

Tips And Tricks For Where To Go In Portugal

Fabulous food, wonderful wine and warm and welcoming people mean the most difficult question you have is where to go in Portugal? A low cost of living in Portugal combined with an idyllic climate and incredible natural beauty make a Portugal vacation one to remember.

Where To Go In Portugal

From the vibrant nightlife of the capital Lisbon to the bling of the Algarve's glamorous beaches, to picturesque medieval villages of the Central region and the North's sweeping expanses of vineyards, you'll discover something for every interest and every budget.

Here are the 15 places you must visit on your Portugal trip!

1. Lisbon

Portugal's capital and gateway city, Lisbon is a convenient place to start your visit Portugal vacation. Stretching languidly along the banks of the Tagus River near the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal's largest city winds its way slowly upward among seven steep hills.

Gothic cathedrals, scenic bridges, quaint shops and vibrant neighbourhoods echoing to Portugal's traditional fado music make an enchanting introduction to this charming city.

Lisbon's old Moorish quarter the Alfama is renowned for its looming St. George's Castle, enchanting architecture and winding maze of cobblestone streets. Hop on one of the vintage trams such as the celebrated Tram 28, which creaks its way through Lisbon's historic quarters, past delightful formal gardens and some of the city's prime attractions.

Hopping on and off to take advantage of the sights along the way is one of the best ways to experience Lisbon. Don't forget to sample some delicious Portuguese cuisine along the way at one of the many cafés and restaurants. People watch over a coffee and the traditional Portuguese tart, it will soon become a firm favourite.

2. The Algarve

The poster child for Portugal tourism, if you enjoy a heady mix of glorious beaches, sunny Mediterranean climate, and a jet-setting social scene, head for the gorgeous Algarve Portugal.

Picturesque towns, countless historic sites, jewel-like seas cascading against a wild, windswept coast, fabulous cuisine and affordable prices are just some of the reasons the Algarve ranks highly in all the Portugal travel guides.

The Algarve's major cities Albufeira, Lagos, Vilamoura and Portimão are treasures in their own right. You will find Portugal's most sumptuous and secluded beaches such as Camilo Beach in Lagos together with fabulous nightlife. Year-round sunshine and mesmerising red rocky cliffs round out the Lagos experience.

If its tranquillity you're after on your Portugal trip, Silves, best known for its red sandstone castle together with the idyllic towns of Sagres, Aljezur and Tavira. An elegant town, Tavira is packed with Renaissance monuments, bridges and castles. It provides an enjoyable change of pace set amidst orange and olive groves and traditional whitewashed villages.

Oh, and don't worry about not speaking Portuguese. Many areas in the Algarve Portugal speak more English than Portuguese, especially around Vilamoura and Albufeira.

3. Óbidos

Set dramatically on a hilltop in western Portugal, Óbidos is ringed by an old fortified wall giving Óbidos a reputation as one of Portugal's most romantic destinations. Inside the wall, the splendid medieval castle and historical town centre are begging to be explored by foot. Wind your way through a tangle of narrow, cobbled streets to discover busy squares, charming cafes, shops and whitewashed houses garlanded in flowers. Over this cheery town, looms the commanding castle with its battlements, massive gates and towers. Don't leave Óbidos without tasting the Ginja de Óbidos a cherry liqueur served in tiny chocolate cups.

4. Sintra

A day trip from Lisbon in the foothills of the Sintra Mountains on the coast is the charming little town of Sintra. Lush green hills dotted with sparkling villas, royal retreats, castles and palaces line the road. Sintra itself welcomes visitors with colourful buildings, winding alleyways and small cafe-lined streets inviting exploration and people watching in equal measure.

Visitors to Sintra shouldn't miss the gorgeous Pena's Palace, a fantastical castle with echoes of Germany's Neuschwanstein. Constructed in the mid-1800s Pena's Palace was a summer retreat for the Portuguese royal family. Today, Pena's Palace is wrapped in beautifully designed parklands featuring exotic trees, plants and flowers. Crowning Sintra's highest hill is the ancient ruined Castle of the Moors and the romantic Monserrate Palace with its lush subtropical gardens.

5. Madeira

Nicknamed the “Floating Garden of the Atlantic,” Madeira is a fertile subtropical oasis in the Atlantic Ocean between Portugal and North Africa. Popular for its lush green landscapes, flower gardens and wines, its Orchid Garden and the Laurissilva Forest, are “must-sees” for any visitor. The capital Funchal is home to historic fortresses and churches together with the tree-lined Lido Promenade with its spectacular ocean views.

Madeira has emerged as one of the most in vogue destinations in Portugal for hiking, lazing by the seaside and eating exotic cuisine. Madeira’s capital Funchal hosts one of the world’s best New Year’s Eve parties. Porto Santo is home to one of the most beautiful expanses of beach in Portugal. Other Madeira landmarks include a house once owned by Christopher Columbus, the Museu CR7 a homage to Cristiano Ronaldo and the Madeira Wine Museum.

6. Porto

Porto is one of the most popular cities to visit in Portugal. World famous for its production of fine port wine, Porto’s medieval past is on display, together with its charmingly authentic Ribeira riverside pedestrian zone, an atmospheric spot on the river, awash with live music, cafes, restaurants and raucous street vendors. Dominating this popular setting is the Ponte Dom Luis, an all-metal, double-deck arch bridge linking Porto to Vila Nova de Gaia, renowned for its fabulous port wine cellars.

Anyone with a passion for Portugal’s heavenly ceramic tiles or azulejos shouldn’t miss the São Bento railway station, which features a superb delicately tiled mosaic. A profusion of medieval palaces, cathedrals and formal gardens, plus a cuisine often considered to be the best in the country make Porto one of the most gorgeous cities in Western Europe.

7. Evora

Enjoy a break from the tourist hordes with a visit to Portugal’s Alentejo region. The region’s capital, Évora, has a rich and occasionally idiosyncratic history dating back more than 2,000 years thanks to its Capela dos Ossos, or Chapel of Bones. Inside this 16th-century church are approximately 5,000 human bones.

Other historical sites include a well-preserved Old Town, home to more than 4,000 historic structures including the old Roman walls, the Roman Temple and the 13th-century Cathedral of Évora. Not far outside the city is Europe’s largest complex of prehistoric megaliths.

8. Aveiro

Snuggling up to Central Portugal’s Atlantic Coast, Aveiro is a buzzing city. Often called “the Venice of Portugal” thanks to its picturesque charming canals interconnected by quaint bridges and sprinkled with bright gondolas and

speedboats. A combination of historic sites, lovely beaches and superb cuisine make Aveiro a popular stop on any Portugal trip. Amongst Aveiro's sightseeing highlights are the evocative architecture and artworks of the Aveiro Cathedral, the São Gonçalo Chapel and the Convento de Jesus.

9. The Azores

The rocky archipelago of the Azores composes nine volcanic islands set in the Atlantic Ocean. Located about 1,500 km (930 miles) west of Lisbon, the Azores is renowned for world-class whale watching, their hot mineral springs and quaint seaside towns. Each island has its own distinct identity. Pico is home to the highest mountain in Portugal.

10. São Miguel

São Miguel is the largest island in the Azores and is known as "The Green Island". Nearly halfway between the American and Portuguese coasts São Miguel, is the easiest to reach by air and there is plenty to see in this emerald green oasis. For a thoroughly Azorean experience, explore the numerous hiking trails, waterfalls, and the beautiful twin lakes Lagoa das Sete Cidades. Once on the island, don't miss Furnas. This small village shows visitors the positive aspects of living with a volcano. Sprinkled with natural, mineral-rich hot springs and cooking holes called caldeiras, the experience is not to be missed.

11. Coimbra

Nestling in Portugal's centre by the Mondego River is Coimbra, home to Roman and medieval ruins. Coimbra is a historical centre, being one of the country's former capitals. Among Coimbra's highlights is the University of Coimbra, one of the oldest continually operating educational institutions in the world.

Coimbra's most enduring claim to fame is its majestic library the Baroque-styled masterpiece, the Biblioteca Joanina widely considered to be one of the most beautiful libraries in the world. Aside from playing host to a treasure trove of historic sites, and beautiful gardens, Coimbra is home to Portugal's second form of fado music.

One of the most pleasurable activities in Coimbra is to wander its ancient streets, discovering its many historic attractions, from the stunning Old Cathedral to the Gothic Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha, which contains the tomb of Queen Isabel.

12. Ericeira

Surfing is one of Portugal's main attractions and whitewashed Ericeira, cinematically swathed across the sandstone cliffs overlooking a sunny blue Atlantic is a mecca for waves. After catching your share of waves, recharge your batteries at one of this small fishing village's famed seafood restaurants. Easily

accessed for Lisbon, Ericeira's ocean views will quickly win your heart just as surely as its cuisine captures your soul.

13. Monsanto

For travellers in search of the authentic old Portugal, visiting Monsanto is sure to prove a highlight of their visit. The charming rustic village is built around, in and even under massive hulking boulders! Undeniably the country's most Portuguese village and barely changed in hundreds of years, this hidden gem remains well off the beaten tourist track.

14. Serra da Estrela

Harder to get to, the Serra da Estrela is home to the highest mountain peak in continental Portugal. Proving Portugal tourism's claim that Portugal isn't all beaches, this remote mountain range has plenty to see and do, and is Portugal's only winter skiing location. Sparsely populated with tiny villages, this remote mountain showcases nature. Once you've worked up an appetite exploring the great outdoors, foodies will enjoy sampling the local creamy, pungent cheese and homemade honey made there.

15. Peneda-Gerês National Park

Portugal may only have one national park but it is a wonderfully wild and atmospheric one. Located in the beautiful Minho region, the Peneda-Gerês National Park offers nature lovers oak forests, bird watching and natural swimming pools. A winding Roman road complete with ancient markers, elderly bridges and enchanting waterfalls complete the allure for passionate hikers.

Portuguese Cuisine

There's more to Portugal's rich culinary heritage than Piri-Piri chicken. Bacalhau is a Portuguese staple, eaten two or three times a week, in different forms, from baked with cream and potatoes to a cold chickpea salad.

Alentejano Pork is a truly national dish. Black Iberian pigs, known in Spanish as Pata Negra, are reared on both sides of the border. In Portugal, the best come from the Montado region of Alentejo. Farmed in oak forests and fed on acorns, the pigs develop layers of intramuscular fat resulting in sweet moist meat. In Portugal, pork is widely cooked confit-style, in dishes such as rojões are a northern favourite.

Lisbon red mullet, especially those caught in the waters off the village of Sesimbra is a major Portuguese ingredient in many national dishes.

Caldo Verde is an iconic Portuguese comfort-food dish. You find it in most restaurants and at home. It consists of five simple ingredients: potato, onion, olive oil, kale and chouriço – divine! Pastel de nata is Portugal's quintessential custard

tart. The Portuguese have a national sweet tooth and everybody knows nata. It is so simple but so good.

Many people are familiar with Port and even Madeira but they are not Portugal's only fabulous wine styles. Portugal offers amazing Madeira's, muscatels, plus the wines from the Douro and strong Alentejo wines. Vinho Verde or literally "young, green" is a wonderful sparkling wine from Minhol.

Portuguese Culture

Portugal has been inhabited for thousands of years. The Visigoths, Celts, Romans, Moors and Christians all left their mark on Portugal. In Portugal, you can look upon 20,000-year-old stone carvings in the Vila Nova de Foz Côa, watch a glorious sunset over enigmatic megaliths outside Évora or immerse yourself in the hidden world of Alcobaça, Batalha Belém and Tomar, all UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Unlike many Western European countries, Portugal's national boundaries have been set for eight centuries. This long unbroken history is reflected in a unique culture that reflects the mixture of the many peoples who settled Portugal and those the Portuguese explorers encountered on their famed journeys of Discovery.

Today, Portugal's art flourishes in the form of Manueline art, its amazing ceramic tile designs and its famed fado music.

Living in Portugal

Once you've seen all Portugal has to offer when you visit Portugal on holiday, why not consider living in Portugal? Portugal makes a wonderful retirement spot and Portugal offers a range of attractive conditions for investing in your retirement home here.

Portugal is also one of the best countries for buying a house, thanks to its clear and transparent tax rules and streamlined path to obtaining a residence permit. These are all part of new legal provisions designed to make Portugal more alluring to foreign investors. Portugal It also has a special regime for non-habitual residents, aimed at attracting foreign investors through very favourable income tax rates.

Cost Of Living In Portugal

With the aftereffects of the global economic crisis still Europe still reverberating across Portugal's economy, it's a buyer's market for real estate and a renter's market for apartments.

Food and wine are fabulous and very affordable. Even better, you can drink the water and crime is low. Being Western Europe, infrastructure is good and WiFi is nearly universal so if you work on the Internet then Portugal is a great place to be.

Moving to Portugal From US

Considering a move to Portugal? Many Americans looking to make the plunge and relocate to Portugal from the U.S. have found the process confusing and geared toward EU citizens.

There are two paths to consider. Firstly, the citizenship model and secondly gaining residency. Portugal sells residency and nationality via its Golden Visa system. This leads to a Residence Permit with the possibility of receiving Portuguese nationality. In return it requires either transferring 350,000 euros to the Arts or investing 1,000,000 euros to create a minimum of 10 jobs, acquiring property valued at 500,000 euros or rehabbing an older property costing 350,000 euros.

Portugal's Entrepreneur, Employed and Self-Employed Program is designed to attract qualified, educated professionals to work and invest in Portugal. Skilled professionals who retired in the US might follow this approach to start a business or be self-employed in Portugal.

Residency is a two-part process. Your Residence Visa Type 1 is effective for 120 days and is obtained from the US. Once in Portugal you can apply for Part 2 of your Temporary Residence Permit.

Final Point

Set on the rugged western coast of the Iberian Peninsula Portugal is a magnet for travellers, thanks to its idyllic climate, very affordable living costs and exceptional cultural and historical highlights and sublime cuisine. Portugal's geography ranges from lush green mountains and sweeping vineyards of the North to the rolling farmland and quaint medieval villages of the Central region through to the glamorous beaches of the Algarve along the southern coastline. Further afield are echoes of Portugal's imperial past. Lying in the Atlantic Ocean are the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira, renown for their lush subtropical landscapes and verdant gardens.