



From Sintra to the sea

Take advantage of your holidays in Lisbon to enjoy some moments of pure relaxation close to the capital.

Begin your trip in Sintra, one of the most magical places in both Portugal and Europe, and fill your lungs with the fresh mountain air, refreshing your soul with the immense cooling shade offered by the Parque de Monserrate and the Parque da Pena and visiting their respective romantic palaces. In order to get to know all the tastes and flavours of good living, try the local regional pastries, such as queijadas and travesseiros.

Discover the streets filled with old houses and small palaces that spread over the hillside and the Palácio da Vila, with its huge conical chimneys forming the predominant feature of the town's historic centre. Travel through history by wandering through the different rooms of this marvellous building and see a beautiful and important set of Mudejar "azulejos".

After this, make your way up the zigzags of the road leading to the Palácio da Pena, with the sunlight forcing its way timidly through the trees. This palace's mixture of different styles, all displaying a highly romantic taste, is like the icing on top of the mountains. Stop here and have lunch, or perhaps you might like to move on to Seteais – another palace now converted into a hotel – offering a sweeping view of different shades of green that lead you all the way to the sea.

After lunch, visit Cabo da Roca, the westernmost point of mainland Europe, with its superb view over the sea and, arriving at Guincho, relax for a while on the terrace of an outdoor café, while you watch the surfers demonstrating their own special brand of skills.

If you choose to stay in Cascais, there is an excellent supply of both restaurants and accommodation, and you can always spend the next day getting to know the town better, either on foot or by bicycle. You may, however, prefer to return to Lisbon by the road along the seafront and spend some time in Belém, admiring two of the most mythical architectural works from the period of the Portuguese Discoveries, each of them classified as World Heritage: the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos and the Torre de Belém.

Let your sweet tooth be tempted by the famous cream cakes of the Pastéis de Belém café or relax on the terrace of the Centro Cultural de Belém, watching a free concert in the early evening. Have dinner in the riverside area and then relax and have fun in one of the bars or discos to be found there.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Palácio e Parque de Monserrate
- Palácio e Quinta da Regaleira
- Castelo dos Mouros - Sintra
- Praia Grande do Guincho
- Cascais
- Cabo da Roca



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Palácio e Parque de Monserrate

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Suggestions

Beaches and the Cabo da Roca

Praia das Maçãs, close to Colares is an important centre for relaxation and leisure, where you can sunbathe and swim in the sea while contemplating the beautiful surrounding landscape of mountains and the Atlantic Ocean.

Praia Grande is one of the most popular beaches in the Lisbon region, being greatly appreciated by both swimmers and surfers. It is the venue for all kinds of national and international competitions involving the use of a board, such as surfing, bodyboarding and skimboarding. If you prefer a calmer "sea", then you'll find a saltwater swimming-pool waiting for you at the top of the cliff.

From Sintra, you can take a tram ride to Praia das Maçãs, offering you the chance to remember the old days and enjoy the countryside even more.

No visit to the Sintra coast would be complete without a trip to Cabo da Roca, Europe's westernmost point, "where the land ends and the sea begins".

Sintra

At the top of the mountain range outside Sintra is Pena Palace, built in the 19th Century by king Fernando of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. In the foothills you'll find small palaces such as Monserrate and the Quinta da Regaleira, surrounded by exotic parks and estates.

Strolling through Sintra you can see the Neolithic burial site of Tholos do Monge, marvel at the skyline from the Moorish Castle, experience the austere atmosphere of the Capuchos Convent, and enjoy the romance of Pena Park. In the historic old town, take a walk into the past through a maze of little streets, steps and archways.

Towards the middle of town, you'll see the enormous chimneys of the National Palace, the most fascinating royal construction in Portugal, a combination of numerous tastes that give it a strange beauty. It was here in the National Palace that King Manuel heard of the discovery of India and Brazil, and the great author and playwright Luís de Camões recited the "Lusíadas" poems to King Sebastião. It's here that you'll also see the best and largest collection of Mudejar ceramic tiles in the Iberian Peninsula.

Beaches of Estoril

The beaches of fine white sand begin at the mouth of the Tagus estuary and accompany you all along the coast to Cascais. Carcavelos beach, marking the point where the Tagus meets the Atlantic, is the largest of these, with waves that are perfect for surfing. The beach of Tamariz, lying at the far end of the gardens of Estoril Casino, is the most elegant.

In the 1920s, the Sud Express train from Paris used to stop at Estoril station, bringing kings, nobles and millionaires from Europe, who came here to find a safe haven of relaxation and leisure. They left their mark in the form of palace-like villas and the glamorous atmosphere that you will feel in the region. Cascais was a fishing harbour that the presence of Portugal's last kings turned into an elegant seaside resort. Its pedestrianised streets and the charm of its hotels and restaurants combine with the scenic effect of yachts moored in the bay to produce an atmosphere of great charm.

A corniche with many seaside restaurants leads you to the superbly panoramic beach of Guincho, framed by the hills of Sintra. The waves are stronger here, making this beach one of the best places in Portugal for surfing and windsurfing.

A night by the Tagus

In the 90s, the Lisbon Porto Authorities decided to take a very different approach to their riverside properties. Where there were once warehouses, now there are some of the best bars and restaurants in Lisbon. And certainly among the most popular.



In Docas, the busiest single point in Lisbon's extensive nightlife, there is, to choose one example, the Café da Ponte. Open to 4 in the morning, on Thursdays there is live music while on Sundays it is Karaoke night for all those who wish to pit their singing voices against the local crop of talent.

Right by the Tagus, there is a wonderful river-facing café terrace. This is the Café In where, on hot summer nights, there is no better place for a refreshing glass of lager.

Moving on from Docas and Belém, you reach the discos of the Rocha Conde d'Óbidos area, within just a stones throw of the Santo Amaro Docks. Here, there is the Blues Café, with its youthful and laid back ambience, the Dock's Club, a key player in Lisbon nightlife with music for all types and tastes and the King's and Queen's, one of the most open of the capital's discos with people and music for every possible style.

And keep on rolling. Nothing closes before six in the morning.

Playing at your pace

In the famous coastal resort of Estoril, the Estoril course designed by Mackenzie Ross was established in 1836, the. It was on this course that in 1974 Steve Ballesteros played his first competition outside Spain, when he was 17 years old. The unevenness of the ground, combined with the pines and eucalyptuses, test your technique more than your distance.

The Quinta da Marinha private residential complex in Cascais provides you with a course on flat ground with spectacular views over the sea and the Serra de Sintra mountains. With five pars 5 and six pars 3, set amongst pine groves, hole 13 is the most spectacular, a par 4 of 339 metres that slopes down towards the sea, and ends on a green which is set against the backdrop of the sea.

Between Estoril and Sintra, the Quinta da Beloura course is set on flat ground, having the Serra de Sintra as a backdrop. The forty thousand trees of the most varied species scattered throughout the course form a green band, broken up by the various lakes throughout the course. The cosmopolitanism of the region will make you feel part of it.

Sintra sweets

Where the historical and cultural heritage form a perfect match to the leafy greenery of the hills, a particular beauty that has gained Sintra World Heritage status. Thus, it is a major stop on national tourist itineraries with its traditional pastries in equal demand. Piriquita, in the town centre, makes its own delicious 'travesseiros', puff pastry filled with egg and almond. And the 'queijadas de Sintra', made from fresh cheese, egg and cinnamon, began life at the Queijadas da Sapa Bakery by the town entrance, even if they are now produced elsewhere.

And in the vicinity of Sintra, there are other cakes with equal fame and tradition, the delicious 'fofos de Belas', for example.

And before these rich sweets, ideal for desserts, the region has another speciality worth consideration, Negrais suckling pig, tender but with crackling skin.

And match that delicacy to one of the finest red wines of Portugal, Colares, still grown here even while vineyards are under threat from urban expansion. And the region's coastline ensures it gets a ready supply of excellent fish and shellfish. A grilled fish becomes the best of fare when served with a bottle of chilled white wine in the terrace sunshine, with the sea beyond.

Useful contacts

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