

EUROPE · BEACHES · FOOD · WINE · HISTORY · CITY BREAKS · HIKING



Portugal

Portugal fits a great deal into a narrow strip of Atlantic coast. Vintage trams climb Lisbon's hills past tiled façades, port lodges line the Douro opposite Porto, and the terraced vineyards upriver are among Europe's loveliest landscapes. Add Sintra's palaces, the Alentejo's cork-oak plains, the Algarve's cliff-backed coves and Madeira's levada walks, at prices gentler than much of western Europe.

i Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Portugal and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 11 August 2026.

CAPITAL Lisbon	CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	LANGUAGE Portuguese	BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct
DAILY BUDGET £60–£270 ££ Moderate	PLUGS Type C, F 230V · adapter needed	FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 35m direct ~£70–£280 return	TIME ZONE UTC+0, UTC-1 standard time

Portugal is long and narrow, and most first trips run north–south along it. Lisbon and Porto, about three hours apart by fast train, anchor the classic itinerary: a few days in each, with Sintra and the Cascais coast as side trips from the capital and the Douro Valley's vineyards an easy train or road trip inland from Porto. South of the Tagus, the Alentejo's whitewashed hill towns and Roman Évora lead down to the Algarve, where cliffs, coves and golf resorts stretch from Sagres to the Spanish border. Madeira and the Azores, out in the Atlantic, add volcanic landscapes and serious hiking.

Travel is easy and relaxed: trains and coaches are reliable, English is widely spoken, and food and wine are excellent value away from the tourist cores. Lisbon and Porto have grown much busier and pricier over the past decade, with short-term lets reshaping old neighbourhoods, and the Algarve fills with families in July and August. Spring and early autumn bring warm days, wild flowers or the grape harvest, and much smaller crowds. People are courteous rather than effusive. Visitors are often surprised by how cool the Atlantic stays even in summer, and by how quickly the interior empties once you leave the coast.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ARCHITECTURE

Sintra's palaces

Romantic palaces and gardens dot the wooded Serra de Sintra west of Lisbon: the candy-coloured Pena Palace, the Moorish Castle's ramparts and Quinta da Regaleira's initiation well. Book timed tickets and go on a weekday.
- 2

NATURE

Douro Valley

Steep terraces of vines and olive groves line the Douro around Peso da Régua and Pinhão, in one of the world's oldest demarcated wine regions. Visit quintas for port tastings, ride the riverside railway or take a boat.

3

BEACH

Ponta da Piedade

Near Lagos, golden sandstone cliffs, sea stacks and grottoes form the Algarve's most spectacular stretch of coast. Explore by kayak or small boat, then swim at nearby coves such as Praia do Camilo and Dona Ana.

4

HISTORY

Évora

The Alentejo's walled, UNESCO-listed capital holds a Roman temple, a Gothic cathedral and the eerie Chapel of Bones, lined with thousands of skulls. The surrounding cork-oak country hides megaliths such as the Almendres Cromlech.

5

NATURE

Madeira's levada walks

Narrow irrigation channels contour Madeira's steep, laurel-forested mountains, with footpaths running alongside. Classic walks include the Levada do Caldeirão Verde and the high ridge trail from Pico do Arieiro to Pico Ruivo.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Lisbon

≈ 2.9 million people

Hilltop miradouros, Alfama's medieval lanes, fado in small taverns and the monuments of Belém make Lisbon worth at least three days; ride tram 28 early to beat the queues.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Porto

≈ 1.7 million people

Granite churches clad in blue azulejos, the riverside Ribeira and port cellars across the bridge in Vila Nova de Gaia; a compact, characterful city and the gateway to the Douro Valley.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Braga

≈ 200,000 people

Portugal's religious capital has one of its oldest cathedrals and the zigzag Baroque stairway of Bom Jesus do Monte; an easy day trip from Porto or a base for Peneda-Gerês National Park.

Lisbon and Porto figures are metropolitan areas; Braga's is the municipality, the largest outside the two metros.

Holiday regions in Portugal

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

**Algarve**

Portugal Best: May–Jun, Sep 2h 50m from London

Sea up to 21°C ~£130/day

**Azores**

Portugal Best: Jun–Sep 4h 10m from London

Sea up to 23°C ~£135/day

**Madeira**

Portugal Best: Apr–Jun, Sep 3h 55m from London

Sea up to 24°C ~£120/day

When to go to Portugal

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

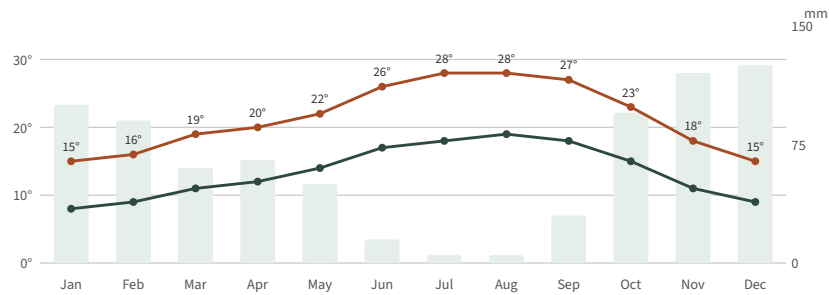
Nov

Dec

Best Good Mixed Poor

Average climate in Lisbon

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr–May

Madeira Flower Festival

Funchal celebrates spring with children building a 'Wall of Hope' from flowers, petal carpets in the streets and a Sunday parade of blossom-covered floats, usually in April or May.

Jun

Festa de Santo António

Lisbon's patron-saint party peaks on the night of 12–13 June, when Alfama and Mouraria fill with grilled sardines, paper garlands, pop-up bars and dancing, and couples marry in civic mass weddings.

Jun

Festa de São João

Porto's riotous midsummer night, 23–24 June, sees crowds tapping each other with plastic hammers, grilling sardines and watching fireworks over the Douro at midnight.

How much does Portugal cost?

SHOESTRING

£60

per person / day

≈ €71.42

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£130

per person / day

≈ €155

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£270

per person / day

≈ €321

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Bacalhau à Brás

Shredded salt cod scrambled with egg, onion and matchstick fries, finished with black olives and parsley; a Lisbon classic and the gentlest introduction to bacalhau.

Pastel de nata

Flaky custard tarts with a scorched top, best eaten warm with cinnamon; the Belém bakery has sold its version, pastéis de Belém, since 1837.

Francesinha

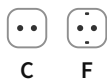
Porto's knife-and-fork sandwich of steak, ham and sausage under melted cheese and a spicy tomato-and-beer sauce, usually served with chips.

Getting around

CP's Alfa Pendular and Intercidades trains link Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto and the Algarve, and suburban lines reach Sintra and Cascais. Rede Expressos and FlixBus coaches cover towns the railway misses. Lisbon and Porto have metros and trams, and Uber and Bolt are cheap and widely used. Hire a car for the Alentejo, Douro and western Algarve, but note that some motorways have electronic-only tolls. Madeira and the Azores are about two hours' flight from Lisbon.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+351

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

TIPPING

Tipping is modest: round up or leave 5–10% for good restaurant service. Bread, olives and cheese brought unasked (the *couvert*) are charged if eaten.

ETIQUETTE

Greet with 'bom dia' or 'boa tarde', and don't open in Spanish: English usually goes down better. Lunch runs from about 1pm to 3pm, and dinner rarely starts before 8pm.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Humberto Delgado Airport (LIS), Lisbon; Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport (OPO), Porto; Faro Airport (FAO), Faro

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONES

UTC+0, UTC-1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Portugal

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Portugal, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Portugal are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Portugal

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Tue 1 Dec 2026	Restoration of Independence Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Sun 25 Apr 2027	Freedom Day
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Christi
Thu 10 Jun 2027	Day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese Communities
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day
Tue 5 Oct 2027	Republic Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Portuguese

ENGLISH	PORTUGUESE	SAY IT
Hello	Olá	oh-LAH
Thank you	Obrigado / Obrigada	oh-bree-GAH-doo / oh-bree-GAH-dah
Please	Por favor	poor fah-VOR
Excuse me	Com licença	kong lee-SEN-sah
How much is this?	Quanto custa isto?	KWAN-too KOOSH-tah EESH-too

Know before you go

Restaurants often bring bread, olives or cheese without asking, and these appear on the bill if touched; simply send them back if you don't want them.

Some motorways, mostly in the north around Porto, charge electronic-only tolls with no booths, so ask your hire company for a toll transponder rather than risk fines.

Pickpockets work Lisbon's tram 28 and crowded viewpoints; ride early in the morning, keep bags zipped and in front of you, or simply walk the route instead.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.