

Portugal: How to do Lagos | Lisbon | Sintra | Caiscais

Portugal is one incredible place. A combination of the best parts of Southern Italy and Spain, combined into one beautiful country full of spirit, passion, food, and scenery. This is one of the most asked about spots in my travel and seems to be a very popular place as people start discovering the magic of Portugal.

If it's your first time I recommend visiting two main cities and spending about 3-4 days in each. Those are Lisbon and Lagos, two different towns but both on the ocean. Caiscais and Sintra happen to be two other suburbs/cities that are right next to Lisbon so they're worth visiting for a day while you're in Lisbon and are extremely close.

1. **Lagos:** This is the seaside village with the quaint atmosphere, cobblestone streets, and incredible gastronomic restaurants. It's most known for its beautiful limestone bluffs which seem to consist of a multitude of colors, along with its deep blue and green beaches where you can spot the ocean bottom. The best way to discover Lagos is just to wander. This is essentially true of most of Portugal, but here time stands still and days are best spent having grilled seafood by the water, hanging out at the beach, and finishing the day with some wine and dinner in the city. Lagos is serviced by easily accessible trains that take you to Lisbon so everyone should check out this unique village and seaside town. When you're here do NOT miss out on the croissants. It's an odd suggestion but for some reason this town is known for them and one place in particular named "Croissanteria

29" is probably the best.



The Lagos Coastline and its incredible bluffs

2. **Lisbon:** Lisbon is a metropolis, but its certainly walkable. The most well known part of it is the old Jewish quarter called Alfama, with roots all the way back to the 11th century. There's a LOT to take in here, but my suggestion is to hire one of the tuk-tuk drivers for a small fee and have them drive you around town in an open air vehicle to see all the sights, and then spend the rest of the day getting lost in the Alfama district. Port Wine and Ginginha are the most well known drinks and they take food seriously in this city so chances are you won't find anything that isn't delicious but be sure to wash it down with the port and Ginginha to get the full Lisbon experience.



The views from the top of the Alfama district are absolutely breathtaking and unreal

3. **Caiscais:** Lisbon is only a short drive (or uber) away from the seaside town of Caiscais. Only 19 miles away, or less than 30-45 minutes, it is a completely different vista, similar to Lagos, but with its own appeal. It is a more rugged coastline, with massive waves and reminds one of the Southern Cape of South Africa. This is a place to take half a day for lunch or dinner and to take in the rugged coastline scenery. The most famous point of Caiscais is the blowhole known as Boca Do Inferno (mouth of fire). Life here is slow and relaxed, so take your time, have some wine, and enjoy the views. Boca Do Inferno in Caiscais



Boca Do Inferno in Caiscais

4. **Sintra:** The Palatial territory of Sintra is less than 10 miles from Lisbon, and once again looks like a completely different place. With an exceptionally mountainous region, fern covered forests, exotic gardens, it is a UNESCO heritage site and home to some of the most beautiful Moorish and Roman compounds - palaces set high up on the hills. You'll feel at awe at the dynamic terrain and the architecture. You could easily spend an entire day just exploring the different mountain peaks and palaces here. Remember to bring warm clothing because it gets cold out here up in the mountains even in the middle of summer. Pena National Palace is probably the most well known site to visit here, but get there early because it can get very packed with tourists.



Palacio De Pena in Caiscais

Hotel Prestige REVIEW – A great Option in the Heart of Budapest

Budapest, a burgeoning city in the heart of Hungary, has long been one of my favorite destinations in Central Europe. There are a plethora of options when it comes to luxury hotels in this city, especially with its growing popularity as a tourist destination amongst travelers from around the world. I came across the Hotel Prestige through the app Hotel Tonight, but ended up staying an extra few days because of how much I loved the property and staff!

The hotel itself is nondescript from the outside, with just an overhead sign and two members of staff to greet you at the front door. However, the minute you walk through the two sets

of double doors you are greeted by the lobby right in the center of the hotel's atrium, with a stunning chandelier hung from the ceiling 6 stories up.



Walk into the lobby and you are greeted by a gorgeous chandelier and elements both modern and classic

This is definitely a boutique hotel, so don't expect a ton of

public spaces or a large property, but do expect a high level of refinement and service similar to what you'd expect at any five star hotel chain. The concierge here was particularly helpful, setting up a house car for a day of sightseeing around Budapest, and the location of the hotel was bar none, being within walking distance to many high end restaurants, museums, and the famous ferris wheel.

English was spoken by all the staff, and requests for things such as extra water, toothbrushes, and other items to the room were handled in an efficient and kind manner.

One of my favorite aspects of this hotel was the bar and restaurant located in the lobby. Costes Downtown is a one michelin star spot, one of the best in Budapest, and not only did they serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but they also had a mixologist on staff during all restaurant hours. The environment was cozy, relaxing, and fun.



Open kitchen design made for a homey feel to this place. The cuisine was incredible as well!

The rooms at the hotel were incredibly well laid out with high ceilings, beautiful wood floors that added to their warmth, and great sound insulation and modern showers and bathrooms. Visiting Budapest near the end of Fall was a colder experience than normal and being at the Prestige Hotel really added to the trip as whenever I got back into my room I just wanted to relax and be coddled.



Beautifully appointed suites at the hotel prestige make for an incredibly comfortable stay



Phenomenal drinks at the bar in the Hotel Prestige

Overall, there are certainly larger hotels with a greater multitude of facilities, but if you're looking for new modern

rooms, impeccable service, a nice restaurant, and great location, you can't go wrong with the Hotel Prestige.

RATING:

Hard Product:

-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)

Right in the center of the Buda side and next to major attractions this location couldn't be any better

10/10

-Cleanliness (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is maid service here?)

Maid service was great every single day

10/10

-Upkeep (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)

Still a relatively new property, it is being kept in tip top shape

10/10

-Public Spaces (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)

Unfortunately the gym was a bit lacking ,and the spa small, but as a boutique hotel sometimes space can be an issue

5/10

Soft Product:

-Service (How good is the service here?)

Staff were attentive and great to speak to, however the lack of 24/7 room service is something to be aware of. Not a big deal for most people though.

9/10

-Restaurants On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)

The one restaurant that is on-site – Costes Downtown, is one of THE best restaurants in Budapest, however the selection of food may be considered a bit limited to some patrons

7/10

-Concierge (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at helping you with a new locale?)

Every member of the hotel was essentially a concierge, giving great suggestions

9/10

TOTAL: 60/70

(35/70 is average)

PROS:

- Modern with a bit of classic
- Exceptionally new and well maintained
- Staff was wonderful

CONS:

- Could use more dining options and maybe more public

spaces

SECRETS:

- This place is luxury at a great deal
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REVIEW: The Best Hotel in Copenhagen – the Nimb

So you wanna go to Copenhagen and you're looking for the perfect place to call home for a few days? Look no further than the NIMB hotel. Denmark is ostensibly the happiest country in the world (Google "Happiest country on Earth"), and to top that off – the Nimb Hotel is located at the entrance of Tivoli Gardens – which is one of the happiest places in Copenhagen. Combine the two and you get a winning combo.



Why they chose to build this as a Moorish Mansion i'm not quite sure – but it's pretty awesome nonetheless

There's not that many choices in Copenhagen, especially if you want something luxurious and want to stay in a centralized location. With those two parameters in place you have the Nimb Hotel, and the Hotel D'Angleterre. When you enter the Nimb, you do so from the street side, and the hotel is unassuming. It's a small lobby with some oversized lanterns and decor you would most likely see in someone's countryside Mansion. However, with 17 suites in total, that's exactly what you're getting at the Nimb.



That's the lobby. Small and cute – not unlike the hotel itself

The service is impeccable, everyone speaks perfect English, the front desk receptionist has excellent advice, and it's all very personable. They recognize each guest, and everytime you enter and exit you give the front desk your key (no electronic keycards here!). Think of it as a very fancy full service B&B. The rooms are large, have beautiful wood flooring, Bang & Olufsen equipment throughout, and my favorite feature – heated floors in the bathrooms!



Any room with a fireplace is great in my book!

The rooms themselves also have fireplaces and so should you choose to use them, the front desk will send an employee to come open the flue and light it up for you. I highly advise visiting Copenhagen in the winter time – and though it's a city that is great year round, the holidays seem to have an extra abundance of Christmas spirit. There's a saying in Denmark which is called Hygge (it's the warm fuzzy feeling you get from good friends, winter sweaters, and a cup of hot chocolate), and there is nothing more Hygge than being at the Nimb with a glass of Glogg, sitting in front of the upper lobby fireplace, overlooking Tivoli Gardens.



Grab a seat, grab a drink, and have some great conversation with friends new and old in the upper lobby bar – overlooking Tivoli Gardens

PROS:

- Location is amazing – its across from the main train station which has direct access to the airport, and it has direct access to Tivoli Gardens
- Great personalized service with 17 rooms and suites, personable and highly knowledgeable staff members
- Everything about the property screams high quality and makes you feel like you're in a bed & breakfast with all the amenities of a full service hotel

CONS:

- This is really nitpicking – but there's no late night room service

SECRETS:

- If you ask the front desk, they will supply you with free tickets to Tivoli Gardens which is attached to the Nimb. They're free and in the winter it's the largest Christmas market in town (and possibly in the world). It's dare I say – magical.

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

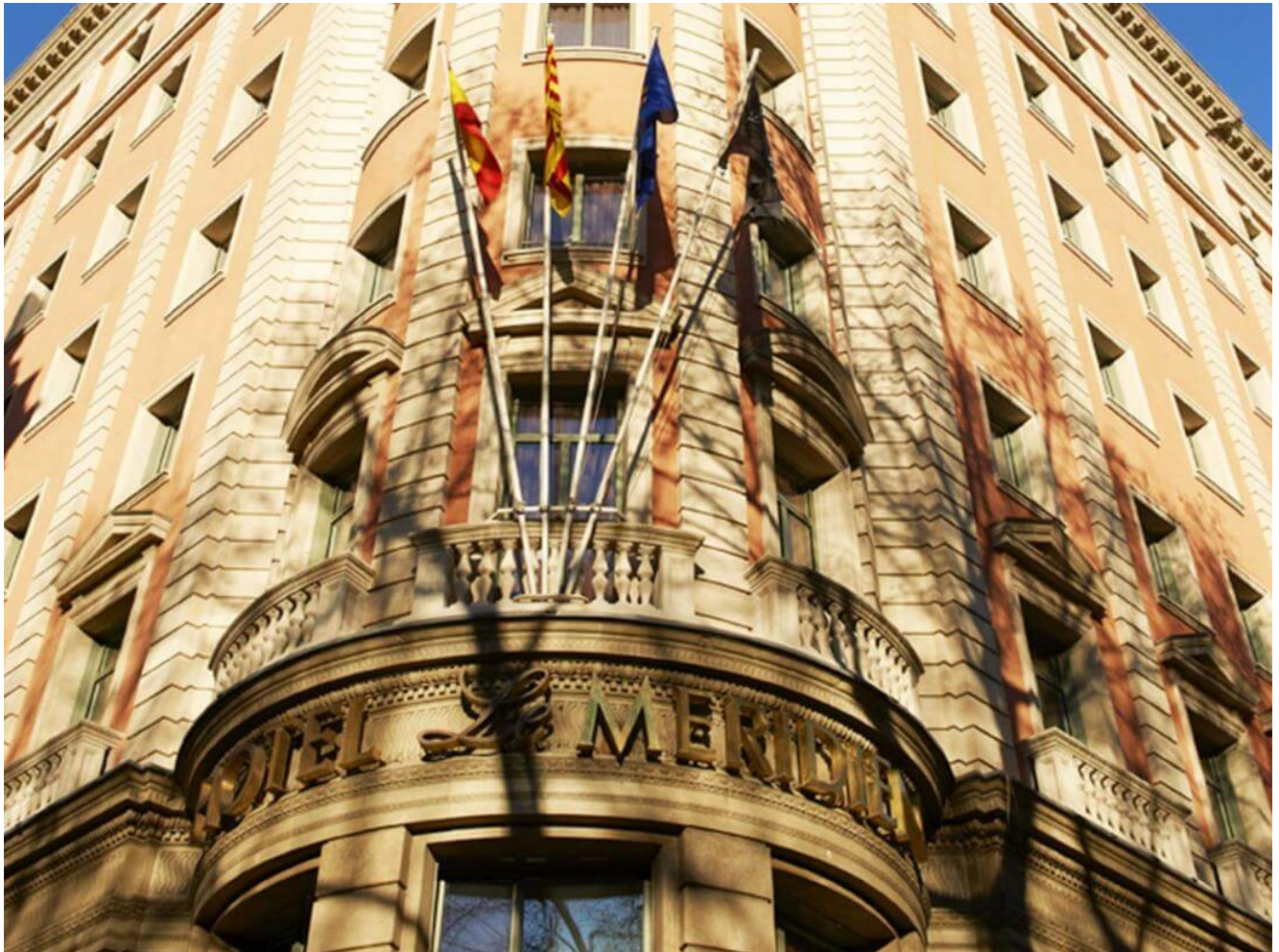
- If there was one thing that really stood out to me in Copenhagen it was the cuisine. This place is a foodie paradise, the seafood is incredibly fresh and served in some really unique methods. Take advantage of this and check out all that the city has to offer (food wise).

REVIEW: Rosewood London (It's pretty awesome)

This hotel is one that makes an immediate impression on you the minute you walk through the double gates.

The movie-esque entrance with gates manned by attendants in British Peacoats leads you to a courtyard complete with British house cars – Jaguars, Land Rovers, Aston Martin's. This is one hotel that takes elegance and sophistication to a completely different level.

REVIEW: The Le Meridien Barcelona



This hotel is a little gem in the middle of Las Ramblas. Le Meridien's are often overlooked by travelers in lieu of larger name chain hotels, but they usually provide the boutique service and luxury that you would expect to find at something comparably higher in price.

I chose this hotel for an extended stay in Barcelona, which resulted in me actually calling this place my home for a bit of time in late Fall a few years back. It is set in a very centralized part of Barcelona – right in the middle of Las Ramblas, which is essentially the main street in the city.

This made for extremely easy access to shops, restaurants, bars, cafe's, and pretty much everything else you could ask

for when roaming and getting lost in Spain's best city metropolis (Madrid just isn't Barcelona if you ask me).

The lobby was a great place to have an afternoon cocktail, and the rooms were modernly appointed and clean with great attentive staff. Although the property has over 200 rooms it felt much more like a boutique hotel where they knew your name and service was remarkably quick everytime I needed something brought to my room.



Modern rooms here felt cozy, sophisticated, and noticeably well insulated, making for some very restful nights in the city

The hotel really embodies something which I find to be an epitome of European cities that have been around for centuries but have since grown up with the times, beautiful old world exteriors – but with modern luxurious interiors. This is the city of Gaudi after all, and interior decor and character and soul should be present at any hotel worth its price of admission. I felt as if Miro inspired some of the furnishings, colors, and overall decor of this place.



Modern bathrooms with granite, wood, and clean lines made this place feel like it had more character than your average luxury hotel

Of course, the best part of this hotel is and always will be its location. I don't think Le Meridien will ever let go of this property. I highly recommend it if you're visiting Barcelona.



Barcelona is all about lounging, and this lobby was built specifically for that purpose. Kudos to SPG & Le Meridien!

PROS:

- Great lobby to socialize in and hang out during nighttime hours
- Rooms were modern but with lots of character and warmth
- Staff was very attentive for what is a relatively large hotel
- The location couldn't be any better for walking to lots of great destinations

CONS:

- There are certainly many newer choices and I haven't reviewed some other top hotels in Barcelona but this one is a solid choice

SECRETS:

- Eat breakfast here at the restaurant downstairs, it's magnificent

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- I'm biased, but I think everyone should visit the Miro museum while in Barcelona