



Hidden treasures

Discover the wealth that lies hidden behind sober-looking façades in a two-day tour of southern Portugal, rounded off with trips to Madeira and the Azores.

Our itinerary begins in Setúbal with a visit to the Baroque Museum housed in the Casa do Corpo Santo. This palace, with its remarkable tiles, painted ceilings and a chapel lined with gilded woodcarvings, is a fine example of 17th and 18th-century civil architecture. Take the A6 in the direction of Vila Viçosa, but, if you can, make a small detour to Portalegre to appreciate the interior decoration of the Igreja de São Lourenço and the Igreja do Senhor do Bonfim. The town of Vila Viçosa is dominated by the imposing Palácio dos Duques de Bragança, whose museum has a remarkable collection of baroque treasures. We would like to highlight two exhibits in particular: a blue-and-white porcelain bottle decorated with the coat of arms of Filipe II of Spain, and the image of Child Jesus the Good Shepherd carved out of ivory.

Our next stop will be Évora, whose historic centre has been classified as World Heritage. Visit the great Gothic cathedral that has benefited from various donations at different times and in different styles. Its baroque chancel, composed of marble both inside and outside, contains some remarkable sculptures, paintings and gilded woodcarvings. Next we will move on to the Igreja de São Francisco, whose main attraction is its ossuary chapel, a small room where a most strange impression is caused by its decoration made entirely of human bones. After this, we move on to Viana do Alentejo, to visit the Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Aires, which stands out quite distinctly in the landscape – a magnificent example of rural baroque architecture.

The next day, our destination is Beja where we will begin by visiting the Museu Rainha Dona Leonor. Amongst its many valuable pieces, you should notice the Processional Altar of St. John the Evangelist, made of gilded woodcarvings, silver and precious stones. Also make sure to visit the Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres, whose exterior gives no hint as to the opulence that lies hidden within, with its rich decoration of gilded woodcarvings, tiles and mural paintings.

We will now continue on to the Algarve. The small sober-looking Igreja de Almancil has an interior that is completely covered with blue-and-white tile panels, with the gilded woodcarvings providing a beautiful contrast. Take a walk through the region and look for other examples of the baroque style, as, for example, the interiors of some of the churches in Tavira or the Igreja de Santo António in Lagos.

We recommend you add two or three days to this itinerary and travel to the archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores. You can take a plane from Faro to Funchal, a city that, although perhaps best known for its natural beauty, also has a variety of artistic treasures. One of these is the Igreja de São Evangelista, exhibiting a blend between the Mannerist and baroque styles, where the exuberant interior decoration is a combination of carved and gilded altarpieces, tile panels and valuable paintings.

In the Azores, your destination should be the island of Terceira, more precisely the city of Angra do Heroísmo. The historic centre is included on UNESCO's World Heritage list, and has some remarkable monuments that it is worth taking some time to discover. The highlight from the baroque period is the Convento de São Gonçalo, a genuinely "golden church" with its beautiful decoration of gilded woodcarving. But you can also find other monuments in this style, such as the imposing Igreja da Misericórdia, whose colourful blue-and-white façade stands out amidst the urban landscape, or the Igreja do Castelo de São João Baptista, on the top of Monte Brasil. Our trip ends here, in this place linked to the



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Museu do Barroco

Casa do Corpo Santo - Terreiro de Santa Maria

2900-334 Setúbal

Tel. : +351 265 236 066

Fax : +351 265 537 893

E-mail : museu.setubal@mun-setubal.pt

Museu-Biblioteca da Casa de Bragança - Paço Ducal e Castelo de Vila Viçosa

Terreiro do Paço

7160-251 Vila Viçosa

Tel. : +351 268 980 659

Fax : +351 268 989 808

Website : www.fcbraganca.pt; www.imc-ip.pt/pt-PT/museus_palacios/ContentDetail.aspx?id=1123|www.fcbraganca.pt; <http://www.imc-ip.pt>

E-mail : pduques@imc-ip.pt

Igreja de São Lourenço

Largo Visconde de Cidrais

7300-104 Portalegre

Sé de Évora

Largo do Marquês de Marialva

7000-809 Évora

Tel. : +351 266 759 330

Fax : +351 266 759 339

Igreja de São Francisco - Évora

Praça 1º de Maio - Évora

Tel. : +351 266 70 45 21

Fax : +351 266 70 57 01

Santuário de Nossa Senhora de Aires

Viana do Alentejo

Museu Regional Rainha D. Leonor - Beja

Largo da Conceição

7800-131 Beja

Tel. : +351 284 323 351

Fax : +351 284 322 702

Website : <http://www.museuregionaldebeja.net>

E-mail : geral@museuregionaldebeja.net

Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres - Beja

Largo dos Prazeres

7800-001 Beja

Igreja de São Lourenço de Almancil

Almancil

Tel. : +351 289 395 451



Igreja de Santo António - Lagos

Rua General Alberto da Silveira
8600-594 Lagos

Igreja de São João Evangelista

Largo do Município e Rua dos Ferreiros
9000 Funchal

Tel. : + 351 291 233 534

E-mail : gabineteinfo@diocesedofunchal.pt; igrejadocolegio@sapo.pt

Convento e Igreja de São Gonçalo

9700 Angra do Heroísmo



Suggestions

Visit Portalegre

The carpets of Portalegre are unique works capable of rendering the subtle tones of any painting or design. And that design might be from a Portuguese painter, Le Corbusier or Jean Lurçat, all of who have sought to see their art re-represented in this form. In a former noble's residence, the Museum of Weaving is an essential stop on any visit to this city. Indeed, it is down to the prosperity generated by the textile industry of the 17th and 18th century that there are so many Baroque palaces endowing the streets of the old city with a sober elegance.

The Catholic Church was also behind many of the finest monuments of Portalegre, such as the Convent of S. Bernardo. On visiting the tomb the convent's founder, bishop Jorge de Melo, ordered carved for himself, and it proved to be one of the most beautiful and grandiose in all Portugal, king Filipe II exclaimed "what a great cage for such a small bird". Whether or not you agree with the king's opinion, it is a truly impressive sight and there is still much more to visit in Portalegre. For example, the great Se that contains a unique collection of 16th and 17th Portuguese painting and tile panels depicting biblical scenes. Drop in on the house where José Régio, the teacher and 20th century literature great, lived. While now a museum, the poet wished for the interior to be maintained in perpetuity. Let the ambience take you and discover one of the most unusual collections of religious and popular artistic forms that was one of the defining passions of Régio's life.

The town of Beja

Start by climbing the two-hundred-step winding stairway of the forty-metre-high tower. This is well worth the effort, as you will gain an idea of the beauty of the town and of the immensity of the Alentejo stretching into the distance.

Then make your way down to the historical centre and lose yourself among the narrow streets. There are some gems here to discover, such as the mannerist and baroque cathedral, the Church of Santa Maria, the Visigoth museum in the Church of Santo Amaro and the Museu Rainha Dona Leonor in the Convento da Conceição. A fine collection of archaeological items, azulejos and religious art awaits you here. And as you admire the architectural splendour of this convent you'll be sure to an atmosphere of undying love, such as that experienced by Sister Mariana de Alcoforado, the lovelorn author of the 'Love Letters of a Portuguese Nun'.

This is the ideal book to read in the placid white surroundings of Beja, perhaps in the Praça da República, which is dominated by the pillory and the Renaissance Church of the Misericórdia and which boasts a fine square of Manueline buildings. And then why not enjoy a meal in an Alentejo restaurant? For dessert, sample the subtle flavours of the renowned conventual sweets.

Visit Lagos

During the Voyages of Discovery, Prince Henry the Navigator would restock his caravels here as they set out to prove the world did not end at Cabo Bojador. King Sebastião made it the capital of the Algarve, a position it maintained through to 1755. And it was from Lagos that king Sebastião set out to conquer North Africa, an expedition that was to prove historically disastrous for Portugal. From the Manueline window set into the Governor's Castle, he was to address his troops for the final time. In the Gil Eanes Square, the sculptor João Cutileiro managed to embody the wild dreams of this adolescent king.

In its churches, museums and bustling squares, Lagos reveals its ties with the sea. On either side of the centre stand two testimonies to very different times. There is the Ponta da Bandeira Fortress, built to impose respect among the corsairs that plagued the region and now home to a museum dedicated to the Discoveries. At the other extreme, there is the Marina, a meeting point with all the people and bars for a lively late afternoon drink.

The first slave market of Europe was held under the arcades of the Infante D. Henrique square. The site is now the place to be for the best in local



handicrafts.

Amidst the abundant profusion of gold leaf carving and tiles of the church of Santo António, pick out the Lieutenant-general portrait following the "promotion" that king Pedro II bestowed upon himself.

Right by the city, enjoy the charm of these rock-enclosed beaches and the seafront restaurants with their menus featuring the pick of the sea's produce. A great suggestion for a great few days.

Madeira's heritage

The excitement that you'll feel on discovering Madeira just cannot be matched. Five hundred years of history are spread throughout its many streets and lanes which are flanked by buildings that are almost as old as the island itself.

As far as the island's historical heritage is concerned, there are various places of interest, especially museums, churches, chapels and fortresses, mainly in the city of Funchal. Amongst other places meriting a visit are the Palácio de São Lourenço, the Fortaleza do Pico, the Igreja da Sé, the Igreja do Colégio (also known as the Igreja dos Jesuítas), the Convento de Santa Clara, the Forte de São Tiago and the Municipal Market. As you travel around the island, you will have no difficulty finding statues erected in honour of different historical figures, such as Christopher Columbus and the discoverer of Madeira João Gonçalves Zarco.

The island's architectural heritage is also an important part of the region's supply of tourist accommodation. You can stay in one of Madeira's famous quintas, country estates that were formerly the residences of princes and aristocrats, or perhaps you might prefer to stay in one of the old manor-houses.

In either case, make sure to appreciate the charm of these buildings and learn all about their history, discovering the centuries-old habits and traditions of the local population.

Angra do Heroísmo

UNESCO includes Angra, in the Azorean island of Terceira, in its list of World Heritage sites. Here you can visit fine monuments that recall a golden age of history. Nine islands in the mid Atlantic form the Azores archipelago. The third one ("Terceira" in Portuguese) discovered became the most important trading post of the Modern Age. In a beautiful green bay, sheltered from the wind, the city and port of Angra do Heroísmo was born. It was here that enormous galleons were loaded with food, gold and silver from the Americas, timber and precious stones from Brazil, as well as spices from the Indies, silks from China and ivory from Africa.

The city became filled with palaces, convents and churches with interiors richly lined with exotic timbers and gold carvings.

From the top of Monte Brazil Mountain, with Angra at its feet, you can see 500 years of history in the architecture of the city. The towers of large churches stand out above the houses. Paulo da Gama, who accompanied his brother, Vasco da Gama, on the first sea voyage to India, is buried in the church of Nossa Senhora da Guia.

Before venturing down into the city, take a look around the formidable fortress of St. John the Baptist that surrounds Monte Brazil. Its walls are four kilometres long and 400 pieces of artillery defended the treasures of a once vast empire from coveting pirates.



Useful contacts

Posto de Turismo - Setúbal

Av^ª. Luísa Todi, 468
2900-456 Setúbal
Tel. : +351 265 534 402 / 265 534 222
Website : www.visitsetubal.com.pt
E-mail : turismo.setubal@mun-setubal.pt

Posto de Turismo - Portalegre

Rua Guilherme Gomes Fernandes, n^º 28
7300-186 Portalegre
Tel. : +351 245 307 445
Fax : +351 245 307 470
E-mail : turismo@cm-portalegre.pt

Posto de Turismo - Vila Viçosa

Praça da República
7160-207 Vila Viçosa
Tel. : +351 268 881 101
E-mail : cultura@cm-vilavicosas.pt

Posto de Turismo - Évora

Praça do Giraldo, 73
7000-508 Évora
Tel. : +351 266 777 071
Fax : +351 266 730 039
E-mail : cmevora.dcd@mail.evora.net

Posto de Turismo - Viana do Alentejo

Praça da República
7090-238 Viana do Alentejo
Tel. : +3251 266 930 012
E-mail : camara@cm-vianadoalentejo.pt

Posto de Turismo - Beja

Rua Capitão João Francisco de Sousa, 25
7800-451 Beja
Tel. : +351 284 311 913
Fax : +351 284 311 913
E-mail : postodeturismo.beja@gmail.com

Posto de Turismo - Faro

Rua da Misericórdia, 8 - 11
8000-269 Faro
Tel. : +351 289 803 604
Website : www.visitalgarve.pt

Posto de Turismo - Funchal

Av^ª. Arriaga, 16
9004-519 Funchal



Tel. : +351 291 211 902

Website : <http://www.turismomadeira.pt>

E-mail : info.srtt@gov-madeira.pt

Posto de Turismo - Angra do Heroísmo

Rua Direita, 70/74

9700-066 Angra do Heroísmo

Tel. : +351 295 213393

Fax : +351 295 212922

Website : www.visitazores.travel

E-mail : turismoacores@visitazores.travel