça da República, where you'll see a beautiful 3 **panel of azulejos** installed below the Câmara Municipal.

Walk through Viseu's historic centre, where you'll discover the varied architectural styles from the 13th to 15th centuries. Stop at the 4 **Praça Dom Duarte** for a coffee, then head over to the Praça da Sé, where you'll see Viseu's cathedral (p331), across the square from the 5 **Igreja da Misericordia**, known for its collection of sacred art.

Walk down past the **Forum** (shopping centre) and the **PS Feira Viseu**, an old power station built on a canal, before making your way over to the 6 **Parque do Fontelo**, a historic green space originally owned by Viseu's Bishop in the 12th century. Finish your walk with a leisurely stroll around the more than 10 acres of forested park, complete with a lake, sports fields, tennis courts and even peacocks. If you're feeling thirsty, stop by the 7 **Solar Do Dão Wine** – the regional wine commission – for a sampling from the local vines.



Beyond Viseu



Viseu's surroundings are best explored slowly, giving you time to truly take in the beautiful surroundings – and drink plenty of wine.

Spilling out from Viseu you'll find spectacular mountain zones, verdant gardens and ancient vineyards; whether you're into panoramic viewpoints, epic hiking or classic car races, there's always the promise of adventure.

Spend an afternoon vineyard hopping, sampling the fruits from ancient vines on the Dão Wine Route; or head off hiking through the Caramulo mountains, a place that draws some in for the views, and others for the car culture. Don't miss the expansive, restored gardens of Santar, which have begun to draw international attention, and while you're out exploring, keep an eye out for the Neolithic dolmens dotting the countryside – the most spectacular megalithic monument, Dolmen Antelas, requires some advance planning to visit.

Dão Wine Region

TIME FROM VISEU: **10 MINS**

On the Dão Wine Trail

The Dão Wine Region is one of the country's most important for national grapes, and an absolute treat to visit. The region, legally defined in 1908, has approximately 20,000 hectares of vines across nearly 380,000 hectares of land, and produces three main red grape varieties: *Touriga nacional* (the star of the show), *Alfrocheiro Preto* and *Jaen*; and four white: *Encruzado* (a fan favorite), *Bical*, *Malvasia-Fina* and *Cercial*.

The **Dão Wine Trail** (A Rota dos Vinhos do Dão), inaugurated in 1998, lays out five wine-tasting routes that encompass the 48 member wineries, with each route focusing on a different geographical section of the region. While most, such as **Chão de São Francisco**, require advance reservations, others like **Lusovini**, allow you to simply drop in for a tasting – cvrdao.pt/en/dao-wine-route has more information on the different routes.

If you're visiting in September, a few vineyards, such as Caminhos Cruzados (p334), will even let you pitch in for the harvest.

Places

Dão Wine Region p333
Serra do Caramulo p334
Santar p335

GETTING AROUND

A car (and designated driver) is the best way to explore the Dão Wine Trail – the Regional Wine Commission of Dão has an app called Rota dos Vinhos that can help you design your route, or opt for a pre-booked wine-tasting tour (Portugal By Wine offers guided day trips; portugalbywine.com).

Although you can get to some of the nearby towns, like Tondela or Oliveira de Frades, by train or bus, the areas around Viseu are best explored by car or bicycle (check out Velo Concept in Viseu for bikes; veloconcept.pt).

MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS

Viseu Dão Lafões district dates back thousands of years, marked by a surprising number of megalithic monuments. Many are little known and often, like the **Orca de Pendilhe**, are open air and free to visit. The most spectacular, however, is a covered affair. The **Dolmen Antelas**, a 6000-year-old, 2.6m by 2.4m burial tomb with black, white and red rock art that is considered to be the best conserved on the Iberian Peninsula – likened to the Neolithic equivalent of the Sistine Chapel. Visits are free, but must be organised in advance with the museum in Oliveira de Frades *(museu@cm-ofrades.pt)*.



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Serra do Caramulo

TIME FROM VISEU: **35 MINS**

Classic car culture

If you're into automobiles, then a visit to the **Caramulo Museum** is a must. Founded and endowed by brothers Abel e João de Lacerda, the museum got its start as a fine art museum. While it still has more than 500 classic works by standout names like Picasso, Dalí, Chagall and Grão Vasco, the real draws are the two- and four-wheeled beauties. The museum's collection includes classic automobiles from as early as 1886, including an original Ford Model T, a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost (1922) and a Bugatti Type 35B Grand Prix (1930).

A second edition of the museum, the **Caramulo Experience Center** (CNC) has a restoration and maintenance workshop – and even offers the opportunity for a ride in a classic beauty (ask upon arrival).

The **Caramulo Motor Festival,** hosted by the museum's foundation and the Portuguese Automotive Association every September, is the largest classic car and motorbike gathering in Portugal, with three days of petrol-fueled events, culminating with the Portuguese Mountain Speed Challenge, an invitation-only classic car race.

DRINKING THE DÃO: BEST VINEYARDS FOR TASTINGS

Quinta do Cruzeiro: Family-owned winery producing sustainably made organic wines with four centuries of history. *tastings by reservation*

Textura Wines: One of the Dão's newest family-run vineyards is dedicated to organic production. *tastings by reservation*

Caminhos Cruzados: This 40-hectare vineyard in Nelas has a unique architectural tasting room. *reservations required at least 48 hrs in advance*

Palacio Dos Condes De Anadia: Wine tastes different when you're at a pink, 12th-century palace with its own, small vineyard. *tastings by reservation*



Caramulinho viewpoint

Nature's way

Hiking through the Serra de Caramulo is a favourite pastime, and serious hikers will want to take on the **Grande Rota do Caramulo** – a 25km, eight-hour circular hiking trail. The trailhead is just outside the Caramulo Museum, and includes stops at some of Carmulo's most iconic viewpoints including **Caramulinho** and **Cabeço de Neve**.

During the summer months, the best way to enjoy the mountains is by lounging around one of the area's crystal clear river beaches. **São João do Monte Beach** is one of the few high-altitude beaches in the area.

Santar

TIME FROM VISEU: **20 MINS**

Cascading gardens

After the **Casa de Santar e Magalhães** *(santarvilajardim.pt)* was renovated in 2013 by the estate's heirs, Vasconcellos e Souza, the villa – and especially its gardens – quickly became a tourist attraction in its own right. The 16th-century estate lies at the feet of a series of historic garden terraces, which were landscaped into a cascading garden paradise by architect Fernando Caruncho, who would win a 2021 European Garden Award for his work. The gardens, vineyard and manor house can be toured by reservation.

BARRO NEGRO

One of the region's most cherished artisan crafts comes from the small town of the **Molelos**, where artisans have been producing *barro negro*, or black ceramics, for hundreds of years. The clay is moulded, dried and placed in a large dugout in the earth, where it's covered with firewood and earth and subsequently fired. At the end of the process, the 'kiln' is completely covered with dirt, which impedes the flow of oxygen and creates the black colour, while simultaneously partially waterproofing the clay. These traditionally fired pieces were historically used as much for cooking as storing liquids, although these days you'll find plenty of decorative items as well.

EATING AROUND THE SERRA DE CARAMULO: COUNTRY FAVES

Mesa de Lemos: Michelin-star restaurant featuring top local ingredients. *8pm-midnight Wed & Thu, noon-3pm & 8pm-midnight Fri & Sat; noon-3pm Sun* €€€

Tres Pipos: Simple, copious dishes of Beira Alta cuisine served in a classic-rustic dining room. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat* €€

Restaurante Montanha: One of Carmulo's go-to eateries serves traditional mountain fare. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm Wed-Mon* €

Arpuro: In a remodelled old stone house with a grassy terrace for classic hill-country meals. *12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Thu-Sun* €



Aveiro

COLORFUL CANAL BOATS | BEAUX ARTS BUILDINGS | COASTAL LIVING

GETTING AROUND

Aveiro's city centre is compact, flat and easily explored on foot. Most of the sites are an easy walk, although you can opt for a bike rental to head further afield. BUGA is the city's bike share system – download the app and start pedalling. There are 20 stations across the city *(8am-8pm)*. You can take the bike to Ilhavo or the beach, or hop on a bus leaving every half hour towards the Costa Nova. To get to the Dunas de São Jacinto, opt for a combined bus and ferry ticket on line 13.

TOP TIP

If you're looking to relax, have a float in the salinas' sea salt spa. The outdoor salt-flat turned swimming pool is salty enough you can float in it and lined with skin-rejuvenating mud that's perfect for a do-it-yourself mud-mask.

Aveiro is considered a coastal destination but this water-laden town technically isn't located on the coast. Aveiro's beaches are 10km from town but thanks to the city's location on the Ria Aveiro (the Aveiro lagoon) and the canals that run through the historic downtown, you're constantly connected to water here.

The second most populous city in the Beiras, Aveiro was an important port for salt production and commercial shipping from as early as Roman times, and continued to be so until a terrible storm in 1575 closed the natural entrance to the port. Although still popular with the monarchy, the city saw an economic downturn until the early 1800s, when artificial canals marked a new era of economic expansion.

Aveiro is often called the 'Portuguese Venice', although it would do better to take its own moniker, as its colourful *moliceiro* boats, Art Nouveau architecture, expansive salt flats, soothing lagoon and resident pink flamingos make it a destination apart from all others.

The Natural Way

Aveiro's most important natural habitats

One of the most remarkable geographical formations on the Portuguese coast is the 45km-long, 11km-wide **Ria de Aveiro** (Aveiro lagoon), also called the Foz do Vouga. This biodiverse area is an important habitat for numerous bird species, thus an essential zone for ecological conservation. On the northern end at the **Barrinha de Esmoriz** is a series of raised pathways that allow visitors to appreciate the local flora and fauna. To the east, a network of trails in Estarreja created by the Bio-Ria project are open for both walking, running and cycling. At the southern end you'll find the **São Jacinto Dunes**, a natural reserve that protects the area's biodiversity and is a



great place to spot the lagoons' most famous flying resident, the pink flamingo.

Colourful Seaweed Collectors

Take a ride on a moliceiro

Considered to be the most elegant of the local waterborne vessels, the *moliceiro* are colourful, gondola-like boats historically used to collect a type of seaweed called *moliço*, the principal fertiliser used in the region's agriculture. Today the *moliceiro* boats are principally employed for tourism, and are a wonderful way to explore the town. Tours typically head through the four major urban canals – Central Canal, Pyramid Canal, Saint Roque Canal and Cojo Canal – past the Art Nouveau buildings and the salt flats and through the Foz do Vouga, aka the Ria de Aveiro, the area's main lagoon. Grab a boat at the **Cais dos Moliceiros**, and check out the painted comics on your boat's hull – *moliceiros* are known for their humorous decorations, often sporting comics that make fun of everyday situations. Tours typically run 45 minutes to an hour.

SIGHTS
1 Cais dos Moliceiros
2 Fábrica Centro Ciência Viva
3 Mosteiro de Jesus

SLEEPING
4 1877 Estrela Palace Hotel
5 Casa Moliceiro Verde

EATING
6 Musgo

DRINKING
7 Bastardo Coffee Roasters
8 Entre Copos e Chavenas
9 Lovecraft Taproom
10 Salicornia

WHITE GOLD

Salt is one of Averio's most famous local products, and according to documents, it was already being procured in the mid-900s. By the 15th century, Averio's salt was being sold across Portugal and in Galicia and Asturias in Spain. The type of salt produced in Aveiro is perfect for food conservation, as seen in the renowned salted codfish Portugal is famous for. The *creme-de-la-creme* from Aveiro's flats is the Flor de Sal, which forms in a thin crystal on the water's surface, and is harvested daily. In the 1960s, there were around 270 salt flats in Aveiro, but today there are only nine left.



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A Princess Saint

The monastery she called home

One of the jewels of Aveiro is the **Mosteiro de Jesus**, a 15th-century Dominican convent and baroque church that was the home of Princess Saint Joana, daughter of King Afonso V, who refused marriage in order to devote her life to religious pursuits. The building remained a convent until 1872 when the last nun in seclusion passed away. In 1882 it was bequeathed to the Third Dominican Order and converted into a religious school, until the First Republic's religious intolerance laws forced it to close in 1910. The church was quickly classified a national monument and turned into the **Aveiro Museum**. Beyond an impressive collection of religious artwork, the museum holds the ornate marble tomb of Princess Saint Joana herself, laid to rest in the building that was her lifelong home.

Beachside Living

Out of town, on the coast

A 10-minute drive from the centre of town are the two oceanside hamlets of **Barra** and **Costa Nova**, Aveiro's beach enclaves. Easy to reach by public bus (30 minutes on bus 5191) or bicycle (45 minutes), these two sandy stretches are perfect for sunbathing, watersports, seafood lunches and leisurely strolls along

EATING IN AVEIRO: AN ARRAY OF OPTIONS

Dóri: Glass-fronted spot with terrace views and top seafood in Aveiro's Costa Nova. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Mon & Thu-Sat; noon-3pm Tue & Sun* €€€

Musgo: Vegan restaurant in Aveiro's historic centre with dish-of-the-day options and delish desserts. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun & Mon* €

Salpoente: Michelin-listed restaurant paying tribute to the best ingredients in the region. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm* €€€

Subenshi Sushi: Creative sushi plates, cool ambience and great service. *noon-4pm & 7.30-10pm Sun-Thu, noon-4pm & 7.30-11pm Fri & Sat* €€



Costa Nova

the lagoon or the Atlantic ocean. Principal highlights include the *palheiros* of the Costa Nova, the adorable striped cottages that were originally haystack fisherman huts. On the Barra side of the peninsula you'll find wild sand-dune beaches lined by a wooden walkway, as well as the **Farol de Aveiro**, Portugal's tallest lighthouse. The 62m (203ft) structure was built in 1893, and visitors are welcome to climb its nearly 300 steps to the top on Wednesday afternoons between 2pm and 5pm.

Science, Alive!

Science centre for kids of all ages

If you're travelling with kids (or are just into science yourself), the **Fábrica Centro Ciência Viva** *(Living Science Centre Factory; nei.cienciaviva.pt)* is a must-stop destination. The museum, located in the old Aveiro Company Mill, is an enormous warehouse laboratory full of mathematical games and holograms, interactive physics, chemistry and biology laboratory where you can get your hands dirty (the chemistry area focuses on cooking, for example), and even a robotics workshop where you can build or program your own mini robot. There are also creative spaces that connect art to engineering and even a stage for tiny scientists to learn in the belly of a snail. Check out their calendar of events for performances, magic (science) shows and films.

OVOS MOLES

Ovos moles (literally soft eggs) are a popular local sweet made from nothing more than egg yolks and sugar (at about a 2:1 ratio) cooked until smooth and encased in a thin rice paper shell, similar to communion wafers. They were originally made by nuns from the town's many convents – notably the Mosteiro de Jesus – as a way to raise money for their orders. When the First Portuguese Republic shut down the convents in 1910, the recipe was passed on to Aveiro's upper-class women who kept the tradition alive. There is also a chocolate version, *ovos moles pretos* (black soft eggs), in which the creamy interior comes encased in a chocolate shell.

DRINKING IN AVEIRO: COFFEE, TEA & SEAWEED BEER

Bastardo Coffee Roasters: Simply great coffee with a selection of delicious cakes in Aveiro's historic centre. *9am-5pm Mon-Sat* €

Salicornia: Small tavern with a terrace, seafood plates with good brews – the seaweed-infused beer is a must-try. 4pm-2am Tue-Sat €€

Lovecraft Taproom: Low lit, welcoming bar with an extensive choice of local and international craft beers. *4-11pm Tue-Sat; 2-9pm Sun* €

Entre Copos e Chavenas: Friendly locally-owned tea shop with dozens of leafy offerings; brunch, lunch and afternoon drinks. *9am-7pm Mon-Sat* €

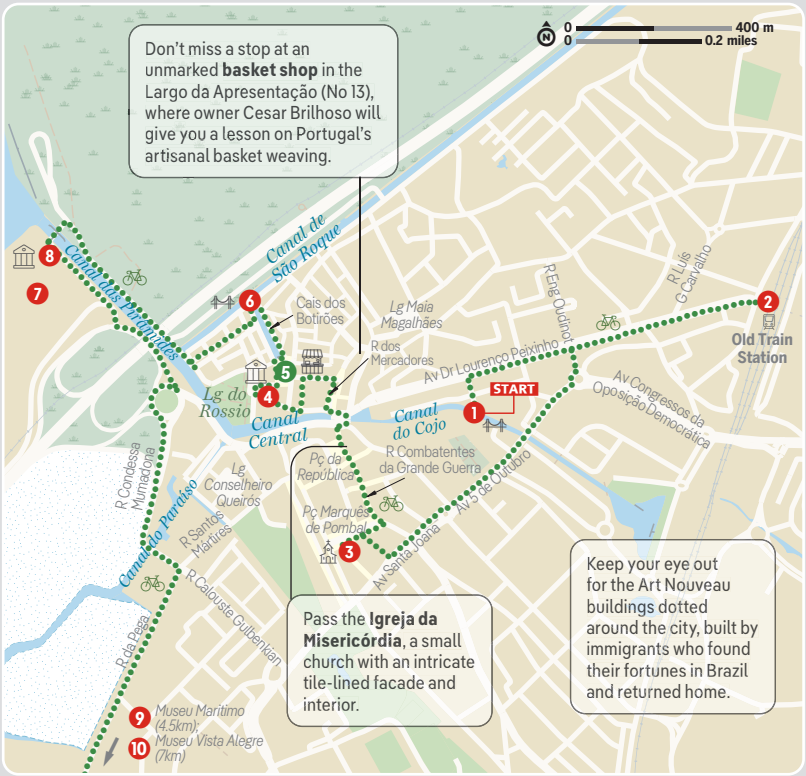
TWO-WHEELED EXPLORATION

Aveiro is the perfect town to explore by bicycle – it's almost completely flat and has more bicycle paths and wider sidewalks than most Portuguese cities.

START	END	LENGTH
Ponte dos Laços	Museu Vista Alegre de Ílhavo	13.8km; 45 mins

Start at the 1 **Ponte dos Laços** (ribbon bridge), where countless visitors have proclaimed their love or friendship with a padlock or a colourful ribbon, and cycle towards the 2 **old train station** (right next to the new train station), whose restored *azulejo* facade depicts traditional scenes from the region. Pass by the 3 **Igreja Carmelita**, an ornate 18th-century church with a heavily embellished interior, then head towards the Cais dos Moliceiros to see the colorful boats touring the canals. Stop at the 4 **Museu de Arte Nova**, an exceptional example of Art Nouveau architecture in Rossio, the best neighborhood to see Aveiro's Art Nouveau legacy; then head to the 5 **Mercado do Peixe** (fish market), a restored 18th-century building that still functions for its original purpose (grab a bite at the second-floor restaurant).

Head across the 6 **Ponte dos Botirões** (buttons bridge) to the 7 **Salinas** (Aveiro Salt Flats), where you can visit the 8 **Ecomuseu Marinha da Troncalhada**, and learn about salt production. Continue out towards Ílhavo, where you'll find the 9 **Museu Marítimo**, dedicated to Portuguese maritime history, whose permanent exhibits include a full-size cod fishing vessel you can climb aboard; along with the 10 **Museu Vista Alegre**, a historical porcelain factory turned exhibition space that has porcelain pieces dating back to the monarchy.



Beyond Aveiro



Make your way along golden-sand beaches, through parkland trails and up to mountain-top lookouts in the pristine nature surrounding Aveiro.

The area around Aveiro is a land based on water. You'll find extensive sandy beaches perfect for sunbathing or surfing; brackish lagoons for swimming, paddling or bird watching; and generations of fishing families still practicing artisanal fishing techniques along the coast. Even the Arouca Geopark, better known for its wooden walkways and stomach-turning suspension bridge, was once underwater, evidenced by the trilobite fossils found across the park. While the areas around Aveiro are best noted for their natural surroundings, there's also plenty of human patrimony that shouldn't be missed, including the colourful, tile-covered churches, the local festivals that light up small towns, and the quirky museums telling unique stories of regional history.

Arouca

TIME FROM AVEIRO: **1 HR**

Geopark gems

Created in 2009, Portugal's second UNESCO **Geopark** is an open-air geological museum and adventurer's haven. The park encompasses a 328 sq km area that holds 41 major geological attractions – including a number of giant trilobite fossils – along with a geological interpretation centre, a historic monastery and sacred art museum, and a network of hiking trails, including the 9km **Passadiços do Paiva** *(passadicosdopaiva.pt/en)* trail. Top tip: if you start from the Areinho trailhead, you'll hike the steepest stairs first and keep the easy walking for the end. You'll need a ticket to hike (bookable online), or to cross the **Arouca 516**, a 516m-long suspension bridge (one of the world's longest), opened in 2021. If you're feeling even more adventurous, opt for white water rafting, canyoning or a rock-climbing experience in the Geopark; or simply head off for a relaxing swim at the **Praia Fluvial do Vau** (Vau River Beach).

Places

Arouca p341
Ovar p342
Espinho p343

GETTING AROUND

Outside of Aveiro, you'll have a lot more freedom if you have your own wheels. Driving to Arouca allows for the best access to the Geopark, for example, but there are twice-daily public buses from town (you just might need to spend the night for logistics to work out). Between beach towns there are plenty of bus and train services to get to and from – the train is the best option.

BEST LOCAL FESTIVALS IN ESPINHO

Festival de Música de Espinho: On its 50th edition in 2024, this music festival fills the second half of the year with concerts and shows around the city.

Festa de São João: one of the area's most popular Saints Day festivals kicks off on June 24.

Festas de São Pedro de Espinho: Celebrated for a week at the end of June, the St Pedro de Espinho is the most animated Saint's Day in the area.

Bienal Internacional de Arte de Espinho: A biannual international art event organised by Espinho's Municipal Museum.

Festival Internacional de Cinema de Animação: *(cinanima.pt)* Academy Awards qualifying animated film festival.



ANDRES RICARDO GONZALEZ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Beach bar, Esmoriz

On the lookout

On the southern side of Arouca is one of the region's most beautiful mountain ranges, the Serra da Freita, part of the Arouca Geopark (p341) that's less visited than its more famous northeastern neighbour. With your own vehicle there are plenty of sights to savour, including the panoramic lookout point **Detrelo da Malhada** – easily the most emblematic in Freita – where you get a 270-degree view over the Arouca Geopark, from the Vale do Rio Paiva to the Montemuro mountains. On clear days, you can see as far west as the Atlantic Ocean, and as far north as the Gerês mountains.

Ovar

TIME FROM AVEIRO: **25 MINS**

Azulejo churches

One of Ovar's main draws are its beautiful, *azulejo*-covered churches, such as the **Igreja Matriz de Santa Maria de Válega**. Considered to be one of the most beautiful churches in Portugal, this 18th-century baroque-style construction was renovated in the 1900s and covered with multicoloured tiles for which it has become famous. The tile work, designed by Januário Godinho and created at the Aleluia tile factory in Aveiro, depicts different biblical passages, while the works inside the chapel were designed by Jorge Colaço and executed by the Lusitânia tile factory in Lisbon.

There's one nearby church that gives it a run for its money, however. Completely covered in classic blue Portuguese *azulejos*, the **Igreja Santa Marinha de Cortegaça** has standout portraits of Saints Paul and Peter, Francis of Assisi, Saint John Bosco, Jesus and Mary.

Espinho

TIME FROM AVEIRO: **50 MINS**

A surfing life

This once sleepy fishing town just south of Porto became a mecca for northern Portuguese surf, thanks to a tubey, right-hand wave that put Espinho on the map. The most northern beach on the country's 'Silver Coast', Espinho boasts a number of high-quality surf breaks, plus several well-regarded surf schools.

The town and its beaches are well connected by the urban train line, though a car is preferred if you're looking to explore alternative surf spots in the area. Head to **Maceda Surf Camp** for surf lessons or just hit the waves – surf spots extend both north and south of the main break at Baía Beach. Summertime is best for learners, while winter can deliver epic swells for tube riders. For an alternative (quieter) option, take the train or drive 15 minutes south to **Esmoriz**.

Quirky paper museum

The **Museu do Papel Terras de Santa Maria** (Paper Museum) is a surprisingly well put together immersion into the history of paper in Portugal and the traditional papermaking process, wrapped up in a beautifully restored papermill just inland of Espinho. Guides are friendly and knowledgeable, and will take you through all of the factory's old processes before setting you up to make a piece of paper of your own. It's a surprisingly worthwhile way to spend an afternoon, especially if you're on the road with younger travellers.

Beachy delights

Praia da Mira, a sun, sea and surf destination where golden sand stretches out as far as the eye can see, is the perfect place to unwind. Behind the beach, the **Barrinha de Mira** lagoon offers wave-free water sports, with family-friendly paddle boats to rent, and the town has been a popular resort stop in Northern Portugal for decades so there are plenty of delicious restaurants and cool guesthouses, though we recommend the lagoon-front cabins in the **municipal camping park** (p345) every time.

ARTE XÁVEGA

Arte Xávega is a traditional, artisanal fishing method considered to be cultural patrimony, and still practiced in a handful of beaches across the country – including in Espinho. The word Xávena comes from the Arab word Xábaka, meaning 'net' and the method involves a very long, tightly knitted fishing net called a *xalavar*, which is slowly unrolled from the shore out to sea using a small fishing boat. After reaching halfway, fishermen begin to return to shore with the other end of the net, creating what is effectively a giant U-shape in the water, trapping the fish in the middle. Then, tractors (formerly oxen) pull the net, and thus the fish, back to shore. Check out the permanent exhibit on Xávena at Espinho's **Municipal Museum**.

EATING IN ESPINHO: BEACH-Y FAVORITES

Sapiens Pregaria: This sandwich shop keeps it simple – the best place in town to get your burger on. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Thu-Tue* €

Marisqueira Santola: Fresh seafood dishes in a modern, light-filled dining room. *noon-3pm & 7-11.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 7pm-midnight Sat* €€

Puro Ponto: Friendly joint where pub fare and creative cocktails and steaks set the stage. *6-11pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm & 7-11pm Sat & Sun* €€

Fat Mama: Classy Italian-fusion restaurant in Santa Maria da Feira that's worth going out of your way for. *5pm-2am Thu-Sat; noon-2am Sun* €€

Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Coimbra p302

Serenata Hostel € This well-kept townhouse next to the Sé cathedral (smack in the middle of town centre) is a fabulous three-floor hostel with rooms and dorms.

AQ 188 Guest House €€ Renovated historical home turned guesthouse with well proportioned, light-filled spaces, comfy beds and an inviting back patio, near the university.

The Luggage €€ Reasonably priced B&B with friendly staff, high-ceilinged, spacious rooms and lovely views from the terraces, in a remodeled 1920s house.

Serra da Lousã p309

Cerdeira Home for Creativity €€ Stay in fully renovated mountain town houses in this village turned creativity-fused hotel that hosts art immersions and workshops.

Figueira da Foz p310

Estacionamento para Autocaravans (free) Little more than a beachfront parking lot in the Costa de Lavos with a shared public bathroom and water point, but with no entry fee and no crowds, this is exactly what caravan camping should be.

Vila Branca Guesthouse €€ Renovated manor house not far from the old town with two bright apartments and a converted garage rented B&B-style.

We Surf House €€ Beautiful modern beach-house hotel with ocean-view rooms and a rooftop terrace and bar that's perfect for sundowners on Murtinheira Beach.

Castelo Branco p311

Hotel Boutique a Esplanada € Family-run guesthouse close to the train station with welcoming hosts and a lovely outdoor terrace garden.

Meliá Castelo Branco Hotel €€ Four-star hotel next to the castle with spacious rooms, magnificent views and exceptional service.

Hotel Rainha D. Amélia €€ A 64-room hotel decorated with local embroidery and works by Cargaleiro; onsite bar, restaurant and children's playground.

Casa 92 €€ Well-appointed serviced apartments in the city centre.

Monsanto p315

Casas da Villa €€ A collection of nicely renovated village houses turned into serviced and self-catering tourist accommodation.

Bode Country House €€€ Luxurious offerings on the outskirts of Monsanto: think country-house meets unique design hotel.

Belmonte p316

in Bulla €€ A design hotel/country house that's redefining what it means to get away from it all. Spend time in the pool, sauna and hot tub after a hard day touristing.

Fundão p317

Pedra Nova €€ Beautifully renovated village house just next to Castelo Novo's castle, with a surprisingly large garden and swimming pool, and exceptional views of the mountains.

Convento do Seixo Boutique Hotel & Spa €€€ Old convent turned boutique hotel outside of Fundão. Expect beautiful rooms, tennis courts, a swimming pool and delicious onsite restaurant.

Serra da Estrela p319

Parque de Campismo Rural Vale do Beijames € One of the nicest campgrounds in the Serra with hot water showers, BBQ area and bar, and plenty of space for cars, tents or campers vans.

Hotel da Fábrica €€ This beautifully renovated old textile factory in Manteigas has clean, modern decor with wool and textile details and spectacular mountain views.

Casa do Baloiço €€ Adorable rental apartment near Penhas da Saúde with a living room swing feature. Fully equipped for your comfort, in winter and in summer.

Casas Da Lapa, Nature & Spa Hotel (p324) €€€ Luxury boutique hotel and spa in the mountain hamlet of Lapa dos Dinheiros, a short walk from the town's river beach, with sunset views to boot.

Covilhã p325

Pousada Serra da Estrela €€ This classic, mountain hotel has been fully modernised, and while its pool and restaurant are great, prepared to be mesmerised by the views.

Casa Das Muralhas €€ Beautifully restored guesthouse in the historic centre with a pool and very friendly staff, plus an exceptional on-site bistro.

Puralã Hotel & Spa €€€
Four-star hotel with a retro past but renovated fittings with nice local design touches. Well known for its restaurant and spa.

Guarda p326

TheVagar Countryhouse €€€
Modern guesthouse with epic views over the countryside. The design seems like it's come straight off Pinterest.

Viseu p328

Hotel Grão Vasco €€ This huge, old-school hotel may be a bit retro, but it's still a solid in-town option with a nice garden and a good breakfast.

Viseu Roykan Japanese Hotel & Spa €€ Located in the historic centre, this Japanese-inspired hotel includes the option for Japanese breakfast, futon beds and traditional *nemaki* robes to use during your stay.

BeMyGuest Jardim das Mães lofts €€ Self-catering lofts with colourful design and all the amenities you could need; plus scheduled spa access for all the guests.

Montebelo Palácio dos Melos €€€ This historic palace offers the service you'd expect, however it stands out for its culinary offerings and its impressive underground pool.

Beyond Viseu p333

Casa das Palmeiras € A working family farm with lovely light-filled houses for an immersive farmstay or simply a quiet getaway.

Casas do Patio €€ Smack in between Viseu and the Serra da Estrela are these lovely, modern country houses a five-minute walk from the Caldas da Felgueira thermal spa.

Chão do Rio €€ Adorable country cottages on a fairytale-style farm with a natural swimming pool, farm animals, bicycles for exploring and a children's playground.

Aveiro p336

A Casa da Ti Laura € This lovely guest house is like going to stay at your favorite aunt's house. Tia Laura welcomes you into her sweet, comfy home with extra helpings of love and oversized breakfasts.

Casa Moliceiro Verde €€
Centrally located, very comfortable serviced apartments with everything you need for short or long stays.

1877 Estrela Palace Hotel €€€
This elegant, carefully restored palace with some nice modern decor touches is centrally located, with rooftop canal views and excellent staff.

Arouca p341

Casa do Soutinho - Suites & Nature €€ Beautiful, rural guesthouse with a pool and vineyards located close to the 516 Arouca bridge.

Vila Tavares €€ Simple but clean and modern guest house that's walking distance to town. Rooms are spacious and most have a garden view.

Hotel São Pedro €€ Modern-style Arouca hotel that's a bit lackluster on design, but well endowed with mountain views.

Ovar & Espinho p342

Cork Train Station Guesthouse € If you don't mind the noise, or are just looking for an overnight between trains, this cool, well renovated guest house above a train station in Esmoriz is quite a fun stop.

Be&See in River €€ Oasis doesn't come close to describing the peace and quiet you'll find in this forest reserve guesthouse that feels like it's out of a fairytale

Tijosa Eco-House Camp €€€
Stay on an island retreat on the northern end of the Ria de Aveiro, in a purpose-built, luxury eco camp where your most loyal company will be the birds.

Praia da Mira p343

Municipal Campgrounds €
Although there is plenty of space for tents and caravans, the real stand-out here are the nearly over-the-water cabins located on the lagoons' edge

O Violas - Art, Coffee & Guesthouse €€ This small, artsy B&B has gotten the details down pat – plus their onsite restaurant is to die for.



JENS BEE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Monsanto (p315)



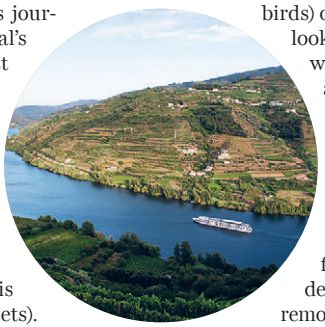
Porto, the Douro & Trás-os-Montes

TILES, WINELANDS AND AGE-OLD FESTIVALS

A riverside city covered in tiles, a region filled with remote villages and an enchanted valley dotted with endless vineyards await.

Like blood flowing through a chain of arteries, the Douro River and its tributaries are the heartbeat of these three regions. While the river's journey ends in Porto, Portugal's second-largest city, for most of us, that's exactly where it begins – posing in front of one of the city's numerous tiled facades, tucking into a nourishing sandwich or sipping a glass of port in a cellar across the riverbank (the best place to capture this northern city when dusk sets).

Follow the river east, and you'll wind up in the Douro Valley, where vines grow amid layers on layers of terraces ingeniously carved into bedrock over centuries. Days are spent sampling wines at a *quinta* (winery) overlooking the river, on a boat spotting soaring *milhafres* (kite birds) or driving along the EN222 looking out for the sprinkle of white and pink of the almond and cherry blooms around each bend.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

The Serra do Marão, peeking further north, separates the Douro from Trás-os-Montes. Here, you can still witness ancient festivals like the Caretos de Podence, wander through remote villages and occasionally hear a different tongue, influenced by its proximity to neighbouring Spain and its isolated roadways.

THE MAIN AREAS

PORTO
Historic capital and birthplace of port wine.
p352

THE DOURO VALLEY
River cruises, scenic roads and vineyards.
p366

BRAGANÇA
Community villages, lush trails and ancient festivals.
p380

BORIS-B/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: The Douro Valley (p366); Above: Mercado Bom Sucesso (p357), Porto

Find Your Way

Following the snake-like path of the Douro River, this region stretches from Porto all the way to Portugal's northeastern border. The selected hubs provide a gateway into this land's history, gastronomy and natural wonders.



Porto, p352
Birthplace of port wine, the capital of the north is a historic gem but exudes youthfulness with its artistic spirit, contemporary architecture and creative culinary scene.

The Douro Valley, p366
Beyond the vineyards, Portugal's oldest wine region is also home to prehistoric art galleries, scenic train rides and sweet treats.

CAR

Outside of Porto, driving is the easiest way to get to know this region, including its remote villages and natural parks. Rent a car and hit the road to explore these and the scattered wineries around the Douro Valley.

BUS

Buses are the best alternative to a car. From Porto, you can easily travel to the main cities in the Douro Valley as well as Bragança further north. Both Rede Expressos and Flixbus run regular coaches from Porto's bus terminal in Campanhã, while Rodonorte covers the towns around Lamego and Bragança.

TRAIN

The train is a convenient way to reach Porto from any main coastal city, including Lisbon. The São Bento train station is the starting point for a scenic slow-paced ride along the Douro Valley with stops in Régua, Pinhão and Pocinho.

Bragança, p380

In the heart of Trás-os-Montes, you'll uncover ancient folk traditions, isolated community villages and the wilderness of Parque Natural de Montesinho.

Plan Your Time

After a couple of days exploring the northern capital, venture inland towards the vineyards of the Douro Valley or go even further to the isolated enclave of Trás-os-Montes to behold Portugal's most ancient festivals.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Porto (p352)

Pressed for Time

● Arrive in **Porto** (p352) and start by exploring the city's iconic **tiled facades** (p353). Wander through the medieval streets of Ribeira, stopping to visit historic sites like the **cathedral** (p358), or head further west to tour the **Igreja de São Francisco** (p358) and **Palácio da Bolsa** (p356). Grab a nourishing **sandwich** (p357) for lunch, then walk it off by hitting a **museum** (p360) or a gallery in Porto's **art district** (p359).

● The next day, take a walk along the river and cross over the bridge to **Vila Nova de Gaia** (p361) for a **port wine tasting** (p362). Return to Porto and hop on the metro to **Matosinhos** (p364), where you can visit a bustling fish market, tour a sardine-can factory and watch the sunset along the beach before hunkering down for a seafood dinner at **O Valentim** (p364).

Seasonal Highlights

Expect harsh summers and brisk winters; spring and autumn are often the best time to visit. Porto is wonderful from spring to autumn.

JANUARY

The cold of winter is ideal for making smoked meats, or *fumeiro*, which is celebrated in several specialised fairs in Trás-os-Montes such as the **Feira do Fumeiro** in Montalegre and Vinhais.

FEBRUARY

The coming of spring brings ancient fertility rituals like the mischievous carnival celebrations of **Podence** (p387) and **Lazarim** (p377).

MARCH

Speckles of white, from the **almond trees in bloom** (p377), flood Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Portugal's biggest almond producer.

Five Days to Travel Around

● After two days in Porto, head east towards **Amarante** (p364) and spend a day sampling glasses of green wine and cheeky pastries. Then get back on the road to reach the **Douro Valley** (p366). Stop off at **Vila Real** (p371) and visit the baroque Casa de Mateus before heading into town for a freshly baked pie at **Loja do Covilhete** (p374) or a walk amid the surrounding **woods** (p374).

● Next is a quick stop in **Peso da Régua** (p366) to learn about Douro's wine heritage at the Museu do Douro. From here, drive along the cinematic **EN222** (p375) to **Pinhão** (p370). Enjoy a boat ride on the Douro or visit one of the area's wineries, before dinner at **Veladouro** (p367). The following day drive to Vila Nova de Foz Côa to spot prehistoric rock art on a tour along the **Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa** (p376).

More Than a Week on the Road

● If you can squeeze in a couple more days, then hit the road and head off to Trás-os-Montes. Make **Bragança** (p380) your base, taking time to walk around its citadel. Drive a few minutes north, and you'll reach remote villages with picturesque stone houses located within the **Parque Natural de Montesinho** (p384).

● Continue south to **Podence** (p387) to visit the Casa do Careto and admire the colourful art murals dedicated to the *caretos* who roam the streets during the village's annual carnival. From here, it's a short drive to **Mirandela** (p386), a region known for its cherries and artisanal smoked sausages.

● End your adventure at **Miranda do Douro** (p385), where you can experience the unique Mirandese culture and cuisine.

JUNE

Porto commemorates the high-spirited **Festa de São João** (p352), a midsummer celebration filled with music, food, fireworks and squeaky plastic hammers.

SEPTEMBER

Grape harvesting is officially on its way in the Douro Valley and surrounding wine regions, with many towns hosting dedicated festivals and wineries offering special harvest programs.

OCTOBER

The village of Vilar de Perdizes hosts its annual **Halloween** party, gathering thousands of people in the country's spookiest celebration.

NOVEMBER

The olives are ripe and ready to blend in Trás-os-Montes' olive oil. While production is usually closed off, some local farms allow you to participate in the **olive harvest**.



Porto

PORT WINE | ARTISTIC ROOTS | HEARTY CUISINE

GETTING AROUND

Walking is the best way to get around the city centre, though there are several steep hills. When it rains (which is pretty often), be careful with the slippery cobblestone streets. From Porto airport, you can get the metro *(metrodoporto.pt)* straight to the city centre. If you're arriving by bus or train, you'll likely end up at the Campanhã station on the east side. From there, it's a short metro or taxi ride downtown. Trams take you along parts of the coast, while buses connect you to the outskirts, like Serralves. Both are run by STCP *(stcp.pt)*.

TOP TIP

Some metro stops accept contactless cards as a ticket. Look for the contactless card symbol and tap your card in that validating machine. Otherwise use the Andante Card *(andante.pt/en)*, valid on the metro, bus and train.

Porto is the city that gave Portugal its name and so much more. Its proximity to the river and the ocean made it an attractive place for various peoples to settle, including Celts, Iberians, Romans and Moors. The city grew from the ancient Morro da Sé hilltop neighbourhood to the riverfront neighbourhood of Ribeira and expanded in multiple waves.

The city's independent spirit acted as the country's ideological compass; it served as an incubator and stronghold for liberalism in the 1830s, ultimately defeating absolutism in the last civil war. For almost 900 years, it has maintained its status (and nickname) as the 'undefeated city', Invicta.

Today Porto is a remarkably dynamic city with its own artistic expression and architecture. Locals are known for their distinct accent and hospitality, and for not mincing their words. The University of Porto, among the largest in the country, contributes to perpetually renewing the city's youthful and rebellious spirit.

A Night to Remember

Experience the Festa de São João

Once a year, Porto celebrates its patron saint by throwing a big outdoor knees-up. Unlike Lisbon, where saint festivities last all June, Porto puts all its energy into a single night: 23 June. Leading up to it, you'll notice little clues: the colourful bunting hanging around Rua de São João, the ladies selling *manjericos* (basil plants), people randomly carrying around plastic hammers, and the *cascatas*, nativity-like scenes depicting the city's neighbourhoods arranged by a community of residents. Then overnight, everything changes. Locals hit the streets with their own barbecue kits, paper lamps are launched into the skies, and everyone dances to their favourite tunes, hitting passersby with that squeaky hammer. Fontaínhas throws the best bash, with food stalls dishing out



BERNI0004/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Festa de São João

freshly grilled sardines, churros and breaded chicken sandwiches, but you can also head downtown or even across the river to catch the midnight firework display. The evening ends with a bang, but you won't escape the party without a friendly wallop.

Hunting for Tiles

Capture Porto's iconic azulejos

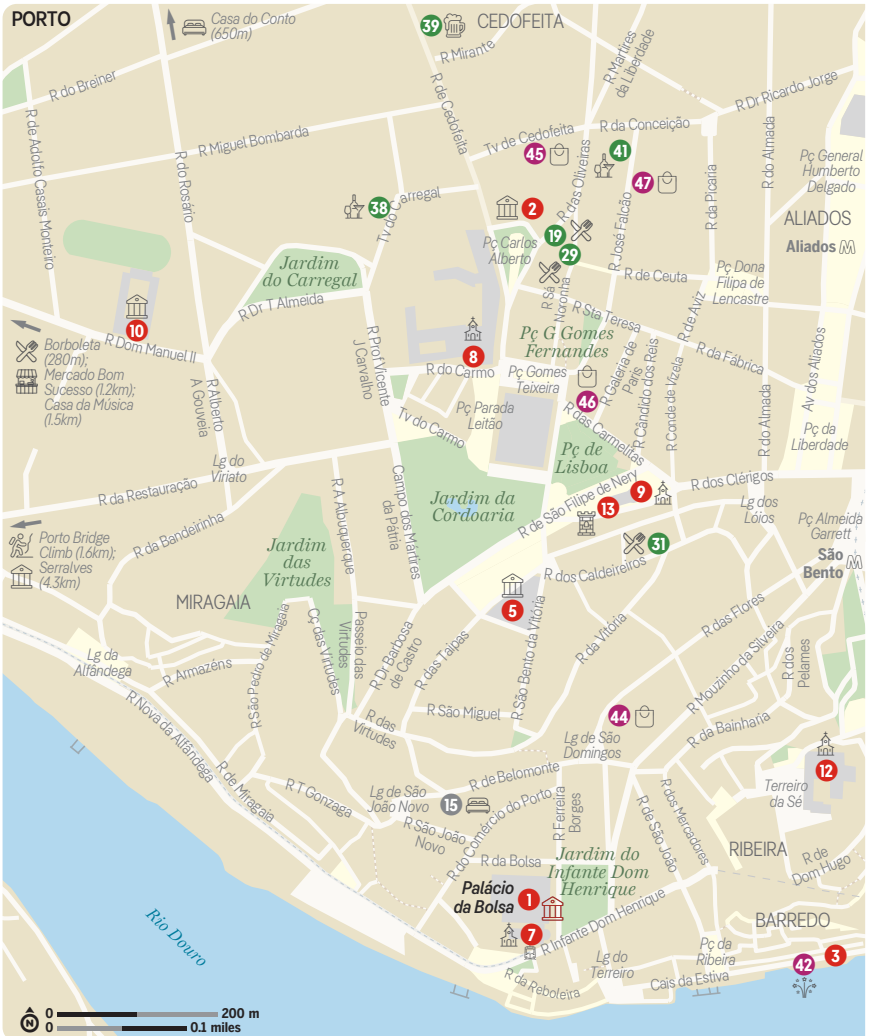
With its eye-popping blue-and-white-tiled facades, Porto offers the perfect backdrop for a photoshoot. The best part is you don't even need to pay for it: stand in front of **Capela das Almas** or pretend to casually walk past its huge 16,000-tile facade, step into **São Bento train station** to witness Portugal's history told in a series of panels, or sit on the steps of **Igreja de Santo Ildefonso**, looking up at episodes of St Ildefonso's life. The panels of this 18th-century church and the station were both designed by renowned Portuguese painter Jorge Colaço.

On the west side of town, near Jardim da Cordoaria, are two other noteworthy sites: the striking rococo church **Igreja do Carmo** *(€5),* with figurative tiled drawings alluding to the cult of Our Lady (closed weekends, and noon to 2pm on weekdays), and the **Banco de Materiais** *(free; closed Monday),* a pioneering materials bank responsible for safeguarding elements of Porto's architecture like its iconic *azulejos*.

Another project dedicated to preserving the city's tiles is the **Gazete Azulejos** *(gazeteazulejos.com; €35),* which offers regular tile-painting workshops based on a catalogue of the city's facades.

THE ARTISTS OF PORTO

Porto has always had an artistic vein, but its height was perhaps in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Artists and writers used to gather around the **Café Majestic** for regular gatherings known as *tertúlias*. Among them were the Quatro Vintes, a group of four Portuguese artists who all graduated with a 20 (*vinte*) mark from Porto's Fine Arts University. The cafe has since become a tourist attraction, with an overpriced menu often pushing locals away. More recently, the city has turned to modern architecture with figures like Souto Moura and Siza Vieira leading the Porto School movement.



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1 Palácio da Bolsa

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3 Cais da Ribeira
4 Capela das Almas
5 Centro Português de Fotografia
6 Igreja de Santo Ildefonso
7 Igreja de São Francisco
8 Igreja do Carmo
9 Igreja dos Clérigos
10 Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis
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15 Mo House
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- 25 Gazela
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TOP EXPERIENCE

Palácio da Bolsa

While Porto never had a royal palace, it eventually built its own temple honouring the city's deep-rooted cosmopolitan nature, economic ties and independent artistic visions. Built over the ashes of a former convent, the Palácio da Bolsa came to represent the eclectic taste of a city that was slowly moving away from the monarchy and establishing itself as an autonomous power.



IKUMARU/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

TOP TIPS

- Guided tours depart every 30 minutes starting at 9.30am and ending at 5pm, with a break between 1pm and 2pm.
- The Salão Árabe often hosts live classical concerts in summer, so keep an eye out for the calendar.
- Prolong your stay by booking a meal at the palace's restaurant **O Comercial** *(ocomercial.com)*.

PRACTICALITIES

Scan this QR code for prices and opening hours.

Getting Down to Business

Porto has always had a privileged relationship with northern Europe, especially the British, who played a crucial role in establishing the city's port wine industry (p362). The building's facade recalls the Palladian architecture style seen in places like London's Mansion House, while the entrance hall features 20 coats of arms of countries that Portugal had traded with. For the first few years, Palácio da Bolsa functioned as a stock exchange, attracting wealthy investors to the city and serving as a welcoming base for state representatives (the late Queen Elizabeth II shared a lunch with Charles and Diana here once). A guided tour will take you through the palace's iconic rooms, most of which can also be booked for events.

A Moorish Revival

Portugal's Moorish roots (p42) are better seen in the south, so having a Neo-Arab Room in Porto feels somewhat out of place. But considering the Arabs' connection with trade and their influence throughout the country, for the Romantics of the time it made sense to bring back this style. And they really went all out, using 18kg of gold leaf to decorate its walls, adding exquisite marquetry floors and carving detailed inscriptions in Arabic mentioning Allah and Queen Maria II, who donated the land for the palace.

Mad for Sandwiches

Dive into Porto's culinary obsession

Sometimes, all you want is a sandwich, and Porto has certainly mastered this. Sure, its most famous delicacy isn't exactly made to hold in your hands, but that's OK. We're talking about the *francesinha*, of course, which is considered a sandwich, but really, it's a knife-and-fork-job to tuck into the multiple layers of meat squished inside slices of bread drenched with melted cheese and a thick tomato sauce. Among the top *francesinha* spots are **Lado B**, **Café Santiago** and **O Golfinho**. For a vegan version, head to **Vegana By Tentúgal**.

Another staple is the *cachorrinho*, a small toasted hot dog served at **Gazela**. Both go nicely with a cold *fino* (small beer).

Then there are all the pork sandwich variations. **Casa Guedes** is known for its *sandes de pernil* (pork knuckle). **Casa Expresso** stuffs its *sandes de rojões* with big chunks of pork, and **Conga** specialises in *bifanas* (pork steak simmered in a spicy sauce). For chunks of cured ham, head to **Casa dos Presuntos Xico** near the Campanhã train station. And if you'd rather stick to beef, **Venham Mais 5** does a mean beef sandwich called *prego*, served with a creamy slice of *queijo da serra* (p324).

As Fresh as it Gets

Hit the food markets

With the opening of the **Time Out Market** in May 2024, Porto has gained yet another gourmet food court. While this one is taken over by local chefs such as Vasco Coelho Santos (from acclaimed Michelin-star **Euskalduna Studio**) and Ricardo Costa (at the helm of **Yeatman**, a Vila Nova de Gaia classic, holding two stars), the city has been busy renewing its old markets for the last few years. It started in 2021 with **Mercado Bom Sucesso** in Boavista, where you'll find classic treats like Cremosi's ice cream and good-value seafood platters at Mariscaria Bom Sucesso. But perhaps the biggest change was the **Mercado do Bolhão** *(mercadobolhao.pt)*, one of the city's oldest markets dating back to the 19th century, which was completely renovated and now includes a mix of fresh produce stalls alongside shops and restaurants. Guided tours (adult/child €12/6) are available on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays to learn more about its past.

WHO INVENTED THE FRANCESINHA?

As the story goes, it was Portuguese emigrant Daniel David Silva who came up with the idea for the *francesinha*, inspired by his time in France. Indeed, *francesinha* translates as little Frenchie. Perhaps you can see a few resemblances to the *croque-monsieur*, but it's more like a distant cousin, as it features many more ingredients, including ham, steak and two types of sausage (basically, anything he could get his hands on). It is usually served with French fries and sometimes a fried egg (because why not?). **A Regaleira** claims to have Porto's first *francesinha*, but these days, you can find it all over town.

DINING IN PORTO: OUR PICKS

Flor dos Congregados: The smell of roasted pork tenderloin will lure you into this cosy tavern. *7-10pm Mon-Wed, noon-3pm & 7-10pm Thu-Sat* €€

Taberna Folias do Baco: This Douro winery has set up in Porto to showcase its natural wines paired with delish snacks. *6pm-midnight Thu-Mon* €€

Borboleta: Escape the city bustle by grabbing a seat on the terrace of this veggie-friendly restaurant. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sat, noon-5pm Sun* €€

Tasquinha dos Guindais: Delicious sardines are slapped on the grill of this popular spot leading down to the riverside. Cash only. *noon-9pm* €

UNIQUE SHOPS IN PORTO

Claus Porto: *(claus porto.com)* In business since 1887, Claus is famous for its fragrant soaps carefully wrapped in colourful vintage packaging.

A Pérola do Bolhão: With an iconic art nouveau facade, this traditional grocery store at Rua Formosa 279 (closed Saturday afternoon and Sunday) sells coffee, spices, charcuterie and wine.

Livraria Lello: JK Rowling never stepped foot in this bookstore, but Harry Potter fans (and bookworms in general) continue to queue up for a shot of its iconic stairway. The €8 entry ticket can be redeemed with a purchase.

Coração Alecrim: Browse through a curated collection of sustainable clothing and Portuguese home goods, before settling down in its Japanese cafe. Closed Sunday.

Lot – Labels of Tomorrow: *(thefeetingroom.com)* A concept store highlighting Porto's up-and-coming designers.



ARKADY ZAKHAROV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sé do Porto

A Trip Back in Time

Explore the city's most iconic historic sites

Wandering through the **Cais da Ribeira**, a UNESCO-listed district, you'll encounter some of Porto's oldest sites. Start with a visit to the 12th-century Romanesque cathedral **Sé do Porto** *(church free; cloister and treasury adult/child €3/free)*, whose fortress-like towers stand out from a distance, while the cloisters feature 18th-century tiles.

The **Igreja de São Francisco** *(ordemsaofranciscoporto.pt; adult/child €10/3)* also has a medieval skeleton, but step inside and you'll witness a spectacular baroque interior with carved gilded altarpieces. Indeed most of the city's historical sites date back to the baroque era. One man in particular was responsible for designing many of these buildings, including the **Igreja dos Clérigos** *(free)* and its adjoining **tower** *(torredosclerigos.pt; adult/child €8/free)*. His name was Nicolau Nasoni (1691–1773), an Italian architect who traded Tuscany for Porto.

By the 19th century, Porto had become a hub for the liberal movement, stuck in a brotherly dispute between Dom Miguel (absolutist) and Dom Pedro IV (liberalist). Eventually, liberalism won, earning Porto the nickname of 'Invicta' (the invincible) and planting a seed of what would later lead to the establishment of the Portuguese Republic. The **Rota Porto Liberal** *(rotaportoliberal.pt)* created in 2015 takes you through some of the city's streets and buildings linked to what is now known as the siege of Porto.

DRINKING IN PORTO: OUR PICKS

Combi Coffee Roasters: Speciality coffee and baked goods draw locals to this lively cafe in the creative district of Bonfim. *9am-5pm* €

Capela Incomum: A former chapel turned wine bar where you can sample local wines paired with small nibbles. *4pm-midnight Mon-Sat* €

Torto: Inside a striking Neo-Moorish building, this unassuming spot serves some of the best cocktails in town. *7pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat* €€

Catraio: This pet-friendly microbrewery pours a mix of Portuguese and international craft-beer brews. *5-11.30pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat* €

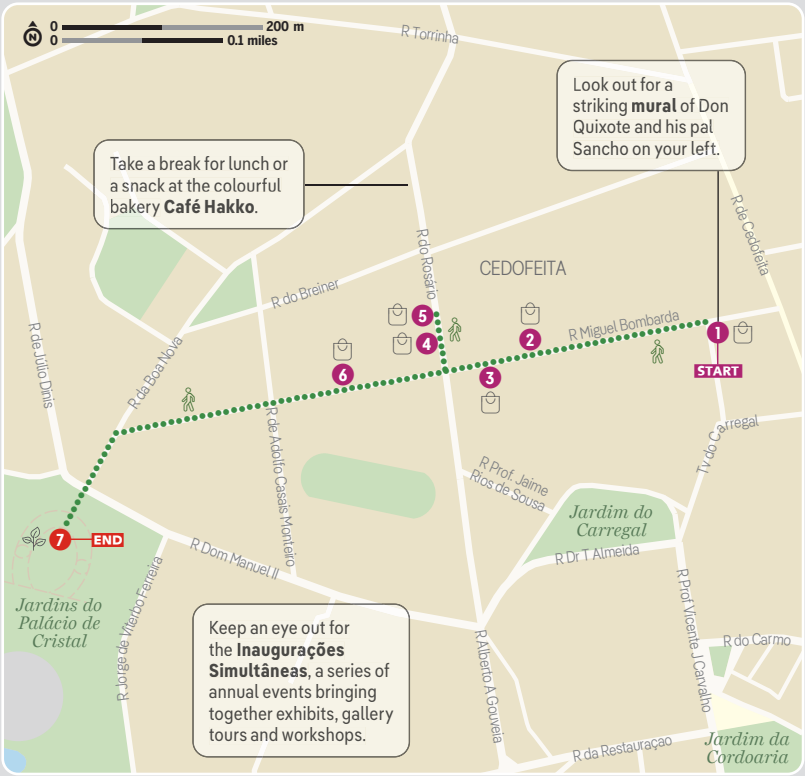
PORTO'S ART DISTRICT WALK

Embrace Porto's artistic scene with this walking tour through the Quarteirão Miguel Bombarda and beyond.

START	END	LENGTH
Ó! Galeria	Jardins do Palácio de Cristal	1.4km; 1 hour

A collection of galleries and independent shops line the streets in and around Rua Miguel Bombarda in the Cedofeita district. Start at 1 **Ó! Galeria** for a look into the colourful illustrations designed by artists across Portugal, including Porto-based folks like Ana Seixas and Mariana, a Miserável. From here, it's a short walk to 2 **Matéria Prima**, where you can browse through vinyl and music-themed publications. Across the street is the 3 **CC Bombarda**, a small shopping gallery housing alternative concept stores selling anything from handmade jewellery to cork and natural wine.

Veer off to the right towards Rua do Rosário and stop by 4 **Patch** for a look into its vintage clothes and ceramic collection. Then head next door to 5 **CRU**, a design shop, coworking space and cafe all wrapped into one. Return to Miguel Bombarda to tour the remaining galleries on the west side, including 6 **Cruzes Canhoto**, where you'll encounter magical creatures turned sculptures influenced by the brutalist, folk art and primitivism movements. Wrap up the day with a stroll around nearby 7 **Jardins do Palácio de Cristal**, a romantic garden with terraces overlooking the river, a free art gallery, a lake and curious peacocks parading around.



BEST OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN PORTO

Porto Bridge Climb: *(portobridgeclimb.com; €20)* Challenge yourself to climb the 65m-tall arch of the Ponte da Arrábida bridge. Not for the faint-hearted!

Six Bridges Cruise: *(several companies; from €15)* Navigate the Douro's gleaming waters and admire the beautiful cityscape while discovering Porto's six bridges aboard one of the many boats departing from the piers of Porto and Vila Nova de Gaia.

SUP Tour: *(porto-surf-school.com; €60)* Paddle along the Douro River in a small bay on the outskirts of Porto (tour includes transfer from the city).

Douro Va'a: *(instagram.com/dourovaa; from €20)* Set off on a Hawaiian canoe from the Douro Marina near the fishing town of Afurada, about 3km west of Vila Nova de Gaia's downtown.



KIEVVICTOR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis

Picture This

Best art museums and architectural sites

Founded in 1833, the **Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis** *(museusoaresdosreis.gov.pt; adult/child €8/4; closed Monday)* was Portugal's first public art museum. The collection is centred around Soares dos Reis' sculptures, but features much more than that, including Portuguese ceramics, antique furniture and over 2000 paintings ranging from the Romantic period to the 20th century. About a 10-minute walk from here is the **Centro Português de Fotografia** *(cpf.pt; free)*, a museum housed in a former political prison showcasing old cameras and temporary photo exhibits. It's closed Mondays and weekend mornings.

Head west, and you'll encounter more modern sites, like the striking **Casa da Música** *(casadamusica.com; adult/child €12/5)* with its irregular polyhedron structure designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. A guided tour (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) is a must if you want to understand the vision behind this concert hall and visit its multiple rooms, some of which are covered with stunning tile features. For the latest contemporary art shows, visit **Serralves** *(serralves.pt; adult/child €24/12)*, which features an Art Deco building, a sculpture park and a museum envisioned by award-winning architect Siza Vieira.

EATING IN PORTO: BREAKFAST & SNACKS

Trama: Local wine and late-night snacks like the mouthwatering octopus skewer await at this casual spot in Bonfim. *5-11pm Tue-Sat* €

Confeitaria do Bolhão: Hunker down for breakfast at this century-old cafe opposite the Mercado do Bolhão. *6am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat* €

Gelataria Portuense: When the heat strikes, you can always cool down with homemade ice cream here. *noon-midnight* €

Oficina dos Rissóis: Oven-baked patties filled with meat, seafood and veg are the house speciality. *noon-3pm & 6-10pm Mon, Wed & Thu, to 10.30pm Fri & Sat* €

Beyond Porto



Take a trip outside of Porto to discover port wine cellars, historic fishing ports and a picturesque riverside town.

While Porto is the epicentre of social, cultural and commercial life, its surroundings show a historical past rooted in specialised industries. The closest cities, Vila Nova de Gaia and Matosinhos, share a Roman past. The former has for centuries been shaped by the industrious port wine industry, which settled its wine cellars along the banks of the Douro. The latter is a historically seafaring city that once had a thriving canning industry but now is a bustling fishing and port city. Inland, towards the Douro, the riverside town of Amarante is known for its cheeky sweets and endless supply of green wine.

Vila Nova de Gaia

TIME FROM PORTO: **6 MINS**

Postcard views

The best way to capture Porto's picturesque riverfront is to head on to Vila Nova de Gaia on the other margin. You can catch glimpses of it as you take the five-minute walk across the **Ponte de Dom Luís I**. For a close-up of the *rabelos*, the boats that once carried port wine caskets up and down the river, take the bottom platform from Cais da Ribeira (p358). If you want a wider shot, follow the top platform from Avenida de Vímara Peres towards **Jardim do Morro**. Stick around this hilltop garden for sunset, or head up to the 16th-century **Mosteiro da Serra do Pilar** for an even higher view. Other photo-worthy spots include the terraces of WOW (p362), a cultural district occupying the former cellars of Croft and Taylor's, and the **cable-car ride** *(gaia cablecar.com; adult/child €7/3.50)* connecting Jardim do Morro to Gaia's waterfront.

Seaside trail

If you're in the mood for a long walk, take the 6km trail west along the river. You'll pass through the fishing town of **Afurada** and the **Douro Estuary Nature Reserve** until you finally reach the sandy shores of **Praia do Cabedelo**. From here, a string of beaches forms all the way south, with the **Praia do Senhor do Mar** standing out thanks to its sea-facing chapel perched on a giant boulder.

Places

Vila Nova de Gaia p361
Matosinhos p364
Amarante p364

GETTING AROUND

You can easily reach Vila Nova de Gaia on foot by crossing the Ponte de Dom Luís I, a two-level bridge linking Porto to the top and bottom part of town. Alternatively, you can get the line D of the metro to Jardim do Morro and then walk down to the cellars. Matosinhos is also connected by metro via line A or the panoramic 500 bus. Rede Expressos offers direct buses to Amarante from the Porto-Campanhã station.

HELP ME PICK:

Port Wine Tastings

As the Douro Valley's temperatures are too unstable, delicate port wine has for centuries been aged in the cellars of Vila Nova de Gaia, where it can lie quiet for just a couple of years or several decades, depending on the wine's style. The southern margin of the Douro is speckled with more than a dozen port wine cellars, all adorned with large signs you can easily read from Porto. Historically, producers settled in Gaia due to its cooler climate, better storage conditions, and exemption from paying taxes to the Bishop of Porto. Although the cellars' business is ageing wines, most of them are also open to visits and tastings.

If You're Looking For...

A Quick Overview

Porto Augusto's *(portoaugustos.pt; €15)* Twenty minutes is all you need to learn about port wine styles at this small cellar run by a Portuguese family. The price is redeemable on a wine bottle at the end. Quinta dos Corvos (next door) is run by the same folks.

WOW Porto *(wow.pt; adult/child €20/9)* A tour of the Wine Experience museum inside WOW gives you an insight into the history of Portuguese wine, ending with a tasting of three wines, though only a single port. A port wine course (€40) is also available including five tastings.



MATYAS REHAK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Taylor's *(taylor.pt; adult/child €20/7.50)* Self-guided audio tours available in 13 languages allow you to quickly take in the history of this 17th-century port house, before settling down for a tasting (grape juice for kids).

A Slice of History

Ramos Pinto *(pictured; ramospinto.pt; tastings from €12.50, adult/child €20/10 for a guided tour)* The basic tasting here features six ports. Guided tours (available at 2pm) include a visit to a 19th-century office complete with carved wood walls and stunning stained-glass windows. No reservations, it's first-come, first-served.

Niepoort *(niepoort.pt; from €45)* Having been through six generations, Niepoort recently opened its cellars, but left them pretty much untouched (cobwebs and all). Welcoming only 24 people a day makes this a more exclusive tasting (and thus slightly higher priced). Bookings are highly recommended.

Cockburn's *(cockburns.com; from €22)* Among the biggest port wine cellars in Gaia, featuring thousands of oak barrels. Tours take you through the ageing rooms and cooperage section where they fix the barrels – this is one of few places with their own coopers team *(tanoeiros)*.

Port with a View

Graham's Port Lodge *(grahams-port.com; from €25)* After touring this 19th-century cellar, sit back and take in the views from the panoramic tasting room.

Churchill's 1982 Garden Bar *(drinkchurchills.com)* It's worth heading a bit further west for a picnic or a tasting amid the lush Churchill's garden in summer.



SIGHTS
1. Churchill's 1982 Garden Bar
2. Cockburn's
3. Graham's Port Lodge
4. Niepoort
5. Porto Augusto's
6. Ramos Pinto
7. Taylor's
8. WOW Porto

DRINKING
- Angel's Share (see 8)

9. Miradouro Ignez

HOW TO

When to go Most tours take place in the morning or early afternoon. Usually, there are specific schedules for tours in English, so check the websites before you go.

Book ahead While some places allow walk-ins, the more renowned cellars will require a reservation at least 24 hours in advance.

Before you go Port wine is sweet and deceivingly strong so be sure to snack ahead or book a tasting with a food pairing.

Continue the journey To see the vineyards up close, you'll have to travel further inland towards the Douro Valley (p372).

Know Your Port Styles

Viticulture has existed in the Douro region since Roman times. However, what we now know as port wine was only developed around the 17th century when British merchants discovered that adding a dash of brandy to the wine during fermentation prevented it from spoiling during their long sea voyages. Port is thus a fortified wine and comes in a spectrum of styles *(winesofportugal.com/en/portuguese-wines/wine-styles/vinho-do-porto)*. Tawnies and rubies are the most popular kind. The key difference between them is the contact with oxygen and the ageing process. Tawnies age in oxygen-exposed wooden barrels, gaining caramel and nutty flavours that pair well with desserts. Rubies, on the other hand, age briefly in barrels, spending most of their time in bottles, which gives them fruitier, berry-like flavours. While you can sample them individually in bars across town, it's worth ordering a tasting (*degustação/prova*) to get a sense of what you like. Most cellars will offer these for as little as €15, though you can pay just as much for a single glass of vintage port. Apart from these two types, you'll also find white port – the base of your typical port tonic – and rosé port, which can be drunk on its own or whisked into a refreshing cocktail. **Miradouro Ignez** is a great spot for a tonic with a view, while **Angel's Share** serves rosé-infused tonics and sangria.

A DAY IN LEÇA DA PALMEIRA



Born and raised in Leça da Palmeira, just across from Matosinhos, **Inês Graça** is an avid food lover and storyteller. *@inescgraca*

Lovely **Leça da Palmeira** is a favourite spot for those looking for a pleasant and quiet area just a few minutes from the centre of Porto. Between walks at **Quinta da Conceição**, diving and hiking, be sure to visit **Piscina das Marés** and **Casa de Chá da Boa Nova**, both designed by architect Álvaro Siza Vieira, and take the opportunity to visit the **Boa Nova chapel** while observing the **lighthouse**. To soothe your stomach during your visit, there are several fish and seafood options available: try the fish and *açorda* at **A Margarida** restaurant or opt for something more contemporary such as **Lessa** or **Fava Tonka**, one of the most popular vegetarian spots in the country.

Matosinhos

TIME FROM PORTO: **30 MINS**

Canned goods and fresh fish

Matosinhos claims to have the **World's Best Fish** *(matosinhos wbf.pt)* and it certainly delivers on it. This seaside district was once a hub for Portugal's thriving fish canning industry. One of the few factories that remain is the **Conservas Pinhais** *(conservaspinhais.com; adult/child €18/12)*. A tour of this 1920s family-operated business starts with a visit to the old offices, where locals used to pick up sardine cans from a tiny service window. Then you'll get geared up with a plastic suit from head to toe before entering the factory grounds, where a group of ladies are busy assembling the ingredients that go into their staple recipes. Note: if there's no fresh catch that day, you'll see them hand-wrapping up each can. One thing is certain, you'll always finish off with a delicious sardine tasting.

If it's fresh fish you're after, head to **Rua Heróis de França** or **Rua Roberto Ivens** where you'll spot a variety of seafood restaurants. Even better, stop by the **Mercado Municipal** and choose your catch directly from the fishmongers. They have a deal with the surrounding restaurants, so don't be alarmed if one of the owners comes to give you a friendly nudge.

Hit the beach

The vast sandy shore of **Praia de Matosinhos** is ideal for those who love long walks by the beach, but especially if you're looking to surf. Several surf schools are based along the promenade allowing you to book a lesson (around €30) or rent a board if you're already experienced. **Surfing Life Club** *(surfinglifeclub.com)* also offers specialised lessons for people with autism or learning difficulties.

Amarante

TIME FROM PORTO: **50 MINS**

Guilty pleasures

Set along the banks of the Tâmega River, Amarante is not your average small town. Peek into its cafe counters, and you'll notice an oddly phallic pastry. Some say it started as an homage to São Gonçalo, the town's patron saint and apparently a successful matchmaker. The tradition stuck, and now *doces fálicos* are sold all over Amarante. **Confeitaria Lailai** and **Confeitaria da Ponte** whip up a delicious version of these alongside other less suggestive treats like the *papos de anjo*, a half-moon wafer filled with an egg and almond mix.

DINING IN GAIA & MATOSINHOS: OUR PICKS

Toca do Coelho: Simple fare like octopus salad and fish cakes are served in this lively spot in Gaia. *noon-6pm Mon-Sat* €

Divino: Take in the views from the panoramic dining room while tucking into a seasonal tasting menu. *12.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat* €€

O Valentim: Grilled fish straight from the coals is the highlight at this Matosinhos spot. *noon-11pm* €€

Terrárea: A cafe meets plant shop serving delicious veggie-friendly treats. *10am-7pm Tue-Sat* €



GODONGPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Conservas Pinhais, Matosinhos

If sweets aren't your thing, you can always hit the small *tascas* (taverns) along Rua 31 de Janeiro. **Adega Kilowatt** (a favourite among passing motorbikers) and **Taberna Don Rodrigo** are some of the top spots to sample Amarante's iconic ham sandwich. Meanwhile, **Casa Herédio** across the bridge focuses on a mix of *petiscos*. Wherever you go, be sure to ask for a glass of the regional *vinho verde* (green wine; p418).

Through forests and along train tracks

Amarante is surrounded by a small forest that can easily be reached on foot. Several trails allow you to explore its lush surroundings and riverside setting, including the **Trilho dos Castanheiros** (3.8km one way) and the **Trilho das Azenhas** (7km one way). Castanheiros starts near Amarante's municipal pool on the south bank, while Azenhas begins on the other margin at **Praia Fluvial das Azenhas**, following the waterfront until reaching the small council of Vila Caiz.

Another option is to follow the old train tracks of the Tâmega line. The **Ecopista da Linha do Tâmega** stretches for nearly 40km, connecting Amarante to Cabeceiras de Basto. It can be done on foot or by cycling. Reach out to **Amarantrilhos** *(amarantrilhos.pt; from €14)* for bike rentals or a guided tour.

AMADEO DE SOUZA-CARDOSO

Born in Amarante, Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (1887–1918) was among the most famous Portuguese modernist painters, mingling with the likes of Matisse and Braque. He spent a couple of years in Paris studying artistic movements such as cubism and expressionism, which had a strong influence in his work. Despite dying in his early 30s, his contributions significantly impacted modern art in Portugal. The **Museu Municipal Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso** *(€4; closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm Tuesday to Sunday)* in Amarante showcases a small section of his work, which you can also find in galleries across the country such as Gulbenkian (p96). Be sure to stop by the museum's shop for some affordable artsy souvenirs.

The Douro Valley



ANCIENT VINEYARDS | SCENIC TRAIN RIDES | PREHISTORIC ROCK ART

GETTING AROUND

From Porto, you can easily reach Peso da Régua and Pinhão by train. Vila Nova de Foz Côa on the east border is slightly harder. You'll have to get a train to Pocinho and then taxi it up to the town centre or the museum. Alternatively, you can take a Rede Expressos bus, changing in Viseu, but you'll still need a ride to the museum. Vila Real, Lamego and Miranda do Douro are directly connected to Porto by bus. If you're on a tight schedule, however, you're best off renting a car, which will give you a bit more freedom to explore the surrounding wineries and roadside viewpoints.

TOP TIP

The Discover Douro *(discoverdouro.pt)* app is a handy tool featuring some of the region's top highlights, including restaurants, hotels, itineraries and upcoming events.

Aboard a steam train ride, I entered the Douro Valley for the first time. It was a brief encounter, snapping quick shots of Pinhão's tiled-covered station and sipping on a glass of port as the terraced vineyards unfolded before me. I revisited it once more on a road trip along the N2, stopping briefly at Peso da Régua to learn about its historic wine industry at the Museu do Douro. But it was only when I gave myself time (more than a day) that I felt I was really getting to the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Standing above the slopes of a winery or sailing down below, I stared at the landscape from every angle, and couldn't help but be baffled by it. And trust me, you will be too.

The Doorway to the Douro

Dive into Douro's history at Peso da Régua

Considered the capital of the Douro, **Peso da Régua** (or Régua for short) offers a great entryway to this region. It was here that Marquês de Pombal established the Real Companhia Velha, the regulatory body responsible for overseeing the quality of port back in the 18th century. Today this emblematic building (with a few modern tweaks) houses the **Museu do Douro** *(museudodouro.pt; adult/child €7/free)*. The visit begins with an overview of the history of the Douro, highlighting the region's estates and natural resources. Upstairs the focus is on the wine itself, exploring the different types of certification and offering a sneak peek into the museum's restoration workshop. While you're here, don't miss the room dedicated to the Portuguese painter Armanda Passos, who was born in Régua. Then in Douro style, finish off with a port tasting at the shop downstairs.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

The Douro Valley

Scenic Trails

Boat trips and riverside walks

From **Cais da Régua**, you can take off on a boat ride along the Douro, though Pinhão (p370) offers a closer look at the vineyards. The pier itself was once a major transport hub, where locals unloaded the wine caskets that would then sail towards Porto for ageing. Even if you don't hop aboard one of many cruises docked here, you can walk along the riverside by following the **Ecopista Ribeirinha**. Alternatively, cross the **Ponte Pedonal da Régua**, the old railway bridge offering a higher ground to relish the views. Régua also sits at the intersection of two iconic roads in Portugal, the N2, traversing the country from north to south, and the EN222, which runs alongside the Douro River.

PEDAL THROUGH THE VALLEY

In early May, Régua welcomes the **Love Tiles Douro Granfondo** *(bikeservice.pt)*, a grand cycling route covering some of the Douro's most scenic roads. From Régua, cyclists will power up the hill towards Sanfins do Douro, pass through Favaios and Alijó, reaching São João da Pesqueira before returning back to Régua to complete the 149km *granfondo* trail. If this sounds like a lot, you can sign up for shorter sections like the *minifondo* (58km) or the *mediofondo* (99km). Previous editions have welcomed more than 3000 cycling enthusiasts. Sign-ups take place online and open about six months before the event. Naturally, if you're driving around this time, be sure to keep an eye out for the cyclists.

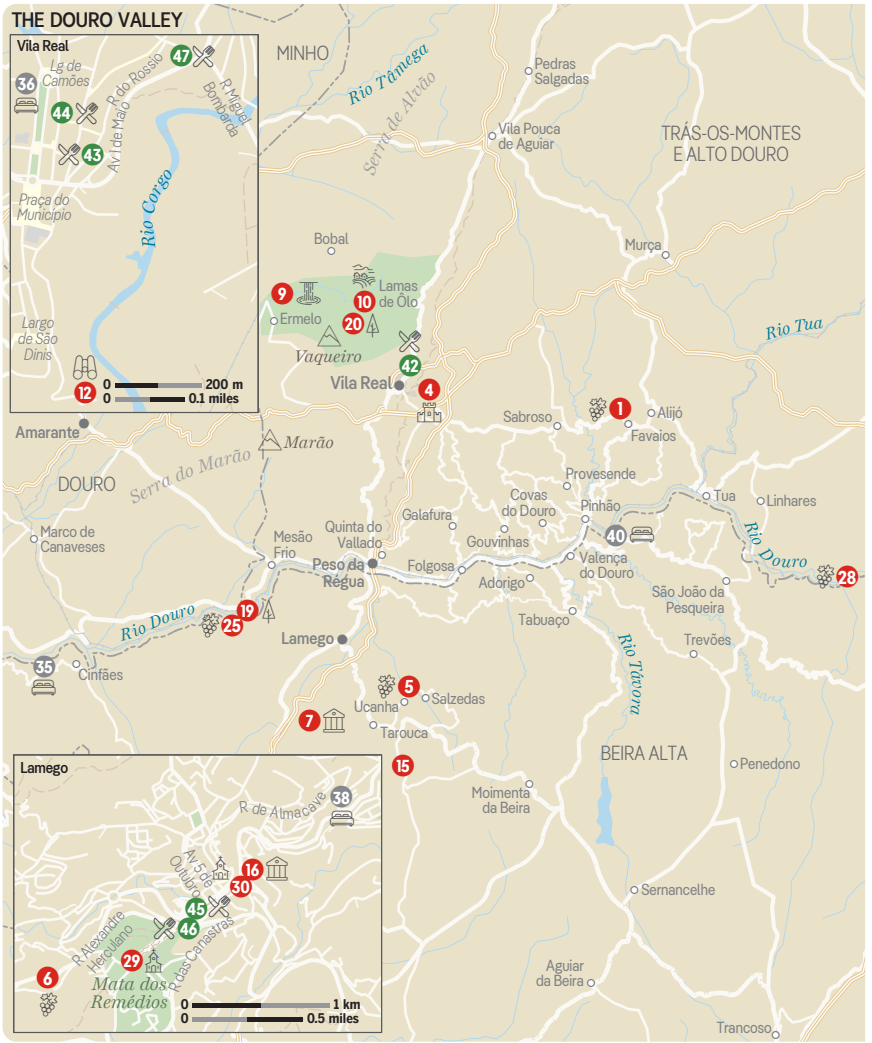
FOOD & WINE IN RÉGUA & PINHÃO

Libatio: Wine tastings paired with delicious tapas are the highlight at this pet-friendly bar in Régua's historic centre. *5-10.30pm Thu-Mon* €

Aneto & Table: Located in Régua's former freight station, Aneto serves *petiscos* accompanied by its small brand wines. *noon-11pm Mon-Sat* €€

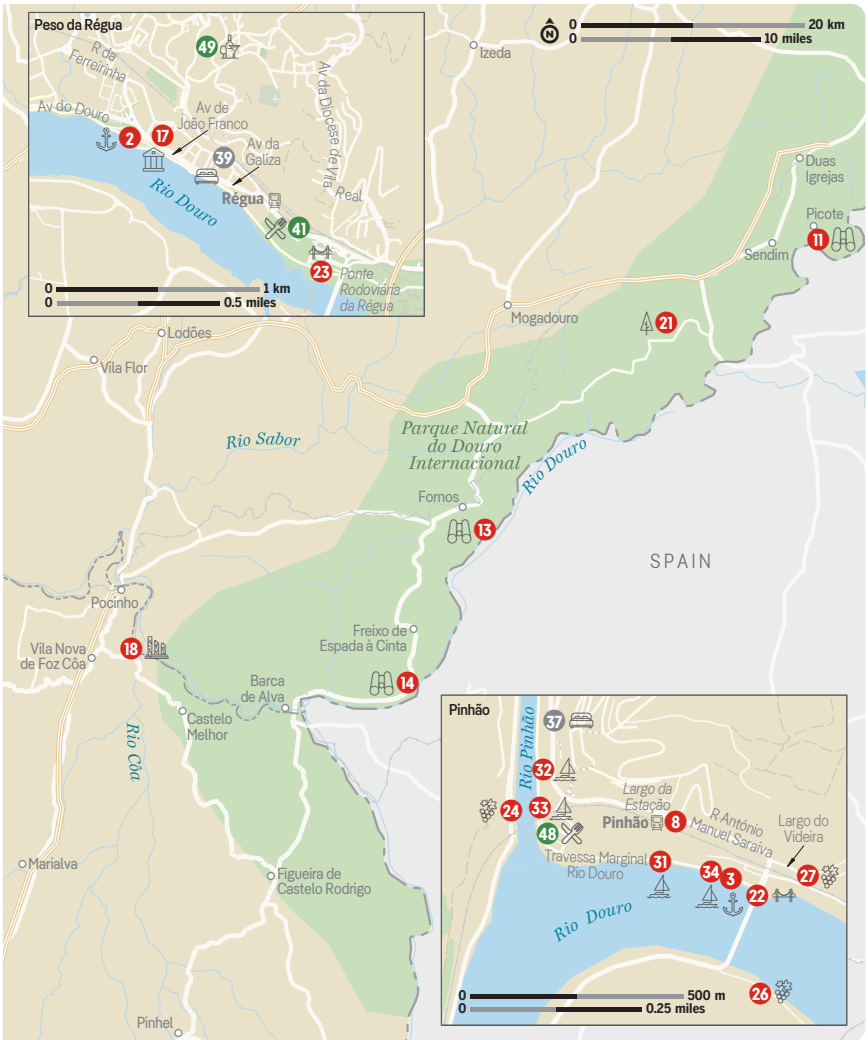
Veladouro: Next to Pinhão's riverfront, this restaurant serves delicious grilled dishes. *noon-3pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun* €€

A Companhia: Inside the Museu do Douro, Companhia serves tasty traditional dishes with a twist. *10am-11pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun & Mon* €€



SIGHTS

1. Adega Cooperativa de Favaios
2. Cais da Régua
3. Cais do Pinhão
4. Casa de Mateus
5. Caves da Murganheira
6. Caves Raposeira
7. Centro Interpretativo da Máscara Ibérica
8. Estação Ferroviária do Pinhão
9. Fisgas de Ermelo
10. Lamas de Ôlo
11. Miradouro da Fraga do Puio
12. Miradouro da Vila Velha
13. Miradouro do Carrascalinho
14. Miradouro do Penedo Durão
15. Mosteiro de São João de Tarouca
16. Museu de Lamego
- Museu do Côa (see 18)
17. Museu do Douro
- Museu do Pão e Vinho (see 1)
18. Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa
19. Parque Fluvial de Porto de Rei
20. Parque Natural do Alvão
21. Parque Natural do Douro Internacional
22. Ponte do Pinhão
23. Ponte Pedonal da Régua
24. Quinta da Foz
25. Quinta da Massora
26. Quinta das Carvalhas
27. Quinta do Bomfim
28. Quinta do Vesúvio
29. Santuário Nossa Senhora dos Remédios



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DOURO VALLEY'S EPIC JOURNEYS



Pedro and **Sara** run the Hostel Douro Backpackers (p389) in Pinhão. *@hostel dourobackpacker*

Pinhão is a small village located in the heart of Douro's 'Enchanted Valley'. Just a few steps away from our hostel you can follow several hiking trails, such as the **Casal de Loivos** circular trail. A visit to the viewpoint along this route is a must to take in the breathtaking views over the Douro River. The walk can be combined with wine and olive oil tastings at the various farms that cross along this route. In the afternoon, take a ride on a *rabelo* boat or, departing from the beautiful Pinhão railway station, go to Pocinho. Without a doubt, this is one of the most beautiful train journeys in our country.

Drifting Along the Douro

Scenic boat rides in Pinhão

Pinhão is the primary hub for riverside cruises along the Douro. Whether you're taking off from here or arriving from Régua, it's worth looking through your options before jumping on board. You can do this by walking along the **Cais do Pinhão** on the day, but to guarantee a seat you're best off booking ahead. **Magnífico Douro** *(magnificodouro.pt; from €12.50)* and **Companhia Turística do Douro** *(ctdouro.com; from €12.50)* offer trips on a traditional *rabelo* boat (now adapted with a motor engine), while **Live Douro** *(livedouro.pt; from €260)* whisks you away in a modern yacht. But if you really want to embrace the sights and sounds of the valley, reach out to **D'aurum** *(daurum.pt; from €15)*, which offers one-hour tours on a sun-powered boat, without the noisy motor roar. Its dock is a bit further along the pier, past the stone arch. As you set sail towards the **Ponte do Pinhão**, you'll enjoy two wines from the village of Favaios paired with regional almonds from Vila Nova de Foz Côa.

A Lesson on Tiles

A historic train station

The 24 tiled panels of **Estação Ferroviária do Pinhão** give a quick glimpse of the journey of port wine, from the harvest to the treading of the grapes, down to the transport in the *rabelo* boats until they reach the cellars in Gaia. Although the train station was erected in the 19th century, the tiles were only added a century later, and are now a trademark of Pinhão.

Tour the Quintas

Vineyard tours and wine tastings

The good thing about Pinhão is its proximity to the vineyards. Indeed, you can easily reach many wineries on foot. **Quinta do Bomfim** *(pt.symington.com; from €25)*, a five-minute walk from the train station, is a classic, as is the **Quinta das Carvalhas** *(realcompanhiavelha.pt; from €15)* located across the river and allowing tasting walk-ins. For a more intimate experience, head west to **Quinta da Foz** *(quintadafoz.pt; from €10),* a small-scale winery offering tastings of its port and Douro wines, as well as seasonal picnics and walking tours through the vineyards. Note that some wineries offer a different price for visits with and without tasting.

The Wine Villages

Quiet charm, Moscatel and bread

On the northern side of the Douro Valley lie two wine villages that are part of the **Aldeias Vinhateiras do Douro**, a group of six historical wine villages. A 30-minute drive from Pinhão will take you to **Provesende** in Sabrosa. This rural town served as the headquarters for the Douro's first grafter school helping fight the phylloxera plague that devastated endless vineyards



STEVE HEAP/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Casa de Mateus, Vila Real

back in the 19th century. Have a stroll along Provesende's quiet streets dotted with opulent manor houses before taking off to the village of **Favaios**, a further 30 minutes north. It's here that you'll find the **Adega Cooperativa de Favaios** *(adega defavaios.pt; €13),* which is famous for producing Moscatel wine. Book ahead to visit the cellars and taste two Moscatel styles. Afterwards, stop by **Padaria da Manuela Barriguda**, where artisanal bread is still baked in huge wood-fired ovens. To learn more about the history of these regional goods, visit the nearby **Museu do Pão e Vinho**.

A Baroque Gem

Tour the iconic Casa de Mateus

A dazzling spectacle of baroque architecture, the 18th-century **Casa de Mateus** *(casademateus.pt; adult/child from €12.50/6.25)* in Vila Real is the opus magnum of this style in northern Portugal. It is believed to have been designed by the Italian architect Nicolau Nasoni (think Porto's Igreja dos Clérigos). Once inside the palace, you'll be filled with awe by the dramatic wood ceiling in the lobby. Moving on, you'll notice the careful preservation and selection of furniture that makes this palace feel lived in (it was until the 1970s). Finish your tour with a relaxing stroll through the gardens, walking along the camellia garden, the cedar tunnel, the boxwood hedges and the ponds. Contrary to popular belief, it isn't here that the globally famous Mateus rosé wine is produced, though it uses the manor's image. Casa de Mateus does, however, make its own wines, as well as olive oil and fruity jams, all of which you can taste on-site (from €10). During the summer, evenings are often dedicated to classical music concerts. The palace is a 10-minute drive from the centre of town, but you can also get bus 1 or 6 from the station near Vila Real's court.

INTRODUCING THE MOSCATEL WINE

The sweet Moscatel wine is made in several European countries, always using muscat grapes. In Portugal, Moscatel is a popular fortified wine that is traditionally produced in the Peninsula of Setúbal and the Douro. Up here, production is based around the towns of Favaios and Alijó. The Moscatel do Douro DOP is exclusively made using the fragrant Moscatel Galego Branco grape variety, producing complex wines that must age for at least 18 months in wood. Some producers will let it age 10 or 20 years more. Visit in early September, when Favaios hosts the **Festival do Moscatel Douro** *(facebook.com/festivalmoscateldouro)* celebrating the new year's harvest.

HELP ME PICK:

Douro Valley Wineries

The Douro Valley is the oldest demarcated wine region in the world. Just one year after a devastating earthquake hit Lisbon in 1755, statesman Marquês de Pombal turned north to keep an eye on port wine quality (as one does). Like a staircase leading down to the river, vineyards here are planted along rows of terraces. The endless *quintas* scattered around produce much more than the beloved port, from full-bodied reds to citrusy whites, and other fortified treats.

If You Like...

Natural & Sustainable

Folias de Baco *(foliasdebaco.com)* Tiago Sampaio spent his childhood amid vineyards and now produces one of Douro's most distinct range of natural wines.

Quinta de Nápoles (Niepoort) *(niepoort.pt)* Niepoort Ports can go for hundreds of euros, but they also have more accessible wines like Nat'Cool, a line of natural wines made with grapes from Douro and other parts of Portugal (including a port).

Quinta Vila Rachel *(vilarachel.com)* Using regenerative and sustainable farming practices, this family-run *quinta* produces unfiltered wines without added sulfites, including a skin-contact orange wine.



KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

Classic & Historic

Quinta do Vallado *(quintadovallado.com)* Vallado belonged to the legendary Dona Antónia Ferreira and is still in the family today. For over 200 years they specialised in port, but they've since branched out to produce whites, reds and rosé, mixing old and new vineyards.

Quinta de Santa Eufémia *(qtastaeufemia.com)* Home to one of Pombal's original milestones, this *quinta* still uses traditional methods like grape stomping in granite mills.

Quinta de Ervamoira *(ramospinto.pt)* Standing between 110m and 340m high, Ervamoira's vineyards are planted vertically (not in terraces) and feature native grapes like Rabigato and Touriga Nacional.

Breathtaking Views

Quinta do Tedo *(pictured left; quintadotedo.com)* Sitting in the confluence between the Douro and the Tedo Rivers, this 18th-century estate offers privileged views of the terraced vineyards on all sides.

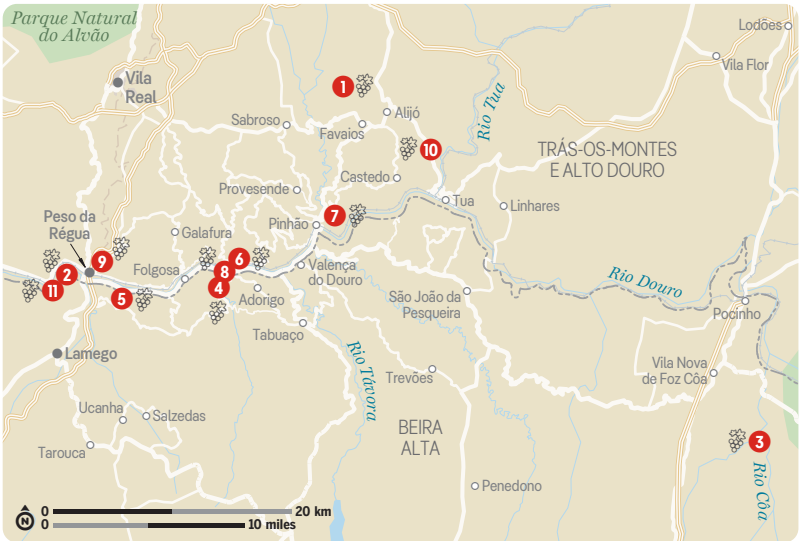
Quinta do Crasto *(quintadocrasto.pt)* After a walk along the vineyards and olive grove, sit back and enjoy the breathtaking views while sipping on a glass of port or the premium red Xisto produced in partnership with Bordeaux's iconic Cazes family.

Quinta do Jalloto *(quintadojalloto.pt)* Primarily producing red wines, this family winery is located near Casal de Loivos, one of the most iconic viewpoints near Pinhão.

Sleeping Amid the Vineyards

Quinta da Pacheca *(quintadapacheca.com)* Sleep in a giant barrel with panoramic windows overlooking the vineyards.

Six Senses Douro Valley *(sixsenses.com)* Enjoy front-row views of the Douro River and the surrounding vineyards at this upscale hotel on the outskirts of Lamego.



SIGHTS

1. Folias de Baco
2. Quinta da Pacheca
3. Quinta de Ervamoira
4. Quinta de Nápoles
5. Quinta de Santa Eufémia
6. Quinta do Crasto
7. Quinta do Jalloto
8. Quinta do Tedo
9. Quinta do Vallado
10. Quinta Vila Rachel
11. Six Senses Douro Valley

HOW TO

When to go Avoid the scorching heat by visiting in spring or late summer to catch the grape harvest season.

Plan ahead Schedule your tastings in advance and allow enough time to drive through the sinuous roads.

Before you go Unless you're staying near big towns or dining at the vineyard, there are few restaurants in between, so grab a light meal before hitting the road.

Budget Expect to pay anywhere from €20 to €50 for a guided wine tour and around €80 for a lunch pairing. Tastings on their own are slightly cheaper.

DIY or Guided Tour

While driving is the best way to reach some of the Douro's most secluded vineyards, it's not always practical, unless you have a designated driver. Luckily, there are plenty of alternatives. You could stick by the river, basing yourself in places like Pinhão or Régua (which you can reach by train), then get a taxi (or hike) to the nearest *quintas* or book a guided tour that takes you further into the valley. **Roteiro do Douro** *(roteirododouro.com)* has compiled a list of experiences in the area that include cruises and train rides combined with vineyard tours. If you'd rather hit the road, **Living Tours** *(livingtours.com)* is among the most affordable companies, providing full-day tours from Porto starting at around €90. It also offers private transfers (around €30) to Pinhão and Régua. Alternatively, you can head off-road in a 4WD with **Detours** *(detours.pt; €140)* or spend a week on a self-guided bike tour with **Cycling Rentals** *(cycling-rentals.com; from €1120)*. And if you're looking for something a little bit extra, you can always book a ride in a classic car with **Luxury Douro Tours** *(luxurydourotours.com; from €200)*. If travelling on your own, allow at least two to three days to explore different areas, stopping at Régua, Pinhão and another town of your choice. Many *quintas* offer their own accommodation, so you can always say yes to one more glass.

ANCIENT COURTSHIP TRADITIONS

The history of Portuguese sweet-making has some unexpected twists. This includes an array of sexually inspired sweets associated with age-old traditions. On 13 December every year, the girls of Vila Real engage in an ancient courtship ritual. They will offer their boyfriend a *pito de Santa Luzia* (the name is suspiciously cheeky), a sweet pumpkin-filled pastry. On 3 February, the boys will get even. They give their girlfriends a *gancha*, a phallic caramel candy cane representing the staff of St Brás that, as expected, also holds a sexual connotation. These canes are made for the event by Casa Lapão and also by families around the old chapel of São João Esquecido.

Lost in Nature

Forests, villages and waterfalls

Vila Real lies on top of the cliffs of the Rio Corgo, surrounded by the mountains of Alvão and Marão. To catch a glimpse of them head to the **Miradouro da Vila Velha** to the south of town (a 12-minute walk). From here, you can head down to the **Passadiços do Corgo**, a riverside trail combining dirt roads and wooden walkways amid a forest of pine and ash trees. A 15-minute drive north of Vila Real is the 72-sq-km **Parque Natural do Alvão**. The park offers excellent hiking opportunities, passing by shady native oak forests and the historic villages of Ermelo, Barreiro and Lamas de Ôlo. Amid the woods, the Iberian wolf, Eurasian eagle owl, otters and wild goats share their habitat with the local Maronesa cows. The park's main attraction, however, is the 300m jaw-dropping waterfall **Fisgas de Ermelo**, where the pristine mountain water forms small lagoons. Try the 13.5km **Percurso Barragens–Barreiro –Lamas de Ôlo** loop or the challenging but rewarding **PR3 MDB** 12.4km trail leading to the waterfall. For a guided tour reach out to **Pena Aventura** *(penaaventura.com.pt; from €35, minimum four people)* or **Por Trilhos** *(portrilhos.com; from €25)*.

A Day in Lamego

Savoury treats and divine stairways

The city of Lamego constantly tests your stamina, as the reward of fully exploring its main points of interest usually comes after tackling a hill or two. But focus on the flat area first, by walking through the Gothic entrance of the **Sé de Lamego**, taking in the fresco paintings on the ceiling. Then head over to **Museu de Lamego**, housed inside a magnificent 18th-century building that was once the local bishop's residence. Now a museum, the collection features chapels with exuberant gilded woodwork and giant Flemish tapestries.

Stop off at **Pastelaria da Sé** to sample the *bola de lâmego*, a savoury pastry usually stuffed with meat, but also featuring codfish or sardines, before heading to **Santuário Nossa Senhora dos Remédios**. Lamego's main avenue, Avenida Dr Alfredo Sousa, is positioned in a way that will make you stare bottom to top at the majestic 686-step baroque stairway leading up to this sanctuary. Along the way, you'll spot rich blue-and-white tiled panels and fountains, as if inviting you to keep going. Keep an eye on the left for the **Presunteca de Lamego**, which serves samples of Lamego's delicious cured ham.

EATING IN VILA REAL: SWEET & SAVOURY STAPLES

Casa Lapão: A must-try pastry shop to snap up an assortment of expertly made regional sweets. *9am-7pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun* €

Loja do Covilhete: Order the local speciality, *covilhete*, a delicate and flaky meat pie, best eaten when warm. *8.30am-10pm Tue-Sat , to 7pm Mon* €

Casa de Pasto Chaxoila: Try tasty regional dishes, such as the famed stewed rolled tripe. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10pm Mon & Wed-Sat, lunch only Sun* €€

Restaurante Cardoso: This local institution is famous for its *francesinha* but also has other snacks and specials. *noon-2pm & 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat* €

DRIVING ALONG THE EN222

Travel to the heart of the Douro Valley on this 225km-road of serpentine curves, winding you in and out of the river.

START	END	LENGTH
Vila Nova de Gaia	Vila Nova de Foz Côa	260km; allow 2 days

After a day touring the port wine cellars at 1 **Vila Nova de Gaia**, hit the road east towards 2 **Resende**. This section is especially picturesque during the cherry blossom season. Take some time to explore the town's trails before continuing towards 3 **Peso da Régua** to visit the Museu do Douro (p366). From Régua, it's a short detour to 4 **Miradouro São Leonardo Galafura**, one of the Douro's most iconic viewpoints. Grab a lunch at nearby 5 **Restaurante São Leonardo**, famous for its *cabrito* (roasted lamb). Then get back on the EN222 and follow the road along the river towards 6 **Pinhão**. This 27km-stretch is among the world's most beautiful rides.

Once you reach Pinhão, take a left towards the 7 **D'Origem – Museu do Azeite**. A guided tour of this olive oil museum costs €15 and should be booked in advance. From here it's only a short walk to the 8 **Miradouro Casal de Loivos**, where you can embrace the magical scenery of the Douro and spot the EN222 road down below. Spend the night in Pinhão, before continuing your journey towards 9 **São João da Pesqueira**, where you can visit the Museu do Vinho de São João da Pesqueira, a small museum dedicated to wine production. From here, it's a 45-minute ride to 10 **Vila Nova de Foz Côa**, where you can witness prehistoric rock art findings.



THE HORSE OF MAZOUCO

A prehistoric masterpiece lies hidden in the tiny village of Mazouco, Freixo de Espada à Cinta. An unsuspecting schist outcrop overlooking the mirror-like waters of the Albargueira stream and the Rio Douro contains a precious 62cm engraving of a horse. The equine is believed to have been carved in stone over 10,000 years ago and was the first piece of rock art to be discovered outdoors in Europe. For decades, it remained a secret among locals, who talked about the 'ram' concealed in the bushes, later revealed by scientists to represent a (possibly pregnant) mare. It was the first significant piece of rock art found in the Douro region, predating the discovery of the Côa engravings by almost 10 years.

Holy Bubbles

Cistercian monks and sparkling wine

Sitting between two wine regions – the Douro and the Távora-Varosa – **Lamego** is a prime spot for wine tastings. The granite and schistous soils of the Távora-Varosa region provide the perfect terroir for producing fresh wines with a high level of acidity. Legend says it was the Cistercian monks who planted some of the region's first vineyards. Their past presence is evident in the massive 12th-century **Mosteiro de São João de Tarouca** *(valedovarosa.gov.pt; adult/child €3/free; closed 1pm to 2pm)*, 17km southeast of Lamego. If you're after a glass of bubbly, don't miss the **Caves Raposeira** *(cavesdaraposeira.com; €7.50; closed Sunday and 1pm to 2pm)*, a six-minute drive from town, or head further south to **Caves da Murganheira** *(murganheira.com; closed Sunday and 1pm to 2pm)*, where bottles are stored in a kilometre-long granite tunnel.

Cherry Blossoms

Explore the village of Resende

It takes just over half an hour to drive to the little town of **Resende** from Lamego. Springtime here means stretches of cherry trees blooming like a white cloud hovering above. Plan to arrive in mid-March or early April if you want to catch them at their best. Even if you're not here around that time, it's worth following the 6km **Rota dos Cerejais**, which takes you down to the refreshing river beach at **Parque Fluvial de Porto de Rei**. June is the best time to sample delicious cherries at the Festival da Cereja, the annual cherry festival, or tour the **Quinta da Massorra** *(quintadamassorra.com; €15)*, an estate with over 25 varieties of cherries, as well as vineyards.

The Côa Valley Art Gallery

Prehistoric rock art

The banks of the Rio Côa are bordered by hard schist outcrops, with tall slabs of slate protruding from the ground. The prehistoric populations of the Côa Valley made use of this natural canvas to engrave what is now recognised as the world's most extensive outdoor collection of prehistoric art. **Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa** *(arte-coa.pt; guided tours from adult/child €16.70/7.90)* has engravings of aurochs, horses, goats and humans spanning 22,000 years of history. To learn more about the context and history of this World Heritage Site, head to **Museu do Côa** *(adult/child €7.30/3.20)*. The museum's brutalist walls give off a cave-like atmosphere, while the twittering swallows flying across the entrance remind you that nature isn't so far away. Visit on a Sunday from 9am to 1pm, and you'll get 50% off your ticket.

If you want to see the engravings, you must prearrange a visit. Guided tours cover three sites: **Penascosa**, **Canada do Inferno** and **Ribeira de Piscos**. Most depart from the museum, but Penascosa leaves from the village of Castelo Melhor, 15km southeast of Foz Côa. All of them start on an all-terrain car, before continuing the rest of the trail on foot. The hardest hike is Ribeira de Piscos, with nearly 2km round trip between parking and the final engravings. For something a little less daunting, you can book a boat ride or kayak tour to spot a collection of carvings closer to the river. The **Passadiços do Côa** *(passadicosdocoa.pt)* are also a great way to explore this region (best tackled early in the morning in summer), connecting you from the museum to two viewpoints overlooking the riverfront. Whichever activity you choose, be sure to stop by the museum's restaurant, **Restaurante Côa Museu**, afterwards for a delectable meal overlooking the valley.

Almond Trees in Bloom

Douro dressed in flowers

There's a reason why **Vila Nova de Foz Côa** is considered the Portuguese capital of almond trees: it's estimated there are 106,000 trees planted on a little over 380 sq km of land here. Besides tasty nuts, the almond tree also brings a joyous spectacle. At the end of February and the beginning of March, the Douro dresses in white and pink blossoms. This captivating scene attracts people from all over the country, and several festivals are held for the occasion, like the local **Festa da Amendoeira em Flor** *(amendoeiraemflor.pt)*. Around the same time, the national railway organises the Almond Blossom Circuit (p378), a special train ride paired with a bus that takes you straight into the almond orchards.

Soaring Between Borders

Cliffs, viewpoints and birdwatching

The **Parque Natural do Douro Internacional** serves as a natural border between Portugal and Spain. This protected area follows the deep canyon dug by the Douro River, forming spectacular cliffs that can be witnessed in the park's many viewpoints. One of the most iconic spots is the **Miradouro da Fraga do Puio**, close to Miranda do Douro, where a glass platform allows you to walk above the horizon and gaze into the mesmerising cliffs over the Douro. A bit harder to access, but worth it, are the **Miradouro do Carrascalinho** and the **Miradouro do Penedo Durão**, both of which are ideal for birdwatching. If you look up you may spot a hovering griffon and, if you're lucky, a migrating Egyptian vulture. For birdwatching and wildlife photography tours, reach out to **Wildlife Portugal** *(wildlifeportugal.pt; from €150)* or **Oriolus Ecotours** *(oriolusecotours.pt; from €145)*.

A DEVILISH CARNIVAL

Every carnival, the streets of the tiny village of **Lazarim**, a 20-minute drive from Lamego, are taken by storm by a devilish and cheeky troupe of *caretos*. They are adorned with masks carved in alder wood by local artisans, portraying zoomorphic and devil-like features, and their bodies covered with improvised costumes made from straw, leaves or rags. These devilish figures run around, parading across the streets, often carrying noisy cowbells. This ancient tradition has several stages and usually ends in an R-rated public roast of the village youngsters, followed by an outdoor feast around an open fire. Can't make it to the party? Visit the **Centro Interpretativo da Máscara Ibérica** *(free; closed Monday)* for a close-up of the outfits and pictures of previous editions.

HELP ME PICK:

Scenic Train Rides

There's something soothing about travelling the Douro Valley by train. For one, you can sit back and enjoy that glass of port without having to grab the wheel later, walk between carriages catching snapshots of the Douro River or enjoy a fine-dining meal aboard a 19th-century presidential train. While some are seasonal rides, others are available all year round, allowing you to get a glimpse of the surrounding vineyards in all its stages.

If You Like...

Steam Trains

For a real trip back in time take the **Douro Historical Train** *(adult/child €54/28)*, which runs between June and October. A steam locomotive will whisk you from Régua to Tua, with a pit stop in Pinhão to fill the boiler with water and admire the station's historical tile facade. A traditional band will greet you on arrival before you step inside your carriage, where a glass of port and regional candies like *rebuçados de régua* await. Take a sip as you ponder the landscape through the windows or outside at the inter-car gangway.



RICHARD SEMIK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Trains usually leave around 3.30pm from Régua and return at 6.26pm, with specific dates being announced on the CP website each year. Be sure to account for that if you're coming from Porto. The journey between the São Bento station and Régua takes about two hours on a regular train, with more direct trains departing from the Campanhã station on the east side of town.

Springtime Views

The **Almond Blossom Circuit** *(adult/child €49/25)* is a seasonal train ride taking place around February and March when the almond trees blossom in the Douro Valley. The train departs early in the morning from the São Bento train station and takes you all the way to Pocinho on the eastern border. Here, the route is interrupted by a bus ride to visit the Museu do Côa (p376) and grab lunch (not included) in the centre of town. Following your meal, a guide will take you through the trail of almond trees, where you'll have time to capture a few shots before getting back on the train to Porto, sampling regional almond sweets along the way.

Vintage Carriages

The most practical and still picturesque ride is the **MiraDouro** *(from €10.65 one way departing from Porto São Bento)*. Running throughout the year, this vintage-style train with red and yellow carriages gives off Wes Anderson vibes. It circulates between Porto (São Bento and Campanhã stations) and Pocinho, though you can hop off halfway down the route in Régua or Tua. Some train models have room to carry bikes for free, but you should check with the ticket office beforehand.



BLEUNG/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Pinhão

HOW TO

When to go Time your trip with the grape harvest by coming in early September, otherwise go with your favourite train.

Book ahead Check the CP website *(cp.pt)* for journey dates. Most tickets can be bought online or from main train stations across Portugal.

Stay the night If you opt for the MiraDouro, split your trip into two sections and spend a night in the Douro Valley.

On a budget Skip the historic charm and get on a regular regional train from Porto to the Douro (from €10), jumping off in places like Régua, Pinhão and Pocinho.

The Royal Treatment

Built in 1890, the **Presidential Train** *(comboiopresidencial.pt; €750 per person)* carried the country's kings and presidents for more than a century. Today, it belongs to the National Railway Museum but occasionally gets back on track for a seasonal trip in the months of September, October, April and May. In 2022 there was news of the train making its last journey, but that quickly went out the window when the national railway found a new partnership. Only 72 passengers can join the ride at a time, making it one of the Douro's most exclusive train experiences. After boarding at the São Bento station, you'll embark on a journey to Vargelas. Along the way, you'll get to taste top-notch regional wines and savour dishes curated by a local chef while listening to live music. Once in Vargelas, you'll tour a historic winery and enjoy a port tasting before returning back to Porto. Argentian chef Chakall, based in Portugal for many years, has been responsible for curating the menu since 2023 and he'll likely be at the helm of it for upcoming editions. There are only 20 trips a year, which usually take place on Fridays and Saturdays. You'll need to reserve a whole day for it as trains leave from the São Bento station at 10.40am and only arrive late at night around 9pm.



Bragança

MEDIEVAL HERITAGE | ART MUSEUMS | CHESTNUT TREATS

GETTING AROUND

You can tackle the relatively small historic centre on foot and leave the car to explore the surroundings. The city also has a network of cycling lanes crossing most sites and an e-bike-sharing system called Xispa. The Xispa Comigo app allows you to find the nearest station in the network. If you're up for an adventure across Trás-os-Montes you can follow the cycling routes E-MOB Trás-os-Montes *(emob.terrasdetrasosmontes.pt)* along the old Tua train line, connecting Bragança to Mirandela.

TOP TIP

Visit Bragança in mid-August to catch the **Festa da História** when the city travels back in time, turning the castle grounds into a giant medieval market with historic reenactments, tournaments and workshops.

Some say it was in Bragança that King Pedro I secretly married Dona Inês de Castro. Sitting on the north-east of Portugal, touching the Spanish border, this feels like the perfect place to elope. Although theirs was a tragic love story, that shouldn't deter you from visiting this historic city nestled in the heart of the Trás-os-Montes region. For one, there's a surprising amount of art: whether that's the giant street art murals by Bordalo II dotted around its shopping centre, the museums dedicated to its painters and artisans, or even the electric boxes depicting the colourful *caretos* that roam the surrounding villages. But there's also a strong medieval heritage, a striking train museum and delicious chestnut treats that honour what grows in these mountains.

The Citadel & Beyond

An impenetrable castle

Bragança's **Cidadela** takes you back to medieval times. Strategically located to deter any curious Spaniard, it was built to withstand the battles with the Kingdom of Castile. Step inside its defensive walls through the main gate of Portas da Vila. Then weave your way through the cobblestone streets until you spot the **Domus Municipalis**, a rare Romanesque building. Next to it is the **Igreja de Santa Maria**, one of the oldest churches in Bragança. Although the original building is from the 12th century, not much remains from that era, instead the highlights are the more recent baroque additions like the gilded altars and the facade with twisted Solomonic-style columns.

After taking in these sights head to the **Castelo de Bragança** *(adult/child €3/free; closed Monday and noon to 2pm)*, to climb up the castle's medieval keep and visit the military museum within. Sadly the only way to get up there is via some steep stairs, so consider that before purchasing your ticket if you have mobility issues. Still within the walls, don't miss

SIGHTS

1. Castelo de Bragança
2. Centro de Arte Contemporânea Graça Morais
3. Centro de Fotografia Georges Dussaud
4. Centro de Interpretação da Cultura Sefardita do Nordeste Transmontano
5. Cidadela de Bragança
6. Domus Municipalis
7. Igreja de Santa Maria
8. Igreja de São Vicente
9. Memorial e Centro de Documentação – Bragança Sefardita
10. Museu do Abade de Baçal
11. Museu Ibérico da Máscara e do Traje
12. Sé

SLEEPING

13. Inn Door 21 – Hostel & Suite
14. Pousada de São Bartolomeu

EATING

15. Contradição
    - G Pousada (see 14)
16. Marron – Oficina da Castanha
17. Solar Bragançano



STREET ART IN BRAGANÇA

Bordalo II: This renowned street artist builds his works from trash, expressing a climatic and anti-consumerist message. Check out the spectacular 3D murals representing a chameleon, boar and genet around Avenida Sá Carneiro.

Frederico Draw: The artist has several works spread around the city; one of the most noteworthy is the representation of a craftsman sculpting a carnival mask (*O Artesão*) and a man holding a rooster, both of which can be seen at the Bairro da Mãe D'Água on the outskirts of town.

Daniel Eime: The artist's minimalist and realistic graphics portray powerful emotional expressions, as seen in the work *Estanco,* also at Bairro da Mãe D'Água.

You can explore all of Bragança's street art features at streetartcities.com/cities/braganca.

the **Museu Ibérico da Máscara e do Traje** *(€1.18; closed Monday and 1pm to 2pm),* where you can spot a collection of folk-style masks and outfits worn in festivals across Portugal and Spain.

Outside the walls, you'll be immersed in the post-medieval expansion, dotted with grandiose 16th-century manor homes. Look out for the **Igreja de São Vicente**, linked to the tragic love story of King Pedro I and Dona Inês de Castro. Behind this church's minimal facade, there's a spectacular chancel with gilded woodcarvings. It's also worth seeing the 16th-century **Sé**, a former Jesuit school. The Renaissance doorway and the triumphal arch featuring the city's coat of arms are a few of the highlights here.

Museum-Hopping in Bragança

Art, costumes and Jewish heritage

For a cultural adventure, head to Rua Abílio Beça, known by locals as the 'museum street', where there are several museums in a row. Start at the **Museu do Abade de Baçal** *(adult/child €3/free; closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm)*, which features a vast collection of archaeological, religious and artistic items. The black-and-white serigraphs by Portuguese artist Almada Negreiros are among the standouts. Then head over to **Centro de Fotografia Georges Dussaud** *(free)* to catch the latest photography exhibit (closed Monday and 12.30pm to 2pm). A few steps from here is the **Centro de Arte Contemporânea Graça Morais** *(adult/child €2.39/free; closed Monday)* designed by Pritzker-awarded architect Eduardo Souto Moura in honour of the native neo-expressionist painter Graça Morais. Along the way you'll also pass by the **Centro de Interpretação da Cultura Sefardita do Nordeste Transmontano** *(free; closed Monday and 1pm to 2pm),* and **Memorial e Centro de Documentação – Bragança Sefardita** *(by bookings only, contact cicsefardita@cm-braganca.pt; free),* where you can learn more about Bragança's rich Jewish heritage.

The Flavours of Trás-os-Montes

Sausages, couscous and farm tours

The region of Trás-os-Montes, where Bragança is located, is known for its comfort food, made to keep the body warm during the harsh winters. It is especially famous for its cured meats. The very best Bísaro pork meats are smoked in a traditional *fumeiro*, a wood-fired smokehouse. One of the most unusual sausages is the chunky *butelo*, made with the animal's

BEST PLACES TO EAT IN BRAGANÇA

Solar Bragançano: One of Bragança's classic restaurants, with spectacular game dishes. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Tue-Sat, to 3pm Sun* €€

G Pousada: Michelin-starred cuisine with a Portuguese soul, showcasing products from local producers. *7.30pm-midnight Tue-Sun* €€€

Contradição: This family-run restaurant is a top spot to unwind after touring the castle. *7pm-midnight Mon, Thu & Fri, noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight Sat & Sun* €€

O Copinhos: This unpretentious little tavern serves delicious homemade traditional *petiscos. 10am-midnight Mon-Sat* €



LUIS PEDRO FONSECA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Castelo de Bragança (p380)

tripe and filled with bones and cartilage from the vertebrae and ribs. It is typically sided with boiled *casulas* (dried green bean skins) and is considered the epitome of local gastronomy, a symbol of a flavourful cuisine with humble origins. Keep an eye out for it at local restaurants or come for the annual **Festival do Butelo e Casulas** in early February, a five-day event dedicated to these two regional delicacies. Another culinary highlight is the *cuscos* (couscous), made from Barbela wheat, an influence of the Moors and Jews who settled here in the past.

Chestnut treats are also a local staple and you can sample a selection of them at **Marron – Oficina da Castanha** *(marron.pt)*. For farm tours, reach out to **Portugal Farm Experiences** *(portugalfarmexperience.com)*, which organises trips to local producers, including a seasonal trip to a chestnut farm.

THE WINE OF THE DEAD

Although the name may sound intimidating, *vinho dos mortos* (wine of the dead) is a cherished drink from Trás-os-Montes hailing from the village of Boticas. The origin of this wine is believed to have occurred during the second French invasion in 1808. Upon the attack, the people of Boticas hurried to hide their belongings in unlikely places. The wine bottles were buried in the ground of the wine cellars, and there they remained until their rightful owners returned. Afraid that it would be spoiled, they hurried to taste it, only to find that it had become lighter in colour, low in alcohol and slightly fizzy. The locals enjoyed the accidental result so much that the tradition of burying wine in Boticas still lives on to this day.

MORE CURED MEATS?

Take a culinary journey to **Vinhais** or **Mirandela** (p386), where the art of sausage smoking is a yearly tradition that provides meat for the rest of the year. Don't miss the chance to try the local speciality, the *alheira*.

Beyond Bragança



Explore villages lost in remote wilderness with tight-knit communities, distinct languages and folk festivals rooted in ancient rituals.

Places

Parque Natural de Montesinho p384
Miranda do Douro p385
Vinhais p386
Mirandela p386
Podence p387
Chaves p388

GETTING AROUND

Hopping into a rental car is a time-saving way of visiting places around Bragança, including the Parque Natural de Montesinho. However, it is possible to use buses to reach many destinations. Rodonorte *(rodonorte.pt)* and Rede Expressos *(rede-expressos.pt)* provide bus connections from Bragança to major towns like Miranda do Douro and Mirandela. Vinhais is covered by Rodonorte only and Chaves by Rede Expressos. STUB's R5 line will take you to Rio de Onor in an hour, and buses usually run twice daily.

'Nine months of winter and three months of hell' is how many describe the harsh climate of Trás-os-Montes in and around Bragança. This region still preserves extensive wild areas like the Parque Natural de Montesinho, where community villages have forged connections with their neighbours in order to survive. The obvious geographical constraints (on the east edge of Portugal) contributed to its historical isolation but also created a unique heritage of festivals, delicious smoked meats and even its own language. While other parts of Portugal have lost many of its ancient traditions, people here hold on to them dearly, inviting you to return at different times of the year to see them in all their glory.

Parque Natural de Montesinho

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: **30 MINS**

Exploring the snowy mountains

The splendour of the Parque Natural de Montesinho is only a short drive from Bragança's centre. Covering more than 740 sq km of verdant land, the relatively gentle terrain is crowned by mounds and crossed by multiple rivers and streams. At the heart of Terra Fria, the park is often covered in snow in winter. It is home to a variety of species including the elusive Iberian wolves, wild cats and otters.

Take in the lush surroundings by following one of the many signposted trails, like the **PR11–BCG**, beginning in the community village of Rio de Onor, or the circular trail **PR12–Guadramil**, starting amid the schist houses of Guadramil. On both of these, you can occasionally spot deer in the distance. Alternatively, follow the **PR3–BCG Porto Furado**, which crosses the heart of the park, around the village of Montesinho.

Community villages

Dozens of little villages dot the wild roads of Parque Natural de Montesinho. Start with the village that gave it its name, **Montesinho**. Standing at 1000m high, this serene town is filled with granite houses with dark schist roofs and wooden balconies. The parish church, Igreja de Montesinho, uses the same materials, blending seamlessly with the maze of cobblestone streets.

The closest village to Bragança, however, is **Gimonde**, a 15-minute drive away. After taking in the views from the village's parish church (and the chorus of frog ribbits), take a walk down to the river where you'll spot an old Roman bridge. From here, it's only a 30-minute drive to **Rio de Onor**. Sitting on the border with Spain (you can literally walk across), this is among the most picturesque villages in the area. It is known for its communal way of life, where residents share land and whatever resources they have with each other. The Spanish village across the border is called Rihonor. Both take their name from the river that flows along their settlements. Such proximity gave rise to a particular dialect known as *riodonorês,* though these days it's mostly spoken only at home.

Miranda do Douro

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: 1½ HR

The singular culture of Miranda

Sitting on a gorge over the Douro River and overlooking Spain, Miranda do Douro played a critical role in Portugal's early days. The sheer isolation and Leonese influence over the region led to the development of a distinct language: the Mirandês. This is Portugal's second official language, and although you won't hear much of it elsewhere, here, road signs come in both tongues. Take a walk along **Rua da Costanilha**, where you'll find a concentration of 16th-century buildings with Manueline and Renaissance windows. Keep an eye out for the *cachorros eróticos*, satirical grotesque figures sitting atop one of the houses on the corner between Costanilha and Rua Abade de Baçal. From here, it's a short walk to the village's imposing 16th-century **Sé** (closed Monday, Tuesday and 1pm to 2pm). Inside, look left to find the tiny Menino Jesus da Cartolinha, a marionette-like figure of infant Jesus in a top hat to which the Mirandese attribute miracles and protection. Back outside, take in the dramatic river views from the adjoining **Miradouro da Sé**, before heading to **Museu da Terra de Miranda** *(€2; closed Monday, Tuesday morning, and 1pm to 2pm Wednesday to Sunday)*, where you can learn more about the unique traditions of this land.

A walk with the donkeys

Meet the **burro de Miranda**, an indigenous donkey breed that is still found in the countryside of Miranda do Douro. Established in 2001, the **Associação para o Estudo e Proteção do Gado Asinino** *(aepga.pt)* is responsible for studying and protecting this species. There are several ways to support the project, including donations, volunteering or internships, but if you're just passing through, it's worth visiting one of its two centres (from €5) in the villages of Atenor and São Joanico. There's a limit to the number of visitors, so be sure to call beforehand. Another option is to book the **Caminhada com Burros** *(from €60),* which includes a visit to the São Joanico centre, before setting off on a walk with a donkey by your side, lasting three hours. Only small children (up to 40kg) are allowed to ride the donkeys, as they're meant to be travel companions. Bookings should be done at least two days in advance.

THE ROUTES OF TERRA FRIA

The territory of Terra Fria ('Cold Land') encompasses Bragança, Vinhais, Mogadouro, Miranda do Douro and Vimioso. It's not necessarily colder than its counterpart, Terra Quente ('Hot Land'), as both suffer from very hot and cold temperatures by Portuguese standards. Officially, the **Rota da Terra Fria Transmontana** *(rotaterrafria.com)* extends for 455km and encompasses six different municipalities. It overlaps Parque Natural do Douro Internacional and is part of the Parque Natural de Montesinho. Split into 11 sections, it can be explored by car, bike and even by foot in some stretches.

STICK DANCERS

On special occasions, you may spot the **Pauliteiros de Miranda**, traditional folk dance groups hailing from villages in and around Miranda do Douro. Known for their energetic and rhythmic performances, they use wooden sticks, known as *paulitos*, to create intricate and synchronised movements accompanied by bagpipe music. This dance, deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Mirandese people, is performed by men dressed in traditional attire, including short skirts, white shirts and colourful sashes. The dance is believed to have ancient origins, possibly linked to pre-Christian rituals or medieval martial training. See pauliteiros.com to catch one of the groups on tour.



VICVA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Caretos de Podence

Vinhais

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: **1 HR**

Smoky flavours and regional delicacies

Vinhais, in the heart of Terra Fria, is well known for its masterful cooking. Smoked meat production is the primary fuel for the local economy, with the native Bísaro pig as a flagship; the annual **Feira do Fumeiro de Vinhais** in early February brings travellers from far and near to taste and buy the local pork charcuterie. But even throughout the year, you can sample some of these local treats like the *alheira de Vinhais* (bread and meat sausage) at restaurants like Vasco da Gama. The handful of attractions in the village include the **Centro Cultural Solar dos Condes de Vinhais** *(free; closed 12.30pm to 2pm)*, a cultural centre housed in an 18th-century manor house featuring a small chapel and a space dedicated to temporary exhibits, the remains of a medieval castle, and the **Centro Interpretativo do Porco e do Fumeiro** *(free)*, a museum dedicated to the Bísaro pig.

Mirandela

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: **30 MINS**

Holy liqueurs and riverside swims

Ask any Portuguese where the *alheira* comes from, and they'll likely point you to Mirandela. Though Vinhais has an equally sized production, Mirandela is the name that stuck. And I don't blame it. Look at any shop window in town and you'll see signs announcing *'alheira'*. And not just made of meat; there are also codfish and vegetarian versions too. Some say it

was the Jewish converts who created this bread and smoked sausage (without pork) to deceive the Inquisition during the many centuries of persecution. These days, most contemporary recipes include pork. Olive oil is another regional delicacy, and the **Museu da Oliveira e do Azeite** *(free)* provides some quirky curiosities about this ingredient; for instance, did you know the Jews used to burn sardines outside their doors to disguise the smell of olive oil? (Non-Jews would usually cook with pork fat.) Signs are in Portuguese only, but the friendly staff can usually help translate. In June, you'll see shops selling boxes of local cherries. For a sour cherry liqueur, head to **Mercado do Zé** and ask for the *ginjinha*. Then make your way across the river for a beer overlooking the river beach at **Parque Dr José Gama**.

Podence

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: **30 MINS**

Street art and folk traditions

One of the country's most iconic carnivals takes over the village of Podence southwest of Bragança between Shrove Sunday and Shrove Tuesday. The **Caretos de Podence** *(caretosde podence.pt)* hit the streets dressed in full-body costumes complete with colourful wool fringes and devilish tin or leather masks. In packs, they parade through the streets to the tune of the cowbells they wear around their waists. These ghoulish and chaotic characters seek to fulfil an ancient fertility ritual by shaking their cowbell belts on women (though lately, roles have been reversed and some women also dress up). The uniqueness of this celebration has been recognised by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Even if you can't make the big event, it's worth visiting the village to spot the colourful street art murals splashed across the town's buildings depicting giant *caretos* (and an odd facade with Cristiano Ronaldo).

Visit the **Casa do Careto** *(free; closed Monday and noon to 2.30pm)* to learn more about this tradition, see samples of the traditional outfits and watch the mini-documentary *A Pele do Diabo*, giving you a glimpse of what goes down when the party is in town. On the way out, the staff will encourage you to return for the festival, and it's tempting to know how such a quiet village can change from one day to the next.

Before you leave, make sure to stop by the **Oficina de Artesanato** *(quintadopomar.com),* an atelier meets souvenir shop a few doors down from Casa do Careto. If you're lucky, you may spot a lady in the back sewing next year's outfits.

DEVIL ON THE LOOSE

A sculpture of a red devil and a black grim reaper greet you as you arrive in Vinhais. At first sight, this might look slightly unusual, but it's all linked to the town's annual festival: **Mil Diabos à Solta** (A Thousand Devils on the Loose). As the name suggests, this local festivity has thousands of people dressed up as devils to take over the town streets carrying a giant grim reaper. Despite its pagan origins, it is held around Ash Wednesday and the following Saturday.

EATING AROUND TRÁS-OS-MONTES

O Abel: Try the *posta à Abel* (a steak dish) or the roasted lamb at this spot on the road to Gimonde. *noon-2.30pm & 7.15-10pm Mon-Sat, to 2.30pm Sun* €

A Gula do Petisco: Grab a seat at this cosy Mirandela tavern serving delicious regional cured meats. *9am-midnight Tue-Sun* €

Vasco da Gama: Listen to traditional Trás-os-Montes music as you tuck into thick slices of local ham. *noon-4pm* €

Brasa: A 12-minute drive from Podence, Brasa is known for its *francesinhas*. *12.15-2.30pm & 7.15-10pm Wed-Sun, dinner only Tue* €€

THE TRÁS-OS-MONTES ARTISANS

The **Rota Saber Fazer** (*saberfazer.pt*) within Terra Quente brings together a network of craft workshops in Trás-os-Montes where you can still have contact with ancestral techniques. Each municipality has a space dedicated to the route that serves as a Welcome Point, where you can meet many of the artisans in person. The route passes through Podence (Oficina do Artesanato), Mirandela and other small villages in between. You can also arrange hands-on workshops like breadmaking, weaving and painting your own Podence mask. Other combined programs include a boat ride with a mask workshop (from €30) and a two-day journey with a local shepherd followed by a cheesemaking lesson (from €125).



JOAOCEPA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Termas de Chaves

Chaves

TIME FROM BRAGANÇA: **90 MINS** OR **3 HR**

Road trips and thermal baths

The healing thermal waters of the city of Chaves were no mystery to the Romans, who founded the city of Aquae Flaviae here. Indeed you can see remains of these traditions at the **Termas Romanas** *(free)*. Today you can pop in for a soothing session at **Termas de Chaves** *(termasdechaves.com; closed 12.30pm to 3.30pm Monday to Saturday, and Sunday afternoon)*, where the thermal water rises to the surface at a steamy 76°C. It's believed that these mineral-rich carbonated waters have many health benefits. The well-kept historic centre is also worth a look, including the medieval **Castelo de Chaves** *(€1; closed 1.30pm to 2.30pm)* and the baroque **Igreja da Misericórdia** *(open 4pm to 6pm Monday to Saturday, 8.45am to 10am Sunday)* with its interior cladded in blue and white tiles. Chaves is also the departing point for the N2 road trip (p28), and you can collect a souvenir travel passport at the local tourism office around the corner from the church.

EATING & DRINKING IN CHAVES

Pastelaria Maria: Head here to sample the Pastel de Chaves, a flaky pastry filled with minced beef. *9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sun* €

Pensão Flávia: It's hard to beat the €20 tasting menu at this lively tavern serving a delicious parade of dishes. *12.30-2pm & 7.30-9pm Tue-Sun* €

Ilha do Cavaleiro: Cross a gate and walk through a narrow corridor to reach this tavern serving small bites and *vinho dos mortos*. *3.30pm-2am Wed-Mon* €

Memórias nas Caldas: A late-night bar serving cocktails and sandwiches paired with good tunes. *4pm-2am Mon-Sat, to 1am Sun* €

Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Porto p352

Passenger Hostel € Dorms and private rooms above the iconic São Bento train station.

Mo House €€ A tastefully decorated guesthouse offering breakfast and a kitchenette to cook your own meals.

Mouco €€ Music lovers will enjoy a stay at this spot near the Campanhã station, allowing you to borrow guitars and records to play in your room.

Casa do Conto €€ Concrete walls carved with typography make up this contemporary hotel in Boavista.

Torel Palace Porto €€€ Treat yourself to a spa treatment at this five-star hotel with rooms named after Portuguese writers.

Vila Nova de Gaia p361

House of Sandeman € With bed frames resembling wine caskets, you can tell this hostel is owned by a port wine brand.

Caléway Hotel €€ Mixing rustic and modern elements, this boutique hotel offers spacious rooms with wide windows overlooking Porto on the other end.

Oh Porto €€ Six self-catered apartments with minimalist decor and in some cases private balconies.

Yeatman €€€ A two Michelin-star restaurant and a spa make this one of the most luxurious options in Vila Nova de Gaia.

Amarante p364

Hostel & Suites des Arts € An affordable guesthouse housed in a striking blue-and-white building overlooking Amarante's riverfront.

Covelo € You'll feel right at home the minute you step into Covelo and receive its personalised newspaper full of Amarante tips.

Hotel Monverde €€€ Make the most of this green wine region by staying at this high-end estate offering tastings and vineyard tours.

The Douro Valley p366

Original Douro Hotel € Housed in a century-old house, this hotel offers the perfect base to explore Peso da Régua.

Hostel Douro Backpackers € Owners Pedro and Sara will tell you everything you need to know about Pinhão while handing you a glass of wine on arrival.

A Padaria Farmhouse €€ Fresh produce from the garden is served for breakfast at this rural farmhouse a few miles off the EN222.

Casa dos Correios €€ With a theme based around post offices, this guesthouse offers a convenient base to explore Vila Real's surroundings.

Lamego Hotel & Life €€ With an indoor and outdoor pool, this hotel is the perfect place to unwind after a day out in the vineyards.

Ventozelo Hotel & Quinta €€€ Splurge a little and stay amid the vineyards of this estate near São João da Pesqueira.

Bragança p380

Inn Door 21 – Hostel & Suite € An affordable option with dorms and private rooms located close to the city's waterfront.

O Abel € Doubling as a restaurant and hotel, the rooms here are simple, but offer a great base to explore the village of Gimonde.

Coração do Tua € Sitting above a pastry shop, this hotel offers sweet breakfast treats and easy access to Mirandela's main attractions.

Pousada de São Bragança €€ Offering privileged views of Bragança's castle, this pet-friendly hotel features a swimming pool and a Michelin-star restaurant.

Chaves p388

Castelo Hotel € Overlooking the town's castle, this hotel offers comfortable rooms and a small wellness area that takes you back to the Roman thermal baths.

Vidago Palace €€€ About a 20-minute drive from Chaves is this historic hotel housed inside a 19th-century palace, featuring a thermal spa and a golf course.



BRUNO ISMAEL SILVA ALVES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Above: Praia do Cabedelo (p407); Right: Guimarães (p412)

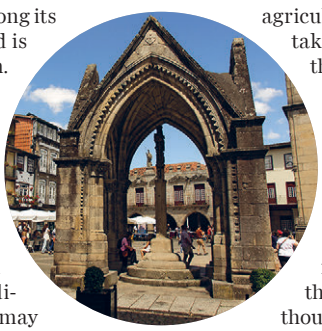
The Minho



STUNNING NATURE, CULINARY CULTURE, WARMHEARTED PEOPLE

Welcome to the Minho: phenomenal mountains and lush green countryside meet an endless sandy coastline in a region grounded by tradition, yet brimming with youthful spirit.

The Minho is the northernmost territory in Portugal, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the mountains of the Peneda-Gerês National Park. Named for the Rio Minho, which runs along its northern border, this land is the birthplace of the nation. It was in Guimarães that Portugal got its start, and there's no lack of sites to learn about the country's history, or gain insights into Portugal's cultural heritage.



NITBRUNA/GETTY IMAGES ©

The Minho is a land deeply rooted in its traditions – even some that may seem a bit odd – where the people carry their heritage with pride. There's plenty to be proud of, too. From exceptional artists and artisans to possibly the best culinary offerings in the country, the modern Minho is a world of wonders – and that's before you mention the *vinho verde*, or the land's natural beauty. Imagine remote villages nestled snugly among agricultural terraces; or breathtaking mountain viewpoints that stretch to the sea.

In a land where there's so much to be celebrated, it's not surprising that festivals come by the dozens, be they religious *romarias* (pilgrimages), animated saints days or modern rock and techno festivals that bring the faithful by the thousands.

And the *minhotos?* Perhaps the kindest, most warmhearted and generous population in Portugal, who will ensure that for as long as you're here, your plate is never empty and your glass is always full.

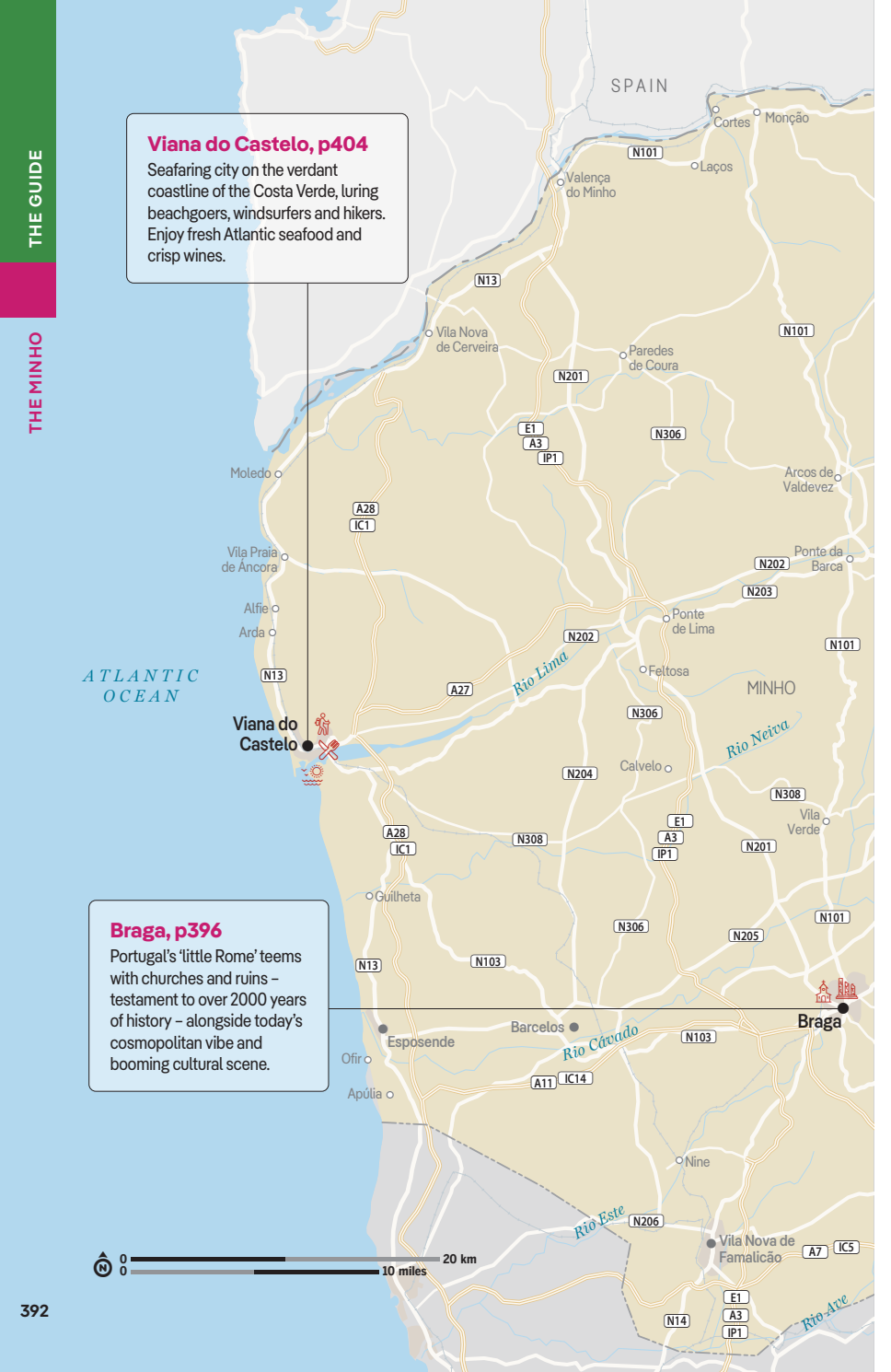
THE MAIN AREAS

BRAGA
Iconic sanctuaries, mouthwatering food, contemporary creativity.
p396

VIANA DO CASTELO
Exceptional seafood, coastal cycling, sports and spas.
p404

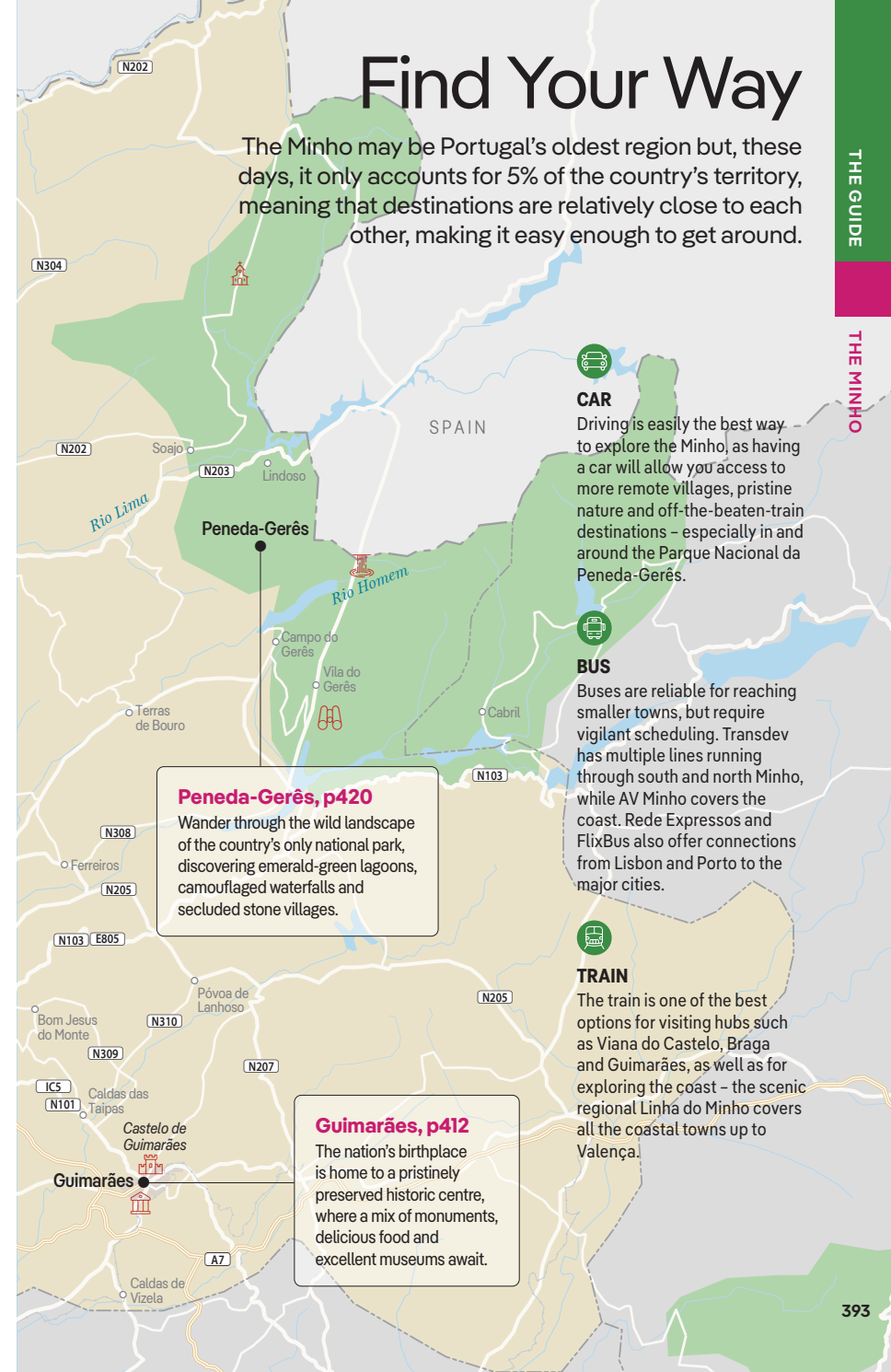
GUIMARÃES
Historic buildings, hilltop forests, creative culture.
p412

PENEDA-GERÊS
Breathtaking nature, wild horses, mountaintop villages.
p420


Viana do Castelo, p404
Seafaring city on the verdant coastline of the Costa Verde, luring beachgoers, windsurfers and hikers. Enjoy fresh Atlantic seafood and crisp wines.
Braga, p396
Portugal's 'little Rome' teems with churches and ruins – testament to over 2000 years of history – alongside today's cosmopolitan vibe and booming cultural scene.
SPAIN
Cortes
Monção
Laços
Valença do Minho
Vila Nova de Cerveira
Paredes de Coura
Moledo
Arcos de Valdevez
Vila Praia de Âncora
Ponte da Barca
Alfie
Arda
Ponte de Lima
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Rio Lima
Feltosa
MINHO
Viana do Castelo
Rio Neiva
Calvelo
Vila Verde
Guilheta
Barcelos
Braga
Esposende
Rio Cávado
Ofir
Apúlia
Nine
Rio Este
Vila Nova de Famalicão
Rio Ave
N101
N13
N201
N306
E1
A3
IP1
A28
IC1
N202
N203
A27
N204
N308
N205
N103
A11
IC14
N206
A7
IC5
N14
0
0
20 km
10 miles

Find Your Way

The Minho may be Portugal's oldest region but, these days, it only accounts for 5% of the country's territory, meaning that destinations are relatively close to each other, making it easy enough to get around.



Peneda-Gerês, p420
Wander through the wild landscape of the country's only national park, discovering emerald-green lagoons, camouflaged waterfalls and secluded stone villages.

Guimarães, p412
The nation's birthplace is home to a pristinely preserved historic centre, where a mix of monuments, delicious food and excellent museums await.

CAR

Driving is easily the best way to explore the Minho, as having a car will allow you access to more remote villages, pristine nature and off-the-beaten-train destinations – especially in and around the Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês.

BUS

Buses are reliable for reaching smaller towns, but require vigilant scheduling. Transdev has multiple lines running through south and north Minho, while AV Minho covers the coast. Rede Expressos and FlixBus also offer connections from Lisbon and Porto to the major cities.

TRAIN

The train is one of the best options for visiting hubs such as Viana do Castelo, Braga and Guimarães, as well as for exploring the coast – the scenic regional Linha do Minho covers all the coastal towns up to Valença.

Plan Your Time

The Minho isn't massive, but with so many historic sites, hidden villages and delicious restaurants to be sampled, you'll want to do some planning to make sure you fit it all in.



BENNY MARTY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Tibias de Braga (p400)

If You Only Have One Day

- Start off your morning in Braga with a coffee and *tíbias* pastry at **Tibias de Braga** (p400), before heading off for a **walking tour of the historic centre** (p400). Grab a flaky **frigideira meat pie** (p398) for energy before making your way to the **Escadaria de Bom Jesus do Monte** (p399), and if you're feeling energetic, climb up the 581 stairs to the mountaintop sanctuary itself.

- Then, it's off to the coast for a seafood lunch at **A Cabana** (p402) in Apúlia (if you have a car), before heading up the coast to explore the seaside city of **Viana do Castelo** (p404). Walk along the riverfront, checking out the contemporary architecture and the city's **old fort** (p406), before making your way up to **Monte de Santa Luzia** (p404) for an exceptional sunset.

Seasonal Highlights

Spring is ideal for hiking, while warm summers are best spent at the beach. Reserve autumn for wine programs and visiting historic towns.

APRIL

Braga celebrates the solemn **Semana Santa** (p398, Holy Week) the week before Easter, with impressive processions and biblical reenactments, such as the Ecce Homo Procession.

MAY

Water still abounds in the lagoons and waterfalls, and the mild weather makes it an ideal time for **hiking** through the Serra d'Arga (p409) or the Peneda-Gerês National Park (p420).

JUNE

As the weather warms, it's time to make a pilgrimage to **Santuário de São Bento da Porta Aberta** (p423), in the Gerês mountains, or head to Braga for the wild and wonderful **Festas de São João** (p398).

A Weekend Jaunt

- Begin your adventure in **Guimarães** (p412), an impeccably preserved historic city that's the birthplace of the nation, where both gastronomy and creative culture now shine.

- Spend some time in **Braga** (p396) before passing through **Barcelos** (p403) to discover the ceramic rooster that has become the symbol of Portugal. Make your way to the coast to the Parque Natural do Litoral Norte in **Esposende** (p401), then up to explore the historic centre of **Viana do Castelo** (p404).

- Head inland to see Ponte de Lima's **Roman bridge** (p409), before continuing on to the **Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês** (p420), where you can swim in the hot springs, hike to the Cascata do Arado, and climb the **Miradouro da Pedra Bela** (p424) for incredible views over the mountains.

Time to Slow Down

- If you've got time to spare, then you'll be able to explore the small villages and coastal secrets that truly make the Minho special.

- Some highlights include **Sistelo** (p427), with its unique mountain setting nestled among agricultural terraces. Make a stop in **Branda de Santo António** (p426) for some true peace and quiet, before heading up to Castro Laboreiro, where both hiking and **canyoning** (p422) make for excellent adventures. Make your way north to **Melgaço** (p425) for whitewater rafting and thermal baths, or on to **Monção** (p426), where it's all about Alvarinho wine. Travel west along the Rio Minho to **Vila Nova de Cerveira** (p411), also known as the Vila das Artes, before ending up in **Caminha** (p410) for some well-deserved beach time.

JULY

Summer calls everyone to Minho's coastal and river beaches, while **adventure-sports** fanatics hit the wind and waves in Viana do Castelo (p407), Esposende (p401) and Caminha (p410).

AUGUST

August is festival time – both the religious pilgrimage to **Nossa Senhora da Peneda** (p423) and music festivals such as **Paredes de Coura** (p410) and **Neopop** (p407) in Viana do Castelo take centre stage.

SEPTEMBER

The grapes are ripe for picking, and the wine estates in the **vinho verde region** (p418) get busy harvesting. Make a reservation and join in for some grape-smashing fun.

DECEMBER

To fend off winter's cold, you'll want to hit Braga's streets on Christmas Eve for the **Bananeiro** (p398) – the age-old tradition of mixing Moscatel with bananas.

Braga



ICONIC SANCTUARIES | MOUTHWATERING CUISINE | ARTS & CULTURE

GETTING AROUND

Braga is Portugal's third-largest city, meaning it's well connected by public transport. Once you arrive, the city's centre is relatively flat, making it easy to explore by foot. If you're looking to go longer distances there are plenty of TUB buses to get you there (including to the sanctuaries of Bom Jesus or Sameiro). The city has invested in creating extensive cycling lanes, but no shared-bike system is yet on the books. If you're arriving by car, parking can be a nightmare; so when in doubt, opt for the underground car parks.

TOP TIP

With so many students in the city, bar culture is alive and well, and some of the coolest places to meet the very friendly students and locals are right in the city's historic centre.

Braga has been through a lot since its founding in 16 BCE. It started its life as the Roman city of Bracara Augusta (although there were megalithic settlements prior), and became an epicentre for Roman transit, as well as the capital of the kingdom of Galicia. Today Braga rules as the heart of Minho, and is home to some deeply rooted Catholic traditions, along with a few of the country's most significant religious sites. There are over 30 churches in the city (including Portugal's oldest), and a historic centre of buildings that pay testament to two millennia of history. But by no means is Braga frozen in time; thanks to the students of the University of Minho, it's the youngest city in Portugal, with an animated and dynamic population. A UNESCO Creative City since 2017, Braga is a vibrant, multicultural centre – with a rich past and a very bright future.

Creative Spaces

Contemporary culture in the city

GNRation *(gnration.pt)* is a unique contemporary arts centre inside an old GNR (police) cartel, where you'll find exhibitions, shows and workshops focusing on contemporary music, art and technology. This must-visit space – which opened in 2012, when Braga was the European Youth Capital – was one of the driving forces behind Braga being named a UNESCO Creative City in 2017. Another important creative centre is the century-plus-old **Teatro Circo de Braga** *(theatrocirco.com)*, one of the most beautiful and prestigious theatres in the country. Since opening in 1915, it has never ceased to be an important artistic centre, and the go-to spot for theatre, cinema, opera, ballet and music. The next stop is located in the 18th-century baroque-style Casa Rolão: **Livraria Centésima Página** *(centesima.com)* is a bookworm's paradise, complete with a cafe, a courtyard garden and an active community promoting contemporary arts and culture. Check out the bookshop's events calendar for expositions, workshops, book signings and more.



SIGHTS
1. Domus da Escola Velha da Sé
2. Fonte do Ídolo
3. GNRation
4. Igreja de Santa Cruz
5. Livraria Centésima Página
6. Museu de Arqueologia D Diogo de Sousa
7. Termas Romanas do Alto da Cividade

SLEEPING
8. Braga Heritage Lofts
9. Domus 26
10. Tea 4 Nine
11. Vila Galé Collection Braga

EATING
12. Alfacinha
13. Bira dos Namorados
14. Cozinha da Sé
15. Frigideiras do Cantinho
16. Kartilho
17. O Filho da Mãe
18. RetroKitchen
19. Tasquinha Dom Ferreira
20. Tíbias de Braga

ENTERTAINMENT
21. Teatro Circo de Braga

SHOPPING
22. Casa das Bananas

Bracara Augusta

Braga's Roman roots

The Roman city of Bracara Augusta lies beneath your feet, although now and then, its memory reappears from underground. The easiest example is the **Termas Romanas do Alto da Cividade**, the former public baths, most likely from the 1st century. The 850-sq-metre exposed space just a few minutes outside of the centre is worth a visit – there's even an enormous Roman theatre being excavated beside it. Inside of town, you can head to the **Museu de Arqueologia D Diogo de Sousa** *(museuddiogodesousa.gov.pt)*, where the Roman artefacts shine (among other Paleolithic and medieval items); then check out the **Domus da Escola Velha da Sé** (by appointment), which houses the ruins of what was once a private Roman home; as well as the **Fonte do Ídolo**, a smaller example of a preserved Roman fountain.

FRIGIDEIRAS DE BRAGA

Frigideiras de Braga are a buttery meat pie that have been a staple in Braga since at least the 1700s. The delectable caloric bomb is made from flaky pastry dough, shaped into a pie and filled with minced veal before it's bathed in butter and fried. Served hot on a plate (and sometimes topped with a fried egg), this gastronomic Portuguese patrimony is best eaten at the **Frigideiras do Cantinho** *(frigideiras docantinho.pt),* which has been serving the savoury confection since 1796. Sit on the terrace if the weather is warm, but head inside to see the 2nd- and 3rd-century Roman ruins from the Bracara Augusta era, found during a later renovation, which have been preserved inside of the shop.



JBCARVALHO PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Tradition, Tradition

The weird and the wonderful

Braga has more than a few important traditions – some stranger than others. During **Semana Santa** (Easter Week) the city hosts myriad processions, but the Ecce Homo Procession, with its barefoot, flame-wielding groups of *farricocos* (black-clad monk-like figures), might be the strangest. Watch the groups storming the streets on the Thursday before Easter.

When summer hits, it's time for the biggest party in town – **São João** 'belongs' to Braga, as they say, so get ready for singing, dancing and drinking (in this saint's honour) all night long.

Come December, it's time for the weird and wonderful **Bananeiro** – a Christmas Eve tradition that brings the city together on the Rua do Souto to enjoy Moscatel…with banana.

EATING IN BRAGA: THE OLD & THE NEW

Alfacinha: Healthy meals served in a light-filled dining room with a selection of take-home market goods. *10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Sat* $

Taberna Belga: The city's (and possibly country's) best *francesinha* comes from Taberna Belga. *noon-6.20pm & 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat* $

Bira dos Namorados: This hotspot is a must for the city's best *pregos* (steak sandwiches). Goes well with a craft beer. *noon-10.30pm* $

Tasquinha Dom Ferreira: A cosy and rustic *tasca* with delicious duck rice and *bacalhau à moda de Braga*. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat* $

RetroKitchen: This cool little *tasca* has new-retro vibes and delicious dishes, plus a cute courtyard. *noon-2.30pm & 8-10.30pm Tue-Sat* $$

Cozinha da Sé: This place offers crafted Portuguese delicacies, focusing on seafood. *noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* $$

O Filho da Mãe: Delicious fusion of Portuguese and South American flavours. *7.30-11pm Mon, 12.30-3.30pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat* $$

Kartilho: Meat-heavy spot focused on premium cuts that are aged in-house. *7pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 12.30-3.30pm & 7pm-midnight Fri & Sat* $$



Christmas decorations, Braga

It's an age-old, very odd mixture that you can taste out of season at the **Casa das Bananas**.

There's one more city tradition that comes without a fixed date: rooster hunting. According to tradition, you must find the three roosters hidden on the **Igreja de Santa Cruz** in order to have a happy marriage. Two of them are easy to find, while the third – well, you'll just have to try for yourself.

Hilltop Sanctuaries

And all the stairs to the top

If you didn't climb the 581-step **Escadaria do Bom Jesus do Monte** to the **Santuário do Bom Jesus do Monte**, did you really visit Braga? All jokes aside, a visit to this magnificent site is more than a must. Don't worry, there's also a hydraulic funicular (elevator) – the oldest in the country – and a road to the top. Located on a hilltop just outside of the city, Bom Jesus do Monte is both a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an important pilgrimage site, and while the 18th-century neo-classical cathedral at the top is beautiful, it's no match for the elaborate baroque and rococo staircase, ordained with status and fountains, that takes you there.

A seven-minute drive from Bom Jesus – or a 256-step, much less ornate stairway – leads you to another hilltop sanctuary, the 19th-century **Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Sameiro**. Thanks to its location at the highest point in the city, the site offers incredible panoramic views over Braga and the Gerês mountains, and some say that on clear days you can even see the ocean near Viana do Castelo.

VIOLA BRAGUESA

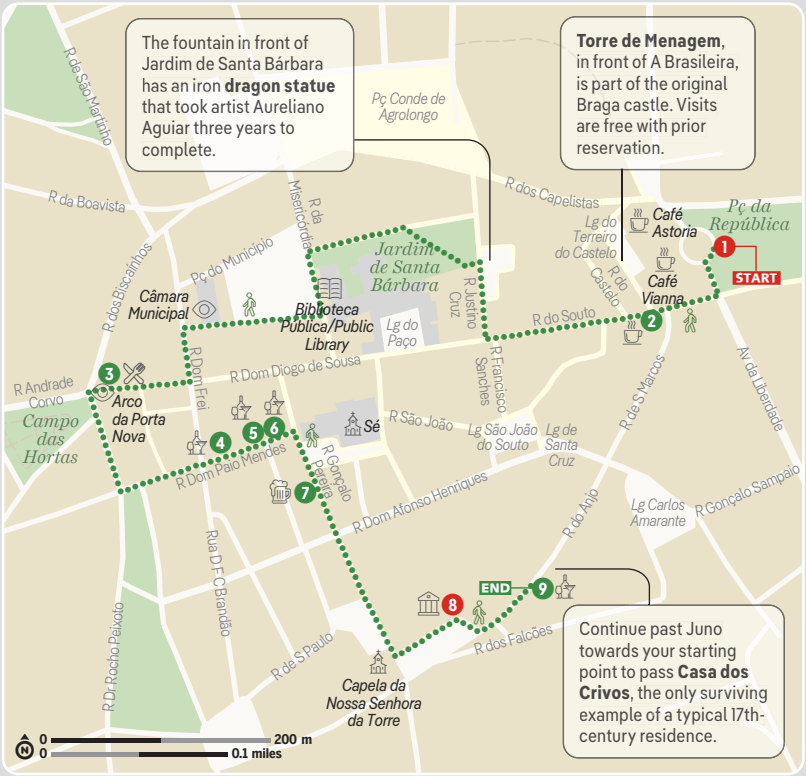
The *braguense* – like the rest of their Portuguese brethren – are a musical people, and since the 17th century they've had their own namesake string instrument to prove it. The viola Braguesa is a short, slender, 10-string instrument inspired by the 15th-century guitar. It's similar to a classical guitar, but with a smaller, narrower body, and a unique sound opening on the front, said to be shaped like a stingray's mouth. The viola Braguesa was historically used only in Minho's folk music; however, it's made the tradition into the contemporary world, appearing in both Portuguese pop and rock varieties. You can see the viola and learn about its history in the **Museu dos Cordofones** (string instrument museum) in Tebosa, Braga (outside of town).

A PUB (& CAFE) CRAWL THROUGH HISTORY

Discover Braga's historic centre in between coffees, drinks, sweets and snacks on this historic cafe-pub crawl.

START	END	LENGTH
Praça da República	Juno	1.5km; 20 minutes

Start at the 1 **Praça da Republica**, where you'll find two of the city's most renowned cafes – the Café Astoria and Café Vianna. The latter, founded in 1871, was once a meeting place for writers and revolutionaries. Around the corner is 2 **Café A Brasileira**, opened in 1907 and still a local favourite. Walk down the Rua do Souto, the city's main vein, through the colourful Jardim de Santa Bárbara rose garden, past the town's 18th-century baroque Câmara Municipal just across from another baroque palace that's become a public library. Then, it's through the city's medieval entrance, the Arco da Porta Nova, to the 3 **Tíbias de Braga** pastry shop, where you can devour a delectable *tíbias* (custard-filled eclair). Next, it's time for a drink. Outside of the Sé, Braga's 11th-century cathedral, you can visit 4 **Sé La Vie**, an easy-going bar; 5 **Rossio Bar**, an art-filled lounge space; or 6 **Mal Amado**, an intimate pub with quality craft beer. Around the corner you'll find 7 **Letraria**, a craft-beer library serving snacks and meals. You'll pass at least three more churches (Capela da Nossa Senhora da Torre is easily the nicest) and the 8 **Museu Pio XII** (don't miss the paintings by Henrique Medina) on your way to 9 **Juno**, where a Pastel de Nata shot is the perfect way to end your day.



Beyond Braga



Braga's surroundings are blessed by the Rio Cávado valley's beauty, where you'll find charming little towns with artisan crafts and excellent food.

The region surrounding Braga is a mix of icons of Portugal and lovely secret finds. Start off at one particularly impressive age-old monastery, with its rolling acres of pastoral lands, then continue on to Barcelos, the birthplace of the rooster that's come to represent the nation. It's the stuff of legends, as they say, as is the artisan market that draws thousands to the town every week. As you continue on to the coast, you'll find the real treasures of slow travel, featuring languid seafood lunches, coastal hikes and bike rides, ancient oceanfront windmills and even misplaced poetry. Follow the Rio Cávado on this delicious journey from Braga, through the countryside, and to the sea.

Esposende

TIME FROM BRAGA: **1 HR**

Along the river

At the mouth of the Rio Cávado along the Atlantic coast you'll find the town of Esposende and its blissful beachy surroundings. The town, whose economy has historically been based on fishing, naval construction and maritime commerce, is also a centre for seafood and a favourite for beachgoers, surfers and kiteboarders – and anyone looking for a bit of peace and quiet.

A coastal cycle

There's an excellent hiking/cycling trail through the **Parque Natural do Litoral Norte**, often used by pilgrims on the Coastal Caminho to Santiago. Grab a bike and start in the town of **Apúlia**, heading north past its oceanfront **windmills**. As you pass seafood restaurant A Cabana, turn on the dirt path towards the sea to visit the house (p402) of local fisher-poet, Carlos Moreira. Next, cycle past the Praia de Fão until you arrive at Ofir, the favourite weekend getaway for Porto's well-to-do. Continue north along the Rua dos Barcos until the pavement ends and the raised wooden walkways appear over the dunes. At the end of the walkway you'll find an exceptional viewpoint over the **Restinga do Cavado**, offering 360-degree views of Esposende, the river and the Atlantic Ocean. The riverside is perfect for paddleboarding, kayaking or learning to kiteboard – call **GKS Kite School** *(gokiteschool.org)* if you're interested in a lesson.

Places

Esposende p401
Mosteiro de Tibães p402
Barcelos p403

GETTING AROUND

Both Transdev and Rede Expressos offer direct bus lines between Braga and Barcelos, which will also take you to Esposende on the coast. You can also opt for the train to Barcelos, but you'll have to change lines. Otherwise, hop in your rental car and you'll nearly halve your travel time – and you'll have more freedom to explore the local markets, beaches, restaurants and secret coves.

CLARINHAS DE FÃO

The north of Portugal is known for its dessert culture, and Esposende is no different. The region is famous for its *clarinhas de Fão* – a moon-shaped pastry with a thin crispy dough, which is basted with egg yolks and stuffed with a sweet, spaghetti-squash jam filling. After baking, the *clarinhas* are sprinkled with enough powdered sugar to stick to your fingers as you gobble them down. Like many of Portugal's best pastries, *clarinhas* were first conceived in the area's convents – most probably the Santa Clara Monastery – and would later became famous in Fão in the 19th century, thanks to a number of families who commercialised the delicious treats.



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Barcelos

The fisher-poet

It was in Apúlia that local fisher Carlos Moreira began to paint his **house**. Except that instead of painting with colours, Moreira painted with words. Years later, Moreira's poetry hasn't just covered his own house's facade – his uplifting works about love, the sea and family also line the walls of the fishing port, nearby garages and some of his neighbours' houses as well. Moreira, who still lives in the same house with his wife of more than 50 years, will happily chat with you about his literary creations, and even has self-published a book of his poems, complete with a short autobiography of the poet's life.

Mosteiro de Tibães

TIME FROM BRAGA: **12 MINS** **30 MINS**

Pastoral dreams

Just a few kilometres outside of Braga is a massive, 11th-century monastery surrounded by 40 hectares of gardens, agricultural land and pastures. The **Mosteiro de Tibães** *(mosteirodetibaes.gov.pt)* is a unique example of religious architecture in

EATING IN ESPOSENDE: SEASIDE SPECIALITIES

O Jardim: Artsy garden cafe with live-music nights that draw an energetic summer crowd. *noon-10pm Sun & Tue-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat* $

A Cabana: Informal restaurant famous for its seafood. Try the *mariscada à Cabana*, if you can get a table. *noon-3pm & 5.30-10pm Fri-Wed* $$

Sra Peliteiro: Carefully presented seafood-based cuisine served with lovely river views. *11am-5pm & 7-10pm Wed, Thu & Sun, 11am-10pm Fri & Sat* $$

A Lareira: Delicious local dishes and excellent river views. Meat and seafood options shine. *11am-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sat, 7-11pm Tue, 11am-4.30pm Sun* $$

Portugal, not only as the only monastery in the country with four cloisters, but also for its rare, light-filled interior – and it's very much worth a visit. Wander through the extensive and impressive gardens that cascade out around the monastery – the community of Benedictine monks who once inhabited these walls became a wealthy agricultural powerhouse – and enjoy the intricate artisanal work inside. The monks were patrons of the arts, turning the monastery into an influential school for sculptors, gilders, architects and engravers. The rococo gilded woodwork of the main nave is an astounding testament. Visits cost €4 (open from 10am to 6pm, Tuesday to Sunday), and there is a worthwhile on-site hotel for those looking to immerse themselves further.

Barcelos

TIME FROM BRAGA: **25 MINS** 🚗 **1HR** 🚆

The roost of the rooster

Founded in the mid-12th century, the picturesque municipality of Barcelos has an adorable historic centre, and is an important stop on the Caminho de Santiago for those leaving Porto. But it's best known as the home of the Galo de Barcelos, or Portuguese rooster, which became a national symbol during the era of the Estado Novo. The rooster, which is usually made of ceramic, can be found through town in infinite forms; however, it's nice to see in the **Museu da Olaria** *(museuolaria.pt),* a pottery museum that tells you about the town's ceramic heritage beyond the *galo*. Continuing on through the old town, take a stop at the derelict **Paço dos Condes**, now an open-air archaeology museum, where you'll find the crucifix that comes from the legend of the rooster itself.

Feira de Barcelos

Every Thursday, thousands of people from near and far flock to the Campo da Feira in Barcelos for the weekly **Feira de Barcelos** *(cm-barcelos.pt/items/feira-de-barcelos),* one of the country's oldest and largest outdoor markets. The market dates back to the 13th century – although back then it was an annual event that took place for 15 days straight. These days, once a week is more than enough, although if you love incredible craft, you'll need plenty of time to get to see the impressive number of vendors that come from across the region with their ceramics, pottery, baskets and woodwork. The fair also offers produce, artisanal food and other everyday items, along with your typical fair fare.

LEGEND OF THE GALO

According to legend, there was once a pilgrim who, on his way to Santiago de Compostela, was wrongly accused of a crime and condemned to death. As the pilgrim approached the gallows, the boy's desperate father noticed the judge was eating a roasted rooster, and he summoned the rooster to sing if his son was innocent. The rooster sang, and the pilgrim was saved. The Galo de Barcelos was nothing more than a folklore item until the 1930s, when the Estado Novo's propaganda spread the typical clay statues far and wide as a symbol of the country's popular art. Their marketing stuck, and today, these black-dotted roosters from Barcelo continue to represent Portugal.

EATING IN BARCELOS: MINHO TRADITIONS

Pedra Furada: Famous for its stuffed roast rooster, this spot over-delivers with outstanding regional dishes. *8am-10pm Tue-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun & Mon* **$$**

Casa dos Arcos: Rustic restaurant cooking hearty portions of traditional recipes. *noon-3.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat, noon-3.30pm Sun* **$$**

O ÁS Restaurante: Creative contemporary Portuguese fare focusing on local ingredients from the countryside and the sea. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm* **$$**

Turismo: With top views of the river, this restaurant brings contemporary twists to local classics. *noon-3pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* **$$$**

Viana do Castelo



EXCEPTIONAL SEAFOOD | COASTAL CYCLING | SPORTS & SPAS

GETTING AROUND

Viana is a city well connected by buses and trains, taking you to and from a nearby metropolis in Portugal or Spain. Once you arrive, the city is easily walkable, although there are two electric buses circling the historic zone during the day, in case you get tired. You can also opt for cycling – the city has improved its bicycle lanes, which extend along the waterfront and out to the beach zones. If you are driving into the city, opt to leave your car in one of the paid underground car parks along the main avenue, and explore on foot.

TOP TIP

For the best view of the city, a climb up Monte de Santa Luzia is an absolute must. But if you want to truly get to know the area, grab a bicycle and explore the small towns along the coast just north of town.

Viana do Castelo sits along the banks of the Rio Lima, gallant and distinctive – the capital of the Alto Minho. The area has been inhabited since the Neolithic era, and in 1258 the town received its official Portuguese charter from Afonso III. Viana city quickly became a maritime trade epicentre (and thus had to be heavily guarded against pirates), and later, a shipbuilding hub where much of Portugal's massive codfishing fleet was created.

Tucked between the river and the sea, the city is in constant communion with the forces of nature, a fact that's imprinted on the identity of the people who live here. Fishers, sailors and surfers call these waters home, and every summer they share their sandy shores with the thousands of visitors who come to partake in pilgrimages, music festivals, folk traditions, vibrant markets and holiday revelries.

The View from the Top

Santuário and Monte de Santa Luzia

In the backdrop of nearly every photo of the city, sitting atop the **Monte de Santa Luzia**, is the iconic revivalist church by famed architect Miguel Ventura Terra – the **Santuário de Santa Luzia** (although its official name is the **Templo do Sagrado Coração de Jesus**). This emblematic monument isn't just a symbol of the city, it also attracts pilgrims coming to pray for Santa Luzia's protection. While many visit year-round, there is an annual procession held on the weekend following Corpus Christi, when the faithful arrive in droves. Drive or hike up to the hill, or take Santa Luiz's **Elevador de Santa Luzia**, its tramcar-style elevator that reopened in October 2023, which travels 650m up in just seven minutes.

SIGHTS
1. Gil Eannes
2. Museu do Traje

SLEEPING
3. Casa Melo Alvim
4. Flag Design Hotel

EATING
5. Casa de Pasto Maria de Perre
6. Confeitaria A Brasileira
7. Confeitaria Manuel Natário
8. O Laranjeira
9. Pastelaria Dantas
10. Taberna do Valentim
11. Tasquinha da Linda
12. Zé Natário

SHOPPING
13. Objectos Misturados

TRANSPORT
14. Elevador de Santa Luzia



A VIANA SAMPLER

Tour Viana do Castelo's old town at a leisurely pace, taking in the history, architecture and exceptional river views.

START	END	LENGTH
Sé Catedral de Viana do Castelo	Forte da Areosa	4.5km; 1 hour

Start at the 1 **Sé Cathedral**, a 15th-century construction with a Romanesque-style facade flanked by two towers – signs of early fortifications. Continue on to the 2 **Praça da República**, the heart of Viana's old town: its sociocultural and political centre for more than 500 years. In the square you'll find three historic sites –the Antigos Paços do Concelho, the elaborate Igreja de Misericórdia church and the elegant 16th-century *chafariz* (fountain). Next, head towards the river, stopping by the 3 **Casa dos Nichos**, a 15th-century building that houses an archaeological museum. Then, it's off to the 4 **Praça da Liberdade**, a huge square on the banks of the Rio Lima, where the city has been investing in contemporary architecture. Standout buildings include the 5 **Centro Cultural de Viana do Castelo**, designed by architect Eduardo Souto de Moura. Heading back towards town, stop at the 6 **Museu de Artes Decorativas**, where a collection of antique Portuguese, European, Hispanic and Arabian furniture, tiles and decoration await. Continue to the 7 **Castelo de São Tiago da Barra**, the old fortress marking where the river meets the sea, before heading north to the 8 **Forte da Areosa**, another waterfront fortress that once protected the city from marine attacks.



A Healing Ship

Gil Eannes, the hospital boat

Built in 1955 in Viana's own naval yard, the **Gil Eannes** *(funda caogileannes.pt)* spent more than 20 years travelling the world as a Portuguese hospital ship, often supporting the cod fishers around Iceland and Greenland. It was retired to Lisbon in 1977, and later brought back to Viana and refurbished by the Fundação Gil Eannes, where the ship could continue its life as a museum (and at one point, a 60-bed hostel). You'll find the *Gil Eannes* anchored at the fishers' port in Viana, where you can visit and learn about the history of the vessel, the functioning of a hospital ship, life on board and some peculiarities about working in the codfishing waters – like how to open routes through the ice.

Feel Good, Inc

Get your sport on

Viana's die-hard water-sports fans gather on **Praia do Cabedelo**; its northern corner is protected from the winds and bigger swells, thanks to the port's breakwaters. Stand-up paddlers, kayakers and windsurfers will usually launch from the small protected beach just in front of the public parking (**Portugal Active** offers SUP tours). If you're after kiteboarding gear or lessons, **Kite Voodoo** *(kitevoodoo.com),* located on the sand, or the **DUTONE Pro Center** *(dpc-viana.com)* closer to the parking area are your go-to spots. Surf lessons can be found with **XLife Surf School** *(xlifesurfschool.com),* just off the main beach road. To wind down after the action, book a yoga, massage and spa afternoon at the **Feel Viana** *feelviana.com)* hotel just behind the sand dunes – cyclists can also try its covered pump track for a €5 fee.

A Coastal Ride

Take your bicycle for a spin

While Portugal has a number of excellent *ecovias* (bicycle and pedestrian trails), the **Ecovia do Litoral Norte**, which connects Viana do Castelo with Caminha, is one of the only ones where its entire (34.2km) extension nearly completely follows the coast. The southernmost end starts at Cabedelo Beach (both Feel Viana and Portugal Active rent bikes), after which you'll cross over the iconic **Ponte Eiffel** (yes, by the same Eiffel who made Paris' Tower) and follow the city bike paths out of town. You'll pass through the hamlets of Carreço and Afife, before crossing Vila Praia de Âncora. Keep

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Wine & Blues Fest: (May) Praça da Liberdade turns into blues central, where *vinho verde* and artisan food are the opening acts.

Neopop: (August) One of the largest electronic-music festivals in Portugal takes over Forte Santiago da Barra in Viana.

Ler in Viana: (April) Bibliophile festival bringing book launches, talks, lectures, theatre performances and concerts to Viana's Cultural Centre.

Feira Medieval: (June) Viana's Medieval Fair in the town's historic centre features costumes, games, music and food.

International Folklore Festival: (July) Since 1996, this festival has promoted traditional music, dance and artistic expression particular to the Alto Minho region.

EATING IN VIANA: SEAFOOD & CLASSICS

O Laranjeira: Local spot serving traditional recipes with modern presentation – don't miss the desserts. *noon-2.45pm & 7-9.45pm* $$

Casa de Pasto Maria de Perre: Rustic restaurant best-known for its codfish and pork specialities. *noon-3pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* $$

Taberna do Valentim: Fresh-caught grilled fish and locally made Alvarinho wine is go-to combo here. *noon-2.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm Mon-Sat* $$

Tasquinha da Linda: Seafood-only restaurant serving exceptional dishes in a light-filled dining room. *12.15-3pm & 7.15-10.30pm Mon-Sat* $$$

THE HEART OF VIANA

The Heart of Viana is a symbolic heart-shaped design found in jewellery, on clothes and in decoration that has come to represent the city of Viana do Castelo – and even the Minho – itself. The heart's history dates back to the 18th century, when Queen D Maria I, thankful for the birth of her male child, asked for a golden heart to be made in worship to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The jewellery version is made using the traditional, labour-intensive *filigrana* process, where tiny chains and threads of gold are woven and then melted together to create intricate patterns. Check them out in the Gold Room at the **Museu do Traje** (Clothing Museum) or purchase your own in town.



SANDRA MORAES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Gil Eannes (p407)

your eyes out for the **Forte da Lagarteira** and **Capela de Santo Isidoro** before arriving in lovely **Caminha**, your final destination.

Masters of Plaster

Sculptural patrimony

Viana do Castelo is known for its plaster – or, more correctly, for the artists who shape it. For generations, the art of stucco sculpture – the kind you find on elaborate palace walls and ceilings – has been perfected in the region, and its unique techniques passed down across generations. One of the best-known workshops, Gessos Marceiro, dedicated to the creation and restoration of plasterworks, was an institution in the city for 225 years before closing its doors in 2015. But the generational knowledge wasn't lost, and contemporary sculptors, such as native-born Iva Viana, continue to bring prestige to plasterwork. As a member of Portugal Manual, a collective of contemporary artisans and artists, Viana opens her workshop, **Iva Viana Atelier Escultura** *(ivavianaescultura.com)*, for visits via the Curated Cultural Experiences Portugal program, and sells pieces at the adorable **Objectos Misturados** *(@objectos_misturados)* shop in town.

EATING IN VIANA: BEST PASTRIES & COFFEE

Confeitaria Manuel Natário: This historic pastry shop is known for its famous *bolas de berlim*. *9am-7pm Wed-Mon, closed Sun lunch* $

Confeitaria A Brasileira: Open since 1902, this historic cafe is the right place for an espresso and a *sidónio* (bean tart). *8am-7pm Mon-Sat* $

Zé Natário: Enjoy coffee and pastry, preferably on the terrace along Viana's main avenue. *7.30am-midnight, Thu-Tue* $

Pastelaria Dantas: Founded in 1915, this sweet shop also serves lunch; just don't leave without a sweet *Jésuita*. *8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat* $

Beyond Viana do Castelo



The Alto Minho's historic towns and pilgrimage landmarks join with quiet mountain swimming spots, expansive beaches and especially delicious comfort food.

Viana do Castelo is encircled by towns that mark history – such as the nation's first chartered city – along with uncrowded mountain getaways and more than a few very cool music and culture festivals. Cross the ancient bridge that has led millions of pilgrims to Santiago (and check out the gardens on the other side), then hop in your car or on a train and follow the Costa Verde up north to the border with Spain, where you'll find exceptional beaches, island forts and a number of pristine natural escapes. The area is as full of time-honoured traditions as it is with contemporary artistic culture, bringing texture and depth to the already exceptional Alto Minho.

Serra d'Arga

TIME FROM VIANA DO CASTELO: **45 MINS**

Land of lakes and waterfalls

The Serra d'Arga, a nearly 45 sq-km wilderness zone rich in biodiversity, is often overlooked for its famous neighbour, Gerês; however, if you're looking for a respite from the heat, the crows or the brutal northern wind, then one of the many waterfalls and swimming holes in this mountain range will more than do the trick. Start at the **Cascata e Lagoa Janela do Céu**, an infinity-like pool that ends in a giant waterfall, before heading to the nearby **Cascata de Pincho**, the area's most famous waterfall, just a few hundred metres down the trail. Head for a hike along one of the Serra d'Arga's official hiking or mountain-biking trails, keeping an eye out for the badgers, otters, griffon vultures and wild Garrano horses that call this place home, followed by an afternoon laze around the **Lagoa da Esturranha**, an exceptionally emerald-green pool that's perfect for napping beside.

Ponte de Lima

TIME FROM VIANA DO CASTELO: **30 MINS**

A pilgrim's crossing

Ponte de Lima is known as Portugal's oldest town, receiving its official charter in 1125, and its bridge, **Ponte Medieval**, dating back to Roman times, is a landmark crossing along the

Places

Serra d'Arga p409
Ponte de Lima p409
Caminha p410
Vila Nova de Cerveira p411

GETTING AROUND

Regular buses run between Viana do Castelo and Ponte de Lima, Arcos de Valdevez and Ponte da Barca on Rede Expressos. There are both trains and buses through Vila Praia de Âncora to Caminha and the north (although having your own car gives you more freedom to stop and explore). But if you're looking to go inland to the Serra d'Arga, there's no other way than having your own wheels.

FESTIVAL VILAR DE MOURO

In 1971 António Barge organised a festival on the banks of the Rio Cora. The Vilar de Mouros Festival – Portugal's first-ever rock festival – brought Elton John and Manfred Mann's Earth Band to the stage, and although it was still the dictator era, one of the national musicians remembered it as a moment of total freedom. Unfortunately, the festival (which would become known as the 'Portuguese Woodstock') was a financial disaster, not finding stability until 1999, when acts such as Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Peter Gabriel, The Cure, Sonic Youth, Ben Harper, Alanis Morissette and Manu Chao all graced the stage. More roller-coaster years followed, yet somehow this cult music festival lives on to this day.

Caminho Português de Santiago. While exploring the old town is worth an afternoon, for the best view of the bridge you'll need to cross it, as the most picture-worthy angles are from the other side. Alternatively, you can grab a canoe or kayak from Ponte de Lima's **Nautical Club**, and navigate the nature-filled riverbed by paddle power.

While you're on the other side of the river, take a walk through the **Parque Temático do Arnado**, a lovely set of themed gardens – there's a Roman-style garden, a baroque garden and a hedge maze – that's free to visit, or rent a bike and meander the idyllic riverside trails of the **Ecovia do Rio Lima**, a 70km pedestrian trail that nearly entirely follows the Rio Lima.

Fairs, festivals and feiras

Ponte de Lima is also home to one of Minho's best (and one of the country's oldest) **outdoor markets**, a bimonthly affair that attracts both locals and tourists from far afield. If you're around in July, don't miss the **Feira do Cavalo** (horse fair), when the town shows off the equestrian prowess it's famous for; or the high-spirited *romaria* (pilgrimage) of **Feiras Novas** in September, which attract thousands of visitors to this otherwise peaceful town. In August, the alternative music festival **Paredes de Coura**, attracts thousands to the banks of the Rio Cora just 30 minutes outside of town.

A few good bridges

There are a few other, picturesque medieval bridges nearby that are worth a gander. The first crosses the Rio Vez in a town called **Arcos de Valdevez**, where notable sights include the **Paço de Giela**, an exceptional private medieval manor house, and the **Praia Fluvial da Valeta** (Valeta River Beach), where you'll get postcard views of the town's bridge. The second is at **Ponte da Barca**, meaning 'bridge of the boat', as the town was formerly a ferry-boat point for those going to Santiago de Compostela.

Caminha

TIME FROM VIANA DO CASTELO: **20 MINS**

Rivers and reserves

Just across the Rio Minho from Galiza, Spain, is the charming, compact medieval town of Caminha, a popular holiday spot that overflows in the summer months. It's best known for its fortifications, the **Muralhas de Caminha**, which you can climb to get exceptional views over the Minho River estuary.

EATING IN PONTE DE LIMA: OUR PICKS

Petiscas: Attractive and intimate traditional restaurant with a Michelin nod and lovely terrace. *noon-3pm & 6-10.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* $

Tulha: Rustic spot serving delicious traditional dishes, such as pork-and-potato *rojões* or *arroz de sarrabulho* (a blood stew). *noon-2.45pm & 7-10pm* $

Orelha d'Elefante: A modern restaurant serving amazing vegetarian lunches located on the far side of the bridge. *noon-3pm Mon-Fri* $

A Carvalheira: A local favourite focusing on regional cuisine and superb desserts. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun* $$



RICARDOTEIXEIRAFOTOGRAFIA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Paço de Giela, Arcos de Valdevez

For more eye candy, walk over to the **Jardim Bento Coelho** and gaze over the **Sapal do Coura Estuary Reserve**; or head out of town to the **Miradouro de Sino de Mouros** for one of the best sunset views in the area. If you don't get seasick, check out the **Forte da Ínsua**, an island monastery from the late 1300s surrounded by a stunningly intact, star-shaped fortress. You'll need a guided tour, a taxi boat or a kayak (and a flat, wind-free day) to get you a few hundred metres offshore to the island.

Vila Nova de Cerveira

TIME FROM VIANA DO CASTELO: **25 MINS**

Vila das Artes

Popularly known as the Vila das Artes, the Vila Nova de Cerveira's art trail started four decades ago. Following the revolution, a group of residents wanted to organise an art festival to strengthen the newly found freedom of expression. The **Bienal de Arte de Cerveira** was so successful in promoting local art, culture and development that it remained on the town's cultural calendar, attracting artists from the rest of the Minho, Galizia and even further afield. In 2011 the festival gained its own governing body: the Fundação Bienal de Arte de Cerveira, which also curates the **Bienal de Cerveira Museum** located at the town's Cultural Forum (open Tuesday to Saturday, €5 entry, €2 for students/seniors, children under 12 free) and helps place the long-term sculptural installations in town, as seen on the Roteiro das Artes (available from city hall).

BEST BEACHES NEAR CAMINHA

Foz do Minho: Popular river beach in Caminha extending from the mouth of the Rio Minho to the beginning of town.

Praia do Camarido: Portugal's northernmost ocean beach's 1km stretch of white sand is sandwiched between an evergreen forest and Spanish views.

Praia de Moledo: Favourite beach of surfers, windsurfers and kitesurfers. Also known for therapeutic iodine found in its waters.

Vila Praia de Âncora: Where the Rio Âncora meets the sea you'll find a wildly popular beach with access to the Duna do Caldeirão.

Praia Fluvial das Azenhas: Inland in Vilar de Mouros, a verdant oasis on the Rio Cora.



Guimarães

HISTORIC BUILDINGS | HILLTOP FORESTS | CREATIVE CULTURE

GETTING AROUND

The granite slab streets of the centre of Guimarães can be easily tackled on foot, although there's a slight uphill hike to the castle and Paço dos Duques. If you're heading further afield, the local Guimabus buses are useful for getting around the city. Arriving and leaving by train or bus is easy, as both stations are within easy walking distance from the historic centre, and there are connections to most nearby towns and cities. If you're arriving by car, you'll want to head for one of the public car parks nearby and walk into the historic centre.

TOP TIP

The historic centre of Guimarães is worth a wander, but be sure to spend some time getting to know the cool, creative happenings if you really want to get under the city's skin.

Formerly known as Vimaranes, the city of Guimarães is the birthplace of the nation. It's where Afonso Henriques was born and where he declared himself Portugal's first king. Guimarães became Portugal's first capital city, and although it later lost the privilege to Coimbra, every single *vimaranense* will proudly tell you 'Aqui Nasceu Portugal' (Portugal was born here).

These days, Guimarães' pristinely preserved historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, although its population of nearly 55,000 is anything but stuck in the past. The city has an impressive creative culture, which has grown exponentially since 2012, the year that Guimarães was Europe's Capital of Culture, and a sizeable student population makes sure the city stays lively. Plus, with a number of highly lauded bars and restaurants, there's plenty to keep you – and all your new *vimaranense* friends – busy until the wee hours of the morning.

The Birthplace of a King

Monte Latito, a royal hilltop home

Monte Latito hill is home to two of the city's most important monuments – the first being **Castelo de Guimarães**, built in the 10th century by Countess Mumadona Dias to fend off Viking attacks. This eight-towered granite stronghold is also believed to be the birthplace of Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques.

Nearby you'll find the monumental **Paço dos Duques de Bragança**, an elegant 15th-century palace built by Afonso I, which later fell to ruin.

During Salazar's regime, the palace was restored to be used as a private residence – a source of immense controversy – and now has an on-site museum exhibiting primarily items from the Age of Discovery.



SIGHTS
1. Castelo de Guimarães
2. Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães
3. Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Consolação e Santos Passos
4. Museu de Alberto Sampaio
5. Paço dos Duques de Bragança
6. Zona de Couros

SLEEPING
7. Aparthotel Largo da Oliveira
8. GuimarãesLiving
9. Hotel da Oliveira
10. Hotel Toural

EATING
11. A Cozinha
12. Histórico by Papaboa
13. Le Babachris
14. Norma
15. Taberna Trovador



MUMADONA DIAS

Mumadona Dias, a Galician noble who became a Countess of Portugal, married Count Hermenegildo González, and ruled jointly with her husband until his death in around 940, when she continued to rule the *condado* (county) on her own until her death in 968. Her refusal to remarry made her one of the richest and most important women on the Iberian Peninsula, whose territory stretched from the Rio Lima down to Coimbra. She would further make history in 951, when, due to divine inspiration, Dias founded the **Mosteiro of Guimarães** (now the **Museu de Alberto Sampaio**) on her property in Vimaranes. Later, she would build the Castle of Guimarães to protect the monastery from attack.

Escape to Penha

A forest and religious sanctuary

Covered in 60 hectares of pristine nature, 616m above sea level, the **Monte da Penha** is a very popular weekend spot for many a *vimaranense*. It's also home to a handful of religious sites, like the all-granite, Art Deco **Santuário da Penha**. It may not be the most ornate church, but the spectacular view across the valley makes it worth the drive – or the 10-minute cable-car ride on **Teleférico de Penha** from the historic centre. Explore the caves, chapels and lookout points that you'll find on the way, along with the area's many hiking and cycling trails. Monte da Penha also has a minigolf course, a tourist train, an equestrian centre, a cafe and campgrounds.

Cultural Revolution

The movers and shakers

Start where the city's cultural revival began, at **Centro Cultural Vila Flor** (CCVF), located inside a restored 18th-century palace. Opened in 2005, the centre, with its striking modern additions and exquisite gardens, hosts a full agenda of dance, theatre and music performances, as well as workshops, film screenings and art exhibitions. The CCVF is also the headquarters for A Oficina, a group that organises cultural programming and festivals in the city. Next, head to the **Centro para os Assuntos da Arte e Arquitectura** (CAAA), an old textile factory that got a new life as a not-for-profit arts collective promoting artistic works across disciplines. Its repertoire ranges from visual arts, performing arts and film to literature design and architecture. Don't miss lunch at the exceptional on-site vegetarian cafe.

An Art Immersion

From history to modern day

The **Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães** (CIAJG), an exceptional historic and contemporary art museum, is another project that came from Guimarães' time as the



EATING IN GUIMARÃES: MEALS TO REMEMBER

Cantinha CAAA: Set-menu lunch joint inside the CAAA arts collective serves incredibly tasty vegetarian fare. *noon-3pm Tue-Sat* $	**Taberna Trovador:** A simple, modern tavern that's the perfect stop for small plates and *petiscos*. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm* $	**Florêncio:** Traditional Minho comfort food where rabbit, pork and codfish dishes shine. *noon-4pm & 7-10pm Mon & Wed-Sat, noon-4pm Tue & Sun* $$	**Histórico by Papaboa:** Sophisticated Portuguese food in a 17th-century stone mansion. *10am-2.30pm & 7-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun* $$
Norma: Modern Minhota and Galician cuisine in a light-filled dining room with a Michelin Bib nod. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat* $$	**A Cozinha:** Michelin-starred Portuguese cuisine with a special focus on sustainability. *12.30-3.30pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sat* $$$	**Le Babachris:** Tiny place serving an ever-changing tasting menu of delicate dishes inspired by market ingredients. *noon-3.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat* $$$	**São Gião:** Refined takes on Minhoto classics and lovely views over the Moreira valley. *12.30-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun* $$$



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Zona de Couros

European Capital of Culture in 2012. The project redesigned the old central market into a multifunctional space best known for its exhibitions of the art of José de Guimarães – both his collections of African art, pre-Columbian art and ancient Chinese art, and of his own work. There are also rotating exhibits of contemporary works, along with a collection of historic religious and archaeological artefacts, principally relating to the city itself. The building, designed by Pitágoras Architects, won numerous awards upon its unveiling.

A Postcard Church

Baroque beauty and cascading gardens

One of the most famous views in Guimarães is of **Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Consolação e Santos Passos**, a baroque church built between the 16th and 18th centuries. Three rectangular gardens extend out along the Largo República do Brasil; its colourful flowers are marked with purple banners during Lent.

Leather Row

Old trade, new life

A slight detour from the historic centre will take you to the **Zona de Couros**, a piece of industrial history that pays homage to one of the most central trade-works that came out of the city: leather tanning. Check out tanks that were used to cure the pelts, as well as the drying rooms and dyeing tanks. You can also peek into the Ilha do Sabão, an old housing unit for tannery workers. Although the industry hit its peak in the 19th century, the tanks continued to be used until the mid-20th century, when the task was modernised and the tanks were abandoned. The area is experiencing a revitalisation, as many of the old buildings are being given new life as learning institutions, tourist accommodation and more.

BORDADO

Guimarães is well known for its traditional embroidery, made in a single colour of cotton thread on a white linen base. While there are six official colours that can be used – blue, beige, white, black, red and grey – most pieces are made in candy-apple red. The technique, which was first written about in the 19th century (although it most likely dates back earlier), includes 20 different needlepoint stitches used to create a number of common motifs, such as flowers, hearts and geometric figures. Historically, embroidery was a popular decoration for rural clothing, although today you'll find it in everything from decorative home goods to wedding dresses.

SILK EMBROIDERY

While embroidery from Guimarães uses cotton thread, the traditional embroidery of **Castelo Branco** (p313) is made of threads of fine coloured silk, thanks to its local climate being ideal for raising silkworms.

A TRIP THROUGH TIME

Walking through Guimarães' old town is like time travelling back to before the birth of Portugal, when Countess Dias ruled.

START	END	LENGTH
Jardim do Carmo	Largo do Toural	1.4km; 20 minutes

Starting at the 1 **Jardim do Carmo**, walk over to visit the 2 **statue** of the renowned Condessa Mumadona Dias, then make your way up the 3 **Rua de Santa Maria**, the oldest road in the city. It's lined with historic houses, such as Casa dos Carneiros (now the local library) and the baroque Santa Clara Convent (currently Câmara Municipal/City Hall).

Walk under the granite arch of Casa do Arco, one of the most photographed houses in the city, and shortly you'll arrive at the 4 **Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Oliveira**, a 14th-century church built to fulfil a king's devotional promise. The church is dedicated to 'Our Lady of the Olive Tree' – note the large olive tree out front, which supposedly predates the building. Both church and tree sit in aptly named Largo da Oliveira, where you'll also find 5 **Padrão do Salado**, a 14th-century Gothic canopy and shrine. Detour from Largo da Oliveira to 6 **Museu de Alberto Sampaio**, exhibiting religious relics and art in Mumadona Dias' original monastery. Double back and walk under the archways of Antigos Paços do Concelho (the old city hall) to 7 **Praça de São Tiago**. Continue on your way to the 8 **Largo do Toural**, where you'll see the Igreja de São Pedro and the 9 **Torre da Alfândega** – laden with the inscription 'Aqui Nasceu Portugal'.



Beyond Guimarães



Guimarães is surrounded by unique ruins and remnants of early settlements, and myriad wineries to indulge in *vinho verde*.

Guimarães is a place of history, so it's no surprise that extending out from the city, you'll find more accounts of ancestral past. Wander through the mossy remains of Iron Age stronghold settlements, discovering how the 1st-century people lived – and how their lives changed following the Roman invasions. Then, following Roman tradition, head for a bath in some healing thermal waters, or for the more adventurous, there are options for whitewater rafting, bungee jumping and ropes courses hidden in the hills. Contemplate the layers of history that created the country as it is today, as you sip on a delicate glass of sparkling *vinho verde* at a quiet country winery, in perfect Portuguese tradition.

Caldas das Taipas

TIME FROM GUIMARÃES: **20 MINS**

Healing waters

The main claim to fame of the small municipality of Caldas das Taipas is its therapeutic thermal spa – in operation not far from where the Romans had their own thermal bathhouse (now used as a cultural centre). Splash around in the mineral-rich water or book a spa day at the **Taipas Termal** *(taipastermal.com)* before taking a stroll around town to see the **Ara de Trajano**, an engraved monolith in honour of the emperor Trajan, or the low Roman bridge that crosses the Rio Ave. If you're looking to cool off, rather than heat up, head off for a swim at the **Praia Fluvial das Taipas**, a beach on the banks of the river with a snack bar, a picnic area and campgrounds.

Citânia de Briteiros

TIME FROM GUIMARÃES: **30 MINS**

Ancient villages

One of the best archaeological examples of the pre-Roman people, the *cultura castreja* (hillfort culture), is just a short drive from Guimarães. Located atop Monte São Romão, partially hidden by the woodland, the hillfort of Citânia de Briteiros overlooks the Rio Ave. The first excavations were undertaken

Places

Caldas das Taipas p417
Citânia de Briteiros p417
Póvoa de Lanhoso p418

GETTING AROUND

The countryside around Guimarães is rather difficult to navigate by public transport. Routes are lengthy and require switching buses, both to arrive at Citânia de Briteiros and Póvoa de Lanhoso, making a rental car the easiest option for both locations. It's also the best – and only – way to get between wineries if you're going *vinho verde* tasting. Caldas das Tapias, on the other hand, is only a 20-minute Transdev bus ride from the city.

VINHO VERDE

Vinho verde (green wine) isn't actually green. The term denotes a DOP wine that's typically light and fresh, and although the whites and sparkling wines are best known, *vinho verde* can also come in rosé or even red versions. Much like Champagne in France, true *vinho verde* comes from the demarcated growing region, which covers 200 sq km of Portugal's northeast between the Douro and the Minho Rivers, nearly entirely in the Minho province. There are around 19,000 registered producers in the country, with each subregion growing its own unique varieties – such as the Alvarinho grapes from the far north, or the Arinto and Loureiro wines that come from the Ave region (incorporating Guimarães and its surroundings).

in the 1870s, when archaeologists discovered that the *cultura castreja* people kept a complex urban organisation, delineating public and private areas, which included both diverse residences and even public baths (much like their future Roman invaders). Follow the lichen- and moss-laden cobblestone streets and learn a bit about life in the Iron Age (10th century BCE), as well as how the village changed, and was eventually abandoned following the Roman conquest. In the 19th century, a few of the traditional roundhouses were reconstructed for reference.

Póvoa de Lanhoso

TIME FROM GUIMARÃES: **35 MINS**

Monte do Pilar

Few castles in Portugal were as impenetrable as the **Castelo de Lanhoso**. Built on top of the magnificent rocky Monte do Pilar (c 10th century), the only access to the castle was an uneven stairway carved into the treacherously steep granite slopes. Although there's an easier entrance these days, the view from the top still provides a sensational 360-degree view over the entire region. A few steps away is the 16th-century **Santuário de Nossa Senhora do Pilar**, an ornate church built from stones from the castle's ruins. Further down the hill you'll find the pre-Roman hillfort, **Castro de Lanhoso**, a relatively intact example of the Iberian Peninsula's *cultura castreja*.

Sporting adventures

Póvoa de Lanhoso isn't all about history. The region is also a destination for adventure-sports lovers, thanks to **Diverlanhoso** *(diverlanhoso.pt),* a 170-hectare outdoors centre offering ziplining, bungee jumping, ropes courses, kayaking, whitewater rafting, paintball games and more (along with lodging and restaurants for those looking to spend some time).

For another type of adventure, Póvoa de Lanhoso is also home to 10 official bike trails, which will take you to some of the region's most interesting sights, as well as several hiking trails, including one that follows the the Via Romana XVII, part of the Roman Antonine road once connecting Braga to Astorga.

WHERE TO DRINK VINHO VERDE: OUR WINERY PICKS

Casa de Sezim: Enjoy tours and tastings or participate in the harvest at this estate that has been in the family since 1376. *9am-5pm by reservation*

Quinta dos Encados: Small estate owned by a passionate family making award-winning wines. Join in during harvest. *9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat*

Quinta da Aveleira: This centuries-old, family-owned farm produces the award-winning wine Valle dos Três Irmãos. *by reservation only*

Adega Cooperativa de Guimarães: This local wine co-op supports small local growers in creating high-quality wines. *9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri*

Quinta Pousada de Fora: A registered estate since 1258, this vineyard produces 70% Loureiro. *9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-7pm Sat*

Quinta de S Gião: A family property producing *vinho verde* since 1972. *2-6pm Mon-Fri by reservation*

Quinta do Ermízio: Vineyard spanning several valleys, produces minimal-intervention wine. *9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, Sat by reservation*

Quinta da Cancela: This boutique, family-owned estate has been producing artisanal red wines for six generations. *10am-4pm*



BRUNO ISMAEL SILVA ALVES/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Paintball game, Diverlanhoso

Filigrana

Filigrana (filigree) is an ancient metalworking technique that uses gold or silver threads to create intricate works, and it's been a patrimony of Póvoa de Lanhoso since pre-Roman times. The process involves attaching minuscule threads of the metal onto a previously created mould, crisscrossing into intricate patterns. Filigree masters are highly skilled artisans, as the production involves meticulous manual work on a tiny scale – the threads can be as thin as 0.8mm. These days, machine *filigrana* does exist, so it's important to check for certification of handmade pieces. The most traditional *filigrana* goes on to become earrings and necklaces; intricate jewels are proudly displayed by women during Minho's *romarias* (religious festivals). Learn more about the traditional process at the **Museu de Oro** (gold museum) in Travassos.

CULTURA CASTREJA

The *cultura castreja* (hillfort culture) was prevalent in northern Portugal and Galicia between the Bronze Age and the 1st century CE. Its people lived in settlements called *castros*, which were fortified villages comprising circular stone houses, encircled and protected by granite walls and moats – almost exactly as a child might draw a rudimentary castle. While thousands of *castros* have been identified in the Minho and Trás-os-Montes regions, the areas around Guimarães have some of the most complete examples, both in Citânia de Briteiros and in Póvoa de Lanhoso. There is a museum – **Museu da Cultura Castreja**, located in an old agricultural manor – dedicated entirely to the subject.

AT THE HEART

The epitome of Portuguese *filigrana* is the **Portuguese heart** (p408) that's seemingly made out of a thousand strands of gold – a motif that has come to represent the city of Viana do Castelo.

Peneda-Gerês



BREATHTAKING NATURE | WILD HORSES | MOUNTAINTOP VILLAGES

GETTING AROUND

While it is possible to reach certain villages in the Peneda-Gerês Park by bus, service is limited and infrequent. Mobilidade Cávado has bus services from Braga to the Vila do Gerês that passes through Rio Caldo, as well as a line to Campo do Gerês, but from there you'll be reliant on taxis (or your own legs). If you're really looking to explore, a rental car is the only way to do the park justice. Just remember that the roads are quite windy, making the point from A to B quite a bit longer than might be expected.

TOP TIP

Although the park is popular and most trails are well marked, it is still possible (and even a bit too easy) to get lost. Mobile-phone service can be spotty, so if you're serious about trekking, bring your own GPS device to stay safe.

Established in 1971, Peneda-Gerês is still Portugal's only national park. The nearly 700 sq km protected zone spreads across four mountain ranges – the Serras of Peneda, Amarela, Gerês and Soajo – and is home to some of the most fragile ecosystems and endangered animals in the country.

Besides granite-clad mountains, the park is made up of old-growth oak forests, peat bogs and dry shrubland, where minks, salamanders, bats, otters, roe deer, Garrano horses and Iberian wolves roam. It's also home to dozens of small villages, many with centuries-old history, where ancient traditions are kept alive. The park d oes as much to protect the native flora and fauna as it does its mountain cultures, outliers in today's modern world.

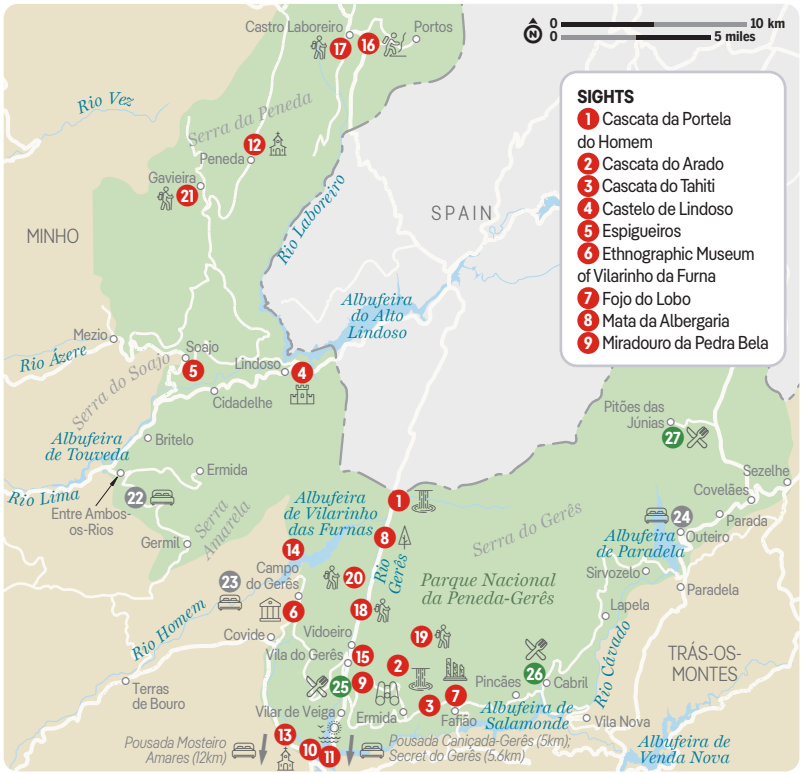
Whether you're here to hike mountaintops, walk along old Roman roads, swim in breathtaking emerald lagoons or gaze at waterfalls, try to spend time learning from the hearty mountain people who call this incredible landscape home.

A World of Water

Waterfalls and hot springs

Peneda-Gerês is a wonderland of water, whether you're into waterfalls, beaches or hot springs. Start at the **Cascata do Tahiti** (aka Cascatas de Fecha de Barjas), a tropical-looking waterfall with an emerald-green pool, just a short hike from the village Ermida. Next, head 5km northwest to the **Cascata do Arado**, one of Gerês' most photogenic falls. To warm up from the chilly swim, it's off to **Vila do Gerês**, a town with thermal baths (**Termas do Gerês**) that have been in use since Roman times. The **Águas Do Gerês** hotel is the go-to spot for a swim or a spa day (springs open May to October).

If beaches are more your thing, head south to the Rio Cávado, where you'll find the white-sand **Praia Fluvial da Barca**, just



SIGHTS (CONT'D)
- Miradouro das Rocas (see 2)
- Miradouro de Fafião (see 7)
- Poço Negro (see 5)
- Ponte da Ladeira (see 5)

10 Praia Fluvial da Barca
11 Praia Fluvial de Alqueirão
12 Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Peneda
13 Santuário de São Bento da Porta Aberta
14 Vilarinho da Furna

ACTIVITIES

15 Hotel Águas do Gerês
16 Peneda-Gerês Canyoning Center
- Termas do Gerês (see 15)

17 Trilho Castrejo
18 Trilho da Preguiça
19 Trilho do Poço Azul
20 Trilho Pé de Cabril
21 Trilho Pertinho do Céu
- Water Park Gerês (see 11)

SLEEPING

22 Casas da Levada
- Hostel Retiro do Gerês (see 7)

23 Leiras do Tempo Cottages
24 Oficina do Joe

EATING

25 Adega Ramalho
- Lurdes Capela (see 15)
- O Abocanhado (see 23)
- Restaurante Fojo dos Lobos (see 7)

26 Restaurante Ponte Nova
- Restaurante Videira (see 5)
- Saber ao Borralho (see 5)

27 Taberna do Caskais

across the river from **Praia Fluvial de Alqueirão**, another white-sand wonder that's home to the **Water Park Gerês** *(@waterparkgeres),* an inflatable over-water park.

Enchanted Forest

Discover the Mata da Albergaria

One of the most important natural areas in the park is the **Mata da Albergaria**, an enchanted forest that's rife with both cultural and natural heritage. On the human front, Albergaria holds the only completely intact stretch of the 318 km-long Roman

CÃO DE CASTRO LABOREIRO

Its unclear which is better known – the village of Castro Laboreiro or its mountain dog. Castro Laboreiro has been a shepherding town for as long as anyone can remember, with the majority of its residents owning two houses – one in the village, where they would pass the winter; and the other along the tops of the mountain range, where they spend the summer with their sheep and dogs. The Cão e Castro Laboreiro, one of the oldest dog breeds on the Iberian Peninsula, is as hardy as a mountain dog can get, weighing up to 45kg and able to run long distances – perfectly suited to protecting their herds from wolves.

road that once linked Braga with Astorga in Spain; while on the nature side, the forest was the last refuge for the brown bear (of which, unfortunately, there are none left), and is a habitat for the Iberian wolf, minks and Garrano horses. When you visit, don't miss a stop at the **Cascata da Portela do Homem**, a picturesque waterfall – but remember that vehicle access is limited in summer and carries a €1.50 fee.

Over the River

Canyoning in a tiny mountain town

The tiny mountain town of **Castro Laboreiro** (population: just over 500) is a shepherding community as old as time, best known for its small medieval castle and an eponymous breed of herding dog. This little hamlet of hardy mountain people is also home to a number of unique **bridges** – many dating back to Roman and medieval times – some of which are the site of modern-day canyoning adventures. When the rivers are full, head to the **Peneda-Gerês Canyoning Center** *(canyoningcenter.com)* for half- or full-day trips that take you up and down waterfalls, under bridges and through crystal-clear mountain pools. These trips aren't for the faint of heart – there is plenty of hiking and scrambling on rocks, and the water is quite cold – however, you'll be hard-pressed to wipe the smile off your face afterwards.

The Lost Village

Visit Vilarinho's underwater ruins

Once a prosperous mountain village, the **Vilarinho da Furna** was intentionally flooded by the Portuguese Electric Company, in the process of filling in the Vilarinho das Furnas reservoir. The 300 or so villagers who lived there received notice a few years prior, in 1969, and although they were compensated by the electric company, they received a pittance for their loss – they even had to build a road at their own expense to be able to carry their belongings out by truck. The last villager left in 1971, and the village was flooded a year later.

EATING IN THE PENEDA-GERÊS MOUNTAINS

Taberna do Caskais: Classic flavours in a light-filled dining room or in the garden outside, with excellent mountain views. *10am-10pm Tue-Sun* $

Restaurante Ponte Nova: Adjacent to a picturesque bridge in Cabril, serving river trout, *cabrito* and *javali*. *8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat* $

Lurdes Capela: Renowned family-run Vila do Gerês restaurant serving superb regional dishes. *11.30am-2.30pm & 6.30-9.30pm* $$

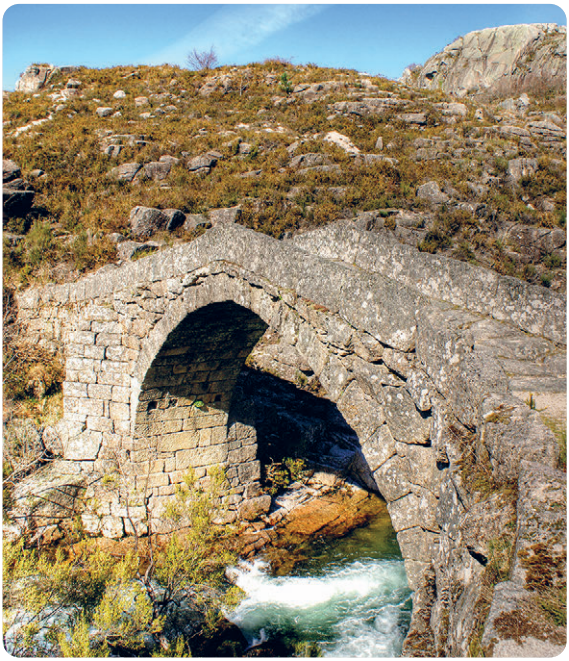
Saber ao Borralho: A charming facade hides an even more handsome interior, where excellent local dishes feature. *noon-3pm & 7-9pm Wed-Sun* $$

Restaurante Videira: Local favourite has a shady patio and dishes that easily feed two. *noon-3pm & 6.30-9pm Thu-Mon, noon-3pm Tue* $$

Adega Ramalho: Well-known tavern famous for its mouthwatering *costeletas de vitela* (veal chops) and choc mousse. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm* $$

Restaurante Fojo dos Lobos: Tavern with views and a good selection of veg options. *noon-2.30pm & 8-9.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-2.30pm Sun* $$

O Abocanhado: This temple to local ingredients delivers delicious dishes on a stunning terrace. *12.30-3.30pm & 7.30-9.30pm (hrs may vary)* $$$



VR2000/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Ponte da Cava da Velha, Castro Laboreiro

It's worth a visit to the former village when it rises from the water during the dry season, as well as to the museum nearby, the **Ethnographic Museum of Vilarinho da Furna**, which tells their story.

Claiming Sanctuary

Religion in the mountains

Beyond being a natural sanctuary, Peneda-Gerês has two important places of religious refuge. Near the southernmost edge of the park you'll find the **Santuário de São Bento da Porta Aberta** (Saint Benedict's Sanctuary of Open Doors), the second-largest religious sanctuary in the country – only outdone by Fátima. The sanctuary was historically a safe-house for travellers in the region (hence the name: open doors). Note that 21 March (the death of Saint Benedict), 11 June (day of the patron saint of Europe) and 10 to 15 August are the main pilgrimage dates. On the park's northern end is **Santuário de Nossa Senhora da Peneda**, a rather picturesque sanctuary built in 1854 in honour of Our Lady of Snow. The sanctuary sits in the shadow of a huge granite outcropping, and during the first week of September it receives thousands of pilgrims for its annual *romaria*.

BEST HIKES

Trilho Pertinho do Céu: Beautiful 6km loop wandering through the foothills of the Peneda mountains.

Trilho Pé de Cabril: A more difficult hike, taking you (1236m in altitude) up the Pé de Cabril peak.

Trilho da Preguiça: Less ambitious hikers will love this 4km trek passing through fern-filled forests and by waterfalls.

Trilho Castrejo: A 12km hike along some of the most beautiful trails in the district of Melgaço, following old shepherding tracks.

Trilho do Poço Azul: A 9km out-and-back hike from Cascata do Arado to one of the park's most beautiful natural pools (poorly marked, so bring your GPS).

HOLY STAIRS

Nossa Senhora da Peneda's staircase is reminiscent of the stairs that take you up to **Bom Jesus do Monte** (p399), in Braga – albeit on a much smaller scale.

WILD HORSES

The Garrano horses are stocky brown Iberian ponies that have been living freely in northern Portugal for thousands of years. The indigenous herds, which can be traced back to Celtic lines, are often seen roaming through the mountains of Serra d'Arga, Soajo, Cabreira and especially in Peneda-Gerês. Garranos are only considered semiwild, as they've historically (and successfully) been used as workhorses, although it's considered tradition to release them to breed in the wild. Unfortunately, their numbers are dwindling, due to their natural predator the Iberian wolf, as well as disinterest in the breed – doubly unfortunate, as their grazing habits are vital for preventing wildfires. There are approximately 2000 left in the wild, which have become popular tourist attractions.



TRATTIERITRATTI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Espigueiros, Lindoso

Granite Granaries

The mighty espigueiros

The tiny ancient villages of **Soajo** and **Lindoso** have one odd thing in common – their **espigueiros** (granite granaries). These odd, communal structures were used for drying grain (although the cross on the top that's meant to warn away evil spirits makes them easy to mistake for elevated tombs). In Soajo, the *espigueiros* are located at the highest point in the village, and as you walk uphill past the stone mountain houses they'll increase in numbers. Head to waters under **Ponte da Ladeira**, the town's medieval bridge, or to **Poço Negro**, just 1km from the granaries, for a relaxing swim before driving the 10km to Lindoso, another ancient village with its own collection of more than 50 *espigueiros*, all from the 17th and 18th centuries. Stop at Lindoso's well-preserved **Castelo de Lindoso** for picturesque views over the valley.

View-Seekers

Hunting for the park's best views

One of the most epic viewpoints in Peneda-Gerês is the **Miradouro da Pedra Bela**, which many argue offers the best view in the entire park. Just 3km away, **Miradouro das Rocas** is another contender, and although it doesn't have the same water views, it's a worthy stop on your way to the Cascata do Arado (p420). Continuing east you'll hit the **Miradouro de Fafião**, which sits atop two gigantic granite boulders connected by a bright-red suspension bridge, offering vertigo-inducing views over the valley. From a distance, you'll be able to see the **Fojo do Lobo**, a stone structure used in bygone eras as a wolf trap.

Beyond Peneda-Gerês



A handful of beautiful villages, each with their own unique character, await in the northern regions around the Peneda-Gerês park.

This corner of Portugal is a land of 'mosts'. There's the northernmost castle, the biggest wine party, the most radical village, and a town considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal. Impressively enough, in all of these stunning villages, be they in the mountains or along the riverside, the history is so perfectly interwoven into the modern-day community, it feels a bit like a parallel universe. Traditional agriculture shows its colours in terraced hillsides, stocky mountain cattle and flavourful wines; while these unique, castle-sporting towns are also the perfect jumping-off points for incredible trekking, cycling or outdoor adventures – whether you're into bungee jumping, canyoning or river rafting.

Melgaço

TIME FROM PENEDA-GERÊS: **30 MINS**

Get radical

As well as having the northernmost castle in the country, Melgaço has also been called 'the most radical outdoors destination in Portugal', with a list of adrenaline-inducing activities that will keep your heart pumping, from canyoning, rappelling and bungee jumping to BTT trails and canopy adventures – plus, the area's most emblematic pastime, whitewater rafting. **Melgaço Whitewater** *(melgacoww.pt)* and **Melgaço Radical** *(melgacoradical.com)* are the town's go-to providers for rafting trips down the Rio Minho. While the trip is best undertaken when the river is at its fullest (between October and May), it's also possible to enjoy some less intense rafting during the warmer summer months.

Places

Melgaço p425
Monção p426
Sistelo p427

GETTING AROUND

There are daily buses between Arcos de Valdevez and Sistelo, as well as Sistelo and Monção with AVIC, and buses to Monção and Melgaço on Alsa or Rede Expressos from Braga or Viana do Castelo via Valença. You can hike or cycle the Ecovia do Vez to arrive at Sistelo (although it's not for beginners), or opt for a rental car, which is the best way to get between towns in the region.

EATING IN MELGAÇO: BEST PICKS BY LOCALS

Adega Sabino: Unassuming tavern famous for its roasted goat and stewed lamprey dishes. *noon-3pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun* $

Tasquinha da Portela: Local spot serving regional cuisine in epic portions, always paired with *vinho verde*. *10.30am-10.30pm Wed-Sun, to 4pm Mon* $

Tasquinha de Melgaço: A small restaurant showcasing signature dishes, including the top codfish with stone crab. *noon-2.45pm & 7-9.45pm* $

Solar do Alvarinho: Go-to spot for tasting two of the town's local specialities – smoked, cured meats and the famous Alvarinho wine. *10am-7pm* $$

ALVARINHO WINE

Alvarinho is a full-bodied and complex monoculture wine, easily identifiable by its strong, distinctive flavour. In the north of Portugal and around Galicia, Spain, where it's grown, Alvarinho wine has a cultlike following, and in Portugal that area centres around Monção and Melgaço. Besides being available in every shop and restaurant in the area, there are museums and even festivals dedicated to this straw-coloured wine. One such event, Monção's **Feira do Alvarinho** (held every July) has been nicknamed the 'Largest Wine Party in Portugal' (although there's no evidence proving this, we like it). Now in its 27th edition, the Feira do Alvarinho brings together wine, music and gastronomy for four days of pure *joie de vivre*.

Slow yourself down

If adventure isn't your style, that doesn't mean you should leave Melgaço off your list. For those who travel at a slower pace, the town offers both a medieval castle and a Romanesque church, as well as the centuries-old hot springs, the **Parque Termal do Peso**, aka Termas de Melgaço *(termasdemelgaço.pt)* – you can walk to the hot springs from town along the pastoral **Passadiços de Malagaço**, a 5.7km raised walking trail. You'll also find plenty of delicious gastronomic traditions in town – particularly those involving smoked meats, and sparkling and Alvarinho wines. If food and wine is your thing, then make a beeline for the **Solar do Alvarinho**, a 17th-century country house transformed into the headquarters of the Alvarinho wine route, where there's plenty of regional wine on tap and smoked meats to taste (and bring home with you).

Monção

TIME FROM PENEDA-GERÊS: **40 MINS**

History and the vine

Another historic town just outside of the Peneda-Gerês park is Monção, situated along the Rio Minho, right on the border with Spain. Follow the **Passadiços de Monção** along the town's 14th-century fortress walls, with views of Galicia, through the **Parque das Caldas** outdoor gardens and onto the **Termas de Monção** hot springs, a blissful refuge on a blustery day. Enter the old town's centre via the **Porto do Rosal tunnel**, where you'll want to visit the **Castelo de Monção**, along with the **Igreja Matriz** and **Igreja da Misericórdia** churches, as well as a stop in **Praça Deu-la-Deu**. Wine lovers will adore a stop at the **Museu Alvarinho**, an informative little museum dedicated to the local vineyard variety, with tastings to boot. Then, head 5km out of town to the surprising **Palácio da Brejoeira**, a neoclassical 19th-century *palacete* (mansion), with a chapel, theatre and lucious gardens, plus an old bodega still producing Alvarinho wine and the local countryside spirit, *aguardente*.

Shepherding shelters

At the highest point (1114m) in the Monção district you'll find a very small town, **Branda de Santo António**, that's full of rudimentary granite and shale houses, which used to shelter shepherds when they took their herds to graze in the highlands during summer. Besides the unique architecture (they look a bit like hobbit houses), the town, located in the peaceful valley named Vale de Poldros, is the perfect place to truly get away from it all.

EATING IN MONÇÃO: COMFORT FOOD

Sete à Sete: Delish local specialities – including wines and desserts – in a stonewalled dining room. *noon-3.30pm & 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun* $

Guardião: Large menu of regional dishes served in generous portions by friendly staff. *noon-3pm & 7-10.30pm Thu-Tue* $

Bistro Don Genaro: This somewhat more modern cafe serves comfort food, pizzas, small bites and sandwiches. *noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun* $

Baluarte Bar: Local pub with a huge esplanade area serving tapas and charcuterie plates with plenty of wine and beer on tap. *noon-2am* $



DIOGO VARAJAO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sistelo

Sistelo

TIME FROM PENEDA-GERÊS: **40 MINS**

The 'Tibet of Portugal'

This charming mountain village surrounded by agricultural terraces isn't just pleasing to the eye – Sistelo was named one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal (in the rural village category), and became the first landscape to be named a national monument. The town is often called the 'Tibet of Portugal', due to its unique landscape; and much like in Tibet, the main activity in Sistelo is hiking. After a quick look at the town's **castle** and main square, head to the **Passadiços do Sistelo** to start your trek. These wooden walkways make up part of the **Ecovia do Vez** *(ecoviadovez.com),* which runs 32.5km along the Rio Lima from Ponte da Barca to Sistelo (the Passadiços das Lagoas do Vez and the Brandas do Sistelo trail are other exceptional sections of the trek). If you're looking to cool off, make **Poço das Caldeiras** your final destination – the river beach is a 1½-hour hike from town, but well worth the reward upon arrival.

TERRACED AGRICULTURE

The agricultural terraces in Sistelo aren't just aesthetically pleasing – they represent a long-standing agricultural tradition of sustainable farming in the mountains that has been going on for centuries. Best seen from the **Miradouro dos Socalcos**, the nearly 200 hectares of terraces segment the mountainside into farmable land, which has allowed the villagers to plant corn, beans, vegetables and even raise a local breed of cow (the Cachena), a small, hardy animal well adapted to the cold winters and limited grazing grounds. Sistelo's agriculture is also hydrologically efficient: the system of irrigation canals and mini aqueducts take advantage of the natural inclination of the land, allowing most terraces to be watered by gravity.

Places We Love to Stay

€ Budget €€ Midrange €€€ Top End

Braga p396

Tea 4 Nine $ Intimate guesthouse in the city's centre, with just four rooms, each named after a type of tea.

Braga Heritage Lofts $$ Sleek and comfortable lofts in a tastefully renovated building in front of Jardim de Santa Bárbara.

Domus 26 $$ Well-appointed B&B in a restored 19th-century building, with clean and modern rooms and common spaces.

Vila Galé Collection Braga $$$ Sleep inside this former 15th-century hospital turned hotel with a spectacular baroque facade.

Apúlia p401

Seascape Apúlia By Gerya $$ Incredible oceanfront cottage on the clifftop that was once a traditional fisher's home.

SISU Guest House $$ A modern B&B located in the town's centre above a contemporary restaurant with large windows and sunrise views.

Barcelos p403

Casa da Ana $$ Restored stone house turned B&B, with modern amenities, large rooms and a lovely terrace restaurant.

Solar de Vila Meã $$$ Renovated countryside villa with light, airy rooms and large balconies, surrounded by vineyards and with friendly staff.

Viana do Castelo p404

Orbitur $ Located on the beachfront in Praia do Cabedelo, this campground is perfect for water-sports lovers or those looking for peaceful vibes.

Casa Melo Alvim $ A historic hotel in the town's centre where you can opt for stately rooms adorned with antique furniture, or sleek minimalist suites in the modern addition.

Flag Design Hotel $$ A new offering in Viana's city centre (just outside of the old town) with spacious, comfortable rooms and exceptional views from the rooftop pool.

Pousada Viana do Castelo $$$ Inside of a restored palace on the top of Monte de Santa Luzia you'll find a luxury hotel with the best views in the city.

Feel Viana $$$ Praia do Cabedelo's sports and spa hotel, where rooms are sustainably built luxury cabins, the food is fantastic and spa days make up for the Minho's unpredictable weather.

Ponte de Lima p409

Mercearia da Vila $$ Six simple and clean rooms hide above a charming old grocery store with hardwood floors and traditional furnishings.

Carmo's Boutique Hotel $$$ This 15-room boutique hideaway has a sublime, barefoot-chic vibe, with a basement spa and an on-site restaurant.

Quinta do Ameal $$$ A vineyard stay known for its award-winning wines offers luxurious kitchenette suites on a spacious estate.

Caminha p410

Olá Vida Hostel $ Centrally located, modern and clean hostel with friendly owners and lovely shared spaces.

Quixote House $$ Secluded guesthouse that feels more like your own summer villa, complete with a swimming pool and tennis courts.

Guimarães p412

Casa de Sezim $ This authentic, magnificently peaceful and quirky B&B is located in a countryside home that has been in the family since 1376.

GuimarãesLiving $ A hostel with style located in the centre of town, and the best value for your money around.

Hotel Toural $$ This four-star hotel first opened as an inn in 1886. Today it offers simple, modern rooms set between two 18th-century buildings.

Hotel da Oliveira $$ Beautiful rooms with large windows in a historic building right in the centre of town.

Aparthotel Largo da Oliveira $$ Clean and modern serviced apartments right above the Largo de Oliveira in the heart of the old town.

Pousada Mosteiro de Guimarães $$$ A restored 12th-century Augustine monastery turned hotel with a bright, modern addition and verdant, rolling gardens.

Póvoa de Lanhoso p418

Quinta da Lagarta $ Beautiful country house with a river running next to it. Large, clean rooms and friendly animals on the property.

Hotel Rural Maria da Fonte $$ Restored country estate with charming antique stone walls, a large dining room, and indoor and outdoor pools.

Peneda-Gerês p420

Hostel Retiro do Gerês $ This clean, modern, well-kept hostel with bright rooms and private accommodation options is the perfect base for hiking in the hills.

Pousada Caniçada-Gerês $$ Exceptionally comfortable, modern guesthouse with mesmerising mountain views and an inviting pool for summer visits.

Oficina do Joe $$ Highly lauded guesthouse on the park's eastern end, with lovely lake views, comfortable rooms, exceptional hosts and bountiful, locally sourced breakfasts.

Secret do Gerês $$ Treehouse tourism at its best, Secret do Gerês is a true escape to nature, where you'll stay in magical, modern treehouse-cabanas, complete with kitchenettes.

Casas da Levada $$ Small stone and wooden cottages on a charming property with kitchenettes, friendly hosts and a communal pool rented B&B style.

Leiras do Tempo Cottages $$ Exceptionally renovated stone cottages, suites and holiday homes that perfectly integrate ancient with the modern, from the hospitality geniuses behind O Abocanhado restaurant (p422).

Pousada Mosteiro Amares $$ A former monastery lovingly renovated into an exceptional hotel for pilgrims and park-goers, located just outside of the Peneda-Gerês' southern entrance

Castro Laboreiro p422

Moinho do Poço Verde $$ A tiny riverside B&B built in two restored watermills previously belonging to a 1900s chocolate factory. Perfect for a short stay in nature.

Just Natur Guesthouse $$ This exceptionally friendly guest house owned by a charming local couple is simple, clean and comfortable – and serves a wonderful breakfast.

Monção p426

Miradouro da Branda $ The definition of peace, this warm, cosy cottage in the mountains is in an old shepherding community where there's nothing but nature surrounding you.

Solar de Serrade $$ This magnificent 17th-century mansion surrounded by vineyards has elaborate furnishings and whimsical gardens.

Convento dos Capuchos $$$ Restored 18th-century hilltop monastery with a glimmering infinity pool with soothing river views.

Sistelo p427

Casa da Teresina $ Large, traditional village house lovely remodelled into a charming holiday cottage with everything you'd need for an autonomous stay.

Casa do Patorrinho $$ Modern accommodation in a historical town with spectacular views and a perfectly placed swimming pool.



LUISCOSTINHAA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês (p420)



Miradouro São Pedro de Alcântara (p67), Lisbon

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

TOOLKIT

The chapters in this section cover the most important topics you'll need to know about in Portugal. They're full of nuts-and-bolts information and valuable insights to help you understand and navigate Portugal and get the most out of your trip.

Arriving p432

Getting Around p433

Money p434

Accommodation p435

Family Travel p436

Health & Safe Travel p437

Food, Drink & Nightlife p438

Responsible Travel p440

LGBTIQ+ Travellers p442

Accessible Travel p443

Wildfires in Portugal p444

Nuts & Bolts p445

Language p446

Arriving



Lisbon is the primary point of entry for most travellers visiting Portugal. The airport is about 6km from the city centre. All flights, domestic and international, arrive at Terminal 1. Terminal 2 is used by low-cost carriers for departing flights. It's also possible to fly directly to Porto in the north or Faro down south, but there are fewer connections outside Europe.

Visas

EU nationals don't need a visa for any length of stay. Visitors from the UK, Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand can stay for up to 90 days in any six months without a visa.

Cash

ATMs are available in the arrivals area past baggage reclaim. Avoid Euronet machines as they often charge extra for withdrawals. Instead, look for the signs saying Multibanco or featuring the MB initials.

Borders

Foreign nationals arriving in Portugal via an EU member state not subject to border control, such as Spain, must submit a Declaration of Entry within three days of arrival. This form is available on the SEF website *(sef.pt)*.

Wi-fi

Free wi-fi is available at both terminals but it's usually slow and unreliable. Elsewhere in Portugal, wi-fi access is widespread.

Public transport from airport to city centre

	Lisbon	Porto	Faro
METRO	30min €1.80	45min €2.85	n/a
TAXI	25min €20	25min €25	20min €15
RIDE-SHARE	25min €15	25min €15	20min €8
BUS	40min €2.10	35 min €2.50	30min €2.70

LISBON AIRPORT

Lisbon's airport is considered one of the worst airports in Europe due to its recurrent delays. To avoid any issues, plan to arrive early, especially if you have bags to check-in. Note that the metro only stops at Terminal 1. To access Terminal 2, you'll need to catch the free shuttle bus, departing every 10 to 20 minutes. The metro stops running between 1am and 6.30am. If you have a flight to catch between those times, schedule a taxi in advance to ensure you make it. Taxis can stop at any terminal. Also, keep in mind that passport control comes after the duty-free shops.

FROM LEFT: MARAMADE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, PIXEL-SHOT/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Getting Around

Buses and trains can take you on a slow journey around the country, but renting a car is ideal if you want to set off at your own pace.

TRAVEL COSTS

Car rental
From €50/day

Petrol
Approx €1.70/L

EV charging
€8–€10/hour

Train ticket from Lisbon to Porto
From €23

Hiring a Car

Car-rental companies typically charge rates per 24 hours, not per calendar day. Most cars in Portugal are manual; automatic transmission cars are in short supply and typically more expensive. Rentals are available at all airports, but Lisbon offers a wider choice. To avoid drop-off fees, return the car to the same pick-up spot.

Road Conditions

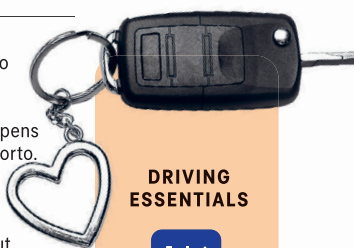
Paid-toll *autoestradas* (motorways) and high-traffic secondary roads (IPs and ICs) are generally in good condition. Smaller, toll-free roads (N or EN) are usually narrow and curvy in mountainous areas, and poorly lit at night.

TIP

Use a contactless card to save money and skip the queues across Lisbon's metro network.

QUEUES & STRIKES

In Portugal, people generally respect queues for buses, often giving priority to the elderly. However, when it comes to metros and trains, locals tend to rush in and out, often without waiting. This happens especially in big cities like Lisbon and Porto. If you would like to hop off and there's someone in your way, you can say *'com licença'* to pass through. Transport strikes are common in Lisbon throughout the year, which may affect travelling.



Bus & Train

Along the coast, most towns and cities are well served by a reliable and comfortable network of trains and long-distance buses. Popular destinations inland are easy to reach by bus, but rail has lacked investment in recent years, meaning that most stations are permanently closed. Bus services are also limited in more remote areas, often requiring time-consuming transfers.

Metro

Metro is available in big cities such as Porto and Lisbon. Most are served by stairs, which makes it hard to navigate if you're carrying loads of luggage or have mobility issues. Escalators and elevators exist, but sadly they can often be out of order.

Air

TAP operates regular domestic flights from Lisbon to Porto (one hour) and Faro (45 minutes). Tickets are not cheap – nor is the carbon footprint – so unless you need to get somewhere fast, weigh the pros and cons of travelling by air and consider opting for a comfortable, hassle-free train trip with a lower impact.

DRIVING ESSENTIALS

Drive on the right.

50

Speed limit is 50km/h in urban areas, 90km/h on secondary roads and 120km/h on motorways.

.05

The blood alcohol limit is 0.5g/L

Money



CURRENCY: EURO (€)

Credit Cards

Most hotels and smarter restaurants accept credit cards; smaller guesthouses and some *tascas* (taverns) might not. Restaurants will usually display a sign outside with the cards they accept.

Digital Payment

Tap and pay is becoming ubiquitous, though some places may only accept Portuguese cards. You may even spot 'bitcoin accepted here' signs.

Taxes & Refunds

Prices in Portugal almost always include 23% VAT. Non-EU passport holders can claim back the VAT on goods from participating retailers – be sure to ask for the tax-back forms and get them stamped by customs. Refunds are processed at the airport or via post.

Tipping

Hotels €1 per bag is standard; gratuity for cleaning staff is at your discretion.

Restaurants In touristy areas, 10% is fine; few Portuguese ever leave more than a round-up to the nearest euro.

Taxis Not expected, but it's polite to round up to the nearest euro.

HOW MUCH FOR...

Museum entry
€5–€10

Discount card for attractions
From €6 (Porto)/€21 (Lisbon)

Train from Lisbon to Sintra/Cascais
€1.90 with a pre-charged ticket

Boat from Lisbon to Cacilhas
€1.28 with a pre-charged ticket

HOW TO... Save Some Euros

Students and people aged over 65 (with proof of age) can get reduced admission to many sights. If you plan to do a lot of sightseeing in the main cities, the Lisboa Card and Porto Card are for you; sold at tourist offices, these offer discounts or free admission to many attractions and free travel on public transport.



LOCAL TIP

Always carry a bit of cash and loose change with you. You might need it for that coffee and *pastel de nata* (custard tart) later on.

BUDGET TRAVEL

Portugal is one of the cheapest destinations in Western Europe. You don't have to spend a penny to lay on its beaches or hike its trails, and even a quality glass of wine costs less than a fiver here. The tourism boom has pushed up the prices in the capital and bigger cities like Porto, but it's still possible to find good deals, especially if you avoid the high season and eat at local restaurants.

Accommodation

Sleep Like Royalty

Pousadas de Portugal (pousadas.pt) is a network of old monasteries, convents, forts, castles and palaces transformed into luxury hotels by the Pestana Group, a member of Historic Hotels of Europe. Despite the modern facilities, each hotel respects the history and architectural traits of the former monuments. Prices vary according to location, but rates start at around €100 per night.

Find a Local Guesthouse

Alojamento Local (AL) is an umbrella term used to designate guesthouses, as well as short-term rentals available on major booking platforms. At this type of accommodation, breakfast is usually not provided or comes at an extra cost, private bathrooms might be optional, there is no 24/7 front-desk service, and in-room amenities are limited.

Go Rural

Privately owned country houses come in all shapes and sizes: country hotels (HR – Hotéis Rurais), old manors and palaces (TH – Turismo de Habitação), small country houses (CC – Casas de Campo), and farmhouses and wine estates (AG – Agro-turismo). A large breakfast of local products is usually included. Other meals may be provided upon request.

Budget Sleeps

Portugal has scores of hostels, particularly in Lisbon and Porto. If you're thinking bare-bones, smelly backpacker lodging, think again: Lisbon's hostels are among the best in Europe, with stylish designs, often in heritage buildings, and excellent amenities. High-season dorm beds typically cost around €20. Many hostels also offer simple doubles with shared bathroom, and some have small apartments.

HOW MUCH FOR A NIGHT IN A...

Pousada
€100–€120

Hostel dorm
€20

Guesthouse
€50



Camp Out

Camping options range from simple sites with modest facilities to large complexes of permanent campervans, often by a beach and crowded in the summer. Prices start at around €10 per person and per tent or campervan. Nearly all campgrounds have hot showers, electrical hookups and a cafe. Glamping is also increasing, with luxury tents and bungalows allowing you to stay amid nature without giving up comfort.

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM

Around 26.5 million people visited Portugal in 2023, which shows that the country is back to its pre-pandemic numbers. Such a high intake of tourists throughout the country, but especially in larger cities, has direct consequences for its permanent residents. Locals have witnessed a high rise in both rental and purchasing costs for housing, resulting from the conversion of homes into short-term rentals, in the worst cases forcing some to relocate. Prices of goods and services have gone up, and day-to-day, locals experience crowded streets and public transport. Consider staying in a small guesthouse or hotel. If that is not viable, opt for a short-term rental in a less crowded area instead.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GENA96/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, MATHISA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, SASHKIN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Family Travel

The great thing about Portugal for children is its manageable size and the range of sights and activities on offer. There's a small but well-run train network that connects key sites, great food on offer, and a wide selection of affordable accommodation. Children are welcome in most restaurants and cafes, where they're often free to roam around and play.

See the Sights

Child concessions (and family rates) often apply to tours, admission fees, accommodation and transport, with some discounts as high as 50% off the adult rate. However, the definition of 'child' varies between under five, 12 or 18 years, so always check. Even those attractions that don't offer a discounted fee, usually have a day, or time of the day, when entry is free for everyone.

Baby Facilities

- Nappy-changing facilities *(fraldário)* are available at airports but may be hard to find in restaurants.
- Most hotels have cots, although most only have a handful, so reserve one when booking your room. If requesting a *berço* (cot), ask for a larger room.
- Bring a light pram that easily folds with thicker wheels to deal with cobblestones and pack a baby carrier.

Eating Out

Many restaurants have a small selection of kid-friendly meals on the menu, usually under *menu para crianças* or *menu infantil* (children's menu). It usually includes dishes like hamburgers, pasta or a *bitoque* (steak and fries topped with a fried egg). Alternatively, you can ask for half-size portions *(meia-dose)*.

Getting Around

Discounts are available for children (usually under 12) on public transport. Those under four generally ride free. If you're hiring a car, ideally bring your own child safety seat rather than pay hire fees, which typically are about €10 per day.

KID-FRIENDLY PICKS

Oceanário de Lisboa (p91) Marvel at the marine life and explore an underwater world with the whole family.

Quinta da Regaleira (p116) Journey down the mystical well and feed the children's imagination with a tour of the gardens.

Serras de Aire e Candeeiros (p286) Kids will enjoy following the dinosaur footprint trail and be dazzled by the caves.

SandCity (p182) Snap a family photo with one of the hundred-plus giant sand sculptures.

Festival Internacional do Chocolate (p267) More giant sculptures – but these ones are made of chocolate.



CHILDREN'S FILMS

Unlike most countries in the EU, Portugal does not dub films into its own language. An exception is children's or animated films, which include screenings in the original version (VO; *versão original*) and dubbed (VP; *versão portuguesa*), making it a viable option for an afternoon of entertainment for the whole family. This cultural stance might contribute to the high English literacy rate in the country.

Health & Safe Travel

INSURANCE

Insurance is not mandatory to travel to Portugal, but it's good to have. Consider one that covers flight cancellation and medical care. Alternatively, or additionally, EU travellers can apply for the European Health Insurance Card (GHIC for UK residents) that covers emergency medical treatment free of charge.



Earthquakes

Portugal is in an active earthquake zone and experiences regular tremors. According to historical records, most earthquakes affecting mainland Portugal have an epicentre southwest of the Iberian Peninsula or in the Lower Tagus Valley. The most vulnerable areas are around Lisbon and the south of the Algarve. The last major earthquake in continental Portugal occurred in 1969.

Jellyfish & Sea Urchins

In general, jellyfish aren't a major problem in Portuguese waters, though there can be sightings along the south coast. Lifeguards are trained to deal with these issues. Watch for sea urchins around rocky beaches. If needles become embedded in skin, immerse the limb in hot water to relieve the pain. To avoid infection, visit a doctor and have the needles removed.

CANNABIS

Portugal has decriminalised the use and possession of all drugs. You may see people smoking cannabis on the street, but selling it is still illegal (except for medicinal use).

SWIM SAFE



Green flag
Safe to swim

Yellow flag
You may remain at the water's edge, but no swimming

Red flag
Danger, no swimming

Checkered flag
Beach is temporarily unmanned

Purple or white flag
Dangerous marine life (such as jellyfish) has been spotted.

Scams

Popular scams in the larger cities include raising funds on the street for local charities that don't exist in exchange for a fixed-fee photo, and selling 'drugs' openly during daytime, particularly in touristy, pedestrian-only streets. The only thing these fake dealers are selling is pressed bay leaves and flour.

THEFT

While streets in Portugal are relatively safe, there is still a risk of theft, with pickpocketing and vehicle break-ins being the most common occurrences. Be mindful of your possessions when walking through crowded areas, and avoid leaving items visible in your rented car. You should report stolen items directly to the police. When you file a complaint, the police will hand you a certificate which you can use to make an insurance claim back home.

FROM LEFT: PIXEL-SHOT/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, NICK KASHENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Food, Drink & Nightlife

When to Eat

Pequeno-almoço (breakfast, 8am to 10am) Generally a simple affair with coffee and a toast or pastry.

Almoço (lunch, noon to 3pm) Can be a two-course fixed-price special, or something more casual, depending on the spot.

Jantar (dinner, 7pm to 10pm) Generally features more elaborate (and slightly pricier) dishes, though some places specialise in *petiscos* (sharing plates).

Where to Eat

Tasca (tavern) Old-fashioned place with daily specials, fair prices and a local crowd.

Churrasqueira or Churrascaria (grill house) Specialising in chargrilled meats, specifically *frango no churrasco* (barbecue chicken).

Marisqueira (seafood restaurant) Serves up fish and crustaceans, often priced by the kilo.

Cervejaria (beer house) Either a brewery serving local beer or a traditional place similar to a *marisqueira* serving seafood dishes.

Adega (wine tavern) Usually decorated with wine casks and boasting a rustic, cosy ambience; expect hearty, inexpensive meals.



MENU DECODER

Couvert The bread, olives and other nibbles brought to your table; note that these are not free

Prato do dia Daily special or dish of the day

Ementa turística Tourist menu

Menu de degustação Degustation menu

Petiscos Small dishes to share; similar to tapas

Dose Portion, generally big enough for two people

Meia dose Half portion, big enough for one person

Sobremesa Dessert

Serviço Service charge

Marisco Seafood

Peixe Fish

Bacalhau Codfish

Vaca/Vitela Beef

Porco Pork

Peru Turkey

Frango Chicken

Queijo e fiambre Cheese and ham

Ovos Eggs

Vegetariano Vegetarian

Vinho Wine

Vinho branco White wine

Vinho tinto Red wine

Vinho verde Green wine

Vinho rosé Rosé wine

Jarro de vinho Wine jar

Garrafa de vinho Wine bottle

Cerveja Beer

Imperial/Fino Small beer in Lisbon/Porto

Caneca Pint of beer

HOW TO...

(Politely) Decline Couvert

So you've sat down at a restaurant, and the waiter drops an assortment of cheeses, bread and sometimes even shrimp at your table. As enticing as it looks, before you dig in, you should know that these 'offerings' aren't free. This is part of the *couvert*, or starters menu, and you'll be charged for each item you eat at the end of the meal. To avoid any surprises when you're about to pay, you can politely refuse the *couvert*, by saying one of the following things:

- Before the waiter puts it on the table: *Obrigado(a), mas não quero o couvert.* (Thank you, but I don't want the couvert).
- If it's already on the table: *Pode levar o couvert.* (You can take the couvert.)
- If you only want one item, you can say: *Pode deixar só isto* (You can just leave this) and point to the plate you want them to leave on the table.

HOW MUCH FOR A...

Pastel de nata
up to €1.10

Tosta mista (ham and cheese toast)
€3.50

Bica (espresso)
€1

Galão
€2

Lunch at a *tasca*
€10–€15

Dinner at a Michelin-star restaurant
€200

Beer
€1.50/3 for a small/large

Glass of wine
€3–€5

HOW TO...

Order a Coffee

The Portuguese weren't always a fan of the bitter taste of coffee. As the story goes, coffee sellers created a slogan to encourage customers to buy this new delicacy. Posters were hung saying *'Beba isto com açúcar'* (Drink this with sugar) across the country, but some say it was the Lisbon cafe **a Brasileira** (p74) that pioneered the idea. The advertising stunt worked, and the initials BICA became synonymous with ordering an espresso, particularly in the capital. The word is still in use today, but now there are a dozen more ways of ordering coffee in Portugal.



Coffee Count

Coffee beans are mostly imported from South America or Africa and roasted in Portugal. There is only one place that grows coffee in Portugal, and that's the island of São Jorge in the Azores.

Café or **bica** The regular espresso. You can order it in a smaller version (*café curto* or *bica curta*) or the full cup (*café cheio* or *bica cheia*).
Café duplo Double espresso.
Descafeinado Decaf espresso.
Café com cheirinho Coffee with a drop of *aguardente* (moonshine).
Carioca Weak espresso.
Italiano A very short espresso, similar to the Italian *ristretto*.
Pingado Espresso with a drop of milk.
Garoto Half milk, half coffee served in an espresso cup.
Abatanado Large dark coffee similar to an Americano.
Meia de leite Half coffee and half milk served in a large cup.
Galão One-quarter coffee, three-quarters milk in a tall glass cup. You can order it with more milk *(galão claro)* or less *(galão escuro)*.

GOING OUT

A night out in Portugal often starts with watching the sunset at the nearest viewpoint. Friends pick up a bottle of wine or beer from the grocers and cheer as the sun goes down. In case you were wondering, yes, you can drink outside here. After that, it's off to a restaurant for a bite to eat, before initiating the bar crawl. In Lisbon, that means hopping between the bars of Bairro Alto, while Porto residents head to the Galerias de Paris.

The best time to hit the clubs is around midnight to 1am. Any earlier, and you might find yourself dancing on your own.

Most clubs are quite casual when it comes to the dress code, but others can be slightly strict. When in doubt, check the club pictures before you head out. Once inside, you can stay as long as the music plays (often as late as 6am).

If you see a group of people dressed in black capes, you might have stumbled upon a student community. Every year, university freshmen go through a series of initiations known as *praxes*, which often involve drinking in cheap bars across the city. This is particularly common in student cities like Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto.

FROM LEFT: NINELL/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, MERILUXA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Responsible Travel

Climate Change & Travel

It's impossible to ignore the impact we have when travelling; Lonely Planet urges all travellers to engage with their travel carbon footprint, which will mainly come from air travel. While there often isn't an alternative, travellers can look to minimise the number of flights they take, opt for newer aircrafts and use cleaner ground transport, such as trains. One proposed solution—purchasing carbon offsets—unfortunately does not cancel out the impact of individual flights. While most destinations will depend on air travel for the foreseeable future, for now, pursuing ground-based travel where possible is the best course of action.

The **UN Carbon Offset Calculator** shows how flying impacts a household's emissions:

The **ICAO's carbon emissions calculator** allows visitors to analyse the CO2 generated by point-to-point journeys:

Support Local Artisans

Buy local artwork at **Portugal Manual** *(portugalmanual.com)*, a network of contemporary Portuguese artisans with their headquarters inside the Depozito shop in Lisbon, or contact artists directly by checking the curated experiences platform *(curatedexperiencesportugal.com)*.

Source Your Own Ingredients

Stock up on fresh ingredients at farmers markets like **Mercado Biológico do Príncipe Real** in Lisbon. You can also save on packaging by visiting one of Portugal's zero-waste shops. **Mapa Lixo Zero** *(lisboalixozero.zerowastelab.pt)* maps these across the capital.

Join a Farm Tour

Portugal Farm Experiences *(portugalfarmexperience.com)* runs tours in farms across the country that include foraging and cooking classes. You can also search for permaculture in Portugal to find specialised farms offering courses and volunteering programs.



Ditch the hire car and take the scenic route by bike or on foot along coastal and countryside trails. See *portuguesetrails.com* for details.

Walk through Portuguese forests and plant trees along the way with *plantaruma arvore.org*.

GO VEGAN OR VEGGIE

Opting for a plant-based diet can help reduce your carbon footprint. Enjoy a vegan take on traditional Portuguese dishes at **Ao 26** (p73) in the capital or head to **Outro Lado** (p157) in Faro to sample vegan cheese produced in the Costa Vicentina.

LJUPCO SMOKOVSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

MINIMISE FOOD WASTE

Download the app **Too Good To Go** *(toogoodtogo.pt)* to get discount deals from local cafes (yes, pastries included) and restaurants, while also preventing food waste.

Shop for Cork

Cork oak forests are among the most bio-diverse environments on the planet, with endangered species like the Iberian imperial eagle and Iberian lynx being dependent on these ecosystems. Portugal is one of the world's largest cork producers, and while most of it ends up sealing wine bottles, locals have found other creative purposes for this sustainable material, using it to make anything from coasters to shoes and umbrellas. Find some at **Cork & Company** *(corkandcompany.pt)* in Lisbon.

Save Water

Water is a precious resource in Portugal, especially in southern regions vulnerable to drought. Opt for shorter showers, reuse your towels and stick to the beach instead of hitting the big water parks.

Marvel at the Dark Skies

Stargaze at the **Dark Sky Alqueva** (p225), which covers around 10,000 sq km around Alentejo's Alqueva lake. The area has been developed under a strategy of integrated sustainable development and emphasises environmental preservation.

Give a Helping Hand

Stay longer and support local initiatives with **Portugal Voluntário** *(portugalvoluntario.pt)*. Seasonal programs can also be found on international volunteering websites such as **World Packers** *(worldpackers.com)* and **WWOOF** *(wwoof.net)*.

É Um Restaurante *(eumrestaurante.pt)* is a casual fine dining spot with a social impact, as they hire and train people without stable housing.

Grab a coffee at **Café Joyeux** *(cafejoyeux.com)*, which employs people with cognitive disabilities. The French association opened a branch in the Portuguese capital in 2021 and is now working with a local team here.

16

The Global Sustainability Index ranks Portugal in 16th place worldwide. The country has produced a roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, which includes targets to reduce greenhouse emissions and a shift to renewable energies.

RESOURCES

greenkey.global
Maps out accommodations with eco-friendly practices.

natural.pt
Information on the best of Portugal's protected areas, including hiking trails.

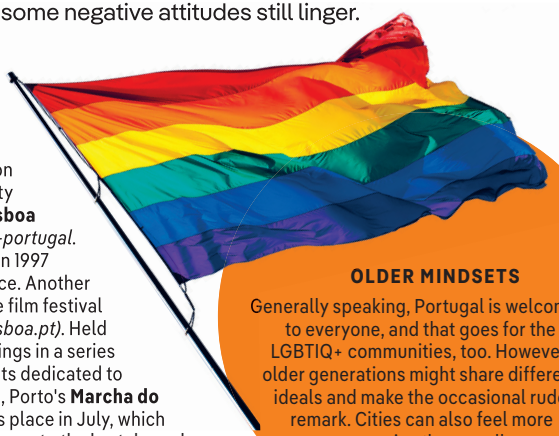
peggada.com
A platform highlighting sustainable projects across the country.

LGBTIQ+ Travellers

In 2021, Portugal came second in the Spartacus Gay Travel Index of the world's best LGBTIQ+ friendly countries. For a country that has spent decades under a dictatorship, liberal ideals are something of a novelty. Same-sex marriages were only allowed in 2010, and while adoption got approved in 2016, some negative attitudes still linger.

The Big Shindigs

If you're up for a rave, schedule your trip around Pride. Lisbon throws the biggest party in June. The **Arraial Lisboa Pride** *(lisboapride.ilga-portugal.pt)* had its first edition in 1997 and hasn't stopped since. Another noteworthy event is the film festival **Queer Lisboa** *(queerlisboa.pt)*. Held in late September, it brings in a series of screenings and events dedicated to queer folks. Meanwhile, Porto's **Marcha do Orgulho** (parade) takes place in July, which sadly started as a response to the brutal murder of a trans woman in 2006.



OLDER MINDSETS

Generally speaking, Portugal is welcoming to everyone, and that goes for the LGBTIQ+ communities, too. However, older generations might share different ideals and make the occasional rude remark. Cities can also feel more progressive than smaller rural towns.

Volunteering & Safe Networks

ILGA *(ilga-portugal.pt)* is the main LGBTIQ+ Association in Portugal. It runs the Centro LGBTI in Lisbon, which often hosts events and provides helpful resources for the queer community. You can also reach out to them online to learn more about volunteering opportunities.

GAY-FRIENDLY DISTRICTS

Lisbon has an area full of gay-friendly bars and clubs *(lisbongaycircuit.com)*. Seek out **Príncipe Real** (p66), home to the country's infamous gay club, Trumps, or **Bairro Alto** (p60), where bars cater to the whole queer family. Further north, in Porto, the action spreads through several neighbourhoods. The **Porto Gay Circuit** *(portogaycircuit.com)* is a good starting point to find your favourite hangout in town.

TOURISM RESOURCES

Variações *(www.variacoes.pt)* is a Portuguese LGBTIQ+ Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. Members include **The Late Birds** *(thelatebirdslisbon.com)*, one of the city's all-male gay hotels. **Proudly Portugal** *(proudlyportugal.pt)* is also an ideal resource for travel tips in Portugal, and **Time Out Lisbon** *(timeout.pt/lisboa/pt/gay)* has a gay section with news updates. To learn more about Lisbon's queer history, reach out to **Queer Lisbon Tour** *(queerlisbontour.com)*.

All Things Drag

Drag queens take over the stage at Lisbon's **Finalmente** (p66), one of the oldest gay clubs in the country, open since 1976.

ALEXANDER SPATARI/GETTY IMAGES ©

Accessible Travel

Portugal has accessibility challenges, but efforts are being made to promote inclusive tourism. Changes are slowly taking place across the country to accomodate all visitors, improving accommodation infrastructures and transport access and adapting museum exhibits.

Accessible Beaches

The Accessible Beach award honours beaches and other swimming areas for their wheelchair-friendly facilities. As of now, more than 200 places are certified:

Accommodation

Newer and larger hotels tend to have some adapted rooms, though the facilities may not be up to scratch; ask at the local *turismo*. Most campgrounds and some hostels have accessible facilities.

Airport

Portuguese airports offer a MyWay assistance service for passengers with reduced mobility. Request the service from your airline 48 hours before departure.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Shrine of Fatima MyEyes app helps visually impaired people navigate the shrine site through audio descriptions. Blind people can also interact with exhibits at the Museu da Covilhã, thanks to its ridged paintings and re-constructions of historical artefacts.

Metro & Train Stations

See Lisbon's accessible stations at *metro lisboa.pt/viajar/mapas-e-diagramas*. Porto's metro is better-equipped, as most platforms are lower. Train discounts are available for customers with special needs and their companions *(cp.pt/passageiros/en/discounts-benefits/Discounts/special-needs)*.

Lisbon's Cobbles

Lisbon's cobbled streets and hills may be difficult for wheelchair users or people who are visually impaired, but not impossible. The Baixa's flat grid and Belém are fine, and all the sights at Parque das Nações are accessible.

FESTIVALS

In 2019 the government launched the Festivais + Acessíveis project to distinguish events that present accessibility conditions for people with specific needs, including pregnant women, seniors, wheelchair users and those who are visually impaired.

RESOURCES

Accessible Portugal *(accessibleportugal.com)* Promotes accessible tourism and is the brains behind the TUR4all website and app (iOS only), a database of accessible tourist resources and services.

Tourism for All *(tourism-for-all.com)* Provides self-guided itineraries around Portugal along with personalised tour packages, transport rental, wheelchairs and personal assistance staff.

Portugal 4All Senses *(portugal4allsenses.pt)* Provides tailor-made tours that include sensory experiences tested by individuals with visual impairments.

Portugal was bestowed with the Accessible Tourist Destination 2019 award by the World Tourism Organisation in partnership with ONCE Foundation. It was the first country to be granted the title, recognising its efforts to promote tourism accessibility.

Wildfires in Portugal

Emerging heatwaves, lack of rain and neglected rural lands have all contributed to the rise of wildfires in Portugal. In 2022 the country had one of the highest percentages of burned land in Europe, with 1% of its territory being consumed by flames. Things get especially precarious in summer, with drylands acting as a fuel.

Travellers on the road can easily be caught off-guard by these events, especially if they're not keeping track of the local news. The following covers a short background on Portuguese wildfires, what to do in case of emergency and how to help out when the dust settles.

Tragic Memories

Sixty-six people died in the large fire that broke out in the region of Pedrogão Grande in June 2017. Many of these casualties were attempting to escape the flames by car. More recently, a series of fires hit Serra da Estrela. The highest mountain in continental Portugal saw 20,000 hectares of its territory burn in the summer of 2022. The fire raged for 11 days, causing lasting effects on the habitat of local fauna and flora. If you're travelling through fire-prone areas in peak summer, such as forests and rural sites, always speak to locals about weather conditions and follow the directions of local emergency services if you do happen to get caught near a wildfire.

The Causes & the Fighters

Many people regard the eucalyptus as Portugal's biggest fire hazard, but there's a lot more at stake. The long periods of drought and the strong Atlantic winds can also contribute to the matter. With people leaving for the city, often chasing better work opportunities, many rural properties are left unattended, and it only takes one spark to start a flame.

Nearly 90% of firefighters are volunteers *(bombeiros voluntários)* as opposed to professional firefighters *(bombeiros sapadores)*. These are people from various backgrounds who use their spare time to help their local fire department.

Safety First

If you're planning to host a barbecue in a park, make sure to check the fire risk for your area first. When driving, don't throw your cigarette buts out the window.

Emergency

112 is the general emergency number in Portugal. It connects you to the fire service, as well as medical services. If you're calling in English, try and speak slowly. Avoid making any rush calls and always follow the directions provided.

Helping Out

As Portugal struggles with the effects of the fires, it is crucial to rehabilitate the land. Initiatives like **Plantar Uma Árvore** *(plantarumaarvore.org)* help to clear out invasive species associated with fire risk and replant native trees.

STAY TUNED

- Fire-prone areas can be found across the country, but higher-risk regions often include places like Vila Real (in the north), Castelo Branco (in the centre) and the Algarve down south.
- **IMPA** *(ipma.pt/en/riscoincendio/rcm.pt)* The latest reports on wildfire risk.
- **Fogos.pt** Provides a map with all the current fires, using a red marker to represent the ones that are still active.
- **European Forest Fire Information System** *(effis.jrc.ec.europa.eu)* For wildfire data across Europe.

Nuts & Bolts

OPENING HOURS

Opening hours will generally decrease in the shoulder and low seasons.

Banks 8.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday

Bars 7pm to 2am

Cafes 9am to 7pm

Clubs 11pm to 4am Thursday to Saturday

Restaurants noon to 3pm and 7pm to 10pm

Shopping malls 10am to 10pm

Shops 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 7pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm Saturday

Museums 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Sunday (some close at lunchtime)

Smoking

Smoking, including of e-cigarettes, is not allowed in public spaces, except within designated areas. Most restaurants and cafes don't have a smoking section.

GOOD TO KNOW

Time zone GMT/UTC in winter, GMT/UTC plus 1 hour in summer

Country code +351

Emergency number 112

Population 10.34 million

Public Toilets

Public toilets exist in Portugal but aren't always in the best state. Those that are regularly cleaned usually have a charge of €0.50, especially in train stations. The best way to get around this is to find the nearest shopping mall or duck into a cafe (be sure to ask or order something first).

Weights & Measures

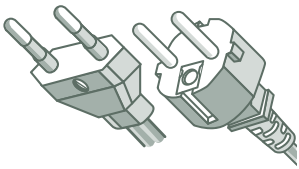
Portugal uses the metric system. Decimals are indicated by commas, thousands by points.

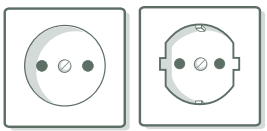
Water

Tap water is safe to drink and of good quality throughout Portugal.

Electricity

230V/50Hz





Type C
220V/50Hz

Type F
230V/50Hz

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

There are 13 national public holidays in Portugal, when some businesses and non-essential services may be closed. Additional regional holidays include patron saint celebrations in summer.

New Year's Day
1 January

Carnaval Tuesday
February/March – the day before Ash Wednesday

Good Friday
March/April

Liberty Day 25 April

Labour Day 1 May

Corpus Christi
May/June – ninth Thursday after Easter

Portugal Day
10 June – also known as Camões and Communities Day

Feast of the Assumption
15 August

Republic Day
5 October

All Saints' Day
1 November

Independence Day
1 December

Feast of the Immaculate Conception
8 December

Christmas Day
25 December

Language

Portuguese comes from the Romance language family and is closely related to Spanish, French and Italian. It's descended from the colloquial Latin spoken by Roman soldiers.

Basics

Hello. Olá. *o-laa*
Goodbye. Adeus. *a·de·oosh*
Yes. Sim. *seeng*
No. Não. *nowng*
Please. Por favor. *poor fa·vor*
Thank you. Obrigado/a (m/f). *o·bree·gaa·doo/a*
Excuse me. Faz favor! *faash fa·vor*
Sorry. Desculpe. *desh·kool·pe*
What's your name? Qual é o seu nome? *kwaal e oo se·oo no·me*
My name is ... O meu nome é ... *oo me·oo no·me e ...*
Do you speak English? Fala inglês? *faa·la eeng·glesh*
I (don't) understand. (Não) Entendo. *(nowng) eng·teng·doo*

Directions

Where's the ...?
Onde é ...? *ong·de e ...*
Could you please write it down?
Podia escrever isso, por favor? *poo·dee·ashkre·ver ee·soo poor fa·vor*
Can you show me (on the map)?
Pode-me mostrar (no mapa)? *po·de·me moosh·traar (noo maa·pa)*

Signs

Entrada/Saída Entrance/Exit
Aberto/Fechado Open/Closed
Há Vaga Rooms Available
Não Há Vaga No Vacancies
Informação Information
Esquadra da Polícia Police Station
Proibido Prohibited
Casa de Banho Toilets
Homens Men
Mulheres Women
Quente/Frio Hot/Cold

Time

What time is it? Que horas são? *kee o·rash sowng*
It's (10) o'clock. São (dez) horas. *sowng (desh) o·rash*
Half past (10). (Dez) e meia. *(desh) e may·a*
in the morning. da manhã. *da ma·nyang*
in the afternoon. da tarde. *da taar·de*
in the evening. da noite. *da noy·te*
yesterday. ontem. *ong·teng*
tomorrow. amanhã. *aa·ma·nyang*

Emergencies

Help! Socorro! *soo·ko·rroo*
Go away! Vá-se embora! *vaa·se eng·bo·ra*
Call ...! Chame ...! *shaa·me ...*
a doctor. um médico. *oong me·dee·koo*
the police. a polícia. *a poo·lee·sya*

NUMBERS

1
um *oong*
2
dois *doysh*
3
três *tresh*
4
quatro *kwaa·troo*
5
cinco *seeng·koo*
6
seis *saysh*
7
sete *se·te*
8
oito *oy too*
9
nove *no ve*
10
dez *desh*

DONATIONS TO ENGLISH

Numerous – you may recognise **albino**, **brocade**, **dodo**, **molasses** and **commando**

DISTINCTIVE SOUNDS

Throaty 'r' (similar to French) and nasal vowels (pronounced as if you're trying to force the sound through the nose).

False Friends

Warning: many Portuguese words look like English words but have a different meaning altogether, eg salsa *saal·sa* is 'parsley', not 'sauce' (which is molho *mo·lyoo* in Portuguese).

Must-Know Grammar

Portuguese has both a formal and an informal word for 'you' (*você* and *tu* respectively). Verbs have a different ending for each person – like the English 'I do' vs 'he/she does'.

Street Talk

Slang in a foreign language is tricky, but listen out for these words and phrases and even have a go at using them.

tudo bem? – more of an end-all phrase than an actual expression of concern from the person asking how you are

então – a flexible word that changes meaning at each inflection. It can be a short form of a concerned question or a replacement for 'hello' *(então?)*, a polite 'watch it' *(então!)*, or a pause someone makes before starting a lengthy explanation *(então...)*

t'fona-me – a super-contracted short form for *telefoname* (call me), mainly used in the Greater Lisbon area

pá – translates as bread, however, is usually used as an interjection meaning 'man!' or 'dude!'. Depending on context, *pá* is also used in the place of 'uhh...' when you are thinking.

tipo – used in the same context as how many English speakers use 'like', however, it literally translates as 'type'

WHO SPEAKS PORTUGUESE?

The global distribution of the Portuguese language began during the period know as *Os Descobrimentos* (the Discoveries), the era of Portugal's colonial expansion into Africa, Asia and South America. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the peninsular nation had enormous economic, cultural and political influence. The empire's reach can be seen today in the number of countries besides Portugal where Portuguese still has the status of an official language – Brazil in South America; Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique in Africa; and Macau and East Timor in Asia.





STORYBOOK

Our writers delve deep into different aspects of Portuguese life

A History of Portugal in 15 Places

This is not an itinerary – it's a journey through time from prehistory to modernity.

Joana Taborda

p450

Meet the Portuguese

Do expect a friendly welcome. But don't be offended if people are late for dinner or say the odd rude word.

Joana Taborda

p454

Fifty Years of Democracy: What Changed?

In 2024 Portugal celebrated the 50th anniversary of the revolution that ended fascism. But Estado Novo is a fresh memory.

Sandra Henriques

p456

Made by Hand

Discover the intangible cultural heritage of Portugal's artisans.

Marisa Paska

p459

Land of Waves & Surfers

Portugal has always looked to the sea, and now it does so with a surfboard under its arm.

Marlene Marques

p462

Largo do Carmo (p74), Lisbon

KERRY MURRAY/LONELY PLANET ©

A HISTORY OF PORTUGAL IN 15 PLACES

Portugal's is a story of comings and goings: the civilisations and invaders who came and left; the explorers who left and returned with new ideas and riches; and the rulers who left their mark and the rulers who were displaced. This is a journey through time, from prehistory to modernity.

LOCAL LEGEND HAS it that Odysseus, on his journey back home, was the first to port on these coastal shores. Having found unwalled Lisbon, he set out to sea again, driven by homesickness. What he left is the story of what would become the future capital and a feeling that the Portuguese would identify as *saudade*.

Rooted in the hearts of the Portuguese, *saudade* is a sense of deep longing and nostalgia for a person, place or period of time. It is in the poems written about sailors gone to sea during the age of exploration, in the myths of a dead king that will return on a foggy day to save Portugal from its foreign invaders, and the tales of grandparents who lived through a dictatorship.

Portugal still lives in a constant limbo, attached to its past, yet wanting to embrace the future. We've been taught to look at our history with rose-tinted glasses, taking pride in the conquests of our ancestors and ignoring the inherent consequences. But it seems we're finally pushing these boundaries, with institutions and artists coming together to portray a more accurate view of the country's background and redefining its future as a modern, creative and welcoming nation.

1. Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa

SAVED FROM THE FLOOD

Côa has been called the largest open-air collection of Paleolithic rock art in the world. Over 1200 carvings have been uncovered, some going back 22,000 years. The first discovery was in the early 1990s, as Portugal's biggest energy company was excavating the area. The prospect of flooding the valley and losing access to the carvings forever enraged the public and many international supporters. In 1995, a new government was elected and lost no time in cancelling the dam project. The Battle of Côa, as it became known, was a rare victory of heritage and culture.

For more on Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa, see page 376

2. Conímbriga

A HISTORY OF LUXURY

During the reign of the emperor Vespasian (69 to 79 CE), this small town in Lusitania (ancient Portugal) became fabulously wealthy, providing homes to 10,000 people at its height. That is until the barbarians invaded it three centuries later. There are plenty of swish villas in Portugal today, from the Algarve to Estoril, but maybe none

match the size and opulence of the House of Cantaber. This 1st-century Conímbriga residence was one of the largest in the western Roman world and featured its own private thermal baths, while the Casa dos Repuxos (House of Fountains) had 569 sq metres of mosaic floor.

For more on Conímbriga, see page 308

3. Mértola

RESTORED ISLAMIC LEGACY

Portugal was part of the Islamic Umayyad Empire for five centuries, from the Muslims' arrival in 711 to the start of the Christian reconquest in 1139. Today just 0.5% of the population is Muslim, and for generations, Portuguese education and literature painted the 'Moors' as an existential enemy. In recent years, scholars revealed the legacy of this period: one estimating that 19,000 words in modern Portuguese have their origins in Arabic. Since 1978, archaeologists working in Mértola unearthed evidence of daily life at a time when the majority of Portuguese were Muslim. In 2001 a biannual festival emerged to celebrate the town's, and by extension, Portugal's Islamic roots.

For more on Mértola, see page 252

Conímbriga (p308)



STOCKPHOTOSART/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

4. Castelo de Guimarães

A STATEMENT IN STONE

The rectangular Gothic towers of Castelo de Guimarães announce the arrival of the medieval period – and Portugal as a nation. The country's first capital was located here, southeast of Braga: it was purportedly the residence of Count Henry and the birthplace of his son Dom Afonso Henriques, who would become the first king of Portugal. The fact that the fortress was built to defend the land from Norman invaders from the north, as well as Moors from the south, tells you much about the world into which the new nation emerged.

For more on Castelo de Guimarães, see page 412

5. Convento de Cristo

A PLACE OF QUESTS

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1983, the Templar Castle and the Convent of the Knights of Christ in Tomar is a vast site in central Portugal that captures seven centuries of the country's history – and looks even further back in time. This was originally a Roman place of worship. The convent's impressive Gothic architecture prompted director Terry Gilliam to shoot his 2018 *Don Quixote* movie here. The filming crew was later accused of damaging the building and gardens. But it looks like this faux pas has already been overlooked, with the convent opening its doors again to stage Netflix's *Damsel* in 2022.

For more on Convento de Cristo, see page 290

6. Universidade de Coimbra

LEARNING AND LATE NIGHTS

The institution of Universidade de Coimbra has been around since 1290, making it one of Europe's oldest universities. In 1537, the university made a permanent move north from Lisbon to its current site. Coimbra remains very much a medieval and a university town in the vein of Germany's Heidelberg or England's Cambridge, though with a more humble vibe. As well as the raucous nightlife you get with a student population – especially during the Queima das Fitas celebrations – there is also a political edge here; witness the graffiti statements outside the *repúblicas*

(communal student dwellings) addressing current political issues.

For more on Universidade de Coimbra, see page 306

7. Mercado de Escravos

WELCOME TO A NEW LIFE

For millions of tourists every year, Faro Airport is the entry point for a relaxing, sun-drenched Algarve holiday. An hour west, in Lagos, there is another arrivals point: it is here is that the first African slaves arrived on European soil in the 15th century. In 2016 the *mercado* became a museum documenting the slave trade. The new curators first had to fight the army, which had been using the place as a recruitment centre and were reluctant to leave. For some, the exhibit still falls short of delivering the full extent of the country's connection with this dark period.

For more on Mercado de Escravos, see page 196

8. Mosteiro dos Jerónimos

WEALTH AND A NEW STYLE

If you want to see the moment of Portugal's peak global power and wealth, seek out the style of architecture unique to the country: Manueline. You are looking at a combination of Late Gothic and mudejar elements, where maritime ornaments and representations of the age of exploration are prevalent. The style emerged as the profits from the spice trade began to flow in the 16th century. It was given its name by the Brazilian Francisco Varnhagen, a 19th-century author, following his visit to Jerónimos. He named it after King Manuel I, as his reign (1495–1521) coincided with the development of the monastery.

For more on Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, see page 85

9. Terreiro do Paço

A HISTORY OF PORTUGAL IN ONE PLACE

This huge, three-sided square, also known as the Praça do Comércio, is a microcosm of modern Portuguese history – and its contradictions. The plaza was the centrepiece of Lisbon's rebirth after the earthquake of 1755. It was designated as a centre of commerce, but became the headquarters for the most important government departments. It is dominated by a statue of King José I. Yet this is also the site where the monarchy effectively ended, when Carlos I and his eldest son were assassinated in 1908. That was designed as a blow for freedom – in a place where Lisbon's first consignments of slaves arrived.

For more on Terreiro do Paço, see page 222

RADU BERCAN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

10. Martinho da Arcada

WHERE IDEAS BREW

It's not just about grand squares and official monuments – history has also been made in corner cafes such as this one. It was here that writer Fernando Pessoa had his last bica (espresso) in 1935, three days before his death. Since its opening in 1782, Martinho da Arcada became a meeting point for politicians, artists and writers, Pessoa included. He was a regular, writing many of his poems here. Indeed, one of Pessoa's famous portraits depicts him sitting at the cafe, painted by his friend Almada Negreiros, who met him on that last visit.

For more on Martinho da Arcada, see page 75

11. Largo do Carmo

DESTRUCTION AND REBIRTH

Another symbolic spot that ties together the 18th and 20th centuries, this square in Lisbon is home to the Carmo Convent, which was all but destroyed in the 1755 earthquake and has remained in ruins to remind people of this tragic event.

It is also where modern Portugal was born. It was here that the last leader of the totalitarian New State surrendered in 1974 at the culmination of the Revolution of the Carnations. It may also be the first revolution to be started by a Eurovision Song Contest entry; Portugal's 1974 song was used as a signal for the military to act.

For more on Largo do Carmo, see page 74

12. Fátima

A VISION IN THE VILLAGE

On 13 May 1917, and in each subsequent month until October that year, three young peasant children, Lúcia dos Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto, reportedly saw a woman who identified herself as the Lady of the Rosary. On 13



MAAT (p87)

October, a crowd (generally estimated at 70,000) gathered at Fátima and witnessed a 'miraculous solar phenomenon' immediately after the lady had appeared to the children.

Pope John Paul II travelled here several times and announced the beatification of the children. Pope Francisco joined the centenary of the apparitions in 2017.

For more on Fátima, see page 286

13. Ponte 25 de Abril

BREAKING THE BORDERS

Ponte 25 de Abril is the first bridge to connect Lisbon to the other side of the Rio Tejo, making the fantastic beaches of the Costa da Caparica a lot more accessible to *Lisboetas*. But bridges, like many places in this list, are symbolic as much as functional. Originally, those Lisbon-dwellers crossed a bridge named after the dictator Salazar (it was opened in 1966, four years before his death). Its new name commemorates the date of the revolution that overthrew the dictatorship he founded.

For more on Ponte 25 de Abril, see page 102

14. Parque das Nações

WATER, DESIGN AND FIBRE OPTICS

The 1998 Lisbon World Exposition (universally known as the 'Expo') was a big moment in the creation of modern Portugal. Parque das Nações is the legacy: a redeveloped waterfront area that featured a new wave of architecture for an hitherto conservative city. The World Expo also plays a role in Lisbon's 21st-century story as a hub for digital nomads, hosting the annual Web Summit, and it's home to one of the country's largest concert venues, regularly welcoming big international acts.

For more on Parque das Nações, see page 89

15. MAAT

A CREATIVE SPARK

Portugal's latest landmark is the Museum of Art, Architecture & Technology (MAAT), created from the shell of a former power station in 2016. Designed by British architect Amanda Levete, it blends seamlessly with Lisbon's waterfront landscape, with a wave-shaped rooftop that has since become a favourite sunset hangout. Its exhibits provide a dialogue between politics, technology and the art world, where national and international creativity thrive, a bond that represents Portugal today.

For more on the MAAT, see page 87

MEET THE PORTUGUESE

Do expect a friendly welcome. But don't be offended if people are late for dinner or say the odd rude word. JOANA TABORDA introduces her people.

THERE'S A SAYING in Portuguese that goes: 'Braga prays, Porto works, Coimbra studies and Lisbon has fun.' And the facts sometimes back up the stereotypes.

Braga still holds on to its religious beliefs, but elsewhere in the country, this is starting to fizzle out. In the 2011 census, 88% of the population identified as Catholic, but the number has been going down since the '90s.

Porto is still a hardworking city, but it also knows how to party, some say better than the capital. You'll often hear northerners swear. It's a part of the daily vocabulary – naughty words just flow out when they feel at ease with someone.

The *Alentejanos* get teased for taking life at a pretty slow pace.

Everyone agrees that people in Lisbon can be a bit rude – except the *Lisboetas*. We like to think we don't have an accent, but beyond the capital, everyone catches how we eat our vowels – *'brigad'* instead of *'obrigado'* (thanks). Maybe we are just in too much of a hurry to enunciate.

Differences aside, there are also plenty of similarities. The Portuguese are usually the last people to arrive at a party. Being late can be a pet peeve for many outsiders who are not used to this carefree attitude, but live here long enough and you may surrender to it.

Who & How Many

Portugal has a population of just over 10 million. The majority (95%) are of Portuguese descent. The remaining 5% are composed of groups of Brazilians, Han Chinese and people from Portugal's former colonies in Africa and Asia.

Many of us also share the same name: I must know 14 other 'Joanas'. So you get categorised: João from football, João from work, João from the cafe down the road – and Joana the writer. Portuguese parents are only allowed to choose from a handful of names to give at birth, though the list has been slowly adapted with the rise of immigrants in the country.

Indeed, a fifth of the babies born in Portugal in 2023 had foreign mothers. The birthrate here is on a downturn, with the country having one of the lowest in the EU. There is a huge elderly population and many young people are choosing to move abroad for work opportunities. In 2019, 80,000 of us left, and more than a quarter went to the UK. However, the increase in remote working opportunities in recent years has led many people to return.

There is one thing that all Portuguese seem to have in common and that is how welcoming they are. This outward-facing land has certainly adopted the world language: Portugal is ranked the 8th best country in the world for English proficiency. Pretty much everywhere you go, you'll find someone who speaks English. Even if they don't, they'll often go out of their way to help you pick a restaurant, choose a dish or simply give you directions to the nearest cafe, where you might bump into João.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHARLESY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, CAROLYNE PAREN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, DZUREK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, DE VISU/SHUTTERSTOCK ©









I'M PORTUGUESE. BUT IT'S COMPLICATED...

I was born in Lisbon, but, like many other Portuguese, I have roots all over. My maternal grandparents originally came from Goa, and spent most of their lives in Mozambique, before moving to Portugal in the 1970s following the fall of the dictatorship. My parents met in Brazil, but they too decided to return to Portugal to raise my brother and me.

Lisbon wouldn't be the same without its diverse communities; some arrived shortly after decolonisation, others came here more recently. In 2020, 183,875 Brazilians migrated to Portugal, making it one of the largest diasporas in the country. At the same time, the number of British in Portugal has more than tripled in the last decade from 14,096 to 46,238, fuelled in some part by Brexit. This increasing diversity has contributed to the country's economic growth, with an influx of capital and new talents. But it has also highlighted faults in the system, especially regarding issues such as affordable housing.

Revolution of the Carnations parade, Liberty Day, Porto
DE VISU/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

FIFTY YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: WHAT CHANGED?

In 2024 Portugal celebrated the 50th anniversary of the revolution that ended fascism. But Estado Novo is a fresh memory. By Sandra Henriques

PORTUGAL NOW HAS more days of democracy than dictatorship. But many of those who were born in fascism and lived through it are still alive to tell stories from that past, and they share it with the younger generations as a cautionary tale.

God, Fatherland & Family

A young and inexperienced First Republic (established in 1910); political confusion (progressive, first, then liberal, dictatorial towards the end – depending on how different historians interpret it); and social unrest (45 governments in 16 years). In the face of all this turbulence, after a nationalist revolution, the National Dictatorship (1926–33) put things 'in order'. Salazar then rebranded the regime as Estado Novo (1933–74).

Oppressive, controlling, conservative and highly religious (Catholic), the new government mimicked its leader's core values and beliefs, summed up in the motto *'Deus, Pátria e Família'* ('God, Fatherland and Family').

The three Fs – Fátima (a religious pilgrimage sight), football and fado – were the government-sanctioned sources of entertainment and culture. Censors 'blue pencilled' every newspaper, film, theatre play and book 'for the good of the nation'. Some anti-regime journalists and artists found creative ways to get away with it; others left Portugal in exile.

The poor were uneducated (ignorant people won't question their leader), forced their kids into child labour (and still, the more they worked, the less they had), and half-starved. I'm the granddaughter and daughter of that generation, and the effects of brainwashing are deep – in the same sentence, some family members will go from being appreciative of how things improved with democracy to the nostalgia of 'those happy days'. Poor but content.

The Foremothers of Feminism

Most women weren't allowed to vote under fascist rule, and the married ones needed their husband's written consent to travel abroad, open a bank account and use birth control. Having paid jobs outside of the home after marrying? Absolutely out of the question.

Resistance and organised movements started in the 1940s but were quickly dismantled by the regime – however, each time, they regrouped. Everything reached a boiling point in 1972 (Salazar had died in 1970, but his grip remained strong post-mortem), when 'the three Marias' published the collective feminist book *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* (New Portuguese


O POVO É
QUEM MAIS
ORDENA!
FASCISMO
NUNCA MAIS

Letters) – to protect each other and make their book every women's, they never revealed who authored each text. Censored, the book's public life was short-lived, and, accused of writing pornographic material, the three women faced trial heavily reported in foreign newspapers and TV channels – the government didn't control the foreign press, therefore news spread fast abroad.

The fall of fascism two years later didn't have immediate effects on women's rights as they had hoped. Currently, albeit standing on the shoulders of their foremothers, women still struggle – 50 years of democracy hasn't been enough time to change a country's mentality. Despite some wins, the path is long and winding, and a lot of the oppression the 'three Marias' wrote about Portugal five decades ago unfortunately still rings true today.

Is the Far-Right Rising?

The rise of conservative, extreme right-wing political parties is a global issue. But in Portugal, a country that just freed itself from a dictatorship, it's almost a personal offence to see parties like Chega grow from one (2019) to 12 (2022) and to 50 elected members of Parliament (2024). As of now, it's the country's third-largest political force, preceded by the centre-right coalition AD and the socialist PS.

The party founder and leader follows the same formula as others elsewhere: disguises hate speech as freedom of speech, is very active on social media (where the younger, more impressionable future voters spend unsupervised time), tells people who are disillusioned with politics what they want to hear, and spreads fake news (easily debunked).

Salazar's ghost is ever-present with every mention of 'family values' and talks against gender identity and women's reproductive rights. They only grow as a political force because their ideals still resonate with a few.

Is it problematic? Not yet. Even with 20% of the Parliament seats, they don't have lawmaking power – they'd need the support of other political parties, which is unlikely to happen. Although they might agree on some issues, the major parties reject associating with Chega.

'Without Memory, There is No Future.'

By 24 March 2022, Portugal had been a democracy for 17,500 days. For the first time in the country's history, we had lived in a democratic state for more days than under a dictatorship – the regime had lasted 17,499 days. We weren't completely out of the COVID-19 pandemic yet, so the effusive public celebrations happened on social media. Regardless of political affiliation, all recognised the value of democracy.

Two years later, on the 50th anniversary of Revolução dos Cravos (Revolution of the Carnations), an estimated 219,000 people marched down Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon. Data analysis consultant PSE said it was the largest crowd ever at the annual event. Older attendants who lived before and through the revolution claimed they had never seen so many people on the streets since 1 May 1974, the first time the Portuguese celebrated Labour Day in complete freedom.

Most of the people that day, wielding red carnations (the incidental symbol of the revolution) and chanting the nonpartisan slogan *'25 de Abril sempre, fascismo nunca mais'* (25 April always, fascism never again), grew up in a democracy, never experienced the restrictions of the Estado Novo regime, and yet carried the torch without a second thought.

Museu do Aljube in Lisbon keeps the memory alive of what living in an oppressive regime was like, of the persecuted ones, and of the 1976 Constitution's fundamental rights that the Portuguese sometimes take for granted.

MADE BY HAND

Portugal's artisans are crafting a bright future from ancient traditions and new inspirations.
By Marisa Paska

THE HISTORY OF artisan work starts at the beginning of time. Manual creation – making things with our hands – has been a part of human culture since the stone ages. Back then, early humans manipulated rocks into tools in order to facilitate the completion of daily tasks – utility was always the first driver of artisan work. Over the years however, artisans perfected their techniques and aesthetic aspects began to take hold.

Culture & Craft Through the Ages

Throughout history, the 'best' artisans of their time have been tapped by bishops and kings, commissioned to create works in reverence of rulers and gods. These commissions solidified the artisan's place in history, allowing masters to make incredible pieces which would come to represent both a culture and an era. It's exactly this representation that makes artisan work so important – artisan creations are as much a record of a moment in time as they are of a place and its peoples.

Portugal's artisan history is interwoven into the fabric of the nation. From the elaborate silk embroidery of Castelo Branco to the palm leaf woven baskets of the Algarve, the wool capes and blankets from the Serra da Estrela (p324), Barcelo's roosters (p403), Arraiolos' woven rugs (p226), or the handmade entrudo masks of Lamego, each type of work is representative of the village or region that it comes from, giving depth and breadth to the story of the people, as well as highlighting their connection to the earth and its raw materials.

These are patrimonial practices that ought to be ever-lasting. However, there exists a worry that the ancient knowledge will die out due to a lack of importance placed on the work.

In Aveiro, in the Largo da Apresentação (No. 13), you'll find Sr Cesar Brilhoso in his shop, selling all sorts of woven basketry. The (rather messy) nameless store also unintentionally serves as a veritable catalogue of all the different basket-weaving techniques in Portugal. Brilhoso sells wares of artisans from across the country; however his shop also ends up being a record of what traditions have died out. He can tell you when the last maker of a particular weave has passed, taking the eternal knowledge with them.

From Historic Knowledge to New Traditions

Luckily, Portugal is a place of generations. It's a country that respects its own traditions, history and ancestral knowledge – making it no surprise that a new generation of artisans are preserving their own cultural heritage, by taking age-old artisan techniques and making them their own.

You'll find these makers in their workshops, experimenting with new motifs for old materials. Iva Viana from Viana do Castelo (p408) makes decorative, sculptural works from plaster, taking up the plaster sculpting tradition that her city has been known for since the 16th century; or Maria João Gomes, the artisan behind Palmas Douradas, making woven Algarvian palm-leaf pieces using ancestral techniques passed down to her.

These new artisans are embracing both social and traditional media to promote their works – or joining collectives that do so for them – bridging the gap that previously left even the most impressive artisan works unrecognised.

Some of these collectives, like Passa ao Futuro, based in the Alentejo region, focus part of their efforts on the documentation of the intangible cultural heritage of Portuguese artisans, while others, like Portugal Manual are more dedicated to the support and promotion of new artisans, with a focus on cultural and commercial promotion, particularly of those preserving traditions.

PORTUGAL IS A PLACE OF GENERATIONS. IT'S A COUNTRY THAT RESPECTS ITS OWN TRADITIONS, HISTORY AND ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE – MAKING IT NO SURPRISE THAT A NEW GENERATION OF ARTISANS ARE PRESERVING THEIR OWN CULTURAL HERITAGE.

According to Filipa Belo, the woman behind Portugal Manual, all of the artisans she represents work with locally-found materials and produce their wares on a small scale, sustainably, by hand and using ancient techniques that have been adapted to contemporary designs. For example, the women behind the brand A Capucha, who are handmaking modern versions of the wool capes used by sheep-herders in the Serra da Estrela. While the material and techniques are traditional, the designs have been updated to better fit contemporary aesthetics.

There are other groups, like MOBA (Mercado de Ofícios do Bairro Alto; p66), who beyond working to promote new artisans, are giving space and recognition to their long-established counterparts, like the seventh-generation metalwork artisans at Latoaria Maciel (p66), whose timeless metal fixtures have literally been lighting up cities since 1810. Some of these collectives even have their own direct-to-consumer shops, like Depozito, a contemporary and traditional artisan depot jointly created by A Vida Portuguesa and Portugal Manual.

According to this older generation of artisans, techniques are dying out due to a lack of interest by the younger generations, principally because it's difficult to make a comfortable living in Portugal from artisan work. Which is where governments and larger organisations have thankfully stepped in.

Promoting & Preserving Portugal's Cultural Heritage

Realising the importance of this intangible cultural heritage, groups such as the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (p96) offer opportunities to promote and preserve artisan work. The Gulbenkian funds artistic residencies, exhibitions and even museums – like the Manuel Cargaleiro museum in Castelo Branco (p311), which provides an incredible record of both traditional and contemporary *azulejo* works. Even the Portuguese government is on the case, continuing to offer the National Artisan Award (O Prémio Nacional do Artesanato) as it has since 1987, in recognition of the nation's creative peoples. The prize, which is divided into categories, puts a spotlight on the best makers in their respective crafts but also provides much-needed monetary stimulation towards the continued creation of artisan works, just like the kings and churches of old.

Visiting a country is as much about exploring a place as it is about getting to know its peoples, traditions, and cultural heritage. As you wander around the country, marveling at incredible *azulejo* facades or the stacks of colorful handwoven blankets at the local market, you'll realise quickly that Portugal, without its artisans, would be a story only half told.

Handicraft display, Óbidos
NICOLA MESSANA PHOTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

LAND OF WAVES & SURFERS

Portugal has always looked to the sea, and now it does so with a surfboard under its arm. By Marlene Marques

WHETHER IT'S SUMMER or winter, rain or shine, solid swells, or just small waves, there isn't a beach here today that doesn't have a surfer in the water. Surfing has developed exponentially in Portugal, and you can see this when you visit any of the main coastal towns and cities.

Portugal's Coastline

Anyone flying over Portugal, ready to land at one of its two main airports, is greeted by the endless shoreline of this country, which, as the Portuguese say, is 'planted by the sea'. With a coastline of 943km, the ocean has always been present in this nation's history, from the era of the Maritime Discoveries to the fishing culture that has developed and accompanied various communities over time.

In fact, most of the country's economic activity is found on the coast, and the population is fleeing to this area, leaving an increasingly deserted interior.

The Portuguese have always had a strong connection to the sea, so it's not surprising that this is where they found one of the fastest-growing sporting activities: surfing.

Surfing's Rapid Growth

Surfing has grown rapidly, especially in the last 15 years, primarily driven by the presence of Portuguese athletes in international surfing competitions and the organisation of such events in Portugal.

In 2009, the World Surf League held the world surfing championship for the first time at Supertubos beach in Peniche.

Nazaré (p276)



Today, the same leg attracts around 100,000 spectators and is estimated to generate close to 10 billion euros for the city.

Also, when Ericeira became a World Surfing Reserve in 2011, the second in the world and the first in Europe, the small fishing village, 50km from Lisbon, which was already very popular among surfers, became one of the world's main surfing destinations and saw the number of tourists and demand for houses skyrocket.

The same year, Garrett McNamara broke the record for the biggest wave ever surfed, and Nazaré was introduced to the world.

Everyone wants to experience the Portuguese waves today, but it wasn't always like this.

From 'Beach Rats' to Elite Surfers

'When I arrived here, there were very few surfers. Maybe 100 in total from the north to the south.' When Nick Uricchio set foot in Portugal in the late 1970s, coming from California, he couldn't believe his eyes. 'There were great waves, but hardly anyone in the water. It was perfection without the crowd.'

The introduction of surfing to Portugal is attributed to outside surfers passing by, many traveling through Europe or on their way to Morocco. Watching these visitors gliding over the waves gave birth to the first generation of Portuguese surfers, first surfing on Styrofoam boards, then on secondhand boards bought from the same foreigners and, later, with Portuguese surfboards.

Nick Uricchio settled in Portugal more than 50 years ago and established Semente, becoming one of the largest surfboard manufacturers in the country. For the Californian surfer and shaper, the evolution of surfing was inevitable: 'It just happened because wherever surfing starts, and there are good waves, it develops. In fact, nowadays, it even develops where there are no waves, like in Switzerland or Germany. Once people start watching and trying it out, there's no stopping it.'

And it hasn't stopped. It went from a sport that was initially considered by Portuguese society to be an activity for degenerates, people who didn't want to work, the so-called 'beach rats', to Olympic athletes and an industry that generates thousands of jobs and injects millions into the economy.

New hotels, hostels, and surf camps have sprung up in coastal towns, and restaurants have multiplied. Other services, such as surf schools, have also expanded, filling the line-up with new enthusiasts every day. However, this growth has put pressure on local communities.

The Future?

'Portugal is one of the sunniest countries in Europe. It gets all the swells from the Atlantic, there's surf for all levels and the cost of living is cheap...at least for foreigners. It's hard for Portuguese people to live here these days.' For Miguel Pedreira, the development of surfing in Portugal has been beneficial for the sport but has had a negative effect at the local level. 'Surfing has grown a lot competitively, and there's more publicity around it, but there's a lack of knowledge about what surfing really is. What does it mean to be a surfer? Where does it come from? What is its history? Its culture?' says the surfer who started in the late 1980s and became the first Portuguese journalist to specialise in surfing. For him, the rise in prices fuelled by the growth of surf tourism has alienated locals and distorted places. 'The reality is that, for example, Ericeira used to be a fishing village, and today it's almost bigger than Mafra. It's just construction everywhere. Yes, there has to be tourism, but there has to be a limit to it because if there isn't, the places will be transformed, taking away their main characteristics. Tourism is this country's salvation, but there must be a limit. I don't know how...'

In this uncertainty, surfing continues to make its way in Portugal. According to the proposal of the former president of Futebol Clube do Porto, who wanted to make surfing a sport to invest in if reelected, there are 1 million surfers in the country. Almost 10% of the Portuguese population has discovered the pleasure of riding the waves.

At the same time, new and significant investments are being made to introduce several wave pools in strategic locations, in line with a worldwide trend.

However, despite the 'growing pains' it is experiencing, everything indicates that surfing will continue to be strong in Portugal. Not least because, with 943km of coastline, there are still plenty of beaches to explore and surf.

ALEKSEY SNEZHINSKI//SHUTTERSTOCK ©

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