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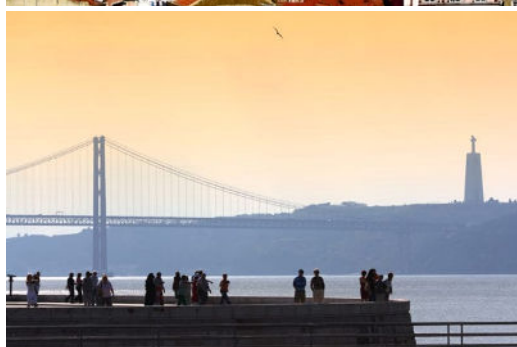
Portugal's coastal capital city presents panoramic views of centuries-old architecture and rich traditions in design and cuisine

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Lisbon is a postcard-perfect city built on seven hills overlooking the River Tagus (Rio Tejo) flowing to the mighty Atlantic Ocean. Boasting centuries of history, the city remains one of the most popular destinations for travelers today.

With a population of a half million, exploring Lisbon is easy and inspiring; hilly walks or tram rides lead to terraces that serve as miradouros, or viewpoints. One of the most spectacular views is from the medieval São Jorge Castle, where the city's red-tiled roofs and pastel-colored buildings fan out to the river estuary beyond.

Decorative tilework is a hallmark of Lisbon's architecture and design. The National Azulejo Museum showcases five centuries of Portuguese ceramic tile, and all over Lisbon elaborately painted tiles adorn the homes and businesses, Metro station walls, and sidewalks. Ceramic shops are part of the streetscape, too, and are filled with everything from lamps and trays to tiles and linens.

Lisbon's enthusiasm for pretty tiles is matched only by its passion for the not-to-be-missed custard tart pastries called pastéis de nata. The flaky treat—made with a vanilla-flecked egg-custard filling—was originally born in a bakery in nearby Belem (where the lines are long but the service quick) and is Portugal's favorite dessert or sweet snack with coffee. If you're craving something savory look no further than the retail temples, where whole, hand-packed sardines are sold in artfully designed cans. Seafood restaurants abound, and stylish cocktail bars liven the city late into the night.

The cuisine and art of Portugal are both celebrated at the Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon. Built in 1959 atop one of Lisbon's hills, the hotel boasts sweeping city views and interiors that are embellished by more than 400,000 square feet of Portuguese marble and Norwegian granite. The modernist hotel, with its luxury spa and open-air rooftop fitness track, is also home to one of the largest private collections of contemporary art in Portugal, featuring an eclectic mix of sculptures, paintings and tapestries.

The art of wine pairing at the hotel's Varanda Restaurant highlights wines from local vineyards and, of course, the country's heritage port wines. Discovering the wines of Portugal is for many an exploration into new territory. Beginners should look for Vinho Tinto for red wine, Vinho Branco for white wine and Vinho Espumante for sparkling wine. Quinta is a designation meaning the grapes were grown on one estate or Quinta.

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