



The Beiras

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Manteigas	339
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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pedra de Sal (p317)
- ➔ Tres Pupos (p349)
- ➔ O Albertino (p352)
- ➔ Restaurante de Casa das Penhas Douradas (p342)
- ➔ Tapas Nas Costas (p312)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Casa das Penhas Douradas (p341)
- ➔ Casa da Sé (p348)
- ➔ Casa Pombal (p311)
- ➔ Casa das Obras (p341)
- ➔ Universal Boutique Hotel (p319)

Why Go?

Three worlds rolled into one, the Beiras offer as much diversity as any region in Portugal.

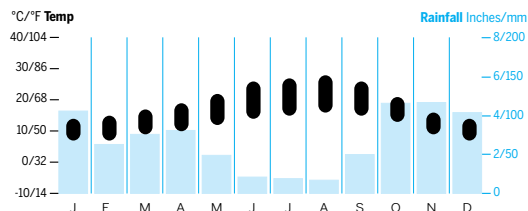
Along the Atlantic, the Beira Litoral lures surfers and sunseekers with scores of sandy beaches. Here, the sophisticated university city of Coimbra and the brash casino-party town of Figueira da Foz arm-wrestle for visitors' attention.

Move inland to the Beira Alta highlands and the mood shifts entirely. Stoic stone villages cling to the slopes of Portugal's highest mountains – the Serra da Estrela – and cast their gaze down at the fertile wine country of the Dão valley.

East of the mountains, in the hypnotically beautiful Beira Baixa, vast expanses of olive and cork-oak forest spread across a hotter, lonelier landscape. Here, surveying the borderlands from the ramparts of nearly abandoned medieval fortress-towns, you'll feel centuries away from the coast you just left behind.

When to Go

Coimbra



Early May Queima das Fitas fills Coimbra's streets with students in dashing capes.

Jun Before summer crowds descend, and beaches are warm enough for a swim.

Jul Clear mountain air and low-season prices in the Serra da Estrela.

The Beiras Highlights

1 Explore the hilltop labyrinth, home of fado, fabulous views and a marvellous historic university in **Coimbra** (p304).

2 Hike alongside the glistening Rio Zêzere outside **Manteigas** (p339), past shepherds' huts and soaring peaks.

3 Admire the art nouveau facades lining the canals of **Aveiro** (p323, and ride through history aboard a *moliceiro* (seaweed vessel).

4 Zigzag your way up terraced slopes to **Piódão** (p328), the most picturesque of the Beiras' stone villages.

5 Conjure up a vanished civilisation at the Roman ruins of **Conímbriga** (p315).

6 Sip fine Dão wine in the flowery civic gardens of **Viseu** (p345).

7 Savour the golden light in the cork-oak forest as you climb from ancient Idanha-a-Velha to the spectacular craggy clifftop village of **Monsanto** (p331).

8 Whistle a marching tune as you explore the marvellous walls and castles of **Almeida** (p356) and other *planalto* fortress-towns.

