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Lisbon
—Western Europe's Sunniest And Most
Accessible Capital



staff

Kathleen Peddicord
Founding Publisher

Harry Kalashian
Publisher

Sophia Titley
Editorial Director

Cristian Landero
Editorial Design Director

Natalie Nicole Diaz
Graphic Design Assistant

If you have queries relating to your subscription, get in touch at:
customerservice@overseaslivingletter.com

For editorial comments and contributions, reach us at:
editorial@overseaslivingletter.com

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LISBON

—WESTERN EUROPE'S SUNNIEST AND MOST ACCESSIBLE CAPITAL

By Sophia Titley



Lisbon is tough to pin down...

Four centuries older than Rome and the second-oldest European capital after Athens, it's drenched in historical ambiance and holds its own against any other Continental haven in terms of Old World charm.

Then again, it's a coastal city, found at the point where the River Tagus empties into the Atlantic Ocean, with a swimmable beach only 10 minutes away... Why not describe it as a beach destination?

Where Lisbon stands out most, though, is in its uniquely cosmopolitan attributes...

This is a global city with an important role in finance, commerce, media, entertainment, arts, international trade, tourism, and education.

It boasts incomparable museums, galleries, concerts, and theatre and serves up world-class cuisine. It draws on thousands of years of history to provide gorgeous

architecture that will have you tripping over yourself as you look ever skyward...

Great weather (perhaps the best of all the Western European capitals with 220 sunny days per year) and track record for safety are a just a few other things Lisbon's got going for it.

It's an ideal base for exploring all Europe. Living in Lisbon, you benefit from being within two to three hours flying distance from all the major cities in Europe. Plus, its health care system is world-class... as is its education system.

Lisbon feels easy-going, which isn't a word I'd use to describe other European capitals, like Paris or London. It offers all the same amenities, but it's far cheaper than those other two options.

With an authentic view to the past, unique and interesting cultural amenities, and low crime rates, Lisbon offers a high quality of life to its residents, making it one of the most desirable cities in the world to live in.



Curious About Life In Portugal?

April 20–22, we're hosting our first in-person Portugal event in three years...

If you're not able to make it, don't worry, you don't need to miss out on a single thing...

[Join us online with the Portugal Virtual Pass](#) and get full access to every presentation, as well as the chance to submit your questions and consult with the speakers one-on-one.

Be it for adventure, investment, or living... you'll get a comprehensive, in-depth view of Portugal that outsiders, tourists, and snowbirds simply don't know about.

You'll leave with the knowledge, support, and confidence you need to make important decisions about your future in Portugal.

More on the benefits and the conference we've prepared for you here.

What Makes It Tick?

- Portugal is the third safest country in the world, and Lisbon has some of Europe's lowest crime rates. You feel safe living here, regardless of your age or gender.
- It's one of Western Europe's most affordable capitals, with the average monthly cost of living estimated at 1,048 euros per person.
- It's the second cheapest Western European capital after Brussels in terms of property prices.
- It offers cosmopolitan, Continental charm and entertainment in spades—architecture, fine art, museums, theater, festivals, gastronomy, and so on.
- Warm hospitality combined with English-speaking locals and excellent food make Lisbon one of the most desired European cities to live in.
- The weather is the best in Europe, with 220 sunny days per year in Lisbon.
- Living here, you're two to three hours flight distance from all the major cities in Europe.
- Lisbon is Europe's crypto tax haven, with 0% tax on crypto gains.
- It's an entrepreneur's playground and burgeoning tech hub, with major events like the Web Summit creating a buzz.
- Excellent beaches are just minutes outside of the city. Inside the city, the wide-flowing River Tagus makes you feel like you're on the ocean.
- Lisbon is an easy-going Western European capital. Alfacinhas (people from Lisbon) are laid-back with a more Latin flair for revelry that shows in their love of music and dancing.
- Portugal offers several attractive, turn-key options for residency and citizenship, as well as the Non-Habitual Resident tax program once you've acquired residency. (More about this in Taxes.)
- Health care is excellent, ranked 12th globally by the WHO (Canada is ranked 30th; the United States, 37th). As a resident, the fantastic care comes just about free of charge. Paying out of pocket is affordable, too.
- Public transportation options are many, allowing for a car-free existence.



The portico of Praça do Comércio...



Jerónimos Monastery in the Belém neighborhood, where some of Portugal's most famous historical figures are entombed...



History

If Old World charm is what you're after, look no further than Lisbon. Its history traces back to the Neolithic period when pre-Celtic tribes built megaliths, dolmens, and other stone monuments that still exist today.

Across time, Lisbon has been settled by various groups: the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Suebi, Visigoths, and Moors.

In 205 B.C., back when it was known as "Olissipo," Lisbon was Roman-occupied. Germanic tribes took over with the collapse of the Roman Empire before the Iberian Peninsula fell to the Visigothic Empire in 500 A.D.

In 714, Lisbon was conquered by the Moors (a Berber and Arab group from Northwest Africa). It didn't return to Christian rule until 1147 when it was captured by Christian crusaders under Afonso I.

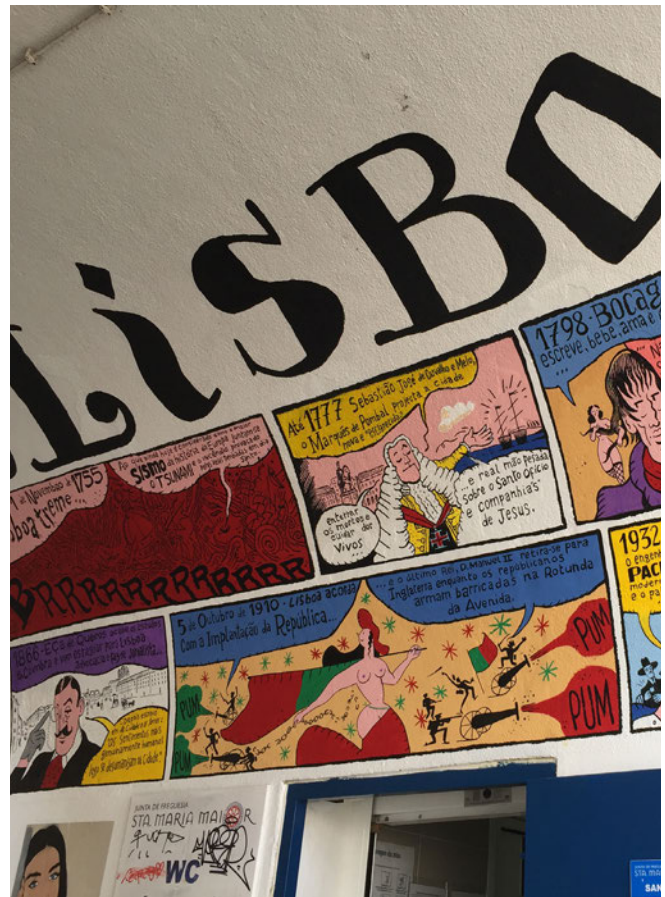
During the time of the Portuguese Empire, Lisbon flourished. It has always offered a strategic geographical position as a port, naturally sheltered and situated at the mouth of the Tagus River.

In 1755, Lisbon was struck by a 7- to 9-magnitude earthquake—one of the most devastating events in the city's history. The earthquake triggered tsunamis and fires, and much of the city had to be rebuilt.

Sebastiao Jose de Carvalho e Melo, First Marquis de Pombal and key advisor to King Joseph I, headed up the rebuilding initiative. It's thanks to his vision that, nowadays, you find some modern contrast within the ruins and colonial-era buildings.

The new Lisbon had its streets enlarged with a geometric design and mosaic walks. All houses were reconstructed to be the same size, with four to five floors, similar facades, and with seismic-resistant structures.

A sewage system was created, and the plaza formerly known as Terreiro do Paço emerged as the improved Praça do Comércio in tribute to the Marquis of Pombal. High-rises only came to Lisbon as recently as the 21st century.



Graffiti depicts the many phases of Lisbon's history...



The grand entrance to Praça do Comércio...

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were chaotic for Lisbon... Napoleon's forces occupied the city from 1807 to 1811, kicking off a period of anarchy across Portugal during the Peninsular War.

In 1910, the Portuguese monarchy was overthrown and the Portuguese Republic was established. The country went through 45 changes of government between 1910 and 1926...

Perhaps the most defining period of its history, though, is the dictatorship it endured from 1926 to 1974. The conservative, corporatist Estado Novo regime, developed by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, suppressed political freedom and civil liberties for decades.

Its eventual downfall and Portugal's return to democracy coincided with Portugal's withdrawal from its African colonies in the mid-70s.

Portugal joined the European Community (precursor to the European Union) in 1986, which brought much-needed funding for its redevelopment.

Urban renewal was carried out in Lisbon through the early 2000s, including improvements to its port infrastructure and metro system and the restoration of historic buildings.

Today, Lisbon breathes history... It's had to reinvent itself multiple times, and evidence of each phase of history it passed through continues to stand, serving as living reminders of the past.

It's perhaps because of this chameleonic ability that you never know what you're going to get in Lisbon, what hidden treasure lies around the next corner.

It's one of the best and most charming things about living here.

Climate And Geography

Lisbon is the capital of Portugal, situated on the west coast of the Iberian Peninsula, the piece of land that connects Western Europe with Northern Africa and acts as the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean.

Lisbon is the only European capital on the Atlantic Ocean. It sits at the mouth of the Tagus River, the longest river in the Iberian Peninsula, which flows from the Montes Universales in central Spain to empty into the Atlantic.

It has a population of about half-a-million people in its administrative limits, while in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, the population is about 3 million—about a quarter of the country's total population.

Portugal is not on the Mediterranean Sea but it enjoys a Mediterranean climate. Winters are mild and rainy, with the daily mean between December and March at 54°F or 12°C. You can expect about 15 days of rain per month during that period. Summers are hot; the daily mean is about 73°F or 23°C.



Getting Here

Lisbon is extremely well-connected through its international airport, Humberto Delgado Airport (also known as Portela Airport). If you're moving here from the States or Canada, you've got the luxury of several direct flights from the cities outlined in the chart below.

Humberto Delgado Airport (LIS)	
Direct Flights From The States	Boston, Chicago, Miami, New York, Newark, San Francisco, Washington D.C.
Direct Flights From Canada	Montreal, Toronto
Other Direct Destinations	Algeria, Angola, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, China, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sao Tome y Principe, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, U.A.E., Ukraine, Venezuela

Getting Around

With a good pair of walking shoes, Lisbon is a fantastic city to explore on foot. It's an incredibly scenic place, with varied elevation, the river, and architectural styles spanning many decades to gawk at.

Living here, you can say goodbye to car insurance, maintenance fees, and concerns about gas prices. You definitely don't need a car in a city like this.



Humberto Delgado Airport



Humberto Delgado Airport

In certain neighborhoods, you may not even need public transportation and can meet all your needs by walking.

That said, Lisbon has got some serious hills... If you've relied on a car to get around for the past few years, it's going to take some time to work up your walking stamina. Luckily, public elevators and escalators are placed in strategic areas to help take the edge off the hills.

Another thing to be aware when it comes to walking in Lisbon: the pavement is often made up of ornate, hand-laid tiles. While beautiful, the tiles are also incredibly slippery and time-warped, making walking difficult for older people.

Public transportation options in Lisbon include the metro, trams, trains, buses, and ferries.

The metro consists of four color-coded lines (blue, yellow, green, and red) that are served by 55 stations between 6:30 a.m. and 1 a.m. This is the fastest and most stress-free way to get across the city.

It's also much cheaper than a taxi—3.50 euros is the starting rate in a cab—and takes a lot less time. A one-way metro ticket is 1.50 euros; a monthly public transport pass is 20 euros for retirees.

If you decide to walk and lose strength as you make your way up one of the steep cobbled streets of Alfama, Bairro Alto, Bica, Baixa Chiado, or Príncipe Real, don't worry. Trams similar to the ones found in San Francisco run across these districts. They've been part of the city since 1901 and are cost-effective (each ticket under 3 euros).

The trams are so unique and charming, some with original 1930s features like wood interiors with brass dials, they've become tourist attractions. Tram 28 is particularly popular; riding it start to finish takes you on a scenic tour of Alfama, Baixa, Estrela, and Graca.

Beware, though, that pickpockets target this route because of its popularity with tourists. (The cramped interiors of the tram make for an easy snag of your cell phone or wallet.)



Can You Handle A Car-Free Existence?

Life without a car can seem unfathomable for North Americans... But in much of the world, it's either unnecessary or downright inefficient to drive a car.

In the Old World especially, cities are compact enough for walking, and they usually have excellent public transportation.

Retirees in the States are suffering because of dependence on cars... Some 70% of Americans over 50 live in suburban or rural areas where public transportation is lacking.

Transportation has become the second biggest expense for Americans over 65 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's right after housing and right before health care in terms of what retirees are spending the most money on.

By moving to a city like Lisbon and giving up a car-dependent mentality, you can cut out your second biggest expense in retirement. That's a big deal...

Aside from the obvious financial benefits of not having your own car, there are also the health benefits of walking more and the global benefits of reducing your carbon footprint.

Greater Lisbon covers the north bank of the Tagus River. Areas of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and Setúbal Peninsula are on the south bank. To cross the river, your options are bridge, train, or ferry...

Two bridges make their way across the Tagus: the 25 de Abril Bridge, with a strikingly similar design to San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge (in fact, it was designed by the same company that made the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge), and the Vasco da Gama Bridge, the longest in Europe at almost 11 miles (17 kms) across.

You can drive or take a bus across the bridges, or you can catch a train from Campolide Station in Lisbon (north bank) to Coima Station in Setúbal (south bank). This takes about 25 minutes.

You can also catch a ferry from Cais do Sodré Ferry Terminal (north bank) to Cacilhas in Almada (south bank). The ferry is about 10 minutes.

Lisbon is well-connected to the rest of Portugal via train. Four train lines depart Lisbon from five major stations (Santa Apolónia, Rossio, Gare do Oriente, Entrecampos, and Cais do Sodré).

Portugal's trains are an efficient, inexpensive, and comfortable way to get around. You get better discounts by booking in advance. For anyone over 65, you can get a 50% discount on full-price domestic train tickets.



A public escalator to take the edge off...



Tram 28 is an unintended tourist attraction...



The 25 de Abril Bridge...



Portugal's train are a comfortable way to travel...

Where's Lisbon Headed?

Major Cruise Ship Destination

I came to Lisbon for the first time in 2013. Returning to the city about a decade later, the first thing I noticed was the massive cruise ships lined up along the River Tagus right in front of the city's historical and cultural center.

The Lisbon Cruise Terminal was inaugurated in November 2017. It features a 4,888-foot (1,490-meter) pier that can accommodate multi-length ships as well as 360 parking spaces for cars, 80 parking spaces for buses, and more.

While I consider the megaships to be eyesores, I recognize the major economic benefit they bring to the city in the hundreds of thousands of tourists they deliver to its doorstep. In 2019, the port received over half-a-million passengers.

Burgeoning Tech Hub

My last trip to Lisbon coincided with the annual Web Summit—Europe's biggest tech conference...

Besppectacted entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts wearing their Web Summit lanyards with pride filled the streets, bars, and cafés around the Cais do Sodre neighborhood where the summit is hosted.

The Web Summit brought more than 42,000 people to Lisbon in 2021. More importantly, though, it accentuates the tech buzz that you feel here...

That buzz is not accidental. It's part of an initiative to attract investment to the city and turn it into the next Berlin—a cool place for talented young people to start businesses.

The more long-term view is to reverse the brain drain that Lisbon and Portugal in general experienced during the economic slump of the past few decades.

In the era of remote work and working from home (or anywhere) plus government initiatives to attract entrepreneurs, the prospects for Lisbon becoming the next Berlin are more promising than ever before.



Cruise ships line up along the Tagus...



Europe's Crypto Tax Haven

Portugal is Europe's crypto tax haven, and Lisbon is its centerpiece.

Portugal views cryptocurrencies as a form of payment rather than property, which is how the United States treats them. Because of this, it does not tax gains made from buying or selling cryptocurrency, nor does it impose VAT on exchanges of cryptocurrencies for fiat money.

Only if you register a company that deals in cryptocurrency in Portugal will you face some taxes.

This crypto-friendly environment plus easy paths to residency have increased Portugal's immigration numbers, up by 40% in the past 10 years.

One potential caveat to Portugal's crypto-friendly reputation is that it has been known to change the rules on investors. It did this recently with the Golden Visa Program for instance...

In January 2022, it changed the rules of eligibility for the program, notably kicking Lisbon off the list of places where investors could buy residential property to qualify.

Lisbon's Expat Community

Portugal has a huge expat community, with about 660,000 foreigners living in the country. About half of this number live in Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

English is the second most spoken language in the country. A big reason for this is Portugal's long relationship with the U.K. and the fact that about 50,000 of the country's total expats are British.

More Americans are moving to Portugal than ever before. In 2021, 102 Americans were approved for Portuguese Golden Visas—the biggest number ever, and that's just one of the ways Americans qualify for residency visas in Portugal.

With conditions in the United States pushing Americans to look outside the borders of their country for a better life, Portugal is becoming an ever-more attractive option...

Those who'd like the Californian lifestyle without the political issues, insane housing prices, crime, non-stop natural disasters, and so on can come to the California of Europe (sometimes even called "Eurifornia").

As an expat to Lisbon, you won't have any trouble meeting other expats. There are endless

opportunities to socialize, and you'll hear English spoken in every bar, cafés, or restaurant.

All sorts of interest-based groups are available if you want to get involved and socialize in a more structured setting. Resources and media specifically for English-speakers are available, too.

Education

Lisbon makes an excellent choice for families with young children. It's full of high-quality schools, including international private schools. There's the American St. Julian's school, the Liceu Francés Charles Lepierre, and the Deutsche Schule Lissabon, among others.

It's also an emerging university city, with a vibrant atmosphere and high-quality universities. Almost all universities offer a wide range of courses taught in English and offer certificates recognized and validated in all countries of the European Union.

LIOS Contributor Marta Vouga studied in Lisbon and says, "As someone who moved to Lisbon to study, I can't say enough good things about my experiences here as a university student. I met people from all over the world with diverse backgrounds and interests. It was the perfect environment in which to broaden my cultural knowledge and expand my horizons."





Still confused about residency overseas? Or simply want to learn more about the benefits of having a second residency? You need our...

PASSPORT TO FREEDOM: THE WORLD'S TOP HAVENS FOR RESIDENCY, CITIZENSHIP, AND A SECOND PASSPORT

This series of reports and audio recordings is your road map to creating your new life in Paradise. Our Passport to Freedom contains five invaluable reports and five instructive audio recordings that will help you on your way to realize your dream life overseas, detailing everything you need to know about establishing residency overseas.



Access For People With Disabilities

A major drawback of ancient, historical cities like Lisbon is that they're not friendly to people with mobility issues. It's difficult to make things accessible retroactively.

Lisbon is hilly and full of narrow passageways with many steps that are paved in cobblestone... The pavement is difficult to navigate for even the nimblest among us.

In newer construction (new museums, train stations, etc.), you'll find better accessibility... but there's a long way to go before the government is able to meet the basic needs of people with disabilities.

Lisbon lags behind other cities in this category.

Lisbon's LGBTQ+ Scene

Rights for the LGBTQ+ community in Portugal are some of the best in the world. Same-sex marriage has been legal in Portugal since 2010. Adoption for same-sex couples has been legal since 2016.

Portugal is a predominately Catholic country, so prejudice attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community exist, but it's highly unlikely that you'd encounter any intolerance in your life here as an LGBTQ+ person.

What you'd likely encounter instead is a vibrant and welcoming LGBTQ+ scene. Spartacus International Gay Guide voted Lisbon the most gay-friendly destination in the world in its 2019 index.

The city's top "gayborhoods" are Chiado, Bairro Alto, and Principe Real, although LGBTQ+ people live sprinkled throughout the city. Beach 19, just south of the city, is famous for being the gay beach.

Is Lisbon Racially Friendly?

Not being a person of color, it's impossible for me to give a comprehensive answer to this question...

What I know is that Lisbon is a multicultural environment and that it frequently ranks top on lists of the most racially friendly places in the world.



The calcada pavement can be difficult to navigate...



I put the question about how racially friendly it is to my colleague on the ground. Granted, he's Portuguese and not of African descent, but he says that there is no systemic racism in Portugal like there is in the States. In his opinion, day-to-day racism isn't an issue in Portugal either.

That said, Brazilian friends of mixed descent have said that they've received ignorant comments from Portuguese people.

My advice is to experience the city yourself, and ideally consult other people of color living in Lisbon, before making a decision to move here...

Cost Of Living

Lisbon is one of Western Europe's most affordable capitals, not only for the expenses of day-to-day living but also for the cost of property. It's not as cheap as it was 10 or 15 years ago, but it still offers incredible value.

CIA Landlord Insurance puts Lisbon second on its list of cheapest Western European capitals to buy property in. (Brussels is first on the list, though its monthly cost of living estimate is higher than Lisbon's.)

It estimates about 230,000 euros is needed to buy a home in Lisbon and that a person can live here on about 1,048 euros a month.

Price per square meter of real estate in Lisbon's city center is about 4,500 euros. On the outskirts of the

city, this drops down to about 2,600 euros per square meter. Renting an apartment costs an average of 860 euros.

It's not just the big-ticket items like real estate and rent that are cheaper in Lisbon, though...

Eating out is super affordable, about 10 to 12 euros for a main course at a Portuguese restaurant. Because of the proximity to the ocean, seafood is a specialty in Lisbon.

Local wine is high-quality and inexpensive. At a restaurant, a glass will cost you about 3 euros. You can get a decent bottle of wine for about the same price or up to 5 euros at a grocery store. Expect to pay about 200 euros per month on groceries as a couple.

Transportation and health care—the second and third biggest expenses for Americans in the United States over 65—are two areas where you'll save a fortune in Lisbon...

In the national health system, you'll pay a small surcharge on doctor's visits (about 4 euros) and tests (about 10 euros). A medical appointment in the private system is still affordable—between 50 and 80 euros.

For transportation, combining walking, a monthly public transportation pass (40 euros), and occasional taxis, you'll pay about 150 euros a month.

[For a full breakdown on the cost of living in Lisbon, go here.](#)



What's There To Do?

Cultural Entertainment

Lisbon's cultural life is rich and busy, boasting incomparable museums, galleries, concerts, and theater. It offers just about any cultural activity you can you can think of...

Theaters show plays almost on a nightly basis. Tickets are between 10 and 20 euros. They're housed in ornate buildings with spectacular exteriors. Some of the most popular are S. Carlos, S. Luís, Villaret, Maria de Matos, D. Maria II, Tivoli, and Armando Cortez.

Live music is also a big deal in Lisbon. Fado is the most traditional form music takes here, dating back to the 1820s. It's characterized by its mournful tones and melancholy lyrics about the sea. You can listen to Fado at casual bars around the Alfama neighborhood.

There's also non-traditional music on offer. Every year Lisbon hosts several summer festivals, like the NOS Alive festival that brings thousands to the city every year. It also hosts Rock in Rio Lisboa, a mega-event featuring legendary artists from around world.

There are festivals dedicated to rock, jazz, world music, and other eclectic genres.

Parks And Miradouros

Miradouros are viewpoints, and they're found all across the city, tucked away among the backstreets in secret corners. They are these charming little terraces bordered by gardens and fountains offering unmatched views over the Atlantic Ocean.



Santa Luzia Church dates to the 12th century...



The Fado Museum in the Alfama neighborhood...



The view from Miradouro Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen...



All locals have a personal favorite, but some of the best include Miradouro de San Pedro de Alcântara, Castelo de San Jorge, Miradouro da Graça, and Portas do Sol.

You'll quickly fall in love with these tranquil little pockets, isolated from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Lisbon also has some spectacular parks, like Parque Eduardo VII (26 hectares, with manicured gardens and walking paths) and Guerro Junqueiro Garden (another city park popular for walking and with kids).

Runners and cyclists will find trails across the city. My favorite is to follow the trail along the Tagus on a sunny day, venturing off-path here and there for a snack or to explore a new neighborhood.

Eating And Drinking

Eating out in Lisbon is super affordable, and the food is always fresh and delicious. Seafood fans will be content here because it's featured in many local dishes. In fact, the Portuguese eat the most fish per capita in Europe (and the fourth most in the world).

In Lisbon, there are nice restaurants with high quality food for decent prices on almost every corner.

Nightlife

Alfacinhas are a raucous bunch, more unpredictable and with a Latin flair for revelry that shows in their love of music and dancing. At about 10:30 p.m., the city comes alive, and people spill onto the streets to enjoy themselves.

The prime neighborhoods for going out are Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré. Bairro Alto is said to have the most bars per square meter in the world... shocking for someone coming from the U.K. where there's a pub on every corner!

The best part about Lisbon's nightlife is that you don't have to worry about safety. You can go out and feel safe pretty much anywhere at any time... another reason it's been historically popular with expats.



Walking along the Tagus River is a favorite pastime...



Coffee is part of life in Portugal.

Across the country, you'll find small *café*s and cozy *pastelarias* that serve up 50-cent espresso.

In Lisbon, some *café*s are housed in these ornate, brightly painted little kiosks that have an interesting history...

They owe their design to Moorish influences but were popular watering holes until the 1900s. They eventually fell out of people's consciousness but are now starting to make a comeback.

Coffee pairs especially well with a *pastel de nata*—a creamy, vanilla custard pastry topped with icing sugar or cinnamon and local delicacy.

Manteigaria serves up some of the best *pastel de nata* I've had in my life, plus you get to watch the experts at work as you wait for your pastry to be served.

The Beach

How many European capitals are surrounded by white sandy beaches with swimmable waters?

In the Lisbon and Tagus' regions, you'll find 54 Blue Flag beaches (a distinction awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education to all beaches that meet excellence in the areas of cleanliness, safety, amenities, and environmental standards).

The Atlantic waters are chilly but offer opportunities to practice water sports like surfing, body boarding, sailing, kite-surfing, wind-surfing, snorkeling, jogging, beach soccer, and even dance classes in the sand.

The Estoril Coast and Guincho beaches play host to national and international surf and body board events. Carcavelos beach is popular for beach soccer. If you're looking for something more relaxed, try the Queen's beach, perfect for families.

Golf

Portugal is a top global golf destination. Most of the attention is focused on the Algarve, but Lisbon has some quality courses in close proximity.

In the capital's zone (and surrounding areas) a few highlights in the international golfing circuit include: Belas, Penha Longa, Quinta da Marinha, Troia, Oitavos Dunes, Aroeira I and Aroeira II, Praia del Rey, and many more...

Language

English is widely spoken in Lisbon. It's the second-most spoken language in Portugal, taught in schools, so almost everyone speaks it, including doctors, lawyers, and real estate agents. You won't have any problems getting by on English alone.

A great English resource for newcomers is *The Portugal News*, the only digital Portuguese newspaper that covers all the major news about Portugal in English. The Portuguese-American Journal (PAJ) is an interactive blog dedicated to



Estoril Coast



Guincho beach



Praia del Rey golf course



A funky bookstore at Lx Factory...

sharing news and giving insight into the Portuguese-American experience.

Livraria Britanica is a great English-language bookshop where you'll find classic novels and popular fiction in English. You'll also find books in English throughout the city in the countless branches of FNAC and Bertrand bookstores.

If you want to pick up some Portuguese in Lisbon, always recommended to enrich your new life overseas, there are a handful of schools where you can learn. Some of the most recommended are Lusa Language School, Portuguese Connection Language School, and Portuguese Et Cetera.

The Property Market

There's no denying that Lisbon's property prices have increased over the past decade or so, but it still offers incredible value for money.

Lisbon is the second most affordable capital in Western Europe, with the price of a home coming to 227,751 euros and the price per square meter of property at about 4,547 euros. This drops down to 2,653 euros on the city's outskirts.

Portugal doesn't impose any restrictions on foreigners looking to purchase real estate. It has a centralized, reliable property registry system, and the law protects property, property rights, and the right to access and use one's own property.

The property purchase process in Portugal goes something like this:

1. You find the property you want to buy and then sign a letter of intent to purchase it in the presence of a local lawyer.
2. Both parties agree to a price, and the lawyer writes the promissory contract (*contrato de promessa de compra e venda*) with the seller. You'll need the Property Registration Certificate (*Certidão de Teor*), the Property Tax document (*Caderneta Predial*), and the License of Use (*Licença de Utilização*) to complete the promissory note.

3. You put down a deposit, usually 10% to 30% of the total purchase price. If you as the purchaser decide not to proceed, you forfeit the deposit. If the seller backs out, he has to pay double the deposit back to the purchaser.
4. Next, you will pay the remaining balance of the purchase price, transfer tax (*imposto de sisa*), and any attorney or notary fees.
5. With everything paid, which usually happens within about four weeks of signing the promissory note, you can complete and sign the deed (*escritura de compra e venda*).
6. The last step is to register the deed at the public land registry and tax office.

LIOS Contributor, Portugal expat and homeowner Marie Moore adds this: "One thing to note, as you're scouting property in Lisbon, is that there's no standard practice when it comes to listing the size of apartments. Some real estate companies will include the balcony, storage area, private parking space, roof terrace, etc. in their total square meterage calculations. You should bring tools to measure the property yourself when you go to view it.

"Also, if you back out of a sale after making an official offer to purchase, you will lose your deposit, unless you specify and have approval for an inspection first. Home inspectors are not common here. You may have to pay a plumber, electrician, and roofer to look at your property before you buy it."

Mortgage loans are not commonly available to foreigners but can be, particularly if you transfer sufficient savings to cover all of or the majority of the loan to their branch. This enables expats to bridge finance two properties until the sale of their property overseas is finalized without diminishing a nest egg.

Renting

Across Portugal, leases are expected, but delays in paperwork are common. It's good practice to rent before you buy anywhere in the world you are considering living... especially true in Lisbon, where each neighborhood has a drastically different personality.

You should shop around and experience different areas at different times of the year (summer and winter, tourist high season and low season, and so on) to figure out which is right for you.

Good rental deals are easy to find. You'll find that some neighborhoods are cheaper than others, but all of them offer homes in good shape and in desirable areas at good prices.

A studio in the city center would rent for about 500 euros regardless of the neighborhood. A one-bedroom in a central area goes up to 1,000 euros. The average overall rent across all neighborhoods is 860 euros per month.

Health Care

Portugal's health care system has some problems with staff shortages, but still, it's one of the top worldwide, ranking 9th best in Europe and 12th in the world. While it used to be completely public, austerity measures forced a huge cut in the health services budget, resulting in part of the system being privatized.

With 34 hospitals and clinics throughout the city, you're never far from care in Lisbon. The top hospital in the country is Lisbon's Centro Hospitalar de Lisboa Central (Hospital Dona Estefania). Instituto Portugues de Oncologia de Lisboa ranks third. Hospital da Luz is the most expat recommended.

Every citizen and legal foreign resident who has registered with their local health center benefits from the national health care system, which guarantees all basic health—accidents and illness—is covered.

The hospital network has modern, well-equipped units, and at least 90% of all doctors are English-speaking. Specialty consultations at a public hospital will cost you about 8 euros and emergencies about 20 euros.

Because of the long wait times in the public system, most expats supplement public care with insurance that allows them to visit private facilities. Locally, you could consider Multicare, Médis, or Liberty Seguros.



A Breakdown Of The Neighborhoods

- **Alfama And Graça.** These are the oldest and most traditional neighborhoods in Lisbon. With their narrow streets and Fado houses, they almost feel like two small villages than neighborhoods of a city.
- **Lapa And Campo De Ourique.** If you want a real community feeling, these two vibrant residential districts are great options. They offer a range of shops, grocery stores, and small markets.
- **Entrecampos And Cidade Universitária.** These areas are best for students, with lots of affordable housing options and public transportation links. Professionals also call these areas home because they are so convenient.
- **Parque Das Nações.** This is one of Lisbon's most sophisticated neighborhoods, standing out for the futuristic architectural style of some of the buildings. Rents are higher here than in most other places. It's one of the greenest areas of the city—good for biking and walking. While not in the city center, it's easily reached on public transport.
- **Chiado And Príncipe Real.** These are some of the liveliest, most sought after neighborhoods in Lisbon. They're at the beating heart of Lisbon's action, the meeting points for artists, poets, and entertainers. Renting is more expensive here by comparison (about 1,000 euros per month for a one-bed apartment).

Most private hospitals and clinics have agreements with these providers.

Health insurance isn't expensive in Portugal depending on the plan you choose. Marta says, "I pay around 22 euros per month, flat rate. All specialty consultations are at least 50% covered by insurance, meaning you pay less than half the total cost of the appointment. For example, an average specialty consultation costs about 80 euros; with insurance you'd pay only 35 euros."

Getting Residency

Visiting As A Tourist

To come to Portugal as a tourist, you don't need a visa as an American or Canadian passport-holder. As a tourist, you can stay for a maximum of 90 days within any 180-day period.

Portugal is party to the Schengen agreement, which eliminates all internal border controls between the 26 participating countries.

To enter one Schengen country is to gain up to 90 days of continuous travel between the member states. This means that, once you are in a Schengen country, you do not show your passport when you cross borders.

It also means that the 90 days you are granted applies to all 26 countries of the area as a whole. If you spend the full 90 days in Portugal, you have to leave the Schengen area entirely after that. You can't cross the border to Spain (another Schengen area country) for an addition 90 days, for instance.

Staying Here Long-Term

To stay for longer than the 90 days, you'll have to apply for a residency visa. Portugal offers several residency visa types, from student visas to investor visas. They're generally easy to qualify for and obtain.

The Passive Income Earner Residence Permit (D7)

The residency visa that most Portugal expats choose is the Passive Income Earner Residence Permit, or D7 visa. As the name suggests, this is an option for people who have income or capital that allows them to support themselves in Portugal.

To qualify for the D7, you have to meet a minimum income requirement. Officially, this is tied to the minimum wage, which is 705 euros per month in 2022.

The immigration officer that processes your application has discretionary power, however, so we recommend you have more than this available for the best chance of being accepted.

About 1,200 euros per month should do it. For a couple, you should be able to show one-and-a-half times this amount. The liquid assets you can use to qualify can be pensions, dividends, royalties, salary (as long as it's not Portugal-sourced), or capital.

Applications for residency must start in your country of residence. If approved, you'll get a residence visa that is valid for 120 days. During this window, you'll need to come to Portugal and apply for a residence permit.

Residence permits are valid for one year and can be renewed for periods of two years. After five years with a residence permit, you can apply for a permanent residence permit.



LIOS' Preferred Portugal Lawyer

When you're ready to start your Portugal residency application, get in touch with Live And Invest Overseas' preferred lawyer [here](#).

One downside of the D7 visa is that it's designed to make you tax-resident in Portugal. It requires you to spend at least 16 months in the country during the first two-year period.

By doing so, you will trigger tax residency. You will have to file taxes in Portugal, though this doesn't necessarily mean that you'll have a huge tax bill. In some cases, you may not owe any tax at all.

The Golden Visa Program

Portugal's Golden Visa Program is a residence by investment program, and it's aimed at non-EU citizens, including Americans and Canadians. It enables investors and their family members to enter and live in Portugal and to freely travel within the whole Schengen area.

It's a great alternative to the D7 visa option because it does not require you to become tax resident in Portugal in order to qualify. You only have to spend 7 days in Portugal in the first year and a total of 14 days in each of the subsequent two-year periods to maintain your status.

That said, it's expensive, and the rules of the program recently changed and made it less desirable to investors. There are several ways to qualify, from making large bank transfers to Portugal to investing in artistic or cultural activities...

Most people opt to invest in real estate to qualify for a Golden Visa. These are the rules in 2022:

1. Acquisition of real estate worth at least 500,000 euros;
2. Acquisition of real estate worth at least 400,000 euros in a low-density or low-income area;
3. The acquisition of real estate for a minimum purchase price of 350,000 euros (if the property is at least 30 years old or is located within an urban regeneration area and the buyer renovates it);
4. The acquisition of real estate for a minimum purchase price of 280,000 euros (if the requirements in #3 are met, and the property is located in an eligible zone).

Not all properties qualify for a Golden Visa-eligible investment. Eligibility is restricted to certain inland districts of Portugal and the Azores and Madeira Autonomous Regions.

A Lisbon property purchase will no longer qualify you for a Golden Visa unfortunately.

Taxes

Tax Residency

You become tax resident in Portugal if you spend more than 183 days in country in any 12-month period (it doesn't matter if these days are consecutive or not), and/or if you maintain a residence in Portugal at any point in the same time period.

Basic Tax Rates

For tax residents of Portugal, the follow tax rates apply...

Personal income tax	14.5% to 48%
VAT	23%
Capital gains tax	28%
Net wealth/worth tax	0%
Inheritance tax	10%
Property tax	0.8% (rural), 0.3% to 0.5% (urban)
Rental income	28%
Stamo duty	0.8%

Tax Credits And Incentives

Non-Habitual Residents (NHR) Tax Regime

If you haven't been tax resident in Portugal for the previous five years, you can apply for NHR status. This allows you to receive income at reduced tax rates.

For employment and self-employment income, the tax rate is a flat 20%. For pension income, it's a flat

10%. Some foreign-sourced income is exempt under the NHR program. NHR status lasts for 10 years.

Double Taxation Treaties

Portugal has double taxation treaties in place with Canada and the United States, so you're at no risk of being taxed twice here.

Ease Of Doing Business

Opening A Bank Account

Having a local bank account is a good idea if you plan on living in Lisbon long-term. It will save you time and money on daily transactions and help with paying local bills.

To open a bank account, you'll most likely need to visit in person and bring your ID, proof of address, Portuguese insurance number, and in some cases, proof of residency with you.

On opening her first bank account in Portugal, Marie says, "It took three hours for me to open my bank account, but I obtained a current account and debit card, a savings account with automatic monthly deposits, a credit card with automatic monthly payments taken from the current account, and approved automatic billing for utilities... a package that makes life much simpler."

There are also mobile bank accounts in Portugal that are easy to open and use. Some of the most popular ones are N26, bunq, and Revolut.

Paying Bills

Bills are paid on a monthly basis in Portugal. The easiest way to pay bills is through automatic direct debit. You can work this into your contract when you sign up for a cell phone, internet, or TV provider.

Internet

Three main internet providers serve Lisbon: NOS, MEO, and Vodafone. Which provider you end up with depends on which area you settle in as they serve different areas.

Across the city, there's good fiber connection, so internet access and speed should not be a problem.

If you get stuck with slow internet, you can always visit one of the many co-working spaces set up across the city. They are popular and well-used by digital nomad types.

Internet is also available in many cafés... however, you'll see signs that say "no laptops please" in certain ones. It's best to go to a co-working space or Starbucks to do your online work.

Downsides To Lisbon

Government bureaucracy is an issue regardless of where you settle in Portugal. It can make simple things like applying for a library card time-consuming and frustrating.

Nothing irresolvable if you have a bit of patience and a lot of persistence.

Lisbon is not a mobility-friendly place... it's hilly and has ancient, hand-laid tiles for pavement that have become slippery with the passage of time. Also, older buildings may not be equipped with elevators, meaning strain on the knees if you live a couple of floors up.

The city underwent rapid urbanization in the 90s, and the environment bore the brunt of those changes. Natural resource use, pollution, and restructuring of land use strained the environment... Today, like most big cities, Lisbon suffers from some issues of air and water pollution.

The situation has been improving over the past 30 years but there are still not appropriate facilities to eliminate urban, industrial, and hospital waste. Initiatives have been underway since 2005 to protect and enhance green spaces, revitalize abandoned buildings, address water pollution, reduce overall pollution, and manage natural resources more responsibly.

Environmental infrastructure has expanded, but more development is needed for the country to balance economic development and sustainability.

Could Lisbon Be For You?

Most expats considering Portugal are only thinking about the Algarve... It's beautiful and enticing to be sure, but it doesn't offer anything close to a cosmopolitan existence.

Lisbon is exciting. It's one of the most historical cities in the world, with excellent cuisine, top-notch cultural amenities, and a vibrant, up-and-coming entrepreneurial atmosphere.

It's a Continental capital, but it's laid-back, with none of the uptightness of London or Paris. Locals are friendly, and it's a safe environment. It's also got great health care and transportation infrastructure, all at affordable prices.

But despite the conveniences and amenities, the clincher in any decision to move to a new place is often the simple, day-to-day stuff...

In Lisbon, it's the opportunity to live in a village atmosphere despite being in a major city, because the neighborhood is that ancient and well-established...

It's the chance to take a moment and enjoy a coffee on the terrace of your favorite kiosk... or sit in the sun and watch the meandering River Tagus from a secret *miradouro*.

It's the possibility of discovering something new, even surprising, every time you walk out your front door...

If those simple charms sound appealing to you, Lisbon should be at the top of your list. 🇵🇹



About The Author

For Sophia Titley, home is a subjective concept. She was born in Singapore but grew up in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia... and has since lived in Canada, Spain, Colombia, and, most recently, Panama. She studied political science and Spanish at the University of British Columbia, and in her free time enjoys trying new recipes, playing soccer, and salsa dancing.

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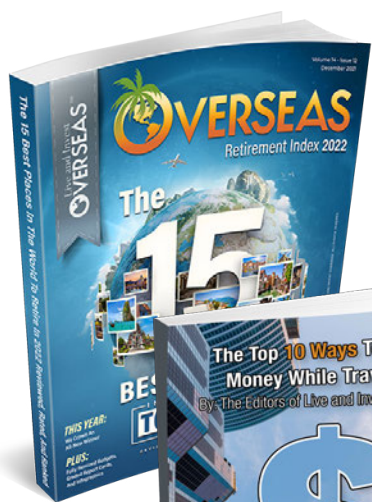
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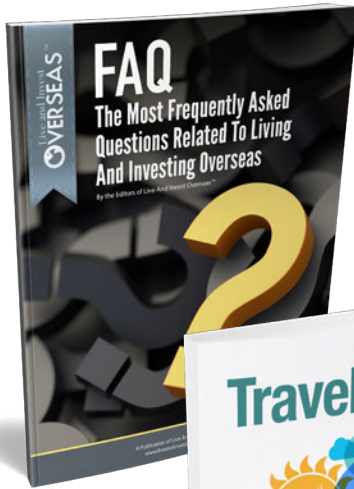


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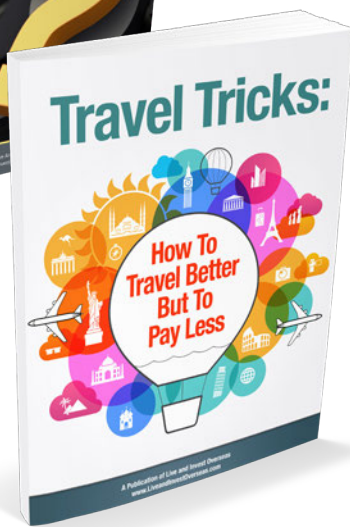


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