

48 HOURS

LISBON

The Portuguese capital is ideal for a laid-back city break, finds Ella Buchan

With its custard-yellow trams, steep hills and a suspension bridge resembling the Golden Gate, Lisbon has echoes of San Francisco, while its tiny tapas spots and bars in centuries-old walls are reminiscent of Madrid's old town.

But just as its famous pastéis de nata aren't quite the same as English egg custards, Lisbon has its own unique taste. The Portuguese capital is chilled out and charming, with soaring towers, castle ramparts and chequered squares, all meandering up from the broad Tagus River.

It's also refreshingly cheap: a beer is about £1.20, while a bottle of decent wine in a restaurant will set you back around £7.

With TAP recently adding New York to the US cities served by its Lisbon hub, the city is becoming even more popular as an extended stopover for those hopping across the Atlantic. It also opens up destinations in South America, including Rio, served by the airline, which flies to Lisbon from Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester up to nine times each day.

This spring also saw the opening of one of the city's chicest hotels. AlmaLusa occupies a prime spot where Lisbon's royal palace once stood, occupying an 18th-century building that stored weapons and cannons.

Most of the city's highlights can be reached on foot, so recommend clients pack comfy shoes – and a big appetite.

▶ DAY ONE

10.00: Pick up wheels from bikeiberia on Largo Corpo Santo, right by the Tagus (£8.50 for a four-hour rental). Pedal west along five miles of waterfront bike paths to pale grey Belem Tower (entry £5), built as a fortress to guard Lisbon's harbour in 1515. En route you'll pass a pretty marina and the 25 de Abril bridge, a dead ringer for San Francisco's Golden Gate. bikeiberia.com

11.30: Retrace your tracks to Discoveries Monument for views over Belem (£3.35). Use the underpass to reach Rua de Belem, where Pastéis de Belem has been making pastéis de nata to a secret ancient recipe since 1837. The flaky tarts (85p), are filled with gooey custard. pasteisdebelem.pt

12.30: Pedal two minutes west to Jerónimos Monastery, [→](#)

→ with its honey-coloured stone cloisters, tree-like columns and gargoyles (entry £8.40). Harder to spot, the Berardo Collection Museum is tucked behind the Belem Cultural Centre, on your right when heading to the underpass. This private collection is free to enter and boasts works by Andy Warhol and Francis Bacon.

en.museuberardo.pt

14.30: Return your bike and walk 15 minutes north up Rua do Alecrim to hit Principe Real. Chefs at tiny A Cevicheria (129 Rua Dom Pedro V) prepare ceviche and seafood dishes behind the bar, under the tentacles of the giant octopus suspended from the ceiling. Feast on gazpacho with scallops, roasted octopus and confit codfish, with mains around £10.

15.30: Walk five minutes north to Embaixada (26 Principe Real), a hip shopping emporium housed in a lavish art nouveau building. After browsing ceramics, jewellery and toys, courtyard bar Gin Lovers serves an encyclopedic selection of spirits in head-sized goblets (from £4).

ginlovers.org

17.00: Walk five minutes to Sao Pedro de Alcantara for the Gloria Funicular, (£4.20 return), in service since 1885. The trams creak down to Restauradores Square in the city centre.

17.30: A 10-minute walk south brings you to the blue swinging doors of A Vida Portuguesa on Rua Anchieta. Inside is an old perfume warehouse selling hand-bound notebooks,

sardines and exquisitely scented soaps.

avidaportuguesa.com

19.00: Enjoy an aperitif at teensy bar-cum-shop Wine Up (49 Rua do Alecrim). There are no menus - the friendly owners suggest wines, from £3 a glass, according to your mood.

20.00: In Praça do Município, the AlmaLusa hotel's restaurant Delfina is the spot for traditional Portuguese fare with a tasty twist. Seasonal ingredients go into dishes such as bacalhau meia cura - crisp-skinned salted cod with puréed chickpeas and quail eggs (£14.50).

21.30: Walk 10 minutes back to Rua do Alecrim and turn right at Rua do Arsenal for a nightcap at Pensão Do



10.00: The 25 de Abril Bridge



11.30: Pastéis de Belem



14.30: Seafood lunch



12.30: Jerónimos Monastery



15.30: Gin Lovers



SAVE

Sintra Boutique Hotel

Pretty Sintra, a one-hour train ride from Lisbon, is a great add-on to a city break. This cute and comfy hotel sits on a hillside overlooking the historic old town, and some rooms have views of the 11th-century Moorish Palacio Nacional de Sintra Museum, just a few steps away. The neutral decor is lifted with tasteful touches of burnished gold, while knowledgeable reception staff go out of their way to help you plan your stay. Doubles from £100 a night.

sintraboutiquehotel.com



SPEND

Hotel Lisboa Plaza

A short walk from Avenida de Liberdade – the city’s main boulevard dotted with kiosks serving giant G&Ts and Korean food – this grand art nouveau building oozes old-world charm. Many rooms overlook the University of Lisbon Botanical Gardens, a fantastical mix of old buildings, blooms and street art. The U-shaped terrace, perched above the city’s rooftops, is a lovely place to chill out with a coffee or bottle of local vino. Doubles from £110 a night.

lisbonplazahotel.com

SPLURGE

AlmaLusa

Located in the city’s former arsenal in historic Praça do Município, this has fast become the hottest hotel in town since opening this March. The 28 rooms are a masterclass in understated luxury, with peaceful muted brown and grey tones and 100% percale cotton sheets. Original details include mosaic floor tiles that survived the 1755 earthquake and mirrors belonging to a barber shop that once operated here.

Doubles from £125 a night.

almalusahotels.com/baixachiado



13.00: Time Out Mercado da Ribeira

→ Amor. This former brothel was velvet chairs, chandeliers and risqué frescoes.

DAY TWO

09.00: Rise early to board the number 28 tram at Praça do Martim Moniz, beating the crowds. Buy a day pass for £5 from any metro station. The 1930s vehicles loop through historic Baixa, past the Se Cathedral in Alfama, the theatre district Chiado and up the steep hill to St George’s Castle.

10.00: Alight at the 11th-century castle (entry £7), to wander around archaeological ruins from the first known settlements. Stroll around gardens thick with cork oak, umbrella pine and olive trees, and the remains of the medieval royal residence.

castelodesaojorge.pt

12.00: Ride the tram to Praça do Comércio, built after the devastating earthquake of 1755. Surrounded by grand ochre facades, an equestrian sculpture of King José I gazes towards the river. Board the lift to the wide terrace of neoclassical Rua Augusta Arch (£2.50), symbolising the resilient spirit of the city.

13.00: A 10-minute stroll west along Avenida Ribeira das Naus takes you to Time Out Mercado da Ribeira. This 13th-century fish market is now filled with bars, souvenir shops, food counters

and long wooden tables. Grab lunch from top chefs like Marlene Vieira, with a seafood tasting plate for £10, and sip wild cherry liqueur for £1 at Casa da Ginja.

timeout.com/market

15.00: Back in the square, the Lisboa Story Centre offers a fascinating, interactive journey through the city’s history, with a focus on the 1755 earthquake.

lisboastorycentre.pt

18.00: After freshening up at your hotel, head to Miradouro Sao Pedro de Alcantara, on the edge of Principe Real. Locals bring wine and nibbles to watch the sunset drench the city sprawl below. A map made of tiles serves as a guide to the view, while the park is dotted with sculptures of Greco-Roman heroes and gods.

19.30: Continue five minutes northwest to Pizzeria Zero Zero (32 Rua da Escola Politecnica), named after the strong flour used in the dough. Pizzas from primavera to tuna (from £8), are baked in a central stone oven.

pizzeriazerozero.pt

22.00: Head southeast and turn left on to Calçada da Patriarcal, then take another left on to Rua da Alegria to reach Hot Club of Portugal (48 Praça de Alegria). This tiny cellar bar is one of Europe’s oldest jazz clubs. Take a breather in the back garden.

hcp.pt