LIFE IN PORTUGAL

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD: best comfort at affordable prices

In Portugal, you can stay in the best Hotels at affordable prices, if we compare it to life in Italy. Portugal has a long sea-faring heritage and with the Atlantic Ocean flanking the entire west and southern boundaries of the country, it is no surprise that fish and seafood play such an important role in the Portuguese gastronomy.

At breakfast you can enjoy baked products, and sweet pastries, local cold meats and cheeses, honey from nearby hives and a wide variety of fresh fruit.

Lunch can be fish or meat, (among the meat delicatessen, you can taste leitao, a special kind of pork meat served with orange segments), or a wonderful dish of rice with fish. Dining at the fish market in Aveiro city centre is a great gastronomic experience. The Mercado do Peixe, or fish market, was first built in 1904 but has been entirely rebuilt in recent years, with huge panes of glass offering extensive views out to the Sao Roque canal, whilst at the same time bringing the maritime atmosphere right into the building.

Dinner can vary from household to household, and again it can be fish or meat. And you can usually have a soup before the main meal. Among the soups, caldo verde is the most famous.

Many families also end their meals with a sobremesa, that is a dessert.

Let us not forget about the most famous pastry in Aveiro and, perhaps, one of the most renowned in the country: “ovos moles”. Ovos moles are a local delicacy made with eggs yolks and sugar, and literally mean ‘soft eggs’. You must not leave Aveiro without trying one of this, which you can find in almost everywhere in the city centre.

Last, but certainly not least, bacalhau is the king of Portuguese food. You can taste at least 365 recipes of this delicious and traditional cod (one per day, they say) and if you are in Aveiro, there is an interesting Museum nearby (in Ilhavo), where you can learn the whole history of the bacalhau fishing tradition, and you can also see the real fish alive in water.

HEALTH

If you want to live and work in Portugal and you want to benefit from SNS healthcare you should register with the Health Centre in the area where you live as soon as you start a job, presenting a valid identity document (identity card or passport), a social security beneficiary’s card and a document proving that you are a resident.

The Health Centre will issue an SNS user's card in your name and inform you who your family doctor is.

Health Centres provide general practice and family medicine, public healthcare, nursing, immunisation and some diagnostic tests. Hospitals have out-patient (specialist consultants), in-patient and emergency services.

Beneficiaries pay a taxa moderadora [small charge] for each appointment or treatment provided in the SNS. A regular appointment in a Health Centre, for example, costs EUR 2.20, while an emergency appointment in a hospital costs EUR 9.40.
In addition to Health Centres and public hospitals, various private health establishments and health practitioners operate on a freelance basis and provide additional sources of healthcare, providing services privately or by means of agreements or conventions with the SNS.

As European citizens, we can use our European Health Insurance Card until a SNS user’s card is issued. For short stays, that card is enough.

**MEDICINES**

The Portuguese State pays part of the cost of most medicines, though some are totally subsidised, particularly those which are vital for treating certain illnesses.

SNS patients are partially subsidised when they purchase medicines prescribed by SNS doctors or private doctors, provided they present their SNS user’s card.

Prescription medicines are mainly sold in chemists (though the sale of medicines in commercial spaces, such as supermarkets or convenience stores, has been permitted since the end of 2005, provided they are duly controlled by qualified staff). You can recognize a chemist by a green cross on a white background.

**TRANSPORTS**

Transports in Portugal vary according to distance and cities. In fact the main cities are well connected and, for example, from Porto to Aveiro, the metropolitan train is fast and cheap.

On the other hand if you want to travel locally by bus, it’s not always easy. People in Aveiro don't seem to trust buses much, and information is not always correct. However, if you get to know the correct info about timetables, stops and tickets, you will be surprised to find out that the local trasport is efficient and punctual.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT CITY AFTER LISBOA: COIMBRA**

Lying halfway between Lisboa and Porto in the Beiras region of central Portugal, Coimbra is famous for its university - the oldest in the country - and lively cultural institutions, Coimbra is also a busy commercial hub with its many shops, boutiques, and appetizing choice of cafés and restaurants. The city center is divided into two neighborhoods, the Lower Town and the Upper Town. Its historic heart lies high on Alcaçova hill, known to the Romans as Aeminium. Here, medieval convents, cathedrals, and some fine museums cluster around the old University.

Kings were born in Coimbra; they are entombed here, too. Indeed, it was once the proud capital of the Portuguese nation. The University of Coimbra is one of the oldest universities in Europe. It was originally founded in Lisbon in 1290 by King Dinis, but was transferred to Coimbra in 1537 and located in what used to be a medieval palace. Partly rebuilt in the 17th and 18th centuries in Baroque and neo-classical styles, this is the Old University where some of the most celebrated tourist attractions in Coimbra can be found. Another attraction is the students' neighbourhood, where the communities of students have created their own atmosphere in the alleys of the old city.

**AVEIRO**

About 40 minutes northwest of Coimbra, the old port and fishing town of Aveiro lies on the east side of the Ria de Aveiro, a fish-filled lagoon. As well as being an attractive town, Aveiro boasts beautiful beaches and an interesting architecture. Aveiro is often compared with Amsterdam or Venice, despite having only three canals.
The traditional boats, called barcos moliceiros, were once used to collect seaweed, and then salt. Now they take tourists on board for appealing tours of the canals. Along the way, visitors can see some magnificent Art Nouveau buildings and house fronts decorated with azulejos. Top tourist attractions in Aveiro include the **Catedral de Sao Domingos**, presented to the Dominicans by the Infante Dom Pedro and consecrated in 1464. Opposite the cathedral, the former Dominican convent, Convento de Jesús, houses the **Museu de Aveiro**. This impressive museum displays an excellent collection of Portuguese Baroque art, as well as sculpture, archaeological exhibits, and pictures of the 15th to 18th centuries. In the vestibule of the church is the Baroque tomb of St. Joana, the patron saint of the city.