

CIRCA



TOURS

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Dom Luis Bridge - Porto

Photos by Circa Tours

Northern Portugal

Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto
(16 days - 14 nights)

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SAMPLE ITINERARY

This is an example of a possible itinerary. It can be resized, reorganized and customized to fit your interests, budget and schedule. It can also be combined with other tours.

HIGHLIGHTS (16 days - 14 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES - For more details on destinations, see our article on northern Portugal on our website: http://www.circatours.com/News-Specials-Tours-Cruises/Northern-Portugal.htm	NIGHT
1	Leave the U.S.	
2	Arrive in Lisbon . Airport transfer. Explore the city at your leisure	Lisbon
3	Half-day city tour (Jeronimos monastery, Tower of Belem...). At leisure	Lisbon
4	Day tour to Cascais, Ericeira, Mafra convent and Queluz palace (Thu and Sat only)	Lisbon
5	At leisure	Lisbon
6	Day wine tour to Evora and Azeitao (Tue and Sat only)	Lisbon
7	Day tour to Obidos, Batalha, Alcobaca, Nazare and Fatima	Lisbon
8	Day tour to Sintra (Pena Palace), Colares, Cabo da Roca, Guincho, Estoril	Lisbon
9	Train to Coimbra . Afternoon at leisure	Coimbra
10	Train to Porto . At leisure	Porto
11	Half-day city tour (Bairro da Se neighborhood and port wine tasting). At leisure	Porto
12	Day tour to Santiago de Compostela (Spain)	Porto
13	Day tour to the Minho region (Guimaraes, Braga, Barcelos)	Porto
14	Day tour to Amarante, Lamego, Pinhao	Porto
15	Train to Lisbon . At leisure	Lisbon
16	Airport transfer. Return to the U.S.	

ITINERARY

Day 3: Classic Lisbon. This half-day classic tour starts with a scenic view of Lisbon and its hills in the distance. Next is a visit to the Belém quarter, with beautiful historical monuments dating back to the 15th century. Brief stop at the famous Belém Tower, a World Heritage site and the point of departure for many Portuguese maritime explorations. View the Monument to the Discoveries (Padrão dos Descobrimentos), built to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator.

On to visit the church at the **St. Jerome Monastery** (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos), another World Heritage site and a masterpiece of the amazingly ornate "Manueline" style. Then, visit the Coach Museum (Museu dos Coches) displaying one of the biggest collections of carriages in the world. (On Mondays, the monastery and the museum are closed, so these two visits are replaced by a tour of the Ajuda Palace or the "Fundação Medeiros e Almeida").

Following the river you'll arrive at the historic **Alfama District** where you can enjoy a leisurely walk along the ancient narrow streets and a tasting of Port wine. Next, head towards the downtown area (Baixa) to admire the famous squares of Lisbon: Trade Square (Praça do Comércio), the Rossio Square - the heart of the city - and the Restauradores Square. Then, on down the Liberdade Avenue, the "Champs Elysees" of Lisbon, to finish the tour at Pombal Square.

Day 4: Cascais, Ericeira, Mafra and Queluz. On your way north from Lisbon this morning, you'll visit cosmopolitan Cascais and the typical village and beautiful beaches of Ericeira. The high point of this tour is the town of Mafra with





its beautiful Baroque convent. The tour ends with a visit of one of the most representative monuments of Portuguese architecture: the Queluz Palace, a lavishly decorated 18th-century palace in the Rococo style.

Day 6: Evora and Azeitao wine tour. Relax on this easy drive through the rolling hills of Alentejo while enjoying the sight of olive and cork tree groves and lush vineyards along the way. After a 1 ½-hour ride, arrive in the charming and historic town of Evora, a World Heritage site. Evora, located at the heart of Portugal, offers a quaint provincial atmosphere complete with

whitewashed houses, a beautiful cathedral, a chapel of bones and even the well-preserved ruins of a Roman temple. End the day with a wine tasting at a wine cellar in Azeitao.

Day 7: Obidos, Alcobaca, Nazare, Batalha, and Fatima. Today you will visit some of Portugal's best-known landmarks. You will lose track of time in Obidos, a picture-perfect fortified medieval village with whitewashed houses and narrow streets. You will admire amazing Gothic churches in Alcobaca and Batalha which is famous for the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitoria. This building, a 14th-century masterpiece in the late Gothic and Manueline styles, is considered Portugal's finest architectural achievement. And you will have lunch in Nazare, a typical Portuguese fishing village with a beautiful beach and a delightfully quiet, laid-back atmosphere. The last stop of the tour will be in Fatima, the world-renowned Marian pilgrimage site and sanctuary.

Day 8: Sintra, Colares, Cabo da Roca, Guincho Beach, Boca Inferno, Cascais and Estoril. Visit the imposing and sumptuous 19th-century Pena Palace and enjoy its flamboyant beauty. Located on top of a craggy hilltop, surrounded by lush green valleys cooled by Atlantic Ocean breezes, this fantasy castle is an amazingly eclectic combination of Gothic, Manueline, Moorish and Renaissance architectural styles - a stunningly colorful and exuberant Romanticist creation. Next, take a leisurely stroll around charming Sintra, where you will have lunch. Leave for Colares (by tramway when available or by bus) and take in the scenic view from Europe's westernmost point at Cabo da Roca. On the way back to Lisbon, discover the panoramic coast, going by Cascais with its fishing village atmosphere and Estoril with its famous casino and gardens.



Day 9: As the country's third largest city and its former capital, **Coimbra** is home to Portugal's oldest and most prestigious university, dating back to the 13th century. The pleasant city center, with its maze of narrow streets overlooking the Mondego River, gives Coimbra a particular charm. Enjoy a visit to an extraordinary masterpiece of the 18th century: the library of Coimbra's University. Also make sure you visit the church of Santa Cruz with its beautiful façade and, on the inside, the Manueline cloister and the tomb of Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal.

Day 11: Half-day tour of **Porto**. This beautiful city, one of the oldest in Europe, is replete with historical and cultural memories. Enjoy a unique and unforgettable tour through the "Bairro da Sé", the heart of ancient Porto, where you can appreciate the medieval roots and old-world charm of the city. Then visit a wine cellar across the river in Vila Nova de Gaia.



Day 12: Santiago Compostela. This trip takes you into Spain to tour one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in all of Christendom. The famous cathedral was built between the 11th and 13th centuries. The more recent façade, dating back to only 1750, is the highest expression of the Baroque style in Spain. Inside, the main altar displays a statue of St. James and is open to pilgrims who wish to follow the age-old tradition of touching or hugging the statue of the saint. After the visit, you will have time to explore the old town at your leisure. On the way back, you'll stop in Viana do Castelo for a visit of the cathedral and the unique city center.

Day 13: The Minho region (Guimaraes, Braga and Barcelos). Today, there is a lot of history to discover on a unique journey to the Celtic, Roman and medieval Minho region. First Guimaraes, often referred to as the "birthplace of Portugal," is a quaint medieval town with a 12th-century castle. Next is Braga with the Bom Jesus pilgrimage site and sanctuary. And, finally, this tour takes you to Barcelos, whose claim to fame is the legendary "Galo de Barcelos," a rooster who miraculously saved the life of a wrongly accused pilgrim (more details on this story when you get to Barcelos).

Day 14: Day tour to the **stunningly scenic Douro Valley** - the birthplace of port wine - (**Amarante, Lamego and Pinhao**). "Spectacular" hardly seems an adequate description of the scenery along the Douro River. Olive groves and vineyards seem to hang from the steep hillsides, often held in place by stone terraces built centuries ago. In Amarante, by the river, discover the monastery of St. Goncalo. In Lamego you'll visit the shrine of Our Lady of Remedios. Lunch is served while you enjoy the magnificent panorama over the Douro River. Next is a tasting of port wine. On the way back to Porto this afternoon, stop off to visit of the sleepy small town of Pinhao.

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Hello, my name is **Pierre Mainguéné**. I personally handcrafted this itinerary.



I am the co-founder and president of Circa Tours. I was born and raised in Brittany, France so, as a native European, I love everything about the "old country" especially France, Spain and Portugal: the history (and there is lots of it), the arts (same thing), the lifestyle, the cuisine (especially in France, Catalonia and the Basque Country), the wine (everywhere) and the endless diversity of local cultures.

In dozens of trips I have taken to Europe, I have traveled to nearly every corner of those three countries, and I continue my journey of discovery every year. I am a Travel-Institute certified France and Spain Specialist, and I am also recognized by the Tourist Office of Portugal as a certified Portugal Specialist.

My goal is to create the best possible trip for you. I am always ready to listen to your wishes (however creative) and feedback, and I will always enjoy sharing my experiences with you.

That's me, by the way, in front of Maimonides in Cordoba. And, the following are some comments made by a few of our clients:

- "Very well organized and thorough. Excellent customer service both here in the United States during the planning and reservation phase, and on the ground in France. The whole thing was outstanding. I think our guided tours of the Louvre and the Musee d'Orsay were the best two tours." A.B., North Carolina
- "Our trip was one of the most memorable trips I've had. All of the tour guides were absolutely brilliant. They were all very well informed and were able to answer all the different types of questions we had. We've never used tour guides before so this was definitely something new for us. We learned so much more than we would have if we just grabbed a pamphlet and walked around on our own." J.L., New York
- "We enjoyed considerable back and forth in perfecting this itinerary [...]. Circa Tours in the persons of Pierre and Carolyn Mainguéné epitomizes the expert but non insistent, flexible and ever good natured, efficient and focused on delivering, friendly and collegial [...]. For example, instead of declining to recommend restaurants or off-handedly dropping some names with all kinds of caveats, they gave us a red Michelin guide of Spain! Never a hesitation about specific requests. Every query answered fully and immediately. A pleasure! Merci mille fois, Circa Tours!" J.O., Maine
- "The trip was wonderful. Our tour guide was excellent and we had a great day touring around Madrid. [...] The Transcantabrico tour was very nice. [...]. The food was amazing, but TOO much!! The restaurants were top notch

and the food delicious, but I gained 5 pounds!! [...] Thank you and Carolyn so much for your help with this trip. My family and I enjoyed it immensely and we will have many fond memories for many years!" E.S., Florida

- "It was not a good trip - it was a GREAT trip! Truly everything was fabulous, ran smoothly, and worked well. The guides were excellent, the itinerary perfect. We enjoyed Spain very much and will ask you for assistance on our next journey to southern Europe!" J.K., California
- "Circa Tours did a good job. They worked very closely with us in putting the program together. We were very pleased with how efficient everything ran. The information we received from Circa Tours was done up very well, which allowed us to just pull the appropriate paperwork and be on our way. The tours were very well done. The guides we had with the local travel providers did a very good job of explaining the areas we toured. Pierre at Circa Tours made sure we saw a bit of everything." D.T. Florida
- "We are all home, safe and sound - very tired, but in a hazy daze of love for France. Thank you and Carolyn SO much for arranging such an amazing trip for all of us. Throughout the trip, my sisters, mom and myself could be heard saying such things as, "THANK YOU, PIERRE" ...or, "thank goodness for Pierre!!!". Thank you and Carolyn for all of you expertise and care in helping us and doing all of the hard work for us! Thank you! Thank you!!!" K.B., Iowa
- More on our website: www.circatours.com. Click on the gray button "Client Comments."



Azulejos (ceramic tiles) in a train station - Portugal

Photo by Circa Tours