



Portugal

WORLD TRAVEL AS LIFESTYLE SERIES

John Bucher Herr

Portugal

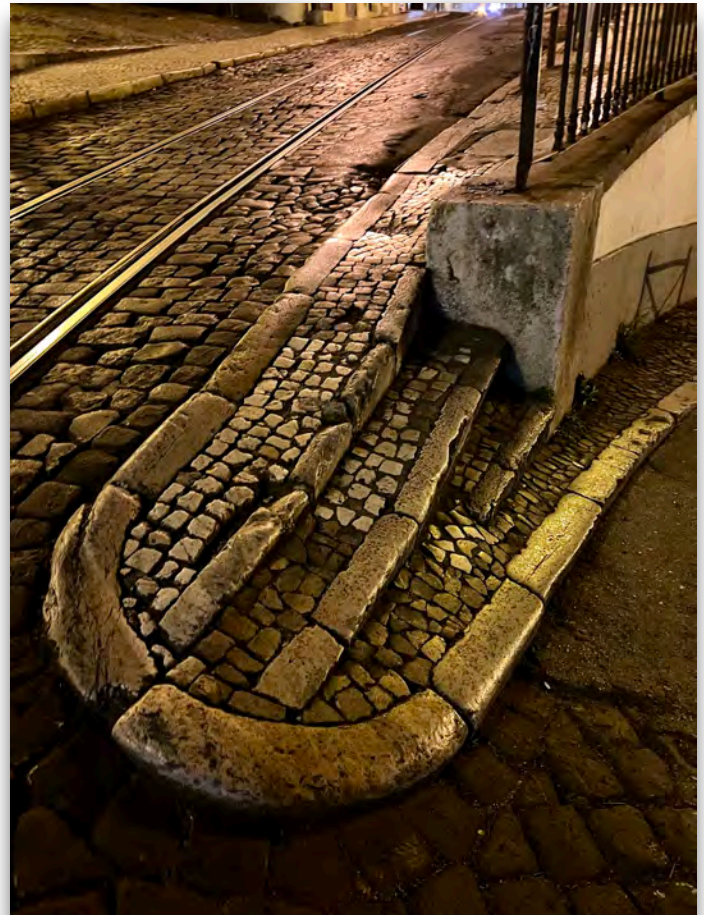


February, 2023



United Airlines offered a return fare to Lisbon, Portugal for \$840 through Chicago and Newark from Harrisburg, Pa. On the leg from Chicago, O'Hare to Newark, I overheard a conversation of the flight attendants on Portugal. I butted in by asking one of them what is so great about Portugal? "Oh my, the streetcars, cobblestone streets and sidewalks, the wine and the castles. I will return again soon; it was wonderful."

It was a red eye (overnight) flight from Lisbon (Lisboa) arriving at 8:00 am. I went to the visitor desk to book a taxi for 23 Euros to take me to the Santa Luzia Hotel. The driver was friendly telling me to be ready for many hills. The hotel was located in Santa Marie

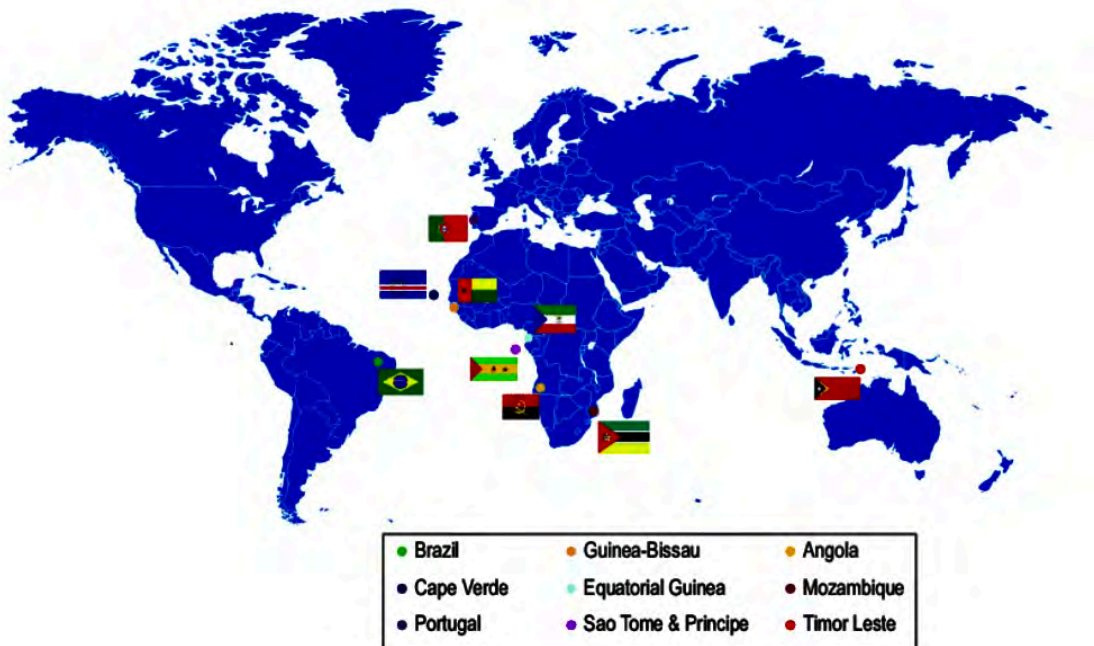




Maior, almost at the top of a hill. Looking back, I believe that most of Portugal has something to do with a hill. Marie, the cordial hostess showed me to a small but adequate room across the street while I waited for the arrival of Marjan Vuurman from Costa Rica. Her flights were on Air Canada and Lufthansa. Meanwhile, I hit

the cobblestone streets with abundant overlooks on the bright but chilly morning.

Portuguese is similar to Spanish but not that close. I did a little research and learned that Portuguese is spoken in ten countries



around the world. The big one is Brazil the one not mentioned is Macao, the gambling Mecca near Hong Kong, China.

Macau was a Portuguese territory which reverted back to China in 1999. I remember visiting Macau from Hong Kong by boat. Macau is so important now it is connected to Hong Kong by a bridge. I remember the cobblestone streets. It is now called 'a special Administrative Region of China'. The official languages are Cantonese and Portuguese but English is spoken freely in the casinos. The casinos are now larger than the Las Vegas making it the highest volume gambling center in the world.

Portugal is located on the Western end of the Iberian Peninsula surrounded on two sides by Spain. Today, there are only 10.3 million people. They are part of the European Union so their currency is the Euro. The average income is 25,000 Euros/yr making them 40th in the world. It is one of the oldest countries in Europe having been lived in and invaded since prehistoric times. The country is 80% Roman Catholic. This was established in 1143 when Leon created the Kingdom of Portugal. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal constituted one of the longest lived maritime and commercial empires. By the end of the 16th



century, Portugal began a decline in world dominance. Today, the country has a profound influence across the world in cultural, linguistic and architectural matters. Their National Bank has a high percentage of gold and lithium reserves. They have a stable, feasible



standard of living which is the envy of the rest of the world.

Lisbon

Marjan arrived in time for lunch. One hundred feet down the cobblestones was an outdoor French restaurant. The waiter waived the menu towards us. My eyes were drawn to the word 'poissons' and I blurted,

"Poison, we don't want poison!"

"No sir, that is the French word for fish."

Oh, so much for being the smart aleck tourist.

"What do you have that's good."

He did appreciate us later when he was presented with a Hershey kiss. This was his first day on the job. He had landed here from Brazil yesterday. This was the beginning of a new friendship.

The Santa





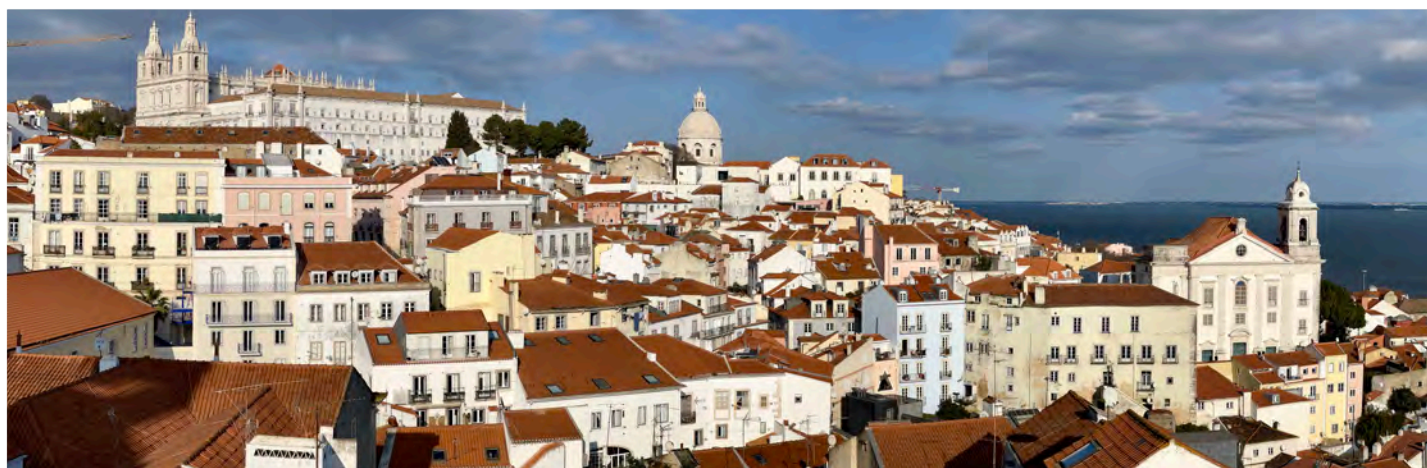
Santa Luzia B&B - Horigem

Rua de São Tomé 23

1100-561 Lisboa (PT)

Luzia Hotel had an agreement with a couple who owned a taxi to contract out for guests to secure services by day as well as airport runs. The wife, who did the day runs, was Fatima. She was a handy service for 200 Euros /day to drive us around the region. Marie, our hostess, had an in for distance travel with Ana Marta Borges whose office was down the hill outside of the old city of Lisbon. We made a day descending the hill to sightsee on the way to her office from Igreja Paroquial de Graça to São Vicente.

The Promenade was only a block from the Hotel Santa Luzia. It featured a clear and chilly view of the harbor. The #12 trolley had a station close by. We were getting introduced to ceramic tiles.



A shop that made handmade tiles which were three quarters of an inch thick and none exactly alike. Marjan bought 4 tiles of cats



and 4 of dogs for her brothers' veterinary clinics in Costa Rica and Venezuela. They cost 160 Euros so they had to be packed accordingly for the long trip home.



Other shops displayed single tiles surrounded by cork making good hot pads for the kitchen.

It was difficult to find Henry among all these tiles.





Down on the flats near the shore, we found Ana Borges who listened to our wants and then presented a solution in speedy time.

Three flights on Air Portugal and one on Royal Morocco, 3 star hotels in Marrakesh, Casablanca and Porto with breakfast and airport transfers. She included medical insurance for Covid 19. Her bill was just over 1300 Euros. Her efficiency was much appreciated.

The harbor promenade was called “The Arco de Rua Augusta” was made to celebrate the restoration of the city after the 1755 earthquake. The featured statues of the Portuguese greats including Nuno Alveras Pereira, Sebastião Jose Carvalho e Melo. Marquis Pombal, Vasco de Gama and Viriatus grace the central arch.





A museum on the right featured the native beers of the country



and the House of the Pastel de Bacalhau. Bacalhau is the Portuguese word for cod fish. The delicacy is a combination of codfish, cheese, eggs and spices.



The Lisbon Cathedral was first built in 1147 on the site of a



previous moorish mosque. The stone walls are thick built on a steep location.



Another church of note was the Igreja Paroquial da Graça at



the top of Lisbon's highest hill. It is located about a kilometer up the

hill from our hotel (Santa Luzia). It is also a convent which dates



back to 1271. The Belvedere (outside plaza) has beautiful views of



rooftops of the city and the Tagus River. There was a cool back



entrance for the plaza. Henry was still nowhere to be seen. I loved





the cobblestones and tiles of these ancient streets and sidewalks. The

restaurants within the old town of Lisbon are unique in that they serve the most popular dish of the country - bacalhau; many different versions but all delicious.

The manager of the O Prego told us that his bacalhau was the best.

“If you don’t like it, you don’t pay!”



Our neighbor had no interest in the food.

We went for the O Prego Bacalhau, the top billing on the menu. It was well worth the 20 Euros. He was correct, we tried many other bacalhau's in Portugal and this was the winner.



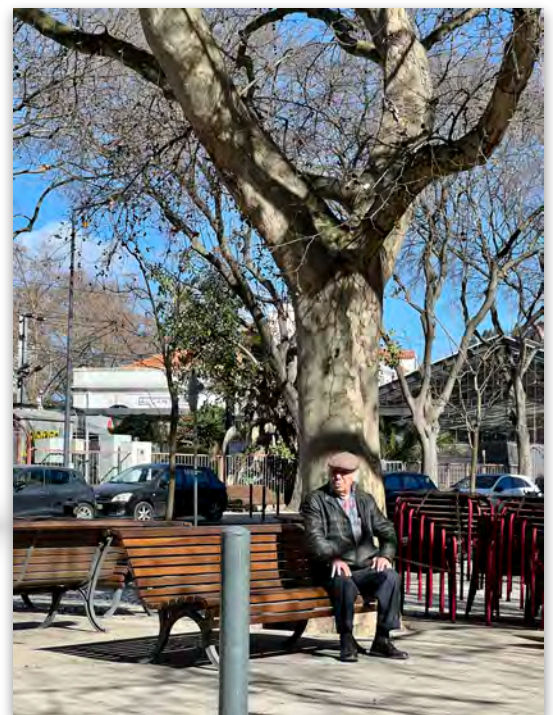




The Lisbon Estrela contains the capitol building which is quite



high end and modern. The Estrela Basilica was even more beautiful within its walls. Mr. Estrela thought the park on the other side of the street was good for a little relaxation.



Almeda, a suburb of Lisbon lies on the South side of the Tagus River which can be accessed by the 25th of April Bridge. The town of



125,000 boasts the Statue of Christ the King. The statue dedicated to the sacred heart of Jesus gazes over Lisbon. Here is a photo of the silhouette of Mary gazing at her Son in the mid day sun. The 25th of



April Bridge and the statue are a celebration of thanks for surviving the destruction of World War II. Yes, the original idea came from



Rio de Janeiro which has the Christ the Redeemer Statue looking over their city. Portugal's statue was begun in 1949 and completed 10 years later for the cost of 20 million. The day of our visit had extreme wind and cold. The crosses laying on the ground depicted Jesus' life and way to the Calvary. The visit was unforgettable. The statue is beacon for miles around on a clear day.





Our room in 2B had a welcoming table with wine and cheese compliments of the Santa Luzia Management to cool down after a hard day on the road.



The Miradouro (Mirador) Sao Pedro de Alcantara has a plaza and park affording good views of the city and river.

The sign is an advertisement for the Communist



Party of Portugal. Its location is in Estrela, a colorful, middle class neighborhood.

Click on the photo on the left for a video of the inside of the Estrela Basilica. Built in the middle 18th century by Queen Maria I of Portugal, it is thought to be one of Lisbons most beautiful. Pink, yellow and grey marble was used for the walls and floors.



Belem is an area near the mouth of the Tagus River that sports many goodies of interest. The Anthropological museum built in 1893 houses significant pre Roman articles including Egyptian mummies. The Maritime Museum is nearby with a



disappointed seagull in front.



The Tower of Belém has a large garden setting. A violinist serenaded while the artist painted the Tower in watercolor.





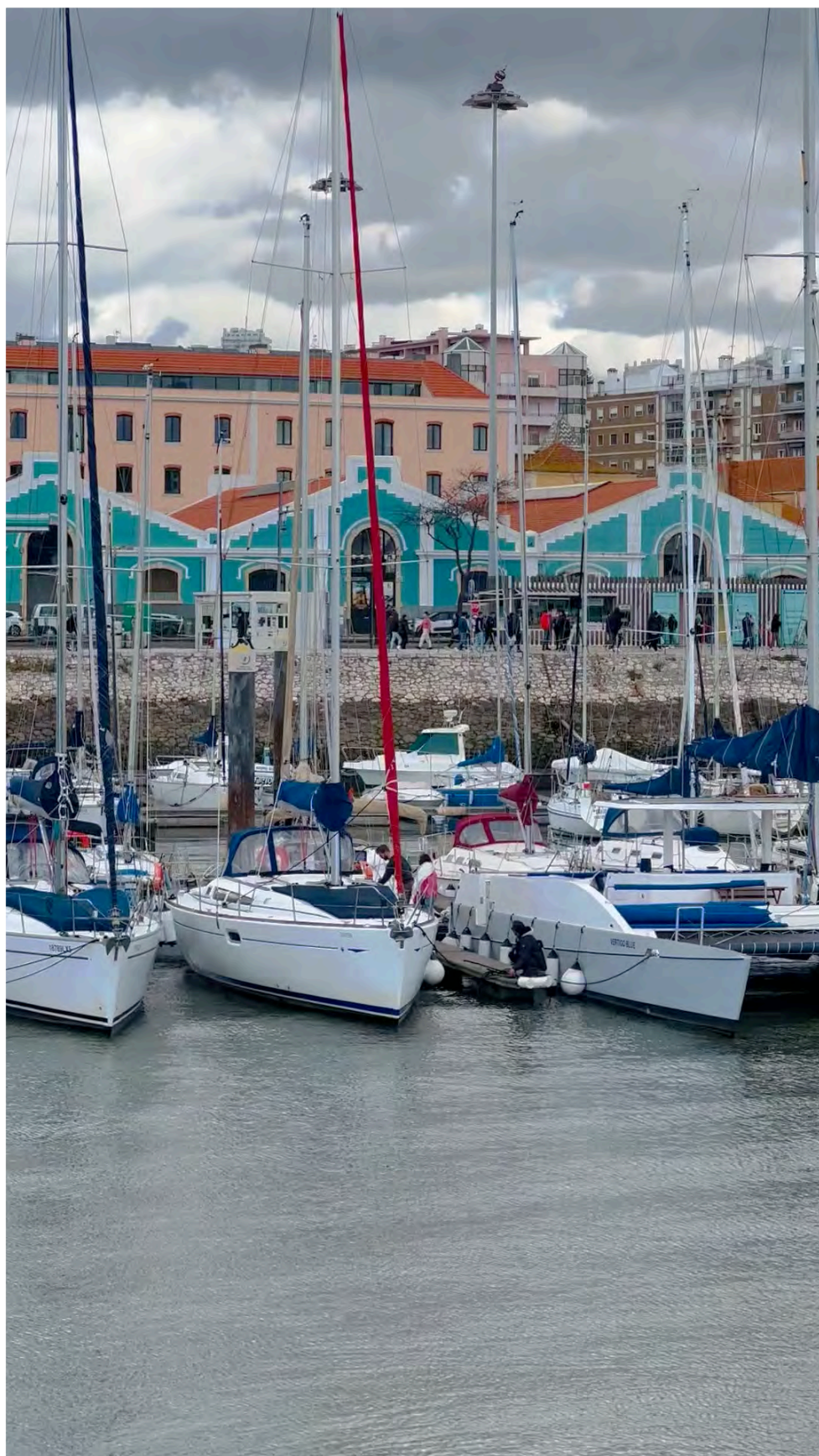


I loved the snack trucks that



kept the harbor visitors contented.





The Monument to the Discoveries (Padrão dos Descobrimentos) has intricate tile work on its plaza.



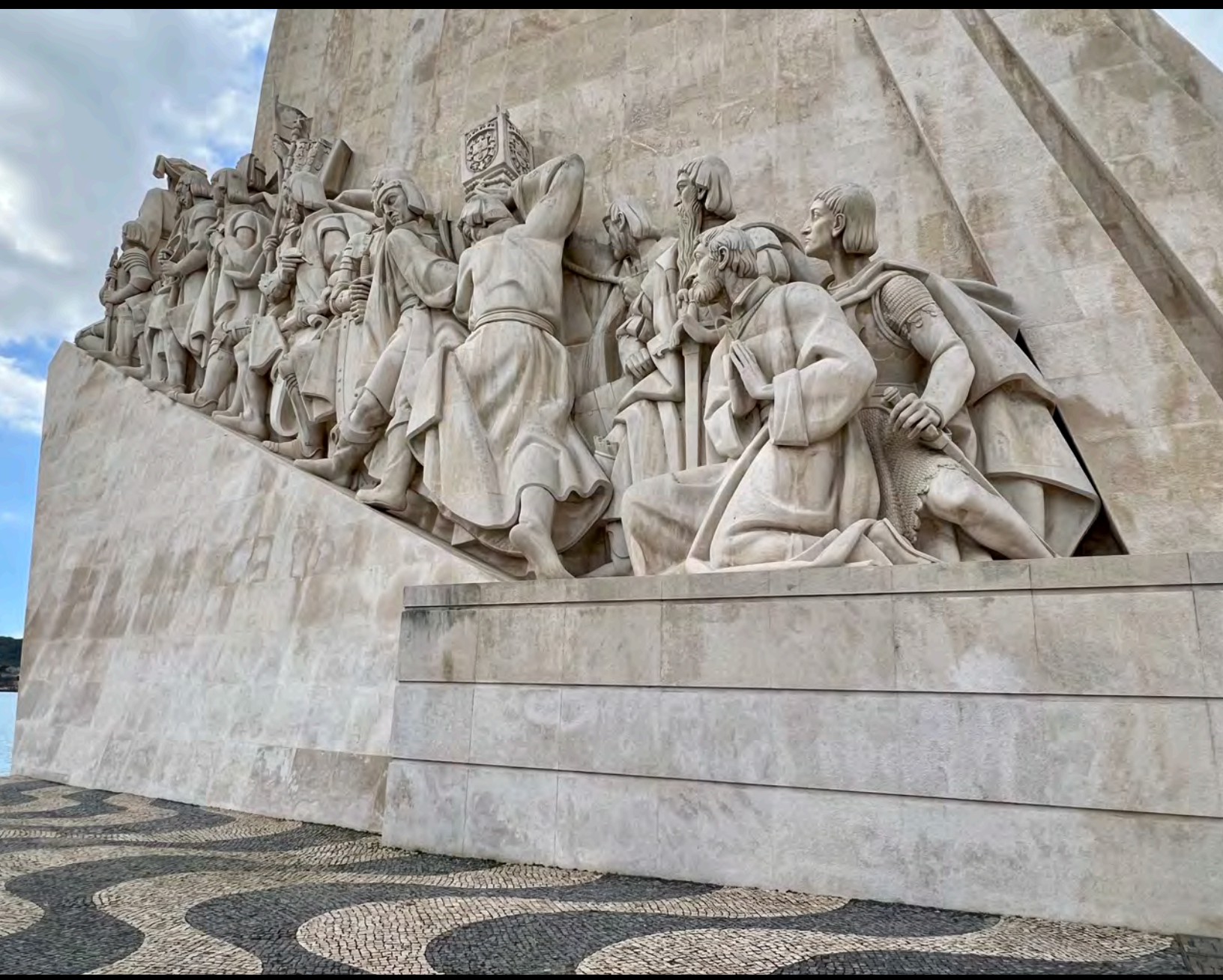
Here is a ceramic map of the world to document the successes of the



country. This was a gift from the people of South Africa. The monument celebrates Portugals' Age of Discovery, honoring the country's explorers and adventurers. There are 33 statues on the sides



with their names on a list below. These heroes are looking out at the 25th of April Bridge and the statue of Christ the King. Here is the harbor where these fellows sailed from during this period.



The aqueduct was completed in 1744 which brought drinking water from the springs of Alfama. No longer useable today but it is





hike able for those who can handle exposure.

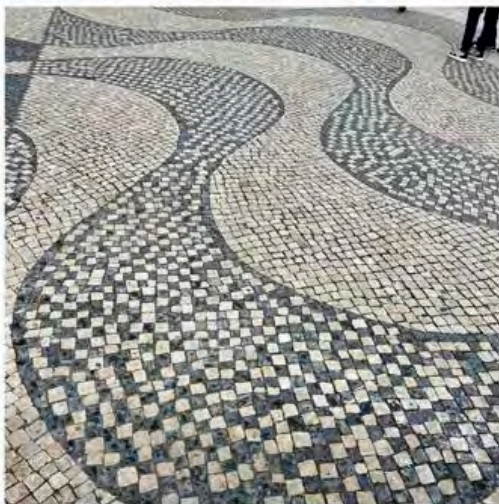
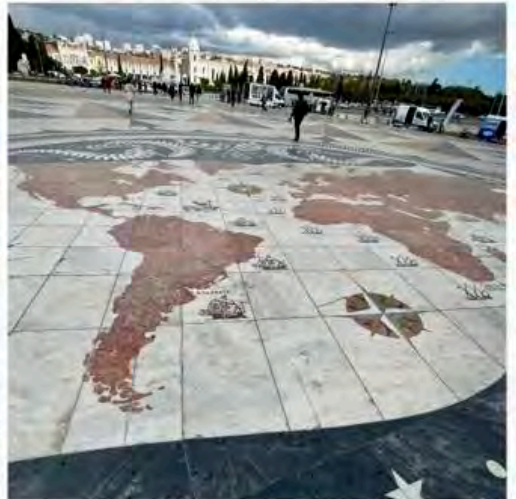
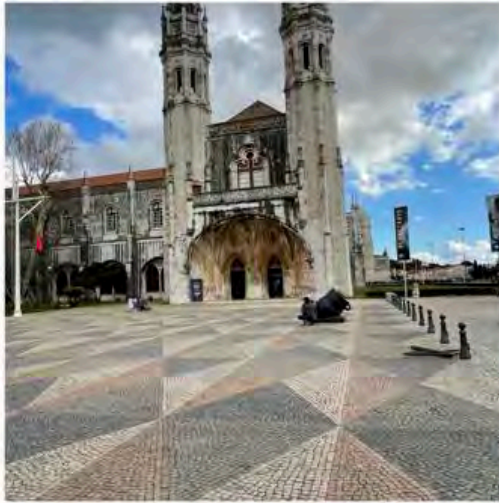














Cascais

On the way to Cascais, a coastal west of Lisbon, we passed through Estoril giving us a look of some beautiful Portuguese real estate. The garden park had the Avenida a Republica (Ave. of the Republic). The town is noted for its beaches and popular harbor. It is





a retirement town for many. On the other side there are rocky cliffs



that the Atlantic Ocean pounds constantly. Further on, the beach



gets normal with Spring flowers and rubbery plants. Our privilege was lunch at

the 4 star Meste Ze' Restaurant located along one of the most beautiful vistas in Portugal. Fatima's advice was, "Don't worry about the price, just enjoy." We followed her advice pretty well. The





service was just as thorough as the fare with a table to enjoy the all world shore line to match.



Colares

It is a small town of 7500 in the region of Sintra; the significance being the most western region of continental Europe.



The rock marker (Cabo da Roca) is located at the end of a garden of those rubbery plants. The light house, built in 1772, is 541 feet above



CABO DA ROCA

AQUI.....

ONDE A TERRA SE ACABA
E O MAR COMEÇA.....

(CAMÕES)

PONTA MAIS OCIDENTAL DO
CONTINENTE EUROPEU



CAMARA MUNICIPAL DE SINTRA
1979

LATITUDE: 38° 47 NORTE

LONGITUDE: 9° 30 OESTE

ALTITUDE: 140^m ACIMA DO NIVEL
MEDIO DAS AGUAS



the Atlantic ocean which doesn't mind the wind like Fatima and Marjan. A restaurant offers another pretty view of the rocky coast to the south.







Sintra

A resort town in the foothills of the Sintra Mountains about 50 kilometers East of Lisbon. It is a charming area that has attracted





the Royals for ages. It is also known as the Portuguese Riviera. The town has 380,000 inhabitants who live well nestled within the lush, tropical hillsides. It is one of the wealthiest regions of Portugal. Sintra is old. Remnants from 5000 BC have been found. It was big for the Romans and the Moors. The history of this area could consume a complete semester in a university course.

The Palace of Pena is what we came to visit today. The half day ticket price was 26 Euros. The guy at the turnstile was cell phone, color coordinated. Ok, now it is only a 45 minute walk up the hill through the dense, lichen covered forest.





We had to wait until 2 pm to be permitted to enter the building.



Here we had to show our tickets again and yes, we could not find them. Marjan pleaded with the officials for mercy by showing the credit card receipt. She received a hesitant yes so we were on our



way. The monastery and chapels yielded many with good views.





Lisbon can be seen on a clear day.



Construction was begun in the Middle Ages with a chapel dedicated to Our Lady Of Pena at the top of the hill. In 1493 King

John II ordered the construction of the monastery. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 did much destruction but the essentials were saved. The palace was completed in 1854 by King Ferdinand.

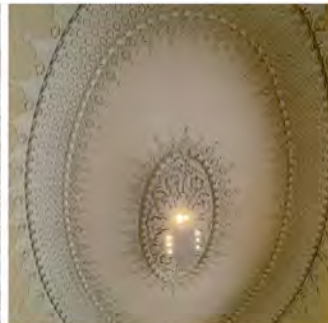
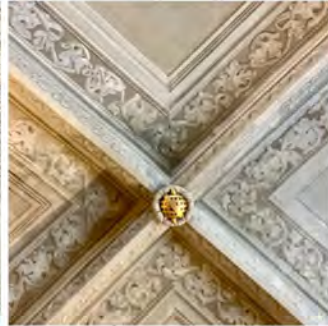


When we went up the stairs to enter the living quarters of the palace, we had to show our ticket stubs for the third time. This could have been an occasion for extreme stress but splendor of this scene brought us back to calm. The royal folks literally lived on top of the world. They even had a stag hall. Here are some collages of ceilings and chairs. Please enjoy other scenes.









c Enjoy the video of the kitchen.



São Martinho, at the bottom of the hill from the Palácio Nacional de Sintra (Pena Palace). Is a charming place.



Porto



The flight on TAP showed the Atlantic shoreline and beyond. Lina, a native of Porto, picked us up at the airport and whisked us into town to the Hotel International in her late model Toyota. The



monitor on the dashboard showed how the gasoline motor alternated





between making electricity or using electricity. The hotel fronted on a narrow street that featured several ‘hole in the wall’ restaurants. Our bathroom had a really cool vanity that featured a large drawer under the counter but did not reach the floor.

Porto is the second largest city in the country with only 232,000 people but with the metropolitan area its figure rises to 1.7 million. Oporto, the name in Portuguese, is the northern city of Portugal located by the



mouth of the Douro River. The city dates back to the Romans and then the Moors in 711. In 1387, the marriage of John I of Portugal and Philippa of Lancaster, England cemented a Portuguese-English military alliance which is the oldest in their history. In the 14th and 15th centuries, Porto was big on shipbuilding hence the beginning of the Age of Discovery. This was led by Henry, The Navigator. The city benefitted from the wine produced in the Douro Valley in the 13th century. The Prime Minister of England and the Marquis of Pombal



established a monopoly to control the wine quality. The winegrowers rebelled against these strict regulations and then burned down the authority's buildings. This was known as the 'Revolta dos Borrachos', the revolt of the drunkards.

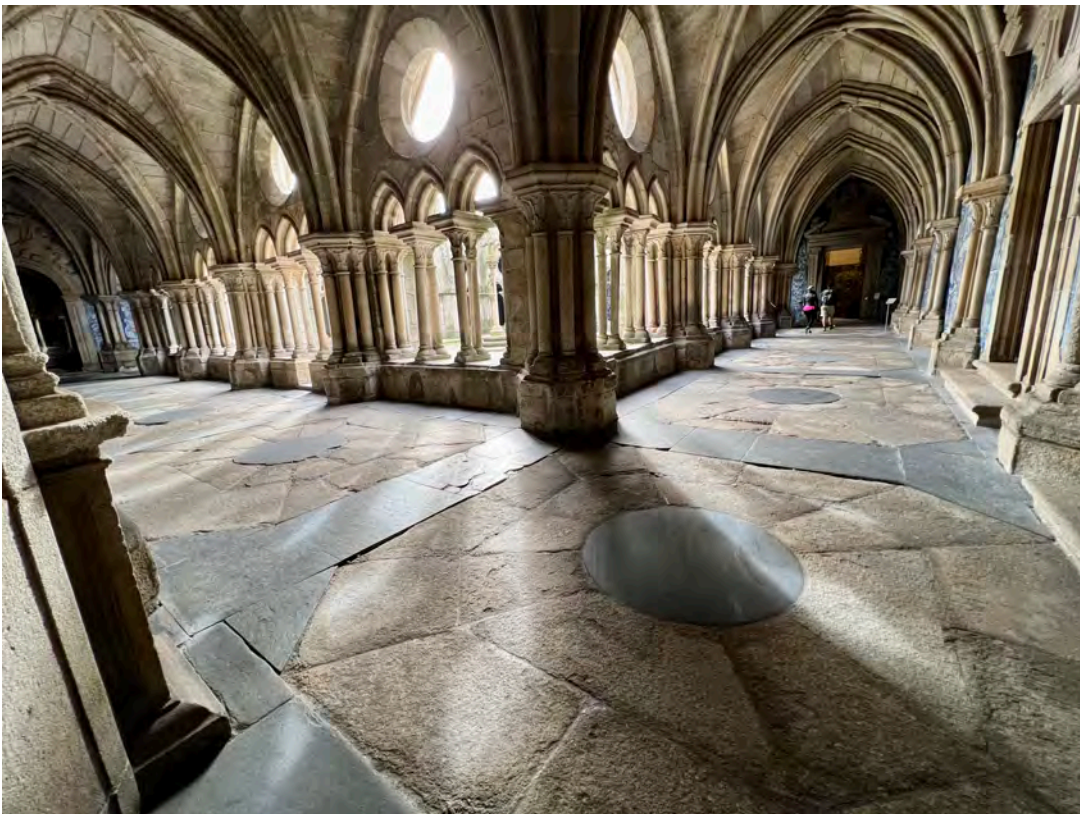
Marjan had to give deference to the priest before he gave us a wonderful breakfast to start the day. It was a raw, chilly morning as Lina drove



us to the Porto Cathedral. Its' history is unusual. The ground

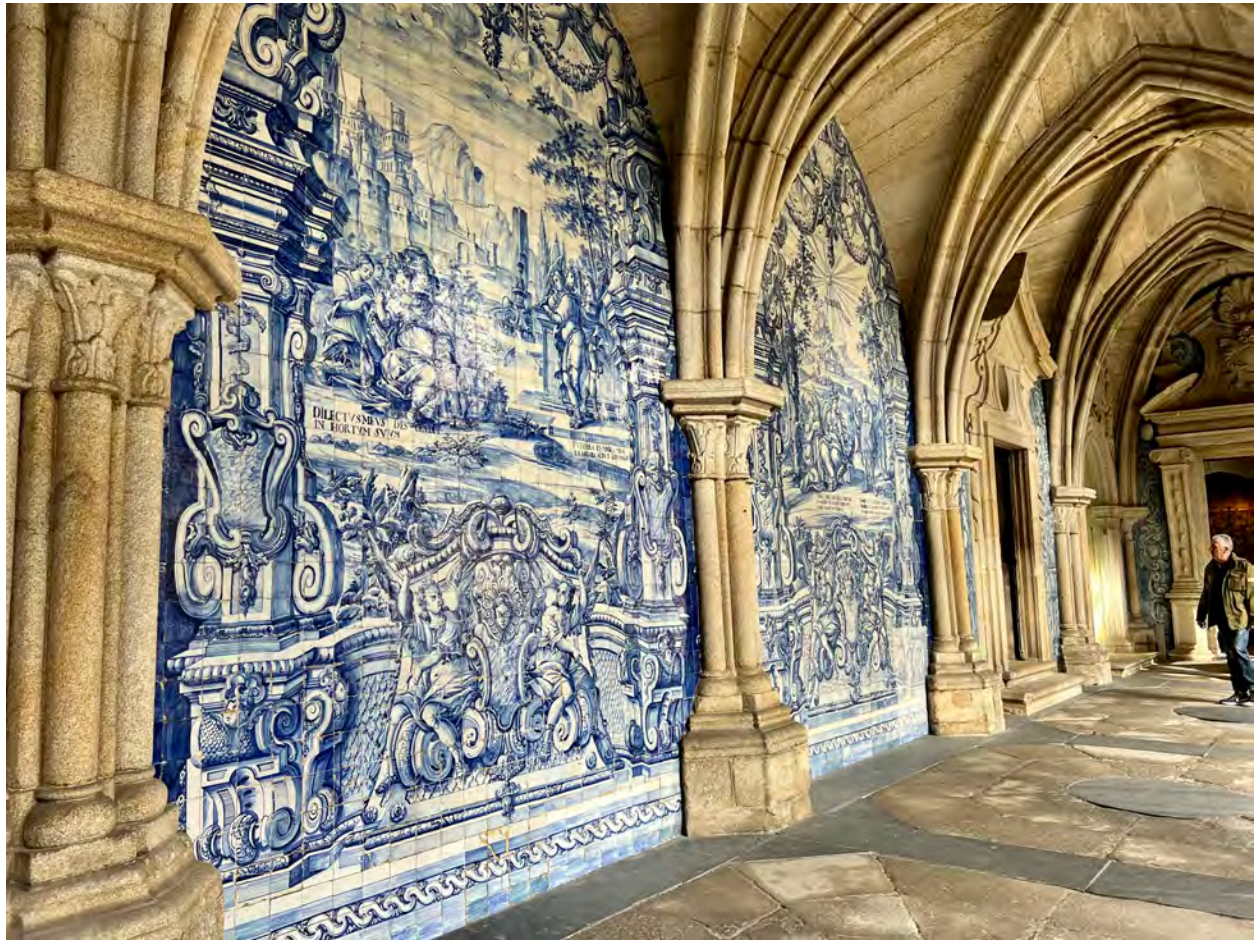


breaking was 1110 and was completed in 1737. We arrived as a soprano



was singing a beautiful rendition of the Schubert 'Ave Maria' outside. As so often happens, we will hear it now even though not many others did that day (

video). The church had gorgeous tile work inside depicting many



Biblical scenes. The walls had massive stones that blended with the arches. The scenery was Romanesque. The Paço Episcopal do Porto was the bishops' quarters that was open to the public as well as the stairs leading to the towers. This was a wonderful, early, Sunday morning treat. How about the well tiled courtyard? Here are some more views and a video.











I think we found Henry dancing with his girlfriend on a plaza in Porto!



The Igreja de Santa Clara is a Catholic Church built between 1416-1457 that was beside a convent. It features gold and polychrome. In 1956, the church was declared a World Heritage Site. I found one



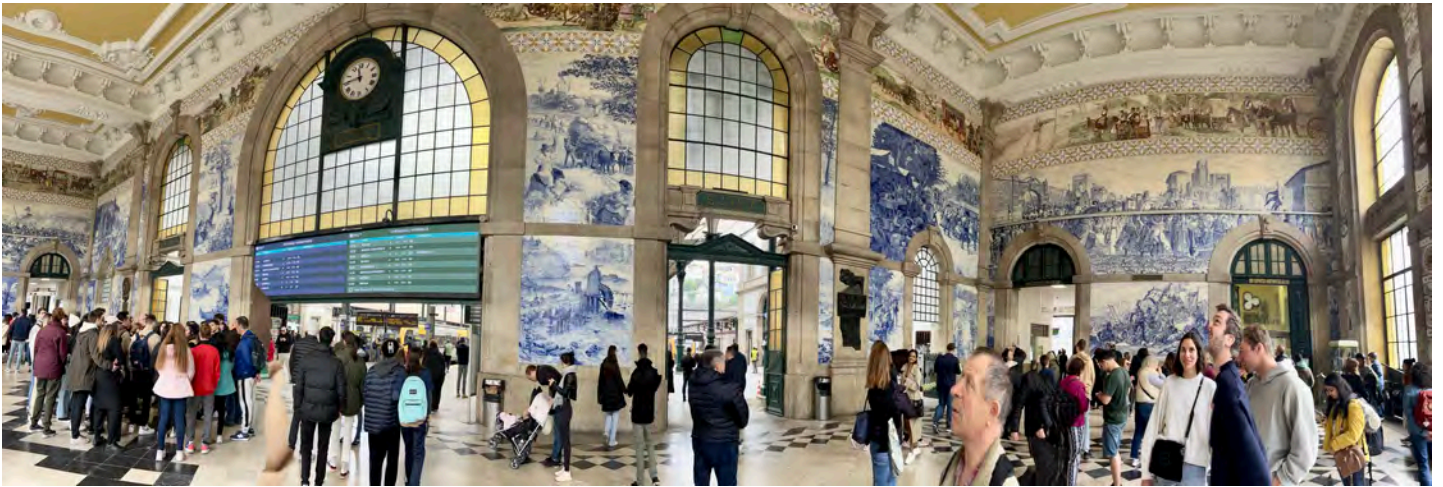
simple door upstairs.







The railroad terminal in Porto is a jewel. It is a smorgasbord for



the eyes of tiles and architecture.



And the street views outside were a continuation of the treat.
Wow, Porto is wonderful!





Proceeding down the Victoria which leads to the Douro River, we were serenaded by a nice violin (Video).





The buildings and side streets are especially scenic. Ig. The Cat,

narrow passages made interesting.





Here is a building made by a not famous architect which sported a four and one half star Portuguese restaurant out front. The Terreiro had outside seating with good china. Here one can enjoy the view of the river with wine, squash soup, and seafood rice.

The view includes the port caves on the Gaia side of the river.

Nearby, there was a cutlery shop that would etch your name on any purchase.





Here was an evidence of the Fasching celebration last night. The



Douro Riverfront has many distractions and diversions, See photos.





The Dom Luis Bridge carries a light rail and pedestrians on the upper deck with cars and pedestrians on the lower deck. The 564



foot span used to be the longest in the world when it was built in 1886. It connects Porto with Vila Nova de Gaia. There is also a funicular on the Porto side of the bridge.



The Igreja de São Francisco, a Franciscan church, cloister and







The 'hole in the wall restaurant' up the street from our Hotel International was quite large after entering. It was actually a 4 star restaurant named Francesinhas Al Forno da Baixa. The walls made of huge boulders seemed to add to the size of the

room. It was a popular place drawing a 20's crowd. The gizzards on a spiced stew were delicious; after the fresh mushrooms on white wine, coriander, lemon juice and garlic.

The Regimento de Artiharia N. 5 is a military overlook on the South side of the D o u r o River. It affords a good look of the towns on both sides. I was greeted warmly by a friendly sea gull. The



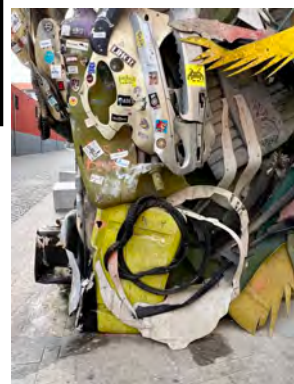


Southern side of the Douro is the city of Vila Nova de Gaia.

It dates back to the Roman times but today it is the home of many wine cellars (caves) where port wine is aged and stored. There are narrow streets here like Porto that blossom with artists' treasures. Here is the multi story 'rabbit' which is literally made



from junk.



A stroll along the shore revealed a multicolored bird oversees the port boats.



We did a visit to the Cálem Wine Cellars that date back to 1859. This is port or port wine, meaning it has between 18-21 % alcohol as opposed to regular wine that tests at 12%. The port is produced from grapes that are grown in the Douro Valley. Port, a hefty sweet wine, both red and white, have been produced here for over 1000 years.



We were told that the climate of the valley is harsh. It is made up in two seasons; winter for 9 months and the 'hell' (112 degrees) for the three summer months. The Cálem white and red wines slowly change hues with age. There is the 10 year, 20, 30, 40 and then the vintage. The price per bottle ascends with age. I purchased a 10 year and vintage bottle for some special occasion down the road. Both colors make a good cordial after dinner or for the use to have a little nip on a chilly night.





The Majestic Cafe is Porto's most chic. The doorman was a really busy fellow.



The Mercado do Bolhã (main market) had fresh, wholesale everything.



The Chapel of Santa Caterina built in the 18th century features the tiles of E d w a r d o Leite. I liked the interior as well.



Lena instructed us to meet her on the plaza near the bookstore at 10 am in the morning. She was talking about the most beautiful bookstore in the world, the Livraria Lello. We left the hotel a little before 9 to hustle uphill three blocks on the cobblestones to become part of a line of folks over a block long. The line was 2-3 deep and was moving slowly. Marjan decided to walk up to the entrance while I held her place. She learned that tickets could be purchased online for 6 Euros each that reserved an entrance time. Our entry time was 4 pm. Good, we can come back near the end of our day and when there won't be a line. We opted for a ice cream while





waiting or Lena. The line was just as long at 4 pm but our tickets made us preferential. Marjan bought two books so the store canceled our ticket fees. Imagine owning a business where you win either way. Bodies line up all day for the privilege of paying you

one way or another. The attraction is the spellbinding neo- Gothic decor. The famous woodwork, skylight and staircase to the second



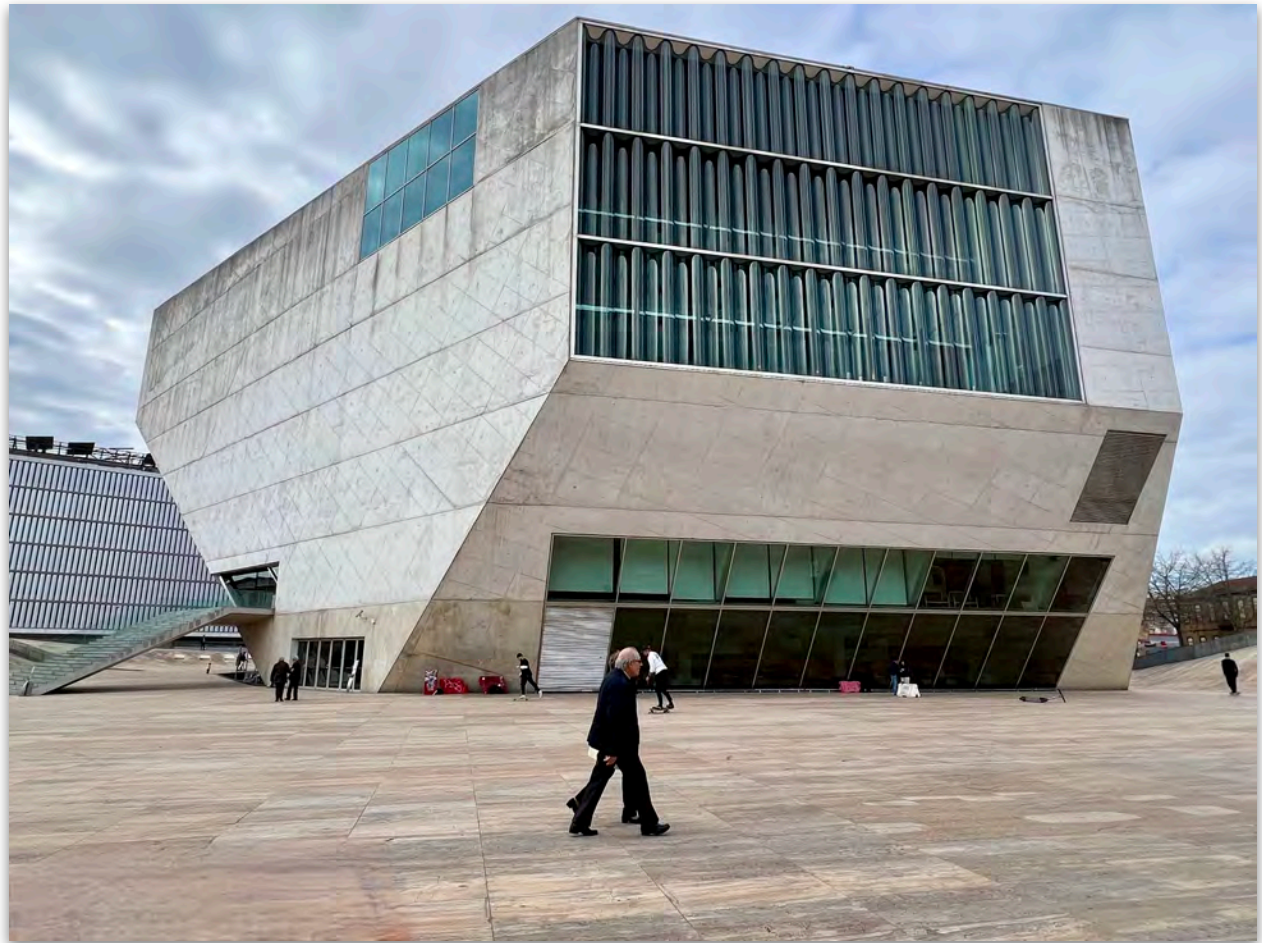
floor by a single stairs that splits twice from two different landings...





truly an all world sight. The following photos try to show the idea of the construction. The store opened in 1906 by the brothers Jose' and Antonia Lello. The motto on the stained glass ceiling says it all, "Decus in Labore" (Honor in Labor).





Porto has a modern music hall named the Casa da Música. I was able to enter the entrance hall where there was no one. The gift shop was open which sold memorabilia.

The União das Freguesias de Aldoar, Parque da Cidade and the



Forte de São Francisco Xavier de Queijo are all located on the Porto Atlantic Beach. The fort was built in the 6th century as a protection for Porto. It has



been restored well. The preserved park is a worthwhile visit on a sunny day.



The Church of the Carmel is combined with a convent on the left side and a monastery on the right. If you look close at the photo,



you can see a one meter wide house in the middle to separate the monks from the nuns. The convent dates back to 1393. It was possible to climb into the towers which made way to photograph the



happenings on the plaza. Marjan was the brave one to get into the towers by ladder.



Porto has the world's most beautiful McDonalds. All the ordering had to be done by computer screens.



Here are some other scenes of interest.





I learned about Vasco de Gama in middle school; the fact that



he was the first European to find a way to India by water instead of the dangerous overland routes to access the tea and spices. The achievement took much time and sacrifice. They left Lisbon in July, 1497 4 ships and 170 men. They returned two years later with 2 ships and less than half of the men. They had stops in Mozambique, Mombasa and Malindi which were unfriendly. It took 23 days to cross the Indian Ocean to arrive in Calicut, southern India. The gifts that

da Gama had for the Indian ruler named Zamorin didn't please at all. They failed to make a trade treaty, but the few spices and other goods that they obtained, gave them hope for a profitable future. It took 132 days for them to sail west to the eastern coast of Africa on their return. Vasco de Gama lost his brother on the trip. This all happened the same time that Columbus discovered America while looking for a passage to India for Spain. The prosperity of Portugal today did not come easily. This is maybe why we were met by many



Portuguese who were so 'down to earth' friendly and helpful. It was our privilege to get to know them while visiting their beautiful country.

Text by John Bucher Herr

Photos & Videos by John Bucher Herr and Marjan Vuurman