

## **Information**

Please note that the following information was taken from The Lonely Planet, Portugal, Fodor's web site on Portugal and the Hotel do Mar web site. It is meant as a guideline only, please make sure to check information before making travel arrangements.

## **Destination Information**

### **Portugal**

Portugal is an extraordinarily diverse little country. Only 560 km long and 220 km wide, it packs in a fantastic range of attractions, from lush green valleys and high mountain ranges in the north to balmy beaches and dreamy olive groves and cork plantations in the south. Cultural gems are everywhere, including Unesco World Heritage Sites at Evora, Porto, Guimaraes, Batalha, and Alcobaca.

Entertainment is among the hottest in Europe, with bars and clubs staying open till dawn in Lisbon, Porto, Cascais, Lagos and Albufeira. And if you're after outdoor action you can find it at championship surf spots all along the coast, at top-notch golf courses in the Algarve, or on challenging bike trails in the unspoilt hinterlands.

Best of all, none of this is hard to reach. You can take a train from Faro, the Algarve's capital in the south, to Porto, in the north, in just seven hours; or cross the waist of the country, west to east, from Lisbon to Elvas, in under four.

### **Sesimbra**

This former fishing village, 20km south-west of Setubal, shelters under the Serra da Arrabida at the western edge of the Parque Natural da Arrabida. It's long been a favourite getaway with Lisboaetas and is now rapidly developing into a major resort. On weekends and in high season the place buzzes. Cruises, guided walks and scuba-diving activities are also on offer, including trips to Cabo Espichel where dinosaurs once roamed.

Hotel do Mar is located 30 kms from Lisbon airport, facing Sesimbra Beach with a fabulous sea view. The beaches in front of the hotel and nearby offer excellent conditions to practice sea activities such as scuba diving, sailing, boat trips, etc. You can also play golf, horseback ride, water ski and visit the region for its wines and cheese.

## **Documentation**

Citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States need a valid passport to enter Portugal for stays of up to 60 days. Visas are required for longer stays and, in some instances, for visits to other countries in addition to Portugal. Citizens of the European Union need a valid passport but can stay indefinitely. Others, including nationals of South Africa, need a visa unless they are the spouse or child of an EU citizen.

## **Customs**

Visitors 15 and over are permitted to bring in 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of loose tobacco. Visitors 17 and over may bring 1 litre of liquor over 22 proof and 2 litres of wine. Perfume is limited to 50 grams, eau de cologne to .25 litre. Please bring sales receipts for expensive personal items to avoid paying export duties when you depart.

## **Transportation Information**

Buses depart from Lisbon's Praça de Espanha three or four times daily (3 Euros). It's a 60-90 minute ride. Buses depart at least nine times daily from Setubal (2.30 Euros) for a 45 minute ride. There are hourly buses from Cacilhas (2.40 Euros) for an approximately 50 minute ride.

Taxis holding a maximum of 3 people cost approximately 50 Euros per transfer.

Nationals of EU countries need only their home driving licences to operate a car or motorcycle in Portugal, although holders of the UK's old, pre-EU green licences should also carry an International Driving Permit (IDP). Portugal also accepts licences issued in Brazil, Switzerland, the United States and Canada. Others should get an IDP through an automobile licensing department or automobile club in their home country.

## **Climate**

Portugal falls within both Atlantic and Mediterranean climatic zones. The Atlantic has the strongest influence, especially in the northwest where the weather is noticeably milder and damper than elsewhere. Bring your brolly if you're heading here: up to 2000 mm of rain can fall annually (the national average is 1100 mm).

You can thank the Atlantic for slightly moderating the dry Mediterranean climate of the southern coast, where top summer temperatures average a sizzling 28 C. Summer maximums in Lisbon and Porto are slightly lower and rain is rare everywhere in July and August. You can expect a lovely average of 12/six hours daily sunshine in a typical Algarve summer/winter and about 10/four hours up north.

## **Language**

Portuguese is the seventh most spoken language in the world. It can be difficult to pronounce and understand (most people speak quickly and elliptically). If, however, you have a fair knowledge of a Latin language, you may be able to read a little Portuguese. Just be aware that, with some cognates, appearances can be deceptive – it's best to double-check terms in a pocket Portuguese-English dictionary. Any attempt you make to speak Portuguese will be well received. In large cities and major resorts many people speak English and, occasionally, Spanish or French.

## **Etiquette**

Portugal has a strong Catholic influence. If you're visiting a church or place of worship, wear conservative clothing.

In cities, most restaurant patrons are sophisticated and well mannered. In the countryside, however, things might be different: try not to show dismay at locals who eat with their fingers or talk with their mouths full.

It's prudent to use a title, such as *senhor* and *senhora* during introductions. Shake hands with every man and his dog, and have business cards at the ready. Dress is casual (slacks and nice shirts, with jackets optional) to formal (suits and ties) in Lisbon and Oporto, and casual elsewhere.

Don't expect things to start on time: everybody in Portugal runs late -- period.

## **Health**

Sunburn and sunstroke are common problems in summer in mainland Portugal and virtually year-round on Madeira. On a hot, sunny day, even people not normally bothered by a strong rays should cover up. Carry sunscreen for nose, ears, and other sensitive areas; be sure to drink enough liquids; and above all, limit your sun exposure for the first few days until you become accustomed to the heat. No special shots are required before visiting Portugal (except for yellow-fever shots if you want to visit Madeira and have come from an infected area).

If your system is sensitive to new and different foods, note that mild cases of diarrhea may respond to Imodium, Lomotil (known generically as loperamide), or Pepto-Bismol (not as strong), all of which can be purchased over the counter. Drink plenty of purified water or *cháá* (tea) -- *camomila* (chamomile) is a good folk remedy. In severe cases, rehydrate yourself with a salt-sugar solution: ½ teaspoon *sal* (salt) and 4 tablespoons *aççúúcar* (sugar) per quart of *agua* (water). The word for aspirin is *aspirinha*; Tylenol is pronounced *tee-luh-nawl*.

## **Safety**

Your biggest threat is likely to be petty theft (i.e., pickpocketing and bag snatching). Don't wear a money belt or a waist pack, both of which peg you as a tourist. If you carry a purse, choose one with a zipper and a thick strap that you can drape across your body; adjust the length so that the purse sits in front of you at or above hip level. Store only enough money in the purse to cover casual spending. Distribute the rest of your cash and any valuables (including credit cards and your passport) between a deep front pocket, an inside jacket or vest pocket, and a hidden money pouch. Do not reach for the money pouch in public.

Be particularly cautious in crowded areas and in the poorer areas of large cities. Be wary of anyone stopping you on the street to ask for directions, the time, or where you're from -- particularly if there's more than one person and if you have recently visited the bank or an ATM.

Shopkeepers, restaurateurs, and other business owners are generally honest, and credit card receipts are rarely subject to copying. There have been occasional incidents of highway robbery, where the thief slashes the victim's tires during a stop at a gas station and then follows the victim, offering to "help" when the tire goes completely flat. In other cases, the thief takes advantage of an unwary traveler who has left car keys in the ignition or money or a handbag on the seat while stopped at a gas station.

### **Emergency Information**

The national number for emergencies is **112**, which is the universal EU emergency number.

*Ambulance* (PHONE: 21/321-7777).

*Fire* (PHONE: 21/342-2222).

*General emergencies* (PHONE: 112).

*Police* (PHONE: 21/346-6141).

For general problems or in case of theft, the *Tourism Police* (Rua Capelo 13, near Teatro de São Carlos, Chiado PHONE: 21/346-6141) have an office open 24 hours. If you need to make a claim against your travel insurance, you must file a report there.

If you need medical attention, many doctors speak English. Ask the staff at your hotel or at the embassy to recommend a reliable one.

### **Time Zone**

Portugal, like Britain, is on GMT/UTC in winter and GMT/UTC plus one hour in summer. This puts it an hour earlier than Spain year-round. Clocks are set forward by an hour on the last Sunday in March and back on the last Sunday in October.

### **Currency**

All transactions are made in euros. Euro notes come in denominations of 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. The Euro is divided into 100 cents, and coins are available as 2 and 1 and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cents.

ATMs are ubiquitous, and the Portuguese use them for banking as well as for paying bills and taxes. The Multibanco, or MB, system, is state-of-the-art and reliable. The cards most frequently accepted are Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Eurocheque, Eurocard, and Electron. You need a four-digit PIN to use ATMs in Portugal.

Most major banks have offices in the Baixa, and there are currency-exchange facilities at the airport

(open 24 hours) and at Santa Apolónia train station (open daily 8:30-8:30). Large hotels and some travel agencies also offer exchange facilities, but the rates are usually poor. Few savvy travelers use them anyway; ATMs are ubiquitous and have better rates.

Value-added tax (IVA) is 12% for hotels. By law prices must be posted at the reception desk and should indicate whether tax is included. Restaurants are also required to charge 12% IVA. Menus generally state at the bottom whether tax is included (*IVA incluido*) or not (*mas 12% IVA*). When in doubt about whether tax is included in a price, ask: *Estáá incluido o IVA?*

A number of Portuguese stores, particularly large ones and those in resorts, offer a refund of the 19% IVA on single items worth more than EUR80. Be sure to ask for your tax-free check; you show your passport, fill out a form, and the store mails you the refund at home.

### **Electrical Current**

The electrical current in Portugal is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC); wall outlets take plugs with two round prongs.

If your appliances are dual-voltage, you'll need only an adapter. Most laptops operate equally well on 110 and 220 volts and so require only an adapter. Don't use 110-volt outlets marked "For Shavers Only" for high-wattage appliances such as blow-dryers.

### **Tipping/Gratuities**

Service is included in café, restaurant, and hotel bills, but waiters and other service people are poorly paid, and you can be sure your contribution will be appreciated. If, however, you received bad service, never feel obligated (or intimidated) to leave a tip.

#### Airports and Train Stations

.50 Euro per bag for porters (more if bags are heavy)

#### Taxis

10% of fare (there is an official surcharge for airport runs and baggage)

#### Hotels

1 Euro for doorman who calls taxi

1 Euro per bag for bellman

1-2 Euro per day for maid service

1 Euro for room service (unless gratuity already added), then \$1 for delivery

#### Restaurants

10-15% at more expensive establishments

Coins for inexpensive establishments (round to nearest .50 Euro)

2.50-5 Euros for waiter at hotel if dine there regularly (wine waiter slightly less)  
.30 - .50 Euros for server at bar

Hairdressers or Barbers  
1 Euro minimum

Cinema and Theatre  
.50 Euros for ushers who seat you

Washroom Attendants  
.50 Euros

### **Telephone Charges**

The country code for Portugal is 351. The area code for Lisbon and its surrounding area (including Cascais, Estoril, and Sintra) is 21. To access Lisbon from abroad, dial 351 (Portugal's country code), then 21 plus the number. From within Portugal, you need just 21 plus the number.

All phone numbers have nine digits, the first two being the area code in or around Lisbon and Oporto, the first three anywhere else in the country. All fixed-phone area codes begin with 2; mobile numbers, which also have nine digits, begin with 9.

### *Directory and Operator Assistance*

For general information, dial 118 (operators often speak English). The international information and assistance numbers are 171 for operator-assisted calls, 172 for collect calls, and 177 for information (the operators speak English).

### *International Calls*

Calling abroad is expensive from hotels, which often add a considerable surcharge. The best way to make an international call is to go to the local telephone office and have someone place it for you. When the call is connected, you'll be directed to a quiet cubicle and charged according to the meter. If the price is EUR10 or more, you can pay with Visa or MasterCard.

You can also make direct-dial long-distance calls from most phone booths on the street, although it's easiest if you use a phone card.

To make an international call yourself, dial 00 followed directly by the country code (1 for the United States, 44 for the United Kingdom, 61 for Australia, and 64 for New Zealand) and the area code and number. The Portuguese telephone directory contains a list of all of the principal world country codes and the codes for principal cities.

If you have a calling card, you can enter the appropriate access number from your hotel phone (and some public phones) to be connected with an English-speaking operator to make an international call.

Be aware that you cannot get this service from all phones in the city.

### *Long-Distance Calls*

To make calls to other areas within Portugal, precede the provincial code with 0 (most phone booths have a chart inside listing the various province codes). The 0 is unnecessary when dialing from outside Portugal.

### *Public Phones*

Pay phones are abundant and either take coins only or coins and phone cards.

The easiest way to call from a public booth is to use a **Portugal Telecom** ([www.telecom.pt/uk/](http://www.telecom.pt/uk/)) *cartão telefônico* (calling card), which you can buy at post offices, newspaper shops, and tobacconists for either EUR5 or EUR10. The phones that accept them have digital readouts, so you can see your time ticking away. Instructions in several languages, including English, are posted in the booths.

With coin-operated phones you insert coins and wait for a dial tone. The minimum cost for a local call is EURO.20; it's EUR0.50 to call another area, for which you must dial the area code. You can ask to use the phone in cafés or bars, where they're often metered. The waiter or bartender will charge you after you've finished, though expect to pay a higher rate than the one you would pay in a public phone booth.

### **Business Hours**

Most businesses closed between 1 and 3 for lunch, but stay open until 6 or 7 in the evening. Government offices are generally open from 9 am - 12 pm and then from 2 pm - 5 pm.

Businesses are closed for religious and public holidays, possibly including local transportation.

Banks are open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am - 3 pm. Money exchange booths at airports and train stations are usually open 24 hours.

Gas Stations on main highways are generally open 24 hours. In rural areas the standard business hours are 7 am - 10 pm.

Pharmacies are usually open Monday to Friday from 9 am - 1 pm and from 3 pm - 7 pm. There are some pharmacies that are open all night or Sundays.

### **Computer Access**

Free Internet access is rapidly becoming the norm all over Portugal - at municipal libraries, at local branches of the Instituto Portugues da Juventade (IPJ) and at a growing number of municipally-run cyber-espacos. In general you must book ahead and are limited to a half-hour slot, especially if others are waiting.

Cybercafes are common only in bigger cities and towns and charge anywhere from .50-3 Euros or more per online hour.