



Maribel's Lisbon sightseeing guide

The City's Top Attractions

In the Heart of the City

[The Gulbenkian Art Museum*](#)

The Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, the best of Lisbon's museums, this truly magnificent, world-class, private art collection of Western and Eastern Art, spanning 5,000 years, was given to Portugal by Armenian oil tycoon Calouste Gulbenkian. This exquisitely diverse collection ranges from Egyptian sculpture to 20th-century Lalique jewelry. It is widely considered the finest private collection in Europe and housed in a modern building purpose built for this collection, so it is very easy to tour in about two hours. And it sits in a large, grassy park dotted with sculpture and ponds. Every piece in this collection is simply stunning. Open Wednesday-Monday from 10:00 am to 5:45 pm. Closed Tuesdays. Admission is 10€ for the permanent and modern collection and 14€ for both plus temporary exhibits. 50% discount to those over 65. Free on Sundays after 2:00 pm. Audio guide costs 4€.

Tel: (+351) 217 823 000

To reach the museum by metro, go to the São Sebastião stop, exit the station following signs to Avenida de Aguiar, take a few steps down the street and turn right. The Exhibit Hall will be in front of you-this is not the main museum entrance. Turn left and continue walking downhill 150 yards. Just before the roundabout you'll see the pink Spanish embassy across the street on your left, and you'll see a small sign pointing right to the *fundação*. The entrance is 10 yards away. Or take a taxi.

The auditorium of the [Gulbenkian Foundation](#) (separate building) hosts a wonderful performing arts series with regular concerts on Sundays at 11:00 am and 4:00 pm and in the evenings at 7:00 and 9:00 pm. Check closer to your arrival date to see what performances are scheduled during your stay. Ticket prices are extremely reasonable, at €10.

[Museu Nacional de Arte Antigua*](#)

Set in a 17th-century palace, the Ancient Art Museum is Portugal's National Gallery, not far from the Hotel Janelas Verdes. This vast museum, containing 40,000 works of art, is found in the Santos residential quarter on Rua Janelas Verdes. It presents European (Bosch, Zurbarán, Raphael, Dürer, Cranach, Rodin) and Asian paintings and an impressive collection of decorative arts, including faience from around the world and silver and gold jewelry. It has a café with pleasant terrace overlooking the Tagus River. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Closed Mondays. Admission is 6€, but seniors receive a 50% discount. Free on Sundays/holidays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Tel: (+351) 213 912 800

[São Jorge Castle](#)

The 11th-century Moorish castle that stands at the top of the former Arab quarter, the Alfama district, a maze-like, Casbah-type neighborhood is Lisbon's most visited sight and offers its best views. Inside the castle the Ulysses Tower has a camera obscura that offers a 360-degree angle on Lisbon, with demos every half-hour. And the gardens house strolling peacocks. Open daily 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, November to February from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Admission is 8,50€ or 5€ for seniors. To reach the castle without the steep climb, the first step is to take the [Elevador Castelo](#). Second step: leave the building, go left 30 meters and you will see Pingo Doçe supermarket on the right; just enter the building and find second lift [Elevador de Baixa](#).

Tel: (+351) 218 800 620

Tip: The most amusing way to reach the castle is to take the #28 E (E stands for eléctrico) tram but please be very beware of pickpockets, and it's usually jammed!. Alight at the Graça Miradouro stop and walk down. Or take the minibus #787 from Praça da Figueira. After a castle visit, walk back downtown; take the tram, or a taxi.

TRAM 28

This 1930s yellow tram, built in England, is one of the city's great rides, although it may be standing-room only (again, beware of pickpockets!!). Most visitors take it to go from the flat Baixa district, at Praça do Martim Moniz, to the steep Alfama. It's the longest tram route in the city and its entire route takes 40 minutes. Trams come by every 15 minutes and run from around 6:00 am to 9:00 pm. Fare is 2,85€. Purchase your ticket from the driver. Rides are free to Via Viagem 24-hour cardholders.

The Alfama*

The former Moorish quarter of the city with a steep, Casbah-Like layout is now a village unto itself with a jumble of whitewashed houses and red tile roofs cascading down to the waterfront. When the Moors were expelled, the Alfama eventually became the home of the Lisbon fishermen and mariners. Part of the fun here is getting lost in its maze of narrow streets and alleys (during the day).

Parque Eduardo VII*

This is Lisbon's urban oasis and its largest green space, with hothouses (*estufas*) filled with lush foliage and fountains and a large central promenade featuring the traditional Portuguese cobblestone pavings. This steep, slopping park sits at the top, north end of Avenida Liberdade, Lisbon's prettiest thoroughfare and boasts a fine restaurant, Eleven, that features glass walls affording views all the way downtown to the river. It's a member of the Relais & Chateaux group and sports one Michelin star. The *estufas* are open daily from 9:00 am-7:00 pm April-September and 9:00 am to 5:00 pm October-March. Admission is 3,10€ but free on Sundays until 1:00 pm.

Casa Museu Medeiros E Almeida*

Rua Rosa Araújo, 41, across from the Vincci Liberdade and Port Bay Marqués hotels and two blocks above the Avenida da Liberdade, is set in the former mansion of an art collector and industrialist, one of Portugal's wealthiest men, and gives the visitor a glimpse of the opulence of this elegant district in the 19th-century.

This museum is an unsung gem (think NYC's Frick or London's Wallace Collection)! Displayed here are Medeiros e Almeida's priceless collection of European paintings (including a Ribera, a Rembrandt, a Delacroix, two Brueghels, a Gainsborough and a

Tiepolo), Flemish tapestries, one of the world's finest collections of clocks, watches, fountains from Versailles, English and Portuguese silverware, a tea set used by Napoleon, ceramics, furniture and 18th-century *azulejos*. Medeiros e Almeida and his wife lived here until 1970, and the twenty-five rooms have been kept exactly as they were used on a daily basis. Open Monday-Friday from 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm and Saturdays from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm. Admission is 5€ but free on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. There is a downstairs cafeteria.

Tel: (+351) 213 547 892

[Elevador de Santa Justa](#)

This wrought iron elevator or street lift, built by Raul Mésnier, a disciple of Eiffel in 1902, connects the lower (Baixa) and upper (Bairro Alto) parts of the city. It's Lisbon's only vertical street lift, whisking you up 32 meters and the upper exit leads you to Largo do Carmo and Convento do Carmo. It runs from 7:00 am to 11:00 pm in June-September and from 7:00 am to 9:45 pm October-May. Ticket is 2,50€ or round trip for 5€. It is included in the Via Viagem card (trams, buses, elevators and metro and an unlimited 24 hour V.V. pass costs 6€. Expect long lines, even in the winter. The top of the elevator houses a pricey rooftop café. You can access the viewing platforms for only 1,50€ if you enter the platform from the top behind the Convento do Carmo.

[Elevador de Bica](#)

This is a 1892 funicular/tram, now electric, that runs from the Bairro Alto down to the riverfront, through the picturesque neighborhood of Bica along the Rua da Bica de Duarte Belo, one of Lisbon's most photographed streets. You can catch it at the riverfront behind the [Time Out Mercado da Ribeira](#) with its entrance tucked into an arch on Rua de São Paulo, and it will take you to the popular viewpoint, Miradouro de Santa Catarina.

[Elevador da Glória](#)

This is an 1888 funicular/tram that departs from near the Praça dos Restauradores on the western side of Avenida da Liberdade and climbs the sheer street in just a few minutes, leaving you in the Bairro Alto at the lookout point below Alcântara. Round trip: 4€ but free to those with a Viva Viagem card.

[Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara](#)

This viewpoint, atop one of Lisbon's seven hills in the Bairro Alto can be reached by riding the vintage Elevador da Glória funicular from Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara to the Praça dos Restauradores. The elevator functions from 7:15 am until 11:55

pm Monday-Thursday, 7:15 am to 12:25 am on Fridays, 8:45 am to 12:25 am on Saturdays and from 9:15 am until 11:55 pm on Sundays. Cost is 3,70€.

[Solar do Vinho do Porto*](#) (temporarily closed in 2022 for renovation)

After soaking up the views, go across the street to sample ports at the Solar do Vinho do Porto, where you can taste some of Portugal's finest labels in a cozy, stylish setting. Ports from every single producer are found on the menu. Prices start at 1,50€ a glass. Cheese and charcuterie platters are also sold.

A *solar* is a mansion, and this mansion houses the Institute of Port Wines. You can find it 50 feet from the afore-mentioned Elevador da Gloria, across the street. The entrance has a plaque indicating the Port Wine Institute. Open 1:00 am until midnight. Closed Sundays.

[Miradouro de Santa Luzia](#)

Another of the city's spectacular viewpoints, it affords wonderful views from the Alfama. There is a bar for drinks open 9:00 am to 11:00 pm.

[Museu Nacional do Azulejo*](#)

The National Tile Museum is one of the city's most appealing museums, a true jewel, housed in the sumptuous 16th-century *Convento da Madre de Deus* in the eastern suburbs and covers the entire Portuguese tile spectrum, from early Ottoman geometry to Goan intricacies. The cloister has beautiful web-like vaulting (called the Manueline style, after King Manuel I) and blue and white tiles. Don't miss the upstairs tile panorama, Portugal's longest tile, a 118-foot panorama of pre-earthquake Lisbon, created in 1730, and also don't miss the Baroque convent church with its elaborate gold altarpiece and tile works depicting the life of St Anthony. There is a restaurant and shop. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, with last entry at 5:30. Closed Mondays. Admission is 5€, seniors receive a 50% discount. Free first Sunday of the month.

You can reach it by taxi (about 7€) or on bus #794 from Praça do Comércio. There is a café housed in the former kitchen with an outdoor terrace and a nice gift shop.

Tel: (+351) 218 100 340

[Museu de Artes Decorativas](#)

Also known as Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva Foundation, at Largo das Portas do Sol, 2, the Decorative Arts Museum is housed in the 17th-century Azurara Palace, and contains a wide collection of applied art; Indo-Portuguese furniture, silver, gold,

porcelain, paintings, textiles, tapestries, Arraiolos carpets and tiles amassed by a Portuguese banker. It gives the visitor the opportunity to experience a noble home from Lisbon's Golden Age. Open on Monday and Wednesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Closed Tuesdays. Admission is 4€. No senior discount.

Tel: (+351) 218 814 600

SÉ de Lisboa*

Lisbon's oldest building, the fortress-like cathedral, was built in 1150 on the site of a former mosque, and it survived the November 1, 1775 earthquake. Its 13th century Cistercian cloister opens on to a deep pit full of archaeological excavations going back 2,000 years. Don't miss the cloister and the Roman ruins. It's open daily from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm. To reach it, take tram #28 (always packed) or walk. Admission is free.

Pre-Covid-19: "Masters of the Lisbon Guitar" concerts (90 minutes) are/were held here in the cloister Saturdays and Sundays at 8:30 pm. Tickets cost 20€, or 30€ for VIP tickets. One can purchase tickets the day of the concert from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. On weekdays these concerts are/were held in the Sacristy of the church of Santa Maria Madalena at 7:00 pm.

Museu do Oriente

This museum, housed in a huge 1930s building on Avenida de Brasilia, traces Portugal's presence in its former colonies of Goa, Macao and East Timor and its long history of trade with other Asian countries. It displays 17th-18th century Japanese and Chinese painted screens, artifacts from Timor, 19th century Chinese porcelain and a collection of 17th century Chinese snuff boxes, among other items. A panoramic restaurant can be found on the top floor. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am-6:00 pm and on Friday until 10:00 pm. Admission: 6€ for adults; 3.50€ for seniors; free to all from 6:00-10:00 pm on Friday. Closed Monday.



Monuments in the Belém District

Plan on spending a full half-day, from 10:00 am 3:00 pm to see them all, but not on a Monday when monuments shut tight. And don't leave Lisbon without the Belém tour with its spectacular sights from Portugal's Golden Age of Discovery.

To reach Belém you can take the modern tram 15 (beware of pickpockets!!) from Praça da Figueira or Praça do Comércio that takes about 30 minutes. Or better still, to go quickly, take a taxi or Uber and start at the new National Coach Museum, the first stop on the tram, then move from east to west on by foot to the Jerónimos Monastery (with pre-purchased ticket in hand!). Be aware the monuments can be absolutely mobbed by cruise ship day-trippers in the mornings. Before or after you tour the Monastery, stop for a coffee and snack break at the Antigua Confeitaria de Belém, mentioned under pastry shops below.

National Coach Museum (Museu Nacional dos Coches)

This museum's collection of royal horse-drawn carriages is the finest in Europe: 700 carriages, all presented in chronological order, from the 15th-century on, plus saddlery, uniforms and children's carriages fill the museum's new white concrete building adjacent to its former home in the Royal Riding School, the Antigo Picadeiro Real.

The bulk of this fine collection fills the main branch, while the Royal Riding School branch has only a half-dozen carriages but is worth a visit for its 18th-century elaborately painted ceiling by Giacomo Azzolini and the special exhibit on the history of firefighting (may be temporary). Each branch has its own admission fee, or one can purchase an 10€ joint ticket. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Admission to the Coach Museum only is 8€, free the first Sunday of the month.

Tel: (+351) 210 732 319 / 210 492 400

[Monastery of Jerónimos*](#)

This giant white limestone church and monastery was built for King Manuel in the elegant Manueline style in the 15th century. Inside the church you'll find the tombs of Vasco da Gama and poet Luís de Camões. After visiting the church (free for all), purchase your ticket (see below) to enter the Gothic and Renaissance magnificent double cloister, the most elegant in all of Europe. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:30 pm, May-September, and closes one hour earlier the rest of the year. Admission is free to see the church and 10€ to the stunningly beautiful cloisters. Free to Portuguese nationals until 2:00 pm on Sundays, so it is always crowded then.

It is best to visit the Monastery at the earliest possible hour and make it your first monument to visit in the Belém district. It becomes extremely crowded mid-morning when the cruise ship shore excursion buses begin to arrive. After visiting the Monastery you can backtrack to the National Coach Museum, which does not receive so many visitors or take a coffee and *pastéis de nata* break at the [Antiga Confeitaria de Belém](#).

Update: Online ticket sales have now been reinstated and one can purchase [here](#). Or you can also purchase a Monastery ticket at the Ask Me Lisboa ticket booth in the park facing the Monastery.

[Museu de Marinha](#)

The Maritime Museum, founded in 1853, is housed in the west wing of the Jerónimos Monastery and showcases the country's important maritime tradition. This vast museum gives new meaning to the word "cavernous". Its rooms display the model ships, real vessels, the King and Queen's private ship cabins and navigational tools of Portugal's Age of Discovery and beyond to today's fishing industry. Walk outside to reach a large warehouse housing actual boats, *rabelos*, that historically plied the River Douro, to ceremonial royal barges. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, May-September, and until 5:00 pm October-April. Admission is 6,50€, seniors receive a 50% discount, free to all on the first Sunday of every month.

Tel: (+351) 210 977 388

Padrão dos Descobrimentos

The giant riverside Monument to the Discoveries, in the shape of a huge caravel ship in full sail, was erected in 1960 to honor the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. From this site many voyages of discovery departed, including Vasco da Gama's voyage to India. The sidewalk mosaic at the foot of the monument depicts a huge compass containing a map of the world. Take the elevator to the top for unparalleled views of the city. Open daily from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, March-September and until 6:00 pm October-February. Closed on Mondays in March and from October to February. Tickets are 5€, seniors 65+ receive a 50% discount.

Tel: (+351) 213 031 950

Belém Tower

This beautiful white tower, the symbol of Portugal, sitting beyond the Monument to the Discoveries, was built between 1515-1520 to protect Lisbon's harbor from English and Dutch pirates and was the last building that sailors saw as they left on their sea voyages. It's the architectural jewel of the Manueline period and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are 120 steps to the top, and the climb up a steep spiral staircase can be extremely tedious and the lines to enter long. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:30 pm, May-September and until 5:30 pm, October-April. Admission is 6€, seniors receive a 50% discount. Free to Portuguese nationals on Sunday until 2:00 pm so expect crowds.

Update: Online tickets to this monument are again available [here](#). Reports of crowding and the narrow steps up to the top make this a better "view from the outside" stop only.

Portuguese School of Equestrian Art - EPAE

The Portuguese Riding School is considered one of the top four elite classical riding academies in the world. Its Henrique Calado Riding Ring is located at Calçada da Ajuda, and like its Spanish cousin in Jerez de la Frontera, Andalucía, it presents a "horse ballet", or a gala costumed demonstration of dressage, with its beautiful Lusitano horses accompanied by classical music, beginning at 9:30 pm. Tickets cost 25€ and 37.50€. There is seating for 300 spectators only.

Update: These shows are now given on the last Friday of each month. One should check the [online calendar](#) for the monthly schedule and to purchase the tickets [here](#).

Museum Bernado Collection

This modern art collection at Museu Coleção Berardo, amassed by wealthy Madeira resident, Joe Bernardo, is housed in the pinkish marble contemporary Centro Cultural de Belém at Praça do Império, across the wide avenue from the Jerónimos Monastery (take the underpass at the south end of the square). Here you'll find works of Picasso, Mondrian, Miró, Bacon, Warhol (his Judy Garland), Rothko, Hockney and Pollock, among others. Open daily from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm with last entrance at 6:30. The museum only closes on Christmas Day, with truncated hours (closing at 2:00 pm) on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Admission is 5€, with a 50% discount for seniors over 65, and is free on Saturdays.