

PORTUGAL

Jewel of the Iberian Peninsula

— Dr. Catriona McLeod

A little country with a lot of charm, Portugal has a fascinating history and unique culture. Nestled into Spain on the western side on the Iberian Peninsula, its coastlines touching the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Cadiz. Each of Portugal's regions is fabulous in its own right, so it's enjoy some time in each one to appreciate the rich variety of experiences, including lingering sunsets over the sea, scenic boat trips, festivals, some of the oldest wineries in the world, the laid-back people, and of course the food.



LISBON

Olá, bom dia, Lisbon! This romantic, history-rich capital city is enchanting, and there are so many ways to enjoy it. Wander the cobble-stone lanes and nibble on Portuguese pastries, spot the fabulous beasts on the Jeronimos Monastery or join a walking tour through the Old Town and see how the Romans, Moors, Jews and Phoenicians shaped Lisbon's architecture and culture. Jump aboard a historical tram, or hire a bike and take a leisurely ride along the northern bank of the Tagus River. Then unwind in a casa de Fado accompanied by a Fado singer, and a glass (or two) of traditional port.

Se Cathedral

Include a visit to the Se Cathedral in your walking route to cool down on a hot Lisbon day. Built in the 12th century, the Cathedral has born witness to the marriages, baptisms and passing of Lisbon's nobility. The building, with its two clock towers, resembles a fortification rather than a church, but its interior reveals a fascinating mix of influences including Romanesque, Gothic, Neoclassic and Rococo, and excavations in its cloister show hints of Roman and Arab design.

Delectable Portuguese tarts

The famous pastel de Belem, a small egg custard pastry created in the 18th century by monks at Jeronimos Monastery



in Lisbon's Belem district, is much loved throughout the world. Although every street in Lisbon has at least three pastelarias, enjoy the most delicious at the charming and tiny Chique de Belem. Perch on the sidewalk seating, enjoy the view and indulge when the bakers bring your pasteis to you!

Gourmet food court

Mercado da Ribeira is Lisbon's biggest fresh food market, and a not-so-secret Lisboan favourite. Opened in 2014, its 35 kiosks sell regional specialties including Alentejo ham, wines, pastel de Belem, Azeitao sheep's milk cheese, beautifully packaged tinned sardines and chocolates. You can still buy fresh fruit, vegetables and fish from the original market stalls on the other side of the huge 19th century building, every morning except Sunday. Five local award-winning chefs whip up delicious meals in their on-site restaurants. Sit on benches on long shared tables to enjoy a freshly cooked and totally Portuguese lunch.

Fado – the music of life

Alfama, the oldest district in Lisbon, is a fascinating labyrinth of narrow streets, bars and small squares. Spend the day exploring this district on foot, and plan your day to end at a casa de Fado. Portugal has a diverse musical culture and Fado is the country's national musical treasure; an experience never forgotten. The intensely melancholic and haunting songs by a solo singer (and guitarists) are about love, its woes, sadness and longing for things that were lost or never done.

Casa de Fado in Alfama

The most authentic casa de Fado in Alfama include the Casa de Linhares and Pateo de Alfama. Meals include pork dishes, sardines and other seafood, accompanied by famous wines, such as those from Douro and Alentejo.

Fairytale castles in Sintra

This little hilltop town, a scenic 40-minute train ride from Lisbon, has elegant and towering palaces, castles and fortresses, all set in the Sintra-Cascais Natural Park. If you've ever longed to be a prince or princess, then the Palacio da Pena may well be the castle of your dreams.

The Portuguese Riviera

Thirty kilometres west of Lisbon is the once sleepy coastal fishing village of Cascais. Now it's a cosmopolitan suburb of Lisbon and famed for its nightlife, seafood restaurants and great surfing at the white-sand beaches of Praia do Guincho, to the northwest. Linger at a cafe in the new marina, charter a game fishing boat or learn to kite-surf. Sailing has a long tradition here and yacht spotting is a favourite pastime, although the prettily painted fishing boats will also star in your memory.

Farol Design Hotel

Amble back to the stylishly sleek Farol Design Hotel and lounge on its pool's secluded sun terrace, which overlooks the water. The doors of the On the Rocks bar open directly to the terrace, with the feeling of floating on the ocean.



PORTO & THE NORTH

The Baroque city of Porto has an old soul, but a lively and modern character, and was elected best European Destination 2017.

Culture abounds

Every turn of a corner reveals a gallery or museum, such Casa da Musica or the Museu de Arte Contemporane. Public art is everywhere, from azulejos (hand-painted tiles) to large-scale city murals. Stroll down the medieval lanes or hop on a Rabelo boat cruise for a different view of the city.

Gourmet delights

Porto is also experiencing a culinary reawakening, from cool bistros offering delicious petiscos (small plates) and amazing food markets and cellars, to cooking tours and classes.

Port tasting in Porto

There are many bars, cafes and cellars where you can taste the warm flavours of the local specialty. Try Caves Ferreira, where a history of traditional port making is matched with specific tastings; or Espaco Porto Cruz, which combines fashion, art and gastronomy with wine-tasting.

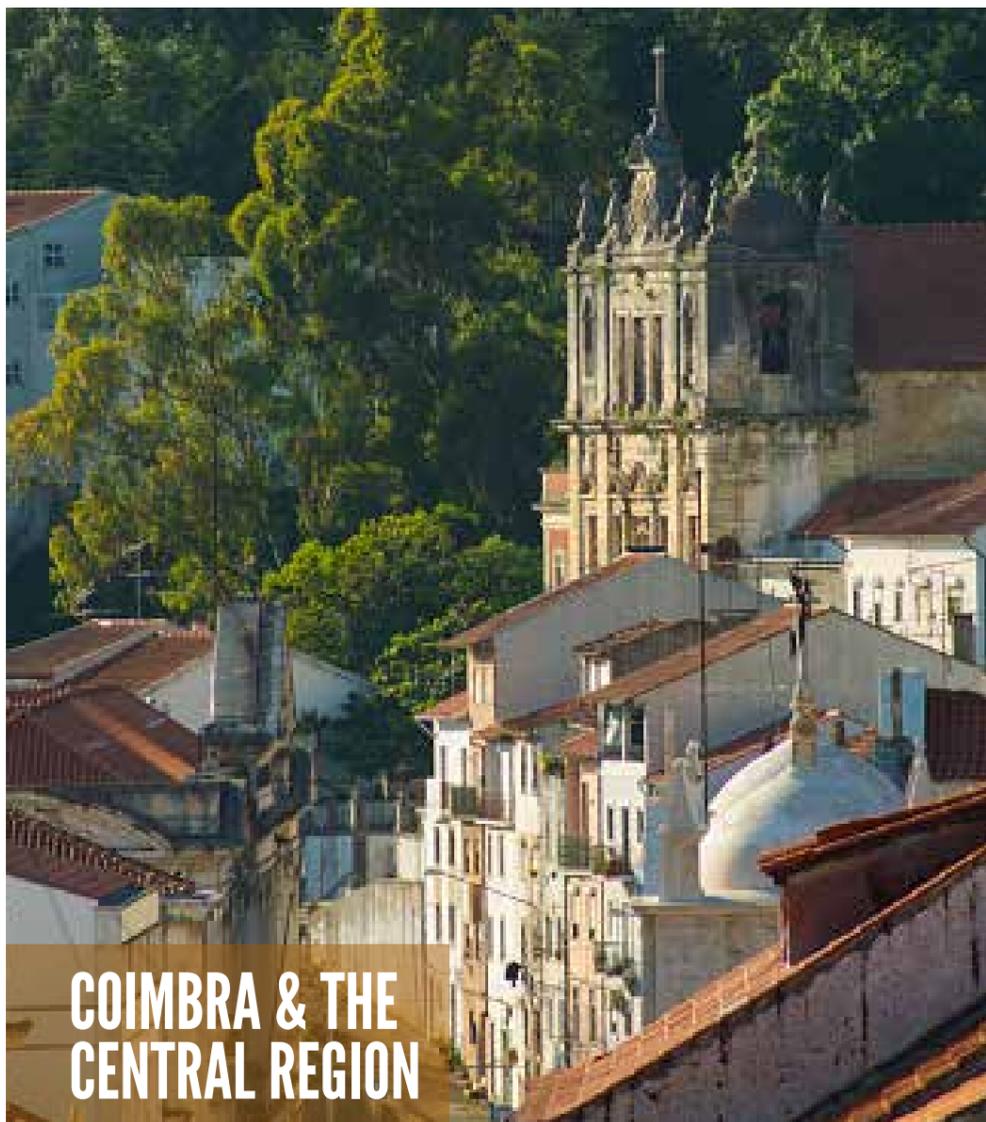
Douro River Cruises

Porto is also the starting point for river cruises down the Douro River, through the Douro Valley, the majestic, wild region known globally for its port. Cruise for a week or longer and relax as you float past family-run estates, vineyards, olive groves and four World Heritage-listed sites: the prehistoric rock art sites of the Coa Valley, the Historic Centre of Porto, the old city of Salamanca and the Alta Douro.

Six Senses Douro Valley

When it's time to rejoin land, stay at the Six Senses Douro Valley, a superbly renovated 19th-century, terracotta-hued manor house overlooking the river. The hotel features a spa, an organic garden, restaurants, a wine library and swimming pools. Here you can undertake a wine certificate program or visit some of the nearby historic wineries and meet with the vintners. Afterwards, uncap, unwind and enjoy a truly indulgent massage.

Left to right: Lisbon. Sintra. Portuguese tarts. Porto.



COIMBRA & THE CENTRAL REGION

The gracious, dignified city of Coimbra sits on the east bank of the Rio Mondego, halfway between Lisbon and Porto, and is a unique combination of the Romanesque, with Gothic arches, Islamic influences and Renaissance details.

Historical sights

Don't miss the well-preserved Roman ruins! It is a starting point for day trips to some of the North's best-known centres of cultural or historical significance. Famed for its very old university and a stunning collection of churches, monasteries, beautiful Jardim Botânico (Botanical Garden) and a lively arts and cultural scene, Coimbra is best experienced on foot.

Traditional nightlife

At night, you can hear traditional Fado in Coimbra too, but here it is performed with the Guitarra de Coimbra and several male singers.

Stay in Coimbra

The romantic and charming Quinta das Lagrimas Palace is a short walk from Coimbra's mediaeval centre, yet seems like a world away from the bustling city. This grand 14th-century building, former home to Prince Pedro and his lover Ines de Castro, features a Michelin-starred restaurant, rooms in the magnificent 18th-century palace or the Garden residence, a nine-hole pitch-and-putt course, a lake and a sleek, modern spa.



ALENTEJO

Alentejo is the geographical, historical and cultural region of south-central and southern Portugal. The open countryside, warm climate and rich soils mean it is Portugal's 'bread basket', and a food lover's delight.

Tasty treats await

Traditional cheeses, wines and smoked hams and sausages – acorn-fattened pork is a specialty here – can be found in the local markets and cafes.

Beautiful beaches

And here's a secret ... forget Ibiza and the Mediterranean; some of the world's most stunning and pristine beaches are found in Alentejo.

Stay in Alentejo

Another hidden gem, relaxed and rustic Herdade da Malhadinha Nova, is set in a working winery, with an infinity pool and a Michelin-star chef. Oh, and then there's local hot air balloon rides, and grape trampling. This is authentic, relaxed Portugal at a five-star level.



BEACHES & ISLANDS

Left to right: Coimbra.
Alentejo. Azores.
Bottom left: The Algarve

THE ALGARVE

The sunny Algarve is the most popular tourist destination in Portugal, and is noted for its beaches and seafood. Its coastline features scalloped beaches, soaring cliffs, and Atlantic Ocean surf breaks.

Stay in Carrapateira

To avoid the hordes try Carrapateira, a quiet, pretty village with two local surf beaches. The creamy-sand beaches can be easily accessed for a swim or surf, and you can shop the town markets for fresh sardinhas, textiles and ceramics.



MADEIRA

Madeira, a tiny archipelago southwest of Portugal, is always on holiday. Mild temperatures and beautiful, protected forests are a boon for hikers and photographers, but it is also renowned for the fortified Madeira wine and local cuisine.

Explore Funchal

Sub-tropical Funchal is the setting for Madeira's springtime Flower Festival. Flower-decorated floats and shop windows perfume the air, and at Largo do Colegio, local children construct The Wall of Hope from flowers, symbolising their dreams for a peaceful world.

The Madeira Royal Savoy Hotel

Treat yourself to the Savoy! The Madeira Royal Savoy Hotel, with its superb waterfront position in Funchal, is the latest extension of the world-famous Hotel Savoy. It has stunning views over the city, the mountains and the Atlantic Ocean, and two huge, heated salt-water swimming pools. The roof is planted with flowers and herbs, and the grounds are peppered with 1,000-year-old olive trees.

AZORES

The Azores is an archipelago of islands accessible by air from Lisbon, Porto and Madeira. This is THE place for nature lovers and fans of adventure sports.

Water sports heaven

Whale watching, diving, hiking, sailing, surfing, windsurfing, kayaking and other water-based activities are readily accessible, while those seeking something more restful can take a dip in one of the many lava-formed swimming holes.

Thermal pools & spas

At Furnas Lake, the kitchen tradition is to slow-cook cozido (a traditional stew) in the underground hot springs. The Furnas Boutique Hotel Thermal & Spa, located in a volcanic crater, and within walking distance of the local town, has four thermal pools to relax tired muscles.

Saudade & boa noite

When you finally depart you will be filled with saudade, the deep emotional state of longing for an absent something or somewhere that you have come to love – in this case, it will be Portugal. ®