Iberian Magic!

Exploring the Heart of Portugal with Mountain Lake PBS

Town of Évora

This October join Mountain Lake PBS to discover Portugal—one of Europe’s smallest but most exciting countries.

We’ll begin in the north, on the vineyard-terraced slopes of the Douro River where port, Portugal’s signature fortified wine, has been tended for centuries in the oldest demarcated wine region in the world. Then we’ll head inland across Portugal’s expansive flatlands towards the Alentejo region, where cliff-top castles, Roman ruins and medieval churches coexist. Finally, we’ll leave the rural landscape behind and immerse ourselves in the culture and culinary sophistication of Lisbon, the City of Seven Hills.

Our itinerary gives us ample time to explore and be inspired. We might be sampling the local port from a pre-eminent quinta or wine estate in the Douro Valley, enjoying a craft exhibition or fado performance, or marveling at antique azulejos; tiles decorated in the classic Portuguese color palette of blues and white. Slowly, the stories of the history, religion, and culture of this open and welcoming country will unfold.

Throughout our journey, we’ll also experience the bounty of the Portuguese table—freshly baked bread, olives, cheese, chargrilled fish, smoked meats and regional pastries. Simple cooking, perfectly prepared, is rooted in the vibrant life of Portugal’s coastline and countryside.

Superb lodging awaits us throughout the trip, from manor-house, boutique luxury in Porto to traditional, historic pousadas in Évora and Lisbon. Join us and experience the magic of Portugal!

September 29 – October 9, 2024

Tour begins September 30 in Porto, Portugal

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

• Tours of major sites and travel in three beautiful and diverse regions of Portugal, including guided tours in Porto, Évora, Monsaraz, Sintra and Lisbon.
• Port wine tastings and a river cruise in the Douro Valley
• Excursion to the royal sanctuary of Sintra
• Performance of fado, Lisbon’s traditional songs
• Deluxe 5-star accommodations in three hotels
• Fine dining in city and countryside: breakfast daily, 7 lunches and 5 dinners
• Private air-conditioned motorcoach transportation to all destinations in the itinerary including excursions
• Free time for relaxing and further sight-seeing

LIMITED TO 25 PARTICIPANTS
Baroque library and bell tower. After lunch, we continue on to our late afternoon arrival and check in at the Pousada Convento Évora; a converted 15th century convent in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage town of Évora. The gracious staff will have a supper of homemade and locally sourced tapas ready for us upon arrival in the village.

Friday, October 4 [Évora]

ÉVORA: ANCIENT CITY OF KINGS

Évora’s origins date from the Roman era, but its golden age was in the 16th century when the city was chosen by the Portuguese kings as their place of residence. With our private guide, we’ll explore the many treasures Évora has to offer, including its Roman temple and ancient walls, Moorish-influenced architecture, and medieval cathedrals, palaces and squares. Two gems include the 12th century Roman-Gothic Se Catedral de Évora, situated on the city’s highest point with its commanding view of the historic center, and the Capello da Ossos, whose name derives from the human skulls and bones that cover the interior walls. At lunch, we’ll savor more of the rich gastronomy of the region, seasoned with the traditional flavorings of the Alentejo—mint, coriander, and purslane. The rest of the afternoon and your evening is free for dinner on your own.

Saturday, October 5 [Évora]

MONSARAZ: WHISPERS OF THE PAST

Today’s full-day excursion with our private guide takes us to the medieval village of Monsaraz—probably the most beautiful monument village in Portugal. En route, prehistoric stone monoliths and ancient olive trees dot the fields surrounding this walled town, one of the oldest settlements in Portugal. Enter narrow lanes lined with whitewashed stone cottages of lime and schist and you are transported back to earlier times. With a mere 150 current residents, the town is nonetheless a living history of Portugal’s past as well as a vibrant center for traditional crafts, including ceramics and weaving, and a variety of products made from the famous Portuguese cork. Enjoy a traditional, local lunch overlooking the Alqueva Dam. Our late afternoon return to Évora leaves your evening free for more exploring and dinner on your own.

Sunday, September 29

Flights from the US, with arrival the following day.

Monday, September 30 [Porto]

BEM VINDA! [WELCOME!]

From your arrival at Porto Airport (OPO), our private motorcoach waits to take us to our first home, the Hotel Infante Sagre with old-world allure, steps from Porto’s iconic attractions. We celebrate our arrival with a welcome reception at the hotel followed by a gala dinner.

Tuesday, October 1 [Porto]

PORTUGAL’S FORTIFIED WINE

Breakfast daily at all three hotels. From Porto, we set out this morning on our day-long excursion to explore the beautiful Douro Valley. Surrounded by terraced vineyards stretching up the river, we stop along the way at one of the many quintas—wine-producing estates with the perfect microclimate for producing the region’s celebrated port wine. We’ll sample the various types of port—lawny, white, crusted, vintage—and learn more about this fascinating slice of Portuguese history and viniculture and enjoy lunch at the vineyard. A traditional rabelo boat awaits us in the afternoon for a cruise on the Douro before our late afternoon return to Porto and a free evening.

Wednesday, October 2 [Porto]

POSTCARD PORTO

This morning we set off to explore the pretty city carved in two by the Duoro River, that gave Portugal’s signature wine its name. Porto’s historic quarter, the Ribeira, a narrow warren of cobblestone streets along the river, is also a UNESCO World Heritage site. Our private guided tour gives us a front-row look at Porto’s many bridges, its breezy waterfront promenade, and rows of pastel-colored houses, many bejeweled with brightly colored tiles and roofs of corrugated iron. After lunch and some free time to wander as you please, we cross the River Duoro once again to Vila Nova de Gaia, a hub of the Port wine industry, where barrels of wine and port have been loaded and unloaded for hundreds of years. We’ll tour one of the city’s premier port lodges and have dinner there.

Thursday, October 3 [Évora]

COIMBRA: MEDIEVAL MAGIC

Our travels continue this morning as we head southeast towards Évora, our home for the next three nights. Our journey takes us into the heart of the Alentejo region, Portugal’s vast interior flatland, dotted with cork trees, wheat fields and vineyards. Along the way, we tour the small town of Coimbra, once the capital of nascent Portugal in the Middle Ages. Steeped in history, Coimbra’s old town encircles its historic hilltop university, with its handsome
Sunday, October 6  [Lisbon]

SINTRA: FAIRYTALE LANDSCAPE

On our way to Lisbon, we stop off a world away in feeling and atmosphere from the busy capital. Nestled in the wooded hills of the Serra Mountains, Sintra, with cooler temperatures and misty forests, is where Portugal’s royalty decamped to pass their summers since the National Palace was built here in the 14th century and which we will privately tour. After lunch, we will head high up to the Palácio Nacional da Pena, the eclectic and colorful palace on the highest peak of the Serra de Sintra. We’ll end the day with a sunset toast on the beach at Cabo da Roca; the westernmost point in Europe. Upon our arrival in Lisbon, we check in at the Pousada Lisboa, a transformed home to kings and ministries superbly located in the heart of the city.

Monday, October 7  [Lisbon]

LISBON: CITY OF SEVEN HILLS

Set against the backdrop of the Atlantic Ocean, Lisbon’s weathered charm beckons us and we set off on a tour to introduce us to the wonders of Portugal’s light-filled capital. We’ll explore the city’s many diverse districts, each with its own distinct charm. Chiado is fashionable by day and trendy at night—lively and full of restaurants, shops and music. Belém, where Portugal’s maritime explorers set off in search of sea routes to the south and east, is filled today with parks and tree-lined plazas that offer a respite from the city’s bustle. And perhaps the most iconic, Alfama, where we will enjoy a good, local lunch, is one of the oldest districts replete with historic buildings around every twist and turn of its maze of cobblestoned streets. Tonight our dinner is at a traditional Fado house where you will hear the melancholy melodies sung for hundreds of years.

Tuesday, October 8  [Lisbon]

MORE LISBON

Today is a free day to explore more of Lisbon’s offerings, including world-class museums such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, one of Europe’s unsung treasures with an outstanding collection of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Islamic, Asian and European art. In the evening, we gather for our gala farewell dinner at a fine Lisbon restaurant close to the hotel.

Wednesday, October 9

ADEUS PORTUGAL!

Tour ends after breakfast. Coach transfer to Lisbon Airport (LIS) for return flights to US.

Itinerary is subject to change.
Meals in bold are included in the price of the tour.

The Portugal tour is organized exclusively for Mountain Lake PBS by THE GRAND TOUR Travel Company, Peterborough, New Hampshire.