

Loving Lisboa:

Two Days in the Portuguese Capital

As romantic as Paris, as fun as Madrid, as laid-back as Rome, but small enough to fit in their pockets – Lisbon is faded, beautiful and difficult to leave. Aesthetically, it's a rollercoaster ride through seven hills providing innumerable beautiful vistas, a compact city centre with perfectly aligned cobbled streets, and neighbourhoods that vary from the bohemian to the very chic. Culturally, this is a city that makes time for the important things in life – relaxing over leisurely meals, browsing through centuries-old shops, meandering through labyrinthine alleys with a drink in hand. Sound like your ideal weekend? Read on...

FADO & FLEA MARKETS

If you are to live life like a Lisboeta, the day must start with a long lie-in followed by a strong coffee and indulgent pastry at one of the many cafés in stumbling distance from most hotels. The sun should be shining so make sure you get a table outside – you can sit and soak up the ambience (not to mention the rays) as the city awakens and starts to bustle.

Fully fortified, set off to the east of the city centre to explore lively **Alfama**, Lisbon's oldest neighbourhood. With its jumble of steep cobbled lanes, skinny houses and lines of fluttering laundry, Alfama's Moorish heritage is strongly evident and it's a pleasure simply to walk around, letting your senses lead the way.

If you prefer a purpose and want to learn more about the city you're exploring, make your first stop the **Casa do Fado e de Guitarra Portuguesa** (Largo do Chafariz de Dentro; www.egeac.pt). Everything you need to know about the melancholy *fado* music that is so intrinsic to Portuguese culture is here, from its working-class Alfama roots to a slightly kitsch recreated fado house.

By the time you leave you'll need cheering up so take yourself off for a very long, very leisurely seafood lunch on the riverfront at the **Jardim do Marisco** (Avenida Infante dom Henrique 21; www.jardimdomarisco.pt). For something a little less formal head to **Malmequer Bemmequer** (Rua de São Miguel 23-5) for simple but delicious dishes cooked on a charcoal grill.

Spend the afternoon dropping into friendly hole-in-the-wall grocery stores, haggling for bric-a-brac in the **Feira da Ladra** (flea market; São Vicente, Campo de Santa Clara, Saturday & Tuesday only) and chilling out with the kissing couples and old men playing cards on the local *miradouros* (outdoor terraces), with marvellous views of Lisbon and the river. For the best view of all make your way to the Castelo de São Jorge as the sun begins to set and enjoy a nice cold beer at the **Largo das Portas do Sol**.

If lunch seems a long time ago – or even if it doesn't – why not think about recharging those batteries ready for the night ahead? For a table with a view we recommend a patio spot at **Casa do Leão** (Rua Castelo de São Jorge), where traditional Portuguese fare is skilfully prepared to quality standards. Then it might be time to nip back to the hotel for that traditional Mediterranean siesta before you dive head first into one of Lisbon's long and blurry evenings.

This city is a veritable night owl, with a relaxed yet constantly evolving scene that caters to all tastes. See it all come to life in the **Bairro Alto**, a web of narrow streets packed with unique, funky, interesting bars that cry out to be explored. We can't resist recommending fabulously kitsch **Pavilhão Chines Rua** (Dom Pedro V 89-91) but the best approach is just to wander and

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halt wherever takes you fancy. Come 1am (especially at the weekends and in summer) and you won't even see the inside of a bar due to the crowds, but there's much more fun to be had heading to Rua da Atalaia, grabbing a takeaway caipirinha and just following your nose.

LAZY DAYS IN BELÉM

Whether the next day is spent in recovery mode or you want to explore more of the city, **Belém** is arguably the most pleasurable and relaxing place to pass time in Lisbon. Sunny outdoor restaurants and tiny little cafés serving the famous *pasties de Belém* (custard tarts) complement its waterside location, exuberant architecture, grand squares and exotic tropical gardens.

There's as much to see and do as there are reasons to sit and watch, depending how the mood takes you. Exercise your brain at the **Museu de Marinha** (Maritime Museum; <http://museu.marinha.pt>) or the **Museu Nacional de Arqueologia** (National Museum of Archaeology; www.mnarqueologia-ipmuseus.pt) both on the Praça do Império. Or pander to your tastebuds with snacks-a-plenty at **Pastéis de Belém** (Rua de Belém; www.pasteisdebelem.pt) before retiring to rest those weary legs with the peacocks under the shady palms of **Jardim Botânico da Ajuda**.

Head back into town in the evening to listen to fado, a soulful end to a peaceful day. Finding somewhere that feels like the genuine article and not a formulaic tourist trap is tricky. Keep your ears strained for tucked-away bars giving local performances as you wander the Alfama, or try **A Baiuca** (Rua de São Miguel). This is a friendly little place, hosting open fado and serving up simple unpretentious food and a lively atmosphere that gets better as the wine flows and the night wears on. Paraphrasing a famous

fado lyric, you'll discover that Lisbon is most enchanting when it's time to bid farewell.

SLEEPING

Budget:

Pensão Londres (www.pensaolondres.com.pt; ☎ 213 462 203) Best-value rooms with a view plus great access to the Bairro Alto.

Midrange:

York House (www.yorkhouselisboa.com; ☎ 213 962 435) A charming retreat from city life in a converted 17th-century convent.

Top end:

Solar do Castelo (www.heritage.pt; ☎ 218 806 050) A romantic hotel that combines a medieval feel with contemporary touches.

For more reviews of Lisbon accommodation, check out the Sleep section on www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation.

By Imogen Hall

For the complete guide to Lisbon grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *Best of Lisbon* guide, available online at shop.lonelyplanet.com.

