

Portugal

The once-great seafaring empire of Portugal is today a country straddling two very different worlds. Portugal is a land of old-fashioned charm, where medieval castles and picture-perfect villages lie scattered over meandering coastlines and flower-covered hillsides. Folk festivals and long-running traditions run deep, from long-time connections to the sea and vineyards that predate the Romans. Meanwhile, laid-back cities and sun-kissed beaches offer enticements of a more modern sort.

Portugal's capital, Lisbon, and its northern rival, Porto, are gems among the urban street-scapes of Europe. Both are magical places for the wanderer, with riverside views, cobblestone streets and rattling trams framed by looming cathedrals. Narrow lanes hide old book and record shops, tiny boutiques and an eclectic mix of restaurants, bars and nightclubs, giving new life to the time-worn setting.

Outside the cities, rambling vineyards and groves of cork and olives roll off into the distance towards jagged peaks in the north and gentler slopes in the south. More famous is Portugal's comely shoreline, which has long enchanted visitors. Stretching along the Atlantic are dramatic, end-of-the-world cliffs, wild dune-covered beaches, protected coves and long, sandy islands fronting calm blue seas.

Portugal's dual nature presents travellers with rewarding opportunities to see both sides of the coin, from visiting old-fashioned wine estates to gallery-hopping; from overnighting in medieval villages to people-watching at trendy beach resorts. Sometimes Portugal is a country happily in conflict with itself, and, while the scales are even, there's no better time to visit.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 92,400 sq km
- **Capital** Lisbon
- **Currency** euro (€); US\$1 = €0.73; UK£1 = €1.06; A\$1 = €0.50; ¥100 = €0.76; NZ\$1 = €0.41
- **Famous for** fado, football, port, *azulejos* (tiles), salted cod
- **Official language** Portuguese
- **Phrases** *bom dia* (hello); *obrigado/a* (thank you); *desculpe* (excuse me); *adeus* (goodbye); *faz favor* (please)
- **Population** 10.7 million
- **Telephone codes** country code ☎ 34; international access code ☎ 00; reverse-charge code ☎ 120
- **Visas** not needed for citizens from the EU, the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand; see p935



