

# The Heart of Portugal



Tucked into the western edge of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal is a country of vibrant diversity. Known for its historic cityscapes, charming villages, bucolic countryside and unpretentious, people-friendly nature, it's easy to understand why this up-and-comer was named Travel+ Leisure's Destination of the Year for 2016.

For a relatively small country, Portugal is chock-full of beautiful beaches, inspiring coastline, enchanting villages and cities that display an abundant history in art, architecture, and lore. Finding a way to experience all this splendid country has to offer can be overwhelming. We've put together a 9-day itinerary that features all the best of Portugal. With our Heart of Portugal Tour you'll find yourself immersed in the culture and custom of the Portuguese people. Traverse her scenic roads, cook in a wood-fired oven, alongside a Portuguese family, enjoy off-the-beaten-path adventure and sample the diverse dishes and distinctive wines of the area. Experience not simply the points of interest, but places of prominence that only a local can share. Enchant yourself in her stunning landscapes, colorful people, irresistible food and luscious wines. You'll be enriched and delighted by "Europe's Best Kept Secret". The Heart of Portugal tour explores the history and culture of this charming country, as well as her diverse culinary scene. We'll visit two distinct wine regions, take in the stunning landscape of the Douro Valley, and visit hilltop medieval villages, which appear untouched by time. We'll travel back a few centuries in Alentejo, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Pastureland and wheat fields share the landscape with olive groves and vineyards, and cork oak forests are peppered about. We'll taste exquisite Ports, exceptional wines, fruity olive oil, fresh-caught seafood, delectable stews and soups and the ever-present pastries and sweet desserts the Portuguese enjoy. We'll spend time in local shops and emporiums including a workshop for hand-made pottery. Spend the night in a village built around a massif of granite, the incredibly large boulders balanced impressively about. It's been said that Portugal led the Age of Discovery. Come with us on this once-in-a-lifetime experience, let your eyes drink in the beauty, your palate taste the freshest, most delicious foods, travel back to days of old, and discover Portugal as only a real explorer can, from the heart.

## **Day 1**

Welcome to Portugal.

Arrive at your convenience to the hotel.

(Private transfer can be arranged).

In the afternoon meet your tour guide at the lobby for a walking tour in Lisbon.

Stretching along the banks of the Tagus River near the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal's capital and largest city winds upward among seven steep hills, forming an enchanting destination of warm weather, alluring alleys, quaint shops, Gothic cathedrals, impressive bridges and colorful neighborhoods.

After the walking tour we will enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Lisbon.



## **Day 2**

Breakfast.

This morning we depart for a day trip to *Sintra*, a place that will make you feel as if you entered fairytale book.

Sintra presents a spectacular setting of verdant hills, sprinkled with pretty villas, royal retreats, castles and palaces such as the famous Pena's Palace, a castle reminiscent of Germany's Neuschwanstein. Built in the mid-1800s and serving as a summer retreat for the Portuguese royal family, Pena's Palace is surrounded by forested parklands containing exotic trees, plants and flowers.

We will have lunch in Roca cape, a place that offers spectacular scenery. After lunch we will visit Cascais, a popular coastal town. Cascais still retains much of the charm of its fishing past. The daily catch is still auctioned in the harbor side square and colorful boats still bob in the harbor where you can see their owners often mending nets on the quay.

In the early evening we'll head back to Lisbon for an overnight. Remember to pack your bags. Tomorrow we are heading



## **Day 3**

This morning we are leaving Lisbon and heading north. Our first stop would be in the charming village of Obidos. Obidos is

Encircled by an old fortified wall. Besides the wall, the magnificent medieval castle and historic center of Obidos make up the city's main attraction. You will have a chance to walk in the labyrinth of narrow, cobbled streets the lead to busy squares, inviting cafes, quaint shops and whitewashed houses spruced with colorful flowers.



Off we go to Coimbra, a vibrant university town. Situated by the Mondego River in Central Portugal. Coimbra is home to a treasure trove of historic sites, beautiful garden and a lively culture that is centered around one of Europe's oldest universities. No trip to Coimbra would be complete without a visit to the University of Coimbra to admire one of the world's most beautiful libraries that will make you feel as if you in a Hurry potter movie, especially when you see the student walking around with their unique traditional attire.

Our next discovery will be the "Venice" of Portugal. Hugging the country's Atlantic Coast in Central Portugal, Aveiro is a bustling city often called "the Venice of Portugal" due to its picturesque setting of scenic canals connected

by charming bridges and dotted with colorful gondolas and speedboats.



Along these canals Moliceiros fishing boats, which resemble gondolas, glide with their passengers. These gondolas and the art Nouveau buildings have given rise to Aveiro being referred to as the Venice of Portugal. Next, we will drive to Porto, check into the hotel before we go out for dinner in this beautiful city.

Overnight in Porto.

#### **Day 4**

Wake up surrounded by the calming water views of Porto. Today we will tour more in leisure. After breakfast we'll have a guided walking tour in Porto where we stop occasionally to taste local specialties, among them the Famous port. Porto is the undiscovered northern capital of Portugal; it can rival Lisbon for historic sights, varied activities and nightlife. The historic center proudly boasts traditional architecture, astounding buildings and winding streets; crammed with hidden gems, whilst modern Porto delivers a vibrant culture and daring cuisine.

Today's lunch will surely be a memorable one. You will not find a menu in English at this restaurant and what you will taste is a traditional sandwich of Porto with a very interesting story behind it. Wait till you hear it!



In the afternoon you will have free time to walk around, shop, drink more Port... Overnight in Porto.

#### **Day 5**

This morning we leave Porto and continue our journey to the heart of the Port and wine country to discover the awe-inspiring views of the Douro valley. The Douro is a swift river, dropping over 120 meters during its 160-kilometer journey across Portugal, and carving deep, precipitous canyons into the landscape. The unwieldy geography has not daunted the people who live on the steep but fertile slopes along its banks, however, and the sight of tiny white villages clinging to the hillsides, surrounded by narrow strips of fields stepping down to the river, ranks among the most picturesque in the country.

Because the climate does not allow time for the grapes to ripen fully, the wine produced is quite light with a slight sparkle.



We will have private visits to family vineyards and have a picnic lunch in the vineyards. If the tour will take place during harvest time, you may choose to challenge yourself and help stomping the grapes by foot. This is one of the very few places in the world where they still do that, Using foot stomping as the best way for crushing the grapes as opposed to using a machine. The gentle tread of the pickers feet gradually extracts the rich color and tannins from the grape skins. Experts say that from a Sanitary point thanks to the delicate balance of acid, sugar and alcohol that prohibits human pathogens from surviving in wine At the end of the day we will head to our hotel for dinner and a good night sleep. Overnight in the countryside.

#### **Day 6:**

Our adventures in the heart of Portugal continue today. Our first discovery would be Sortelha, one of the best historical villages in Portugal. The great charm of this village is its

medieval atmosphere, with all the houses having been built of granite and mostly consist of one story. Their foundation was built into the rock following the topography of the terrain.



Our next visit would be to Belmonte. The interesting little town of Belmonte is dominated by a 13th century castle that was transformed into a fortified manor house in the 15th century by the family of Pedro Alvares Cabral, the discoverer of South America. Adjacent to the castle is a warren of ancient alleys that make up the old Jewish quarter. An important Jewish community settled in Belmonte, substantially increasing in size when the Catholic Monarchs of Spain issued a decree ordering the expulsion of all Jews in 1492, with the king of Portugal following suit in 1496. During this period, many Jews originating from Spain settled in towns and villages close to the border, such as Belmonte. Their houses are located, as was the rule, beyond the castle walls in the Bairro de Marrocos (Morocco Neighborhood).



Our final destination today would be Monsanto, a stunning medieval village built around gigantic boulders. We will have a true local experience baking bread the old fashioned way in the community oven of the village.

Overnight in Monsanto.

### **Day 7**

Today we make our way to Alentejo region, a region of sunbaked olive groves, fortified towns and traditional villages, Our first stop will be in Marvao, a village that is located only few miles away from Spain. We will explore this spectacular medieval walled village, which perched on a rocky crag. The narrow cobbled streets lined with whitewashed houses, many with decorative doors and windows from the 15th century, wind their way up to one of the best preserved castles in Portugal dating from the 13th century. The views from the castle are truly breathtaking looking out over wild rocky landscape towards Spain and the Serra da Estrela mountains in Portugal.



After having lunch in Marvao we will make our way to Estremoz. Estremoz lies in the center of the marble quarries in Alentejo – so much so that the material is used extensively as you'll see the marble buildings, marble-clad streets and squares.



Our final destination for the day is Evora where we'll spend the night. Overnight in Evora.

## **Day 8**

Good morning Evora. Evora boasts a vast array of fascinating historical monuments. Although it's small, it has the second large national monuments of Portugal, like an impressive roman temple, prehistoric stones and a 16<sup>th</sup> century chapel decorated with bones, skulls, and entire bodies hanging from the wall. (The story will be told)



After departing Evora we will drive to Monsaraz. A walk through the medieval village of Monsaraz is a journey through time. We are going to visit a winery and have a hand-on cooking class of traditional recipes of the Alentejo region in the vineyard. If time permits we will visit the best place to buy Pottery and cork. Portugal is world leader in the production and transformation of cork. We will visit a familiar cork factory where you can understand how cork is treated and processed to produce the different cork products that exists nowadays.



We will end our Portuguese journey in Lisbon. Overnight in Lisbon.

## **Day 9**

Head home or extend your stay.

### **The tour includes**

8 nights accommodations (2 Lisbon, 2 Porto, 1 Douro, 1 Monsanto, 1 Evora, 1 Lisbon)  
All breakfasts  
7 lunches  
5 Dinners  
Hands-on cooking class  
Wine tasting  
Port tasting  
Transportation  
English speaking guide  
Entrance fees as per the itinerary

### **The tour does not include**

Flights  
Travel insurance  
Personal expense  
Anything not mentioned in the itinerary

### **Price per person in a double room:**

\$3350.00

**To reserve your space on the tour go directly to**

<http://www.foodnwinevacations.com/reserve-now>

Where it says select your tour on the drop down menu pick *The heart of Portugal*

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