

Activities and Culture Around the Lisbon MBA Católica|Nova

6 Reasons to Love Lisbon

It's One of The World's Safest Capitals: The European Safety Observatory says that Lisbon is Europe's safest capital. While you should hold on to your wallet in the city's public transportation to avoid pickpocketing, serious random violent crime (murder and rape) is extremely rare, not to say almost nonexistent in the city's everyday life.

The Best Climate in the World: It is known as the sunniest capital in Europe, but the city's enviable climate is not just 300 days of sunshine per year. It also has mild temperatures, never below zero in winter, and nights are cooled off by the Atlantic Ocean in the hotter summer months.

Tolerance and Freedom: Freedom of religion is so natural in Portugal, that, unlike in many other countries, it's even irrelevant in political campaigns (candidate's religious beliefs are generally unknown and not even discussed). In 2010 it also became one of the first few countries to allow same-sex marriage.

It's Bohemian yet Trendy: Lisbon somehow holds on to its unconventional styles while also being up-to-date on the latest global trends. Many neighborhoods, like Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré, have a sleepy atmosphere in the daytime, but at night are energetic mixes of diverse tribes, socializing and partying together until dawn.

The Fish and Seafood: Some say that Portugal has the best fish in the world. With its large coastline and long history at sea, that could in fact be true.

It's Affordable: As Western Europe's least expensive capital, Lisbon is often described as one of the continent's "best value for money" destinations. But that's not just for tourists. Even locals can plan a night out in the city without spending much. You can find fulfilling meals for just around 10 euros, there are free monuments and museums and there's a wide range of activities with no admission charge.

Discover the "Age of Discovery" – places to visit

Jerónimos Monastery: Built in 1502, it's now classified as a World Heritage Site, and is where you find the tomb of Vasco da Gama.

Belém Tower: Also a World Heritage monument, it was built in 1515 to protect the harbor. It was the starting point of many voyages, and has an image of Our Lady of Safe Homecoming carved in stone to bless and protect the navigators.

Ancient Art Museum: it houses several treasures from the Discovery Age

Casa dos Bicos: The most famous 16th-century house is Casa dos Bicos. Built in 1523 with over 1000 diamond-shaped stones on the façade, it was home to the Portuguese viceroy of India, Afonso de Albuquerque.

Igreja de Santiago: It was here that Christopher Columbus is said to have married his Portuguese wife Filipa Moniz Perestrelo in 1479. Columbus tried to persuade the king of Portugal to finance his travels, but when the king refused, he offered his services to the king of Spain instead.

Igreja de São Roque: Brazilian gold was also able to pay for grandiose works in the palaces and churches of Lisbon, especially in the 1700s. The grandest of them all is one of several magnificent chapels inside the Church of São Roque, the chapel of St. John the Baptist, considered "the world's most expensive chapel," mixing ivory, agate, lapis lazuli, and gold.

Museu dos Coches: Other extraordinary works that resulted from the wealth derived from the Discoveries are in the Coaches Museum. The most outstanding are the vehicles built during the reign of king João V, such as the magnificent Carriage of the Oceans.

Museu Militar: In rooms dedicated to Vasco da Gama and Prince Henry the Navigator, the Military Museum features murals depicting the voyages to the East, and a collection of Portuguese artillery that was spread along the coasts of Africa and Asia.

Emblematic Museums

Orient Museum: Portugal was the European power with the longest presence in Asia, so it has quite a story to tell about how its culture influenced and was influenced by the East. This is the museum to know all about it, with a permanent collection dedicated to the Portuguese presence in Asia.

Gulbenkian: It is one of the most important cultural institutions in Portugal and one of Lisbon's must-see attractions. It includes masterpieces from various periods and areas, from Egyptian to Greco-Roman and Islamic art, plus European painting and decorative arts.

Tile Museum: Tile art is a common feature throughout the Mediterranean, but only Lisbon has a museum exclusively dedicated to it. It's a must-see, one-of-a-kind attraction, housed in a magnificent old convent from 1509, and with a collection featuring pieces going back to the 1400s.

Centro Cultural de Belém: It is one of the biggest icons of modern Lisbon. It is a cultural center, with auditoriums, museums, temporary exhibitions and major events. The CCB is also one of the spaces most sought after by Lisbonians and visitors to enjoy the relationship with the river, as its gardens and terraces offer some of the best public spaces in the city.

Museu de Arte Contemporânea: It is one of the first contemporary art museums in the world and gathers a vast collection from the second half of the 19th century to today.

The best sunset spots in Lisbon

Cais das Colunas: It's by Praça do Comercio, on Cais das Colunas, that tourists are most often surprised by the colors of the Lisbon sky at dusk, especially in the autumn months, when the sun sets behind 25 de Abril Bridge.

Ribeira das Naus: considered the “beach of downtown Lisbon”, it's worth staying here in the sun until it disappears, as it's at sundown that the place becomes even more beautiful.

Miradouro da Senhora do Monte: One of the best places to have a view over almost the entire city.

Miradouro de Santa Catarina: This is one of the most popular spots in the afternoon, especially for the café terraces and the relaxed atmosphere. It's with beer and often to the sound of live musicians that tourists and locals say goodbye to the sun.

Miradouro da Graça: It's one of locals' favorite lookout points, and it has one of the best café terraces. Naturally, it's here that many meet in the evening, relaxing as the sun sets.

Fundação Champallimaud: The Champalimaud Foundation is just a short walk from Belém Tower, where the Tagus begins to merge with the Atlantic. It's already with the sea on the horizon that you have one of the most beautiful views of the setting sun.

Arco da Rua Augusta: The triumphal arch, facing Praça do Comércio and Rua Augusta, extends its opening hours during the summer months to allow you to stay admiring and photographing the sunset.

Cool and Trendy Lisbon

Príncipe Real: one of the hottest neighborhoods in Lisbon, it's where you find independent boutiques and some of the trendiest spots for a drink or meal at any time of the day, especially on Rua Dom Pedro V and around Praça das Flores.

Lx factory: once an abandoned industrial space, it was first taken over by small businesses and creative professionals, then came the shops and cafés, and even a small market on Sundays.

Chiado: it has always been Lisbon's main shopping district, today mixing independent stores and international chains, especially on the streets of Carmo and Garrett, and at the Armazéns do Chiado mall.

Bairro Alto: Throughout most of its 500-year history, Bairro Alto has maintained a certain bohemian and alternative atmosphere. Starting on Praça Luís de Camões and entering Rua do Norte, this is where the night owls roam the streets looking for the perfect bar or restaurant.

Cais do Sodré: this area now competes with Bairro Alto as the main nightlife destination. Rua Nova do Carvalho (now also known as "Pink Street" for the color of the pavement) mixes crowds of all ages and backgrounds, on the terraces or inside the bars.

Avenida da Liberdade: it is Lisbon's luxury shopping boulevard but also offers several affordable kiosks for light meals or drinks at any time of the day.

Parks and Gardens

Edward VII Park: This is the largest park in the city center, offering beautiful views over downtown and the river.

Tropical Botanical Garden: Found by the Jeronimos Monastery, this peaceful garden is filled with exotic trees and plants from Portugal's former colonies in Asia and Africa.

Monsanto Forrest Park: It's Europe's largest urban forest and one of the continent's biggest urban parks. It's a place for leisure (with picnic and sports areas) but also an important ecological reserve overlooking the city.

Tapada das Necessidades: This is one of Lisbon's secret spots. It presents one of Europe's biggest collections of cacti, and has a wonderful view of 25 de Abril Bridge.

Jardim da Estrela: Laid out in 1842, this neighborhood park across from the Basilica of Estrela maintains the romantic atmosphere of the time.

Jardins da Gulbenkian: These gardens are home to the world-class Calouste Gulbenkian Museum and were designed by Portugal's leading landscape architect Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles. Many locals had their first kiss on its lawns, and it's still one of the city's favorite oases.

The Best Beaches around Lisbon

Guincho Beach: Guincho beach is the biggest in the municipality of Cascais; it's a windy beach making it ideal to surf, kitesurf and windsurf.

Tamariz Beach: Tamariz beach is located in Estoril and is one of the tourist attractions of the region, concentrating various bars and nightclubs.

Meco Beach: Protected by a clay cliff, Meco beach is considered to be the “Mecca” of Portuguese naturism. North of the big dune, the beach is also frequented by families that appreciate quietness, a vast stretch of sand and crystal-clear waters.

Galápos Beach: Protected by the imposing Serra da Arrábida, Galápos beach is heaven on earth, with a beautiful blue and calm sea and a stretch of golden or very white sand.

Figueirinha Beach: The calm sea and the beautiful surrounding landscape make Figueirinha beach one of the most popular Lisbon beaches you’ll find. A sand bank emerges when it is low tide, making this beach popular amongst the adults but especially with the kids.

São Julião Beach: With a stretch of sand of over 250 metres, São Julião Beach is one of the most popular beaches in the municipality of Sintra. Surrounded by cliffs, this beach is much appreciated by surfers, fishermen and nature lovers.

Day Trips from Lisbon

Sintra: Sintra is a fairytale town outside Lisbon, Portugal, that looks like a fantasy kingdom or an ethereal and enchanted forest. This is where the Celts worshiped the moon, the Moors built their “great wall,” and royalty erected their dream palaces. The most spectacular of those is Pena Palace, looking like a Disney extravagance but an actual royal residence from the 1800s. Other almost surreal constructions include Quinta da Regaleira, the Capuchos Convent and Monserrate Palace, plus fountains and waterfalls further adding to the mystical atmosphere whose spell no one is able to resist. Altogether, those constructions resulted in Europe’s first center of Romantic architecture, and it is now a World Heritage Site.

Cascais: Cascais is the “Portuguese Riviera.” A former fishing village, it became a cosmopolitan resort when the Portuguese king made it his summer retreat in the late 1800s. The nobility soon followed him, and, as a result, elegant 19th-century mansions now line the cobbled pedestrian streets of the historic center and the seafront. Today, it is the perfect place for some beach lounging, a dip in the cooling Atlantic waters, a rich seafood meal, or simply a stroll by the sea. Cascais is also a destination for surfers and windsurfers, who spend their days at the beaches of Carcavelos and Guincho (which has hosted World Surfing Championships).

Estoril: Once promoted as Costa do Sol (“Coast of the Sun”), the suburb of Estoril is part of Cascais, and together they make up the “Portuguese Riviera.” In Estoril you will find grand hotels and Europe’s biggest casino. Down the promenade that connects Estoril to Cascais is a number of beach bars and restaurants, so even when it’s too cold to get your feet in the sand, it’s a pleasant day trip from Lisbon for a few hours by the sea.

Queluz: Queluz, located between Lisbon and Sintra, would be just another unremarkable suburb if it wasn't for one major attraction that's one of Portugal's most beautiful monuments and one of the last great rococo palaces in Europe. Inspired by the palace of Versailles, it's known as both "Royal Palace of Queluz" and "National Palace of Queluz." It was built in 1747 with lavish formal gardens, and was the official residence of the royal family in the late 1700s.

Évora: Évora is an ancient city listed as a World Heritage Site. It is known for one of the best-preserved Roman monuments in Iberia, and its medieval streets give an idea of what Lisbon looked like before its destruction by the Great Earthquake of 1755. It can be visited on a day trip from the capital, which is about 90 minutes away. Within its medieval wall is also a macabre chapel covered with thousands of human skulls and bones, a Gothic cathedral, Renaissance palaces, and picturesque squares. Just outside town is the "Portuguese Stonehenge" (the Cromlech of Almendres), a group of stones standing as the most important megalithic group in the Iberian Peninsula.

Óbidos: Enchanting Óbidos is one of Portugal's most beautiful destinations and one of Europe's best-preserved medieval villages or walled towns. In 1951 the castle and the entire village were classified as national monuments and, in 2007, it was voted one of the seven wonders of Portugal. Óbidos has around two thousand people still living in its pretty whitewashed houses with gothic doorways, potted plants and bougainvillea, all inside the crenellated walls of an ancient castle. Many of those people still dedicate their lives to the traditional handicrafts and the famous local drink, Ginja de Óbidos, sold on the only real street in town, Rua Direita.