

A Brief Guide To Settling Into Your New Life In Portugal

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Making the move from your home country to Portugal often involves quite a culture shock' & the more you know about that the easier it will be for you when you start your new life here.

If South Africa hadn't coined the phrase 'A World In One Country' then Portugal could have done. The country has everything from ultra touristy beaches with fish 'n chip shops, English bars & kiss me kwik hats to bustling city centres to sleepy villages to river beaches & tiny bubbling trout streams to majestic Knights Templar castles that date back to the 1200s & everything in between so one of your first decisions is which Portugal suits your needs, tastes & finances because if you're a small town person (as I am) you'll never be happy in a bustling city or an area full of partying tourists.

When you first arrive you'll almost certainly find yourself with little if any support network of friends & you'll feel like a fish out of water but at the very least, if you're reading this you know that this & other Facebook groups are always there to offer you invaluable help & support in times of need.

My better half (Susan) & I came here about 13 years ago (having lived in Africa for many years) & every single day for the first 18 months, I'd have happily climbed onto an aircraft & flown back to Africa & this is the time you need to remember the old adage of 'fake it till you make it'. If you can do that, you'll slowly come to learn the people, the area & how things work here & at that point things will start to slowly fall into place for you.

Don't expect the first year or two to be easy. You'll spend at least the first few months feeling like a stranger in a strange land (to quote Robert Heinlein) & even more so because the Portuguese very often don't bother to advertise anything at all & work on the (often) mistaken belief that everyone in the area knows where the businesses are so why bother putting up a sign to say who they are or what they do..... Or putting it bluntly, many do not have a single marketing bone in their corporate body. ☺

As an example of that, the industrial zones in my 3 nearest towns all have a goodish number of small businesses on them but less than 10% have any signage outside at all & the same can be said of many high street shops..... So get used to that because it's simply not going to change anytime soon & you need to consider it as all part of the charm of Portugal which makes this magnificent country & people what it is & what they are.

You also need to be aware that a very significant percentage of companies here appear to have no concept of time or customer service whatsoever & it is (for example) a REALLY bad idea to tell a garage that you are not in a rush to get your vehicle back as by telling them that, they are likely to think you are giving

them the vehicle on long term loan so they can use it as a workshop ornament & they will keep it for months on end & another mistake is to expect them to honour a delivery time or come to that, even a delivery day. They might tell you Monday but very possibly won't tell you which Monday..... but again, you have to accept the slower pace of life here as it is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future..... but as a safeguard, you might consider ensuring you always have more than one vehicle at your disposal to minimise such risks. Customer service in my area is so lacking, I personally have FOUR vehicles to guard against such frustrations. ☺ Those comments are not meant to scathing or critical of our host country..... But they are the truth of the matter & this piece would not have any value if it were not truthful & if I am completely honest, I have to add that the lack of customer service & time keeping very often drives me nuts but that said, I am a stickler for promptness & efficiency. (and I know that sometimes drives my better half crazy so I apologise to her for that! Lol!

Another challenge you'll face is learning the language & believe me when I tell you it's a really tough language to learn but most if not all areas offer free Portuguese language lessons & even if you don't learn well in that kind of environment you will slowly pick it up simply by living here & making Portuguese friends & an ever increasing number of Camaras/Town Halls & Juntas/Councils are launching proactive programs designed to encourage us immigrant populations to integrate as much as possible with the local Portuguese populations & that to me is simply a brilliant idea & a wonderfully kind gesture and the rapidly advancing technology of smartphones & devices mean you can always use a translator app that you can even speak to & it repeats the phrases in (more or less) real time in Portuguese or the language of your choice.

If you feel you learn best with a 1 on 1 private tutor then there are a number of those listed in the Trade & Business Directory also in the files section of this group but I find the best way for me to learn it is simply to share time & conversation with my Portuguese friends.

If you feel online video training is best for you then I find the one below to be very good indeed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eytXdMikCX8&t=55s>

There are also lots of little tricks that you'll learn. For example, if you want something obscure such as a toilet plunger you can always print out a picture of one or save it to your smart phone & show it to the guy in the shop & you will find more info on that if you read Top Tech Tips And How To Beat The Language Barrier which is also in the files section of this group.

Another confusing thing (for many of us) is that so many things are gendered & one trick is to remember that if it ends in an A as in Paula then it's female & if it ends in an O as in Paulo then it's male, hence for example, anchovy is biqueirão as in male gendered & bass is 'achiga' as in female gendered. -

Please don't ask me why one species has a different gender to another because I have absolutely no idea! Lol!

If you get really stuck & need telephonic help with translation then the Portuguese Government have introduced a nearly free and utterly brilliant service where you can call them & they call the other party & work as translators between the two parties & you can access that on this link:

<https://www.acm.gov.pt/-/servico-de-traducao-telefonica?fbclid=IwAR3bt8zjLvctTpSGXe3CDNIM1mE4PmKCNpKi-nvirUhhBfZb7Hds1ZIOv7w>

The vast majority of Portuguese are incredibly welcoming, friendly & generous & you can expect them to welcome you with open arms and a big smile. I can't comment much about life in the big cities because I'm a small town guy & I don't do big cities at all but would guess they're more impersonal than the smaller rural communities like the one we live in but if you do opt for a rural community you need to know that the more you put into that community the more you'll be accepted into it.

Right from day one of moving into our new home, I made a point of giving a nod and a wave to my fellow villagers as I drove past & if I saw an elderly neighbour struggling with something, I'd park up & offer help and that all helped a lot but my big breakthrough in that regard came when I was driving home in heavy rain & saw one of my elderly neighbours struggling to walk to the next village so I turned round, picked her up & took her to where she was going which turned out to be a physiotherapy appointment.

When I went back to collect her, I asked if it was a regular thing and it was, so I appointed myself as her duty driver until her course was complete & that earned me endless 'Brownie Points' with my fellow villagers & I'm now in a position where I often walk down to my animal field to find some caring fellow villager has dropped off a wheelbarrow load of garden trimmings for me to feed to my livestock & it's not at all unusual for my fellow villagers to swing by our house & leave a gift such as excess home grown veggies, wine or olive oil etc.

Another thing you might need to get used to is how so many companies, especially the smaller ones close for lunch & in some/many cases close for several hours but that's something you need to accept & I can't see it changing any time soon but you will get used to it fairly quickly.

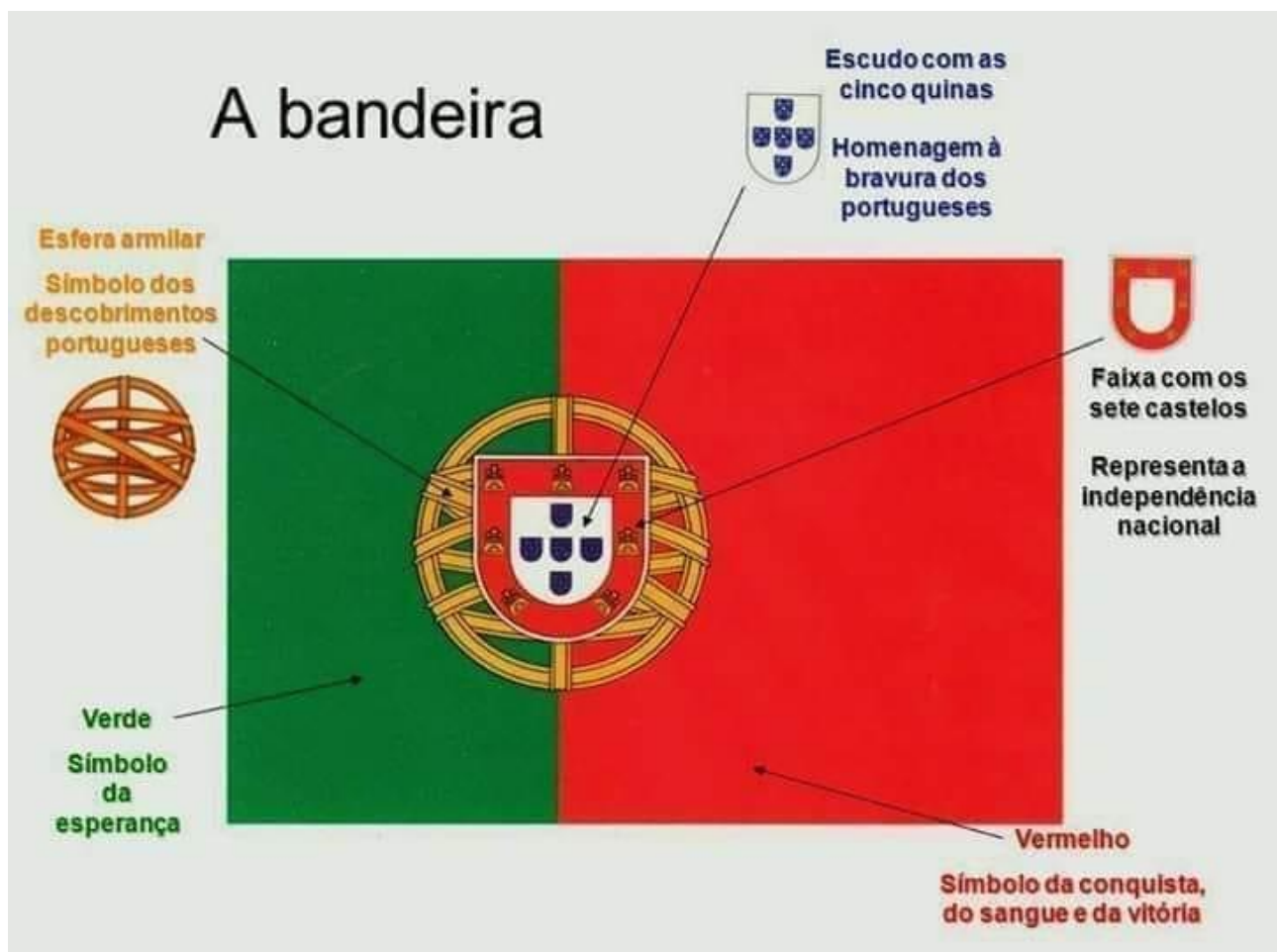
I guarantee there will be times when you miss your home country & your friends/family there and you probably always will to some extent but Portugal has an awful lot going for it by way of good people, low to almost non existent crime levels & really good & almost free medical care & believe me if you give it enough time, you'll one day find yourself thinking of Portugal as home & whatever else you do, don't expect Portugal to change to (for example) a little Britain or a little South Africa for you because it won't & it's us immigrants that needs to integrate into Portuguese culture & society.

10th June is Portugal Day & Dia de Portugal is often celebrated with Festa & just in case you are wondering what the symbols of the Portuguese flag represent; the current Portuguese flag was established in 1911 but most of its symbols

date back several hundreds of years.

The 2 main colours are green and red which represent hope for the future (green) and blood (red) during battle respectively.

The central red shield, filled with yellow castles and smaller blue shields, symbolizes victories against the Moors. This is the oldest symbol on the Portuguese flag. The smaller blue shields represent the five Moorish kings who were killed by the first King of Portugal, Afonso I & the seven yellow castles symbolize Moorish fortresses that were overthrown in battle.



Hope that helps & bem vindos/welcome to Portugal. :)

