CITY GUIDE 08 · PORTUGAL

PORTO

A weekend on foot

Granite churches, tiled façades, a river the colour of strong tea — Portugal's second city rewards anyone who arrives hungry and keeps looking up.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

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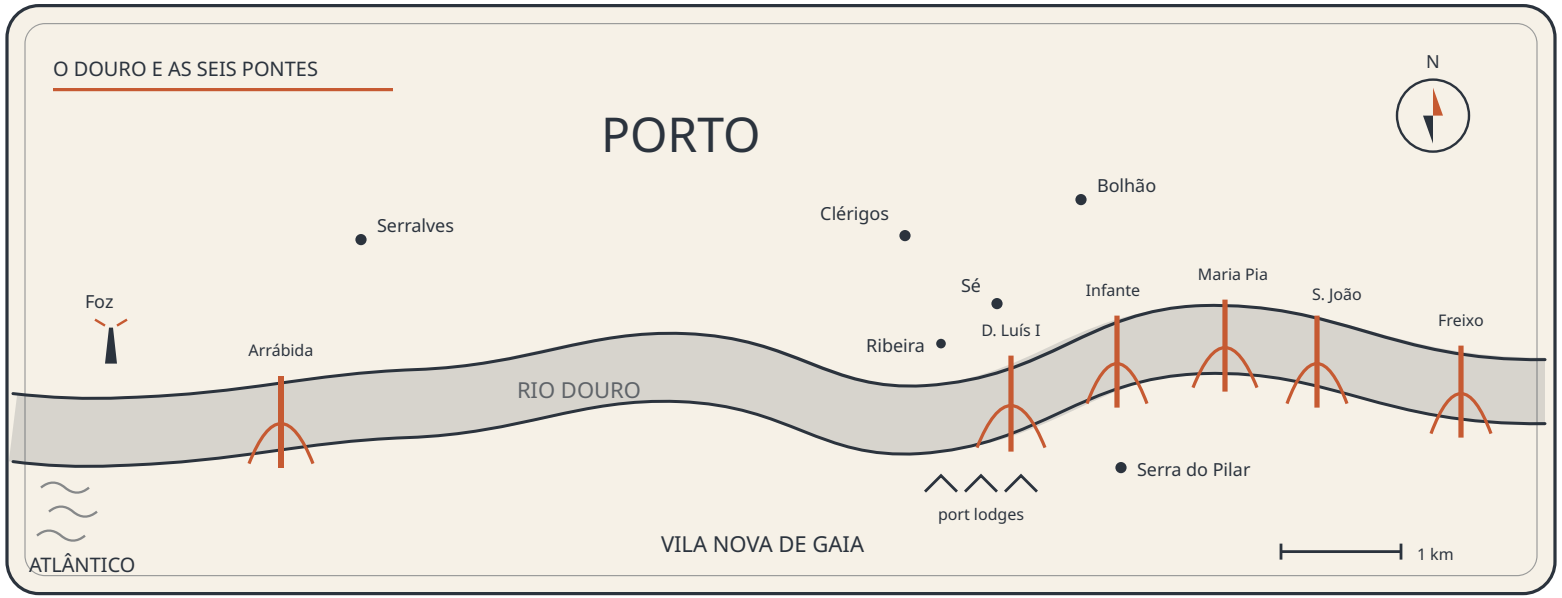
Porto is a city built on a disagreement between land and water. The Douro arrives from Spain through gorge after gorge, takes one look at the Atlantic, and slows into a broad, tea-dark ribbon; the city answers by refusing to be flat anywhere at all. Everything you will love here — the tiled churches, the bookshop staircases, the port lodges across the water — is arranged on a slope, and the slope is the point. Measure your plans in metres of climb, not kilometres of distance.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

Orient yourself from the top deck of the Ponte Luís I. To the north: Porto proper, stacked from the Ribeira's arcades up to the granite needle of the Clérigos Tower. To the south: Vila Nova de Gaia, where the port wine sleeps in long, low lodges. The Atlantic waits a forty-minute riverside walk to the west, at Foz, where the city ends in lighthouses and salt spray.

THE LIE OF THE LAND



The Douro at a glance — six bridges stitch Porto to Gaia, and the river runs west until it hits the Atlantic at Foz.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

Two days is enough, but only just. Porto is small on the map and enormous underfoot — allow twice the time the map app suggests and you will still arrive late, and happier.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

Six districts, six temperaments. Take them one or two per half-day, always heading downhill, and let the funiculars undo your worst decisions.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

RIBEIRA

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

The postcard. Arcaded quays, laundry strung over the river, rabelo boats posing for photographs. Come at eight in the morning, before the tour groups, when the fish restaurants are still hosing their doorsteps.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

BAIXA

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The working heart around the Avenida dos Aliados — beaux-arts banks, tiled façades and the Bolhão market's shouting fishmongers. The best people-watching per square metre in the country.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

CEDOFEITA

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

The gallery mile. Rua de Miguel Bombarda flips its exhibitions on synchronised Saturday openings; between the galleries come record shops, a brutalist church and vegetarian lunch counters.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

FOZ DO DOURO

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

Where the river gives up. A belle-époque promenade, pine-shaded gardens and the city's best sunset bench, just beside the Felgueiras lighthouse. Take the vintage tram out; walk back along the water.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

BONFIM

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

The neighbourhood the guidebooks reach last: tascas with handwritten menus, azulejo façades going gently to seed, coffee roasters in former garages. Go now, before the postcards find it.

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

VILA NOVA DE GAIA

SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS, SIX MOODS

Technically another city, spiritually the cellar downstairs. Port lodges by the dozen, a cable car for the lazy, and the single best view of Porto — which is, of course, not in Porto.

THE CITY'S BEST BALCONIES

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Every terrace in Porto is aimed at the river — six miradouros, free and unticketed and open until the light gives out, and worth the climb between the neighbourhoods. Chase them anti-clockwise as the sun swings west.

THE CITY'S BEST BALCONIES

1	Jardim do Morro	the whole river bend, a patch of grass, and the sunset crowd

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6	Serra do Pilar	the monastery terrace, and the one definitive picture of the city

EAT & DRINK

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The rule of thumb: granite walls, paper tablecloth, a menu shorter than this paragraph — sit down. Porto eats generously and without ceremony, and the bill will embarrass you in the best possible way. Book the serious rooms a week ahead; walk into everything else and trust the counter.

EIGHT TABLES WORTH BOOKING

EAT & DRINK

1 Casa Guedes

The roast-pork sandwich raised to civic monument. Take the Serra-cheese version and a glass of vinho verde.

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5 Conga — Bifanas since 1976 — pork, chilli oil, no apologies. Stand at the counter like everyone else does.

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1 Café Santiago

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Out along the coast in Matosinhos, for turbot grilled over coals and a seafood rice that feeds a table.

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2 O Gaveto — Out along the coast in Matosinhos, for turbot grilled over coals and a seafood rice that feeds a table.

3 Época — The new guard: market cooking, natural wine, a room the size of a kitchen. The hardest reservation in town.

EAT & DRINK

> A francesinha is a commitment, not a snack. Schedule nothing ambitious within two hours of finishing one.

EAT & DRINK

SMALL SPENDS, BIG RETURNS

EAT & DRINK

Espresso, standing, any counter ..... **€**

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Pastel de nata at Manteigaria ..... €

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Bifana at Conga ..... €

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Francesinha at Café Santiago ..... €€

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Francesinha at Café Santiago ..... €€

Cellar tour and tasting, Gaia ..... €€€

EAT & DRINK

FILE UNDER

EAT & DRINK

COFFEE

EAT & DRINK

COFFEE

NATURAL WINE

EAT & DRINK



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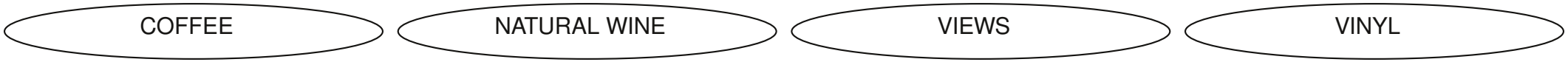

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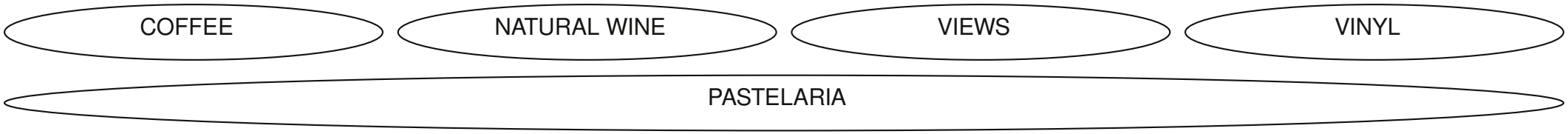

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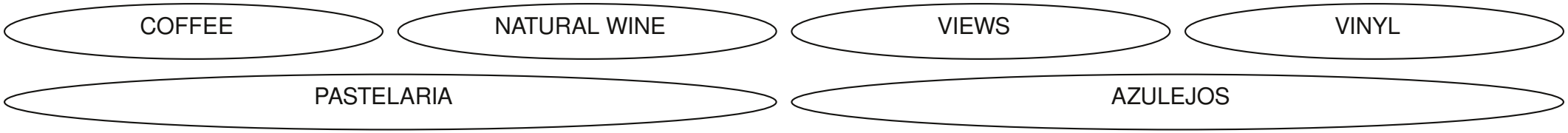

EAT & DRINK

COFFEE

NATURAL WINE

VIEWS

VINYL

PASTELARIA

AZULEJOS

PORT CELLARS

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MIRADOUROS

ONE PERFECT DAY

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Start uphill of breakfast and let the city fall toward the river. The route below is six kilometres, two funiculars shorter if you cheat, and it ends with the Atlantic in your glass. The times are honest but Portuguese: treat them as suggestions with good intentions.

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15:00	São Bento station	Twenty thousand azulejos of battles and harvests in the ticket hall.

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16:30	Ponte Luís I, top deck	Walk the high iron over to Gaia as the light goes long and golden.

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18:00	Serra do Pilar	The monastery terrace with the definitive postcard view. Linger a while.

ONE PERFECT DAY

16:30	Ponte Luís I, top deck	Walk the high iron over to Gaia as the light goes long and golden.
18:00	Serra do Pilar	The monastery terrace with the definitive postcard view. Linger a while.
21:00	Galerias de Paris	One street, thirty bars; the night sorts itself out from here.

ONE PERFECT DAY

> Sunset queue mathematics: the bridge's top deck fills forty minutes before golden hour. The monastery terrace behind it never quite does.

PRACTICALITIES

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Porto is a short flight from anywhere in Europe and a six-euro ride from its own airport: the violet E line runs from Aeroporto to Trindade in about twenty-five minutes.[a] Once you are in, the metro matters mostly for arrivals and football nights — this is a city you cross on foot.

[a] Load the card with a Z4 title for the airport leg; Z2 titles cover everything you will do downtown, including the Gaia side of the river.

PRACTICALITIES

Andante fares — one card, loaded and reloaded at any machine

PRACTICALITIES

Ticket	Zones	Price	Good for
Z2 single	2	€1.40	One hour of metro, bus and tram
Z4 single	4	€2.25	The airport run
24-hour, Z2	2	€5.20	A full day downtown
Andante Tour 1	all	€7.50	Twenty-four unlimited hours
Andante Tour 3	all	€16.00	The whole weekend, everywhere

PRACTICALITIES

Wear shoes you trust on wet granite; the calçada is beautiful and treacherous in exactly equal measure. Museums close on Mondays, the Bolhão sleeps on Sundays, and lunch is sacred from one until three — plan around it, never through it. Tipping is a rounding-up, not a percentage.

PRACTICALITIES

> Buy an Andante card at any metro machine the moment you land — €0.60 for the card itself — and stop thinking about tickets for the rest of the weekend.

PRACTICALITIES

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See you at the counter.

PRACTICALITIES

City guide 08 · Porto — researched on foot, revised over coffee.