



A trip into the world of faith and legends

Start this day dedicated to rest and relaxation with a visit to Fátima, a town devoted to the Virgin Mary.

The huge mystical importance of the shrine is due to the belief in the Virgin's apparition here to three children in 1917. Since then, great hordes of pilgrims have been making their way to Fátima, especially on 13 May, the date of the first apparition. Whether you are a believer or not, it is impossible to feel indifferent at this place of great spirituality.

In Leiria, make your way up to the castle and enjoy one of the best views over the city, surrounded by an extensive pine-forest which once provided the wood used to build the caravels that set sail to make the great Portuguese maritime discoveries of the 15th century. Take your time to appreciate the panorama and then head on to Marinha Grande, a town with a longstanding tradition of glass-making, to visit the factories or the Glass Museum and buy some beautiful pieces of crystal glassware.

Next, take a stroll along the beach at São Pedro de Moel, a seaside resort that still retains the charm of the olden days, and continue southwards along the road, between the sea and the pine-forest to Nazaré. Choose from some of the local specialities of fish and shellfish for an appetising lunch. To help your digestion, make your way up to the Sítio, the quarter perched on a cliff overlooking the town and offering a breathtaking panorama over both land and sea.

In Alcobaça, make sure to visit the monastery with its famous tombs of Pedro and Inês, and included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. Take some time to admire the porcelain and crystal glassware that sparkle in the shop windows, for this is a region that is rich in potteries and crystal glass factories.

Because this is definitely not a day for dieting, pass through Alfeizerão and try the famous local sponge cake. Next, you can relax on a café terrace overlooking the bay of São Martinho do Porto, perhaps taking advantage of the gentle afternoon breeze to enjoy a little windsurfing.

Before bringing your trip to an end with a relaxed stroll through the mediaeval streets of Óbidos and a taste of the famous Ginjinha, the locally made cherry brandy, make sure to pass through Caldas da Rainha, another centre famous for the production of a highly characteristic form of pottery.



Points of interest along the Itinerary

- Castelo de Leiria
- Marinha Grande
- Praia de São Pedro de Moel
- Nazaré
- Mosteiro de Alcobaça
- Praia de São Martinho do Porto



Points of interest along the Itinerary

Castelo de Leiria

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Suggestions

Fatima, the world's altar

The Sanctuary of Fátima is a symbol of the Virgin Mary and one of the world's most important religious sites. A major tourist attraction for centuries, pilgrims from all over the world flock here every year, especially between May and October.

It was between May and October 1917, when three shepherd children, Jacinta, Francisco and Lúcia - witnessed apparitions of Our lady of the Rosary, (the Virgin Mary), at the site of the sanctuary.

Initially regarded with suspicion by the Church, but greatly cherished by the people, the phenomenon was only officially recognised in 1930 by the Bishop of Leiria.

On the 13th May 2000 the Vatican beatified Jacinta and Francisco, because it is said they could miraculously cure illness after their visions. The fame of the Sanctuary of Fátima has spread throughout the world, especially during the papacy of John Paul II, who was a devout worshipper of Our Lady of Fátima.

As well as the famous Sanctuary, you can also visit Fátima Parish Church, the small Chapel of the Holy Way and the Calvary. At Loca do Anjo in Valinhos, you can visit the shepherd children's houses and their local water well. Trips to the Museum of Sacred Art and Ethnology, the Wax Museum, and the Casa-Museu de Aljustrel, as well as the Museu Fátima 1917 Aparições, and the Animated Crib and Village of Bethlehem - will all shed light on the history of Fátima, and leave a lasting impression of this mystical place.

The glass route

As a matter of fact, the most important Portuguese manufacturing industry of glass and crystal has existed in these two towns, not so far from Lisbon, for centuries. It is connected to the country's ancient wine industry due to the manufacture of glass bottles.

The Glass Museum is set up in an old factory founded in the 18th century, the Royal Glass Factory, and exhibits glass and crystal from various periods and manufacturing centres, as well as machines and tools used in the art and glass industry over the years.

In this programme, you can see a live presentation of the centuries-old art of glassblowing and be enchanted by the magic of the fire dominated by the experienced hands of the glass-making craftsmen. You can also buy indescribably fascinating pieces.

From the oldest to the purely avant-garde this route recounts the history of an industry and a nation that has crafted glass for 250 years.

Fish & shellfish, Nazaré

Nazaré has long been one of the country's main ports and has a very special tradition in fish. From simply grilled fish through to the oily 'caldeirada' stews heavy in local shellfish and molluscs, this region is not going to disappoint anyone who likes their menus with an ocean influence.

Nearby, try chicken in an Alcoaça pot and follow it with a visit to the Cistercian Convent with its magnificent Gothic architecture.

And as the altitude begins to build up with the hills of Aire and Candeeiros, the recipes change to include goat and mutton, wild pork and served as the bread dish 'migas' or as a 'cozido serrano' meat stew.

Alcoaça has been a centre for fruit production since the time the Cister monks first arrived. For an even sweeter dessert alternative, take the 'Brizas do Lis' from Leiria, or the famous sweetbread 'Alfeizerão pão-de-ló'.



In close vicinity of Lisbon, the gastronomic traditions of this region more than justify a visit.

Caldas da Rainha

Having benefited from the healing properties of waters already revered by the local population, the Queen ordered a hospital to be built on the site in 1485, making it the oldest thermal hospital in the world. The city grew up around the hospital and was always a favourite place for kings and the Portuguese aristocracy, its popularity peaking in the 19th century when spas were all the rage.

The thermal waters continue to be much sought after, though today Caldas da Rainha boasts many other attractive elements. These include the fresh and green Parque Termal (Thermal Park) in which there are a number of good quality museums, like the José Malhoa Museum. Here you will find fine naturalist and realist paintings by José Malhoa as well as other Portuguese painters from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The abundance of clay in the region led to the proliferation of ceramics factories, an industry that continues today and is internationally renowned for its figurative and satirical works. The ceramics owe their fame to 19th-century potter and caricaturist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, who founded a factory here. A collection of his work can be seen at the Museu de Cerâmica (Ceramics Museum).

Some of the city's churches (like the Nossa Senhora do Pópulo Church) and Caldas da Rainha's historical town centre are worth a visit. And don't forget to explore its surrounding areas, including the town of Óbidos and the great beaches.

Óbidos and its surrounding region

With its narrow, twisting streets and imposing walls, Óbidos whisks you straight back to the middle ages. This medieval town with its simple white houses is the ideal location for a romantic break.

Relax in the castle, now converted into a pousada hotel; browse the shops on Rua Direita before a candlelit dinner in the "Cozinha das Rainhas" restaurant. Later, soak up the atmosphere of the town's bars and toast your stay with a glass of the famous ginjinha cherry liqueur.

Take a day to wander the sandy beaches of Praia d'el Rey with its grandiose cliffs running the length of the Atlantic coastline.

Visit Caldas da Rainha, with its rich artistic heritage and gardens designed for princes and princesses. Order some of the delicious 'cavacas' cracknel for late afternoon tea before dropping in on the Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro House Museum, great for souvenir shopping.

Along the coast, the seaside town of Foz do Arelho is a must for a fresh fish or shellfish lunch. And the "Óbidos Lagoon Sailing School" esplanade is an ideal spot to enjoy a glass of freshly squeezed fruit juice or a cup of tea.

Visit Leiria

Like present-day visitors to Leiria, the monarchs who once stayed here have long enjoyed the city's countryside, castle and verandas.

The river Lis runs through the city, lending it a unique charm and supporting local industry. A ceramic tile panel still marks the site of a paper-mill built in 1411 on its banks, the first paper "factory" in Portugal. It's still working today, producing flour.

The local Cathedral has a strange story, its bell-tower is not part of the main building but situated in a street nearby, where a gateway once led into the castle. Leiria has more surprises too, like the Rua Direita or 'straight street' - that is actually not straight at all. This crooked road winds through the town centre, leading off Praça Rodrigues Lobo, an ideal location to relax on an esplanade under the 16th Century arcades. Several interesting buildings lend interest to these excellent shopping streets; some of them restored or designed by the Swiss architect Ernesto Korrodi in the first half of the 20th Century.

The popular local nursery rhyme about 'straight street' does not mention the castle at all, yet this is Leiria's most imposing medieval monument. The



castle has a dark and fascinating history, such as the stories of the Court of King Duarte in 1438. When his brother Dom Fernando who was held prisoner, the King was said to have died of a broken heart.



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