

## Title:

Travel Portugal: A Land True To Its Past

## Word Count:

520

## Summary:

Perched on the western edge of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal stands out among its neighbors as one of the oldest and yet most traditional and conservative European civilizations. Visitors can view 22,000 year-old Paleolithic art on the rock faces of Vale do Côa, and human occupation of this region dates 500,000 years back in time! The Celts settled here around 750 B.C. and were followed by Romans, Visigoths, and Greeks among others. The Moors enjoyed their infamous occupati...

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

Perched on the western edge of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal stands out among its neighbors as one of the oldest and yet most traditional and conservative European civilizations. Visitors can view 22,000 year-old Paleolithic art on the rock faces of Vale do Côa, and human occupation of this region dates 500,000 years back in time! The Celts settled here around 750 B.C. and were followed by Romans, Visigoths, and Greeks among others. The Moors enjoyed their infamous occupation from the 8th to the 13th Century and left their culture and ornate, whitewashed architecture as an eclectic signature on the Iberian Peninsula.

Today, Portugal's homogenous culture and dedication to tradition is largely due to Salazar's oppressive rule during the mid-1900s. As a result, visitors can enjoy a more culturally authentic stay in Portugal than any other European nation.

The north-south axis of mainland Portugal creates regions of dynamic terrain and unique specialties. The popular Douro Valley stretches 125 miles along a winding river and is famous for the string of port wineries at its edges. Cruises are now offered along the entire length of the Valley, beginning in Porto. The resort town of Lagos in the southern Algarve region attracts sun-seekers and history buffs alike. Prepare to be swept away by this hidden gem encircled by 15th Century walls.

## Travel Portugal in the Atlantic

Two groups of islands off the Atlantic Coastline belong to Portugal and are a perfect and serene escape from the mainland, offering centuries of Portuguese history all their own and a look into the region's natural beauty. The Azores Islands archipelago lies 907 miles from the coast and is a haven of turquoise lakes, rolling green hills and sandy beaches. Monasteries, cathedrals, forts and ruins dating back to the 15th Century, when Portuguese navigators encountered the outcropping, are sprinkled about the islands. To the South, the enticing subtropical climate of Madeira Island and the surrounding volcanic archipelago is a bastion for adventure-seekers, resort luxuries, Madeira wine and untouched 15th Century architecture standing dramatically on seaside cliffs. Both of these secluded retreats are easily accessible from major airports on mainland Portugal.

## Tips to the Savvy Traveler

Nearly all of Portugal works on Siesta time and 97% of the country is Catholic, therefore also affecting commercial hours and holidays. Most shops, banks and pharmacies are closed between 1pm and 3pm (yes, even in major cities). Make special note that museums also close in the middle of the day between 12:30pm and 2pm. Almost everything except museums closes by 1pm on Saturdays, and plan on simply eating and resting on Sundays when nothing is open. To plan your trip wisely, check the hours of operation of attractions you'd like to see before planning your trip or booking your room!

Lastly, be aware when traveling by taxi. Fare is metered within urban limits, but once you leave these boundaries, you will be charged by the kilometer in addition to the price of the driver's return trip to the starting point. When taking a taxi after midnight, negotiate the price with the driver before getting in the car, especially if you've been indulging in Port!