

GENERAL INFORMATION

Passport and Visas

A valid passport (or identity card for European Community nationals) is required. Visas are not necessary for citizens of European Union countries, the U.S.A., Canada and most major countries. Please contact your local Portuguese Embassy, Consulate or your Travel Agency for further information.

Health Requirements

With the exception of vaccination certificates for persons coming from areas where yellow fever is endemic presently there are no special health requirements.

How to reach Porto

Porto is the second largest city in the country with an area of 42 km². It is located in the north of Portugal and in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula, on the right side of the Douro River, close to its mouth.

You will find it easy to get to Porto by car, train, bus, metro, boat or plain, due to a growing wide network.

Car rental

Special arrangements are made with the main reliable rent-a-car outlets to grant special discounts to delegates and companions.

Accomodation

The Portuguese Hotel Industry has established a good reputation abroad basically due to the high standard of services rendered. Also good professional teams together with ryhe Portuguese natural warmth and friendliness make a powerful combination that will certainly help you feel welcome.

Language

The official language is Portuguese. English and French are widely spoken.

Local time

Mainland Portugal is 1 hour behind European Standard Time.

Currency

As a member of the European Monetary System the € [euro] is the Portuguese monetary unit.

At present, the bills in circulation are: € 5,00 ; € 10,00 ; € 20,00 ; € 50,00 ; € 100,00 ; € 200,00 ; and € 500,00.

The coins are as follows: 1 cent ; 2 cents ; 5 cents ; 10 cents ; 20 cents ; 50 cents ; € 1,00 and € 2,00

Tipping

Tipping is optional, but normally 10% is customary in taxis, restaurants and bars.

Exchange

Major credit cards are accepted in most hotels, shops and restaurants.

Travellers cheques and currency can be changed at hotels or at a bank - these are open Monday to Friday from 08h30 to 15h00. Automatic changing and cash dispensing machines linked to international networks are also widely available.

Post and Telecommunications

Automatic direct dial telephone service is available to and from most countries in the world. Public phones accept either a pre-paid card, or coins (see signs on the booth). Credit systems such as AT&T are also available. Post offices are open Monday to Friday from 08h30 to 12h00 and 14h00 to 18h00.

Medical Care

Clinics and hospitals provide round the clock emergency service. The national emergency phone number is 112.

Hotels have a doctor on call through the reception. Reciprocal European Union cover is available at out-patient departments, otherwise private consultation fees are charged.

Electrical Current

European type 2 pin sockets with 220 volts AC at 50 cycles are used. The phase 380 volt current is normally available in meeting and exhibition rooms.

Smoking

Smoking is forbidden by law in public transportation, and in closed public areas.

Shops

Shops are open from 09h00 to 13h00 and 15h00 to 19h00 Monday to Friday, and 09h00 to 13h00 on Saturdays. In major town centres and in many shopping malls, they stay open during lunch hours, and close later at night, including weekend.

Main Shopping Areas

Porto becomes more and more a privileged spot to do your shopping. You will find here Portuguese handcraft, typical shops, the traditional markets and fairs, as well as modern shopping centres. Rua Santa Catarina with traditional shops as well as Via Catarina Shopping and Plaza Shopping.

Shopping

Fine leather goods, lead crystal ware, porcelain, vintage wines, golden and silver filigree, pottery and specialist textiles are considered excellent buys in Portugal.

Sales Tax

Sales tax [VAT] is included in prices quoted. For non European Union residents, tax free shopping schemes are available in many shops, which gives substantial savings to visitors.

Driving

Vehicles drive on the right side of the road. The use of safety belts is compulsory, and children under 12 must ride in the back seats. Portugal has actually a large freeway network crossing the whole country from the North to the South in Algarve, and from the Ocean front to the border with Spain. Valid driving licenses from European Union countries, the USA, Canada and other major countries are acceptable for use in Portugal up to 6 months stay.

Public transportation

In Porto you can choose between bus, metro, electric trams or railway, within the city or to the suburbs. Trains and express bus service also links the main towns of the country.

Meals

Breakfast is normally served between 07.30 and 10.00 hrs., lunch from 12.30 to 15.00 hrs., and dinner from 19.30 to 22.00 hrs.

Dinning

Porto's gastronomy is rich and varied. Be informed of the specialities offered by the restaurants in Porto as well as of the gastronomy of this region. There are a wide variety of restaurants and cafés in Porto ranging through the elegant and sophisticated to the casual and inexpensive. Take-away and fast food is also available from many outlets. Restaurants, bars, some with living shows, and discos along the river Douro (Ribeira area) as well as Foz area are very popular, specially at weekend nights.

Entertainment

Porto's cultural life goes far beyond its historical and monumental patrimony. Esplanades, entertainment spots, cinemas, Internet access, music, boat travel and night entertainment are only a few of the available offers as far as leisure is concerned.

Religious Services

Portugal is predominantly Catholic, but a wide number of other faiths [Protestant, Christian, Moslem, Jewish, and Hindu, among others] are also followed. Please inquire at hotel reception for times and places of services.

Security

Crime rates in Portugal are among the lowest in the world. Hotels have their own security staff, which is sufficient for most events. Specialist firms are also available if necessary, and the police provide special protection for visiting dignitaries and high risk individuals.

Check in / out policy

Should hotel rooms be required for guaranteed occupancy before 14.00 hrs, the previous night should be reserved. Check out time is 12.00 hrs. noon.

Accessibility

Porto International Airport located 11 kms. from the city centre, and is served by all major international airlines from all over the world.

Climate

The climate in Porto is temperate, offering the best of both Atlantic and Mediterranean sea breezes all year round.

V.A.T.

Value added tax (I.V.A. in Portuguese) is included in prices quoted. For non EU residents, tax free shopping schemes are available at many shops.

Water

Tap water is safe to drink. Portuguese and imported bottled mineral water is also readily available.

Public Hospital (Closest to Meeting Venue)

Hospital Geral de Santo António
Largo Prof. Abel Salazar
4099-001 Porto
Tel: (+351) 22 2077500

Museums

Most of the Museums are closed on public holidays and open Tuesdays to Sundays, from 10h00 to 17h00. Please check with the Secretariat of the Congress for further information. Some of the most important museums in Porto are:

Museu do Carro Eléctrico

Tram Museum.

Fundação Serralves

House, lake and garden make a lengthy visit to Serralves a must. Contemporary and modern art.

Museu dos Transportes e Comunicações

Museu Militar

This museum is housed in what used to be the secret police, headquarters of the Salazar dictatorship. There is a collection of miniatures and heavy artillery park.

Gabinete de Numismática – Casa Tait

One of the most complete numismatic collections in the country is on display.

Igreja S. Francisco

A Gothic-structured church built in the 14th century.

Torre dos Clérigos

It's 75,60 mts high and offers superb views of Porto and its surroundings.

Sé Catedral

The structure is Romanic, built in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Museu Soares dos Reis

Decorative and religious art, Jewellery, furniture, Portuguese faience.

Museu Romantico

Recreates the way of life of the rich in Porto as it was in 19th century.

Museu do Papel Moeda – Fundação Dr. António Cupertino de Miranda

There is collection of about 10.000 fiduciary documents, made up of notes from the Bank of Portugal and former colonies.

Port Wine Museum

The importance that the Port Wine had in the development of the city.

Casa da Música

Palacio da Bolsa

Given the variety of styles, the interior is considered one of the most complete museums of 19th century architectural interior design.

Estação de S. Bento

The entrance atrium was covered with glazed tiles paintings made by Jorge Colaço.

Parks and Gardens

Parque da Cidade

This is a 90 hectare leisure area where you can walk and practice sport. There are lakes with ducks, and the pin grove invites you to have a leisurely picnic.

Jardins do Palácio de Cristal

A 12,5 hectare leisure area. There are some animals that roam within the park.

Jardins de Serralves

Beautiful gardens with a wide variety of plants. There is a fruit grove, a rose garden, an oak grove and a lake.

Parque Zoológico da Maia

A cultural and recreational area.

Porto Card

The Porto Card was created by the Tourism Department of the Porto City Council and aims at the promotion of the city and the Porto brand as a tourism destination par excellence, granting its holders, tourists and national and foreign visitors, free access or discounts on several products or services, with the participation of various entities associated with this project.

The Porto Card allows its holders:

- Free entrance to the municipal museums and discounts on several other museums and monuments, shows, cultural institutions and equipments, cruises on the Douro River, tours, restaurants, traditional shops and other places of interest;
- Free travel for almost all metro connections;
- Free travel in the Guindais Funicular
- Free travel all over the STCP network: buses, tram, and Z lines;
- Free travel in the CP suburban trains, from Valongo to Coimbrões.

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