

Portugal Holiday – Lisbon and Oporto

Seven members of the Travel Group went on a trip to Portugal this October. Travelling with Riviera Travel our two-centre tour over 8 days was very enjoyable. Visiting Lisbon and Porto (not Oporto we were informed) allowed us to see two very different cities.

Spread across steep hillsides that overlook the river Tejo **Lisbon** was rebuilt after the devastating earthquake in 1755 with wide tree-lined avenues and grand plazas.

The included guided tour took us to the main sites of interest, a highlight being the UNESCO listed monastery begun in 1502. It withstood the earthquake and Vasco da Gama is interred there. Our afternoon was free to explore this beautiful city and sample the many cafes and restaurants.

Another day comprised a visit to the nearby town of Simtra and the former royal palace.

Travelling north to Porto on Day four we stopped en route to visit Fatima. Following a vision of the Virgin Mary by three children it became a pilgrimage site. The magnificent modern church and size of the vast assembly area took us all by surprise. Our journey to Porto continued with a stop in the town of Coimbra where we had a tour of the oldest and most prestigious university in Portugal containing one of the most beautiful old libraries still in use today. The students who have a very privileged status in the town wear cloaks. These inspired J. K. Rowling who lived in the area for two years to compose the Harry Potter stories.

In **Porto** we stayed at the very modern Sheraton hotel. The glass-walled bathrooms caused much mirth and confusion.

Our first day in Porto included a city tour, a boat trip on the Douro and port tasting.

The second day comprised a coach tour following the river Douro and visiting a vineyard followed by wine tasting.

For the last two days we drove back south via Obidos en route to Cascais where we stayed at the Pousada Cascais, an old fortress that had been converted into a 5* hotel. A warm sunny day relaxing on the seafront with a glass of wine and good food rounded off a very enjoyable holiday.

Written by Jean Beaugeard – 27th October 2017