

Discover Portugal

North America Media Kit

C O N T E N T S

Seven Regions of Portugal	2
History and Culture	4
Active Adventures	6
Cultural Cuisine	7
Romantic Retreats	9
Relaxation Destinations	10
Information Sheet	11

Whatever your passion, wherever you wish to roam, Portugal has more than enough to satisfy your every need. Join us and find out what Europe is all about!

Discover Portugal

The year 2038 will mark an exciting time for the country of Portugal, as it will celebrate its 900th anniversary as a free nation, rich with history and full of storied adventure.

It also happens to be the closest European neighbor to America, and yet Americans remain relatively unfamiliar with the country's charms and traditions. Certainly Portugal's heyday occurred before North America and Europe had much contact at all, but that's no reason for Americans not to explore and enjoy all that it has to offer! In fact, Portugal and America share many similarities. Much like America's West Coast, Portugal offers miles of sandy beaches, wine regions, a mild climate and even a red suspension bridge. But the similarities end there. What lies beyond them is a European paradise unlike any other on earth.

One of the best reasons to book a trip to Europe's west coast is that Portugal offers some of the best values in Europe, even in the midst of a challenging economy. The country is attracting American visitors at a brisk pace not only because they get more for their money, but travelers also get a fresh and "real" experience courtesy of the country's remarkable ability to remake itself

as a wonderful blend of the traditional and the new, the classical and the modern. It has a culture and history uniquely its own with a distinctive personality. The stories this nation can tell a traveler are the stuff of legend!

Today's Portugal boasts some of the most exciting new buildings in Europe, from Porto's Casa da Música to Cascais' new Casa das Histórias Paula Rego Museum. Its restaurants and cafes serve bold new dishes that combine traditional Portuguese cuisine with flavors of the other regions once explored by Portuguese mariners, making it an ultimate destination vacation for foodies. Portugal's cities are also heavily influenced by the cultures of the distant lands influencing their cuisine, appealing to the history buff in every traveler.

Portugal also offers numerous options for the ultimate vacation lodging. New resorts, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and inns are opening on a regular basis, including five-star luxury hotels and resorts, many of them incorporated into and preserving historic sights. But the best part? They cost a lot less than high-end resorts in other nations. You can't afford not to visit!

For the outdoor adventurer, new infrastructure across the county allows safe access to Portugal's mountains, coast, and hill country,

making it easy and fun to plan an outdoor adventure. Portugal has miles of pristine Atlantic beaches coupled with Europe's mildest climate. New, beautifully appointed cruise ships and river boats offer cruises through the Douro River Valley, the Algarve Coast and the Guadiana River.

Today's Portugal beckons the traveler looking for authentic Europe with an inviting mix of the traditional and the modern. Come discover this land of explorers, and become one yourself!

Portugal Facts

CAPITAL CITY

Lisbon, also called Lisboa, boasting a population of two million.

POPULATION

10.6 million, about the same size as the state of Pennsylvania.

LANGUAGE

Portuguese. English is also quite common.

TIME ZONE

Five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST) in the United States. The Azores are four hours ahead of the EST.

CURRENCY

Portugal uses the Euro (€). All banks have automatic exchange machines (Multibanco).

CHIEF CITIES

Largest: Lisbon and Porto

Regional cities: Aveiro, Beja, Braga, Bragança, Castelo Branco, Coimbra, Évora, Faro, Guarda, Leiria, Funchal, Ponta Delgada, Portalegre, Santarém, Setúbal, Viana do Castelo, Vila Real and Viseu.

Seven Regions of Portugal

Lisbon

Lisbon has created top-level restaurants and attracted some of the finest chefs from around the world; luxury hotels have sprouted up everywhere, museums, theater and art venues draw talent from the best artists around, and the city's nightlife is second to none.

Lisbon, Portugal's capital, is named for its founder Ulysses, the Greek hero who is said to have reached



Portugal 2,500 years ago. Today the city is home to two million Portuguese people. Its numerous cathedrals, churches, museums and art galleries not only pay homage to the city's long history, but they attract the most modern of artists and art, performers and theater, singers and music. It all combines to make Lisbon one of the most cosmopolitan of European cities. A visitor can easily reach the resort towns along the Atlantic Coast from Lisbon. Some of the more classic towns include Estoril and Cascais, while the historic towns

PORTUGAL



— such as Sintra, Óbidos, Mafra, Tomar, Santarém, and Alcobaça — offer an authentic view of older Portuguese culture. In the town of Fátima, the Catholic church certified the appearance of the Virgin Mary in 1917. Today, thousands of pilgrims visit it annually.

Porto e Norte

Porto (called Oporto by the British) is Portugal's second largest city, known worldwide for its prime export, Port wine. In 2006, the region marked the 250th anniversary of Port wine production along the Douro River valley, which is easily explored by car or river cruises and was in 2009 rated 7th in the World in terms of sustainable destinations by National Geographic Traveler. Porto has become known for its granite Baroque architecture, breathtakingly exemplified in its relatively new futuristic concert

hall, Casa da Música, designed by Dutch master architect Rem Koolhaas. Porto is also the gateway to Portugal's official birthplace, which dates back to the 12th century. The city of Guimarães in the northeast of Porto is the nation's first capital, and marks the birthplace of Portugal's first king, Dom Afonso Henriques. The region is dotted with towns and manor houses in classic Baroque style.

Centro de Portugal

This centrally located region offers a varied terrain, natural wonders, and a long, storied past. In the coastal city of Aveiro visitors will find colorful beach houses, whereas Figueira da Foz has a world-class casino and great surfing to attract tourists. In Conimbriga, Roman ruins are abundant, while Belmonte and other interior towns feature ancient ruins strewn among castles and fortresses. Meanwhile, Coimbra is marked by the distinctive Baroque style of the 1600s.

In the majestic mountains of the Beiras-Centro region, visitors can experience traditional Portuguese cuisine or indulge in outdoor sports, including snow sports. In the north, Estrela Mountain's natural park offers hiking opportunities among its numerous quaint, walled towns. In the south, open plains are dotted with a rugged landscape of granite. The region is also known for some of the best cheeses in Europe.

Seven Regions of Portugal

Alentejo

A coastline of rocky cliffs and little known beaches. A Roman temple. A Gothic cathedral. Ancient ruins. Dolmens and other megalithic monuments. With colorful attractions and incredible sights to behold, the Alentejo region is as well known for its wild side as it is its deep history. At one time the region was ruled by Moors, Romans, Carthaginians and others, and the remnants of these cultures pop up in this region's fortified cities and countryside. The city of Évora offers palatial hotels and authentic cuisine, while the region's fields, cork forests, olive groves and sunflower fields make for a beautiful drive.



Algarve

Millions of Europeans vacation in the Algarve every year. In fact, it's even so popular that the locals

flock to it, too! It's all about the sun, the sand and the sea in Algarve, which also boasts some of Europe's best golf courses, home to world-class competitions. White sand beaches stretch on for miles and the villages are all picturesque. In the region's largest city, Faro, the neighborhoods have remained virtually unchanged since the 1700s.

Madeira

Discovered in 1420, Madeira is a semi-tropical island 800 miles southwest of Lisbon in the Atlantic Ocean. The island is blessed with a perfect climate: always warm in winter and never too hot in summer. Funchal, the capital of Madeira, has a romantic air thanks in part to constant sunshine, a bay surrounding the city, botanical

gardens, elegant resorts and fascinating landscapes. World-class hotels rise on black cliffs, and casinos, nightclubs, and restaurants make any night a night to remember. Madeira's steep topography

gives the island six distinct climate zones, changing with each rise in altitude. The landscape also contributes to some of the best hiking in Europe, with trails that

follow water channels (called "levadas") past waterfalls and spectacular views. Madeira's nearby smaller island, Porto Santo, has a coast covered with dunes and vineyards, and shows off an incredible six mile-long sandy beach.

The Azores

The Azores archipelago is made up of nine islands 800 miles out to sea, making them nearly as close to New York as they are to mainland Portugal. Formed by the meeting of three tectonic plates, the Azores Islands appear to rise from the water almost magically. They've been a stopping-off point for great sea-faring explorers from all over the world since the 1400s. While the volcanic topography makes for some great flora and fauna, with crater lakes shimmering in blue and green, the remoteness of the islands has contributed to their culture. Distinct in cuisine, dialect and traditions from the rest of Portugal, the Azores have continued to carve out a unique corner of Portuguese history. The towns are full of historic churches, yachting clubs, fishing harbors, and museums. Plus, the United Nations has recognized two sites in the Azores as World Heritage Sites, destined to be preserved due to their historic value: the town of Angra do Heroísmo on the island of Terceira, and the vineyards on Pico Island, the smallest of the Azorean islands. And in 2007, the Azores were named by the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations as the world's second most appealing islands destination.

History and Culture

Ancient Invasions

Travelers to Portugal are certainly seduced by its beauty, but in days past, those who ventured forth came to invade. First it was the Celts, then the Greeks, followed by the Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and, finally, the Moorish forces. It took the Romans 200 years to conquer what they called Lusitania. Once they did, they built roads, cities, villas, commerce and early Christianity. But like the invaders before them, the Romans fell as well. They were conquered by barbarians from the Visigoth kingdom in the third century, who in turn fell to Moorish forces in the beginning of the eighth century.

Portugal is Born

By the 11th century, the Moors controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula (modern day Spain and Portugal.) The only area the Moors didn't control was confined to land between the Douro River, which now marks the city of Porto, and the Minho River, which now forms Portugal's northern border. This area was named for its main city, Portus, and the town across the river, Cale... thus, "Portucale." Modern Portugal was born in this region in the 12th century when the duke ruling Portucale died and his wife attempted to enthrone her lover instead of the Duke's son, Afonso Henriques. Henriques

raised an army, defeated his mother, and then turned his attentions to the Moors to the south. He won military victories at the Mondego River and the city of Santarém, finally taking Lisbon with the help of some passing crusaders. In the following century, Henriques' successors continued to push out the Moors until 1249, when Portugal finally solidified the borders that remain in place to this day.

Age of Exploration

Bordered by Moors to the south and not-always-friendly Castilians to the east, the new nation looked to the ocean to expand. Between 1415 and 1489, Portuguese ships used new technologies to chart the coast of Africa and find the sea route to Asia. Trade and cultural exchange soon followed. It was a golden age for Portugal, one that lasted until a disastrous battle with Spain resulted in Spanish rule from 1578 to 1640. But Portugal continued to grow with its trade to and from Brazil and its other colonies. Rich woods and gold paid for ornate palaces, churches and public buildings, but at the height of the Baroque-style era in 1755, Lisbon was destroyed by a massive

earthquake. The city was rebuilt among the ruins, however, setting its intent on becoming the finest city in Europe.

Modern Turmoil Finally Leads to Democracy

Portugal remained in a state of flux during much of the 19th and 20th centuries. An invasion by Napoleon was narrowly repelled, and when a Portuguese king fled to the colony of Brazil, the country experienced a civil war in the 1830s. A constitutional monarchy soon took control and passed progressive social reforms until they were toppled by another revolution in 1901. But in 1926, a military coup changed the power structure once again. António Salazar took control as prime minister, running a dictatorship that survived until 1974. While Salazar's rule wasn't as repressive as some in neighboring countries, thousands of people were imprisoned and thousands more left for better economic opportunities abroad. In 1974, military forces overthrew the dictatorship and ended all hostilities in Portuguese Africa, thus influencing a new Republic. Twelve years later, a democratic Portugal joined the European Union.



History and Culture

Rich in architecture, art, music, literature

For a country about the size of Maine, Portugal has a rich and varied cultural past. Extraordinary writers, poets, musicians, builders, painters and sculptors have sprung from the lands of the Tejo, Douro, Mondego and Guadiana Rivers. Portugal's cultural heritage has been underscored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has declared 13 of the country's sites to be World Heritage Sites, including many sites mentioned in this guide, as well as the cities of Porto, Évora and Guimarães, and the town of Angra do Heroísmo in the Azores.

Architecture

Manuel I was crowned king of Portugal in 1495, during which his reign kicked Portugal's economy and expansion into high gear. Just two years later – the same year that the explorer Vasco da Gama set sail for India – King Manuel sealed his

legacy with the construction of a church in Setúbal. This project is seen as the birth of the Manueline architectural style for which Portugal has become famous. The stars of this whimsical and nautical era of creation are the Belém Tower and the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon, and the Mafra Convent and the great Batalha Abbey, each about an hour's drive north of Lisbon.

Music & Performance

Fado is seen as Portugal's "music of the people." Accompanied by a Portuguese guitar (called "guitarra portuguesa", a relative of the lute) and a traditional 12-string guitar (called "viola"), fado songs are profound expressions of the Portuguese soul describing how the Portuguese see themselves and their country. The music is hauntingly beautiful and melancholy, full of an anguish and passion that reveals the Portuguese spirit to any traveler who stops to listen. This spirit is called "saudade" – loosely translated as a nostalgic longing to return to a time that never was. Fado is most often performed in

Fado Houses, with a dinner followed by a performance. Dozens of Fado Houses can be visited in Lisbon and other parts of Portugal.

But fado isn't the only music found in Portugal. Visitors can easily find a philharmonic concert, a jazz session in a corner bar, a rock gala, or a professional staging of a favorite Broadway show. Performance venues and music festivals abound throughout the country.

Art, Old and New

Portugal is also home to some of the finest art in the world. Renowned museums include Lisbon's National Museum of Historic Art (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga), the Modern Art Center (Centro de Arte Moderna) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. Each has an extensive collection in both classic and modern art, but for creations with a strictly Portuguese flavor, travelers aim for Lisbon's Chiado Museum and the Serralves Museum in Porto. Lisbon also has several specialty museums: the National Coach Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Ethnological Museum, the Decorative Arts Museum, the Military Museum, the Municipal Museum, the Tiles Museum, the Fado Museum and more. Each city also has its own museum, such as the Machado de Castro Museum in Coimbra and the Sacred Art Museum in Funchal. But tourists can even find art and artifacts outside of museum walls, such as Portugal's delicately painted tiles, the "azulejos", which are remnants of the country's early occupation by the Moors.



Active Adventures

There's no shortage of adventurous escapes for the vacationer who just can't sit still. Active travelers can explore Portugal by foot, mountain bike, jeep, hang glider, parachute, horse, surfboard, kite-board or climbing rope... and that's just for starters!

The Porto e Norte region is a favorite place for travelers to take in the beauty of the landscape with a visit to the vast Peneda-Gerês Park, stretching some 270 square miles. Not only does it encompass great hiking opportunities, it also has unique little towns and cultural sites.

The Beiras-Centro de Portugal region features the tallest mountains in Portugal, part of the Trás-os-Montes area. With a climb or a hike, visitors have the opportunity to get views of imposing slopes and deep valleys with fast-flowing rivers, which offer the perfect conditions to raft or canoe.

Think surfing is more for Hawaii or Fiji? Think again! The Lisbon region is shaped by the Atlantic Ocean's waves and the sea breezes at the mouth of the Tejo River. The beaches near towns like Carcavelos attract body

boarders, long-boarders and kite-surfers from all over the world, addicted to catching both the waves and the breezes. Beaches at Peniche, Guincho and Praia Grande, about 20 miles from Lisbon, often host European championship windsurfing and surfing events. Travelers can easily find rentals and lessons from local experts.



South and east of Lisbon is the Alentejo Region, which is Portugal's largest area, featuring wide open spaces perfectly created for horseback riding or biking. The Alentejo is populated with riding schools like the Alter do Chão stud farm, Ponte de Sor, or Alcácer do Sal, where visitors can choose to ride or just watch the noble Lusitanian horses in action.

The Algarve, Portugal's southernmost region, is a favorite

of para-gliders, with winds along the Costa Vicentina that can carry the rider above the beaches and over the fields of carob and almond trees, citrus groves and the small vineyards for which this area is known.

Some of the best active adventures for thrill seekers can be found on Portugal's two archipelagos, the Madeira Islands and the Azores. Strong swimmers love to venture into the streams that course down

Madeira's volcanic peak – fast in summer, slow in winter. Diving and snorkeling opportunities are plentiful, where the underwater landscape includes sunken ships to the south of Porto de Abrigo. Whale watching is the name of the game in the Azores, where visitors can get close up views of whales, bulls, or blue marlin. Sea life is so plentiful in the Azores that the islands were named one of the 10 best sites for spotting whales!

The process is simple: small groups are taken out with experienced guides on small inflatable rafts that are specially designed not to disturb the whale's natural habitat. Junior Jacques Cousteaus should be thrilled to learn that six of the 10 largest blue marlin in the world were caught off the shores of the Azores. And on land, visitors can experience a bit of authentic, adventurous culture by taking in a bullfight in which the bull is put on a long, tethered lease.

Cultural Cuisine

Explore culture through cuisine

Portugal's cuisine and wines are as distinct as the country itself – and incredibly delicious. Fresh seafood is certainly a staple of the Portuguese diet, but vegetable-based soups are also plentiful, as are some delectable and sinful desserts. Add to that a number of eye-opening wines that are unique to Portugal, and you've got a meal fit for a king.



Wines like Port, Vinho Verde and Madeira are currently experiencing a burst in popularity in the United States, and it's not hard to see why. Madeira wine is a sweet, fortified wine like Port or Sherry that traveled well for long, warm ship voyages, making it a favorite of America's founding fathers. Meanwhile, Vinho Verde is a "green" wine made from young, fresh grapes. Many Portuguese

wineries are now expanding their offerings of red wines, too.

To really get the full experience of Portugal's diverse cuisine, travelers should dine in both the north and south, on the mainland and through the islands.

One of the more common Portuguese meals is bacalhau--a dried, salted cod eaten throughout Portugal. The country's cooks claim there are 365 ways to prepare this national dish, marking one for every day of the year. That's a lot of ways to cook a fish! Another countrywide favorite is grilled sardines, but the Portuguese version bears little resemblance to the canned and oily fish Americans are used to at home.

In the north, visitors will find an abundance of rice dishes, fine sauces, and ancient recipes. This is the region where cod is considered haute cuisine. Dark "broa" bread is also common across the north, adding richness and complexity to even the simplest meal. The northeast corner of the country is famous for its smoked hams, called "presuntos", and for delectable handmade sausages. Dishes are often accompanied by a light and refreshing Vinho Verde wine, rich reds, and sweet Port from the Douro River valley.

The Beiras-Centro de Portugal Region, situated between Porto and Lisbon, is home to lamprey, fish rice, octopus and roast goat dishes. Coastal towns such as Aveiro and Figueira da Foz offer an abundance

Cultural Cuisine



For centuries, Portugal's Madeira Islands served as a port of call for ships from around the globe. Foreign travelers often left behind

fruits from their home countries, making the islands a great place to find some incredible exotic fruits. And, of course, fresh fish is always abundant. One favorite dish is "milho frito," which is fried cubes of polenta served with fresh tuna steak in a tomato and Madeira wine sauce. Yum!

In the Azores, limpets (a shellfish), croques (a small mollusk unique to the Azores), crayfish and rabbit stews are local specialties. You can find salted codfish here too, but

the Azorians prefer to produce a traditional dish in which cod is replaced with mackerel, octopus and perch. Chili peppers and paprika are local sources of pride, and fine beef – from the cattle grazing on the islands – is often served grilled or roasted in a wine sauce.

And last but certainly not least, Lisbon isn't just a city of restaurants, it's *the* city of restaurants. The city features both grand, old establishments that can trace their history back generations, and some of the newest trendsetters with world class chefs in their kitchens. Continental classics rival the culinary scene of any other major European city, but are also complemented by local Fado cafés and the culinary influences of former Portuguese colonies like Brazil, Cabo Verde and Mozambique. Whatever your taste, it's guaranteed that Portugal has something for every discerning palate.



of local seafood, while inland a classic dish is "chanfana" – goat meat stewed with wine and spices. All of Portugal produces outstanding artisan cheeses, but the country's crowning jewel is the rich sheep's cheese known as "queijo da Serra", from this region's Estrela Mountains. Other great cheeses you won't want to miss getting a taste of come from Sabugal and Rabaçal.

But it doesn't end there. The wide-open Alentejo Region and the coastal Algarve Regions each have their own distinct cuisine. Bread dishes, dry soups, rich sausages and dark hams are popular in Alentejo. One of the area's delicacies is a special soup called "Açorda Alentejana" is made with bread, cilantro, garlic, olive oil and poached eggs. The Algarve also specializes in spicy, grilled seafood.



Romantic Retreats

A regal palace. A medieval castle where a romantic drama played out centuries ago. A walk on an undiscovered beach. If it's passion you're after, Portugal is definitely a place to ignite or rekindle the flames of love with a romantic getaway!

The town of Sintra features such a stunning setting that it was once a summer palace for kings. The town square is flanked by fountains, cafes, a medieval castle and antique shops, and features both a national palace and Pena Palace, once the home of the queen. It looks like something from a storybook, making it the perfect spot for you to live out your fairytale romance! About five minutes outside of town is Seteais Palace, a pink, 18th century palace that is now a luxury hotel. Romantic B&Bs are scattered along the countryside, as are places and houses once belonging to the nobles. What better place for you and your love to stay?

The Buçaco Palace Hotel was once a Carmelite monastery that now serves as a luxury hotel on the mountain rising above the town of

Luso. Surrounded by the Buçaco Forest, this property also once served as a royal palace. The town of Luso sports its own thermal springs, which have attracted visitors for their healing qualities since the 1800s. There's nothing quite like a natural spa!

A spa of a different sort can be found on São Miguel in the Azores, on the grounds of the Terra Nostra Garden Hotel, where "caldeiras" — geysers, steam vents and springs — abound. In the town of Furnas, 23 hot springs bubble and steam, giving visitors a good show as they walk through the botanical gardens.



But timeless stories of passion and heartache are part of Portugal's long history. Visitors can set foot on the same sites that have inspired timeless stories. For example, in the southern Portugal town of Beja,

a 26-year-old nun named Sister Mariana Alcoforado fell in love with a French officer in the 17th century. However, he abandoned her. Her passionate letters to him were published in 1669, inspiring many other authors and poets. Author Myriam Cyr penned "Letters of a Portuguese Nun," which makes for excellent reading while visiting the cobblestoned streets of Beja.

Another tragic love story from Portuguese history is that of Pedro and Inês de Castro. Pedro was heir to the throne in the 13th century, and Inês was his wife's lady in waiting. When Pedro's wife died, he publicly declared his love for Inês... who was then promptly killed by the king. Pedro got revenge by tearing out the hearts of two of the killers and then leading a revolt against the crown. With victory, Pedro had Inês exhumed, posthumously crowned the Queen of Portugal and ensconced in the great Abbey of Alcobaça. Today, visitors can stay at the very palace where Inês and Pedro lived, which is now part of the hotel Quinta das Lágrimas in Coimbra. The garden where Inês was murdered is on the hotel's grounds and

called the "Garden of the Tears." At the Abbey of Alcobaça, about 50 miles away, the tombs of Pedro and Inês lie foot-to-foot, so that on the day of judgment, the first thing the lovers see will be each other.

Relaxation Destinations



For those looking to unwind from the day to day rigors of their life, Portugal is the perfect place to do nothing at all. The cobalt blue sea and stunning mountain ranges offer every excuse to just sit back and admire the scenery. In the winter, Madeira's capital city of Funchal is typically sunny and a perfect 72 degrees. Funchal straddles the hills, which surround a bay like a vast amphitheater. Its luxury hotels are some of the best in the world. With views out to the Atlantic, seaside swimming pools of salt and fresh water and numerous cafes, the hotels are definitely the perfect place to sit back and be pampered. The peaks of Arieiro rise above town, almost 6,000 feet above sea level. Funchal's gardens are full of plants from all over the world, gifted with the ability to thrive in Funchal's unique climate. A casino with musical entertainment and a spa offer diversions. But for an eagle eye view of what the city

has to offer, the more adventurous might take a hot air balloon ride.

Come spring, visitors are encouraged to try the coast of the Alentejo, where bed and breakfasts, cozy hotels and villas are nestled in the small towns and fishing villages, offering a more relaxed pace. This is where one can tour walled cities and historical monuments, or travelers can spend a day shopping for local crafts. When the urge to be active strikes, there are tons of cycling, hiking and swimming opportunities.

In the Algarve Region to the south, relaxation is found on the greens of the many golf courses and under the sun, which loves to shine on the clean, sandy beach. Wide beaches facing south are the norm, along with world class resorts of every shape and size.

Portugal has more than 60 first-class golf courses and its mild climate means it's possible to play and putt year-round. Score! Course designers such as Henry Cotton, Rocky Roquemore and Arnold Palmer have created many of the country's top courses, with an attention to the beauty of the natural surroundings coupled with a top-notch challenge for pros and amateurs alike.

If you've ever wanted to give yourself a proper pampering, this is the place. Dozens of historic spas and spa resorts are being reborn across the country, whose waters were once sought after for their healing qualities, ability to help people relax and recharge, and enjoy life. Now, spa towns like Luso, Curia, Monfortinho and Monchique are welcoming a new generation of spa goers with today's modern spa treatments, combined with the authentic methods that made them a destination for earlier generations.



Information Sheet

Location

Portugal sits at Europe's west coast and borders the Atlantic Ocean. Spain is to the east and north. The mainland is a six-hour flight from the eastern coast of the United States, whereas Portugal's Azores Islands are a four-hour flight.

Climate

The country has a mild climate without extremes of temperature. Winters are pleasant; summers can be moderately hot. The northern region, known as Porto e Norte de Portugal, has an Atlantic climate influenced by the Gulf Stream. The country's midsection, the Lisbon and Centro de Portugal regions, have gentle dry summers and short, mild winters. Southern Portugal, the Alentejo and Algarve regions, has a warm, dry Mediterranean climate free from heat extremes. The Madeira Islands, 600 miles to the southwest of Lisbon, have an inviting year-round climate with temperatures around 70 degrees. The Azores Islands, 800 miles to the west of Lisbon, also offer very mild weather.

Tourism

Approximately 12 million people visit annually, including about 250,000 from the United States.

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Area

Portugal encompasses 35,672 square miles, roughly the size of Maine, including the islands that make up the Azores and Madeira.

Land: 35,502 square miles

Water: 170 square miles

Coastline: More than 350 miles

Getting to Portugal

Year-round daily flights are available to Lisbon from Newark on TAP Portugal or Continental Airlines; TAP Portugal also offers year-round direct flights from Newark to Porto twice a week; from Philadelphia on U.S. Airways; and from Boston on SATA/Azores Express. The SATA/Azores Express flights from Boston also serve Ponta Delgada on the Azores island of São Miguel and Lajes on the Azores island of Terceira. Additional seasonal flights on SATA/Azores Express are available to Lisbon from Providence, Rhode Island and Oakland, California.

Lodging

A traveler can find a wide range of lodging options throughout the country, from humble hostels to five-star luxury properties. Bed and breakfasts are plentiful, as are manor houses, historic hotels and resorts, urban and apartment-style hotels.

A company called "Center - Turismo no Espaço Rural" offers privately owned homes ranging from wonderful farmhouses to manor houses. Camping areas throughout the country offer an inexpensive option and close contact with nature.

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