



ACADEMY
TRAVEL

TAILORED
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS

PORTUGAL

Imperial Legacy and Vibrant
Present

Overview

Portugal's status as a minor European power today belies its former greatness as the administrator of an empire that stretched from Brazil to Macau. The legacy of Portugal's imperial past is still visible today in the art, architecture and cuisine of its beautiful cities. With 15 UNESCO World Heritage sites for the traveller to explore, Portugal is a compelling destination.

Our 16-day tour delves deep into Portugal's history: its ancient past (with visits to prehistoric megaliths, Paleolithic rock art, and Roman remains), traces of the Moorish invasion and subsequent Christian reclamation of the peninsula, and the triumph of its Golden Age of Exploration. We also enjoy spectacular coastlines and lush river valleys with terraced vineyards on a private cruise of the Douro. Along the way, we learn how Portugal honours its cultural heritage and celebrates the new through its vibrant contemporary urban art scene.

Tour leader

Dr. Jeni Ryde is a former senior lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, where she completed her PhD on the Renaissance, heritage tourism and museology. Jeni has a wide-ranging knowledge of European art, history, and architecture and has extensive experience of touring the Iberian Peninsula.

Essential information

Tour dates: September 14-29, 2023

Price per person: \$10,320

Supplement for sole use of double room: \$2,140

Maximum number in group: 16

Start: 6.00pm September 14, Bessahotel Liberdade in Lisbon

Finish: After breakfast, September 29, Hotel Pestana Vintage in Porto

Fitness level

★★ Good overall fitness required

Itinerary

Lisbon (4 nights), Évora (3 nights), Tomar (2 nights), Coimbra (2 nights), Pinhão (2 nights), Porto (2 nights)

Further information and bookings

Hannah Kleboe 02 9235 0023,
hannah@academytravel.com.au



Highlights

Lisbon: Age of Discovery

Relive the wonder of the Golden Age of Exploration on a walking tour of Lisbon: The Belém tower, Discovery Monument and the Jeronimos Monastery with its nautically themed cloisters. On the way, we enjoy a coffee and a fine Portuguese tart!

Porto: City of Bridges

Admire Porto's historic centre, its buildings adorned with exquisite decorative tiles. A warren of steep streets set in the valley of the Douro; the city is spanned by no less than 6 bridges.

Sintra & Grand Palaces

Explore the summer retreats and hunting residences of the Portuguese nobility: the Palácio Nacional de Queluz with its outstanding gardens and tiles and the Palácio Nacional de Sintra.

Cruise the Douro Valley

Our private cruise along the Douro, takes us from rural Pinhão to Porto, admiring terraced vineyards, and hills topped with grand farmhouses.

Ancient History

View dinosaur footprints on the headland of the wild Cabo Espichel, a circle of Neolithic monoliths in the cork forests of Evora and Palaeolithic rock art in the Côa valley near Pinhão.

Detailed itinerary

Included meals are shown with the symbols B, L and D.

Thursday 14 September – Arrival in Lisbon

Passengers arrive and check in at leisure. Our tour starts with a welcome drink in the hotel, followed by dinner in a popular restaurant nearby. Overnight Lisbon (D)

Friday 15 September – Alfama, Art & Music

After an introductory talk in the hotel, we head up to the castle of São Jorge to enjoy outstanding views. From here we meander down through the Moorish *bairro* (borough) of Alfama, a maze of narrow streets, flower-laden iron balconies and small squares. After lunch, we visit one of Europe's unsung treasure houses, the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, a private art collection with works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Monet, Van Dyke and Renoir. To complete a fabulous day, we enjoy dinner and a performance of *fado*, a distinctly Portuguese musical style, with a melancholy theme. Overnight Lisbon (B, D)

Saturday 16 September – Sintra & Surrounds

On this full-day trip, we first visit the 18th-century Palácio de Queluz, a former royal residence with beautiful gardens and exuberant architecture, followed by the Palácio Nacional de Sintra. Sintra is a unique combination of natural mountain beauty and fairytale palaces, and the National Palace is easily distinguished by its two large conical chimneys and architecture which combines Manueline, Gothic and Moorish styles. On our way back to the capital we visit the Convent of the Capuchos: a stark contrast to the palaces, this austere Franciscan Monastery seems to emerge from the surrounding woodland, with its tiny cells carved out of the rock. We journey back to Lisbon along the coast via the seaside town of Cascais. Overnight Lisbon (B)

Sunday 17 September - Belem & Azulejos

Today we pay homage to the Golden Age of Discovery and explore the *bairro* of Belém. Our touring commences at Belém Tower, a 16th-century fortification which formed a vital part of Lisbon's defences. We continue up the river to the Discovery Monument, celebrating the location where explorers departed to the Far East to open important trade routes. After a coffee break and a Portuguese tart, we move on to the Jerónimos Monastery with its superb Manueline cloisters. In the afternoon we make an excursion to the National Tile Museum to view its exquisite collection of *azulejos*. Overnight Lisbon (B)

Monday 18 September - Setúbal Peninsula and the Alentejo Region

Departing Lisbon, we travel south to the dramatic Setúbal peninsula. At Cabo Espichel we witness the ferocity of the Atlantic Ocean. In this magnificently isolated spot, one

can view two different, well-preserved sets of dinosaur footprints, dating over 50 million years apart. We stop for lunch in Sesimbra, one of Portugal's finest beach towns, where we suggest partaking of the seafood. Our drive continues to the World Heritage-listed city of Évora, capital of the Alentejo region. The Alentejo is famed for its wine as well as the cork oak forests and olive tree plantations which cover its rolling hills. Overnight Évora (B, D)

Tuesday 19 September - Évora

We take a walk around the historic centre of Évora, starting with the city's iconic Roman Temple. Other highlights are the Igreja (church) de São João and attached convent, dating from the 15th century, built over the top of Évora's Moorish castle. We also visit the Igreja de São Francisco, best known for its lugubrious Chapel of The Bones, where a Franciscan monk decorated the walls with skulls. After lunch we drive through the semi-arid Alentejo countryside to the surrounding hill towns, stopping in picturesque Monseraz, a fortified hilltop town which has been occupied since pre-history. In the early evening we meet for a talk in the hotel. Overnight Évora (B)

Wednesday 20 September - Monoliths & Wine Tasting

Our destination today is the unique site of Chromeleque dos Almendres, a megalithic stone circle pre-dating Stonehenge. The 95 standing stones, some engraved, are in a spectacular hillside location among olive and cork trees. The exact use of this site is unknown, but it has always been considered sacred. We continue to a local winery for a tour, tasting and lunch. The afternoon is free for sightseeing in Évora. Overnight Évora (B, L)

Thursday 21 September - Tomar & The Knights Templar

Heading north to the Templar city of Tomar, we stop for a boat ride across the River Tagus to the enigmatic Almourol castle, emblematic of the Christian Reconquest of the peninsula and now home to a Templar interpretation centre. After lunch we enjoy a tour of Tomar itself, including the Templar Convento de Cristo, a historical jewel. The oldest part is the 16-sided Templar church, or *Charola* which, like the castle, dates from the 12th century. This church was then converted to a Chancel under Manuel I in the 16th century, turning it into one of the

finest works of the Portuguese Renaissance and giving it the World Heritage status; it enjoys today. Overnight Tomar (B, D)

Friday 22 September - Alcobaca Monastery

We venture out of Tomar for the morning to visit the unique monastic establishment of Alcobaça. After the Reconquest, the Cistercian monks started a settlement here, going from wooden houses in 1178 to a stone monastery and church in 1252. It was one of the first truly Gothic buildings in Portugal, and the church at the time was the largest in the country. The afternoon is at leisure in Tomar. Overnight Tomar (B)

Saturday 23 September - Conimbriga

Leaving Tomar behind, we stop for a viewing of the 180 arches of the nearby Acueduto de los Pegões, designed by a distinguished architect in the 17th century to provide water to the Convento de Cristo. Our main highlight today is the outstanding Roman site of Conímbriga. This is Portugal's largest and most impressive Roman site, dating from the 1st century CE. The ruins are extremely well preserved and feature villas paved with magnificent mosaic floors, plus baths and a forum. After an extended stop here, we continue our journey to Coimbra and enjoy free time before dinner in our hotel, the 18th-century palace, Quinta das Lágrimas. Overnight Coimbra (B, D)

Sunday 24 September - Coimbra

In medieval times, the river-front city of Coimbra was the capital of Portugal. Declining in importance in the Late Middle Ages, the city remained a major cultural hub and still boasts the country's finest university, one of the longest continuously operating in the world. Our walking tour covers the well-preserved medieval core of the city, including the pearl at its heart: the Juanina Library. We see the well preserved Sé Velha, the best example of a Romanesque cathedral in the country, and the Praça do Comércio, or Commercial Square. This evening we meet for a talk in the hotel. Overnight Coimbra (B)

Monday 25 September - North to Pinhão

Today we leave the centre of Portugal and head north to Pinhão with stops to punctuate our route. We take time for lunch in Viseu, where we can stroll the cobbled streets and enjoy a glass of one of Portugal's Dão region red wines. Before arriving at our destination, we stop at

Hotels

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are a comfortable four-star standard or higher.

Bessahotel Liberdade, Lisbon

(4 nights)

M'Ar de Ar Aqueduto, Evora

(3 nights)

Hotel dos Templários, Tomar

(2 nights)

Hotel Quinta das Lágrimas, Coimbra (2 nights)

Vintage House Hotel, Pinhão

(2 nights)

Hotel Pestana Vintage, Porto

(2 nights)

Weather

September is a great month for touring in Portugal. The harsh heat of the summer should be over, and we expect daily temperatures of around 21-27°, down to around 17° at night. Some small showers are possible.

Fitness requirements for this tour

GRADE TWO ★★

This Grade Two tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 4-5 kilometres at a moderate pace with only short breaks
- stand for a reasonable length of time in galleries and museums
- tolerate uncomfortable climatic conditions like cold, humidity and heat
- negotiate steps, slopes and uneven ground
- walk up and down steps and slopes

São João de Tarouca to view the church and monastery. The first monastery to be erected by the Cistercian order on the Iberian Peninsula, it has recently been carefully restored. The three-nave church is lavishly decorated in gilt, with tiles from the 17th and 18th centuries. Overnight Pinhão (B, D)

Tuesday 26 September – Paleolithic Rock Art

Today we drive to Vila Nova de Foz Côa to visit the World Heritage-listed Côa Valley Archaeological Park. We are treated to a guided tour in 4WD vehicles to view the best of the 5000 or so examples of rock art and engravings, dating from the end of the Paleolithic era to 8000 BCE. This extraordinary site, in a rural and isolated spot, along with its outstanding museum, gives us an excellent window into the life of primitive man on the Iberian Peninsula. This evening we meet in the hotel for a talk prior to free time for dinner. Overnight Pinhão (B, L)

Wednesday 27 September – Douro Cruise

Leaving the roads behind, we pack our bags and embark on a full-day private cruise downstream along the Douro River to Porto, the City of Bridges. As we navigate the various dams and locks of this stretch of river, which once transported port grapes to the coast, we enjoy lunch and a port aperitif, along with views of steep terraced vineyards dotted with wine-producing farmhouses or *quintas*. Built with the wealth from the deal with British traders for port export in the 18th century, many have now transformed into luxury hotels. Disembarking in Porto, we settle into our final hotel. Overnight Porto (B, L)

Thursday 28 September - Porto

We discover Porto's historic centre on foot, climbing the narrow streets behind the hotel where buildings are adorned with colourful tiles and stopping at the famous cathedral cloisters. We tour the World Heritage-listed Palácio da Bolsa and the celebrated Arabian hall before finishing at the train station with its vast display of over 20,000 tiles representing battles and the history of Portugal. We save the afternoon for contemporary Porto with a look at modern architecture like the Casa da Música, designed by controversial Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. In the late afternoon we enjoy a port tasting before our farewell dinner. Overnight Porto (B, D)

Friday 29 September - Departure

The tour concludes after breakfast. It may be necessary to take a domestic flight to Lisbon before flying home. (B)

✉ info@academytravel.com.au

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