

A group of people are standing on a stone wall overlooking a city. In the foreground, a man wearing a black t-shirt, khaki pants, a white cap with a blue logo, and a blue bag is taking a photo with his smartphone. To his right, a woman in a bright pink top and orange skirt stands with her back to the camera. Further right, a woman in a red jacket and green skirt and a man in an orange t-shirt and khaki pants are looking towards the camera. The background features a dense cityscape with red-tiled roofs and a prominent, tall, ornate church tower with a clock face. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

What to visit in Porto & other useful tips

ASPHER DEANS' & DIRECTORS' RETREAT | 06-08 JUNE



1. Batalha Square and Church of Santo Ildefonso

At the heart of Porto's historic center lies the enchanting **Praça da Batalha**, a bustling square brimming with history and cultural significance. Dominating this lively plaza is the magnificent **Church of Santo Ildefonso**, an architectural gem renowned for its striking façade adorned with intricate azulejo tilework. Built in the **18th century**, this Baroque church is dedicated to Saint Ildefonso, a revered Spanish bishop, and theologian. Its façade, designed by architect **Nicolau Nasoni**, is adorned with around **11,000 azulejo tiles**, depicting scenes from the life of Saint Ildefonso and religious motifs, creating a mesmerizing visual spectacle that captivates visitors. Inside, the church boasts a lavish interior adorned with gilded altars, ornate sculptures, and magnificent frescoes, offering a glimpse into Porto's rich religious heritage and artistic legacy.



2. São Bento Train Station

Nestled in the heart of Porto, **São Bento Railway Station** stands as a magnificent testament to the city's rich architectural heritage and historical significance. It's considered the **most beautiful railway station in Portugal and one of the 36 most beautiful train stations in the world**, according to Conde Naste Traveler. Designed by architect José Marques da Silva and inaugurated in **1916**, the station seamlessly blends **Beaux-Arts and Neo-Manueline styles, adorned with stunning azulejo tilework that depicts scenes from Portugal's history**, daily life, and transportation evolution. Beyond its architectural splendor, São Bento is a bustling transportation hub, connecting Porto to various destinations across Portugal, including Lisbon and the Douro Valley. Welcoming travelers with its grandeur and charm, São Bento Railway Station is not only a gateway to exploration but also a captivating cultural landmark that enchants visitors with its timeless allure.



3. Porto Sé Cathedral

Perched atop the **highest point of Porto's historic center**, the **Cathedral of Porto**, also known as Sé Cathedral, commands attention with its imposing presence and centuries-old grandeur. Built in the 12th century, this iconic Romanesque cathedral boasts a striking façade adorned with intricate carvings and sculptures, while its interior showcases a harmonious blend of architectural styles, including Gothic and Baroque, including a stunning Baroque narthex added by Italian architect Nicolau Nasoni in 1736. Visitors are captivated by the cathedral's serene atmosphere, adorned with beautiful stained glass windows, ornate altars, and a majestic organ. As **one of Porto's oldest and most significant religious landmarks**, the Sé Cathedral not only serves as a place of worship but also offers a glimpse into the city's rich history and cultural heritage, making it a must-visit destination for travelers seeking to immerse themselves in Porto's storied past.



4. Muralha Primitiva, Escadas das Verdades and Porta das Mentiras

Located within the historic center of Porto, the **Porta das Mentiras (Gate of Lies)** serves as a fascinating entry point into the **city's ancient past**. This gate is part of the **Muralha Primitiva (Primitive Wall)**, which once encircled Porto to protect it from invaders. Constructed during the 14th century, around the year **1336**, the Muralha Primitiva is a testament to the city's medieval defensive architecture. Nestled within the historic center of Porto alongside the Porta das Mentiras (Gate of Lies) and the Muralha Primitiva (Primitive Wall) are the **Escadas das Verdades (Stairs of Truth)**. These stairs, steeped in history, are said to have been the site where **locals gathered to proclaim truths and settle disputes during medieval times**. Today, these ancient stairs serve as a unique landmark, offering visitors a glimpse into **Porto's medieval customs and traditions, while also providing a picturesque spot to admire the surrounding historical architecture**. Together, the Porta das Mentiras, the Muralha Primitiva, and the Escadas das Verdades form a compelling narrative of Porto's rich cultural heritage, inviting exploration and reflection on the city's past.



5. Cais da Ribeira and Dom Luís I Bridge

The picturesque **Cais da Ribeira**, nestled along the **Douro River** in Porto, Portugal, is a vibrant waterfront area steeped in history and charm. Lined with colorful buildings, lively cafes, and bustling restaurants, this **UNESCO World Heritage Site** exudes a captivating atmosphere that draws locals and tourists alike. At the heart of Cais da Ribeira stands the iconic **Dom Luís I Bridge**, an architectural marvel that connects Porto to Vila Nova de Gaia. Designed by **Gustave Eiffel's protégé, Théophile Seyrig**, and completed in **1886**, this double-deck metal bridge spans the Douro River with graceful arches, offering breathtaking panoramic views of Porto's skyline and the bustling river below. Across the Douro River, we can see the **renowned wine cellars of Vila Nova de Gaia**. Here, visitors can explore the historic wine lodges, known as "caves," where the world-famous Port wine is aged to perfection. These cellars offer immersive guided tours that delve into the rich history and winemaking traditions of the region, allowing guests to learn about the intricate process of producing Port wine while sampling a variety of exquisite vintages.



6. Escadaria and Funicular dos Guindais

The Escadaria and Funicular dos Guindais offer a unique way to explore the enchanting city of Porto, Portugal. This historic funicular, inaugurated in **1891**, connects the bustling riverside area of Ribeira with the upper neighborhoods of Batalha and Vitória, traversing the steep incline of the Guindais hill with ease. As passengers ascend or descend the picturesque staircase or ride the charming funicular, they are treated to **breathtaking panoramic views of the Douro River, Dom Luís I Bridge, and the vibrant cityscape below**. The Escadaria dos Guindais, comprising **262 steps**, is a scenic route that winds its way up the hillside, offering glimpses of Porto's architectural gems and hidden treasures along the way. The Funicular dos Guindais, with its vintage carriages and nostalgic charm, provides a convenient and memorable journey for visitors exploring Porto's historic neighborhoods. Whether ascending by foot or riding the funicular, the Escadaria and Funicular dos Guindais offer an unforgettable experience that combines adventure, history, and stunning vistas of this captivating Portuguese city.



7. Fernandina Wall

The **Fernandina Wall**, or **Muralha Fernandina**, stands as a historic landmark in Porto, tracing its origins back to the **14th century when it was constructed during the reign of King Ferdinand I**. This **medieval defensive wall once encircled the city**, serving as a protective barrier against invaders and showcasing Porto's strategic importance as a maritime and commercial hub. While much of the Fernandina Wall has been dismantled over the centuries, remnants of its majestic arches and fortified towers can still be found throughout the city, offering glimpses into Porto's rich architectural heritage.

One of the most captivating aspects of the Fernandina Wall is **the breathtaking vista it provides of the majestic Douro River**. From certain vantage points along the wall, visitors can marvel at panoramic views of the river as it winds its way through Porto's historic center, flanked by colorful buildings, bustling waterfront promenades, and iconic landmarks such as the Dom Luís I Bridge.



8. Santa Catarina Street and Café Majestic

Running through the heart of Porto's bustling downtown area, **Rua de Santa Catarina** stands as one of the city's most iconic thoroughfares, pulsating with energy and lined with a **myriad of shops, boutiques, and cafes**. Among the many treasures adorning this historic street, the **Café Majestic** reigns supreme as a timeless symbol of elegance and sophistication. Established in **1921**, this **legendary café has played host to poets, writers, and intellectuals over the decades, earning its reputation as one of Porto's most prestigious gathering spots**. **J.K. Rowling**, the celebrated author of the Harry Potter series, shares a special connection with Porto's Majestic Café that adds a touch of magic to its already storied history. Legend has it that Rowling **frequented the café during the early 1990s** when she lived in Porto and taught English in the city. It's said that the Café Majestic served as one of her favorite writing spots, providing inspiration for her literary endeavors.



9. Capela das Almas and Bolhão Market

In the heart of Porto, the charming **Capela das Almas (Chapel of Souls)**, stands as a testament to the city's religious heritage and architectural beauty. Adorned with striking **blue-and-white azulejo tiles** depicting scenes from the lives of saints and religious figures, the façade of this **18th-century** chapel is a captivating sight that draws visitors from near and far. Today, the Capela das Almas has become an **immensely popular spot for Instagrammers and photography enthusiasts**, who flock to capture its intricate tilework and vibrant colors, creating a visual tapestry that reflects Porto's cultural richness.

Adjacent to the Capela das Almas, another iconic landmark awaits exploration: the **recently renovated Mercado do Bolhão**, or Bolhão Market. This historic market, dating back to the **19th century**, has long been a beloved gathering place for locals and tourists alike, offering an array of **fresh produce, artisanal goods, and traditional delicacies**.



10. Aliados Square and Porto City Hall

At the heart of Porto's bustling downtown area lies the majestic **Praça dos Aliados**, a grandiose square that serves as a **focal point for the city's social and cultural activities**. Dominating the plaza's skyline is the imposing edifice of the Câmara Municipal do Porto, or Porto City Hall. Designed by architect António Correia da Silva and completed in **1957**, this monumental building is a striking example of neoclassical architecture, characterized by its imposing columns, grand staircase, and intricate detailing.

Its imposing façade, adorned with sculptures and reliefs depicting historical and allegorical figures, exudes a sense of authority and grandeur that befits its role as a seat of municipal government. Flanked by palm trees and surrounded by bustling cafes and shops, the square buzzes with activity, serving as a gathering place for locals and tourists alike and it's **one of Porto's most iconic landmarks**.



11. Clérigos Church and Tower

The Church and Tower of the Clerics (Igreja e Torre dos Clérigos) stand as iconic symbols of the city's architectural splendor and religious heritage. Designed by Italian architect **Nicolau Nasoni** in the **18th century**, this Baroque masterpiece boasts a soaring bell tower that dominates the city's skyline. The Torre dos Clérigos, standing at **76 meters tall and comprising 225 steps**, offers **breathtaking panoramic views of Porto and the Douro River** from its observation deck, rewarding visitors with a stunning vista of the city's rooftops and landmarks.

The Church and Tower of the Clerics have become **iconic symbols of Porto**, attracting visitors from around the world who come to admire their architectural beauty and historical significance. Whether ascending the tower for panoramic views or admiring the ornate details of the church's interior, a visit to the Igreja e Torre dos Clérigos is a must for anyone exploring Porto's cultural treasures.



12. Livraria Lello

The **Livraria Lello** stands as a beacon of literary excellence and architectural splendor. Established in **1906**, this **iconic bookstore** is renowned for its exquisite Neo-Gothic façade, characterized by intricate carvings, stained glass windows, and a striking red staircase that winds its way to the upper floor. The interior of the Livraria Lello is equally breathtaking, with ornate wooden bookshelves, a magnificent ceiling adorned with intricate motifs, and a grand skylight that bathes the space in natural light.

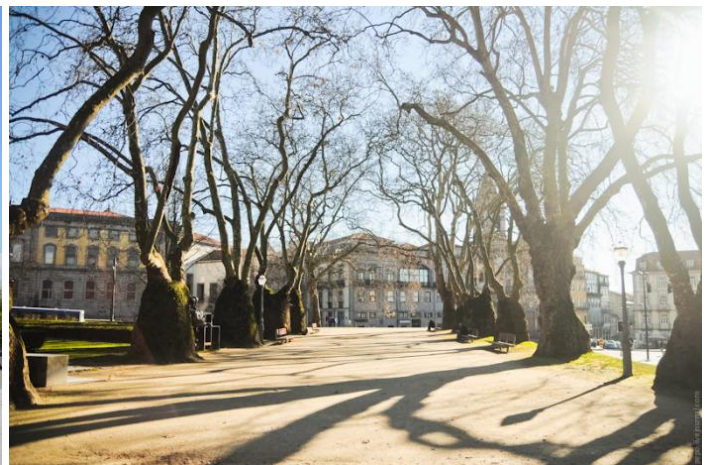
Beyond its architectural magnificence, the Livraria Lello holds a special place in literary history, having inspired famed author **J.K. Rowling** during her time in Porto. It is said that **Rowling drew inspiration from the bookstore's enchanting ambiance while crafting the magical world of Harry Potter**.



13. Carmo Church

The **Igreja do Carmo (Carmo Church)** stands as a magnificent example of Portuguese Baroque architecture and religious devotion. Built in the **18th century**, this awe-inspiring church is characterized by its **ornate façade adorned with intricate carvings, statues, and azulejo tilework**, depicting scenes from the life of Saint Teresa of Ávila and the Virgin Mary.

One of the most striking features of the Igreja do Carmo is its **twin bell towers**, which rise majestically above the surrounding rooftops, commanding attention with their grandeur and beauty. Adjacent to the Igreja do Carmo is the Carmelitas Church, connected to it by a narrow house-like structure, which adds to the architectural charm of the complex. Together, these two churches form an integral part of Porto's religious and cultural heritage, attracting visitors from around the world who come to admire their beauty and learn about their rich history.



14. Cordoaria Garden, Lions Square and Café Piolho

The **Jardim da Cordoaria** and **Praça dos Leões** exude a tranquil ambiance that belies their vibrant past. These picturesque spaces have long been intertwined with the **city's academic traditions, serving as gathering points for students and intellectuals alike**. The Jardim da Cordoaria, with its lush greenery and shaded pathways, provides a peaceful retreat for contemplation and leisure, while the Praça dos Leões bustles with energy, its cobblestone streets lined with cafes and bookstores.

At the heart of this academic enclave stands the **Café Piolho, an iconic establishment that has been a beloved haunt for generations of students**. With its charming facade and cozy interior, the café exudes a nostalgic charm that harkens back to Porto's storied past. Founded in 1909, Café Piolho has been a hub of intellectual discourse and artistic expression, its walls adorned with memorabilia and photographs that pay homage to its rich history.



15. Passeio das Virtudes

Overlooking the scenic Douro River in Porto, the **Passeio das Virtudes, or Virtudes Promenade**, offers visitors a **tranquil escape from the bustling city streets**. This charming promenade is nestled on the slopes of the Miragaia neighborhood and provides **stunning panoramic views** of the river, the Arrabida Bridge, and the picturesque Ribeira district. Lined with leafy trees, benches, and beautifully landscaped gardens, the Passeio das Virtudes is a popular spot for locals and tourists alike to relax, unwind, and soak in the breathtaking vistas of Porto's historic skyline.

At the heart of the promenade lies the **Virtudes Garden**, a verdant oasis featuring lush vegetation, meandering pathways, and a tranquil fountain. This idyllic green space offers a peaceful retreat for visitors seeking respite from the urban hustle and bustle, with ample opportunities for picnics, leisurely strolls, and enjoying the company of friends and family.



16. Miradouro da Vitória

Perched atop Porto's charming old town, the **Miradouro da Vitória, or Victory Viewpoint**, offers visitors a **breathtaking panorama of the city's historic center and the meandering Douro River below**. This scenic overlook provides a perfect vantage point to admire Porto's iconic red rooftops, centuries-old buildings, and the majestic Dom Luís I Bridge spanning the river. The Miradouro da Vitória is a popular spot for locals and tourists alike to soak in the beauty of Porto's skyline while enjoying a moment of tranquility away from the bustling streets below.

17. Street of Flowers

Nestled nearby is the picturesque **Rua das Flores**, or **Street of Flowers**, a pedestrian thoroughfare renowned for its **charming ambiance and vibrant atmosphere**. Lined with historic buildings adorned with colorful facades, quaint cafes, and artisan shops, Rua das Flores exudes a captivating blend of old-world charm and contemporary flair. Strolling along this bustling street, visitors can immerse themselves in Porto's rich cultural heritage, indulging in local delicacies, browsing unique souvenirs, and soaking in the lively street performances that often animate the bustling thoroughfare.

Traditional food

If you want to try Portuguese and Porto traditional dishes and pastries, here are some recommendations:

- **Francesinha:** Try Porto's iconic sandwich-main-course, the Francesinha, a hearty dish with layers of meat, cheese, and a spicy sauce.
- **Bacalhau:** Sample various preparations of bacalhau (salted codfish), a staple in Portuguese cuisine.
- **Seafood:** Being a coastal city, Porto offers an abundance of fresh seafood dishes, including grilled sardines and seafood rice.
- **Pastéis de Nata:** Indulge in these delectable custard tarts, a sweet treat loved by locals and visitors alike.

Airport and Transportation

Navigating transportation from the airport to Almeida Garret Library (city center)

- **Public Transportation:** Porto's public transportation system is efficient. Consider taking the metro: Line E (purple line), direction "Estádio do Dragão" or bus: line 601 or 602, direction "Cordoaria".
- **Taxis and Ride-Sharing:** Taxis and ride-sharing services are available at the airport. Opt for registered and reputable services.
- **Uber or similar services**

Safety Tips in Porto

Porto is generally a safe city, but it's essential to stay vigilant and follow safety guidelines:

- **Personal Safety:** Be cautious of your belongings in crowded areas. Keep your passport, identification, and valuable items secure.
- **Emergency Numbers:** Know the local emergency numbers, including **112** for all kinds of emergencies, even health-related, and 144 for social emergencies.
- **Transportation Safety:** Use well-lit and populated streets, especially at night. When using public transportation, be mindful of your surroundings.

