

# THE UNIQUE CASTLES OF PORTUGAL



For lovers of castles and fortresses, Europe has a number of extremely attractive sites. However, Portugal can boast to be unique in this field and claim to offer castle-enthusiasts something unique. Unlike anywhere else in Europe, Portugal's castles show a mixture of the combined influences of the Romans and the Moors. This is due to the fact that Portugal was a crossroads of these two cultures during the middle Ages, sandwiched between the hostile Moors in the South and the Romans, who invaded in 711 A.D. Portugal managed to evolve independently from these contrasting influences and is nowadays proud of the unique result.

The border area with Spain is rich in castles and host a large number of the country's 150 such attractions. The area includes the Beiras, an area blessed with steep mountains and a plethora of Roman/Moorish fortresses.

Nevertheless, the capital Lisbon is home to Portugal's most impressive castle, the infamous St. George castle, or Castelo de Sao Jorge. Despite having been threatened by earthquakes and severe storms, the castle has survived to dominate the capital city. The panoramic views from the castle of the surrounding countryside are breathtaking and lure travelers from all over the globe. The beautiful surrounding gardens are similarly awesome especially on a summer's day, making the very reasonable entrance fee of approximately €5 worthwhile. Another element making the Castelo de Sao Jorge unique is its hosting of weddings for both Portuguese locals and foreign couples. It is said that the Portuguese people love wedding ceremonies and few can think of a better venue than Portugal's proudest and most beautiful castle.

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