



The Beiras

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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 sun-seekers 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 – casting 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 feel centuries away from the coast you just left behind.

Best Places to Stay

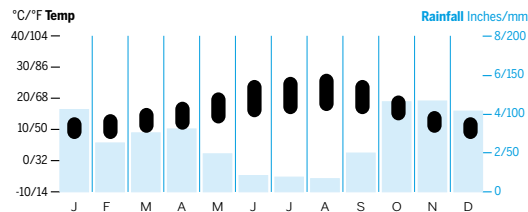
- ➔ Casa das Penhas Douradas (p336)
- ➔ Casa da Sé (p342)
- ➔ Aveiro Rossio Hostel (p319)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Fangas Mercaria Bar (p306)
- ➔ Pedra de Sal (p312)
- ➔ Tres Pupos (p340)

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 moun-

tain air and low-season prices in the Serra da Estrela.

The Beiras Highlights

- 1 Explore the hilltop labyrinth that is **Coimbra** (p298), a home of fado, lip-smacking food, fabulous views and a marvellous historic university.
- 2 Hike alongside the glistening Rio Zêzere outside **Manteigas** (p334), past shepherds' huts and soaring peaks.
- 3 Admire the art nouveau facades lining the canals of **Aveiro** (p318), then hit the streets for some of the Beiras' most animated nightlife.
- 4 Zig-zag your way up terraced slopes to **Piódão** (p323), the most picturesque of the Beiras' stone villages.
- 5 Conjure up a vanished civilisation at the Roman ruins of **Conímbriga** (p309).
- 6 Sip fine Dão wine in the flowery civic gardens of **Viseu** (p340).
- 7 Savour the golden light in the cork oak forest as you climb from ancient **Idanha-a-Velha** (p327) to the spectacular craggy cliff-top village of **Monsanto** (p326).
- 8 Whistle a marching tune as you explore the marvellous walls and castles of **Almeida** (p350), **Trancoso** (p347) and other Planalto fortress towns.

