36 HOURS

# Porto, Portugal

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By Seth Sherwood  Photographs by Matilde Viegas

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First Lisbon; now Porto. The whole world seems to have fallen in love lately with the nearby beaches, old churches, seafood-heavy cuisine and historical UNESCO-listed streets of Portugal's second-largest city, where the number of tourists has doubled in a decade. (The circus-like atmosphere along the Douro riverfront and outside Livraria Lello, a neo-Gothic 19th-century bookstore, are only the most obvious signs.) And the home of port wine is keeping pace with a slew of new offerings. Recent years have seen the opening, upgrading or expansion of museums, art centers, food markets, food halls and hotels aplenty — along with the inauguration of World of Wine, a dining and entertainment district.

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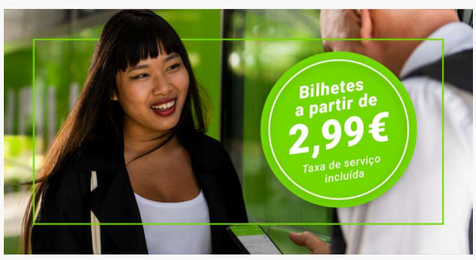


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## Recommendations

### Key stops

- **Cozinha das Flores**, a classy nouveau Portuguese restaurant led by one of the country's most successful international chefs, features design elements from a Pritzker Prize-winning architect, the Porto-area native Álvaro Siza Vieira.

- **The Serralves Museum**, a collection of contemporary art on the park-like grounds of the Serralves Foundation — a decades-old private institution that works closely with the Portuguese government — has a new wing by Mr. Siza.
- **Mercado do Bolhão**, a 19th-century food market, reopened two years ago after a total renovation.
- The **World of Wine** district, like a theme park for epicureans, features several food- and drink-themed museums, a wine school, and numerous restaurants and bars.

Attractions +

Shopping +

Restaurants and bars +

Where to stay –

- Design savvy and art-filled, **the Rebello** opened last year in Vila Nova de Gaia and offers knockout views of Porto, across the Douro River, from many of its 103 apartment-style rooms. A roof bar, pool, spa, restaurant and cafe are also in the converted 19th-century stone building, which is near the Ferreira port-wine house. Rooms from around 450 euros, or about $488, in June.
- The six minimalist white rooms of the **Babel** guesthouse, tastefully furnished with vintage and modern furniture, offer an excellent city-center base. Its lively downstairs restaurant serves local Portuguese ingredients with splashes of flavor from North Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Rooms in June start around €138.
- Roughly a mile east of the city center, a drab residential street hides **Outsite Porto-Mouco**, a modernist white building with 12 apartments, a coworking cafe, a library, a pool and grassy grounds. Apartments from around €123 in June.
- For **short-term rentals** among the central districts, Ribeira is rich in historical buildings and lies closest to the picturesque riverside, while Clérigos abounds with dining and nightlife.

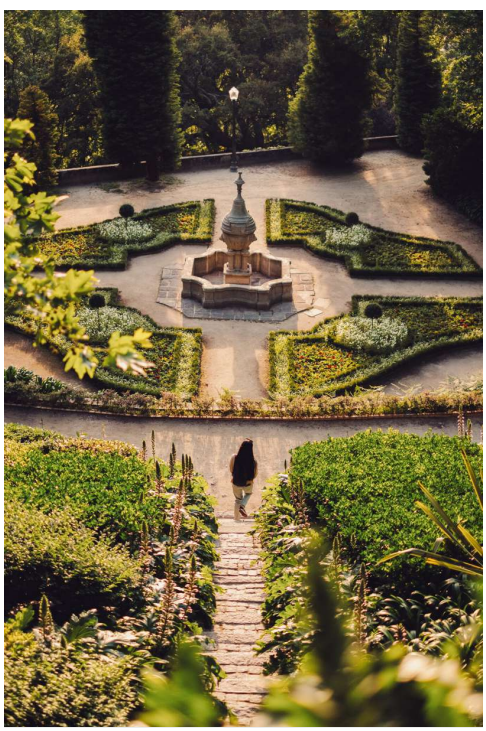
Getting around +

## Itinerary

### Friday

5 p.m. **Relax in a bucolic park**

Gazing at the bridges and passing ships on the Douro River is a favorite Porto pastime. For sublime views far from the dense crush of the waterfront walkways, the Jardins do Palácio de Cristal, a manicured 19th-century park, is a relaxed, bucolic alternative and a favorite with locals. In addition to tree-shaded lookout points, the park includes ponds, fountains, lawns, flower beds and rotating art exhibitions in the free, multilevel Galeria Municipal do Porto. As you stroll, keep your ears open for the calls of the park's resident ducks and peacocks.



Jardins do Palácio de Cristal

8 p.m. **Eat an all-star dinner**

After decades abroad, cooking alongside international legends (Wolfgang Puck, Ferran Adrià) and helming kitchens of beloved London restaurants (Viajante, Chiltern Firehouse), the chef Nuno Mendes has planted his flag once again in his native land, overseeing the precise neo-Portuguese cuisine at Cozinha das Flores, a year-old restaurant along the pedestrianized Rua das Flores. Try tasty tiny snacks (crunchy sourdough crackers with

Cozinha das Flores

Fiasco

razor clams), elegant comfort food (Azores squid sliced into pasta-like strands with a zesty stew of chickpeas and cod tripe) and unusual desserts (ice cream, made from and resembling egg yolk, on ribbons of sugary, fried egg-yolk, sprinkled with ham shavings). Note the abstract drawings on the pink-and-green mosaic wall: the Pritzker Prize-winning architect (and Porto-region native) Álvaro Siza Vieira contributed both. Dinner for two costs about 120 euros, or about $130, without drinks.

10:30 p.m. **Sip a quiet cocktail**

If you're keen to avoid thronged streets and blasting music — hallmarks of the Mardi Gras-like Clérigos nightlife district — head east to Bomfim, a laid-back bohemian neighborhood of art galleries and indie boutiques. Sporting red walls and red banquettes, Fiasco is both Porto's sultriest new cocktail bar and a mecca for vinyl record collectors, thanks to numerous racks of rock, rap, indie, electro, world-beat and other albums for sale. A Lusco Fusco Groove cocktail (Ysabel Regina brandy, Campari, fortified Portuguese wine and coffee) runs you 9 euros. Down the street, Terraplana Café channels an old-time urban saloon (tin ceiling, checkerboard floor) while dispensing original cocktails. The back garden is perfect for a Tropicalia cocktail: ruby port, sparkling rosé and guava-hibiscus syrup, brightened with salt (€11).

The Super Bock Arena, also known as Pavilhão Rosa Mota, seen from the Jardins do Palácio de Cristal.

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## Saturday

Álvaro Siza Wing

10 a.m. **Admire art and architecture**

Now 90 years old, Mr. Siza, the architect whose touches you spotted at Cozinha das Flores, has been keeping busy. This year, the Serralves Museum — a world-class contemporary art museum that he designed in the 1990s — added a splashy new wing that he also designed. Known as the Álvaro Siza Wing, the jagged white addition displays plans and models from the architect's long international career, as well as works from the permanent collection, including strange fairy tale-like paintings from Paula Rego and abstract lithographs by Gerhard Richter. An apocalyptic installation by the Thai artist Korakrit Arunanondchai and a haunted playerless piano from the French artist Philippe Parreno are particularly potent. Admission to all buildings and grounds is €24.

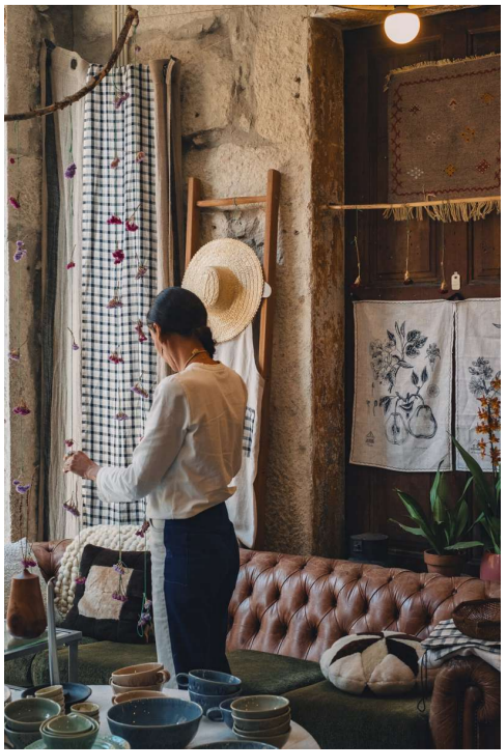
Mercado Bolhão

1 p.m. **Test the market**

Bearded and bespectacled, Joaquim Lucas resembles a scholar as he carefully slices presunto (€65 a kilo) from aged hocks of Alentejo ham. His stand, Charcutaria Princesa, is one of dozens inside Mercado Bolhão, a recently upgraded 19th-century covered food market in the city center that reopened in 2022. The smorgasbord also includes spice dealers, fruit sellers, cheese specialists, wine stands and more. Raw surf-and-turf comes courtesy of Casa das Ostras — which cracks open sea urchin (€5 each) and shucks Algarve oysters (three for €7) — and Talho do Toninho, a butcher stall serving toast slices topped with beef or deer tartare (€1.50). For dessert, Doçaria Portuguesa does a chocolate-rimmed pastel de nata (€2), the classic Portuguese egg tart. For a sit-down meal, several restaurants occupy the upper level. And a short walk south is a new food hall from Time Out, opened in May.

3 p.m. **Digest some history**

Strolling nearby Rua Santa Catarina, a car-free shopping boulevard, provides both a digestive walk and an architectural exhibition. Start at Capela das Almas, an 18th-century church covered with blue-and-white azulejos (added in 1929) depicting divine episodes filled with saints, apostles, magi and cherubs. Heading south, you can admire the Art Nouveau façade of A Perola do Bolhão, a fine-food shop dating to 1917, and the grand Belle Epoque interior of Café Majestic, which opened in 1921. Finally, stop in Praça da Batalha, home of the azulejo-covered Igreja de Santo Ildefonso, an 18th-century church, and the Batalha Centro de Cinema, a 1940s Art Deco movie theater that was restored and reopened in 2022. In addition to an eclectic roster of films, the center offers a library, bookshop and bar.



Coração Alecrim

5 p.m. **Try on Portuguese fashion**

Your Saturday night wardrobe awaits inside Labels of Tomorrow, a two-level international fashion emporium a few blocks north of Livraria Lello in the Cedofeita neighborhood. Portuguese labels take center stage, from button-up blue maritime jackets for men from Sanjo (€149.90) to gauzy takes on 1950s ladies' bowling shirts (€130) by Mustique. After your fitting-room adventures, a terrace cafe-restaurant and a backyard bar provide refreshment for shopping fatigue — or fuel for another spree. If you prefer threads with history, the nearby Coração Alecrim shop sells vintage clothing — fur coats (€70), sheer paisley dresses (€40) — and its own line of retro-inspired jackets, shirts and more. A Japanese vegetarian cafe, Musubu Porto, is tucked in back.

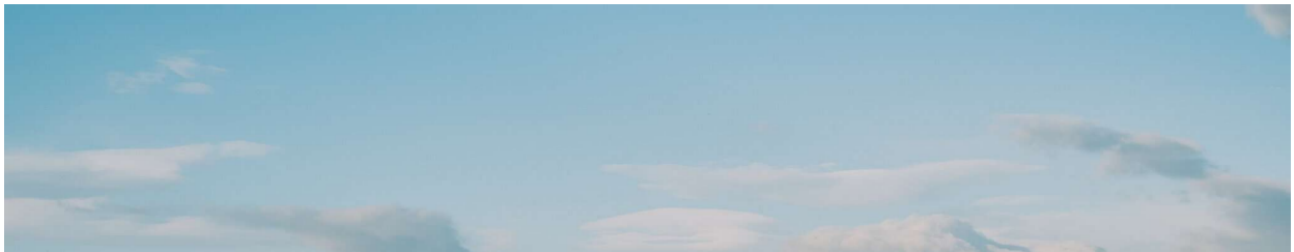
7:30 p.m. **Savor French-Portuguese flavors**

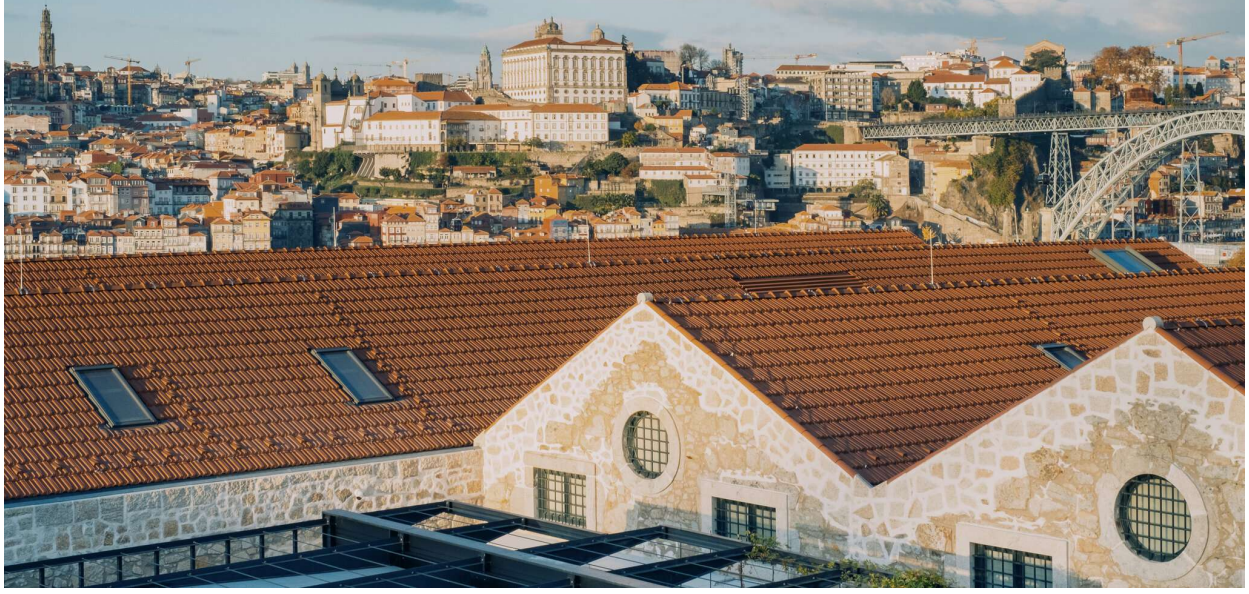
If France is too far away, you can enjoy Gallic flavors at Apego, a homey little restaurant in a quiet street north of Trinidade train station. Global music echoes off the high stone walls and yellow banquettes as the Franco-Portuguese chef Aurora Goy reinvents local cuisine with dishes like a savory tarte tatin (which replaces apples with eggs and mushrooms) and a bed of pomme paillasson — a crispy-fried cake of shredded potato — topped with mackerel and leeks in white-wine sauce. Desserts include a French-style sablé biscuit with pear and custard-like sabayon incorporating Madeira wine. A three-course dinner for two, without wine, costs around €90.

Genuíno

10 p.m. **Worship wine**

Gallery district by day, the zone around Rua Miguel Bombarda morphs into a destination for wine lovers as night falls. Occupying an elegantly repurposed 19th-century chapel, Capela Incomum allows acolytes of the grape to sip vintages likes Lapa dos Gaivões (€4.50 a glass) — a smooth red blend from the Alentejo region — in its burgundy-painted lounge or tree-shaded front yard. A block away, Genuíno is a lively Brazilian-owned restaurant and natural-wine bar outfitted with a disco ball, playful wine-themed posters, and vintage tables and chairs. Most wines come from small regional producers, including an agreeably dry, concrete-aged orange wine from Folias de Baco (€5.50 a glass).





A view over the museums in the World of Wine (WOW) district, with the Dom Luís I Bridge in the distance.

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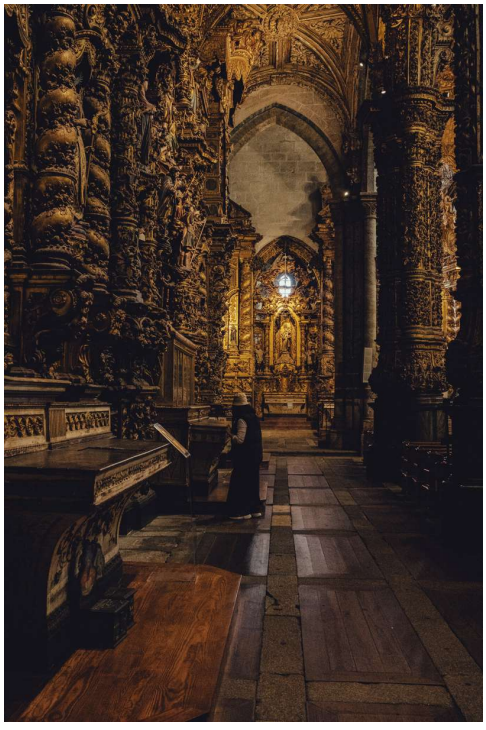


Igreja de São Francisco

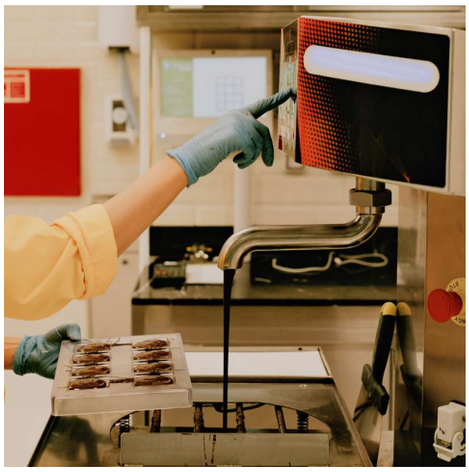
## Sunday

10 a.m. **Go for the gold**

By now you have noticed: Old churches beckon from nearly every corner. If you venture inside only one, Igreja de São Francisco pays off in gold — literally. Erected in the medieval period, the church's soaring stony interior was enriched in the 1700s with talha dourada — elaborately carved and gilded wood. The effect is a dazzling symphony of radiant decorative themes — spiral-twist columns, swirls, floral patterns, coats of arms, cherubs and disembodied faces that burst from every surface. Downstairs, in the crypt, a transparent floor panel reveals a sea of white bones lurking below ground. Admission €10.

12 p.m. **Get Wowed**

Did you know that the Chinese village of Jiahu might have produced the world's first wine, several millennia before Christ? That Muscat from Alexandria was Cleopatra's favorite wine? That the signing of the Declaration of Independence was celebrated with a toast of Madeira? Educational nuggets fill the Bridge Collection (entry €25), a museum with a staggering array of historical wine



The Chocolate Story museum in the WOW district.

information and antique drinking vessels in the World of Wine (WOW) entertainment district. Opened in 2020, WOW encompasses several museums — including ones devoted to chocolate, cork and rosé wine — as well as boutiques, a wine school, and numerous restaurants and bars. Root & Vine serves up a classic international brunch — eggs on toast, salmon bagels, waffles — and panoramic views of the city for a final snapshot. Museum admission €25 each.

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