

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Highlights of Portugal
8 days

Portugal - Trip code HOP



Highlights of Portugal

This fast-paced trip crams in so much in just eight days. In the traditional Explore mould we use a host of forms of transport such as jumping on a ferry for a fish meal on the docks in Lisbon and taking the train to Porto. We see the highlights, but also places not normally included by travel companies. We do most of our exploration on foot, including walking up through the gardens in Sintra to see the Moorish Castle and Palacio de Pena and exploring the backstreets of Coimbra. We'll even try Ginjinha - a local sour cherry liqueur.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Lisbon and Tejo Estuary** - Explore by ferry, metro and on foot and try the local produced Ginjinha brew
- ★ **Sintra** - Train into the mountains and wander up to the colourful Pena Palace
- ★ **Coimbra** - Discover the Medieval capital of Portugal
- ★ **Oporto** - Visit a port lodge and explore the old town on foot
- ★ **Douro Valley** - Take a train up the valley and walk amongst the picturesque hillside vineyards

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Lisbon; evening orientation walk

Arriving in Lisbon, we settle into our hotel and after an initial briefing with our Explore Leader, there will be the opportunity to head out for a short walk to get our measure of this remarkable place, boasting over twenty centuries of history - indeed, legend states that it was founded by Ulysses himself! Resting on seven hills overlooking the estuary of the River Tejo, Lisbon has gazed down upon centuries of change - the Phoenicians and Romans both inhabited the city, but it did not become the capital of Portugal until its conquest from the Moors in 1147. It was the hub of global trade and the heart of the maritime 'age of discovery' - boats from every nation would dock here, and riches from trade and exploration worldwide would pass by the city's harbours. Indeed, Lisbon was described as the eighth wonder of the world. Today Lisbon has all the looks of an elegant and carefully planned 18th century city.



Accommodation: Residencial Italia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Day trip to Sintra by train

Today we take a metro to Lisbon's Rossio Station for the short train ride to the hills and palaces of Sintra - inspiration to poets, artists and travellers alike. Lord Byron claimed the village of Sintra 'perhaps in every aspect the most delightful in Europe; it contains beauties of every description... palaces and gardens rising in the midst of rocks, cataracts and precipices; convents on stupendous heights, a distant view of the sea and the Tagus'. The air is noticeably cooler and the views dramatic. We walk for two hours between the ornate palaces and marvellous manor houses that sit amongst the lush and ornate vegetation in this stunning setting. We'll visit King Ferdinand II's very creative and colourful Pena Palace and have time for a picnic lunch in the gardens before we return to Lisbon in the late afternoon.



Accommodation: Residencial Italia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Explore Lisbon on foot; ferry to Cacilhas for lunch and chance to hear 'Fado' this evening

Our morning walking tour takes us through the different bairros (districts) of the town, and those we are unable to visit can be explored later during our free time this afternoon. Old trams negotiate the undulations of Lisbon's cobbled streets, and the varied and interesting buildings throughout the city never fail to impress, both architecturally or for the history they contain. We walk up Alfama Hill where there is time to nip into local neighbourhood shops for a snack. In the course of the day your Explore Leader will also find a place to try Ginjinha, a very local liqueur made from sour cherries, which is an acquired taste. We then jump on a local ferry across the Tejo River to Cacilhas which has a working port feel and excellent views back across to Lisbon proper. Here we include a traditional slow paced fish lunch (vegetarian options are available) near the docks before returning to the city at around 14.00. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore, particular highlights are the churches and Se de Lisboa Cathedral, as well as the galleries and museums which offer insights into the art, history and society of Portugal. The Baixa District is well worth a visit and is linked to the equally interesting Bairro Alto by a 32 metre wrought iron lift named Elevador de Santa Justa. Tram 15 along the waterfront takes you to Belem where you'll find the Discoveries Monument - remember that Lisbon was the centre of the age of discovery, and the starting point for many early explorers' great voyages around the world including Vasco de Gama. You may also choose to visit the 500 year old Jeronimos Monastery and the Tower of Belem, whilst here. This evening you'll have the opportunity to experience a live performance of 'Fado' music. Stemming from the word 'fate', the music of Fado can be deeply personal in its expression. Said to have been born from the songs of African slaves, the sentiments behind this soulful music are deeply linked to the heritage and hearts of the people, and as such is quintessentially Portuguese. Enjoying this performance after dinner (at around 22.30) we come a little closer to feeling a sense of 'saudade', a sentiment of nostalgia which, it is said, that only the Portuguese truly understand.



Accommodation: Residencial Italia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Visit Alcobaca and Batalha Monastery; arrive in Coimbra

This morning we leave Lisbon and drive to Alcobaca, a gem of a small medieval town in the centre of the country featuring one of Iberia's great monasteries. Hiding behind the imposing Baroque facade is an austere monastery with a forest of unadorned 12th century arches. But make sure you visit the rest too: the atmospheric refectory, vast dormitory and other spaces bring back the Cistercian life, which, according to sources, wasn't quite as austere here as it should have been. After some free time for strolling around we continue to Batalha. We take time to see its splendid Gothic monastery, Mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitoria, built to commemorate the Battle of Aljubarrota, which was fought just south of here. The construction of the monastery was never fully completed and we'll see the unfinished chapels. In the evening we reach the old university town of Coimbra. Although it has a beautiful historic centre it also has one foot firmly planted in the present. It has an attractive modern riverside park and is home to a large university. Our Explore Leader will take us on a walk through the backstreets of this little known town.



Accommodation: Riversuites Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Wine tasting and spend the night in the Douro Valley

This morning we have a couple of hours free in Coimbra, which was once the medieval capital of Portugal and sits on a hillside rising from the River Mondego. You may like to visit the university area with its startling collection of centuries old buildings and its famous library. Later this morning we will drive into the Douro Valley to Lamego. This picturesque Baroque city is nestled among the terraces of the wine growing region of the Douro Valley. After free time here for lunch we will continue to Peso da Regua where we have a wine tasting at a local vineyard before checking in to our hotel for the evening. This afternoon there will also be the opportunity to join a boat trip for around one hour along the Douro River to take in the views along the valley with its vineyards set on terraced hillsides.



Accommodation: Regua do Douro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Train to Porto for a walking tour and port tasting; free afternoon

This morning we take the train to Porto and on arrival our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation walk. We'll stroll down the cobbled streets to Cais da Ribeira - undoubtedly the most picturesque spot. This characterful quayside is dominated by the tall outline of the two tiered Dom Luis I Bridge, built in 1886 by an assistant of Gustave Eiffel. Here, ancient houses with laundry-draped balconies stand high above the waterfront looking out over the river, where several old boats lie moored at the water's edge. Despite the decline in the use of this harbour, with its fish market and restaurants, it continues to have character and bustle reminiscent of its lively past. Following our tour we include a visit to a port lodge. The history and processes involved in making these white, ruby and tawny delicacies are most interesting, and we'll get to enjoy a port tasting. The rest of the day is then free to further explore the city that has a surprise around every corner - churches clad in finely illustrated blue and white azulejo tiles; bustling food markets selling everything from fruit and vegetables, to bacalhau (traditional salted cod), fresh chickens' feet and tripe; and peaceful squares with small friendly coffee bars hidden away, where you could sit back and watch the world go by. This evening there's the opportunity for you to dine in a locals home and try a traditional home-cooked meal using produce from the area.



Accommodation: Hotel Moov Centro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Free day in Porto

Today is free for you to further discover Porto. There are a number of fascinating buildings to visit whilst walking in the heart of the city. You may choose to climb the tower of the 18th century Baroque Igreja dos Clerigos, which affords superb views across the city or see the Palacio da Bolsa - built to house Porto's stock exchange. The interior design is outstanding - particularly the building's Arabian room, inspired by Granada's Alhambra Palace. You may consider venturing further afield and taking the train or a local bus the short distance to the attractive towns of Guimaraes or Braga.



Accommodation: Hotel Moov Centro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Porto

Our trip ends at our hotel in Porto after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

On this trip, we get an introduction to Portugal in just 8 days. From the centuries of history and trams in Lisbon to the rolling Mediterranean hills and landscapes, traditional music to wine tastings, this varied and fast paced trip has much to offer.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Ferry
Public Bus
Taxi
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Portugal Holidays & Tours

Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a trip to Portugal - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The northern high plains has both extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. The islands have very different weather patterns due to their positioning and can have sudden rain falls throughout the year so waterproofs are recommended even in the summer.

Time difference to GMT

0

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Portuguese

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Lisbon: Fado concert in the Baixa District €5.00. Visit to Belem by tram €1.50 per way; Jeronimos Monastery and the Tower of Belem combined ticket €12.00. Peso da Regua: Douro River boat trip (approximately 50 minutes duration) €10.00. Porto: Dinner at a locals home €20.00 for three courses with drinks included; taxis to/from dinner are approximately €10.00 per person. Guimaraes by train €14.00 (journey time is approximately 1 hour 15) or Braga by train €11.00 (journey time is approximately 1 hour).

Clothing

Lightweight cotton clothing is best from June to September, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, but especially after the start of September, and a warm fleece/light jacket is recommended for cooler evenings.

Footwear

Walking shoes or boots are strongly recommended for the walks in the countryside and in the towns, ideally waterproof just in case.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack. We recommend a bag you are happy to wheel and lift as we use a variety of public transport and taxis on this tour. A daypack is essential for the walks in the towns and countryside. Remember you are expected to carry your own baggage - so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

During the summer months we recommend you bring a sunhat, sunglasses and sunscreen. A water bottle is recommended.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £15.00 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Portugal Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£15

Beer price

£2.00 - 3.00 depending on your location, well touristed areas are usually slightly more expensive.

Water price

£1.4

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Cash-point machines are available in all major towns. Bankcards with the Cirrus logo are accepted.

Credit Card Acceptance

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques can be exchanged in all major towns but are not recommended due to the high rate of commission.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Ferry, Public Bus, Taxi, Train

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Portugal: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

This trip is designed to acquaint you with the highlights of Portugal in just 8 days. We make the most of our time by using a mix of public transport and charter buses to travel between the cities and in order for you to experience the journey like the locals do. Once we're in the cities our explorations are mostly done on foot, so please bring sensible footwear and be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

Non refundable permits

Portugal Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.