



Portugal

Seafaring explorers, custard tarts and fado, on the sunny Atlantic edge of Europe.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Lisbon

POPULATION

About 11.4 million (INE estimate for the end of 2025)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Portuguese (Mirandese is also recognised in the far northeast)

CURRENCY

Euro (€), since 2002 (before that, the escudo)

AREA

About 92,000 km², including Madeira and the Azores

GOVERNMENT

Semi-presidential republic (constitution of 1976)

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Mount Pico, 2,351 m, in the Azores (Torre in the Serra da Estrela, 1,993 m, is the highest on the mainland)

LONGEST RIVER

The Tagus (Tejo), about 1,000 km, most of it in Spain; the Mondego, 234 km, is the longest river entirely in Portugal

NEIGHBOURS

Spain, its only land neighbour

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+351

A 45-minute trip to Portugal

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- 0 to 5 min** Welcome. Show the map page and find Portugal together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there?
- 5 to 15 min** Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 139 BC: Viriathus is killed; 1580: Portugal passes to the Spanish king; 1999: Macau is handed back to China.
- 15 to 25 min** At the table: talk about Bacalhau à Brás and Caldo verde. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help.
- 25 to 30 min** Say it like a local: practise "Bom dia" (Good morning), "Boa tarde" (Good afternoon), "Boa noite" (Good evening, good night). Everyone says them together.
- 30 to 40 min** Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at <https://worldstroll.com/countries/portugal/group>. No scores needed.
- 40 to 45 min** Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page.

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)

- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Portugal and its cities



- Lisbon (Lisbon): Alfama, the oldest quarter, Yellow trams on steep hills, Belém and its pastries, The 25 de Abril Bridge
- Porto (North): Port wine lodges across the river in Vila Nova de Gaia, The Ribeira riverside quarter, São Bento station and its blue tiles, The francesinha sandwich
- Braga (North): The sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Monte, Its old cathedral, The Roman ruins of Bracara Augusta
- Guimarães (North): Its medieval castle, A UNESCO-listed historic centre, European Capital of Culture in 2012

- Aveiro (Centre): Moliceiro boats, Ovos moles, a sweet of egg yolk and sugar, Striped beach houses at nearby Costa Nova
- Coimbra (Centre): The University of Coimbra, Coimbra fado, sung by students in black capes, The tomb of the first king in the Santa Cruz Monastery
- Tomar (Centre): The Convent of Christ, The Festa dos Tabuleiros, held every four years, A well-preserved medieval synagogue
- Sintra (Lisbon): Pena Palace, The Moorish Castle, Quinta da Regaleira, The National Palace and its huge chimneys
- Évora (Alentejo): The Roman Temple, The Chapel of Bones, A UNESCO-listed old town
- Faro (Algarve): The Ria Formosa lagoon and its islands, A walled old town and cathedral, The Chapel of Bones at the Carmo church
- Lagos (Algarve): Golden cliffs and sea caves, Beaches such as Meia Praia and Dona Ana, Boat trips to Ponta da Piedade

A short history of Portugal

From Lusitanian warriors who fought Rome to the explorers who opened the sea route to India, Portugal's small corner of Europe has had a very large part in world history.

139 BC **Viriathus is killed**

Viriathus, leader of the Lusitanian people, won several victories against the Romans before he was betrayed and murdered in his sleep in 139 BC. The Portuguese remember him as a national hero. Rome went on to conquer the region, which became the province of Lusitania.

AD 868 **The County of Portugal is founded**

The nobleman Vímara Peres took the land between the Minho and Douro rivers from the Moors and became the first Count of Portugal. The name comes from Portus Cale, the Roman name for the port at the mouth of the Douro, today's Porto.

1147 **Lisbon is captured from the Moors**

Afonso Henriques, who had called himself king in 1139, took Lisbon after a siege of about four months, with the help of crusaders from northern Europe on their way to the Holy Land. Lisbon became the capital about a century later, in 1255.

1179 **The Pope recognises the Kingdom of Portugal**

In the papal bull Manifestis Probatum, Pope Alexander III recognised Afonso Henriques as king of an independent Portugal. It is often called the founding document of the country.

1386

The Treaty of Windsor is signed

After English archers helped Portugal beat Castile at the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, King John I and England signed a pact of lasting friendship, sealed by his marriage to the English princess Philippa of Lancaster. The alliance is still in force today.

1415

Portugal captures Ceuta

King John I and his sons, among them the young Prince Henry, later called Henry the Navigator, took the North African port of Ceuta. It is seen as the start of the Portuguese overseas empire.

1498

Vasco da Gama reaches India

After sailing around the southern tip of Africa, Vasco da Gama landed near Calicut (Kozhikode) in India on 20 May 1498. He had opened the first sea route from Europe to Asia, and the spice trade made Lisbon rich.

1500

Cabral lands in Brazil

A fleet led by Pedro Álvares Cabral, on its way to India, sailed far out into the Atlantic and on 22 April 1500 reached the coast of Brazil, which Cabral claimed for Portugal.

1580

Portugal passes to the Spanish king

King Sebastian died in battle in Morocco in 1578 and his successor left no heir. Philip II of Spain claimed the throne, and for sixty years, from 1580 to 1640, Spain's kings were also kings of Portugal.

1640

Portugal regains its independence

On 1 December 1640 the Duke of Braganza was proclaimed King John IV of Portugal. After years of war, Spain accepted Portugal's independence in 1668. The

date, 1 December, is a national holiday.

1755 **An earthquake destroys Lisbon**

On the morning of 1 November 1755, All Saints' Day, a huge earthquake, followed by a tsunami and fires, almost completely destroyed Lisbon. Tens of thousands died. The city centre, the Baixa, was rebuilt with a new grid of straight streets.

1807 **The royal court sails for Brazil**

Days before Napoleon's army reached Lisbon, the royal family and about 10,000 courtiers sailed for Brazil. From 1808 to 1821 Rio de Janeiro was the capital of the Portuguese empire.

1910 **Portugal becomes a republic**

On 5 October 1910 a revolution ended centuries of monarchy, and the republic was proclaimed from the balcony of Lisbon's city hall. The last king, Manuel II, went into exile in England.

1974 **The Carnation Revolution**

On 25 April 1974 army officers overthrew the Estado Novo, the dictatorship built by António de Oliveira Salazar, with very little bloodshed. People put red carnations into the soldiers' guns, which gave the revolution its name. Democracy followed, and Portugal's African colonies soon became independent.

1986 **Portugal joins the European Community**

Portugal joined the European Economic Community, today's European Union, on 1 January 1986, on the same day as Spain.

1999

Macau is handed back to China

At midnight on 20 December 1999 Portugal handed Macau, its last territory in Asia, to China, ending 442 years of Portuguese rule there.

What people eat in Portugal

Portuguese cooking is simple and generous: good olive oil, garlic, fresh fish and seafood, pork, bread and a great love of sweets. Lunch and dinner usually begin with a soup, such as caldo verde, followed by a main course of fish or meat, then dessert, and end with a small, strong coffee.

Bacalhau à Brás

Lisbon (the Bairro Alto quarter)

Shredded salt cod, onions and very thin fried potato sticks, bound together with softly scrambled egg and finished with black olives and parsley.

Caldo verde

Minho, northern Portugal

'Green broth': a potato soup filled with very finely shredded Portuguese cabbage or kale, served with a slice of chouriço sausage and a drizzle of olive oil.

Pastel de nata (Pastéis de nata (plural))

Belém, Lisbon

A small tart of crisp, flaky pastry filled with egg custard, baked in a very hot oven until the top is blistered and dark in spots. Often dusted with cinnamon and eaten with a coffee.

Grilled sardines (Sardinhas assadas)

The whole coast, above all Lisbon

Whole fresh sardines sprinkled with coarse salt and grilled over charcoal, eaten with boiled potatoes, a salad of peppers, or simply on a slice of bread.

Arroz doce

All over Portugal

A creamy rice pudding flavoured with lemon peel and enriched with egg yolks, served cold with patterns of ground cinnamon drawn on top.

Francesinha

Porto

A towering sandwich of bread, steak, ham and sausage, covered in melted cheese and a hot tomato and beer sauce, usually with chips on the side.

Tripas à moda do Porto

Porto

A hearty stew of tripe with white beans, sausage and carrots, served with rice.

Bifana

All over Portugal

Thin slices of pork simmered with garlic and white wine, served hot in a soft bread roll, often with mustard. A cheap, quick lunch at a café counter.

Cataplana

The Algarve

Clams, prawns, fish or pork cooked with onion, peppers, tomato, garlic and white wine in a cataplana, a hinged copper pan shaped like two clam shells that closes tightly and steams the food.

Cozido à portuguesa

All over Portugal

A big boiled dinner of several meats and smoked sausages with cabbage, potatoes, carrots and turnips, a winter favourite and one of the national dishes.

Polvo à lagareiro

Trás-os-Montes and all over Portugal

Tender roasted octopus with small 'punched' potatoes, garlic and a very generous pouring of olive oil. It is often eaten on Christmas Eve.

Alheira

Mirandela and Trás-os-Montes

A soft smoked sausage of bread and garlic mixed with meat, traditionally poultry or game. Most alheiras today, including the protected Alheira de Mirandela, also contain pork. It is usually fried and served with chips and a fried egg.

Serra da Estrela cheese (Queijo Serra da Estrela)

Serra da Estrela mountains

A soft, creamy cheese made from raw sheep's milk curdled with thistle flowers instead of rennet. When young it is soft enough to be almost runny.

Port wine (Vinho do Porto)

The Douro Valley

A sweet fortified wine, usually red, made from grapes grown on the steep terraces of the Douro Valley and often served with dessert.

Vinho verde

The Minho, northern Portugal

A light, fresh and often slightly sparkling wine, usually white, drunk young and chilled.

Ginjinha (Ginjinha or ginja)

Lisbon and Óbidos

A sweet sour-cherry liqueur served in a small shot glass, often with a cherry at the bottom.

At the table

- Lunch is usually between noon and about 2:30 pm, and dinner between about 7:30 and 10:30 pm.
- Bread, olives, cheese or other starters (the 'couvert') are often put on the table without being ordered. You pay for them only if you eat them, so send them back if you do not want them.
- Restaurants must offer free tap water to their customers.
- Say 'Bom apetite' to wish people a good meal before eating.
- A meal usually ends with a small, strong coffee. Ask for 'um café' and you get an espresso.

Bacalhau à Brás

Shredded salt cod, onions and very thin fried potato sticks, bound together with softly scrambled egg and finished with black olives and parsley.

Ingredients

- 400 g salt cod, soaked in advance in cold water in the fridge for 24 to 48 hours, changing the water several times
- 500 g potatoes, cut into very thin matchsticks (or 150 g ready-made potato sticks)
- Oil for frying
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 6 eggs (use pasteurised eggs if serving pregnant women, young children, older people or anyone with a weak immune system, or cook until firm)
- A handful of black olives and chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Black pepper

Method

1. Drain the soaked cod, remove the skin and bones and pull the flesh into fine shreds.
2. Fry the potato matchsticks in hot oil in batches until golden, then drain them on kitchen paper.
3. In a wide pan, cook the onions and garlic gently in the olive oil for about 10 minutes until soft and golden.

4. Add the cod and cook for 5 minutes, stirring, then stir in the fried potatoes.
5. Beat the eggs with black pepper, pour them into the pan over low heat and stir until they are softly set. Taste before adding salt, as the cod is salty.
6. Serve at once, topped with black olives and parsley.

Caldo verde

'Green broth': a potato soup filled with very finely shredded Portuguese cabbage or kale, served with a slice of chouriço sausage and a drizzle of olive oil.

Ingredients

- 500 g floury potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1.5 litres water
- 250 g Portuguese cabbage (couve-galega) or kale, shredded as thinly as possible
- 100 g chouriço or other smoked sausage, sliced (optional)
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and black pepper

Method

1. Put the potatoes, onion, garlic and water in a pot with a little salt. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 20 minutes until the potatoes are very soft.
2. Blend or mash everything until smooth, then stir in 2 tablespoons of olive oil.
3. Bring back to a simmer, add the shredded greens and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until they are bright green and just tender.
4. Meanwhile, fry the chouriço slices briefly in a dry pan.

5. Season, ladle into bowls, add a few slices of chouriço and a drizzle of olive oil. Serve with bread.

Pastel de nata

A small tart of crisp, flaky pastry filled with egg custard, baked in a very hot oven until the top is blistered and dark in spots. Often dusted with cinnamon and eaten with a coffee.

Ingredients

- 1 sheet (about 320 g) ready-rolled all-butter puff pastry
- 250 ml whole milk
- 25 g plain flour
- 1 cinnamon stick and a strip of lemon peel
- 200 g sugar
- 100 ml water
- 4 egg yolks
- Ground cinnamon and icing sugar, to serve

Method

1. Heat the oven to its highest setting (at least 250 °C) and butter a 12-hole muffin tin.
2. Roll the pastry up tightly into a log, cut it into 12 slices and press each slice, cut side up, into a hole of the tin with a wet thumb, so the pastry comes up the sides.
3. Boil the sugar, water and cinnamon stick for 3 minutes to make a syrup.
4. Whisk the flour into the milk with the lemon peel and heat, stirring, until it thickens. Take it off the heat and stir in the syrup. Remove the cinnamon and peel and let it cool for 10 minutes.

5. Whisk in the egg yolks and fill each pastry case about three quarters full.
6. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes until the pastry is golden and the custard is set with dark spots on top. Cool a little and dust with cinnamon.

Grilled sardines

Whole fresh sardines sprinkled with coarse salt and grilled over charcoal, eaten with boiled potatoes, a salad of peppers, or simply on a slice of bread.

Ingredients

- 12 to 16 very fresh whole sardines, not gutted
- Coarse sea salt
- Olive oil
- Crusty bread or boiled potatoes
- A salad of roasted green peppers, tomato and onion

Method

1. Rinse the sardines and pat them dry. In Portugal they are grilled whole and not gutted, which keeps them moist, and many people do not scale them either.
2. Sprinkle generously with coarse salt and leave for about 30 minutes.
3. Heat a charcoal grill or a very hot griddle pan until it is very hot.
4. Grill the sardines for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until the skin is crisp and the flesh is opaque and comes away from the bone.
5. Serve at once with bread, potatoes and the pepper salad, and a drizzle of olive oil.

Arroz doce

A creamy rice pudding flavoured with lemon peel and enriched with egg yolks, served cold with patterns of ground cinnamon drawn on top.

Ingredients

- 200 g short-grain rice
- 400 ml water
- A pinch of salt
- Peel of 1 lemon, in wide strips
- 1 litre whole milk, warmed
- 200 g sugar
- 3 egg yolks
- Ground cinnamon, to decorate

Method

1. Cook the rice in the water with the salt and lemon peel until the water is almost all absorbed, about 10 minutes.
2. Add the warm milk a ladle at a time and simmer gently, stirring often, for about 30 minutes, until the rice is soft and creamy.
3. Stir in the sugar until it dissolves, then take the pan off the heat and remove the lemon peel.
4. Beat the egg yolks with a few spoonfuls of the hot rice, then stir them into the pan. Cook over low heat for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring, until thick, so the yolks are fully cooked.

5. Pour into a serving dish, let it cool and draw a lattice of ground cinnamon on top.

Useful phrases

Bom dia

bohn DEE-ah · Good morning

Boa tarde

BOH-ah TARD · Good afternoon

Boa noite

BOH-ah NOYT · Good evening, good night

Olá, tudo bem?

oh-LAH, TOO-doo BAYNG · Hi, how are you doing?

Muito obrigado / Muito obrigada

MWEEN-too oh-bree-GAH-doo / -dah · Thank you very much (said by a man / by a woman)

De nada

d' NAH-dah · You're welcome

Desculpe

dish-KOOLP · Sorry, excuse me

Com licença

kohn lee-SEN-sah · Excuse me, may I get past?

Fala inglês?

FAH-lah een-GLAYSH · Do you speak English?

Não percebo

nowng per-SAY-boo · I don't understand

Quanto custa?

KWAN-too KOOSH-tah · How much does it cost?

Um café, por favor

oong kah-FEH, poor fah-VOR · An espresso, please

A conta, por favor

ah KON-tah, poor fah-VOR · The bill, please

Onde é a casa de banho?

OHND EH ah KAH-zah d' BAH-nyoo · Where is the toilet?

Um bilhete para o Porto, se faz favor

oong bee-LYET PAH-rah oo POR-too, s' fash fah-VOR · One ticket to Porto, please

Saúde!

sah-OOD · Cheers! (literally 'health')

Até logo

ah-TEH LOH-goo · See you later

Socorro!

soo-KOH-rroo · Help!

Things you might not know

1. Portugal and England (today the United Kingdom) have the oldest alliance in the world that is still in force, sealed by the Treaty of Windsor in 1386.
2. Portugal produces about half of the world's cork. The bark of the cork oak is stripped by hand about every nine years, and the tree is never cut down for it.
3. Guinness World Records lists Livraria Bertrand in Lisbon, founded in 1732, as the oldest operating bookshop in the world.
4. Giant waves at Nazaré, pushed up by a deep underwater canyon, draw surfers from all over the world. As of 2026, the Guinness world record for the biggest wave surfed is a wave of about 26 metres ridden there in 2020 by the German surfer Sebastian Steudtner.
5. Japanese tempura is thought to come from 'peixinhos da horta', green beans fried in batter, brought to Japan by Portuguese missionaries in the 1500s.
6. Catherine of Braganza, a Portuguese princess who married King Charles II in 1662, is credited with making tea drinking fashionable in England. Her dowry included Bombay (today Mumbai).
7. Portuguese is the fifth most spoken native language in the world. Far more people speak it in Brazil than in Portugal.
8. Portuguese children usually carry their mother's surname before their father's, the opposite order to Spain.

9. Fado, the soulful song of Lisbon, was added to UNESCO's list of intangible heritage in 2011. The word comes from the Latin 'fatum', fate.
10. Lisbon's 25 de Abril Bridge is painted the same 'International Orange' as the Golden Gate Bridge. It opened in 1966 as the Salazar Bridge and was renamed after the revolution of 1974.
11. The colourful Rooster of Barcelos, a favourite souvenir, comes from a legend about a roasted rooster that stood up and crowed to prove a pilgrim innocent.
12. Portugal's national day, 10 June, marks the death in 1580 of Luís de Camões, the poet of the great sea epic 'The Lusiads'.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Portugal, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Bacalhau à Brás or Caldo verde? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Portugal joins the European Community (1986). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Macau is handed back to China (1999). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Belém Tower, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Portugal, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Portugal?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Queijo Serra da Estrela, Portugal's famous mountain cheese, is made from sheep's milk.

- A) True
- B) False

2. The francesinha, a huge sandwich covered in melted cheese and a beer and tomato sauce, is the pride of which city?

- A) Faro
- B) Évora
- C) Porto
- D) Lisbon

3. When it opened in 1882, what powered the funicular railway up to Bom Jesus do Monte in Braga?

- A) Water
- B) Electricity
- C) Horses
- D) Steam

4. In 1498 Vasco da Gama became the first European to reach which country by sailing around Africa?

- A) Brazil
- B) China
- C) Japan

D) India

5. Japanese tempura is thought to come from 'peixinhos da horta', brought to Japan by the Portuguese. What are peixinhos da horta?

- A) Grilled sardines
- B) Custard tarts
- C) Salt cod fritters
- D) Green beans fried in batter

6. Which number do you call in an emergency in Portugal?

- A) 999
- B) 911
- C) 112
- D) 000

7. Portugal produces about half of the world's supply of what?

- A) Rubber
- B) Cork
- C) Olive oil
- D) Coffee

8. Pena Palace in Sintra was built in the 1100s by Portugal's first king.

- A) True
- B) False

9. You are looking for the 'casa de banho'. What are you looking for?

- A) The beach
- B) The bedroom
- C) The toilet
- D) The bank

10. People from Porto are nicknamed 'tripeiros'. What does it mean?

- A) Tripe eaters
- B) Bridge builders
- C) Wine tasters
- D) Boat people

11. In Portugal, children usually have their mother's surname before their father's.

- A) True
- B) False

12. What tip is customary for good service in a Portuguese restaurant?

- A) About 5 to 10 percent
- B) Tipping is forbidden
- C) At least 25 percent
- D) Exactly 20 percent, by law

Quiz answers

1. True

True. It is made from raw sheep's milk, curdled with thistle flowers instead of rennet.

2. C) Porto

The francesinha comes from Porto, where it was first served in 1953.

3. A) Water

The funicular works with water: a water tank on the car going down pulls the other car up. It was the first funicular built in the Iberian Peninsula.

4. D) India

Vasco da Gama reached India, landing near Calicut on 20 May 1498. Brazil was reached by Cabral in 1500, and the Portuguese first reached Japan in the 1540s.

5. D) Green beans fried in batter

Peixinhos da horta, 'little fish from the garden', are green beans fried in batter. Portuguese missionaries brought the idea to Japan in the 1500s.

6. C) 112

112 is the emergency number in Portugal, as in the rest of the European Union.

7. B) Cork

Portugal produces about half of the world's cork, stripped from the bark of cork oaks about every nine years.

8. False

False. The palace was built from 1842 to 1854 for King Ferdinand II, on the site of an old monastery.

9. C) The toilet

Casa de banho is the toilet or bathroom. Ask 'Onde é a casa de banho?'

10. A) Tripe eaters

Tripeiros means tripe eaters. Legend says Porto gave its good meat to the fleet sailing to Ceuta in 1415 and kept only the tripe, which it still cooks as tripas à moda do Porto.

11. True

True. The mother's surname usually comes first and the father's last, the opposite of the traditional Spanish order.

12. A) About 5 to 10 percent

Service is included, but leaving about 5 to 10 percent for good service is customary.

Portugal visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

Play the interactive version, collect a stamp in your passport:

<https://worldstroll.com/countries/portugal>