



AllWays

Porto, Portugal

www.allwaystraveller.com



Music and a great deal more in Porto

The Portuguese city Porto is found on the Douro River where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

Porto is universally known for the fortified wine port, which is produced in the Douro Valley region and shipped worldwide from the city.

For the visitor, Portugal's second largest city, after Lisbon, is compact and eminently walkable and truly rewarding.

It offers a bustling city centre full of character adjoining the UNESCO World Heritage listed old town.

Together they lead down to the bustling waterfront, with Porto on the one side and Vila Nova de Gaia found across the stunning Arrábida Bridge that crosses the Douro river on the other.

Both sides of the river frontage and immediate surrounds here are alive with bars and restaurants, offering alfresco wining and dining and a string arts and craft sellers.

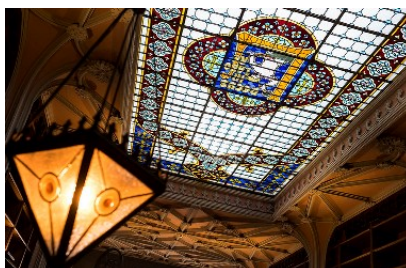
Porto's popular tourist beaches are found at Foz and Matosinhos with a more laid-back expanse of sea and sand at Vila Nova de Gaia.

As for heritage and culture, this is found in abundance with a visit to *Livraria Lello* invariably at the top of any wish list.

Finally, a highlight of a visit to Porto will be the excellent street musicians who perform impromptu concerts throughout the city and the live music venues found here.

www.visitporto.travel

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller



Porto captivates with the sound of music

By Ashley Gibbins

As a travel writer one needs early in a trip to decide on the focus of the resulting feature.

Before our visit to the vibrant city of Porto, I was reliably informed that if Ann and I had enjoyed Lisbon (we certainly had done a year earlier), we would 'love' Porto even more.

So, would comparing Porto to the Portuguese capital be the angle I was looking for?

No, because this would be to do Lisbon an injustice.

Both cities make for a great short break, and it is unfair to judge the one against the other.

Happily, the theme for this Porto feature presented itself within a couple of minutes of us checking into the M.ou.Co.

It is the music

Ann reviews the M.ou.Co below but for me it was when Rita, the hotels concierge, told us the hotel's name means *music and more*.

She then took us to the hotel's music library, and the chance to borrow from a collection of hundreds of vinyl albums for playing in the room.

Those with greater musical talents than Ann and I possess, also have the chance to hire musical instruments for impromptu jamming sessions.

The hotel's musical emphasis also embraces concerts, artistic residencies and workshops.

Finally, we heard British electronic musician James Holden, was performing in the hotel's own live music venue while we were there.

The concert venue takes 300 standing and has a year-round programme of performances from local and international touring musicians.

The M.ou.Co is also organising a competition for the many street musicians who perform in and around Porto.

This will offer the chance for those competing to perform in the hotel to a wider audience and with a recording contract for the winner.

With the seeds of a music focussed feature sown, all Porto had to do was prove fertile.

Dona Mira

We got off to a fine start when eating at Dona Mira on our first evening in Porto.

The restaurant, which is a short stroll from the M.ou.Co is owned by Carlos Fuchs.

He is a Brazilian born musician and record producer of real renown, with and Grammy, Latin Grammy and Independent Music Awards nominations and awards to his name.



Bruno Tripp

Carlos moved to Porto in 2018 and continues to record along with running a restaurant serving delicious salads and sandwiches along with great coffee and good beers, wines and cocktails.

He is only too pleased to talk music with diners and detail the range of eclectic art on show.

www.instagram.com/donamiracafe

Tia Tia

We were also lucky enough to find *Tia Tia*, run by Cátia Roldão and Tiago Feio and enjoyed one of the most memorable dining experiences for a very long time (see Ann's review below).

Music and art plays a vital part of the experience for those visiting *Tia Tia*.

The couple have an extensive collection of vinyl records, played on rotation and with the playlist shared online giving diners the chance to select the music they would like to accompany the meal.

Cátia and Tiago also display selected works from local artists.



Clubs and bars

For other music venues in Porto check out the *Hot Five Jazz & Blues Club* (www.hotfive.pt/uptown/) and *Rua Tapas & Music Bar* (www.ruatapas.com) or ask at the tourist information centre.

Music everywhere in Porto

During our stay in Porto and were never far from the music that helps to make visiting this vibrant city a genuine pleasure.



Take in one of Europe's oldest cities at leisure

By far the best way to enjoy Porto is to stroll around, with regular stops for refreshments, something to eat and, of course, to enjoy a performance or two from street musicians.

It is one of Europe's oldest cities, and a thriving settlement on the hillsides overlooking the mouth of the Douro during Roman times.

Today it is the city's medieval Ribeira (riverside) district that leads to the waterfronts, on either side of the Douro, that draws and captivates.

The area was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, for its 'remarkable universal value due to the huge number of historical buildings'.

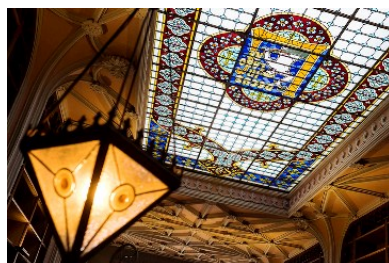
This helped to spotlight Porto as a tourist destination.

It is somewhat astonishing to realise this delightful city was largely overlooked by traveller until the start of this century.

The Ribeira is a maze of cobbled streets that take you past merchants' houses and any number of al fresco cafes and bars.

The Rua das Flores (Flowers Street) has been the main thoroughfare this part of the city since the 1520s.

Running downhill from the San Bento Railway Station to the river, it was so-called because of the flowers that filled the gardens of the houses that lined the street when it was first opened.



Today the street still flourishes, but with cafes, restaurants and boutique shops.

In Porto's *old town* one also finds the Clérigos Church, a Baroque church with its 75-meter-tall Torre dos Clérigos (bell tower), and a focal point for the city.

The Porto Cathedral here is one of the city's oldest monuments and Casa do Infante (Prince Henry's House) was built in the 1300s for Prince Henry the Navigator.

There is much more to discover in Port's 'old town' but that is the pleasure of just meandering around to see what takes the eye.

More information

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/755/>



Livraria Lello : a unique shrine to the printed word

When it comes to art and culture, Porto offers all one would expect of a city proud of its UNESCO World Heritage Site status.

There is the chance to choose from a wide range of museums and galleries of genuine international renown.

On this short break we decided to focus on just one and opted for *Livraria Lello* or the Lello Bookshop, which is located in the 'old town'.

Widely recognised as one of the world's finest bookshops, it is located on Rua das Carmelitas, next to the Praça de Lisboa.

This is an area of open space where needless-to-say I was first able to enjoy 35 minutes of tremendous entertainment from a four-piece playing Europop and rock standards.

When iconic is truly merited

While I am all too aware that the word iconic is used 'liberally' when describing travel destinations and tourist attractions it is an adjective that is more than justified when describing the *Livraria Lello*.

While the first bookshop was opened in 1881, by brothers José and António Lello, it was the passion by a Frenchman Ernesto Chardon who worked at (and indeed slept in) the bookstore.

Chardon's whole life was dedicated to books and, when he won a fortune in the city lottery, he devoted it all to making the *Livraria Lello* the literary institution it is today and establishing a publishing empire within it.

By 1906, the bookstore was operating from the neo-Gothic style building by Francisco Xavier Esteves that remains its home to this day.

It is an architectural gem that is accepted as being 'one of the most emblematic examples of the in the city of Porto and throughout Portugal'.

The *Livraria Lello* has attracted readers, writers and literally connoisseurs and architectural enthusiasts ever since.

During the pandemic 'lockdown', the *Livraria Lello* even became the world's first drive through bookshop, offering free copies during the height of the Covid crisis.

Inside the store

Step inside the bookshop and one is almost overwhelmed by the elaborately carved arches, ceiling and walls along with the columns reaching up from the ground floor.

While this floor is largely neo-classical, head up the magnificent concrete staircase (that you will be convinced is wood) and its art deco.

Taking 'centre stage' to stunning effect, is the intricate and resplendent stain-glass ceiling.

If you do get to look up at this blaze of glistening colour, see if you can spot the small 'smiley face' among the original artwork.



Added by the artists brought in to clean and, by doing so, reveal the startling colour of the original.

If not ask one of the very helpful staff.

Throughout, and true to its nature, are the thousands of books from the finest Portuguese and international authors, past and present that fill the shelves lining the walls.

Those responsible for preserving while promoting the bookshop and its legacy now charge a €5 entrance fee (taken off the price of any book purchased, which 50% of visitors take advantage of) and operate a time slot booking process to avoid overcrowding.

On our visit to the *Livraria Lello*, we got the chance to speak to Susanna, one of the bookshop's dedicated team.

Her undiluted enthusiasm store makes one realise just how passionately committed everyone is to ensure its decades long tradition of literally excellence and inclusivity is upheld.

And a musical angle?

In 2022, a collection of touching and sometimes prescient personal letters written by a young Robert Allen Zimmerman to a high school girlfriend was bought at auction by the *Livraria Lello* at auction for approaching \$670,000.

The young man changed his name to Bob Dylan and the rest, as they say, is history.



More information

www.livrariavello.pt/en/home



All along the waterfronts

If it was one true that 'all roads lead to Rome', in Porto, everything will lead you to Cais da Ribeira, and the waterfront running along the Porto side of the Douro.

The area is alive with cafes, bars, restaurants and craft stalls, on both ground level and along the upper walkway that sits on top of the original mediaeval city walls.

Dom Luís I bridge

Cross the river over the river, on either the upper or lower levels of the magnificent arching iron Dom Luís I bridge, and you are in Vila Nova de Gaia, a city in its own right.

The bridge built by Théophile Seyrig, a business partner of France's Gustav Eiffel, was the longest arch bridge in the world when it opened in 1886.

It offers great views of both Porto and Gaia.

The Cais de Gaia

The Cais de Gaia that runs along the waterfront at Gaia, mirrors the Cais da Ribeira as an area for wining, dining and local crafts.

Gaia is also the hub of the port wine industry and, since the 17th Century, where all port wine originates.

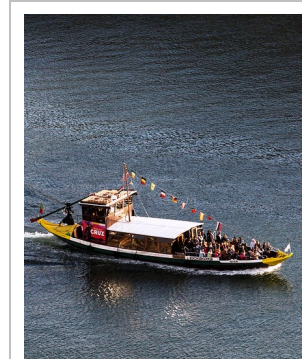
Barrels of wine from the upper Douro Valley are brought Gaia and taken to the port lodges of the major producers that line the riverfront to be made into port.

All of these provide tours and tastings with many of the bars also offering five glass samplings.

The Mosteiro da Serra de Pilar

Looking majestically over the hustle and bustle of the waterfront in Gaia is the Mosteiro da Serra de Pilar, a 17th century monastery.

The six bridges river cruise

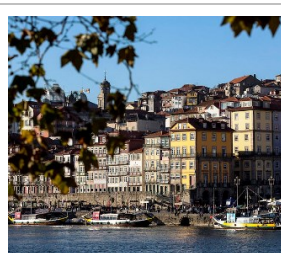
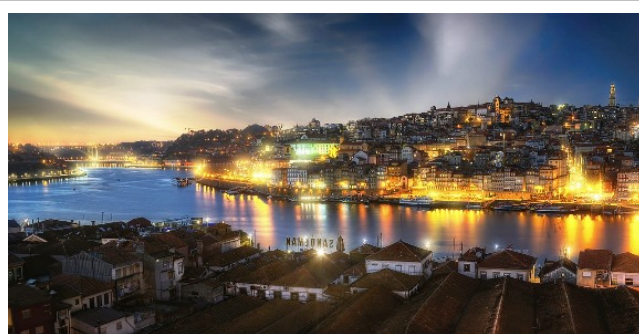


Porto is known as the 'city of bridges' with the Luiz I Bridge one of six spanning the Douro between Porto and Gaia.

One of the best ways to appreciate these is on one of the many, 50-minute 'six bridges' river cruises that ply the river here.

This is one of the most popular, and best ways to appreciate the bridges themselves and get an overall impression of Porto and Gaia from the water.

www.rotadodouro.pt/en/





Making time for a fine half-day at the coast

When on a short break to Porto, it is going to be difficult to drag oneself away from the historic heart of the city and its waterfronts.

That said, Porto does offer coastal options for, at least, a half-day by the sea.

Gaia

We decided on the beaches at Gaia, which is a short Uber ride away.

This is the less touristy option with long stretches of sandy beach interspersed with large rocks.

There is a promenade that offers as much sedate or brisk walking as walking in the fresh sea air as one could wish for.

A selection of bars and restaurants all come recommended.

Foz

The Porto neighbourhood of Foz is a short car or bus ride from the heart of the city.

Foz Beach, which takes in the Ourigo, Ingleses and Luz Beaches is popular with city residents who come for the bars and ocean sunset views.

Matosinhos

Matosinhos is a very popular spot with a long stretch of wide sandy beach with an esplanade strung with bars, cafes and restaurants known for their seafood.

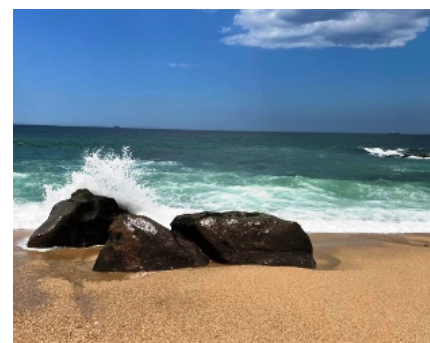


A very popular spot it attracts those looking to surf, swim and sunbathe.

Leça da Palmeira

Leça da Palmeira beach is found across the harbour from Matosinhos and offers a stretch of fine white sand.

It is here you will find the *Leça da Palmeira*, a 17th century fort and the *Farol da Boa Nova*, Porto's lighthouse, which was built in 1926 to stop ships overrunning the entrance to the port and ending up on the rocks.



And finally – while in Porto

Visitors to Porto should not miss out on ...

Mercado do Bolhão



Mercado do Bolhão is Porto's central market and a genuine architectural icon.

Dating from 1914 and built over two levels, it recently reopened after a major refurbishment and grand enhancement.

It is now alive daily with stallholders selling fresh produce, meat, fish and flowers and attracts locals and visitors in equal measure.

With its reopening the Mercado do Bolhão has become a genuine tourist attraction embracing arts and crafts and several excellent value restaurants.

Oh, and the cleanest public toilets I have come across – anywhere!

<https://mercadobolhao.pt/en>

Porto.Card

Porto.Card is the official sightseeing pass of the city of Porto (Portugal). In 2022, it was the 6th best-selling card in the tourism sector.

It is one of the most popular of the city cards and passes available throughout Europe.



Francesinha



If, unlike me, you are a meat eater, you should try a Francesinha at least once.

It is a sandwich that uses thick slices of white loaf bread with ham (Portuguese Fiambre), sausage, cheese, and steak, then topped with more cheese and a slightly spicy sauce on top.

Available as 1,2,3 or 4 day options, it offers unlimited and free use of public transport (metro, STCP buses, local trains of CP Porto and various bus lines of private operators). Excluded are the historic streetcars.

Porto.Card holders also get discounts on the entrance fee at over 150 attractions.

<https://visitporto.travel/en-GB/porto-card-landing-page/>

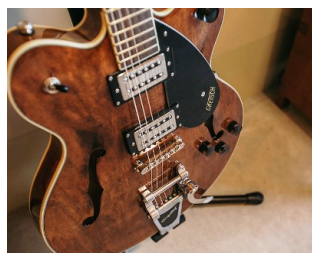


Images : Luis Ferraz

Music is serious business at the M.Ou.Co

Stay, Listen, Play is the theme at this stylish, urban-chic hotel in a peaceful and historic Porto neighbourhood.

By Ann Mealor



Not only does the building's design concept make this an interesting place to visit, but so does its focus on music and live performance. Music is serious business here.

There is a concert hall that holds 300 in the basement with excellent acoustics - and sound proofing! There are turntables in most rooms for playing vinyl records - guests can choose from a vast selection in the library.

And, if you fancy making sweet, or not so sweet music in your room, there is a menu of guitars available for hire.

A former factory, *M.Ou.Co* is minimalist in look and feel, harking back to its industrial roots.

Wall and floors throughout are concrete merged with natural stone, brick and pine, and soft furnishings in muted earthy tones.

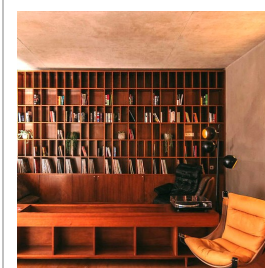
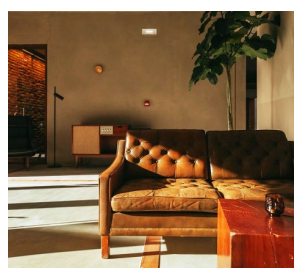
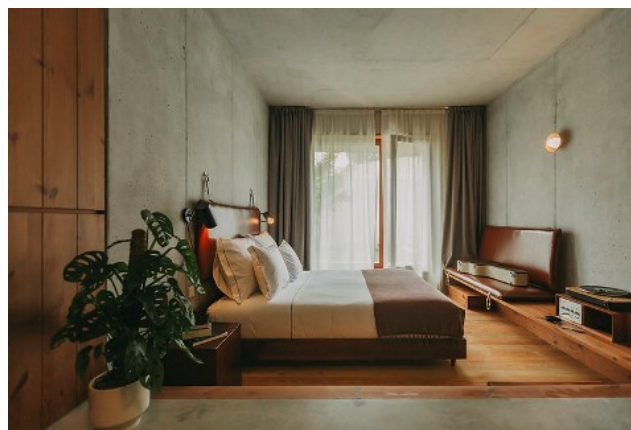
Lush, green plants, patterned rugs and leather sofas add warmth to the pared back décor.

Our room

Our room was large and cool providing a welcome refuge from the heat of the day.

It was on two levels with a small kitchen area, *Scandi style* table and chairs, a large powerful shower and a lovely outside seating area looking on to landscaped gardens.

With architecturally clean lines and foliage filled boarders, outside and inside blended seamlessly.





Dining at M.Ou.Co



Eating al fresco

It is always a treat to have the chance to eat outside and take advantage of warm Mediterranean weather.

At M.Ou.Co, al fresco dining can be enjoyed in the pretty courtyard garden.

For those who prefer dining in the restaurant, or for snacks in the bar, both offer a good alternative.

Our meal

For our first evening meal, we were keen to try some of the Portuguese inspired comfort food that had caught our eye on the menu.

We opted to share so we could both try all the dishes that came to the table.

For starters we chose plump croquettes filled with dried fruit and garlic accompanied by a lime mayonnaise dip.

Next up was a traditional bread, egg and shrimp soup.

This was followed by a plate of flakey codfish in olive oil with garlic and onions and a dish of succulent monkfish and shrimp rice with peppers and coriander.

We still made room for apple pie and a warm chocolate fondant with a particularly good peanut ice cream.

The Portuguese white wine we had by the glass was, as you might expect, excellent.

As were the expertly mixed great pre-dinner cocktails.

Breakfast

Breakfast each morning set us up for the day.

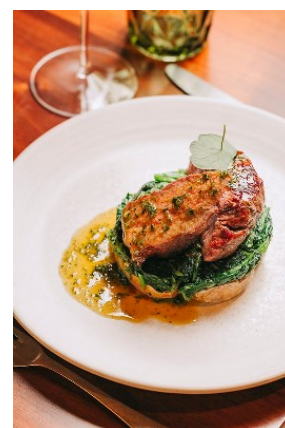
There was a good choice of cheese, cold meats, cereals, fresh fruit and juices.

As well as a hot selection of scrambled eggs, baked beans, tomatoes and bacon or sausages, there was a delicious array of freshly baked pastries and croissants, including the custard filled pastel de nata, that I became particularly fond of!

The staff here are friendly and helpful at every level.

Nothing is too much trouble for them, including making restaurant recommendations and guiding you on the map to the top tourist spots. There is always a cheery welcome or good-bye from the reception team and considerate service from the restaurant staff.

If you want to try somewhere that's a bit quirky, very relaxed but with a high level of customer service then give the M.Ou.Co a go - and say *thank you for the music*.



More information



www.moucohotel.pt

M.Ou.Co. brings global music to the fore

From the time it opened in 2022, the M.Ou.Co has been on a mission to bring performers, in all musical genres, to Porto.



James Holden

It stages concerts in its basement venue for 180 seated or 300 standing guests.

The venue has hosted Portuguese artists, but also those from around the world including Angola, France, Spain, the UK and the USA.

One highlight was Brazilian Bala Desejo who recently won a Latin Grammy Award.

In addition to guests enjoying the finest music, *M.Ou.Co.* has three rehearsal rooms complete with musical instruments and technical equipment.

M.Ou.Co. also employs Flora Vezzà, a physiotherapist specialising in Ergonomics exclusively at the venue just for musicians.

James Holden

Our stay at *M.Ou.Co.* happily coincided with a concert held by British electronic music artist James Holden.

Although music provides a constant soundtrack to my life, I had not listened to the electronic music James is known for.

So not knowing what to expect, but it was a tremendous 90 minutes.

<http://www.jamesholden.org/>



More information

To combine a stay at M.Ou.Co. with one of its concerts :

www.moucohotel.pt/en/agenda/



Catia and Tiago create something special at Tia Tia

By Ann Mealor

Tucked away down a side street in central Porto, you are only likely to come across *Tia Tia* via recommendation, review or by getting lost in your search for somewhere else.

Either way, if you are lucky enough to be in quaint and picturesque Porto, despite the dizzying array of dining options, you won't want to miss out on this gem of a place.

Modern, minimalist, cool yet cosy *Tia Tia* is a new venture by Chef, Tiago and Front of House manager Catia.

The name comes from the 'tia' in both their names, reflecting not only their personal and business partnership but their mutual commitment to creative, healthy and locally sourced fine dining at affordable prices.

Chic and stylish

Chic and stylish with a polished concrete floor and natural stone walls, patterned rugs and green potted plants add warmth and splashes of colour to the restaurant.

A bright, conservatory style area with a glass roof lights up the room and there is a delightful patio garden at the back harbouring a variety of lush, tropical green flora.

A bookcase of vinyl records (donated by Tiago's mother) stands close to a turntable so, if in a musical mood, you can browse the collection and request an album during your meal.

As Ashley has mentioned earlier in this feature, there is also the opportunity to bring your own vinyl records to enhance the wonderful food and wines still further, and maybe leave them for future diners to enjoy.



Lunch a real delight

We went for lunch and, as the weather was unpredictable, sat under the glass ceiling where we enjoyed watching a torrential downpour from the comfort of our seats.

Six main dishes

The menu is focussed around six main course sharing dishes that change on a daily basis.

Local, seasonal produce from small producers are used to create healthy, unusual dishes with intense flavour and a variety of textures.

Good quality, fresh, simple ingredients are cooked well, sometimes using traditional Portuguese methods, but with an added twist.

Vegetables are organic and there is no meat on the menu, but always a sustainably sourced 'wild' fish dish available.

We had five plates between us, all brought to the table separately, so each one could be savoured and fully appreciated.

We started with a warm, silky smooth carrot puree topped with fresh green asparagus and crunchy pumpkin seeds, served with sour dough toast. It tasted wonderful.

This was followed by prettily presented roasted cauliflower on a light coconut sauce, decorated with slices of wafer-thin raw turnip – a great combination.

Next was one of *Tia Tia's* most popular offerings – two soft boiled eggs, nestled in a bed of fried mushrooms and toasted buckwheat.

Before dessert, came our last choice, slithers of melt in the mouth mackerel on a creamy, almond sauce speckled with local black cherries.

Last, but well worth waiting for, was the perfect French Toast with passionfruit honey.

What a decadent sweet treat and not disappointingly soggy as I have experienced in the past.

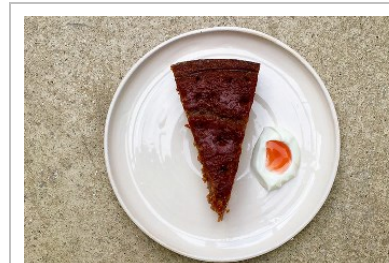
It was complemented by a side of tangy yoghurt with zesty lime.

Our meal was paired with two delicious, naturally fermented local wines; a lightly sparkling white Flui, and a crisp, orange Vinho da Ordem.

Having enjoyed every mouthful of each course, we rounded off our dining experience with roasted coffee from Guatemala.

The thought, care and attention to detail Tiago puts i to his dishes and Catia into the restaurant are clearly evident and makes eating here such a pleasure on many levels.

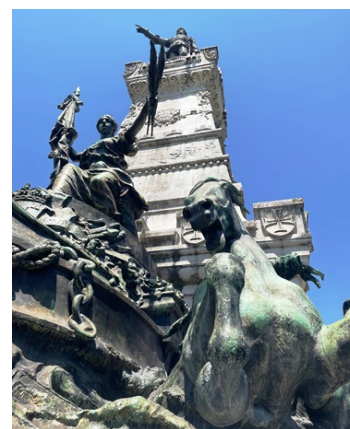
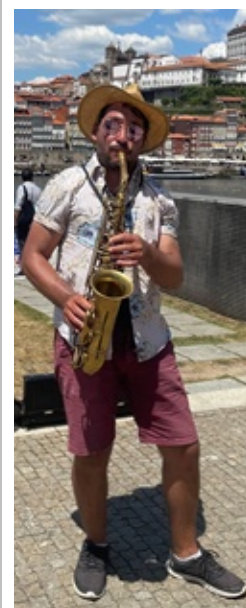
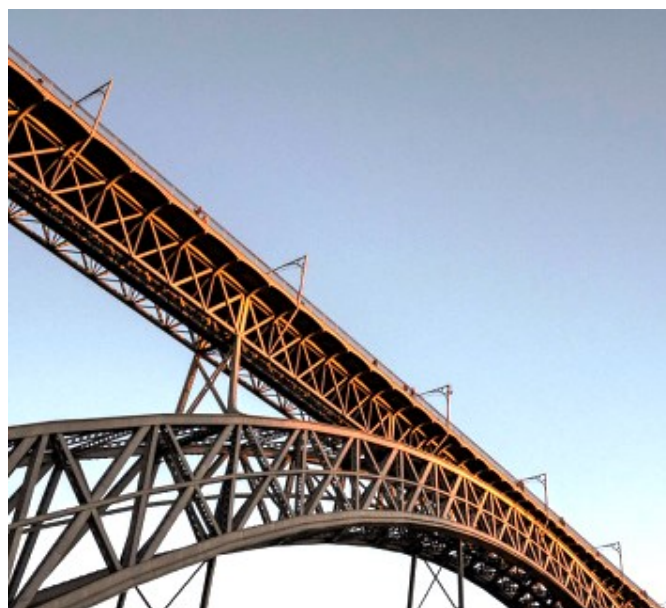
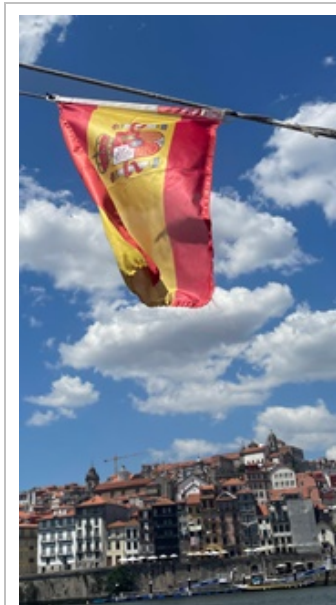
For us, it was the most memorable dining experience for a very long time from two passionate and compassionate restaurateurs.



More information

<https://www.instagram.com/tiatia.porto/>

A snapshot of Porto



If you like Porto

Living life a little ragged is Lisbon's genuine charm

One of the world's oldest cities, Portugal's coastal capital is one of the most attractive while offering visitors a genuine mix of experience.



AllWays Traveller to Lisbon



Running through Lisbon's core, the Ave da Liberdade is a majestic boulevard that leads from the Parque Eduardo VII, and on to the Praça do Comércio, the city's grand, harbour-facing plaza.

This part of Lisbon offers the historic splendour, arts and culture and fine dining and retail one can expect from any European capital city.

Head either side of this and one is immediately meandering and Bairro Alto and Alfama old town areas.

These are a winding maze of very hilly, cobblestoned streets and alleyways, strewn with small, traditional bars and restaurants.

Lisbon is very much a city for those who live here and, while welcoming visitors, it has not felt the need for large scale gentrification.

It may be ragged around the edges but that gives Lisbon an originality that is very much its attraction.

Being a small, easily walkable city (in comfortable shoes), Lisbon offers all one could wish for on a first short break. One that will almost certainly sow the seeds for a return.

www.visittlisboa.com

<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/continents/europe/a-little-ragged-around-the-edges-is-lisbon-s-charm>

AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



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www.allwaystraveller.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



Ann Meador is a professional travel writer and photographer and Managing Editor of *AllWays Traveller*



Ashley Gibbins is a professional travel writer and photographer and Managing Director of the International Travel Writers Alliance.