

# Portugal on repeat

Fall in love with Portugal all over again by selling a second-time visit, says Laura French

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If the sprawling golf resorts and gold-sand beaches of the Algarve are the first thing you picture when you think of Portugal, then you're probably not alone.

But with wine routes, hiking trails, adventure sports, epicurean delights and cultural treasures spread across its scenic landscapes, this diverse country conceals a horde of riches that

one visit doesn't quite do justice.

And from the volcanic calderas of the Azores to the secluded coastal villages of Alentejo, there's plenty to explore for repeat visitors wanting to get off the beaten track and delve a little deeper.

#### ► BEACHES

So they've been to: The Algarve  
How about: Alentejo

Sell it: With its cocktail of coastline, nightlife, culture and adventure, it doesn't take a genius to see why the Algarve has become so popular over the last six decades. But those who only ever target here are missing a trick; just north lies the Alentejo, a sprawling region where heritage and gastronomy meet head-on with serene beaches and scenic







**LEFT:**  
Rota  
Vicentina  
trail,  
Alentejo

**RIGHT:**  
Madeira  
Wine  
Festival



PICTURES: DISCOVERING MADEIRA/AVELAR; JETZ.COM

→ landscapes – and it’s all happily untouched.

“The coastal region here, the Costa Azul, is still relatively deserted, much like the Algarve was 40 years ago,” says Rosanna Melaragni, country manager for Sunvil. “Beaches are blessed with golden sand, and in the height of the summer season it’s still possible to find a secluded spot.”

A handful of picturesque fishing villages scatter the coast; among the biggest is Vila Nova de Milfontes, a hotspot for Portuguese holidaymakers thanks to its olde worlde, whitewashed streets, 16th-century castle and smattering of sandy beaches lining the banks of the Rio Mira.

Elsewhere there’s Zambujeira do Mar, a quieter alternative where backpackers and surfers flock; and Porto Covo, a small fishing village home to dramatic beaches overlooked by towering cliffs. **Book it:** Sunvil offers a seven-night Rota Vicentina self-guided



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walking holiday along the coastline with time for dolphin-spotting, boat excursions and birdwatching, from £707 based on two sharing. The price includes flights from Gatwick, B&B accommodation and car hire, based on an October departure. **sunvil.co.uk**

### ▶ CITY BREAK

**So they’ve been to:** Lisbon

**How about:** Porto

**Sell it:** The food and culture scene peeping out from Lisbon’s cobbled, hilly streets have put

this historic city in the limelight for all the right reasons, but if clients have already been there and done that, it’s time to suggest Porto.

Vineyards surrounding the region and a swathe of Michelin-starred chefs mean it won’t let Lisbon lovers down on the food front, while medieval alleyways, brightly coloured street art and a buzzing nightlife scene will give culture seekers something to rave about too.

As in Lisbon, there are lookouts throughout the city – each offering postcard-worthy views over the surrounding landscapes and elegant beaux arts architecture – alongside a lively contemporary arts scene and a string of picturesque coastal walks and gardens.

To get a taste for its diverse architecture, suggest visitors check out the neoclassical Pálacio da Bolsa, complete with a gold-gilt, Moorish-designed

ballroom, Porto Cathedral and the ultra-modern Casa de Música concert hall.

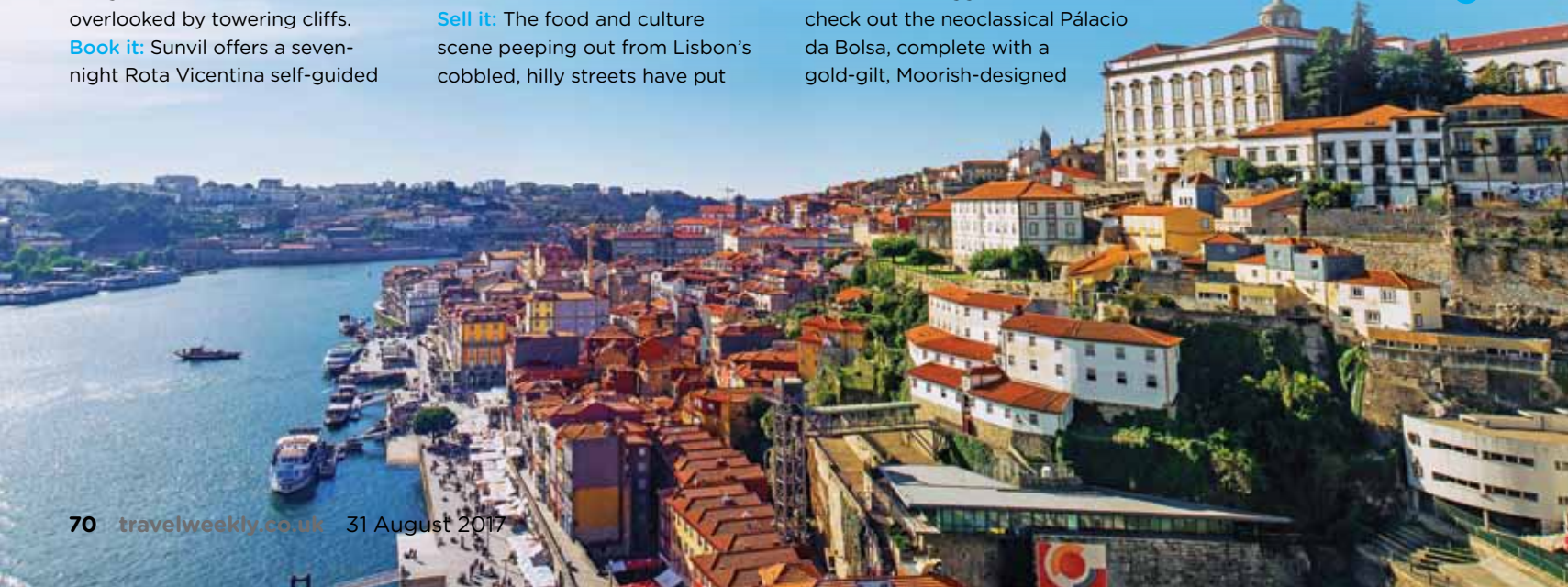
**Book it:** Simply Luxury by Travel 2 offers three nights at the five-star Pestana Vintage Porto, in the Unesco-listed Ribeira district, in a double classic room with breakfast from £549, including UK lounge passes and private transfers, valid for travel on May 15, 2018, from Gatwick. **travel2.com**

### ▶ WINE AND FOOD

**So they’ve been to:** The Douro Valley

**How about:** Madeira

**Sell it:** When it comes to food and wine Portugal isn’t short on options, with vineyards rolling into one another in the Douro Valley and beyond. But for something a little different,





→ a subtropical climate, high altitude, rich volcanic soil and method of repeatedly heating the wine combine to create a unique flavour and texture – think roasted nuts and caramel.

“The wine embodies the history of the island and every visit must include a tour of a local vineyard to taste the four types, which vary from dry to sweet,” says Joana Dias, trade representative for the UK and Ireland at the Madeira Promotion Bureau.

Vineyards, sandwiched between exotic banana trees and passion fruit vines, cover 10 square miles of the island, and between mid-August and October visitors can experience the elaborate harvesting ritual.

Recommend they head to Funchal to pair it with world-class cuisine – think Michelin-starred restaurants, fresh fish and local specialities such as bolo do caco, a flat, round bread served hot with garlic butter.

**Book it:** Jet2holidays offers a week’s B&B at the three-star Hotel Orca Praia in Funchal, Madeira, from £259 based on two

adults sharing, departing from Birmingham on November 13 with return transfers.

**trade.jet2holidays.com**

## ▶ VILLAGES

**So they’ve been to:** Costa Verde

**How about:** The Silver Coast

**Sell it:** Set around Lisbon, the historic Silver Coast lays claim to more Unesco World Heritage Sites than any other part of the country – including three of Portugal’s ‘seven architectural wonders’. It’s also home to a plethora of rural towns and villages, including Alcobaca, known for its ancient monastery and annual festivals in August and October, and Obidos, an ancient walled castle town perched on a hill and surrounded by fields and vineyards, where visitors will find the iconic Porta da Vila, a blue, azulejo-adorned gateway into the town.

For a quieter place to stay nearby, suggest Foz do Arelho, a coastal fishing village right by the Obidos Lagoon. “Foz do Arelho is a beautiful, unspoilt village,” says Dave Woollcott, commercial director at James Villas.

**RIGHT:**  
Casa da Encosta

**BELOW:**  
São Miguel Island



## The Silver Coast lays claim to more Unesco World Heritage Sites than any other part of the country

“Typically Portuguese in essence, it offers plenty for holidaymakers, with restaurants catering for all tastes at a reasonable price, and a string of bars offering a nice atmosphere.” It also makes an ideal base for exploring other sites in the area, which include Portugal’s largest caves, Mira de Aire, alongside a handful of excellent beaches.

**Book it:** James Villas offers seven nights at the Casa da Encosta in Foz do Arelho (a 15-minute drive from Obidos) from £388 per person based on six sharing with a private pool, departing June 2, 2018, from Gatwick.

**jamesvillas.co.uk**

## ▶ ADVENTURE

**So they’ve been to:** Northern Portugal

**How about:** The Azores

**Sell it:** If clients have already hiked through the mountainous north, suggest venturing over to the Azores, whose plunging slopes, lunar-like calderas, tumbling waterfalls and verdant

forest form a unique backdrop to an array of outdoor pursuits – helped along by pleasant year-round temperatures, which rest around the mid-20s in summer.

“The Azores are perfect for outdoor enthusiasts, particularly keen hikers,” says Nicola Brown, Azores specialist for Regent Holidays. There are plenty of other activities to sample: on São Miguel Island – the main port of entry – visitors can paddleboard across the bubbling, steaming Furnas Crater Lake, take a 4x4 tour of the volcanic landscapes or head out on a whale-watching trip.

Meanwhile, on the black-sand island of Pico, keen hikers can climb the highest mountain in Portugal – reaching 2,300 metres – while those heading to Terceira will find historic settlements such as the 16th-century Unesco World Heritage Site of Angra do Heroísmo, as well as ancient farmhouses that offer a glimpse into the Portugal of yesteryear.

**Book it:** Regent Holidays offers an eight-day Two Island Self-Catering Fly-Drive holiday, combining four nights in a traditional Azorean stone house on Pico with three nights in a poolside villa on Sao Miguel. Prices start from £969 per person, based on two adults sharing and including flights, accommodation and car hire.

**regent-holidays.co.uk**

