

Welcome to Portugal

Medieval castles, cobblestone villages, captivating cities and golden beaches: the Portugal experience can be many things. History, great food and idyllic scenery are just the beginning...

Ghosts of the Past

Celts, Romans, Visigoths, Moors and Christians all left their mark on the Iberian nation. Here, you can gaze upon 20,000-year-old stone carvings in the Vila Nova de Foz Côa, watch the sunset over megaliths outside Évora or lose yourself in the elaborate corridors of Unesco World Heritage Sites in Tomar, Belém, Alcobaça or Batalha. You can pack an itinerary visiting palaces set above mist-covered woodlands, craggy clifftop castles and stunningly preserved medieval town centres.

The Portuguese Table

Freshly baked bread, olives, cheese, red wine or crisp *vinho verde* (young wine), chargrilled fish, *cataplana* (seafood stew), smoked meats – the Portuguese have perfected the art of cooking simple, delicious meals. Sitting down to table means experiencing the richness of Portugal's bountiful coastline and fertile countryside. Of course, you don't have to sit; you can take your piping-hot *pastel de nata* (custard tart) standing up at an 1837 patisserie in Belém, or wander through scenic vineyards sipping the velvety ports of the Douro Valley. You can shop the produce-filled markets, or book a table in one of the country's top dining rooms.

Cinematic Scenery

Outside the cities, Portugal's beauty unfolds in all its startling variety. You can go hiking amid the granite peaks of Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês or take in the pristine scenery and historic villages of the little-explored Beiras. Over 800km of coast offers more places to soak up the splendour. Gaze out over dramatic end-of-the-world cliffs, surf stellar breaks off dune-covered beaches or laze peacefully on sandy islands fronting calm blue seas. You'll find dolphin watching in the lush Sado Estuary, boating and kayaking along the meandering Rio Guadiana, and memorable walks and bike rides all across the country.

Rhythms of Portugal

Festivals pack Portugal's calendar. Drink, dance and feast your way through all-night revelries like Lisbon's Festa de Santo António or Porto's Festa de São João. There are kick-up-your-heels country fairs in the hinterlands, and rock- and world-music fests all along the coast. Any time of year is right to hear the mournful music of fado in the Alfama, join the dance party in Bairro Alto or hit the bars in Porto, Coimbra and Lagos.



Why I Love Portugal

By Regis St Louis, Writer

I'm enamoured by the scenery, the rhythms of village life and Portugal's outstanding (and underrated) food and wine. I love exploring the hidden beaches along the Costa Vicentina, taking picturesque walks in the Serra da Estrela (where I still bump into shepherds during a day's outing), and roaming in less-visited corners of the Alentejo – such a magical place for discovering the traditional soul of Portugal. But it's the Portuguese themselves who make this country so special. Despite the sometimes dour exterior (it's just a facade!), they're among the kindest and most warm-hearted people on earth.

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