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LISBON CALLING

The Portuguese capital makes for an ideal short break destination.
Sun, sights and those delicious custard tarts!

Perched on seven hills at the edge of the River Tagus, Lisbon is Europe's second oldest city and was once

the heart of an empire that ruled countries from South America to Asia. Unsurprisingly then, Lisbon has been a melting pot of cultures for centuries and the result is a city full of eclectic architecture, culture, art and food. Which all makes it a pretty good spot to spend a few days in.

You'll be tripping over UNESCO Heritage sights if you visit Lisbon, with Instagrammable photo ops at every turn. It's packed with winding streets and crumbling buildings a century or two past their best but all the

more beautiful for it.

Did we mention it's set on seven hills? Yep. Some spots are a bit of a slog to get to but the city is served by old-fashioned trams, which make light work of more hilly areas. Hop on Tram 28 (which dates from the 1930s) to see the sights the lazy way as the route winds through the picturesque Alfama neighbourhood. It's the oldest district in town and is packed with Moorish architecture and a maze of narrow streets. It's also home to some of Lisbon's best known attractions including

the Moorish St George's Castle (Castelo de São Jorge) and the 12th century Se Cathedral. Alfama is also where you'll find the twice-weekly flea market, Feira da Ladra. The market runs on Campo de Santa Clara from dawn until dusk on Tuesdays and Saturdays and you can pick up everything from handmade goods and antiques to books and CDs.

Speaking of shopping, Lisbon may not be the biggest shopping hub but you'll find well known brands and big name labels in Chiado or Avenida da Liberdade (the likes of Zara and Mango are

much cheaper than they are at home). For something different, check out the quaint stores around Baixa that have been family run for centuries and offer antiques, beads and accessories or go to Barrio Alto for quirky designer gear. Portugal produces most of the world's cork (fun fact, kids!) and the material has found its way into accessories and all sorts of products. Visit Cork and Co (www.corkandcompany.pt), a sleek design store that has a baffling collection of cork-related products, from jewellery and bags to homewares and techie

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accessories. Always wanted a cork iPhone cover? Now you know where to get one!

There are of course lots of accommodation options in the city, to suit all budgets, but for us there was only one choice - the boutique Hotel Altis Avenida (preferredhotels.com). It has a brilliant location and a rooftop restaurant too. Design-wise it's a mix of old and new, and has a number of deals on from now until the end of the year. The Lisbon's Soul City Break (from €355) offers two nights' accommodation, breakfast, a welcome drink and an EcoTuk tour of the city.

When it comes to eating and drinking, Portugal is best known for its port and wine, seafood (salted cod in particular) and pastel de nata, the delicious Portuguese custard tarts. The gourmet food court in the Ribeira Market in the Cais do Sodré district has pretty much anything you could want, from local dishes to more



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AI fresco at Hotel Altis Avenida; the fairytale-like city of Sintra; 'drinks on the terrace?'; travel by tram; Lisbon at night. OPPOSITE: The Lisbon skyline



tricky to locate but you'll be rewarded with great views of the city

international cuisine, as well as being one of the city's coolest spots to hang out in.

But if you're after more of a restaurant feel, then Barri Alto area is the place to go for restaurants and bars and general liveliness of an evening. Park Bar, on Calçada do Combro 58 is a not-so-secret rooftop bar on the top of a car park. It can be

and good wine. For a traditional cultural hit while in Lisbon, you'll have to check out fado, the Portuguese 'trad' music and one of the best places to experiences it is in Pova, a small reastaurant/bar on Rua Nova do Carvalho (povolisboa.com).

If you're staying for a few

days there are plenty of places outside of Lisbon to investigate too. The pick of the bunch has to be the nearby city of Sintra; it's a 40 minute train ride away and well worth a visit. The UNESCO heritage city is like something out of a fairy tale, with turreted palaces and pastel-hued buildings set above pine covered hills. The cooler climate meant it was popular with Portuguese nobility and the wealthy, which resulted in all the elaborate houses and botanical gardens that sit alongside centuries old castles and monuments. Take a day trip and fulfill the living-like-a-princess fantasies of a lifetime. **U**

You can fly to Lisbon with Aer Lingus and Ryanair. For more info visit visitportugal.com

what to pack?



Mega Matte Lipstick in Lava You A Lot, **€6.29**, Seventeen @ Boots



Nubuck backpack, **€14**, Penneys



Etoile Hanton wool bomber jacket **€370**, Isabel Marant @ Brown Thomas



Better Than Sex Waterproof mascara, **€23**, Too Faced @ Debenhams



Trainers, **€32**, Next