



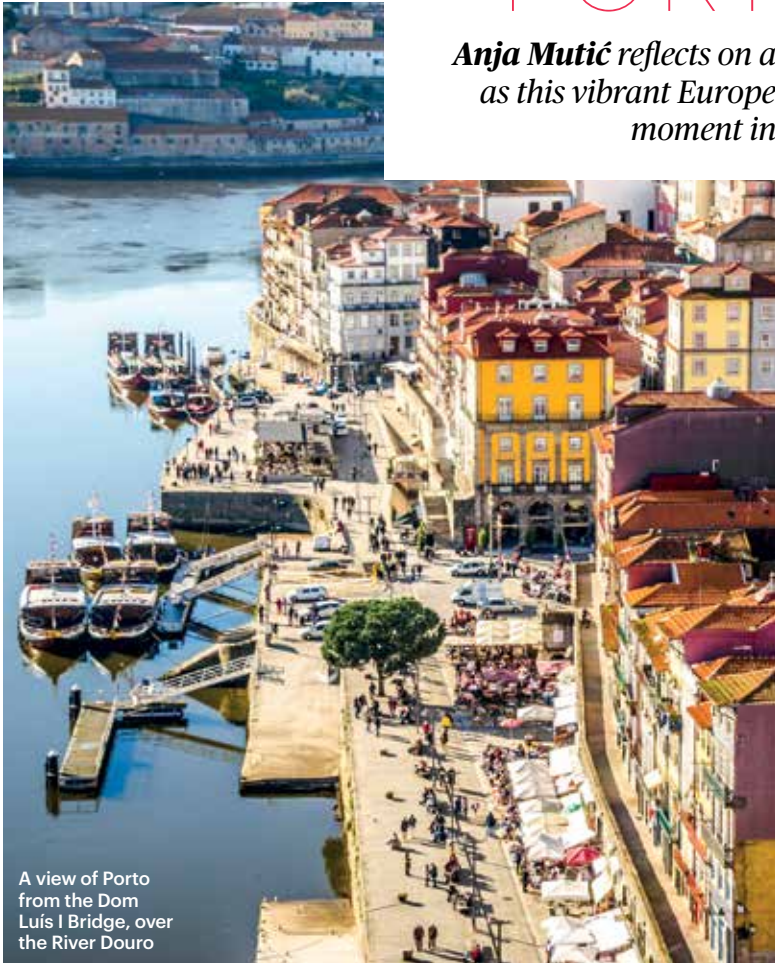
Portugal is famed for its sinfully delicious traditional custard tarts



Lisbon's trams trundle along the capital's sun-dappled streets

DESTINATION PORTUGAL

Anja Mutić reflects on a journey through Portugal as this vibrant European destination savors its moment in the spotlight



A view of Porto from the Dom Luís I Bridge, over the River Douro



Coastal retreat Cascais has a rich cultural tapestry to explore



The sun slowly drops in Lisbon as I walk by the Tagus river from the grand Terreiro do Paço square toward the Cais do Sodré district. Along the Ribeira das Naus promenade, lovers huddle on terraced limestone steps of this city “beach,” sipping cold Super Bock beer by the kiosk. Children and joggers run loose on the broad former boatyard converted into a lovely stretch of riverside.



It is a mark of how much this city has transformed that when I first visited Lisbon back in 2003, this particular sweep edging the Tagus had little of this waterside loveliness. Instead, one would head straight to perennial favorites such as the historic oceanfront district of Belém. Here, you climb to the top of Torre de Belém, a 16th-century riverside tower built during the Age of Discovery, or sample the sinfully delicious custard tarts, *pasteis de Belém*, at Antiga Confeitaria de Belém, their recipe dating back more than 180 years.

Despite the ever-present saudade, Portugal’s prevailing sentiment of longing for times past, which you can hear in the melancholic melodies of fado music, the country is back in the ascendant. Only this time it is for reasons different than its famed ancient explorers discovering new faraway shores. Roles have recently switched, in fact, and now travelers are discovering Portugal as a prime place to soak up the soulful vibe, richly layered culture and traditions, wild landscapes, stellar gastronomy, and top wines.

Though Portugal’s sun-dappled capital has traditionally looked out to sea ever since the golden era of discovery and exploration, the ties between its ancient quarters – spread on seven storied hills – with the industrialized riverfront of docks, wharves, and warehouses had been severed by decades of neglect. That has changed, especially since 2013, first with the unveiling of the revamped Terreiro do Paço square, then the shiny new Ribeira das Naus.

The most dazzling waterside delight is the Museum for Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT), recently opened in a contemporary building designed by the British Architect

Amanda Leveté. I visit on a hot July afternoon, and though the sun is beating down, I can’t get enough of the waterfront’s beauty. I walk up to the gorgeous sloping roof that doubles as a park, taking in the river that flows out toward the ocean.

The building’s outer layer, comprised of 15,000 glazed tiles, a shout-out to Portugal’s heritage of ceramics, sparkles in the sun. Inside, the 75,000-sq-ft exhibition spaces, including the main oval-shaped gallery with video installations, showcase rotating exhibits by local and international artists. Before leaving, I pop into Lisbon’s counterpart to London’s Tate Modern, a former electrical power plant next door to MAAT that has been turned

into an exhibition space, its giant turbines and pipes forming a perfect backdrop for art.

As an emerging capital of cool in Europe, Lisbon booms with movement and action – new openings all over the city, once-forgotten hillside neighborhoods getting a new lease on life – but it’s this riverside revival that’s by far the most exciting. Food

Lisbon booms with movement and action – new openings all over the city



Clockwise from far left: Lisbon’s contemporary Museum for Art, Architecture and Technology; the city comes alive before the Rua Augusta Arch; the colorful ancient quarter of Alfama, Lisbon’s oldest district; the picturesque beauty of Cascais

pea salad with braised tuna and codfish *pataniscas* (batter-fried balls of cod), closing my meal with honey and olive oil pudding as the final treat.

Cascais and Atlantic coast

While Lisbon’s riverside revival is a joy to witness, the ocean calls – and it’s so close. In less than an hour – the train from Cais do Sodré railway station takes 40 minutes; by car, at a time of day when the roads are clear, you can get there in half an hour – I find myself on the golden sands of Cascais. Upscale and grand, this chic town is where Portuguese royals flocked to for seaside fun on its fabulous beaches in the 19th century. According to local lore, it all started when King Luís I went to Cascais for a swim in 1870. Today, the town’s palatial architecture, winding streets of pastel-colored houses, and verdant gardens blend charmingly with a fishing-village vibe. On its southern edge below the 15th-century citadel, the exclusive Cascais Marina provides a harbor for sleek yachts to moor, and a scenic spot for a waterfront wander.

To take in the Atlantic’s mighty power, I walk along the shores of Cascais, watching the waves crash against the cliffs. To blend in ➔

has followed suit to the riverfront as well. On one of my first visits to the city, I visited the old Mercado da Ribeira. Though filled with ambiance and whiffs of times past, it was clear the food market struggled to sustain an incoming flow of business. Then it shut down and reopened in 2014 as Time Out Market, a buzzy food hall with more than 40 stalls headed up by Portugal’s top chefs. Today, there’s no place like it to get the lowdown of iconic Portuguese bites. You can chow down on breaded soft-shelled crabs at Marisqueira Azul, grilled chicken by celebrity Chef Miguel Laffan, and passion-fruit ice cream by Santini (that Lisboetas swear is the most delicious).

On the waterfront right below the ancient quarter of Alfama, the recently unveiled Cantina Zé Avillez serves up home-style Portuguese cooking by celebrity Chef José Avillez. He started with high-end Belcanto, now graced by two Michelin stars, and continued his culinary adventures with a series of restaurant openings over the past few years. Feeling the soft breeze off the Tagus, I sit in the bright contemporary canteen clad in colorful tiles made of Estremoz marble, and savor black-eyed

4CORNERS/GETTY





Left to right: Cascais boasts a dramatic coastline; the crumbling charm of Porto reflected in the River Douro; Porto is Portugal's cultural capital, featuring colorful rooftops and peeling façades; sample traditional codfish *pataniscas*; one of Porto's many wine cellars



SIVAN ASKAYO



with locals on a weekend visit, I hop on a bicycle for a short ride to Boca do Inferno (Hell's Mouth), a cave chiseled out by the ocean's pounding. For a close-up look, you can take a pathway down the cliff and hear the mesmerizing sounds of the Atlantic. While here, don't skip a tradition – a glass of *vinho verde* and grilled catch of the day at Mar do Inferno, a family-run tavern and a local favorite. If you want action that goes beyond dipping your toes in the sand and cycling along the shoreline, rent a surfboard and head to a beach (*praia*), just like the surfers who make their pilgrimage to Guincho, one of the most gorgeous beaches on the Lisbon coast.

Cascais also has a surprisingly rich cultural tapestry to explore. In the Cascais Museum Quarter, peek inside the eclectic collection of Condes de Castro Guimarães Museum and wander around its magnificent gardens. Check out what's on at the bright pink Centro Cultural de Cascais, housed in a former convent, or get the low-down on lighthouse technology at the Lighthouse Museum inside the Santa Marta Lighthouse.

Art and history aficionados are in for a treat at Cidadela de Cascais, the ancient fortress area that overlooks the Marina and the Atlantic. The citadel has been guarding the Lisbon coast and the Tagus river estuary since 1490, when King John II had the Santo Antonio Tower built as a defense from seaward attacks. Demolished by earthquakes, rebuilt, and added on to for centuries, the complex was the royal family's summer palace in the 19th century. Today, the citadel houses the luxurious Pestana Cidadela Cascais, Pousada & Art District, and is a lovely area to wander around browsing the many studios, galleries, and museums tucked away in different areas of the historic fort.

With the cultural attractions explored and nature diversions done, nothing compares to ordering a cold drink on a steamy day and chowing down on garlic *amêijoas* (clams) at one of the restaurants along the seafront. Grab a table on the terrace of Monte Mar restaurant in Guincho and order the hake fillets with cockle rice to savor on the edge of the ocean – a Cascais classic.

Porto

Porto in the north (reached by fast train from Lisbon in just over two and a half hours) is Portugal's second-largest city. Its crumbling charm gives it a poignant beauty. Over countless visits, it never fails to captivate me. Famous for the eponymous sweet wine produced here, Porto rises up from the north bank of the Douro river in a tangled streetscape of colorful rooftops and peeling façades. The cultural capital of the north is just right for a couple of days.

PORT TASTING IN PORTO

Cross the river for an afternoon of wine tasting in **Vila Nova de Gaia**, a quick ride by river taxi. Famous for the eponymous sweet fortified wine that's produced here, this city on the south shore of the river is home to numerous wine lodges, most of which offer informative tasting tours of their facilities. The choice can be overwhelming, so visit at least two to learn how port is made and aged, and the important role it has played in the history of Porto.

- **Graham's** (grahams-port.com) Sip on a single harvest aged tawny, while marveling at the impressive vistas from Graham's tasting room.
- **Taylor's** (taylor.pt) Tour the museum circuit on an audio-guided visit, learning the story of port and the cellar.
- **Ferreira Cellars** (eng.sograpevinhos.com/visitas/cave/6) Learn about one of the Douro's most iconic figures, Dona Antónia Adelaide Ferreira, and visit the 19th-century tasting room.



4CORNERS/GETTY

A compact city with most attractions within walking distance, it's easy to lose yourself in Porto's labyrinthian passageways. As a scenic introduction to Porto, visit Torre dos Clérigos, a Baroque tower designed by the Italian architect Nicolau Nasoni in 1754, with splendid Rococo carvings in the interior and – as the main reward after climbing 225 steps – outstanding panoramic vistas from the belfry. A stroll to the east takes you to the São Bento train station on Praça Almeida Garrett, a stately turn-of-the-century building worth a quick peek for its striking entrance hall, featuring 20,000 historically themed *azulejos*, Portugal's ubiquitous decorative tiles.

For a fix of art, check out Fundação de Serralves, Porto's cultural powerhouse that showcases changing exhibits of contemporary Portuguese artists. Dotted with sculptures, fountains, and art installations, a 44-acre garden surrounds the spectacular building designed by Porto's architect Álvaro Siza Vieira.

On a recent afternoon, as I strolled along the cobblestoned Ribeira waterfront filled with photo-snapping posers, I recalled why Porto won my heart in the first place. Tourists were few and far between and you could soak up the wistful ambiance of this UNESCO-protected riverfront quarter. Flat-bottomed boats lloled on the Douro, old ladies clad in black chatted from laundry-laden balconies, and the feeling prevailed that you could indeed get lost in this time-worn warren of alleyways.

While the city has been synonymous with port for hundreds of years (see box, left), Porto's restaurant boom is a more recent phenomenon. Seafood is wonderfully fresh and delectable, with dried codfish (*bacalhau*) and sardines featuring on all the menus. The Portuguese are big meat eaters, too – try the traditional *tripa à moda do Porto*, tripe stew with sausage, chicken, and beans. For a globally inspired take on Portuguese fare, book a table at Mini Bar by José Avillez, the chef's second opening in Porto after the cozy Cantinho do Avillez. It features DJ-spun music on weekends and small bites made for sharing – think Algarve prawns in ceviche, tempura avocado with dehydrated kimchi, and Thai-flavored pan-seared scallops.

Soak up the wistful ambiance of Porto's Ribeira waterfront, a quiet UNESCO-protected riverfront quarter

Portugal has taken the best from its past, blended it with what's edgy and new, and crafted a heady mix that pleases the palate – and the soul.

Where to stay



The One Palacio de Anunciada, Lisbon

Located in the exclusive Baixa neighborhood, this gorgeous newcomer is housed in a former 16th-century palace. The original architecture has been beautifully preserved and fused with a sophisticated interior design. The hotel features elegant amenities and within the grounds guests can enjoy the exclusive outdoor pool and 26,909 sq ft of gardens.



Altis Avenida Hotel, Lisbon

With a central location close to Lisbon's Rossio and Restauradores Squares, this boutique hotel is inspired by the glamour of the Portuguese 1940s. Its rooms are urban-chic, while the cozy Lobby Bar is a popular destination. For panoramic views of Lisbon's historic center, head up to the rooftop Rossio Restaurant for elegant dining on a fabulous terrace.



Pestana Vintage Porto, Hotel & World Heritage Site, Porto

Comprising several charming 16th-century buildings, this picture-perfect hotel has a prime position overlooking the Dom Luís I Bridge, and is a great base for your explorations of Porto. Take in the stunning river views from the comfort of your room, sample the restaurants in adjacent Ribeira Square, or taste sweet Port wine at a world-renowned cellar.



Pestana Cidadela Cascais, Pousada & Art District, Cascais

With stunning views of Cascais Bay, this hotel is located within a 15th-century citadel. The first hotel in Europe to have an integrated Art District, the property offers guests the chance to meet resident artists at work throughout the complex. This memorable coastal retreat also features contemporary décor, elegant indoor and outdoor pools, and sophisticated dining options.

➔ For information and reservations, please visit PreferredHotels.com