

Portugal

General information

The official name of Portugal is Portuguese Republic and the official language is Portuguese, which is also one of the official languages of the EU.

It is located in South Western Europe and to the north and east it borders Spain, while to the west and south it is washed by the Atlantic Ocean. It also includes two autonomous regions, the archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores, in the Atlantic Ocean. The total area it occupies is 92,212km² Its population is 10,639,726 (2024).

The regime of government of Portugal is a semi-presidential republic. It has been a member of the European Union since 1 January 1986 and in the Schengen area since 26 March 1995. Its currency is the EURO. The capital of Portugal is Lisbon.



History

Evidence of human existence has been found in Portugal dated back to the 9th century B.C making it one of the oldest countries in Europe. In the ancient times it was named Lusitania and later on Callaecia. Portugal was first colonized by the Phoenix and the Carthaginians, followed by the Romans, the Alans, the Swabians, the Visigoths and the Saracens. Afterwards, Ferdinand of Castile conquered the entire country who named it «Portugal» and he establish the new country at 1143. It gradually became independent from the Kingdom of Castile and during the 12th and 13th centuries, it expanded its borders to its present extent. The



Portuguese from then on began to develop their state through their fleet, which reached Africa, India, South America, China and Japan. In 1580, the succession crisis was the opportunity for the Spanish to seize the Portuguese throne until 1640. A multitude of wars followed until 1807, when Napoleon's troops invaded Portugal. 13 years later, the

king returned and in 1910, democracy was established. In World War I, the country will join the Entente camp. During those years, political instability prevails in the country, leading to the rise of a dictator who ruled for 48 years. The country remained neutral in World War II. In 1949, it became a member of NATO. In 1974, the dictatorship fell and democracy was established. Finally, in 1986, Portugal became an official member of the European Union.

Cultural and other traditions

Important cultural traditions of Portugal are:

- The Music of Nostalgia known as Fado which was declared Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO (2011).
- The Festivals of the Saints (Festas dos Santos Populares). Portugal celebrates its Saints with large popular festivals, especially in June:
 - São João (Saint John) in Porto.
 - Santo António (Saint Anthony) in Lisbon.
 - São Pedro (Άγιος Πέτρος).
- Other major cultural and other traditions are Bullfights (Tourada) and the Festival of Tiles and Crafts.

Important and famous Personalities from Portugal

are Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) – The big explorer, Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) – the father of Portuguese literature, great poet and writer, known for the usage of heteronyms and the «*Book of worry*». Lastly Cristiano Ronaldo (1985-) – Legend of football, one of the greatest footballers of all time, with many "Golden Balls" and uncountable titles.



Famous monuments and places: The most important monuments and sites in Portugal are the Belém Tower (Torre de Belém) – Symbol of Portuguese Exploration, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Jerónimos Monastery (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos) – a Masterpiece of Manueline Architecture and the Pena Palace (Palácio da Pena) – A Fairytale Palace in Sintra.

Traditional Portuguese foods and drinks include cod (bacalhau), which is considered the most iconic Portuguese dish, and the famous custard tarts – Pastéis de Nata, while a well-known drink of the country is Port Wine.

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