

ONE PERFECT DAY

Lisbon

PORTUGAL HAS TURNED ITSELF AROUND – AND SO SHOULD YOU IF YOU HAVEN'T PUT ITS LIVELY CAPITAL ON YOUR EUROPEAN ITINERARY. BY EMILY McAULIFFE.



IN CENTURIES past, Portugal's capital stood tall as one of the most powerful cities in Europe. But a catastrophic earthquake in 1755 and the country's economic woes in the past decade saw the city slip into the shadows, out of sight of Europe-bound travellers. But that was then and this is now – Lisbon has emerged from its quiescent state more vivacious than ever. Startups have swooped into the city and tech giants are fronting up for this month's international Web Summit. In addition, up-and-coming designers have opened their doors and top chefs have flamed their fires to shape a city that casually intertwines its rich historic past with unpretentious modernity. Pair all that with a dusty-orange cityscape that bounces soft light across its seven hills at dusk and you have a golden city begging to be explored.

(Left to right) The futuristic Museu de Arte, Arquitectura e Tecnologia; several tram lines converge at Praça do Comércio; Portuguese *azulejos* (painted tiles) adorn many buildings



08:00

Breakfast in Portugal usually entails a pastry and coffee so kick off with arguably the country's greatest gift to the culinary world, the pastel de nata, when Manteigaria (Rua do Loreto 2; +351 21 347 1492) in Chiado pulls its first batches of silky custard tarts from the oven. Balance the sweetness with a shot of bitter espresso, sipped like a local, standing at the bar.

08:30

Head east through the central Chiado district and take a detour down Rua do Carmo to pass the 45-metre-high cast-iron Elevador de Santa Justa with filigree details. Forget queuing for the brief elevator ride to catch the view and instead make your way down the city's main shopping

street, pedestrianised Rua Augusta, towards the Tagus River. At the end is Lisbon's emblematic gateway to the city, the Arco da Rua Augusta, flanked by sunshine-yellow buildings that hug the waterfront square Praça do Comércio. Take the lift and some stairs to the top of the arch for a 360-degree view of the city and river, minus the crowds. It costs €2.50 (about \$3.75) but entry is included if you purchase a Lisboa Card (visitlisboa.com), which permits discounted or free visits to many attractions.



(Clockwise from left) Portugal's famed custard tarts; the Alfama district is one of Lisbon's oldest; Elevador de Santa Justa



09:30

From Praça do Comércio, walk 10 minutes east to one of Lisbon's oldest and most traditional neighbourhoods, Alfama. You'll probably spot women pegging washing from tiny balconies, most likely chatting with a neighbour doing the same. Visiting in the morning enables you to snap the narrow cobblestoned streets before the tourist surge hits. There's a cluster of key monuments in the area, including Igreja de Santo António, a church dedicated to Lisbon's most popular saint, and Sé de Lisboa, the cathedral built after Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques, took the city from the Moors in 1147.

10:30

To appreciate Lisbon's modern history, go to Museu do Aljube (museudoaljube.pt), across the road from the cathedral. Housed in a former political prison, it tells the story of Portugal's fight for freedom from dictatorship between 1926 and 1974.

11:30

Walk 15 minutes uptown (or take the 737 bus from the cathedral to Praça da Figueira), past the carved dual arches of Rossio railway station, to Igreja de São Domingos. In this church rattled by Lisbon's 1755 earthquake then gutted by fire in 1959, the charred pillars and walls set against the high red ceiling have an eerie yet calming presence. Afterwards, if you're feeling indulgent, line up for a shot of ginja (Portuguese cherry liqueur) at hole in the wall A Ginjinha (Largo de São Domingos 8; +351 21 346 8231), just across the street.



(Clockwise from left)
The open kitchen at Jncquoi restaurant; Belcanto's sea bass with seaweed and bivalves, aka Dip in the Sea; catch dinner and a show at Beco Cabaret Gourmet



Flight path

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12:30

A five-minute walk north-west will deliver you to the start of Lisbon's beautiful tree-lined central boulevard, Avenida da Liberdade. Tread the black-and-white mosaic tiles to browse high-end stores with elegant 19th-century façades, including Bulgari and Prada.

13:30

On the same street, enter the city's new upscale fashion-meets-food hangout, Jncquoi (jncquoi.com). The lower floor houses Fashion Clinic, where you'll find men's designer clothing and a tailoring service, while the middle level features a 42-seat bar and gourmet deli. Head upstairs to the restaurant lined with century-old frescoes and enjoy an à la carte lunch of modern Portuguese cuisine teamed with local wines.

15:30

From Avenida da Liberdade, jump on one of Lisbon's famous funiculars, Ascensor da Glória (Calçada da Glória 6), and chug up the steep, graffiti-splashed street to Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara lookout. After admiring the views of Castelo de São Jorge and the Tagus River, walk up to Praça do Príncipe Real, a hub of Lisbon's gay community. Once home to dusty antique shops, the neighbourhood has been gentrified and the elevated main street now runs like a catwalk past boutiques and trendy cafés, with glimpses of the sprawling city either side. The show stopper is Embaixada (embaixadax.pt), a three-level shopping and dining gallery inside a 19th-century palace. Even if you don't intend to buy anything, it's worth dropping in just to marvel at the Neo-Moorish architecture, grand marble staircase and distressed stucco ceilings.

17:00

Embaixada is across the street from Jardim do Príncipe Real. Stroll through this leafy park before hailing a taxi to the new Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia (maat.pt) in Belém, about six kilometres away. The futuristic white-tiled MAAT cultural centre adjoins an old power station, which is now an exhibition space known as Central Tejo and includes a display about the evolution of electricity. A combined ticket gives access to both museums. After your visit, head next door to super-modern Sud Lisboa (sudlisboa.com), where you can enjoy a coffee on the terrace overlooking the river and the iconic rust-red Ponte 25 de Abril, a suspension bridge named to honour the day of Portugal's revolution in 1974.

19:00

Catch a train or tram 15 to Cais do Sodré in the city centre and have a pre-dinner drink at Pensão Amor (pensaoamor.pt) in Lisbon's former red-light district. The quirky bar's red walls, velvet armchairs and suggestive artworks hint at its burlesque past but these design elements work well with the mock-fresco ceiling and chandeliers.

20:30

José Avillez's two-Michelin-starred Belcanto (belcanto.pt) is one of Lisbon's most renowned fine-dining establishments. Recently, Avillez has extended his epicurean empire with the tastefully themed restaurant Beco Cabaret Gourmet (becocabaretgourmet.pt), hidden at the back of his Bairro do Avillez dining precinct, a 10-minute walk from Pensão Amor. Book a table for the nightly show and enjoy the 12-course dégustation in a fun and glamorous setting. Your perfect day ends when the bill arrives at midnight in a glittering stiletto. Now if only you could click your heels and experience Lisbon's charms all over again. ●



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