
Cascais and the Estoril Coast

ABOUT



Photo: Turismo do Estoril

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Cascais and Estoril, or the coast north of Lisbon, became one of the most cosmopolitan and touristic places in Portugal ever since King Luís I chose the bay for his summer residence in the late 19th century.

The mild climate and an annual average of 260 rainless days were surely strong reasons for his choice and for the most affluent families of the time to follow the royal family and set up their villas and mansions there. It's worth going on a stroll around town to get a feel for the atmosphere of that period.

To get there, follow the waterfront road from Lisbon to Cascais or take the train. It's a very scenic route, always hugging the River Tagus and the busy beaches of the Estoril coast. En route, you will pass various forts erected to defend the capital, providing crossfire with the Bugio Fort, right in the middle of the river mouth, between Santo Amaro, on one side, and Trafaria, on the opposite bank.

Don't miss

- > have a meal of fresh fish, with a view of the sea
- > discover Cascais by bike
- > eat an ice-cream by the sea
- > go to the beach
- > learn how to surf
- > have fun on summer nights in Cascais and Estoril

CASCAIS

Cascais was initially a fishing town, but today it is the outdoor terraces, the restaurants and the shops that bring the bay and the historic centre alive.

On your first stroll around town you will get a feel for its connection to the sea and the relaxed mood of the Cascais residents. The 19th and early 20th century mansions are currently cultural and leisure venues which provide more information on the history of this town. They include the Condes de Castro Guimarães Museum, the Casa de Santa Maria, the Santa Marta Lighthouse and the King Carlos - Sea Museum. Close to the latter, you're bound to come across the Casa das Histórias de Paula Rego (Paula Rego House of Stories), a modern building with a very peculiar design, definitely worth a visit, which houses a number of the works of this Portuguese artist.

Right by the sea, at one of the highest points, you will see the Citadel Palace, former House of the Cascais governor, chosen by King Luís for his residence. Currently, it is under the authority of the Presidency of the Portuguese Republic. On the sea-facing side, you can see the Cascais Marina.

Naturally, the proximity to the Atlantic has always contributed to keeping the traditions of fishing and nautical sports, especially sailing, alive. The conditions of the Cascais Marina, the calm sea, the climate, the beaches and the heritage are more than enough reasons for it to be a place of choice for many seamen who spend their holidays here and for holding frequent regattas, whether for recreation or competition.

Although it is close to the sea, one of this area's noticeable features, due to its microclimate, is the presence of vast tracts of woodland and green spaces, such as the Marechal Carmona Park. After all, this is part of the Sintra-Cascais Natural Park.

At the northern end of town, Boca do Inferno (Hell's Mouth) is a very popular places to visit. It is a striking rock formation where you can observe the power of nature and the sea. Further along, you can see the São Jorge de Oitavos Fort and, some 10km away, is Guincho Beach, another seascape awaiting you for a good fresh fish or seafood meal. It is one of the main surfing and windsurfing spots on the Portuguese coast, featuring in world tournaments.

Cascais and Estoril are also known golf destinations. Their various courses are considered among the best in the world and included in the international tournament circuit. They afford quality sport, for several levels of skill and with demanding challenges, in an environment that is pleasant all year round.

ESTORIL

A former summer resort for Europe's royal families, Estoril preserves the lively, relaxed and cosmopolitan atmosphere that made it famous.

This mood and its beauty were also reasons for it to have become a sanctuary during World War II for those seeking a quieter place to escape a Europe in turmoil. In the oldest hotels, you can still hear stories from those times.

It is the ideal place for family holidays. The promenade between Azarujinha beach and Nossa Senhora da Conceição beach, in Cascais, is perfect for a walk, feeling the sea breeze on your face, or for a bicycle ride. And you will always find it hard to resist a dive in the white, fine sandy beaches or in the Tamariz swimming pool. The sea is a permanent fixture. Whether for a late afternoon reading or dinner while watching the sunset, this is a place of choice.

Amid the mansions and the quintas, in a microclimate affording mild temperatures all year round, the Portuguese Music Museum, at Casa Verdades de Faria, is a good reason for a visit to Estoril.

The grand Casino is still a point of attraction. You can not only try your luck in Europe's largest casino, but also enjoy a programme of events and exhibitions which makes a major contribution to local entertainment, which continues in the beach bars.

In summer, between June and September, FIARTIL, the oldest arts & crafts fair in the country, which is held here every year, is an opportunity to discover traditional crafts and taste the wide variety of regional produce demonstrating the excellence of Portuguese gastronomy.

FROM CARCAVELOS TO OEIRAS

While some prefer the salt water swimming pools at Estoril, Carcavelos is the first beach you'll come across providing bodyboarder- and surfer-class waves and one of the first places in Portugal that pioneered these sports.

It's a good location to eat fresh fish, as well as an opportunity to taste the Carcavelos wine, produced in local estates according to very special methods.

Continuing along the coast, you will find Oeiras, where highlights include the Parque dos Poetas (Poets' Park), dedicated to Portuguese poets, the Gardens of the Marquis of Pombal Palace, who was the 1st Count of Oeiras as well, and the Barcarena Gunpowder Factory, a cultural and recreational venue.

The 4km from here to Paço de Arcos can be done on foot along the promenade, making it an invigorating walk.

Closer to Lisbon, in Dafundo, you can see the ocean collection of King D. Carlos at the Vasco da Gama Aquarium, set up in 1898, one of the first in the world, and visit the Manuel de Brito Arts Centre, in Algés, a private collection devoted to Portuguese contemporary art.

USEFUL INFORMATION

You can request BICAS, free bicycles, from the City Council Tourist Offices, so you can discover Cascais at leisure. All you have to do is show your identification and sign a statement of liability. More information from www.cm-cascais.pt.

GETTING HERE

Cascais is about 20km from Lisbon and there are good roads to get there, whether on the A5 motorway or on the waterfront road along the mouth of the Tagus and the sea.

Comboios de Portugal - Tourist Travelcard + Beach Ticket

From Cais do Sodré in Lisbon, the urban train service goes past several places of interest to tourists along the river: Paço de Arcos - Santo Amaro - Oeiras - Carcavelos - Parede - S. Pedro - S. João - Estoril - Monte Estoril and Cascais. More information from www.cp.pt.

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.