

PRINT

**The Sun**

TRAVEL

## Tagus there now: Lison's beautiful riverside



LIS-BONNY ... Skyline

YOU want a city break with a difference?

Within moments of cycling along sunny Atlantic beaches we were being serenaded by a mournful 90-year-old singer in a dark, crowded, wine-riddled, smoky bar.

Forget chalk and cheese. Lisbon is as different as port and cheese — and there was plenty of that to be found in Portugal's capital.

Galleries, castles, cuisine, sunshine, giant Jesus statue, the awesome Elevator of Santa Justa, antique trams in picturesque streets and sumptuous custard tarts — Lisbon really does have it all.

After a rich history of Moors, Romans and a broad spectrum of other invaders, Lisbon was hit by one of Europe's worst earthquakes and tsunamis in 1755. More than 15,000 perished.

Rebuilding took decades — but rebuild it they did, led by the Marques de Pombal with a vision that included the Avenida da Liberdade. The tree-lined thoroughfare is magnificent, leading to King Edward VII park with its wonderful views over the city to one of the world's largest natural harbours at the mouth of the River Tagus.

The majestic Praco Do Comercia, which fronts the waterside entrance to the city, was part of the renovation and is now the largest square in Europe.

It has witnessed some of Portugal's most epic events and was at the heart of the 1974 Carnation Revolution when citizens stuffed the barrels of soldiers' rifles with red flowers to celebrate a military coup.

Nowadays, Lisbon is a vibrant city with chic shops, seafood stalls, open-air coffee bars and markets aplenty.

Lisbon prides itself on being Europe's westernmost and sunniest capital city and one of the best ways to see its changing face is by hiring a bike from Bikeiberia's Lisbon Hub in the Baixa area by the river.

For £13 a day you can cycle in comfort alongside the Tagus via boatyards, plush seafood restaurants, cool boulevards and out to the Discoveries — an awesome sculpture in tribute to Lisbon's explorer past, when men set sail to discover the rest of the world.

For a little more you can catch the ferry to Trafari on the south coast.

From there — with not even a hill to tackle — it's a rewarding cycle alongside wave-smashing Atlantic beaches with their golden sand as far as the resort of Caparica.

Lisbon has its own music — Fado — and enthusiasts come from all over the world to hear its soulful sentiment.

Fado literally means fate and it is regarded as an expression of the supposed national trait of fatalism. Nice.

But for anyone who loves pure emotion and atmosphere, Fado — whether sung by old men or young women — truly tugs at the senses.

It is best served in atmospheric bars... and Lisbon's Bairro Alto quarter is blessed with those plus fado restaurants by the score.

Check out the tiny, world-renowned Tasca do Chico bar.

It encapsulates all that is best about unforgettable Lisbon. Wine, cheese, music — heaven.

ANDY TOTHAM

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