
Porto in a few days

ABOUT



Photo: João Paulo

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On a brief visit to Porto, there are some places that cannot be missed. In the words of many visitors, this city has something mystical that is difficult to describe and which varies according to the place, time of day and light.

Whatever it is, it certainly has to do with its people, known to be generous and easy-going, as well as the River Douro and its heritage on both banks, with its bridges and monuments, the tiles, the flowering balconies and the shopping streets. The historic centre of Porto and the River Douro on the Gaia side, where the Port Wine lodges are located, are classified as World Heritage.

S. Bento Station, with its atrium lined with tiles, is an ideal starting point. Just ahead is the **Cathedral**, not to be missed, whose precinct offers the first view of the river, the cascading houses and the opposite bank. From there you descend by steps and mediaeval streets to **Ribeira**, with its café terraces and picturesque corners. It's worth staying a little to get a flavour of the atmosphere and take in the river with the D. Luís Bridge and the opposite bank, before going on a cruise under Porto's six bridges. Once you've seen the outline of the cascading houses and church towers, you will want to see the gilt interior of the **Church of S. Francisco**. Nearby, you can see more tile-fronted churches and monuments, and visit the Palácio da Bolsa (former Stock Exchange palace). The tram leaves from next to the river for a trip that goes to **Foz** (the mouth of the Douro), where you can take a stroll and fill your lungs with the sea air. Avenida da Boavista starts here, and not far away is **Serralves**, with its gardens to stroll or rest in and its contemporary art exhibitions. The museum is the work of Álvaro Siza Vieira, one of the foremost architects of the Porto School of Architecture, and winner of the Pritzker Prize.

The architecturally imposing **Casa da Música**, with its full programme of cultural events, is on Rotunda da Boavista, an area that is good for shopping. There are also good shops to be found around Avenida dos Aliados. In between are the Crystal Palace gardens, with another panoramic view of the river, and the **Soares dos Reis Museum**. Another garden, full of sculptures, is Cordoaria, surrounded by churches and other monuments. It's worth climbing the **Clérigos Tower** for a different view of Porto. Immediately nearby is the **Lello bookshop** that inspired some of the Harry Potter stories. Continue walking towards Aliados, past the shops and art nouveau buildings. After exploring this broad avenue, it's worth strolling along the pedestrians-only Rua de Santa Catarina for more shopping. Then pop in to the **Café Majestic** for a break.

There's still a visit to be made to the south bank of the river to go to a **Port Wine lodge** and taste some Port in its unique setting. From Ribeira, cross the D. Luís foot bridge and you'll see them. One of the most beautiful views over Porto can be had from Gaia. And you can also take the chairlift, which follows this side of the river.

In terms of gastronomy, this side of the river is a good option, but Ribeira also teems with restaurants and café terraces, as does Foz, which also has beautiful views over the sea. Portugal's cuisine is always a winner with tourists, but this is even more true in Porto and Northern Portugal. You can be sure of a good meal, accompanied by fine wines from the Douro or the fresh Vinho Verde typical of the region, in any restaurant, from the finest to the most popular.

Don't miss

- > visit Casa do Infante, by Ribeira
- > admire the old houses of Miragaia, very close to the Ribeira quay
- > by day or by night, stroll through the Galeria de Paris and the adjacent streets, close to the Torre dos Clérigos
- > pop up to Rua Miguel Bombarda for a taste of contemporary art and design
- > stroll through the Parque da Cidade, down to the sea front
- > enjoy the great beaches and café terraces at the mouth of the river Douro
- > try a francesinha (a sandwich with cured ham, sausage, and steak covered in molten cheese and a hot tomato and beer sauce), one of Porto's specialities
- > try some fresh fish or seafood, or some cod fishcakes
- > get to know a little of the coast to the north or south of Porto
- > explore Porto by night
- > participate in the São João Festival

USEFUL INFORMATION

Useful Information

www.visitportoandnorth.travel

www.visitporto.travel

city transport:

<http://www.stcp.pt/pt/viajar/>

<http://www.metrodoporto.pt/>

GETTING HERE

By air: Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport

By road: A1 (Lisbon-Porto), A3 (Valença-Porto), A4 (Amarante-Porto), A28 (Vila Nova de Cerveira-Porto)

By coach: Rede Expressos <http://www.rede-expressos.pt>

By train:

Comboios de Portugal (www.cp.pt) - Tourist Travelcard + Beach Ticket

In addition to normal train ticket prices, Comboios de Portugal - CP (Portuguese Rail Services) is offering discounts on day or leisure trips with the Tourist Travelcard (Bilhete Turístico) which allows you unlimited travel on suburban trains from Lisbon (on the Sintra/Azambuja, Cascais and Sado lines), Porto (on the Aveiro, Braga, Guimarães and Marco de Canaveses lines) and on regional trains on the Algarve line, and the Beach Ticket (Bilhete Praia) for trips from Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra to the nearest beaches.