
Viewpoints: the most beautiful views in Portugal

ABOUT



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Portugal by... Condé Nast Traveler

Portugal treats you to countless landscapes and viewpoints. From the peaceful Lisbon viewpoints to the wild horizons of the Portuguese coast, these landscapes will enthrall you at first sight. Portugal offers itself from the top of castles, mountains, cliffs and villages; be sure to take it all in, and enjoy its beautiful features.

Shrine of Santa Luzia , Viana do Castelo

On the top of the Santa Luzia hill, inspired by Sacré-Coeur in Paris, stands a neo-Byzantine church dedicated to its namesake saint, which is the perfect place to enjoy a unique sunset over the River Lima estuary and take delight in its beaches and the beautiful city of Viana do Castelo. Climb up to its dome to enjoy the view, as if you were a bird. And if you're looking to record the moment, having the church as the main feature in the picture, you must climb a little further up to achieve the perfect shot. While you wait for the right light, taste one of the many excellent wines at the Pousada, which also offers a splendid view. You couldn't end the day with a better vista.

Porto seen from the Serra do Pilar convent in Vila Nova de Gaia

The most easily recognisable and charming panoramic view of Porto is from Vila Nova de Gaia, from any of its lodges and terraces. This side of the Douro provides the best view over the city, revealing it in all its beauty. From the considerable height of the viewpoint at the Serra do Pilar convent, the landscape is dominated by the magnificent D. Luís I iron bridge, a symbol of the city, and by the old town, with its Cathedral and the Clérigos Tower silhouetted against the sky. Take your time and enjoy the view while the river keeps on flowing to the Atlantic.

Monsanto Castle

Monsanto is a small Portuguese inland town, with a castle that radiates history and a prime location at 758m, on the so-called Cabeço de Monsanto. The view from the highest point at Monsanto fortress and its viewpoint on the cobbled slope exudes the Portuguese rural spirit, which is why it is called the "the most Portuguese village in Portugal".

São Pedro de Alcântara viewpoint, in Lisbon

The São Pedro de Alcântara viewpoint is a balcony overlooking downtown Lisbon, and the hillside where São Jorge castle stands. To get there, take the Glória funicular which shortens the distance between Praça dos Restauradores and Bairro Alto. It was King Pedro V who converted the land earmarked for extending the Águas Livres Aqueduct into this two-tiered garden, dotted with sculptures and monuments to many Portuguese personalities. A tile panel at the upper viewpoint indicates precisely which landmarks to look for.

São Jorge Castle, Lisbon

Lisbon's castle was named by King João I who, after marrying the English Princess Philippa of Lancaster, decided to place the castle under the protection of England's patron saint. Originally Visigoth, then Arab and finally Christian, many visit the castle to walk around its labyrinthine spaces. Its walls and towers make the castle famous among those in search of "good views". This fortified viewpoint is indeed a worthy ally of downtown Lisbon, Bairro Alto and the river Tagus, unveiling one of the city's best panoramic views.

Santa Luzia viewpoint, Lisbon

The Alfama rooftops and the Tagus estuary define the view from Lisbon's Santa Luzia viewpoint. From its unkempt garden close to a church dedicated to the Order of Malta, this viewpoint reveals the city above a former section of the Arab wall. Its walls and balconies are covered by hundreds of tiles and, despite being dwarfed by the breathtaking view of the city, they, too, provide a wonderful panorama. The two panels located at the exit from the garden show the vista of the city dominated by the São Jorge Castle and Praça do Comércio before the 1755 earthquake, when the latter was known as Terreiro do Paço. Take them in while viewing Lisbon from here.

Castle of the Moors, Sintra

The dilapidated walls of the Castle of the Moors snake along the top of Pena park. Through dizzying passages, the turrets and watch-towers follow each other along a path that ends up at the keep after 500 steps. From the Sintra Mountain you can see the city and the houses that dot the landscape around the fortress and, on a clear day, the blue of the Atlantic. As you go, this panoramic view will make up for the climb along the castle walls, that are more than a thousand years old. Take your time and think up your catch phrase; many celebrities felt so gratified at the outline of this Arab fortress and the city it peers down on that they offered expressions of gratitude to the wind.

Pena Palace, Sintra

This was the view presented to the kings on their days of leisure. In former times, Portuguese monarchs and noblemen spent the summer here, since the climate was cooler than in Lisbon and the view much more idyllic and mysterious. Pena Palace stands on a headland on the Sintra Mountain. With its leafy woods and stately houses, it is a kind of beacon with a thousand colours that stand out from the green. It is an architectural jewel, with stone and tile follies and all kinds of whimsical features, such as the Tritão portico, carved in stone in the shape of shells, corals and vines to symbolise the union between land and sea. A series of viewpoints surround its walls and turrets, from where you can enjoy a spectacular view over the city and the surrounding landscape, even allowing a glimpse of the sea on clear days. The charm of this place comes from each of these panoramic views and the emotions that the ever-changing castle outline triggers. Indeed, a Portuguese attraction not to be missed.

Cape Roca, Sintra

This headland furiously pounded by the ocean is, among many other things, a natural viewpoint looking out to an immense, impressive sea, at 140m and with a 360° panoramic over the landscape of the Sintra-Cascais Natural Park. It is the westernmost point of Europe, and a milestone on the rock marks the exact location, so, besides its beauty, the significance of the place envelops it in an almost magical halo. The Tourist Office, housed in the attractive lighthouse, will issue certificates to prove your presence in these coordinates, a relative world's end celebrated by the beauty of the landscape.

Marvão, Alentejo

Like other fortified towns in the Alentejo, such as Monsaraz and Mértola, Marvão's vista rises from the ground to soar high. Its castle, known around here as the "eagles' nest", stands on a headland 900m above sea level, and from it you can enjoy an unparalleled view that takes in the town of Marvão, with its whitewashed houses and maze of streets, the Serra de São Mamede Natural Park, a miracle of nature, the Serra da Estrela woods and even Valencia de Alcântara, in the Cáceres region across the border. The place which in former times acted as a defensive fortress will show you today the beauty of inland Portugal from a bird's eye view, or rather, an eagle's.