



AS ONE OF THE OLDEST CITIES IN EUROPE, Lisbon has a rich, intriguing history as evidenced by its well-kept architecture and monuments adorning the city. A western location on the Iberian Peninsula (bordering both the Atlantic Ocean and the Tagus River) means mild, temperate weather year-round. In fact, Portugal's vibrant capital provides an ideal gateway to neighbouring towns and wine regions. With a changing landscape as diverse as its regional cuisine and the emergence of new high-end properties and activities, a select number of Portugal's coastal towns are at long last becoming luxury destinations set to rival the most opulent offerings of Italy, Spain and France.

Though many European capitals demonstrate their progress through the construction of modern edifices and artwork,

Lisbon prefers to meticulously renovate the remaining evidence of its prosperous glory years; ornate palaces and historic homes have been skilfully transformed into five star hotels and event venues. The Pestana Palace, the once regal home of a 19th century Marquis, is today a national monument boasting four extravagant suites decorated with authentic period furnishings, magnificent views of the Tagus River and an award-winning spa. In 1883, the Count of Valençães painstakingly transformed his home into an exquisite palace. Nowadays, the five star Lapa Palace – high on a hilltop adjacent to the famed Alfama district (birthplace of the hauntingly melancholic Fado folk music) – is a prime example of the extravagant wealth once enjoyed by the country's privileged aristocracy.



Port of plenty

THE COASTAL PLEASURES OF PORTUGAL AND IN PARTICULAR THE HISTORIC AND COLOURFUL CAPITAL OF LISBON, AWAIT THE LUXURY TRAVELLER. *Jessica Benavides Canepa* DISCOVERS A GROWING NUMBER OF NEW OFFERINGS IN THE REGION.



The charm of old town Lisbon



PRACA DO COMERCIO



CHIADO FACTORY



ROSSIO SQUARE

The Portuguese way of life – deeply rooted in tradition and a strong desire for innovation – rewards the discerning visitor with a taste of aristocratic living combined with the very best in contemporary creature comforts.



Eduardo VII Park, Lisbon



PENA NATIONAL PALACE



HOTEL PALACIO CONCIERGE JOSÉ DIOGO



SEASIDE ALGARVE REGION

The elegant, tree-lined Avenida da Liberdade features the world's finest luxury fashion brands rubbing elbows with a curiously complementary mix of the old and new. Classic monuments paying homage to Portugal's most important personalities stand alongside the city's most contemporary dwellings. At the avenue's base is the Praça Marquês de Pombal, an impressive square that complements the well-manicured Eduardo VII Park and just a short distance from the modern comforts of the internationally-recognised Four Seasons Ritz Hotel.

Chiado, one of Lisbon's most upscale areas, is currently enjoying a cultural and gastronomic rebirth. Lisbon's 200 year-old opera house, Teatro Nacional de São Carlos harmoniously neighbours vintage-chic concept shops like the newly-opened Chiado Factory. The culinary wunderkind of the moment is José Avillez, a talented young chef whose quick rise to fame and impressive collection of Chiado eateries include Cantinho do Avillez (known for its hearty regional fare), the recently inaugurated gourmet

Mini Bar Teatro and the crowning jewel of his epicurean empire; Michelin-starred Belcanto.

The majestic Praça do Comércio – alternately called Terreiro do Paço, is the city's classically-columned waterfront square (renovated in 2012) usually brimming with activity from the adjacent shopping street Rua Augusta, the nearby Rossio Square (in the heart of Lisbon), the iconic yellow trams making their way down from surrounding hills and the Ribeira das Naus, the busy promenade that lines the Tagus River. A little further east, past Cais do Sodré – a seedy-turned-hip nightlife district – a short coastal trip by train or by car offers you a different side of the Tagus: the beautiful towns of coastal Portugal.

Casçais, a one-time fishing village blessed with pristine, sandy beaches, was reinvented as a sophisticated jetsetter's playground once the royal family christened it their official summer residence in the late 1800s. These days, the town remains an excellent choice for indulgent relaxation. Largo de Camões, a quaint square at

the heart of the old town centre, is surrounded by a myriad of brightly-coloured shops, cafés and restaurants with uniquely-tiled floors resembling cascading waves. The Hemingway Restaurant, located in the harbour, serves wonderfully creative cuisine and mixed drinks in a decidedly eclectic setting. A pleasant walk along the promenade that lines the Estoril coast brings visitors to Praia do Guincho, a beach with waves so powerful, it has long been considered Portugal's surfers' paradise.

HOTELS RANGE THE FULL GAMUT from boutique to grand luxe, most with distinctive characteristics earning them their loyal clientele. The 33-room Farol Design Hotel represents a successful marriage of the past and present; a 19th century grand residence re-styled to include a sleek, contemporary wing with fashion-savvy interiors and dramatic views of the Atlantic Ocean. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the spacious Pousada de Casçais is a national monument in

Portugal / Places to stay

The Farol Design Hotel

Set in a grand 19th century residence with dramatic views of the Atlantic Ocean. Prices start at €195 (A\$279) for a garden view room. farol.com.pt/en.

Pousada de Casçais

A national monument and former citadel, now a five star hotel. Prices start at €179 (A\$256). Pousadas.pt

Hotel Palacio

In Sestoril, the hotel featured in the 1964 James Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Prices start at €175 (A\$250) palacioestorilhotel.com

Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon

located right in the heart of the city. Prices start from €575 (A\$824) fourseasons.com/lisbon/

Lapa Palace

Adjacent to the Alfama district. Prices start from €400 (A\$573) olissippohotels.com/en

Pestana Palace

Pestana Palace is a former regal home of a 19th century Marquis. Prices start from €209 (A\$299) pestana.com/en



THE FEROL DESIGN HOTEL



FOUR SEASONS HOTEL RITZ LISBON

the town harbour with quite a storied evolution; originally a citadel, then a fortification, a royal palace and finally a military base before becoming a five star hotel in 2012. The interiors of the 126-room hotel are unexpectedly modern and minimalist, perhaps designed to highlight the recent addition of unique artist signature rooms and artwork from the Art District galleries and artists' commune on the premises – said to be the only one of its kind in Europe.

Lovers of historical intrigue would enjoy a visit (and/or stay) to the Hotel Palacio across the bay in neighbouring Estoril, a still ritzy hotel frequented by James Bond author Ian Fleming (during his WW2 years as a naval officer) and later immortalised in the 1964 Bond classic, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Concierge José Diogo, whose teenaged cameo (in the film) made him a local celebrity in his own right, is one of a handful of loyal employees still working at the landmark hotel. Indeed, a 007 martini at the English-inspired bar is like traveling back to a more glamorous era.

Only 20-odd minutes inland, Sintra is a town rich with grandiose castles, a mountainous landscape and acres of natural beauty that fully warrant its classification as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The most mesmerising former royal residence is the Pena National Palace – a monument resembling a whimsical fairy-tale castle seemingly erected straight from the mind of Walt Disney. Golf enthusiasts gather year-round at the superb 18-hole golf club – one of the best in the country – of the 545-acre Penha Longa Resort. Amenities here include, lush

gardens, exemplary spa services and a global collection of fine dining options – two star Michelin restaurant Arola offers a lofty space and Portuguese cuisine with a twist.

Further south, several hours before reaching the tourist-infested beaches of the popular Algarve area, lays the newest coastal gem: the Herdade da Comporta region. Made up of seven pristine hamlets including Brejos and Comporta, the area offers a postcard-perfect sanctuary by the sea. Well-heeled Lisboans, European royalty, models, designers and dignitaries set up house in fashionably minimalist cabanas without a care or worry of over-population.

The Portuguese way of life – deeply rooted in tradition and a strong desire for innovation – rewards the discerning visitor with a taste of aristocratic living expertly combined with the very best in contemporary creature comforts.

GETTING THERE

Emirates flies direct from Sydney to Lisbon. Return airfares start at A\$2,323 economy and A\$9,129 business class. Total flight time is 23 hours and 18 minutes.

WHEN TO GO

From March to May or September to October, the weather is still warm and there are fewer crowds than in the summer peak months of June to August. Sun lovers will however enjoy the steamy, beach-perfect weather during summer, when a number of colourful festivals take place including arts festival The Festival ao Largo; and Festas de Lisboa commemorating St Anthony and St Peter.