



Fruit market, Madeira

PICTURE Shutterstock/kaskip

Taste of Portugal

A new Michelin guide is set to focus attention on Portugal's food scene, but the country isn't just about fine-dining, says **Yolanda Zappaterra**

Shaped by centuries of invasion and trade, Portuguese cuisine blends Mediterranean, African and Middle Eastern influences into mouth-watering dishes built on local, high-quality products. And in February next year the spotlight will be on the country's culinary scene with the launch of the first Michelin Guide dedicated solely to Portugal.

The country's dining scene is just as much about rural, traditional dishes and family restaurants as it is fine dining, and protected production methods ensure quality and traditional cultivation skills are preserved. And its cuisine, of course, goes far beyond well-loved, world-famous dishes such as firey *frango piri-piri* and sweet *pastéis de nata*. Learning about – and tasting – some of Portugal's best dishes is a highlight of many trips to the country. Here we look at some of the best foodie breaks the country has to offer.

PORTO AND THE DOURO VALLEY

A seven-night trip from Explore really packs in the foodie experiences, with everything from sampling just-harvested oysters and fresh-pressed olive oil to learning how to make cornbread and a hands-on lunch in the fish market of Matosinhos. Clients learn about heritage food production techniques in the region, with salt-making and fish-farming stops across a wide range of locations spanning the salt marshes, beaches and lagoons of

Aveiro, a wine estate kitchen in a historic monastery near the Douro River and the pretty streets of Porto.

Book it: Explore's A Taste of Portugal – Porto and the Douro Valley costs from £2,099 including seven nights' B&B accommodation and some meals and food experiences, but not flights.
explore.co.uk

“Walking tours incorporate tastings and cooking classes, while other activities include a dinner showcasing Portugal's fado music

AN IBERIAN ADVENTURE

Travellers can take in the culinary highlights of both Portugal and the Galicia region of northwestern Spain with an Intrepid Travel tour. Along with foodie tours in Porto and Lisbon, where they'll learn about Portugal's seafood heritage and the capital's *ginjinha* cherry liqueur, clients can enjoy port wine tasting in the villages of the Douro Valley, plus a home-cooked meal and overnight stay at a farm in Alentejo, known for its Azaruja sausages made from Iberico pork.

The eight-day tour also takes its small groups into Galicia to sample *pulpo a la gallega* – paprika-infused ➤

DESTINATIONS

EUROPE | PORTUGAL



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bolo do caco flatbread; wine cellar, Porto; cooking class venue with Audley Travel; fish market, Madeira
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octopus – in Santiago de Compostela and more.

Book it: Intrepid Travel's Portugal Real Food Adventure, featuring Galicia costs from £1,898, including accommodation, ground transport, selected meals, and activities. Flights are extra. intrepidtravel.com

CITY DELIGHTS

Audley Travel has a flexible seven-day package, allowing agents to add food experiences to an itinerary that already includes a food tour in Lisbon, a port tasting in Porto and a full-day wine-focused excursion to the Douro Valley. Extras on offer include walking tours incorporating tastings and local cooking classes, while other activities – among them a dinner showcasing Portugal's fado music tradition – will steep clients in the country's wider cultural traditions.

Book it: Audley Travel's Highlights of Lisbon & Porto trip costs from

£3,695, including flights, transfers, B&B accommodation in four and five-star hotels and excursions. audleytravel.com

GASTRONOMY CRUISE

While many Portugal tours focus on the coast, Riviera's river cruise heads from coastal Porto into the heart of the country via the Douro, immersing passengers in a Mediterranean landscape filled with olive trees, vineyards and medieval hilltop villages. An excursion to Spain's Salamanca is included, as are a guided tour of Porto with wine sampling and a tasting at a quinta.

Book it: Riviera Travel's Douro, Porto & Salamanca River Cruise costs from £1,799 for seven nights, departing on April 7, 2024, including return flights from Heathrow and transfers, full-board accommodation on the five-star *Douro Splendour*, eight guided visits and tours, and the services of a cruise director and concierge. rivieratravel.co.uk

FLAVOURS OF MADEIRA

Thanks to its different microclimates, rich volcanic soil and Atlantic Ocean location 400 miles off the northwest coast of Africa, Madeira is home to a huge variety of exotic produce, from guava to sugar cane. A food tour of Funchal is a great way to sample much of that produce, including local specialities such as *bolo do caco* (a Madeiran flatbread), the alcoholic drink *poncha* and exquisite handmade chocolates made using *pitanga* (Surinam cherry). The three-hour tour makes a fine excursion for foodie clients looking to add something special to their Madeira package.

Book it: EasyJet holidays offers seven nights' B&B at the five-star Pestana Casino Park Hotel for £633 including 23kg of luggage, transfers and flights from Bristol on October 4. Discovering Madeira offers a range of food and wine tours of Funchal and Madeira. easyjet.com/holidays discoveringmadeira.com 

ASK THE expert



Nuno Fazenda,
 Portugal's secretary
 of state for tourism,
 commerce and services

"Portugal is very strong in terms of sun and sea, but it's also strong in terms of culture, wine and gastronomy. We have Michelin cuisine but also traditional restaurants or *tascas* [rustic eateries serving authentic homemade dishes]. We are reaching records every year in terms of exportation of Portuguese wines. And our wines – red and white as well as port – are being recognised by prestigious international magazines and getting awards.

We have internationally recognised wines all over the country, like Porto wine, Douro wine and Alentejo wine.

There are several wine tourism experiences and great professionals who can explain the production and history. We have more investment in small accommodation projects, such as at *quintas* [wine-growing estates], as well."

