

People & Country

The People

Leading seafaring and wealthy colonial power in the 15th century, an isolated and impoverished country in the 20th century and now an aspiring member of the European Union. The story of this little

Population	10 million
Surface	92,300km ²
Coastline	850km
Capital	Lisbon (500,000)
Language	Portuguese

country on the south-western corner of Europe couldn't be more chequered. Just like its larger rival and neighbour Spain, diverse peoples originally settled in Portugal. Then came the Celts followed by Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans. The 400-year Moorish rule underpins modern-day Portuguese identity. The Arabic impact extends beyond names like 'Al-garve', 'Al-entejo' and 'Al-bufeira' to the almond and fig trees of the Algarve, courtesy of the Caliphs. The omnipresent azulejos (the blue-&-white tiles covering churches and other buildings) were originally the work of Moorish artisans too. Today's Portugal was borne from the



CHRISTIAN CORRADI



ANDRÉE KAMPSCHULTE

Porto	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct
Rain (L/m ²)	164	115	22	147
Sun (hours/day)	4	7	10	6
Daytime (°C)	13	17	23	20
Night-time (°C)	6	9	14	12

Lisbon	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct
Rain (L/m ²)	117	72	16	119
Sun (hours/day)	5	8	11	6
Daytime (°C)	14	19	28	22
Night-time (°C)	9	12	18	15

Faro	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct
Rain (L/m ²)	80	41	4	63
Sun (hours/day)	5	9	12	7
Daytime (°C)	15	20	28	22
Night-time (°C)	8	11	19	15

reconquista – Christian re-occupation. In 1095, the Spanish King Afonso of León-Castilla presented Count Henrique the Earldom of Portugal for defeating the Moors in battle. His son, the imaginatively named Afonso Henrique, declared himself the first King of Portugal in 1143. By 1249 the Moors were driven out of their remaining strongholds in the Algarve, and just 200 years later Heinrich the Seaman began to turn a history of besiegement into a story of conquest...

Portugal became a major sea power and expanded. Heinrich himself discovered the Azores and Madeira, his loyal subject Bartholomew Dias



Lisbon

JACK R. JOHANSON



VALÉRY JONCHÉREY



JONO INGHIT



JONO INGHIT

claimed the West African coast for Portugal while Vasco da Gama sailed all the way to India. Portugal became so wealthy via its many colonies that countries as mighty as Spain couldn't oppose their smaller neighbour – even the 'New World' had to be shared, Brazil falling to the Portuguese crown. The rot finally set in with an invasion by Spanish troops in 1580 – they only stayed until 1640, but the growing power of the British and Dutch fleets weakened the kingdom even more. Bit by bit she lost her colonies and hence valuable resources; in 1822 Brazil became autonomous. There wasn't much left of once-mighty Portugal by the beginning of the 20th century. In 1910, Portugal was the first European country to embrace democracy ... but became a dictatorship for 48 years under Salazar and Caetano after the 1926 military coup. Portugal survived World War II yet its former colonies were politically destabilised by internal rebels, eventually leading to a bloodless revolution on 25th April 1974. The colonies were granted full independence in 1975, and in 1986 Portugal joined modern Europe with its entrance into the EEC. In 1998, World EXPO was held in Lisbon and in 2004 Portugal hosted the European Football Championships. Nowadays you have to drive deep inland into the vast forsaken Alentejo or the mountains of the north to find rural poverty or quaint traditions. The transition to the modern world is complete on the tourist beaches and in the big cities. You rarely see the black national costume or colourful donkey-carts now, and even the evocative Fado folk music is now only played for tourists. Any clichés of a melancholic disposition or Portuguese resignation to destiny will soon dissolve when you see the open-minded happiness of people today. You rarely meet locals anywhere else as quickly as in Portugal, and the Portuguese are particularly good at languages; fluent Spanish, English and French is a matter of course for many.

The Country

Portugal shares a longitude with Ireland and therefore firmly belongs to Europe's western region. Its surface area is one-sixth of the Iberian Peninsular. The north and east borders Spain, the south and west 850km of Atlantic coastline. The north is mountainous with peaks in the Serra da Estrela reaching 1990m. The beaches of the west coast are mostly flat and sandy. South of Lisbon stretches the vast, hilly Alentejo where cereals, cork and olive trees set the scene. The mountain ranges of Serra de Monchique and Serra do Malhao form a border with the Algarve. While wild sandstone coastline dominates the west of the Algarve, the south is strewn with countless golf-courses and holiday-resorts.

The Climate

Portugal's climate is as varied as its landscape. The north-west is influenced by the Atlantic – lots of rain and moderate temperatures in winter, warm (rather than hot) summers. The vegetation around Porto is abundant and green while the north-east generally endures a dryer continental climate (winter precipitation falls as snow, the summers are hot and arid). A Mediterranean climate takes hold south of Lisbon, a city with a year-round mild climate that's bypassed by storm depressions in winter. The average temperature stays around 12°C in winter and 23°C in summer. Only Alentejo and the Algarve are spared the rain – summer here lasts from March to October, July and August see sub-tropical heat, and even in January the temperature often rises over 15°C.