

Candida Dias

# Travelling *through* Portugal



*The author on the roof of the Palace de Belem*

**B**orn in a small village in the Tras-os-Montes region of Northern Portugal, I recall mountains, farms, friendly people, and beautiful old buildings.

Returning to Portugal as an adult, I explored all the opportunities offered by this small, densely populated country.

In a sense, Portugal is the ideal vacation spot. You can fly into one of three major cities located in the south, centre, or north of the country—Faro, Lisbon, Porto—or drive in through Spain.

Most people speak more than one language, including English, French, German, and/or Spanish as well as Portuguese. Prices are some of the lowest in Europe and the currency is the Euro, useful if you are travelling to other parts of Europe.

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Whether you enjoy the sun and sand or prefer exploring a country's history and culture, Portugal offers

a bit of everything. The coastline goes on for thousands of kilometres along the mainland, with much more coastline circling the islands of Madeira and the Açores (Azores).

If you like lounging by the beach eating *Bolos de Belem*—freshly fried doughnuts sprinkled with sugar—and enjoying the surf, the beaches are unbeatable. In the south is the ever-popular Algarve, always booming in July and August with tourists and locals enjoying the warm, calm water and water sports. If you prefer a more serene environment, the coastline of the Alentejo is still warm, but less populated. Further north in Lisbon,



*Lisbon: Monument to the Discoveries*



*View of Porto*



Peniche, one of the many beaches



View of the north

Peniche, and Nazare, the waves are more pronounced and the water noticeably colder, but it's great for surfing!

If you would rather explore art, architecture, and history, in the capital city of Lisbon are the Jeronimos Monastery, Tower of Belem, and Monument to the Discoveries—marvels to see and all within steps of each other.

The central shopping area in the heart of Lisbon is framed by a magnificent arch and clock, and soccer stadiums are scattered throughout the city. On the hills overlooking the city are St. George's

Castle and the Statue of Christ the King along the Tagus River.

The Palace of Belem is another amazing site I saw when visiting Portugal after being elected by the Portuguese community as their representative in Western Canada. I had the privilege of meeting Portuguese immigrants from all over the world who were representing their own communities. The meetings were

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held in the Palace where we were all later invited for drinks with the President of the Republic of Portugal.

Before leaving Lisbon, stop in at Sintra outside the main city. The incredible brightly coloured Palace of Sintra rests atop a mountain surrounded by trees. Continuing northward toward Porto, you can visit Coimbra with its university and Don Joao III Library, that date back to the 18th century.

In Porto, a major city and port of Portugal, the open sea meets the Douro River, which runs through Porto. A riverboat (*rabelo*) tour takes you under the many bridges on the Douro, along the riverside area, and past magnificent buildings.

If you prefer little towns and villages, there are an endless number of them in Portugal. Between the cities, you will stumble upon festivals, architecture, local fare, and great people. Anywhere you end up, you will have plenty to see and do—and you will always discover more when you return again to Portugal. ▲

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With the President of Portugal (to Candida's left) and the other government representatives

JUNE was  
PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH.  
<http://www.portuguesemonth.com>