



Regional Information

Portugal – Alentejo & Algarve Wild Coast

In Arrabida Natural Park you'll admire beautiful Mediterranean forest and the gorgeous cliff coast line with some stunning beaches of fine sand and clear sea water. Enjoy the coast and the beautiful sand Troia Peninsula. The Vicentine Coast Natural Park extends itself along the Portuguese coast and is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. This SW landscape is 300 million years old and it is one of the most preserved landscapes in all of Europe; human intervention is less visible throughout the areas long history. Once submerged (about 2 million years ago), this is a vast area with many different coastal habitats and countless beaches and cliffs and isolated islets. This area boasts a diversity of rare botanical species, with very interesting flora and a variety of maritime birds that nest here and complete this beautiful and unique scenery. Cape S. Vicente is the south-western-most point in continental Europe and a passing area for thousands of birds. Sagres is the place from where the brave Portuguese forefathers sailed on their caravels seeking new people and continents.

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General Information



Some History...

The land within the borders of today's Portuguese Republic has been continuously settled since prehistoric times. In 29 B.C. the territory was occupied by the Gallaeci and the Lusitanians when it was integrated in the Roman Empire as the provinces of Lusitania and part of Gallaecia. Roman settlers strongly influenced Portuguese culture, particularly the Portuguese language, mostly derived from Latin. In the 5th century, after the fall of the Roman empire, it was occupied by several Germanic peoples, mainly the Suevi and the Visigoths. In the early 8th century Muslim Moors conquered those Christian kingdoms, occupying most of the Iberian Peninsula.

During the Christian Reconquista (Reconquering), the country of Portugal was settled, as part of the Kingdom of Galicia. With the establishment of the Kingdom recognized in 1143 and the stabilization of its borders by 1249, Portugal claims to be the oldest European nation-state. In the 15th and 16th centuries, as the result of maritime exploration, Portugal established a global empire that included possessions in Africa, Asia and South America, becoming one of the world's major economic, political and military powers. In 1580, after a succession crisis it was united with Spain for a period called the Iberian Union; however in 1640 it re-established full independence during the Portuguese Restoration War that resulted in the establishment of a new dynasty and a return to the previous separation between the two empires. The 1755, Lisbon earthquake, Spanish and French invasions, and the loss of its largest territorial possession abroad, Brazil, resulted in both the disruption of political stability and economic growth as well as the reduction of Portugal's international status as a global power during the 19th century. After the overthrow of the monarchy in 1910, a democratic but unstable republic was established that was then replaced by the "Estado Novo" dictatorship. After the Portuguese Colonial War and the Carnation Revolution in 1974, the democracy was restored and the country handed over its last overseas provinces. Its last overseas territory, Macau, was handed over to China in 1999.

Portugal boasts the world's 19th-highest quality-of-life, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit. It is the 13th-most peaceful and the 8th-most globalized country in the world. It is a member of the European Union (joined the then EEC in 1986, leaving the EFTA where it was a founding member in 1960) and the United Nations; as well as a founding member of the Latin Union, the Organization of Ibero-American States, OECD, NATO, Community of Portuguese Language Countries, the European Union's Eurozone, and also a Schengen state.

Some geography...



Mainland Portugal is split by its main river, the Tagus. The northern landscape is mountainous in the interior with plateaus indented by river valleys, whereas the south, that includes the Algarve and the Alentejo, features mostly rolling plains and a climate somewhat warmer and drier than in the north.

The Algarve, separated from the Alentejo by mountains, has a climate much like the southern coastal areas of Spain. Portugal's highest point is Mount Pico on Pico Island in the Azores. This is an ancient volcano measuring 2,350 m (7,710 ft). Mainland Portugal's highest point is Serra da Estrela, with the summit being 1,993 m (6,539 ft) above sea level. Portugal has a Mediterranean climate, Csa in the south and Csb in the north, according to the Köppen climate classification. Portugal is one of the warmest European countries.



What good “stuff” can you eat?

In the 15th century, Prince Henry the Navigator ordered his explorers to bring back to Portugal any exotic fruits, nuts, and plants from new lands. As a result, the Age of Discovery dramatically affected cooking in Portugal and around the world.

Tomatoes and potatoes were taken to Europe, Brazilian pineapples were introduced to the Azores, Brazilian chili peppers grew in Angola, African coffee was transplanted to Brazil (today producing about half of the world's supply), Brazilian cashews landed in Africa and India, and tea was introduced to Europeans. Today, the Portuguese fondness for certain ingredients like cinnamon or curry powder for example, is also a legacy from this time. But other cultures had been introducing new foods to Portugal for centuries before that. The Romans (who aimed to make the Iberian Peninsula the granary of Rome) brought wheat and introduced onions, garlic, olives, and grapes. Later, the Moors were the first to plant rice, introduced figs, planted groves of lemons and oranges, and covered the Algarve province with almond trees.

Today, naturally, Portuguese food varies from region to region, but fresh fish and shellfish are found on virtually every menu. Grilled sardines and horse mackerel are also popular in the coastal towns, and a mixture of other types of fish is put into a stew called "Caldeirada."

Bacalhau

The national dish is "bacalhau," dried, **salted cod**. The Portuguese have been obsessed with it since the early 16th century, when their fishing boats reached Newfoundland. The sailors salted and sun-dried their catch to make it last the long journey home, and today there are said to be 365 different ways of preparing it, one for each day of the year.



The most typical **desserts** are cinnamon-flavored rice pudding, flan, and caramel custard, but they also often include a variety of **cheese**. The most common varieties are made from sheep or goat's milk, and the most popular is "queijo da serra" from the region of Serra da Estrela.

If given the opportunity, do not miss trying the **alcomonias**—delicious cakes made using pine kernels, flour and honey.

What about a drink?

Wine in Portugal

Portuguese wine is the result of traditions introduced to the region by ancient civilizations, such as the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and mostly the Romans. Portugal started to export its wines to Rome during the Roman Empire. Modern exports developed with trade to England after the Methuen Treaty in 1703. From this commerce a wide variety of wines started to be grown in Portugal. And, in 1758, the first wine-producing region of the world, the *Região Demarcada do Douro* was created under the orientation of Marquis of Pombal, in the Douro Valley. Portugal has two wine producing regions protected by UNESCO as World Heritage: the Douro Valley Wine Region (*Douro Vinhateiro*) and Pico Island Wine Region (*Ilha do Pico Vinhateira*). Portugal has a large variety of native breeds, producing a very wide variety of different wines with distinctive personality.



In Portugal only some grape varieties or *castas* are authorized or endorsed in the Alentejo and Algarve regions.

Alentejo

Red castas Alfrocheiro, Aragonez, Periquita1, Tinta Caiada, Trincadeira, Alicante Bouschet, Moreto;

White castas Antão Vaz, Arinto, Fernão Pires, Rabo de Ovelha, Roupeiro

Algarve

Red castas Negra Mole, Trincadeira, Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez, Periquita;

White castas Arinto, Roupeiro, Manteúdo, Moscatel Graúdo, Perrum, Rabo de Ovelha.

Moscatel is a liqueurous wine from the Setúbal Peninsula. Although the region has produced wines since the dawn of nationality, it was in 1797 that the wines of Setúbal were first mentioned. There is another variety of Moscatel wine, the "Moscatel de Faveiros", in the *Região Demarcada do Douro*, it is made from a different *casta*, and the "Galego" (white), while Moscatel Roxo is made upon a *casta* with the same name as the wine.

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Arriving in Lisbon

Lisbon Airport is located almost in the center of the city, so you can be in your hotel just within minutes of your arrival. There are several cheap professional transport services available, with prices comparable to a taxi. Taxis are also a fast way to reach the city center. They are lined up outside the terminals, and even with luggage, it should cost you between 15 and 20 Euros. Be sure to ask for a receipt.

Several buses also stop right outside the arrivals terminal, and if you don't have large luggage, you can take buses 44, 745, or 83 that run past the major avenues uptown and end up in the old city center.



Those with luggage should take either the AeroBus or AeroShuttle bus services, which run between the airport and the city center. A ticket may be purchased directly from the driver. The buses run every 20 or 30 minutes and stop at important points in the city such as Entrecampos, Campo Pequeno, Avenida Republica, Saldanha, Picoas, Fontes Pereira Melo, Marquês de Pombal, Avenida da Libertade, Restauradores, Rossio, Praça do Comercio and Cais do Sodré. On board, there are screens showing each stop as the bus approaches the area, and a list of nearby hotels, which is extremely convenient if you're not entirely sure which stop you need to get off at for your hotel.

Getting around Lisbon

Lisbon's variety of transportation contributes to its unique charm. Old trams and turn-of-the-century elevators explore the oldest quarters, and the modern subway lines are decorated with contemporary art. Central Lisbon is compact enough to explore on foot, and most sights in Baixa, Bairro Alto, and Alfama are within walking distance.

Baixa, or downtown Lisbon, is the heart of the city. It is the main shopping and banking district that stretches from the riverfront to the main avenue (Avenida da Liberdade), with streets named according to the shopkeepers and craftsmen who traded in the area. **Bairro Alto** is a picturesque working class quarter dating from the 16th century that has traditionally been the city's bohemian haunt of artists and writers. Its grid of streets is quiet during the day, but is transformed at night into the city's vibrant nightlife quarter. Behind colorful and graffiti-ridden façades is a variety of excellent traditional and international restaurants, tourist-packed Fado Houses, and a multitude of sleek bars and stylish alternative fashion shops that stay open until late at night. Throughout the week, and especially on weekends you'll find people of all ages, backgrounds, and lifestyles bar-hopping through the cobbled lanes or standing outside with a drink in hand enjoying the city's usual mild nights

Alfama is Lisbon's most emblematic quarter and one of the most rewarding for walkers and photographers thanks to its medieval alleys and outstanding views. It has influenced poets and novelists, and although Bairro Alto is the city's traditional Fado quarter, it is Alfama that has always been the inspiration for Fado songs, and is becoming just as popular with Fado Houses.



Lisbon's top 10 recommended sights

- JERONIMOS MONASTERY A World Heritage monument; Vasco da Gama's resting place.
- BELEM TOWER The city's icon; a symbol of the Age of Discovery.
- GULBENKIAN MUSEUM Treasures from the East and the West.
- BERARDO MUSEUM OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART One of the world's greatest modern art collections.
- OCEANARIUM An odyssey of sea creatures in a state-of-the-art building.
- ST. GEORGE'S CASTLE Overlooking the city from millennium-old walls.
- ANCIENT ART MUSEUM Fascinating Oriental and European art.
- MuDe - DESIGN & FASHION MUSEUM One of the world's leading design and fashion collections.
- COACHES MUSEUM The world's largest collection of magnificent royal coaches.
- TILE MUSEUM An ancient art form in a lavish old convent.

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Fado (Portugal's national musical treasure)

There are two basic styles of Fado: Lisbon and Coimbra. In Lisbon it is always sung by a solo performer, while in Coimbra it is often performed by groups of male university students. They are accompanied by two guitarists, one playing the melody on a twelve-stringed Portuguese guitar (descendant of the English guitar introduced into Portugal by the British community in Porto in the 19th century), and the other supplying the rhythm on the six-stringed viola.

Santiago do Cacem

The origins of the castle of Santiago do Cacém are rather curious, the result of the victory of a warrior princess over a fierce Moor called ver a fierce Moor called Kassen that took place on Santiago's (St James's) day. She therefore named it Santiago de Kassen, which, over the time, became Santiago do Cacém



Rectangular in shape, ten towers and cubic turrets reinforce the halls. There is a superb view from the castle, whichever way you look. The parish church stands next to it, with its 19th century cemetery. It was put up on the instructions of the Order of the Gladiators when the settlement was donated to them during the 13th century. Of ancient construction, it has undergone significant alterations. During the 18th century the orientation of the church was altered and it was given a new facade. The south side still retains its gothic portal. There is an outstanding 14th century gothic high relief depicting St. James fighting the Moors.

Places of interest include: The Castle, Parish Church, Historic Center, Conde de Bracial Square, Municipal Museum, among others.

Arrábida Natural Park

The Arrábida Natural Park sits on the northern slope of the Sado River estuary in Portugal. The park was founded in 1976 and covers 108 square kilometres (41.7 miles²). The highest point in the park is marked by the Serra da Arrábida, 499 m (1637 ft) high. The park covers the Arrábida Hills, which mediterranean-like vegetation and microclimate resemble Adriatic locations such as Dalmatia.

Two of the park beaches are popular among the inhabitants of Lisbon and Setúbal. Those beaches are Portinho da Arrábida and Figueirinha. The first one, on a small bay, and with a little island off the shore, is especially famous, being a regular feature on Portuguese TV commercials. In 2004, a fire destroyed a significant part of the park, which is now slowly recovering.

Perched up on the hills overlooking the sea is a dazzling white 16th century Franciscan monastery, and along the slope of the hillside are five round chapels once used for solitary meditation.



This land is a blend of maritime coast, pine forest and Alentejan inspiration. It is the country's second biggest municipality and its highest elevation is to be found in the Cercal hills at a height of 346 meters. From here one can see the vastness of the sea to the West.

Those travelling in this region who are interested in handicrafts can find chairs and stools made of wood and wicker at São Bartolomeu da Serra and at São Domingos da Serra, saddlery at Santiago do Cacém and at Cercal do Alentejo, ceramics at Santo André and Ermidas Sado and woodwork and cork at Cercal do Alentejo.

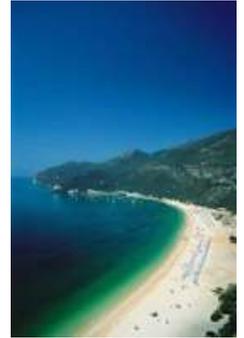
Meals

Included in your program are breakfasts each day. Dinners and lunches are on your own. Dining establishments are moderately casual, although shorts are usually not appropriate. Polo shirts, slacks, loafers, or other closed toe shoes are good. Sport jackets, dresses, and blazers are good all purpose items for those slightly more elegant occasions.

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Zambujeira do Mar

A small fishing village and home to the popular Sudoeste Festival. The festival is one of the biggest summer music festivals in Portugal. During the four days of the festival a whole host of national and international bands take to the stage playing through the day and evening. After hours, world-renowned DJs keep the party going well into the next morning. Past performers have included some big names from the world of indie and rock music including Marilyn Manson, Oasis, Ben Harper, Muse, Fatboy Slim, Doves, Basement Jaxx, and Black Uhuru.



Vila Nova de Milfontes

Translated to English, Vila Nova de Milfontes, means New Village of a Thousand Fountains and springs. The village is filled with restaurants, bars, shops, cafés, and a positive friendly atmosphere, infectious to any visitor.

Founded in 1468 by King D. Joao II, the area was colorfully populated by pirates, slaves, and the like, so it's fascinating to walk the streets with such origins in mind and you see first-hand the evidence of centuries of culture.

Every alley, pathway, and road offers beautiful murals or some other historical marker, Saint Clemont's Castle, which sits right on the estuary's edge and was built in 1602 to help protect the village from pirate attacks, fits perfectly into the whole scene. Old fishermen talk of past catches, donkeys haul carts along the streets and you get a real feel for the history of this charming place.

Surf Camp Alentejo rents equipment (surf boards, wetsuits, etc.) and is five minutes from the beach. Visit www.alentejosurfcamp.com for more information.

Troia Peninsula

Troia is an immense strip of fine sand well connected to Setubal by a ferry departing from the port. The northern end of the peninsula is heavily developed and includes an exceptional 18-hole golf course by Robert Trent Jones Sr. On the southern end there are miles of glorious empty beaches, great stretches of dunes, and a pine forest. In the springtime there is an event of international status, the Troia International Film Festival.



Did you know? The appellation system of the Douro region was created nearly two hundred years before that of France, in order to protect its superior wines from inferior ones. The quality and great variety of wines in Portugal are due to noble castas, microclimates, soils and proper technology. Official designations:

Quality Wine Produced in a Specific Region (QWPSR) or VQPRD - Vinho de Qualidade Produzido em Região Demarcada - These are the most protected wine and indicates a specific vineyard, such as Port Wine, Vinhos Verdes, and Alentejo Wines. These wines are labeled D.O.C. (**Denominação de Origem Controlada**) which secures a superior quality.

Wines that have more regulations placed upon them but are not in a DOC region fall under the category of **Indicação de Proveniência Regulamentada** (IPR, Indication of Regulated Provenance)

Regional Wine - **Vinho Regional** Carries with it a specific region within Portugal.

Table Wines - **Vinho de Mesa** carries with it only the producer and the designation that it's from Portugal.

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Alentejano Natural Park

This natural park has spectacular views over the seashore with cliffs hiding wonderful sandy beaches and estuaries.

The Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park covers the coastline in the municipalities of Sines, Odemira, Aljezur and Vila do Bispo.

Some of its most impressive features are the reefs and small islands such as Pessegueiro and Carrapateira together with the Mira estuary, Cape Sardao and the Sagres promontory. The rocks of Arrifana and Odeceixe and the soil area at Sagres contrast with the sand dunes in Vila Nova de Milfontes and Sardao. The vegetation varies depending on the soil and the wind and salt exposure. There are many well preserved areas in the sand dunes and some areas of cork and Medronheiro trees. On the cliffs it is common to find the Great Cormorant and storks which are often observed building their nests in rocks by the sea. There are also a few otters and amphibians such as toads and frogs. The coastline in this area is a very important migration corridor particularly for birds of prey and sea birds.



Odeceixe

The attractive village tumbles down a hillside opposite the broad valley of the Odeceixe River, below the winding, tree-lined main coast road. In the summer it attracts a steady stream of surfers, campervanners and families, lured by a superb beach and a very laidback atmosphere. Everything centers on the single main street and a small square, Largo 1 de Maio, where you'll find some lively bars, plenty of cafés, a couple of minimarkets, post office, bank and craft shops.

The beach, Praia de Odeceixe, is 4km west of the village, reached down a verdant river valley, the fields either side neatly cultivated with corn. A road-train trundles between village and beach during July and August (approx hourly 10am–5pm), but it's a lovely walk along the road as well, following the river to a broad, sandy bay framed by low cliffs. It is one of the most sheltered beaches along this stretch of coast.



Did you know?

Cape Sardao is the only place in Western Europe where white storks nest at sea cliffs.



Arrifana, and Arrifana Beach

Practically protected by cliffs, the beach is almost like a cove/bay and is safe from the lashings of tall and dangerous waves. Praia da Arrifana beach in Algarve has been a choice destination for many, primarily for its surfing and body surfing! The season begins once the tourist high season ends. At that time the beach turns into a paradise for surf lovers, who get their adrenaline running as the high waves or 'kangroos' rise up from the ocean. If surfing is not of interest, visitors can also visit the nearby Moorish ruins that give a glimpse of the region's history as well as offer some panoramic views of the beautiful Vicentina coast.

Praia da Arrifana beach belongs to Arrifana, a small fishing village in the Algarve region that is also a popular holiday destination with the locals and tourists alike. Located on the waterfront are many seafood restaurants and cafes that are perfect to quench thirst and fill stomachs after a busy but exciting day of activities at the beach. Dishes made from fresh seafood procured from the village's little fishing harbor are delish and in much demand.

Luggage transfers

Our hoteliers or their contractors transfer bags for you daily. Bags can be delivered any time during the day, so confirm with the hotel host each day when they would prefer to have your bags the following morning. You are not required to leave early or before the bags have been collected, nor are you required to be at the next hotel before your bags arrive. Take your time and enjoy, but keep day gear such as sunscreen and your camera with you. Your bike will be equipped with a bag of some kind-handlebar, pannier, etc.-to help transport any personal items. We suggest you keep all directions and information with you, and that you store them in a Ziploc bag to protect against moisture damage.



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Did you know?

The Portuguese alphabet does not have a "k", "w" or "y." These letters are only used in "foreign" words such as *whisky*.



Algarve Pottery

The Algarve is famous for its pottery and ceramics, particularly hand-painted pottery and *azulejos* or tiles. There are numerous ceramics and pottery outlets throughout the Algarve. For working potteries/ ceramics workshops the main, or best-known, pottery centers are located in the towns of Almancil, Porches and Loulé. But there are many other potteries and workshops in the Algarve region.

Portuguese Cheeses

There is a wide variety of Portuguese cheeses, especially made from goat's or sheep's milk, or both together. Usually these are very strongly flavored and fragrant. In the Azores, there is a type of cheese made with cow's milk with a spicy taste (*Queijo de São Jorge*). Traditional Portuguese cuisine does not include cheese in its recipes, so it is usually eaten on its own before or after the main dishes. Other well known cheeses such as *Queijo de Azeitão*, *Queijo de Castelo Branco* and *Queijo da Serra da Estrela* (D.O.P.) which is very strong in flavour, can be eaten soft or more matured. *Serra da Estrela* is handmade from fresh sheep milk and thistle-derived rennet.

And while in Alentejo, try the protected origin local cheeses from Serpa, Évora and Niza.

Restaurants

Breakfast is traditionally just coffee and a bread roll, but lunch is a big affair, often lasting up to two hours. It is served between noon and 2 o'clock or between 1 and 3 o'clock, and dinner is generally served late, after 8 o'clock. There are usually three courses, often including **soup**. The most common soup is "caldo verde," with potato, shredded cabbage, and chunks of sausage.

Algarve Wine

Algarve's wines are renowned. There are four wines in the region which have Protected Designation of Origin (*Denominação de Origem Controlada* - DOC):

Lagoa DOC,
Lagos DOC,
Portimão DOC
Tavira DOC



Portuguese Festivals

There is probably a festival of some sort going on every day somewhere in Portugal.

Attending a traditional festival (*festa*) is a great way for any visitor to Portugal to absorb something of Portuguese popular culture and get to know better the local people and their way of life. Portugal's strong Catholic heritage, allied to the many local pagan customs which were integrated into the average person's religious convictions, has led to a popular culture rich in a firm belief for many Portuguese in saints, miracles, lucky charms, healing springs, shrines, offerings, magic, cults and superstition.



Did you know?

Many of the country's outstanding **pastries** were created by nuns in the 18th century, which they sold them as a means of supplementing their incomes. Many of their creations have interesting names like "barriga de freira" (nun's belly), "papos de anjo" (angel's chests), and "toucinho do céu" (bacon from heaven). A particularly delicious pastry is "pastel de nata," a small custard tart sprinkled with cinnamon.



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The present lighthouse was built over the ruins of a sixteenth-century Franciscan convent in 1846. The statues of St. Vincent and St. Francis Xavier had been moved to the nearby church of Nossa Senhora da Graça on Point Sagres. This lighthouse, guarding one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, is the second most powerful in Europe; its two 1000-watt lamps can be seen as far as 60 kilometers away.

Cape St Vicente

This cape is the southwestern most point in Portugal. It forms the southwestern end of the E9 European Coastal Path, which runs for 5000 km (3125 miles) to Narva-Jõesuu in Estonia. Approximately six kilometers from the village of Sagres, the cape is a landmark for a ship traveling to or from the Mediterranean. The cliffs rise nearly vertically from the Atlantic to a height of 75 meters.

The cape is a site of exuberant marine life and a high concentration of birds nesting on the cliffs, such as the rare Bonelli's eagle, peregrine falcons, kites, rock thrushes, rock pigeons, storks and herons.

Cape St. Vincent was already sacred ground in Neolithic times, as standing menhirs in the neighborhood attest. The ancient Greeks called it Ophiussa (Land of Serpents), inhabited by the Oestriminis and dedicated here a temple to Heracles. The Romans called it *Promontorium Sacrum* (or Holy Promontory). They considered it a magical place where the sunset was much larger than anywhere else. They believed the sun sank here hissing into the ocean, marking the edge of their world.

According to legend, the name of this cape is linked to the story of a martyred fourth-century Iberian deacon St. Vincent whose body was brought ashore here. A shrine was erected over his grave; according to the Arab geographer Al-Idrisi, it was always guarded by ravens and is therefore named by him "كنيسة الغراب" Kanīṣah al-Ghurāb (Church of the Raven). King Afonso Henriques (1139–1185) had the body of the saint exhumed in 1173 and brought it by ship to Lisbon, still accompanied by the ravens. This transfer of the relics is depicted on the coat of arms of Lisbon.

The area around the cape was plundered several times by pirates from France and Holland and, in 1587, by Sir Francis Drake. All existing buildings—including the *Vila do Infante* of Henry the Navigator—fell into ruins because of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. The Franciscan friars who cared for the shrine stayed on until 1834, when all monasteries were disbanded in Portugal.



Sagres

The most southerly community in Portugal and the most south-westerly in continental Europe is at Sagres, overlooking the Bay of Sagres, which is itself flanked by two headlands: Atalaia Point and Sagres Point. It is only when you catch sight of the grey ramparts of the fortress blocking off the massive plateau of Sagres Point and cast your eye around the 10 km arc of sheer cliffs to the lighthouse at Cape St. Vincent that you get a real feeling for the tremendous historical importance of this place. It was at least as important during the Age of Discovery as Cape Canaveral was during the early years of space exploration. In terms of global importance, Sagres' heyday was in the 15th century and this was down to *Prince Henry the Navigator*. He chose Sagres as his home and location of his school of navigation. The school boasts alumni such as Fernao de Magalhaes (Magellan), Pedro Alvares Cabral and Vasco da Gama whose impact on the World is still felt today.

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Bullfighting

Despite opposition from local and international organizations, bullfighting is still a popular Portuguese tradition, not only held in special bullrings in the larger towns, but also in market squares in smaller villages. The first recorded mention of bullfighting in the Iberian Peninsula is from the 1st century Roman historian Strabo, but its modern version was born in the Middle Ages when knights maintained military fitness and prepared for battle by fighting bulls, and displayed their skill and courage by staging these events in castle courtyards and town squares.

Today, the bullfighter or cavaleiro ("horseman") wears a traditional 18th century costume consisting of a gold-embroidered coat of silk or velvet, and rides an elaborately adorned horse. First, a team of bullfighters on foot distracts the bull with capes, and the cavaleiro places darts on its back, showing off his and the horse's courtly skills. When the bull is sufficiently fatigued, the final dart is placed, and the cavaleiro exits the arena. Then a group of eight men parades into the arena, and the leader confronts the tired bull. When the bull charges, the leader meets it and seizes it by the horns. As he hangs suspended between the bull's horns, the other men rush in and try to force the animal to a standstill by hanging on to its tail. At the end, unlike in Spain and France, the bull is not killed in the arena, and cows are led in to lure it from the ring. (It is illegal to kill a bull in Portuguese bullfighting.)

The bullfighting season lasts from Easter to October, and bullfights are usually held on Thursdays and Sundays. The best known fights take place in Lisbon's Campo Pequeno bullring, and in the center of the country, where the bulls are bred.



Lagos

Apart from its animated lifestyle, this was a fishing village and that its importance grew under the Arabs, which built several fortifications. It turned into an important naval center in the age of the Discoveries, in the 15th century; became the capital of the Algarve from 1576 to 1756 and was greatly damaged by the earthquake of 1755; thus its beautiful 18th and 19th century buildings. A fine new marina welcomes boats sailing in from the Atlantic. The beaches around Lagos are some of the most beautiful of the Algarve, like Praia de Dona Ana, which can be reached after a 25 minutes walk from the center of the town, Praia do Camilo, a bit further on, and Meia Praia, whose sands stretch for 4 km (2.5 miles) east of Lagos. However, it is the promontory named Ponta da Piedade and sheltering the bay of Lagos which is most admired by visitors, with its caves, rocks and wonderfully transparent waters. North of Lagos, Barragem de Bravura is a water reservoir offering fine views.



Did you know?

Central de Cervejas (SCC) (full name: SCC – Sociedade Central de Cervejas e Bebidas, S.A.) is a Portuguese brewery, founded in 1934 in Vialonga, Portugal. Its main output is the *Sagres* family of beers. The company has been controlled since April 2008 by Heineken.

SCC produces a range of beers, mainly pale lagers. The main brand is Sagres, which was introduced at the 1940 *Exposição do Mundo Português* (Portuguese World Exhibition). Sagres is named after the town of the same name. It is the second biggest selling brand in Portugal, after Super Bock.



Keep in Touch!

We would love to hear from you before, during and after your trip!

While you're getting ready and excited about your trip, check our social network pages to see pictures from other travelers, and interesting facts regarding the countries we offer.

During your tour, please feel free to post pictures and comments on our pages, that way other travelers can get a preview of what they'll see on their tour from your point of view (and others may dream about going on that trip someday!).

After your tour, if you could share some pictures and videos with us, we would really be grateful! Your snapshots and short films are always appreciated, and we love seeing our clients have fun on tour since we rarely get to see you in person!

Please don't be shy and feel free to gloat about your great vacation!



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