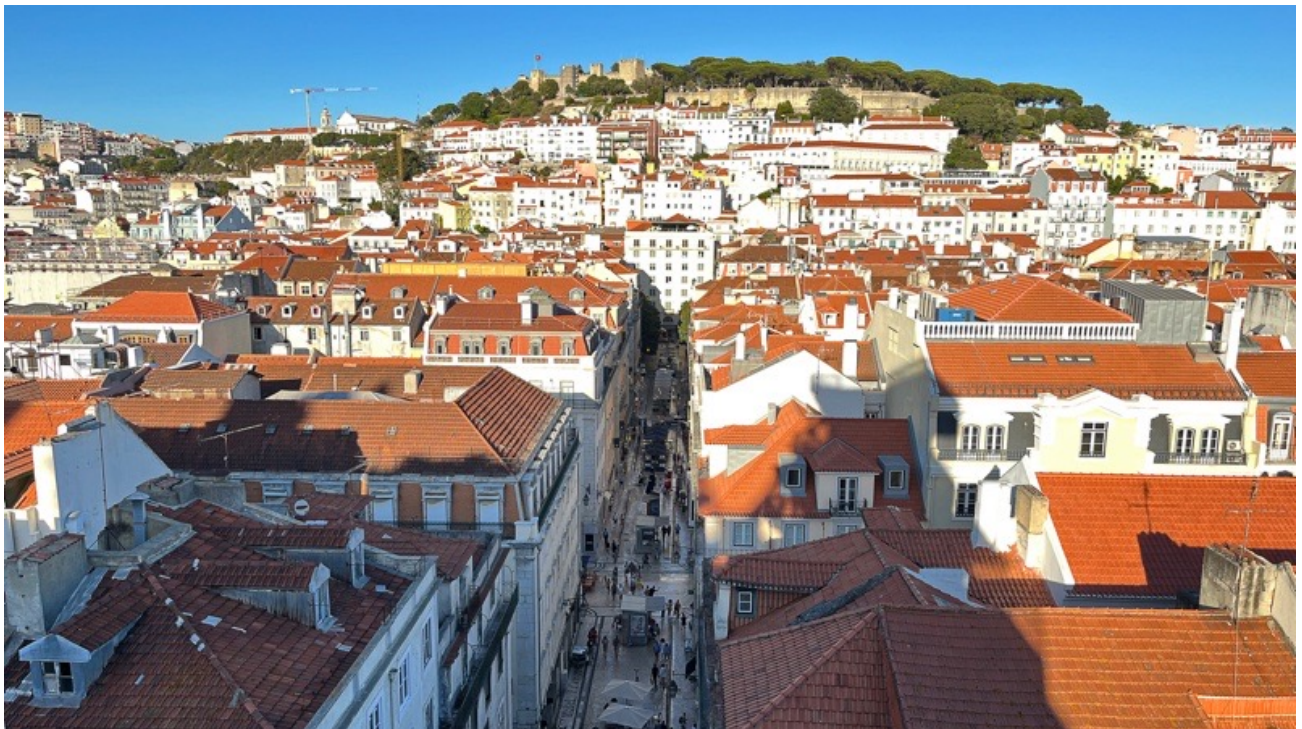


Return to Portugal – Part 4 Lively Lisbon!



After a 3-hour high-speed train ride from Porto, we arrive in Lisbon. Judy celebrates the return to her hometown! It's been 6 years since we were last here.



The red tile rooftops & commanding hilltop castle are iconic features of the cityscape.



There's always been a fortress above the city since ancient times. The Castle of St George dates back to the 12th Century, but has been rebuilt many times since We've been there before — not making the trek this trip.



The city was destroyed by a massive earthquake in 1755. The forward-thinking city planner rebuilt it with wide *avenidas* and expansive *praças*.



And here he is, the *Marquês de Pombal*, literally lionized (with a lion!) atop his monument.



The Portuguese do love their monuments — and why not, they've got a lot of proud history!



And, food.... yes, they do love their food.... So do we! We made a special visit to one of our favorite restaurants, *O Madeirense*, featuring specialties from the Portuguese island of Madeira.



Appetizer: Limpets, grilled in butter & garlic in a hot cast iron skillet. They taste like a cross between a clam and a mussel, but they're actually single-shelled sea snails that cling to the rocks on the coastline.



Whatever — they are chewy and delicious. Just pick ‘em up and slurp ‘em down!



Judy had grilled deep sea Atlantic swordfish. I had the *espetada* (translation = skewer), chunks of beef tenderloin heavily seasoned with salt, garlic butter, and bay leaves roasted on a spit. They hang it in front of you with the juices dripping down. It is mouthwatering delicious, and...YES, I ate it ALL!



Another day, the feeding frenzy continued at *Portugalia*, for traditional *cozinha Lisboaeta*. For starters, 1/2 kilo of steamed whole shrimp. When I first encountered these, I was horrified (Eyeballs! Whiskers!), but they taste so much better cooked whole. Just rip their little heads and legs and shells off and chomp down on the tasty flesh. It's positively primal & full flavored!



Main courses: Judy had steak in a mustard cream sauce, a fond memory of her youth. I went full-on traditional Portuguese with *bacalhau à brás*, salted codfish cooked with fried potato sticks and cilantro (I gave the olives to Judy). Disappointing — surprisingly, not salty enough! Judy's home-cooked version is superior!



But enough eating for a while.... we have important things to do here.
Judy buys flowers for a long-overdue visit....



We pay our respects to her Dad: artist, cabinetmaker, restaurateur, loving husband and father.
He emigrated to America to build a better life for his family, then returned to his homeland.
Descanse em paz, Pai.



On a happier note, we had a reunion with another of Judy's high school pals, also (coincidentally) named Graça (Grace).



We met up at a covered outdoor arboretum, the *Estufa Fria* (literally translated as “cold greenhouse”), established in 1930 in an abandoned rock quarry. Since it never gets really cold in Lisbon, most flora thrive there despite being open to the outdoors year round.



There is also a smaller enclosed *Estufa Quente* (warm greenhouse) for tropical plants.



No amount of Facebooking can replace Face-to-Facing!



They still use these old electric streetcars in Lisbon, and not just for tourists.



It looked like too much fun to pass up, and this one actually took us where we needed to go, so we went on a little ride. I don't know how old the tram is, but it is kept in really good shape.



We enjoyed a rollicking ride along the hilly back streets of Lisbon, including....



....the narrow street where Judy was born and lived her baby years (she got all misty-eyed....)



Historic and environmentally friendly — a blast from the past and the future!
And, as luck would have it, it dropped us off....



....right in front of an historic pastry shop, founded in 1829! Hmmm... so... many... choices...



I opted for another Bola de Berlin. Judy went for a Palmier. Both were soooo good!



And speaking of pastries, you can't visit Portugal without having their signature treat: *Pasteis de Nata* (pastries of cream), layers of flaky dough filled with brûlée'd egg custard. Crusty, creamy, and sweet, it is heaven in each bite. And you can't eat just one!



Another day, we took a taxi down to the riverfront to re-visit some of Lisbon's greatest sights. Here, the Jerónimos Monastery, built in the 1500's to celebrate the great maritime discoveries.



The monks of the Order of St Jerome prayed for the safe return of the sailors. (legend also has it they created the *Pasteis de Nata* — for which we thank them!)



The monastery is a massive and fantastic Gothic structure with incredibly ornate design. Here's a close-up of the arched doorway.



Inside, the tombs of Portugal's two most revered favorite sons: on the right, Vasco da Gama, who discovered the sea route around Africa to India to dominate the spice trade; and on the left, Luis de Camões, the warrior poet (yes, warrior poet!) who chronicled the epic journey.



Some views of the interior and the intricate stone roof design



Really well built — it survived the earthquake!



Across the street and on the river's edge, a more modern monument to the bold Portuguese seafaring explorers: The massive Monument to the Discoveries! It was completed in 1960 to mark the 500 year anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator.



That's him at the front, leading statues of all the kings, queens, and daring explorers who helped Portugal discover new lands and rule the seas in the 15th and 16th Centuries.
There's an elevator to the top and there's no line, so let's go up!



The stone plaza below was a gift from the country of South Africa.
The map has all the Portuguese discoveries on it.



Beyond the plaza, a great view of the Monastery (and the *futebol* stadium behind it).



To the east, the bridge over the Tagus River (if it looks familiar, it's because it was designed by the same people who did the Golden Gate Bridge).



To the west, one of my favorite places, the tiny Tower of Belém. Since 1519, this little fortress has defended the mouth of the Tagus from attack. It is truly a gem.



Time for dinner! Tonight, a pot of steamed cockles (a type of clam) and.... barnacles! Yes, barnacles, those things that grow under ships & rocks! It sounds awful, I know, but boiled barnacles are actually a rare & very expensive delicacy in Portugal & Spain known as *percebos*.



The first time Judy ever ordered these, I thought, “Barbaric! Now she’s gone too far!” I mean.... barnacles!?! You EAT them!?! It sounds disgusting, and they look.... prehistoric, like.... dragon claws, or.... Klingon food! But after you twist the top off to expose the meat, they are chewy & salty. And actually.... quite tasty! Just call me a Klingon Barbarian....



Our final day in Portugal we meet up with long-time family friends Maria Fernanda & Roger, and their son, daughter-in-law, and grandson.



They drove us about an hour west, out to the Atlantic coast for seafood.



The restaurant, “Neptuno”, is right on the beach!



Here's the catch of the day. Seriously, you can't get seafood fresher than this!



We both had shrimp dishes (no heads this time): for Judy, shrimp açorda, which has shredded bread mashed with olive oil, garlic, and spices; and also a few pieces of fried stingray. I played it safe this time with the shrimp linguini in a lemon-garlic sauce. Mmmm!



Thanks for a great meal!
Good food and good friends — what a great way to close out our return to Portugal!
We can't wait to go back!