

Lisbon VS Porto

Both of these Portuguese cities make a lovely autumn weekend away. But which to go for?



Lisbon

Walk the sights

The Portuguese capital swims in history and with its rolling hills and Tagus River, it's a joy to explore. Vintage Tram 28 trundles up past the cathedral towards St George's Castle (castelodesaojorge.pt), which offers sweeping views of this spectacular city. The Belém district is awash with churches, as well as monuments to Portugal's great age of discoveries. The Belém Tower (torrebelem.pt) peels back the centuries, while the old Expo 98 site of Parque das Nações reveals Lisbon's modern side. The cable car across the riverside park is a must-do, as is Europe's largest aquarium, Oceanário (oceanario.pt).

Where to stay

The Pousada de Lisboa is worth a splurge. It's set in an historic building overlooking the Praça do Comércio. Doubles from £155 (pousadas.pt).

Where to eat

Hit the queues for lunch at Cervejaria Ramiro (cervejariaramiro.pt) to savour



Vintage trams rattle around the city's steep, narrow streets



Feast on traditional pastries at Pastéis de Belém

'History lovers will be in their element here'

superb value boat-fresh seafood. For a treat, enjoy dinner in the palatial surrounds of the Pestana Palace (pestanapalace.lisbon.com) – the Valle Flôr has to be Portugal's most dramatic restaurant. At the other end of the scale, the Alfama district is sprinkled with simple restaurants serving fresh sardines and homemade wine. Pastéis de Belém (pasteisdebelem.pt) is a must for anyone with a sweet tooth. They've been making those delicious custard tarts here since 1837!

Where to shop

A slew of characterful shops dot the Baixa and the Bairro Alto quarters, with more



Hit the shops and cafés at Praça do Comércio

Espresso and custard tart break, anyone?



upmarket stores on Avenida da Liberdade and the charming Chiado district. Popular souvenirs include wicker baskets, lace and pottery. Lisbon's most famous market is the Feira da Ladra, which bursts alive on Tuesday and Saturday on the Campo de Santa Clara. The Lisboa Card (visitlisboa.com) is available from tourist offices, offering discounts at more than 100 shops. Head to the Parque das Nações for decent malls.

Book it

Easyjet (easyjet.com) offers flights from London Gatwick, Luton, Bristol and Edinburgh, from £30.49 one way.

The verdict

Lisbon suits everyone, with its historic charm bursting forth at every turn. And if your passions are shopping and food then you're sure to want to return again and again.

Porto

Walk the sights

The beautiful riverfront Ribeira quarter is the heart of tourist Porto. It's easy to see why it's been recognised on UNESCO's world heritage list. The old stone streets wind dreamily down towards the Douro River, where views of the port houses tempt across the water. Make sure to visit the most impressive building in the city, the neoclassical Palácio da Bolsa (palaciobolsa.com). Porto is famous for its bridges, both the ultra modern and the historic. You can walk across the Dom Luís I Bridge, a double-decked metal arch affair. Today, the old wooden boats that used to make the journey from the port vineyards ferry tourists, so take a trip with Douro Acima (douroacima.pt). Porto was named European city of culture in 2001. Find out why at concert hall Casa da Música (casadamusica.com).

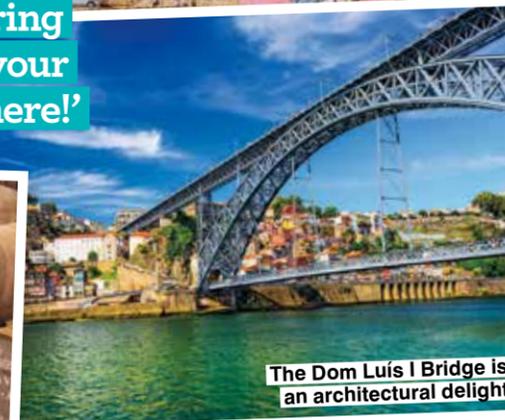


Go for a tour and tasting at a port house



Nab a river view at the Pestana Vintage Porto hotel

'If wine and wandering are on your list, go here!'



The Dom Luís I Bridge is an architectural delight

Where to stay

The luxurious Pestana Vintage Porto hotel (pestana.com) is in the heart of the Ribeira waterfront. Make sure to book a river view. Doubles from £135.

Where to eat

Porto's fiercely proud, tripe-eating citizens are known as the tripeiros, but if you don't fancy this traditional delicacy, head for lunch at Dom Tonho (dtonho.com) in the Ribeira for river views and local fish and meat dishes. The tapas-style hors d'oeuvres are a highlight. Sitting on the Atlantic coast, it's no surprise that seafood is a major draw in Porto. For a bountiful feast, follow the locals to busy Gambamar (marisqueiragambamar.pt). The most obvious alcoholic tittle is, of course,

port. The Douro Valley also produces some excellent red and white wines, which are often great value.

Where to shop

Go crazy with your credit card in the Ribeira, but make sure you visit a port house too. Try Graham's (grahams-port.com) for a free tour and tastings, plus a shop to stock up on all the port and table wines they produce.

Book it

Easyjet (easyjet.com) offers flights from London Gatwick, Luton, Bristol and Manchester from £34.49pp.

The verdict

With its picturesque port and lively cultural scene, Porto is a strong weekend away contender – plus it will steal the heart of wine fans!

Words: Robin McKelvie Photos: Alamy