

Serene escape in Lisbon

Scenic sights of the nostalgic and romantic Portuguese city left a deep impression on Eitaro Ogawa

Bryna Singh

Who: Mr Eitaro Ogawa, 40, is the chief printer at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. He hails from Osaka, Japan, and is also the project leader of the institute's workshop team which consist of paper makers and printers.

Favourite city: Lisbon, Portugal

Why: I've visited this nostalgic and romantic city only once, in 2000, but it left a deep impression on me and I would leap at the opportunity to go there again.

That was also my first trip overseas and I was visiting my wife (then fiancée) who was living there at the time.

Best places for a meal

I would recommend Casa Do Alentejo (*Rua das Portas de Santo Antao, 58, Lisbon 1150-268, tel: +351-21-340-5140*) for its Carne de Porco a Alentejana, a traditional and popular Portuguese pork dish. A meal here would cost about \$25 a person and that includes a starter, a soup, a main course, coffee and dessert.

The entrance of the restaurant may be small and ordinary but, inside, it's huge. The ceiling is high and the walls are covered with beautiful blue tiles. The atmosphere is majestic.

Eitaro Ogawa's

TRAVEL BLACK BOOK



PHOTO: COURTESY OF EITARO OGAWA

Singapore Tyler Print Institute's Eitaro Ogawa recommends heading to a tiny hilltop village, Monsanto, where the landscape is untouched.

Bonjardim Restaurant (*Travessa de Santo Antao 11, 1150-312 Lisboa, tel: +351-21-342-7424*) is another reasonably priced eatery (about \$20 a person for chicken, chicken soup, rice and beer). The combination of beer and chicken is great.

Must-try dishes

The famous egg tarts at Casa Pasteis De Belem (*Rua de Belem 84, Lisbon 1300-085, tel: +351-21-363-7423*).

In general, try Portuguese dishes such as sardinhas assadas (grilled sardines), caldo verde (vegetable soup usually with sausages), bica (strong espresso in Portugal)

and vinho verde (wine with a greenish tint).

Must-get souvenirs

The patterned aprons that the little old women wear, which look like quilts. They look very homey. My children wear them when they help out in the kitchen.

Best place to people-watch

Augusta Road, where plenty of street art and performances take place.

Must-see places

Take a boat ride from the Lisboa side of the river to the other side, to see the old city of Lisbon from Cacilhas. It's beautiful. Also, go to the wet market as that is the best place to get a local experience.

Place with the best view

Located at the highest point in Lisbon, Sao Jorge Castle, or St George's Castle, (*Rua de Santa Cruz do Castelo, 1100-129 Lisboa, tel: +351-21-880-0620*) overlooks all of Lisbon and the nearby countryside.

It is the city's main tourist spot and offers the best panoramic view of Lisbon.

Most memorable experience

Going to the tiny hilltop village of Monsanto, where the streets are carved from rock and homes are built around gigantic boulders. About 20 families reside there and most of them have probably lived there their entire lives. I found this landscape to be untouched, serene and simple, with much room for conversation, thinking, daydreaming and basking in the sun, against the sound of wind and goats.

To get there, take the express bus from Lisbon to Castelo Branco, then take a local bus to Monsanto.

It costs about \$20 and takes four hours to travel

there (including waiting time for the local bus).

The bus ride to Monsanto is fantastically scenic – plenty of fields and olive trees. It is amazing, very pastoral and quiet with no other cars.

Best day trip

Travel from Lisbon to a town called Sintra, which is just a 45-minute train ride away. It is a world heritage site, home to beautiful gardens and landscapes, and a number of palaces and ruins.

There is plenty to see because the town has historical monuments, each with a distinctive flavour.

You will feel as though you are travelling through an encyclopaedia of European architecture across the centuries because the buildings display everything from Gothic to Renaissance to Byzantine influences.

The facades of the palaces and monasteries reflect the various colonial occupations in the past and it is very interesting to see how these have been preserved.

A piece of advice

Travel with your backpack. It is better than lugging a suitcase around since the streets in Portugal are largely cobblestoned.

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