

EXPLORERS' REWARDS LISBON & SINTRA

THURSDAY 16 – TUESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2021 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2495

- **Visit Lisbon, a city of remarkable beauty with a breath-taking setting on the River Tagus**
- **See all the major historic monuments in the city & its hinterland**
- **Several private visits**
- **Museums full of treasures, such as the Gulbenkian Collection & the National Museum**
- **The country palaces & villas at Sintra & Queluz are included**
- **Central hotel & excellent food in local restaurants**



Quinta de Monserrate, Sintra

OVERVIEW

There are strong, indeed warm links between the British and Portuguese people, established via many centuries of trade, shared maritime history and royal dynastic links. Lisbon is a city of remarkable beauty with a breath-taking setting on the River Tagus which has long drawn the attentions of other nations and peoples.

Scholars argue over whether Lisbon was a Phoenician trading outpost, but it was probably the Romans who first sensed its strategic importance. As ever, this was not lost on the conquering Moors who centuries later absorbed the city (which they called Lishbuna) into their wider territory of Al Andalus. Re-conquered by Christians in 1147, Lisbon eventually became the capital of Portugal in 1255. The city has a remarkable heritage of buildings from these early periods in its history, despite the huge damage inflicted by the earthquake of 1755.

In the fifteenth century the city rose to world prominence during the period of the great explorers, beginning with Prince Henry the Navigator's discoveries. When Vasco da Gama opened up the sea route to India, colonial adventures in the Far East and eventually South America, provided the country with great wealth. However, from 1580 to 1640 Portugal came under Spanish rule, a very unhappy experience, still bitterly remembered by some.

From 1640 onwards, Portugal was ruled by the House of Braganza, and under this dynasty Lisbon once again became a most elegant and hospitable city. All of this beauty was shattered by the terrible earthquake of All Saints Day (1 November) 1755. Amazingly, much of the old city was immediately rebuilt in the fashionable Neo-classical style of France. Indeed, French visual culture had always been the inspiration of much that was produced in Lisbon's luxury goods workshops, studios and ateliers. Vast quantities of South American gold financed much of this patronage and consequently the city's museums are today a veritable treasure trove of magnificent works of art.

Moving into the twentieth century, Portugal, like much of Europe, overthrew its monarchy. Since then, subsequent political and social stagnation have been replaced in recent times by a more positive, lively and welcoming attitude. It is this warmth of welcome, temperature and much else besides, which will make this visit to Lisbon truly memorable.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Thursday 16 September – We fly to **Lisbon** from Heathrow, arriving in the afternoon and travel by coach into the city centre to the comfortable 4* **Lisboa Plaza Hotel** for a stay of five nights. Historic Lisbon is divided into four important quarters, all of which we shall discover. After time to unpack, we leave the hotel to explore

what is the first of these areas, known as **Baixa** and **Avenida Liberdade**, stretching down one of the city's many hills to the water's edge. This part of the city was completely rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake in an elegant Neo-classical style. Today, it is the city's main commercial and shopping area. We end with a private visit to **Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida**, Lisbon's most spectacular small museum, full of superlative paintings and decorative arts left to the city by a local connoisseur, Antonio Medeiros e Almeida. Later that evening there will be a group dinner in a local restaurant, **Tagide**, picturesquely situated in the **Bairro Alto**, looking down onto the historic centre. Wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches & dinners.

Day 2: Friday 17 September – We begin the day on the outskirts of the city with a private visit to the **Palacio da Fronteira**, a fine historic villa still lived in by the building family. We return to the centre to explore the **Chiado** historic area. Here we shall visit some of the city's most interesting smaller churches and streets, including the **Carmo Church Ruins & its Museum**, together with **Sao Roque Church**. We have a group lunch at **Taberna do Albricoque** and the afternoon will be devoted to a visit to the **Calouste Gulbenkian Museum**. This is one of the finest museums of its type in the world and contains the extraordinary collection formed by the immensely wealthy Armenian oil magnate. Originally housed in his Parisian residence, it is dominated by his taste for magnificent French furniture, Oriental carpets and trophy Old Master paintings. It is breath-taking! The evening will be free.

Day 3: Saturday 18 September – Today we drive out to the great royal park at **Sintra**, full of remarkable castles, villas and country palaces. We shall include guided visits to the **Palacio Nacional de Sintra**, of medieval and later dates, and in the afternoon the elegant villa and gardens at **Monserate**, the subject of a recent and wonderful transformation. We also visit privately the beautifully frescoed **Quinta de Sao Sebastiao**, where the owner will host our lunch. We return to Lisbon via the picturesque coastal route through **Cascais** and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Sunday 19 September – A gently paced Sunday morning will take us outside the city to the royal place at **Queluz**, a magnificent and extravagant essay in the Rococo style with wonderful formal gardens. After we lunch locally at **Espello d'Agua**, we return to Lisbon and explore the city's third historic area, **Belem**, full of connections with Portugal's maritime history. We shall see the **Belem Tower**, a landmark for explorers returning to Lisbon. Nearby is the magnificent **Jeronimos Church and Monastery**, full of remarkable architecture and important tombs. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 5: Monday 20 September – This morning we explore the last of the four historic areas, **Alfama**. Dominated by Lisbon's eastern hill, and crowned by the **Castelo de Sao Jorge**, this was once the most important part of the city. In decline for many centuries, today it has an atmosphere all of its own. We shall enjoy a privately guided tour of the **Fundacao Ricardo do Espirito Santo Silva**. This is an astonishing series of restoration workshops carrying out work of the highest quality on works of art in many media and for once, the much overused word 'unique' is accurate. After our visit you will have free time for lunch (not included today) and for some independent exploration. We have our final dinner at the **Casa da Comida** restaurant.

Day 6: Tuesday 21 September – Our final morning will be devoted to the **Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga**, Portugal's finest collection of paintings, sculpture and decorative arts. After some free time for a light snack in the Museum Café (not included today), we continue to the Airport and the return flight to London, Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2495 **Without Flights** £2345 **Deposit** £375 **Single Supplement** £225 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at the 4* Lisboa Plaza Hotel

Flights TAP Portugal

Outward: **TP1367** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 2) **1120** arrive Lisbon **1400**

Return: **TP1350** Depart Lisbon **1500**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 2) **1745**

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Tom Duncan & our local guide and tour manager, Helena Lemonnier

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 3 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

