

Your Wedding Guide to Portugal & its Regions

Dearest reader,

Congratulations! You are getting married and considering Portugal as the place to hold your wedding celebration. This is exciting, not only because it is your wedding day, but also because Portugal is a beautiful country with a wide and varied offering. I am sure you will be able to find the perfect spot for you with this handy guide.

Though Portugal covers an area of just 92,000 km² or 35,000 miles², the country has everything you can imagine. Fancy a wedding ceremony on the beach? Dreamt about marrying in a wine vineyard? What about celebrating your love in a renovated castle? Or maybe a festival of love at a glamping ground is more your style? Whatever you dream of, Portugal has it on offer, you only need to know where to look. That is where this guide comes in. Review the regions, learn about what makes each unique, discover possible wedding locations, and learn about the local food and wine.

This guide is in no way definitive, but it is a great place to start. It is most helpful when utilized in tandem with the *Where-to-marry* quiz on the Portugal Wedding Place.

May your day be filled with love and happiness,

Portugal Wedding Place

Lisbon

The sunny Portuguese capital could be the perfect fit for you.

Lisbon combines the international, cosmopolitan feel of a European capital with a splash of Portuguese culture that makes it one of the most popular destinations in Europe.

Plentiful sunshine – in fact, Lisbon is second only to the Maltese capital of Valletta in hours of sunshine per year – nearly year-round means you are almost guaranteed to have sun-filled photos.

Lisbon's size and cosmopolitan feel mean that you can easily find the perfect wedding venue for you. Boutique hotel? Modern art venue? Alternative event space? Rooftop sanctuary overlooking the city? Whichever one is your ideal, Lisbon has it!

You and your guests won't need to travel far as Lisbon's airport is located right in the heart of the city. And if you are worried about your guests making their way around the city, don't be! Lisbon is one of the friendliest European cities for English speakers. From your AirBnB apartment to the Uber driver to the museum staff, everyone will speak at least a little English, if not be completely fluent.

There is also no possibility for you nor your guests to be bored or go hungry. Lisbon is a city with enough architecture, street art, museums, lookout points, and cute winding streets to ensure you have plenty to do for days! As for food, the possibilities are extensive. Not only will you be able to enjoy both traditional and modern interpretations of classic Portuguese food, but also cuisine from all of the former Portuguese colonies. Craving food from Goa or Brazil or Mozambique? Lisbon will guarantee you don't miss out.

The other great thing about being in the capital is that they are comfortable working with international crowds. That means finding a wedding planner and other vendors that speak your language is a snap. Also, they are more likely to have adapted to the ways for foreigners, i.e. the speed of response being a big one, than if you decided to go with a sweet, little *quinta* in the countryside.

Oh, and did we mention the city is gorgeous? If you have your wedding in Lisbon please do us one favor: book a photo session walking around the city. You won't regret it!

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

Lisbon has become increasingly more popular as a wedding destination, which means highly coveted venues and vendors, book up early. The most desired time of the year has traditionally been from May to September, however, because it is a sunny city, weddings now happen year-round. And because it is so desirable it is more expensive than other parts of the country.

That said, while it is a very sunny city, rain does happen and when it does watch out! Because the residents of the city are so unaccustomed to the rain, everything stops, everything slows down, and getting things done becomes a pain.

The taxi drivers. Lisbon taxi drivers are notoriously bad: bad drivers, rude, and unhelpful. Avoid them at all cost. Uber operates in Lisbon and the drivers are plentiful and the rides cheap. So, do yourself and your guests a favor, tell them to skip the taxi queue and hail an Uber or arrange a driver.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- LX Factory
- Petit Palais
- Estufa Real
- Leao Holandes (boat)

Food

Alfacinhas is how the people of Lisbon are known. It translates to mean “lettuce eaters,” but don’t let that worry you, you won’t be going hungry in Lisbon.

A well-known dish from Lisbon that you should be sure to consume is *bacalhau à Brás*. Have you heard that we have a different recipe for salted and dried codfish for every day of the year? Well its true and while *bacalhau* is not for everyone, this dish, made with shredded codfish, fried toothpick potatoes, egg, onion, and parsley, is as simple and as good as you can get.

Alfacinhas are also sandwich lovers but don’t expect lettuce on that sandwich. Their favorite is the *bifana*, a piece of pork cooked in a secret sauce and served in a traditional crusty bread. Simple and traditional at its best.

One thing that Lisbon is known for, is being the home of an entire way of eating – small portions of food that you can share with friends, they are called *petiscos*. You will find *petiscos* all over the country, but Lisbon and the region of *Estremadura* is its home. So, what is a *petiscos*? The most traditional options include:

- *Caracóis*: snails. Not your thing you say? Just give it a chance because anything cooked in that delicious butter and garlic broth is sure to taste outstanding.
- *Ovos verdes*: green eggs. No this isn’t “Green Eggs & Ham”, these deviled eggs, with parsley for the green, are battered and fried.
- *Pipas*: literally translates to pipes. This is chicken gizzards cooked with tomatoes, rice, onion, and garlic. Try it before you judge it.
- *Pataniscas de bacalhau*: little pastries of codfish. Mashed up codfish with seasoning is battered and then fried. All of this is heaven in the palm of your hand.

Going for the sweets, it would be a crime to have a wedding in Lisbon without sampling the *pastel de nata*. Roughly translated into custard tart, this eggy goodness wrapped in a flaky base is Portuguese pastries at its best. There is much discussion about where to find the best one. The younger crowd like *Manteigaria*, a recent chain that has perfected their buttery crust. But if you are a traditionalist, best held to the neighborhood of *Belém* and eat a *pastel de belém*. You can thank us later.

Wine

While the city may sit outside of any winemaking region, it is surrounded to the north, east, and south by three distinct wine regions. The regions are known as Lisbon, Tejo, and Setúbal, with each offering its own unique flavors to be experienced.

- Lisbon
 - Arinto
 - Trincadeira
 - Alicante Bouschet
 - Fernão Pires
- Tejo
 - Castelão
 - Fernão Pires
 - Arinto
 - Sauvignon blanc
 - Chardonnay
- Setúbal
 - Moscatel de Setúabl
 - Castelão

Porto

The second largest Portuguese city, known as the invincible city, could be the perfect fit for you.

Porto's deep-seeded heritage and the pride of its people in their culture, history, architecture, and cuisine are all why it has been named European Best Destination in 2017.

While Lisbon is international and cosmopolitan, Porto is authentically Portuguese and proud of it. Walk amongst the medieval winding streets, listen to the local old ladies as they shout instructions from their balconies, visit the port wine cellars for a unique wine experience, and bask in the iconic skyline.

Porto's growing popularity means that there are plenty of flights from all over Europe and the world (direct flight from Newark) to this lush wedding spot. The growth in tourism also means that much of the city is visitor friendly and most people speaks at least some English. Don't be surprised though if your Uber driver or waiter also speaks French and German – the Portuguese (people of Porto) are incredibly welcoming and will do everything they can to help, even if it means using a bit of international, travel sign language.

Porto's size and the mixture of old and new means that you can easily find the perfect wedding venue for you. Boutique hotel? Traditional *quinta*? Outdoor space? High-end glamour venue? Whichever one is your ideal, Porto has it!

The great thing about Porto is that it is ideal for finding venues with traditional style and modern amenities. Porto is perfect for those that adore the traditional tiles (*azulejos*), stone construction, and an old-world vibe.

Oh, and did we mention the city is gorgeous? If you have your wedding in Porto please do us one favor: book a photo session walking around the city. You won't regret it!

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

While the Algarve, and to a lesser extent, Lisbon, have been go-to wedding destinations for foreigners for years, this development in Porto is only recent. What does that mean for you? It means that finding all of the vendors that you want that speak perfect English may be a bit more difficult here. It also means, if you don't speak Portuguese, you will probably end up relying heavily on the first vendor you encounter with the best English to guide you.

Another difficulty is that many local vendors will not have websites. Facebook pages, yes, but full websites are less common. That means that you will need to do a bit more Googling than if you were to be getting married in Lisbon or the Algarve. Alternatively, if you have found your perfect photographer or celebrant, ask them for recommendations.

Porto's weather is far less reliable than in the south of the country. Annual rainfall totals 1,150 millimeters (45 inches); just to give you a comparison, London has an annual rainfall of 600 millimeters (23.5 inches) per year. This is not to say that it is always raining. The wettest parts

of the year are from November to April with rain almost unheard of from late June to mid-September.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- The Yeatman Hotel
- Casa dos Arcos
- Quinta da Torre Bella
- Palacio Do Freixo

Food

The residents of Porto are known as the *Tripeiros*, tripe eaters. Not as bad as lettuce eaters, but some people just don't have the stomach for tripe... no pun intended. If you are feeling up to it *tripas à moda do Porto* is a must. Tripe with various types of meats, white beans, carrots and seasoning, this meal will fill you from lunch until the next morning.

That said, the city has plenty to offer beyond tripe. One of its most famous food items is the *francesinha*, a stacked, meat sandwich covered in a slightly spicy beer and tomato sauce topped with melted cheese and a fried egg. This sandwich is eaten with a knife and fork (it is that big!) and is not for the faint of heart. That said, it is a bit messy to eat at a wedding so we advise against it on your wedding day.

Another classic Porto dish is *sarrabulho à Porto*, a thick blood stew made with various parts of the pig and best eaten on a cold day. It may not sound appetizing from the description, but the people of Porto have perfected the art of using all of the pig and knowing how to make it taste good.

More of a fish eater? Try the grilled octopus, *polvo assado na brasa*. As simple as it comes, grill the octopus then cover it with a mix of chopped onion garlic, and parsley in olive oil. Served with cooked potatoes and you have a quintessential Porto meal.

If you are now looking for what to eat when arriving at a pastry shop, simply ask for a *jesuíta*, translated to refer to a Jesuit priest. A simple, flaky pastry of flour and butter in the shape of a triangle topped with an egg, sugar, and cinnamon glaze. If you can get it warm you just may think you went to heaven.

Wine

While Porto may be known for its Port wine, this wine is only brought to Porto from the Douro Valley for storage, selling, and shipping. You would be remiss to not enjoy Port wine while you are in Porto, however, there are also other types of wines for you to try while here. They include:

- Wines from the Douro Valley:
 - Port
 - Douro DOC
 - Touriga Nacional
- Wines from the Vinho Verde Region:

- Vinho Verde DOP
- Minho DOP
- Alvarinho
- Loureiro

Western Algarve

The region is home to the tourist destinations of Faro and Lagos, with its eternal sun, could be the perfect spot for you.

The Western Algarve began to embrace tourism as early as the 1960's and has since welcomed millions of guests from all over Europe.

The constant sunshine throughout the year and better than average temperatures mean that from March to October residents from all over Europe flock to the beautiful sandy beaches of this region. During the summer months, Faro airport is directly connected to nearly every large and medium-sized city in Europe, which means your guests will have more time to spend enjoying the sun than sitting in airports.

The other benefit from all of this tourism is that locals will surely speak English, as well as German or Dutch or Spanish – it is truly an international destination. The wedding industry in this region has also grown hand in hand with tourism. While destination weddings to the North of Portugal, and to a lesser extent Lisbon, are still relatively new, the Western Algarve has been working with international couples for years. It won't be hard to find in this region transplants from the United Kingdom or Holland, who are wedding planners or florists.

This is also an excellent spot for your guests who are hoping to combine your wedding with a beach holiday. There are hotels, apartments, and BnB's for every price range meaning your friends can splash out on a luxury house with a swimming pool, while your parents can enjoy a comfortable hotel on the water and your cousins cozy-up in a boutique hotel in a small village.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

Tourism has brought a lot of positive to the Algarve, but there is also another side to it. Some call the Algarve "Little England", as there are numerous English that moved there to enjoy the nearly year-long sunshine. This has brought with it numerous elements of English culture, like great Indian restaurants, fish and chip shops, and some rowdy drinking. This is either a pro or a con depending on your point of view. If you want an authentically Portuguese experience, this is not the region for you.

The other con is that because the region has been receiving destination weddings for years, it is a saturated market. Weddings really are a business in this region so you may find it hard to feel special. This is especially true when your venue or cakemaker has an event nearly every other day from May to October. This also means that while it still may be cheaper than a wedding in London or Zurich or New York City, it will definitely be more expensive than in other parts of the country.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Aldeia da Pedralva
- Os Agostos

- Quinta do Lago
- Herdade Quinta Natura

Food

The Algarve is known for its fresh seafood that is rivaled by few other locations in Portugal. Enjoy your stay to the fullest and make sure to indulge in the fish of the region.

Start your meal off with a *sopa de cabeça de peixe*, fish head soup. It may not sound like the most appetizing dish, but you will definitely enjoy this flavorful soup cooked with parsley, onion, tomatoes, olive oil, peppers, potatoes, and, of course, one fish head.

If seafood is what you are after try the *carapaus limado* (sometimes called *charros alimados*) which are mackerel filets that are briefly cooked, then blanched and finally served either with vinegar or lemon. A light and fresh dish, originally from Portimão, perfect for those hot summer days. Further to the west, originating from the area of Monchique, is a dish called *lulas cheias*, meaning stuffed squid. This dish combines diced squid with *presunto*, tomatoes, onion, and rice to make for a filling meal. If you need some meat in your life try *galinha cerejada* from the village of Loulé. Combining chicken, bacon, cured meats, white wine, rice, and seasoning, this dish is sure to satisfy any carnivore.

For a typical dessert from the area called São Bartolomeu de Messines, try the *bolos folhados messinenses*. These little cakes of puff pastry dough combine flour, eggs, (lots of) butter, sugar, and milk to create something of a sweet bun roll that is sure to leave you happy. For something from Lagos, look for the *bolos de Dom Rodrigo*. While I cannot find who Dom Rodrigo was, I can surmise that he surly like eggs. This recipe combines 10 egg yolks prepared in what is called threads – this is the process of pulling apart the yolk to make fine threads that when finished makes this pastry look like it is comprised of strands of pasta – sugar, more egg yolk, almonds, and cinnamon.

Wine

Known more for its beaches and seafood than its wines, the Algarve does contain its own wine region. While there is a long historical connection with winemaking, it has only re-emerged as a focus for the region within the last few decades. The western part of the Algarve is characterized by a fresher and more humid climate that is more temperate, while the eastern part has more of a Mediterranean climate. Due to the year-round, warm climate the reds of the region are soft, while the whites are full-bodied and best enjoyed when served chilled.

- Castelão
- Syrah
- Negra Mole
- Malvasia Fina
- Manteúdo
- Trincadeira (Tinta Amarela)

Eastern Algarve

The Eastern Algarve, with its legendary combination of sun and scenery, and fewer tourists, could be the perfect spot for you.

The region of Eastern Algarve, from Faro east to the Spanish border, is less easily accessible than the other part of the region, but that downside also means that you will enjoy beaches with fewer tourists and a more authentic Portuguese experience.

The constant sunshine throughout the year and better than average temperatures mean that from March to October residents from all over Europe flock to the beautiful sandy beaches of this region. During the summer months, Faro airport is directly connected to nearly every large and medium-sized city in Europe, which means your guests will have more time to spend enjoying the sun than sitting in airports. There is a train that runs from Faro to the Spanish Border, but really you will want to hire a car to be more mobile.

The other benefit from all of this tourism is that locals will surely speak another language, Spanish is a given, followed by English, German or Dutch – it is truly an international destination. The wedding industry in this overall region has also grown hand in hand with tourism. The Algarve has been working with international couples for years.

This is also an excellent spot for your guests who are hoping to combine your wedding with a beach holiday. There are hotels, apartments, and BnB's for every price range meaning your friends can splash out on a luxury house with a swimming pool, while your parents can enjoy a comfortable hotel on the water and your cousins cozy-up in a boutique hotel in a small village.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

Tourism has brought a lot of positive to the Algarve, but there is also another side to it. This is still a tourist-driven region. This means that you will encounter more foreigners than locals and that prices will be higher as a result, though not as high as in Western Algarve.

The other con is that because the region has been receiving destination weddings for years, it is a saturated market. Weddings really are a business in this region so you may find it hard to feel special. This is especially true when your venue or cakemaker has an event nearly every other day from May to October. This also means that while it still may be cheaper than a wedding in London or Zurich or New York City, it will definitely be more expensive than in other parts of the country.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Guarita Terrace
- Pousada Convento Tavira
- A Quinta (Eventos)

Food

There is one certainty in the south of Portugal, one does not come to the Algarve to eat meat. That is not to say it does not exist, it does and it is delicious, but this is where lovers of the sea come to enjoy its fruits.

Start your meal off with *choquinhos fritos com tinta*, this recipe is for small cuttlefish with the ink sautéed in garlic, bay leaf, and olive oil. The recipe originates from the village of Olhão, just to the east of Faro and is one you will surely enjoy. For a fresher option, the *estopeta de atum*, a cold tuna salad with onions, tomatoes, and peppers from the town of Vila Real de Santo António is a perfect choice.

If shellfish is your thing then for your main dish try the *arroz de berdigão*, rice of cockles cooked with garlic, coriander, salt, and pepper. Alternatively, *bifes de atum*, tuna steaks are delicious in this region. If you need a break from fish, try the *perna de carneiro no tacho*. This recipe comes from the village of Tavira and is for a leg of mutton slow cooked for hours with tomatoes, white wine, potatoes, and various herbs.

This region, just like the rest of Portugal, has its fair share of sweets to offer. *Figos cheios*, literally translated to mean full or stuffed figs, is a recipe for figs dipped in a mixture of almond flour, sugar, chocolate powder, cinnamon, and lemon peel. If you thought this was going to be a light option, think again. Or if you are wanting to try the region's version of the conventional sweets, be on the lookout for the *torta de claras*, which combines 12 eggs whites, 17 tablespoons of sugar and 50 grams of almonds. You won't be disappointed.

Wine

Known more for its beaches and seafood than its wines, the Algarve does contain its own wine region. While there is a long historical connection with winemaking, it has only re-emerged as a focus for the region within the last few decades. The western part of the Algarve is characterized by a fresher and more humid climate that is more temperate, while the eastern part has more of a Mediterranean climate. Due to the year-round, warm climate the reds of the region are soft, while the whites are full-bodied and best enjoyed when served chilled.

- Castelão
- Syrah
- Negra Mole
- Malvasia Fina
- Manteúdo
- Trincadeira (Tinta Amarela)

Western Douro Valley

The oldest demarcated wine region in the world, with its gorgeous views and easy access from Porto, could be the perfect spot for you.

Marry among the rolling hills covered in vineyards for as far as the eye can see with a glistening, golden river cutting through is a wedding most can only dream of. You can make that dream into a reality in the western part of the Douro Valley.

The Douro Valley begins a short 30-minute drive from downtown Porto, which means you and your guests to not have to travel far from your nearest airport. Porto is very in fashion at the moment, meaning most European cities have direct connections to Porto, with even a few international ones (i.e. Newark in the US). While Porto is only now coming into its own, the Douro Valley is a classic region and has been welcoming guests from all over the world for decades.

Let others visit the Port wine cellars in Porto, while you and your wedding party go straight to the source. The Douro Valley is covered in hundreds of distinct *quinta*, each with its own unique style and, of course, wine. If you and your guests are food lovers and wine aficionados, you cannot go wrong enjoying not just the grapes, but also the decadent cheeses, meats, and dishes that hail from this part of Portugal.

Depending on your wedding size and the location you select, you can house your entire wedding party in one location or have your party scattered over a small area in different guesthouses, apartments and *quintas*. Everyone will be able to enjoy walking through the vineyards, tours organized to other vineyards, boating trips along the Douro Valley, relaxing at the spa (even some smaller *quintas* have their own spas) and relaxing by the pool.

In less than an hour of landing in Porto, you will arrive at the western part of the Douro Valley where your relaxing escape of a wedding begins.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

The Western part of the Douro Valley is easily accessible from Porto, which means many tourists make a day trip to this region. They come by bus, train, car or tour and attempt to stop at 2 or 3 wineries in a day. All in the hopes of getting a taste (no pun intended) of the Douro Valley. What does this mean for you? It could mean that your winery still accepts visitors on your wedding day or that a walk around the local town or village may include running into large tour groups. This is not all places, but make sure to check with your venue beforehand.

There is a limited sweet spot in terms of weather. June to September is, on average, the driest period of the year, but July and August are also the hottest months out of the year, with average highs reaching 31° Celsius/89° Fahrenheit.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Quinta de Alvre
- Quinta da Lavandeira
- Douro Royal Valley Hotel & Spa
- Quinta do Outeiro

Food

The food of this region is hearty and filling, food to keep you warm in the winter and keep you full for working in the fields the rest of the year. A very local dish is *papas de sarrabulho à moda de Sandim do Douro*, a blood pudding stew with pig liver, ham, turnip, pumpkin, and seasoning. Not exactly diet food, but it will fill you up. The region is also known for its lamb that stands up beautifully with a glass of table red wine from the Douro Valley. Roasted lamb, *cabrito assado*, is a favorite of the region.

If you are looking for some fish in your diet there is always *bacalhau*. The codfish dish typical of this region is *feijão com bacalhau e couve*, that is beans with codfish and cabbage. All of this dutifully covered in olive oil and garlic. If you are looking for fresh fish *pescada do rio Douro* is a sure crowd pleaser. Fried or grilled it is a delicious fresh water, white fish.

If your mind is now on to sweets, not to worry we have you covered. A favorite of the region is the *cavacas de Resende*. This sweet cake originating in the area of Resende is made from a simple combination of eggs, sugar, and flour. While it may sound simple, the result is pure perfection when paired with a glass of Port wine.

Wine

If you think there is only Port wine to drink in the Douro Valley, you will be happily mistaken. This region, one of the oldest demarcated wine regions in the world, may have gained fame because of Port, but those who continue to come back time and time again, come for the delicious, full-bodied reds and whites of the region. Some of the wines to look for in the Douro Valley include:

- Port
- Douro DOC
- Touriga Nacional
- Duriense IGP

Eastern Douro Valley

Amongst the vineyards of the oldest demarcated wine region in the world, deep in the heart of Portugal, the eastern part of the Douro Valley could be the perfect spot for you.

Marry among the rolling hills covered in vineyards for as far as the eye can see with a glistening, golden river cutting through is a wedding most can only dream of. You can make that dream into a reality in the eastern part of the Douro Valley.

The eastern part of the Douro Valley, which includes an area known as Douro Superior, begins about a one-hour drive from downtown Porto. Porto is very in fashion at the moment, meaning most European cities have direct connections to Porto, with even a few international ones (i.e. Newark in the US). While Porto is only now coming into its own, the Douro Valley is a classic region and has been welcoming guests from all over the world for decades.

Let others visit the Port wine cellars in Porto, while you and your wedding party go straight to the source. The Douro Valley is covered in hundreds of distinct *quinta*, each with its own unique style and, of course, wine. If you and your guests are food lovers and wine aficionados, you cannot go wrong enjoying not just the grapes, but also the decadent cheeses, meats, and dishes that hail from this part of Portugal.

Depending on your wedding size and the location you select, you can house your entire wedding party in one location or have your party scattered over a small area in different guesthouses, apartments and *quintas*. Everyone will be able to enjoy walking through the vineyards, tour organized to other vineyards, boating trips along the Douro Valley, relaxing at the spa (even some smaller *quintas* have their own spas) and relaxing by the pool.

The benefit to choosing the eastern part of the Douro Valley over the western part, especially if you are east of Pinhão, is that you avoid the tourists making day trips from Porto. This means you and your wedding party will be able to enjoy your tranquil stay far from the tourists with the thoughtful attention of the *quinta* where you stay.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

The advantages reaped from having your wedding in the western portion of the Douro Valley means also come with disadvantages, namely, transportation. The A4 highway runs parallel to the Douro river, to the north; however, to get to many of the best spots along the river your journey may take you through some winding roads that may leave some of your guests a little nauseous.

There is a limited sweet spot in terms of weather. June to September is, on average, the driest period of the year, but July and August are also the hottest months out of the year, with average highs reaching 31° Celcius/89° Fahrenheit.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Quinta da Pacheca
- Solar Quinta da Portela
- Six Senses Douro Valley

Food

A hard-working region that produces the grapes that this region is known for, does not play around with its food. The cuisine of the region is hardy and filling, with pork and game being the features of the main course. They also take their desserts seriously and enjoy mixing in a little something extra to keep you going.

For something that will leave you feeling satisfied, enjoy the *arroz de barriga de porco*, rice with pork belly. This recipe joins together pork belly, white wine, garlic, bay leaves, rice, additional cured meats, and seasoning to bring you something special. Traditionally the pork belly is marinated for 21 days in the white wine and seasoning mix. Only then is it stuffed with rice and cooked slowly for a few hours. *Bolo de Favaio*s is another treat of the region. Imagine a slightly sweet bread stuffed with chicken, rabbit, veal, and bacon. You can thank us later. If you are hoping for something with a bit less meat, try the *caldeirada feijão frade* from Torre de Moncorvo. This bean stew combines black-eyed beans with rye bread, rabbit, smoked ham, and herbs for a dish that warms you from the inside.

For dessert, do not miss the *rosquilhas*. Identifiable by their circular shape and twisted dough, these little pastries include some brandy to give them a nice kick. Not to be outdone, the *bolos de Páscoa*, Easter cakes, from Foz Côa, combine plenty of eggs, sugar, milk, flour, cinnamon, and Port wine. For an altogether different feel, try the light and crispy *canelões do Penedo dos Castelhanos*. The dough of eggs, flour, cinnamon is laid out on a flat pan and cooked until done. Upon removing from the pan, the dough rolled up like a cigar and left to cool. Be careful though, it's difficult to eat just one.

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- Douro DOC
- Touriga Nacional
- Duriense IGP

Alentejo

The region to the east of Lisbon is known as the Alentejo, it packs incredible beauty in a place that few foreigners go to and it could be the perfect place for you.

Accessible from Lisbon by car, this region begins less than an hour from the capital and extends to the border with Spain and south along the coast.

The countryside of this region varies from the open rolling plains of the south to the granite hills that border Spain in the north-east of the region. This region is the native home to cork trees, as well as olive trees, vineyards, cows, sheep, and pigs, including the Black Iberian pig (or *porco preto alentejano*).

Let others visit the Douro valley and sip its Port wine, while you head to the source for some of the best table wines in all of Portugal. Eastern Alentejo is covered in hundreds of distinct *quinta*, each with its own unique style and, of course, wine. If you and your guests are food lovers and wine aficionados, you cannot go wrong enjoying not just the grapes, but also the decadent cheeses, meats and other dishes that hail from this part of Portugal.

Depending on your wedding size and the location you select, you can house your entire wedding party in one location or have your party scattered over a small area in different guesthouses, apartments and *quintas*. Everyone will be able to enjoy walking through the vineyards, tour organized to other vineyards, cycling trip through the region, relaxing at the spa (even some smaller *quintas* have their own spas) and relaxing by the pool.

In less than an hour of landing in Lisbon, you will arrive to Alentejo where your relaxing escape of a wedding begins. Because of its close proximity to the capital, it is possible to find locations of incredible refinement and comfort in the middle of nowhere.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

This region gets hot! For real hot. Temperatures can reach 40 °C (104 °F) and occasionally even 45 °C (113 °F). It is a dry heat, but an intense one. That said, you are guaranteed to have sun from April to November.

While this is a place for many Portuguese wedding, this region is still fairly new to welcoming foreigner couples. It means that finding all of the vendors that you want that speak perfect English may be difficult. It also means, if you don't speak Portuguese, you will probably end up relying heavily on the first vendor you encounter with the best English.

Another difficulty is that many local vendors will not have websites and those that do will probably only be in Portuguese. Facebook pages are a bit more common, but then again, they will probably be in Portuguese. One option is to look for wedding planners, photographers, etc. that are based in Lisbon and can easily travel to the region.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- L'AND Vineyards, Montemor-o-Novo
- Pousada Convento de Arraiolos
- M'ar de Ar Hotel
- São Lourenço do Barrocal

Food

Alentejo is a region known for its pork, lamb, and bread. I know, bread? Really? Yes, really. Even other parts of the country you will see *pão alentejano* for sale. This rustic bread is eaten before meals with olive oil from the region or with the meal to soak up all the deliciousness on the plate.

When it comes to meat, you will be remorseful if you don't have a full spread of *enchidos* while you are in Alentejo. *Enchidos* are cured meats made from pork and while *enchidos* are present throughout the country, the quality of the pigs in this region, make it a culinary star. Just to give you an idea of all the beautiful possibilities, here is a sampling of the various *enchidos*:

- *Cacholeira*: made from the liver of the pig
- *Farinheiras*: made from pig stomach mixed with flour (*farinha*)
- *Linguças*: known as the “chouriço of meat”, this *enchido* is made of the meat that is left once the head, feet, bones, and internal organs have been removed
- *Mangotes*: made from a mix of pig loin, kidneys, ears of the pig, and white wine
- *Paio do Lombo*: made from the loin of the pig
- *Presunto*: made from the thigh of the pig – similar to what is called *prosciutto* in Italy
- *Salpicão Alentejano*: made from a mix of pork loin, bacon, tripe, and white wine

If you still have room after the *enchidos*, try the Alentejo version or surf 'n turf, *lombo de pork com amêijoas*. Pork loin and clams may sound like a strange mix but trust us. This simple, but perfectly paired match is a hit with those who can't decide between the land and the sea. If one is curious to try the lamb of the region, *borreguinhos de azeite* is the best option. This recipe sautés very young lamb in olive oil and garlic. Simple and delicious is the optimal description of this dish.

If you somehow managed to leave room for dessert you will not be disappointed, for sweets are even more plentiful than *enchidos*. The *encharcada do convento de Santa Clara* is a wonderful example of conventional sweets, these are sweets coming from convents. The legend in Portugal goes that egg whites were used to starch the habits of the nuns, who were then left with lots of egg yolks. Thus, was born the conventional sweets, which undoubtedly are a combination of egg yolks and sugar. But do not write them off as all the same. Throughout Alentejo and the country, almost every village will have its own conventional sweet for you to try. The recipe for the *encharcada do convento de Santa Clara*, for example, is made up of 22(!) egg yolks, the whites of 4 eggs, 750 grams of sugar, and cinnamon. For a non-egg treat try the *rendinhas*, made from equal parts almonds, butter, and sugar, plus a bit of flour. This is just the tip of the iceberg. What is probably the best advice is to ask what is the local specialty, you can't go wrong!

Wine

The wines of the Alentejo are grown on the region's rolling plains. Characterized by softer tannins, these reds go down easy and pair perfectly with the pork of the region. The incredibly hot, dry summers paired with limestone, schist and granite soils create well-balanced reds and oh-so-easy-to-drink whites. Some of the wines to look for include:

- Alentejo DOC
- Alentejo IGP
- Aragonez
- Trincadeira
- Alfrocheiro
- Touriga Nacional
- Arinto
- Antão Vaz

Northern Portugal

Leave the tourists to Lisbon and Porto and travel further north, towards the city that is the birthplace of Portugal, Guimarães, to find the region that could be the perfect fit for you.

This part of Portugal is known for its lush greenery and unspoiled feel that makes it authentically Portuguese. A place where the people are not jaded by tourists, where their faith is strong – the city of Braga is known as the Holy City, named for the over two dozen churches, chapels, monasteries and convents that cover the city – the hospitality is sincere, and the food is always filling.

This is the part of Portugal where couples go to find hidden gems. Open spaces turned into magical gardens and old monasteries turned into luxury 5-star hotels. This region is also home to Peneda-Gerês National Park, which contains an area of 702.90 km², or 271.39 miles², was created in 1971 due to its national and international scientific interest and the desire to preserve the flora, fauna, and wildlife found in it.

Porto's growing popularity means that there are plenty of flights from all over Europe and the world (direct flight from Newark) to the closest major airport in the region. The cities of Braga and Guimarães are less than 40 minutes from the airport by car and in one hour you can be at the entrance to Peneda-Gerês National Park.

The untouched nature of this region means that you and your wedding party will be able to relax among the lush rolling hills. Those who prefer to relax by the pool or at the *termas*, spring-fed spas that the region is known for, will be as equally happy as those who opt for light or more strenuous hikes, both serve as a great excuse to then partake in the filling food of the region.

The great thing about this part of Portugal is that it is ideal for finding venues with traditional style, an old-world vibe, and great hospitality.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

This region is far behind the rest of Portugal in terms of tourism. What does that mean for you? It means that finding all of the vendors that you want that speak perfect English may be difficult. Or you will need to bring them in from nearby Porto. This means, if you don't speak Portuguese, you will probably end up relying heavily on the first vendor you encounter with the best English.

Another difficulty is that many local vendors will not have websites. Facebook pages, yes, but full websites are less common. That means that you will need to do a bit more Googling than if you were to be getting married in Lisbon or the Algarve. Alternatively, if you have found your perfect photographer or celebrant, ask them for recommendations.

Also, this region's weather is far less reliable than in the south of the country. Remember those lush, green hills? Well, they only get that way, one way: plenty of rain. This region is home to two of the wettest cities, on average, in all of Portugal: Braga and Viana do Castelo. This is not

to say that it is always raining. The wettest parts of the year are from November to April and all of your venue options will most certainly have an indoor alternative.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Pousada de Amares
- Quinta Lago dos Cisnes
- Borralha Guest House
- Casa do Prado Guest House
- Casa do Egpto

Food

While you may find codfish throughout the country, the region of Portugal that lies between Porto and Spain may win for the sheer number of variations on the combination of codfish, onions and potatoes. Keep an eye out for *bacalhau à moda de Viana*, *bacalhau à Gomes de Sá*, *Bacalhau à Lagareiro*, and the list goes on! Also popular in this region is *lampreia* (lamprey), a jawless, river eel that is commonly found in the Minho river. As with codfish, in this region, you can find a variety of approaches. They include *lampreia à moda do Minho*, *arroz de lampreia*, *lampreia à Bordalesa*, and many more. For the meat lovers, the interior part of this area offers the best options. You can try the *arroz de pato à moda de Braga*, duck rice from Braga, or *leitão a Transmontana*, roasted suckling pig, or *alheira à moda de Macedo de Cavaleiros*, a “sausage” of turkey, pork, smoked ham, and sweet paprika.

If after all of that you still have room then you are in the right region. Start with the *toucinho-do-ceu* from Guimarães, a beautiful dessert of an intense yellow color that combines sugar, eggs, almonds, flour, and pumpkin jam. Also important to try are the *fidalginho de Braga*, which brings together flour, sugar, butter, eggs, lemon and cinnamon for a fresh dessert. There are far more sweets in this region than we can possibly list, but if you ask for the local specialty, you won't be disappointed. But don't be surprised if it contains some combination of eggs and sugar.

Wine

This region of the country contains two wine regions, the Vinho Verde region and the Tras-os-Montes region. Vinho Verde literally translates to green wine, however green is not used in terms of color, but in maturity. Grown in the area closer to the sea, this is a young wine with a naturally occurring effervescent quality, best enjoyed on hot summer days. The Tras-os-Montes region, literally translating to over the mountains, is the interior portion of the very north of Portugal. This region has a history of winemaking that pre-dates the Romans and with a variety of micro-climates, it offers a unique wine experience.

- Vinho Verde DOP
- Minho DOP
- Alvarinho
- Loureiro
- Tras-os-Montes DOP
- Transmontano IGP

Central Portugal

This lesser-known region, which runs from north of Lisbon to just south of Porto, that packs a lot in terms of beauty and diversity could be the perfect fit for you.

Away from the hustle of tourist-filled cities, this region of the country offers spectacular beaches, some of the best surfing in all of Europe, rustic campgrounds, traditional *quintas*, and the ability to be close to nature in whichever way you choose.

This is the part of Portugal where couples go to find hidden gems. A place where open spaces turn into magical glamping retreats, old farmhouses (*quintas*) become magical sanctuaries designed to fit your taste, and former palaces transform for fairytale weddings.

This region is also home to Serra da Estrela Natural Park, which contains the largest mountain range in Portugal, and is comprised of an area of 1,000 km², or 385 miles². The nature of this region means that you and your wedding party will be able to relax among the lush rolling hills. Those who prefer to relax by the pool will be as equally happy as those who opt for a hike or cycling trip, both serve as a great excuse to then partake in the delicious food that originates from this region.

The lack of tourists and need to travel by car to get to the best spots means that whichever location you choose, it will feel like your own personal slice of heaven.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

This region is a bit behind Lisbon and Porto in terms of tourism. What does that mean for you? It means that finding all of the vendors that you want that speak perfect English may be difficult. This means, if you don't speak Portuguese, you will probably end up relying heavily on the first vendor you encounter with the best English.

Furthermore, the remoteness of some of the best locations means you and your guests will need transportation to your venue.

Another difficulty is that many local vendors will not have websites. That means that you will need to do a bit more Googling than if you were to be getting married elsewhere. Alternatively, if you have found your perfect photographer or celebrant, ask them for recommendations.

While this region's weather is as not reliably sunny as further south, this, however, is not the problem. The problem is actually how dry and hot it gets in the summer months. This region is where the majority of the fires that swept through Portugal in 2017 took place.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Senses Camping
- Quinta do Hespanhol
- Palace Hotel do Buçaco

- Quinta da Bichinha
- Areias do Seixo
- Convento Inn & Artist Residency

Food

The space between Porto and Lisbon is actually comprised of five official regions of the country, each with their own distinct cuisine. There is Beira Alta, Beira Baixa, Beira Litoral, Ribatejo and Estremadura. It will be nearly impossible to cover them all here, instead this guide endeavors to inspire you with what you might find in this portion of the country.

From the region Beira Litoral, which runs along the coast, eel stew is a popular fish dish that you will find, with almost every city in the region having its own version of how to prepare it. Keep an eye out for *caldeirada de enguias à moda de Aveiro* or *caldeirada de enguias à moda de Murtosa*. Though each version is slightly different, they both cook eels and potatoes in pork belly fat with a variety of herbs to create a beloved dish from this region.

If meat is what you seek, head to the interior and the region of Beira Alta, which lies to the south of the Douro Valley and runs along the border with Spain. The region is known for its delicious veal, look out for *vitela assada à moda de Lafões* – a simple recipe of roasted veal seasoned with salt –, its pork, definitely try the *carne de porco em vinha-d'alhos* – pork loins cooked in garlic and white wine –, and its *morcelas* – blood sausages.

If more game meat is your style than the Beira Baixa region, which sits south of Beira Alta and hugs the Spanish border, is the place to go. *Arroz de pato* – duck rice – or *perdiz estufada com beringelas* – stewed partridge with eggplants – or *almôndegas de lebre* – hare meatballs – are all dishes typical of this region that are sure to satisfy the hungriest of travelers.

To round out your meal with something sweet, these regions won't fail your sweet tooth. The classic *pão-do-ló*, or Portuguese sponge cake, is a traditional and delicious option in this region. *Biscoitos de azeite*, or olive oil cookies, combine eggs, sugar, flour and olive oil to make for a uniquely flavored cookie. *Ovos-moles* are one of the famed, traditional pastries of this region. Though made all over, these simple desserts combining sugar and eggs, are most traditional from the city of Aveiro. Another traditional dessert of this region is *arroz-doce*, also known as sweet rice or rice pudding. Combining rice with eggs, sugar, and cinnamon makes this a filling way to end a meal.

Wine

The space between Porto and Lisbon contains the wine growing region of Dão. The reds of Dão are a sparkling, ruby-color and are characterized as full-bodied, with delicate flavors. The whites, on the other hand, are a citrus yellow in color and are described as light and fresh. To the west of Dão is the region of Bairrada, which lies between the sea and the mountains. This region is known for its white and sparkling wines.

Wines of Dão:

- Dão DOC
- Terras do Dão IGP
- Touriga Nacional
- Alfrocheiro

- Encruzado
- Mencía

Wines of Bairrada:

- Bairrada DOC
- Baga Atlântico IGP
- Baga
- Arinto

Cascais/Sintra

Just to the west of Lisbon lie these two cities that offer you the choice of a sunny, seaside wedding or a romantic, fairytale wedding, meaning that the region that could be the perfect fit for you

Both of these cities lie just outside of Lisbon, about half an hour from Lisbon's center, yet they are completely different from the Portuguese capital.

For those in search of a beach wedding, near a big city, with easy access from all over Europe, and beyond, Cascais is the spot. Historically an area for the wealthy of Lisbon's upper class, the city is an attraction in its own right now. With beautiful beaches, hotels that look out on to the sea from the easternmost portion of Europe, and a vibrant wedding community, you can make your dream wedding a reality.

If sand in your toes is not your style, and nor is the sound of crashing waves, head to Sintra, Cascais's neighbor, for a fairytale wedding. Sintra is dotted with historical palaces and castles, is known for its fine dining, and luxury tourism scene. Known for its iconic Palácio da Pena, the city is littered with picturesque spots from the romanticism era, including Palácio Monserrate, Palácio de Seteais, Quinta da Regaleira, and many more. Adding to the wonder and beauty of the city are the magical forests that surround it, adding a closeness with nature that will make any wedding photoshoot a romantic occasion.

These two cities are popular international wedding destinations, which means finding vendors that speak your language who can help you create your wedding is not difficult. That said, you would do well to avoid peak tourist season as the sheer number of people and higher prices will make you crazy.

The weather in Cascais, outside of the winter season, is usually mild and the hot summers are cooled by the ocean breeze. The same is true in Sintra with the combination of the ocean breeze and dense forest providing reprieve from the Portuguese sun.

Now that we have gushed, here are the possible cons, because, what good is our advice if we don't prepare you for what may be difficult.

These two cities are incredibly touristy. There is no way around it. They are beautiful still, but to get some sense of seclusion, you have to be willing to pay for it. Also, because these places are touristy, moving around within them can be a pain.

In Cascais, there is a center that is walkable and connects well with some of the nicest hotels. That said, to get to the locations that line the rocky cliffs with sweeping views of the sea, transportation is needed.

In Sintra, the center is very small and walkable, or at least there are lots of people walking in it, however, there does not seem to be enough room for everyone on the sidewalks. If you are going to one of the palaces that are just outside of that center be prepared to use transportation. Also, because streets are constantly being closed down to regulate traffic flows, you may have to take a 20-minute detour around the city to go the 3 kilometers in the other direction. It isn't the taxi or Uber drivers taking advantage, it is just a fact of Sintra.

Venues

Here are a few of our favorite spots just to get your imagination going!

- Hotel Fortaleza do Guincho
- Quinta da Caloura
- Monserrate Palace
- Grande Real Villa Itália

Food

The gastronomy from each city is quite distinct and each location is proud of their traditional dishes. And while these two cities may be some of the most visited sites in the country, if one looks hard enough they can find classic dishes in each city.

In Sintra, start off your meal with something from the sea, such as *migas à pescador* or *açorda de bacalhau*. *Migas à pescador* roughly translate to crumbs of the fisherman, this recipe combines bread crumbs, codfish, tomatoes, onion, and seasoning is a filling meal that was traditionally served to fisherman before they went out on their boats. *Açorda de bacalhau* is another filling dish that mixes pieces of codfish with bread, onions, olive oil, eggs, and is topped with coriander. If meat is what you crave it is best to try the *vitela à Sintrense* and the *leitão de negrais*. *Vitela à Sintrense* is veal roasted in garlic, white wine, and herbs until it is soft and tender. *Leitão de negrais* is suckling pig roasted with garlic, white wine, herbs, and lemon juice, cooked low and slow until the meat falls off the bone.

If you still have room for dessert then be sure to try either the *travesseiros de Sintra* – a pastry in the form of a pillow made from puff pastry, egg cream and almond – or the *queijadas de Sintra* – small pastries made from fresh cheese, sugar, eggs, flour, and cinnamon.

In Cascais, anything from the sea is always your best option. Look for *caldeirada à Fragateira* – a hearty stew of various types of fish, tomatoes, garlic, onions, olive oil, bay leaf, and other herbs. Alternatively, *arroz de sardinhas à pescador*, sardine rice of the fisherman is a delicious option. If you really want meat look for *coelho à D. Carlos Ferro* – rabbit cooked in white wine, olive oil, and herbs – another option is *galo cozido com grão* – boiled rooster with grains. And make sure to save room for *filhós de laranja*, a combination of sugar, flour, eggs, oranges, and orange liquor.

Wine

While these areas may sit outside of any winemaking region, it is surrounded to the north, east, and south by three distinct wine regions. The regions are known as Lisbon, Tejo, and Setúbal, with each offering its own unique flavors to be experienced.

- Lisbon
 - Arinto
 - Trincadeira
 - Alicante Bouschet
 - Fernão Pires
- Tejo
 - Castelão

- Fernão Pires
 - Arinto
 - Sauvignon blanc
 - Chardonnay
- Setúbal
 - Moscatel de Setúabl
 - Castelão