



CITY LIFE

LISBON

Trams and tuk-tuks roller coaster through the hills of the Portuguese capital, a city of enticing lookouts, al fresco lunches and daring street art

WORDS: KERRY WALKER. PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK PARREN TAYLOR

Morning breaks over Lisbon's seven hills. In the medina-like lanes of Alfama — one of the city's oldest, loftiest neighbourhoods — the light is beginning to creep through window shutters, washing over the *azulejo* tiles and bathing the terracotta rooftops in an amber glow; in the distance, the Tagus river glitters.

Slowly, pearl-white domes and spires come into focus, and then the facades in a fresco painter's palette of pastels. At this hour, there isn't another soul with me at the Largo das Portas do Sol, the original Moorish gateway to the district. It's a vantage point that offers views over Lisbon's historic heart that are worth rising early for.

Ever since the Moors built their castle here in the 11th century, this has been a city that has made the most of its lofty position. *Miradouros* (viewpoints) cling to the hilltops like eyries, each one giving a different eagle's-eye view. You're forever climbing, catching your breath and trying to keep your footing on the steep, cobbled lanes.

When an earthquake razed most of Lisbon to the ground in 1755, Alfama remained resolutely standing. As I wander deeper into its alleys, the aroma of coffee, the crackles of a poorly tuned radio and the barking of a dog drift towards me through open windows. A woman in a floral pinafore beats a rug against

a wall, greeting me with a broad, toothless smile and a *'bom dia'*. The district feels timeless — but in nearby Graça, the situation couldn't be more different.

While Alfama is high, Graça is even higher still, set on the tallest hill. Over the past decade, the district has been reimagined as a blank canvas for street artists, enabling it to reach new heights on Lisbon's cultural scene.

"To understand this city, look at its walls," Véro Léon van Grieken tells me with a shy smile when we meet later that morning. She's a Belgian expat working as a guide with Lisbon Street Art Tours, wrapped in layers of hand-knitted cardigans. As we trudge uphill from Alfama to Graça — Véro's little dog trotting obediently in our wake — she points out Half Young Panda: a shockingly bright 3D mural of a panda, created from street rubbish by Lisbon-born 'trash art king' Bordalo II, otherwise known as Artur Bordalo.

Afterwards, we admire the intricacy of homegrown artist Vhils' portrait of fado superstar Amália Rodrigues. It's a tidal wave of hundreds of cobblestones rolling halfway up a wall, pieced together in collaboration with an expert team of *calçada portuguesa* (Portuguese paving) masters.



INSIDER TIPS

The city's moreish *pastéis de nata* (cinnamon-dusted custard tarts) are best warm from the oven. Try them at the Manteigaria, a butter shop turned patisserie on the Rua do Loreto, or at Pastéis de Belém, where monks began making them in 1837. pasteisdebelelem.pt

After work, many Lisboetas gravitate towards *quiosques*: gazebo-like kiosk cafes in the city's parks, gardens, squares and *miradouros*. They sell inexpensive wine, beer, coffee and snacks.

For a glimpse of old-school Lisbon, pop into a cubby-hole *ginjinha* (sour cherry liqueur) bar. Most famous of the lot is A Ginjinha, on Largo de São Domingos — going strong since 1840. Order your *ginjinha* with or without cherry.

E-scooters and e-bikes are a great way to get around. Download the Bolt or Lime app to use them. Stick to the streets and bike lanes where possible. bolt.eu li.me

Clockwise from top: Sour cherry liqueur bar A Ginjinha; Elevador de Santa Justa, Lisbon's only street lift; drinks at The Vintage hotel; azulejo art at Campo de Santa Clara square. Previous pages: Enjoying the view from Miradouro da Senhora do Monte

"Vhils started as a tagger but got his big break collaborating with Banksy at the Cans Festival in 2008," Véro explains. "Now he uses explosives, demolition tools and chemicals to carve the city walls, in a process he calls 'creative destruction.'" You might think this would ruffle local feathers, but Lisboetas hardly bat an eyelid, she assures me.

Such daring street art contrasts with the graceful Renaissance spires of Graça's Monastery of São Vicente de Fora, overlooking the broad, blue arm of the river and the dome of the baroque National Pantheon. We round a bend and reach Campo de Santa Clara square, where the Feira da Ladra flea market springs up on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Here, an *azulejo* panel running along a 188-metre-long wall catches my eye. It depicts a fantastical cityscape filled with rainbows, crenellated towers and hot air balloons, accompanied by a doodle of a spindly legged, top-hatted man — the hallmark of Swedish-French street artist André Saraiva. Véro calls him the "godfather of contemporary urban art", as he was one of the first to break onto the street art scene, having covered Paris in illegal graffiti in the 1980s.

Next, we venture off-piste to a car park behind a block of flats, to contemplate murals of giant cats and cubist, Picasso-like portraits, painted during a festival devoted to female street artists. After that, it's on to Shepard Fairey's Revolution Woman, which depicts a freedom fighter holding a machine gun with a flower inserted into the barrel — a nod to 1974 military coup the Carnation Revolution, which ended over 40 years of dictatorship in Portugal. But most arresting of all is Tropical Fado in RGB, by Lisbon-based street artist OzeArv, a rainbow-bright

eruption of birds and flowers that spreads up the side of a three-storey apartment block.

I meet OzeArv, aka José Carvalho, over a pancake brunch in retro-cool cafe Maria Limão, in the heart of Graça, where his intricate foliage murals grow wildly up the walls. A warm, charismatic, softly spoken man with a crop of curly hair and an easy, childlike smile, José started tagging in the 1990s, then took his colourful street art all over the world. Lisbon is now, once again, his canvas.

"With street art, you can paint wherever you want," he says. "It creates a cultural dialogue with communities and gives underrepresented people a voice — even a sense of pride. In this way, it can be a catalyst for social change. It's a shared experience — people feel free to give their opinions."

He continues: "I get much pleasure from being up on the crane or on climbing ropes, high above ground level, drawing my dreams. I like to combine the graphic with the realistic, use clashing colours and hide stories within stories. And Lisbon has the best light to paint. India is the only other country I know with this kind of golden light."

In search of that same light, I make it my mission to seek out Lisbon's most enticing lookouts to best take it in. I begin, a quick tram ride south of Graça, with a leisurely, city-gazing breakfast on the roof terrace of boho The Luminares Hotel & Spa. It's shoehorned into the sloping, bar-rammed lanes of the Bairro Alto district, where Lisbon parties by night and quietly nurses a hangover by day. Set in an 18th-century former palace, the hotel is an ode to Lisbon's light, with painter and muralist Jacqueline de Montaigne's huge, dreamlike murals of gold-haloed women framed by fluttering swallows sweeping up staircases.

At the nearby Miradouro São Pedro de Alcântara, people are already sipping piña colodas to reggae beats mid-morning, with the city spread at their feet. There's a hint of spring in the air, with the first puffs of blossom evident on the trees between the tinkling fountains scattered around.

Backtracking through the shuttered lanes of Bairro Alto towards the river, I follow steps down to the gardens of Miradouro de Santa Catarina, where locals chat, drink beer, play guitar and smoke beneath the burly statue of Adamastor, the storm-battling giant in Portuguese poet Luís de Camões' epic poem *Os Lusíadas*. The city views here at café Noobai are beautiful at this time of day, although the bartender tells me they're even better in the purple haze of sunset.

HEADING FOR THE HILLS

Lisbon's hills have made fairground rides out of its public transport. Bee-yellow vintage trams — including the famous tram 28, which rumbles through much of the historic centre — roller coaster along the streets, while *elevadores* (funiculars) buzz up the steepest inclines, just as they have for more than a century. In downtown Baixa, Lisbon's only street lift, the neo-gothic Elevador de Santa Justa (designed by Raul Mésnier, Gustave Eiffel's protégé) presents passengers with 360-degree views of the skyline. Much newer on the scene is Lisbon's fleet of tuk-tuks.

"Your limo has arrived," chuckles Eduardo Carvalho, of Tuk Tuk Tejo, the next morning. He's a fast-talking, passionate man with a broad grin and a jumper that matches his sky-blue, open-sided tuk-tuk, which I hop into. "Lisbon is mountainous but compact, and the cobbles can be slippery — many

struggle to walk here," Eduardo says. "Electric tuk-tuks arrived in the city 10 years ago, and initially taxi drivers and cars overtook us impatiently; they thought we were just a fad. But now we've been accepted."

We trundle up to the pine-shaded Miradouro Senhora do Monte, Lisbon's highest viewpoint, where the wide-angle vistas reveal the city in all its multi-tiered glory — sweeping from the castle across the river to Cristo Rei, a late 1950s tribute to Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer, and beyond to the forested mountains of Sintra. I recognise the historic centre, fading where the skyscrapers of modern Lisbon sprout up.

"Tuk-tuks let you see all the detail without the uphill slog and crowds. We can get to the places trams and taxis can't, fill you in on the history, show you secret spots," shouts Eduardo as we rattle through the noisy Alcântara docks.

He suddenly swings around a corner to one of these secret spots, pattering up a boneshaker of a hill to Miradouro de Santo Amaro, where a wizened Renaissance chapel has withered like the 400-year-old olive trees surrounding it. But it's the Ponte 25 de Abril, leaping boldly across the Tagus, that fills the frame. Completed in 1966, the suspension bridge is the spitting image of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. And as staggering as the view is, we're the only ones here — it's silent but for the distant roar of traffic and the gulls wheeling on the breeze.

"Nice, huh?" says Eduardo with a smile, more to himself than to me, seemingly lost in his own thoughts. I nod and trace the line of the hills with my hand down to the sunlit river, which in turn drifts to the deep blue of the Atlantic. From up here, you can have all of Lisbon at your fingertips.



Q&A with Pedro Vieira, founder of Lisbon City Runners

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO RUN?

Early morning. Our runs start at 7am, when the city streets are empty. The sunrises from the *miradouros* looking out over the river are just beautiful. Later on, the big sights like the castle, cathedral and Praça do Comércio square get so crowded you can barely take a picture.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SPOTS?

Miradouro da Senhora do Monte and Portas do Sol for incredible sunrise views, and Parque Florestal de Monsanto, because you can run for hours on beautiful trails and feel immersed in nature.

WHICH RUN WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO FIRST-TIMERS?

The Castle Running Tour. It's just 7km [4.5 miles], but challenging because of the climbs. If you're in Lisbon for a short time, it's a brilliant way to see the city; within an hour and a half you've seen many high points, absorbed a lot of history, visited hidden spots and had a workout — and all before breakfast.

lisboncityrunners.com

Right: Vintage trams trundle through Lisbon's hilly streets



‘By day Lisbon has a naive theatrical quality that enchants and captivates, but by night it is a fairy-tale city, descending over lighted terraces to the sea, like a woman in festive garments going down to meet her dark lover.’ **Erich Maria Remarque, *The Night in Lisbon***



Dusk at the Miradouro da Graça viewpoint, one of many in the city



TOP 8

Culinary highs

ALMA

BEST FOR: FINE DINING

Set in the backlit, bottle-lined vaults of an 18th-century former book warehouse in Chiado, two-Michelin-star Alma is an ingenious ode to Portugal from Lisbon fine-dining titan Henrique Sá Pessoa. The chef's tasting menus are ingeniously composed and artistically presented, with signature dishes including suckling pig confit with turnip-top puree, and Costa a Costa, a deep-dive into the sea with scarlet shrimp, pumpkin, harissa and black garlic. almalisboa.pt

ROSSIO GASTROBAR

BEST FOR: SUNDOWNERS

On the seventh floor of the Altis Avenida hotel, this glass-walled, art deco restaurant captivates with views of the castle-topped skyline. If the sun's out, snag a table on the terrace for a feast of exquisite small plates, courtesy of chef João Correia. Top billing goes to the likes of plump, sweet Algarve scarlet shrimp and tender lamb from the mountains of northern Portugal. The cocktails are sensational, too, with Grape among the standouts (gin, vermouth and fresh grape juice). rossiogastrobar.com


GUNPOWDER

BEST FOR: FUSION FLARE

Arriving on Lisbon's food scene with a bang in spring, this vintage-cool restaurant delivers explosive flavours. Indian-inspired dishes spin together the freshest Portuguese produce with recipes and spices that whisk you to the coast of Goa and the backstreets of Mumbai. The big deal here is the seafood, which shines in dishes like silky Algarve oysters with a zingy hit of kachumber salad and razor clams seasoned with ghee. gunpowderrestaurants.pt

BAHR

BEST FOR: KNOCKOUT VIEWS

Expect stunning views at Bairro Alto Hotel's rooftop restaurant and cocktail bar. Subtly lit tables and an open kitchen form the backdrop for fine dining without frippery. Paying homage to Portugal and beyond, chef Bruno Rocha excites with *petiscos* (snacks) such as smoked barnacles on toast and buttery Algarvian tuna. These pique the appetite for mains like sea bass with Jerusalem artichoke and beurre-blanc dashi, and desserts like meringue with green-apple granita. bahr.pt 

From left: Mixing a cocktail at Rossio Gastrobar; roast beef with egg and caesar dressing at BAHR



Left: Low-key rooftop restaurant Lumi at The Lumiares Hotel & Spa



GETTING THERE & AROUND

British Airways, Easyjet, Ryanair and TAP Air Portugal are among the airlines flying frequently and nonstop from the UK to Lisbon. ba.com easyjet.com ryanair.com flytap.com

Average flight time: 2h30m.

Lisbon is well connected to European destinations by rail. London to Lisbon takes two days, via Paris, Barcelona and Madrid. seat61.com

Many neighbourhoods in the historic centre, including Castelo, Alfama and Bairro Alto, are largely pedestrian-only. The 24-hour Carris pass covers trams, buses, funiculars and the metro. carris.pt

WHEN TO GO

Lisbon is ripe for exploring in spring, with comfortable average daytime temperatures of 18C to 24C and the parks in full bloom. Avoid summer, when temperatures can leap above 30C and the big-hitting sights are crowded. Autumn can be golden and glorious, with highs of up to 23C in October. Winter is quieter, cooler and wetter, with lows of around 9C.

WHERE TO STAY

The Lumiares Hotel & Spa, Bairro Alto. From £218, B&B. thelumiares.com
The Vintage, Avenida da Liberdade. From £160, B&B. thevintagelisbon.com

MORE INFO

visitlisboa.com

visitportugal.com

Pocket Lisbon (Lonely Planet).

RRP: £7.99

HOW TO DO IT

Responsible Travel offers an eight-day, tailor-made trip to Lisbon and its surrounds from £1,021 per person, including some meals, a guided tour of the historic centre and a day trip to Sintra. Excludes flights. responsibletravel.com

SEEN

BEST FOR: DATE NIGHT

Headed up by Portuguese star chef Olivier da Costa, hotel Tivoli Avenida Liberdade Lisboa's glamorous restaurant is a sultry, glass-walled beauty. Lisbon glitters seductively below, a tree grows right through the bar, emerald-velvet sofas curve around marble-topped tables and DJs spin lounge beats to people nursing pre-dinner cocktails on the roof terrace. The menu dips into Portuguese, Brazilian and Japanese waters, with excellent sushi and sharing plates like ceviche tacos with guacamole, and Wagyu with leek, mushrooms and green curry. seenlx.com

CURA

BEST FOR: LOCAL INGREDIENTS

The head chef at this Michelin-starred restaurant at the Four Seasons Ritz Pedro Pena Bastos combs Portugal for exquisite farmed, fished and foraged ingredients, which he cooks with precision and flair to yield unusual flavours. Watch chefs prepare mini masterpieces for tasting menus — the likes of bluefin tuna with horseradish, turnip and smoked broth; turbot with barnacles and wild garlic; and parsnip with pine, heather honey and toasted milk. fourseasons.com

TAPISCO

BEST FOR: LIGHT BITES

Spanish tapas and Portuguese *petiscos* are the stars of the menu at this coolly understated space, with a menu overseen by Henrique Sá Pessoa. Banquette seating, cheek-by-jowl tables and a bar and open kitchen running the length of the restaurant create a buzzy vibe redolent of Barcelona's tapas bars. Carefully chosen vermouths pair nicely with clean, bright flavours like octopus salad with paprika, marinated fish with lime, seaweed and Aljezur sweet potato, and cuttlefish tempura with lime mayo. tapisco.pt

LUMI

BEST FOR: LOW-KEY CHIC

Sunlit days ease gently into mellow nights at this rooftop restaurant at The Lumiares Hotel & Spa, with widescreen views of Lisbon, low, cushioned seating for casual al fresco dining and a boho, low-key feel. It's a cracking spot for brunch (try the Lumi omelette with cheese, spinach and chilli or a fruit-topped açai bowl). Return as Lisbon lights up for negronis and sharing plates such as oxtail croquettes with fava bean pesto, roasted octopus with padrón peppers and spicy *pica-pau* beef strips. thelumiares.com □