

# 72 HOURS IN PORTUGAL

*by* TALIA WOOLDRIDGE





Portugal

WHERE ON EARTH

PHOTO THIS  
SPREAD  
Lagoa de  
Óbidos.

**U**PON ARRIVING IN FOZ DO AREHLO, A delightful beachside town located less than two hours from Lisbon, I was greeted by my friend's husband manning a large open BBQ. Male relatives and neighbours supervised while sipping Sagres beer or red wine. The occasion: the fifth birthday party for my friend's adorable twin girls. I was delirious from a red-eye to London and no solid sleep for three days, but I quickly settled in as kids ran around the traditional Portuguese home, playing with wooden swords and new toys.»





ALL PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: SEB GRINHAM

«As we loaded up our plates with fresh potato salad, coleslaw and a tomato and cucumber salad topped with a delicate yet crunchy sea salt, the men made the rounds with succulent chicken and roasted pork. The meal was paired with local wine made by the family and neighbouring guests. For the kids, pork sausage and fresh tomato slices. It was the perfect start to my Portuguese excursion.

Foz do Arehlo is known for the Lagoa de Óbidos, a sheltered sea lagoon surrounded by long stretches of golden sand, a now privately-owned mini-palace, and small restaurants and cafes offering grilled seafood and cocktails. Interestingly, the lagoon's remote location and stunning sunrise view made it the chosen location for the country's largest discotheque in the 1990s, when young adults would drive up from Lisbon and surrounding towns to party until dawn. Now the seaside town is much quieter but the food, pastries and *aguadentes* (brandies) are still worth the trip. When not dining at home, we enjoyed seasonal octopus at Tibino Restaurant (reservations recommended or you may face a long wait!). The fresh pizza from Café Central on the main village road is also delicious or, if you're adventurous, you can try the local specialty, *ensopada de ingueas* (eel stew). We frequented Central's lively cafe for a strong espresso and local pastry, *fartura*, similar to a *churro*, or an after-dinner drink. Across the street you can catch the bus to Caldas da Rainha (20 minutes) or take a taxi to neighbouring Óbidos.

The busy town of Caldas da Rainha offers more options for accommodation than Foz. Be sure to get up early and visit Praça da Republica for the lively outdoor market, selling fruit and vegetables, stunning flowers, housewares and bulk food. Lining the square are fresh cheese shops and bakeries — ideal for a picnic in the nearby beautiful Parque dom Carlos I, where black swans glide around a small pond fronted by the opulent Tennis Club. Tucked behind the club is the yellow colonial-style Museu de José Malhoa, a small fine art museum that houses various exhibits.

The town's iconic Royal Thermal Hospital is also steps away from the park. According to local lore, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Queen Leonor used to visit Caldas for the healing thermal waters and, it is said, she gave roses and possibly money to the poor without telling the King. Across from park, more fascinating history of the city is found inside the many pastry shops that stock *beijinhos das Caldas*, (truffles, or sweet kisses) and *cavacas das Caldas*, a dessert that, according to one history, evolved from humble origins as soup bowls made from bread that were used to feed the poor. Another origin story attributes these desserts to sisters Rosalina and Gertrudes Carlota, who were original confectioners of the Court. They returned home to Caldas after the assassination of King Carlos I in 1908 and sold their famous sweets near the Royal Thermal Hospital to supplement their lost income. Their entrepreneurship apparently paved the way for *beijinhos das Caldas* and *cavacas das Caldas* to become the symbols of Caldas da Rainha.

At Pastelaria Machado Lda, located a few doors down from the quaint storefront bicycle museum, *Museu do Ciclismo*, we sampled *beijinhos* and *cavacas* along with Portugal's famous»

# CALDAS DA RAINHA PORTUGAL



AS FAMOSAS DESDE O SÉCULO XV



DESTINATIONS

PORTUGAL

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Queen Leonor of Portugal; Caldas da Rainha poster; The Royal Thermal Hospital; Fresh octopus at Tibino Restaurant; Beans and shrimp — a typical Foz dish; Market square in Caldas da Rainha.



Cook  
&

PORTUGAL



SERVES 6-8

## Frango na Pucara

### Chicken in a Jug

*THIS BRAISED CHICKEN DISH is traditionally cooked in a tall lidded pot (pucara or jug) but a Dutch oven or even a deep oven-proof dish covered tightly with foil will do the trick. You can use ham if you don't have presunto, and pearl onions in place of shallots.*

**Chicken** 1 whole, cut into 8 serving pieces

**Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper** to taste

**Presunto** 150 g, cubed

**Diced Tomatoes** 1 x 400 g can

**Shallots** 10, peeled and halved if large

**Garlic** 4 cloves, chopped

**Bay Leaves** 4

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil** 2 Tbs

**Port** 100 ml

**Brandy** 100 ml

**White Wine** 150 ml

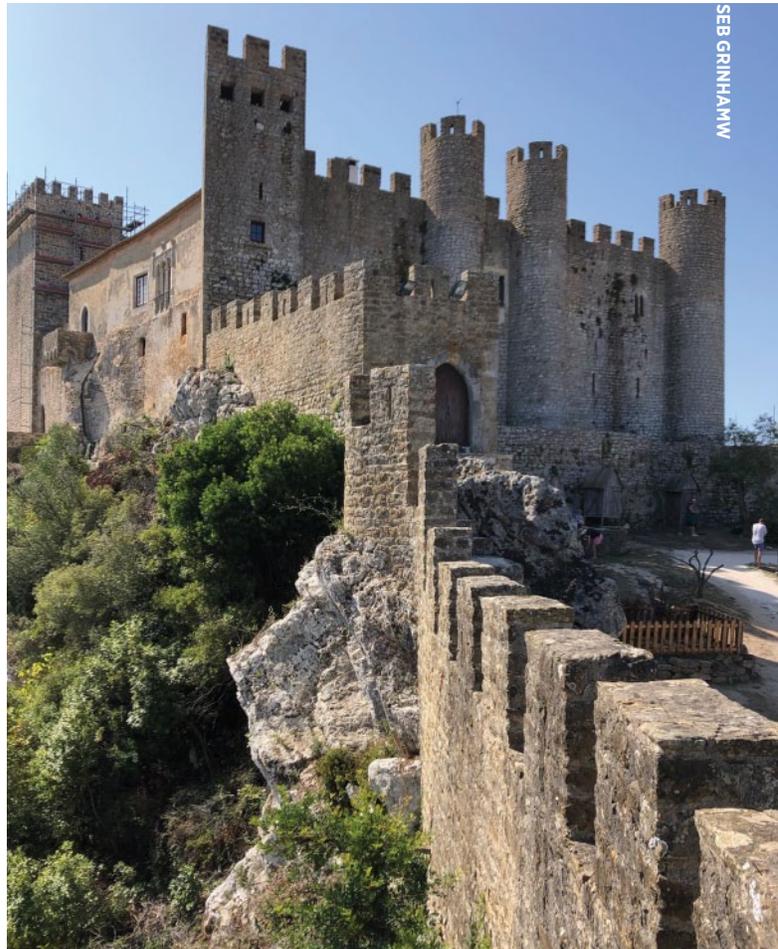
**Dijon Mustard** 2 Tbs

**Paprika** 2 tsp

- SEASON** the chicken pieces with salt and pepper.
- PLACE** the tomatoes in the bottom of a Dutch oven and lay the chicken pieces and shallots on top. Sprinkle with the chopped garlic and tuck in the bay leaves.
- IN** a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, port, brandy, white wine, mustard and paprika. Pour the mixture over the chicken.
- COVER** and cook in a 375°F oven for 50–60 minutes until the chicken is cooked through. Uncover the pot and cook for 15–20 minutes more, until the top layer of the dish is browned and crisp.
- BRING** to the table in the cooking vessel and serve with rice, potatoes or crusty bread to mop up the tasty juices.



TALIA WOOLDRIDGE



SEB GRINHAMW



TALIA WOOLDRIDGE



...Lining the square  
are fresh cheese shops  
and bakeries...

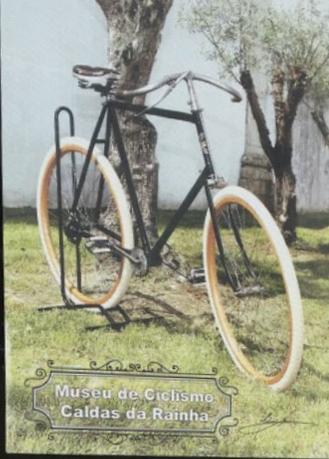
«phallic-shaped cookies, known locally as *pilinhas das Caldas*. If snacking on phallus-shaped desserts isn't your thing, you can find many pottery keepsakes shaped in similar forms. For stunning ceramics, Caldas native artist Bordalo Pinheiro is world renowned for his pottery. It's worth toting home one of his treasures if space allows.

The following day we visited Óbidos, a medieval walled town with a castle and seven Catholic churches. According to tradition, until the 1800s Óbidos was gifted to each Queen of Portugal on her wedding day. Today it is a feast for the senses. Winding cobblestone streets overflow with traditional Portuguese gifts, including beautifully decorated (and personalized) sardine tins, vivid ceramics and tiles, Medieval-inspired wooden toys, cork wallets, shoes, housewares and olive oils, salts, seasonings, chocolates and fruits. Bright rainbow-coloured pastries and mountains of ice cream are also available in abundance!

Although this region of Portugal is known for the tasty salted cod dish, *bacalau*, it was sold out by the time we sat down for lunch at Restaurante O Conquistador. This turned out to be fortuitous as we were able to enjoy the specialty of Óbidos, *carne de porco com castanhas* (pork with chestnuts), a tasty explosion of juicy chestnuts and melted pork, along with *frango na pucara* (chicken stew) served in a tall earthenware pot and large enough for two. Fresh fish came for our pescatarian friends.

After the traditional feast we explored the Castle and walked along the stone walls, overlooking verdant fields for miles. Afterward, among Óbidos' maze of streets, I sampled some sweet and colourful soufflé desserts followed by the town's famous sour cherry liquor, *ginga*, served in a small chocolate cup. For fans of *ginga*, *toupeiro* is a sweet, slightly fizzy cocktail served in a small wine glass. It's essentially *ginga* mixed with a 'secret,' (my guess is soda) that turns it a light pink colour. You can sample *toupeiro* just outside Óbidos' castle wall, down some stone steps in a cellar bar aptly named, O Toupeiro ('mole').

The following morning, I bid adieu to my friends to catch the bus back to Lisbon where I enjoyed lunch at the fabulous RIB Beef & Wine restaurant next to the famous Praça do Comercio, Lisbon's main square and traditional commercial port. RIB is housed in the main floor of the beautiful Pestana Pousada hotel. The architectural history of the restaurant is»



MUSEU DO CICLISMO



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
Lavender and lemons in the  
Caldas market; Caldas bicycle  
museum; Óbidos ceramics; Fresh  
peaches; Óbidos Castle.





TALIA WOOLDRIDGE

SEB GRINHAWW

SEB GRINHAWW

SEB GRINHAWW

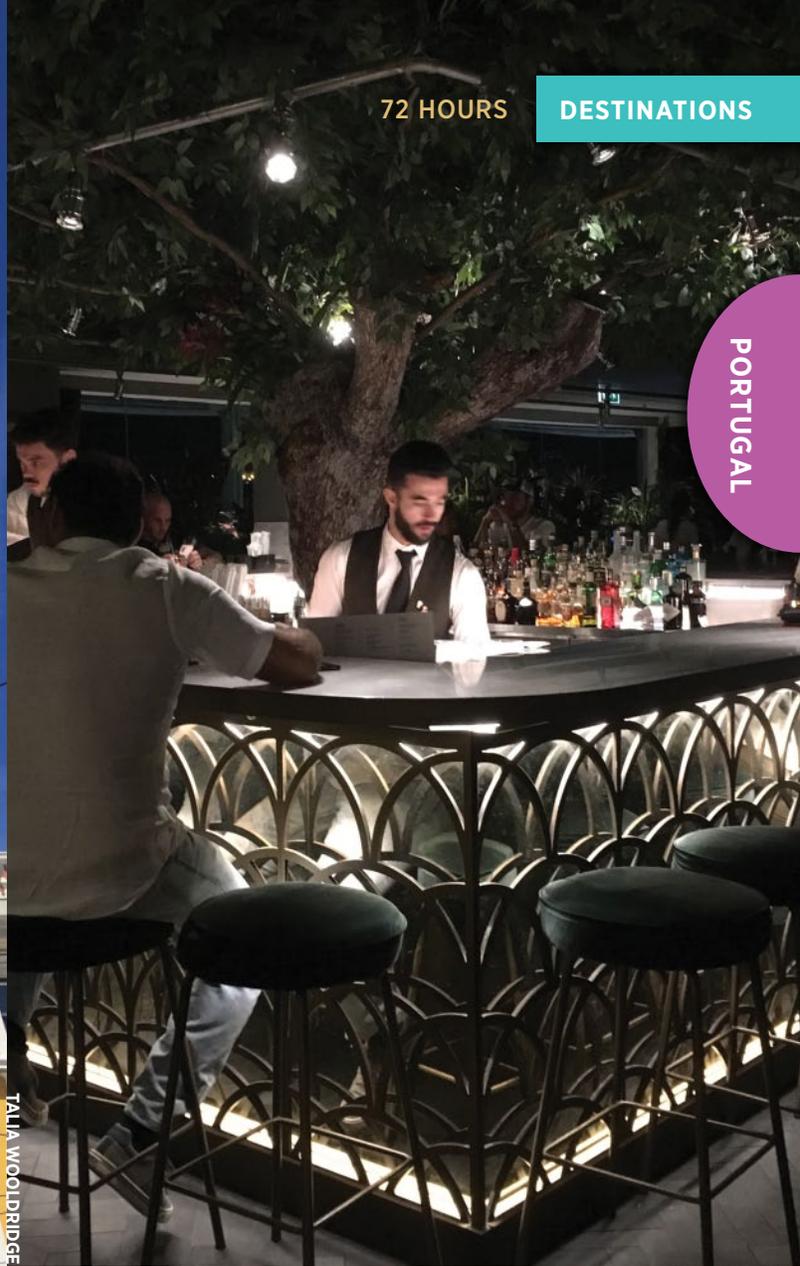


PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Seafood cataplana; Lisbon's main arch; The bar area at SEEN; Cocktail at Sky Bar; Statue of Dom Carlos I.

«fascinating as the property used to be a jail in the 1800s. Although many know of RIB's first location in Porto, the newer Lisbon restaurant offers a quieter ambience with the same excellence in cuisine and understated luxury dining. I paired a rich 2017 Porraís Douro wine with tasty meat croquettes topped with a smoky onion sauce and air-cured beef. For my main dish, I devoured a loin of beef with RIB's chimichurri sauce and a deliciously creamy sweet potato purée topped with shaved almonds and watercress.

After lunch, I checked out Lisbon's Time Out Market (definitely a steal if you're on a budget or tight for time) before trekking out to Belem, where I walked past the block-long queue for egg tarts at Pastéis de Belem and headed straight for the Museo Coleção Berardo across the monastery grounds. Amazing art and lovely gift shops offered a perfect hour-long escape from the hot afternoon sun before I





returned across town to take in Lisbon's Castelo de São Jorge. Had I realized I could enjoy an equally impressive view at Sky Bar, Lisbon's flagship watering hole nestled on the roof of the Tivoli Hotel, I could have skipped the tourist trap and enjoyed exquisite views of the castle and the sea with a cocktail in hand.

After a lovely pre-dinner tippie with cinnamon and citrus, I headed upstairs for my reservation at SEEN restaurant. Here Chef Olivier da Costa's blending of Japanese and Portuguese cuisine with Brazilian flair is seen throughout the eclectic menu — a nod to the 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese expeditions to Japan (it is no coincidence that 'thank you' in Portuguese, *obrigado*, is similar to the Japanese *arigato*, according to my dinner guest). We dined on plump, juicy oysters from the Algarve, a crispy SEEN taco that balanced tangy and creamy textures with just the right amount of spice, and a beautifully-plated octopus carpaccio. For our main, we shared salted black cod with the house signature tamarindo sauce. SEEN, I discovered, is but one of Olivier's many successful eateries, which also include Kob (a take on Kobe beef from Japan) and Guilty, known for its comfort food and sinfully delicious desserts.

After another memorable meal, I took in a nightcap at O Faia, located below street level under ancient carved archways. Here live»





Visit  
to

**Tibino Restaurant**  
[www.tibino-casa-de-petiscos.negocio.site](http://www.tibino-casa-de-petiscos.negocio.site)

**Café Central**  
[www.facebook.com/Caf%C3%A9-Central-43203364021575/](https://www.facebook.com/Caf%C3%A9-Central-43203364021575/)

**Museu de José Malhoa**  
[www.culturacentro.gov.pt/museu-jose-malhoa](http://www.culturacentro.gov.pt/museu-jose-malhoa)

**Pastelaria Machado Lda**  
[www.facebook.com/pages/Pastelaria-Machado/177706825710572](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pastelaria-Machado/177706825710572)

**Restaurante O Conquistador**  
[www.facebook.com/pages/category/Portuguese-Restaurant/Restaurante-O-Conquistador-213442445372023/](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Portuguese-Restaurant/Restaurante-O-Conquistador-213442445372023/)

**O Toupeiro**  
[www.facebook.com/otoupeiro](https://www.facebook.com/otoupeiro)

**RIB Beef & Wine/ Pestana Pousada**  
[www.pousadas.pt/en/hotel/pousada-lisboa](http://www.pousadas.pt/en/hotel/pousada-lisboa)

**Time Out Market Lisbon**  
[www.timeoutmarket.com/lisboa](http://www.timeoutmarket.com/lisboa)

**Museo Coleção Berardo**  
[www.museuberardo.pt](http://www.museuberardo.pt)

**Sky Bar**  
[www.skybarrooftop.com/lisboa](http://www.skybarrooftop.com/lisboa)

**SEEN Restaurant**  
[www.seenlx.com](http://www.seenlx.com)

**O Faia**  
[www.ofaia.com](http://www.ofaia.com)

**TAP Airlines**  
[www.flytap.com](http://www.flytap.com)

«Fado music filled the cavernous restaurant while diners at surrounding tables finished up delectable-looking meals. It was yet another example of Portugal's mastery of intimate and sensual dining. I finished my Port and floated back to my hotel amazed at how, in just 72 hours, I had enjoyed so many contrasting yet freshly prepared meals. And the best part of this quick getaway? My direct flight home with TAP Airlines, celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, concluded my Portuguese food adventure with fresh meats, cheeses and delicious wines. 

In addition to writing, **TALIA WOOLDRIDGE** dabbles in music and fashion, works as an archival producer in film, runs Music Can Heal and enjoys meditation. She's currently working on a memoir. [www.taliawooldridge.com](http://www.taliawooldridge.com); [www.musiccanheal.org](http://www.musiccanheal.org)





SEB GRINHAMW

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Painting of Fado star Amalia Rodrigues, Museu do Fado; Dining al fresco in Óbidos.