

Travel Time WITH CHASE & BUD TRAVEL TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

TOURING PORTUGAL



When in Lisbon you must indulge in "Pastéis de Nata", the famed custard tart first invented 300 years ago in a Portuguese monastery.



Lisbon's architecture is stunning. This 1906 private home was built for the Viscondessa de Valmor right down the street from our hotel, the Jupiter Lisboa.

At last! We got through the pandemic and went on our long-planned group trip to Portugal and Italy a few months ago. I could write paragraphs and paragraphs about our time in each country, but some trips are best explained by imagery – the sun on a castle wall, a table groaning with Italian delights, a group shot of wide smiles. So I'll just say we started with four days in a lovely boutique hotel in Lisbon then moved on to Italy's famed Florence area for another seven days in a magnificent five-bedroom villa. Just take a look and if you're inspired to try it, check out the If You Go sidebar for details.



Four days in Lisbon is plenty of time to book a guided day trip to Sintra for visits to Quinta da Regaleira and Pena Park and Palace.



The Portuguese love their cafe's and bars and take every opportunity to celebrate their classic art and history.



Day trips from Lisbon often include a trip to the headland cliffs of Cabo da Roca, the easternmost point of the European continent.

TOURING ITALY



We were able to enjoy Florence's iconic Il Duomo with fewer crowds and cool weather by visiting in the early fall.



Our Tours by Local guide, Valentina, grew up in Florence, filling our 2 1/2 hour walking tour with personal stories and wonderful local tidbits.



The terrace at our villa in Prato, La Grande Quercia, was a was the perfect place to relax and plan.



We were lucky to be in Prato for the annual Corteggio Storico celebration of the Madonna. Locals parade through the city center in fantastical and medieval costumes.

If You Go

GETTING THERE: Our party of 10 flew TAP Air (www.flytap.com 800-903-7914) for their "Stopover" program allowing stops in Portugal for up to 4 nights on your way to/from their other European destinations with no extra fees. Use their free "Miles & Go" loyalty program for a dedicated customer service phone number.

WHERE TO STAY: We chose Hotel Jupiter Lisboa (JupiterLisboaHotel.com) for its central location, nice neighborhood and rooftop bar and swimming pools. It had a great boutique feel, a spectacular breakfast and truly exceptional service for our group of 10.

In Italy we chose a 5-bedroom villa, La Grande Quercia, in the Florence suburb of Prato. We booked through the Italian web platform Emma Villas (emnavillas.com). I first found the villa on Airbnb and VRBO, but looked for an in-country vendor to compare pricing. Sure enough, La Grande Quercia was available on Emma Villas. We saved \$1000 in fees and had a very responsive personal contact.

WHAT TO DO: Being a group of 10 has challenges. Private tours in Europe are often limited to 8 due to vehicle size. Deciding daily activities can be tough with such a large group. We managed in Portugal and Italy by booking through Tours By Locals (toursbylocals.com) to choose guides from a list of locally-vetted guides to customize your plan. We also rented two vehicles in Italy, a 9-passenger van and a 5 passenger Jeep. This works pretty well as long as you have willing drivers. We managed dinners out and a long day trip to Sienna and San Gimignano. A less stressful option is hiring private drivers.



Strolling by Dante's church gave us a sense of the historical importance of Florence.