

5 Reasons to Cycle Portugal

The country of Portugal is a warm, welcoming location that provides travelers a little taste of everything. Offering a perfect blend of climate, culture and landscape, visitors here get the unique opportunity to experience outdoor adventure, rich traditions and serene relaxation all in one fascinating place. One of the very best ways to experience Portugal's unique charm is to cycle there. Here are five reasons why this beautiful country should be on your biking itinerary.

Algarve

Touted as Portugal's most popular destination, once you visit Algarve you'll understand why. With nearly 100 beaches offering upwards of 200 km of breathtaking coastline to ride along, as well as copious hills and valleys, it's a cyclist's dream. The shoreline, particularly around Lagos, is dotted with fascinating caves and grottos carved from limestone and begging to be explored. The area's highest point, Foia Peak, reaches an impressive 902 meters above sea level and offers breathtaking views of the landscape below. If you get tired of cycling and swimming, the Algarve is also home to many golf courses, spas, shops and restaurants. There's something for everyone in this lovely Portuguese region.

Alentejo

If unblemished coastline is what you seek, Alentejo is the perfect destination. The beaches in this region are absolutely spectacular, with atmospheres ranging from well-traveled to secluded and a variety of activities including surfing, diving, boating and, of course, cycling. Alentejo is also home to some of Portugal's most beautiful countryside, which is dotted with peaceful trees, delicate flowers and a host of local wildlife. It's absolutely nature at its very best.

Fado Music

Experiencing Portugal wouldn't be complete unless you also experience the country's most popular style of music, known as Fado. With roots dating back as far as the 15th century, this bluesy sounding music is unique to Portugal and features a 12-string guitar called the guitarra Portuguesa. The Portuguese attribute the beauty and allure of Fado to something known as "saudade", a word that does not translate to other languages but is defined as a poetic blend of melancholy, longing, loneliness and loss. Listening to this haunting music is like listening to a piece of Portugal's rich history set to song.

Wine

For centuries, Europe has been the birthplace of some of the world's finest wines. Portugal is no exception. One of the most popular wines, produced exclusively in the Douro Valley region, is the port wine, which is sweet, red and typically billed as being of the dessert wine variety. Other areas, such as the Island of Madeira and Alentejo also produce a variety of exquisite wines, both red and white. Portuguese wine has been enjoyed for centuries and continues to be one of the country's most noteworthy attributes. And what better way to relax after a long day of cycling the beautiful terrain of Portugal than by enjoying a glass of their fine local wine?

Architecture

Given the country's abundant history it's no surprise that Portugal is home to its fair share of fascinating architecture. It is marked by unique style and influenced by generations of people who have settled there over the years. It's also quite diverse. You may find anything from Gothic, Renaissance or Romanesque to Baroque or Neoclassicism scattered throughout the country. One particularly interesting style, Manueline (also known as Portuguese late Gothic) provides a tantalizing glimpse into the unique decorative design found in Portuguese architecture at the beginning of the 16th century. There's no better way to reach out and touch the past than to view remnants of it that still exist in the present.

A trip to Portugal means a diverse journey filled with nature, adventure, culture and relaxation. You'll never be bereft of something to do, whether it's sunbathing on sandy beaches to tasting the country's finest wines to visiting ancient architectural masterpieces. And with seemingly endless coastline and breathtaking countryside, Portugal is a cyclist's dream destination. These are just five reasons we think so. What will you come up with?