

## **Lisbon, Portugal – a four-day Familiarisation Trip**

The Treaty of Windsor between Portugal and England is the oldest continuing diplomatic alliance in the world. Established in May 1386 following the wedding between Phillipa of Lancaster (Daughter of 'John of Gaunt' – The 'time-honoured Lancaster' of Shakespeare's Richard II (Act I scene i)) and King John I of Portugal.

Over the ensuing 623 years, the treaty has been invoked several times, more often it would seem to the benefit of the UK rather than Portugal. The Portuguese used the alliance to expel the Spanish in 1640 with assistance from England. The UK again supported the Portuguese during the Iberian Peninsular wars in the early 1800's, which later became the Napoleonic War. However the UK breached the alliance in 1890 issuing an ultimatum to gain control of a portion of Africa that was coveted by the Portuguese Government. During the First World War, Portuguese troops fought on the allied side and in the Second World War, Churchill invoked the treaty to ensure that Portugal would not side with the Axis powers and Portugal remained neutral. However, bases in the Azores that were owned by the Portuguese were made available to the Allies throughout the war. In more recent times, a request from Portugal to the UK for assistance when Portuguese colonies in Goa were under threat from Indian Union forces in 1961, was reported to fall on deaf ears but despite this the Azores bases were again made available to the UK during the Falklands War in 1982.

It was time to re-dress the balance and so a small but determined group of Location Managers were put forward to lead a (possibly very un) 'diplomatic mission' to Lisbon as guests of the Lisbon Tourist Authority and the British-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce. We were all under strict instructions to remain diplomatic but its often 'interesting' when a group of Location Managers are all together for any length of time, we are a solitary lot as a rule, so it remained to be seen whether we could keep the Treaty of Windsor intact.

Wheels up 0600hrs is not the sort of thing one wants to see on a Movement Order, particularly as this means arriving at Heathrow at 0400 to clear through security and into what is known in my family as 'the sunny uplands' of the departure lounge. With neither the weather nor our faces looking particularly sunny we convened at Terminal 2 ready to face the rigors of security check-in very, very early on a Monday morning. It's also a little known fact that none of the shops or restaurants open in the terminal until after 6.00am so we were all feeling hungry, tired and in need of coffee by the time our TAP Portugal flight took off into the early morning sunshine.

Breakfast consisted of watery coffee, even more watery tea and a rather peculiar bun before we arrived at Lisbon's International Airport at around 8.15am.

Clearing through customs we were met by Vitor and Filipa from the Lisbon Tourist Board and Chris, Claudia and Sarah from the British Chamber of Commerce who were to be our collective hosts for the trip.

Boarding a small luxury coach, we were driven the surprisingly short distance to the city. When the airport was first built it was obviously in the countryside but now the surrounding area has been built upon so planes come in low over populated areas while on final approach. It would only take perhaps a small sneeze or accidental nudge of the control column from the Pilot for disaster to strike.

The Romans ruled Lisbon from around 205BC though by then it had already been in existence for over 1000 yrs. It was captured by the Moors in around 800AD and then conquered by the Christians as part of the crusades in 1147AD. Since then it has been the economic centre for Portugal and the de facto Capital though apparently this has never been granted or confirmed officially. In 1755 a terrible earthquake struck the City on All Saints Day (1<sup>st</sup> November). The Lisboners (Lisbonites? Lisbonistas??) think it amusingly ironic that, because the earthquake and subsequent tsunami struck while everyone was in Church, the pious were all killed by falling masonry while the low-lifes and 'women of ill repute' were able to escape. The earthquake is mentioned extensively in Voltaire's *Candide* and is reputed to be partly responsible for the dawning of the Age of Enlightenment in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The city was rebuilt under the direction of the Marquis du Pombal whose statue stands on top of a column of similar height to Nelson's at the roundabout at Praca Marques de Pombal near to our hotel. He decided to clear the areas destroyed by the earthquake and rebuild in a modern European layout. This means that there are several distinctive styles to the city within a very small area – ideal for finding filming locations. Lisbon is also one of the many European cities built on seven hills, some of them pretty steep, it was clear that we were in for some serious walking.

We started at the *Fonte Luminosa* (illuminated fountains). Alas the fountains are only turned on at night and it is my regret that we never saw them in action.

However the area creates a lovely park with the fountains facing west towards the setting sun. We walked down through the *Parque da Fonte Luminosa* towards the *Sao Jorge* castle to admire the views over the red-tiled roofs of the older part of the city. From the ramparts of the castle it is possible to see how the city is laid out and to look across to some of the other landmarks that we were to see later in the day.

Heading south we headed down the stepped streets that lead from the castle down through the *Alfama* Jewish quarter, one of the oldest areas in the city and incidentally another area spared by the earthquake. The streets and alleys are narrow and double back and forth making navigation for the tourist a rather hit and miss affair. Here and there the roads are wide enough for cars but for the most part access is only on foot or using the two-wheeled Segway personal transport system, which can be hired as a means of getting around. Some of the streets would be a good double for the streets that run off the rear of Mont Martre, in Paris though without the number of tourists. Chris-crossing overhead were the cables for the city's famous trams, both modern and period, which travel up and down the narrow roads and compete with the other traffic, buzzing their horns at any badly parked cars. There were streamers of tinsel being strung from wires down the staircases throughout the *Alfama* quarter, apparently as decoration for the forthcoming festival of Saint Anthony of Lisbon, which goes on for five days in early June.

We stopped at the Sao Domingo Church where some of our party sampled the *Ginjinha*, a traditional cherry brandy from a famous nearby bar.

Finally we arrived at the magnificent 19<sup>th</sup> Century Opera House, *Teatro de Sao Carlos* and admired the auditorium with its five tiers of boxes, each with about 6 chairs, arranged in a horseshoe shape around the stalls seating.

Making our way to the President's Box (a photo opportunity if ever there was one) we remarked on how low the ceilings and door openings were, barely 2m high. Clearly the

19<sup>th</sup> Century Lisboners were considerably shorter than the present day. Then we saw the ballroom on the second floor, which was in use as a rehearsal room for the opera orchestra and the balcony overlooking the square outside the Opera House.

After a welcome lunch and a chance to catch our breath at the Solar do Duque restaurant we set off down the *Escadinhas do Duque* or Duke's Staircase towards the gardens at *Sao Pedro de Alcantara* and different views over the city, back towards the castle Sao Jorge on the opposite hill. Here we also saw the vertical lift, the *Elevador Santa Justa*, which allows pedestrians to travel the 45 metres between *Biarro Alto* and *Baixa* and the nearby ruined Carmo Convent church left as a memorial to the earthquake and now used as an archaeological museum. The vertical *Elevador* was built by a Portuguese engineer, Raul Mesnier de Ponsard, a pupil of Gustave Eiffel at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and provides a convenient means of travel mainly used by tourists (The Lisboners tend to walk!). Then we arrived at one of the City's three funicular tramways at *Elevador Gloria* and rode up the 1:2 slope towards the Botanical Gardens.

The gardens have a slightly scruffy overgrown feel to them. The trees are huge with great roots hanging down similar to the trees at Angkor Wat in Thailand so loved by the makers of Lara Croft films. As the gardens are planted on quite a steep slope it is possible to get a number of different angles and positions within the gardens.

Regaining our mini-coach we were driven to the Lisbon Ritz Hotel with its stunning 1950's interiors. Despite an expensive re-fit the hotel has maintained the original designs right down to the original architect's designs for the carpets, which have to be especially woven for the hotel. The public areas are spacious and obviously of high quality, and the hotel is large enough to enable areas to be blocked off for filming or events without disturbing other guests. On the lower floor is the separate reception area for the ballroom. Here it would be possible to build a reception desk and play any hotel arrival scenes well away from the main guest areas.

We were taken up to the roof to see the new gym area and outdoor running track which runs round part of the roof. The views from the gym, out across the city were breathtaking and would give a completely different look to a gym scene or photoshoot. The stylish RITZ sign is also in view from the roof.

Returning to the lower floors we inspected the main suite with a hotel 'rack rate' of €5,500/night and then to the spa and beautiful indoor swimming pool.

Finally we stopped at another 50's iconic building, the cinema Sao Jorge with its large auditorium and period interior and exteriors overlooking the *Avenida da Liberdade* or Liberation Avenue, one of the main thoroughfares that passes across the city.

Everywhere we went we saw examples of the Portuguese Cockerel, which seems to be an almost compulsory motif in souvenir and tourist shops. The cockerel comes from the city of Barcelos in northern Portugal where the inhabitants were alarmed at a rise in crime. One day a Galician pilgrim, passing through on the way to Santiago do Compostela, became the chief suspect. Sentenced to hang for the theft of some silverware, he asked to speak to the Judge who was eating a feast with his friends. Everyone laughed when the Galician, appealing to the Virgin Mary and to Saint James, claimed that the roast cockerel they were eating would stand up and crow as he was hanged as proof of his innocence, but afterwards none of them felt like eating the bird and sure enough, just as the man was to be hanged the roast cockerel stood up and

crowded. The judge, realising he had made a mistake, ran to the gallows and ordered the Galacian to be released and sent on his way in peace. The Galacian later returned and built a monument in honour of the Virgin Mary and Saint James and the Cockerel has now become a Portuguese' symbol of luck and their passion for life.

After a quick beer at the cinema, we drove to our hotel to check-in and change before dinner that evening in the Alfama quarter at the Santo Antonio de Alfama as guests of Marilyn Alexander, Managing Director of The Artists Group ([www.artists-group.com](http://www.artists-group.com)). During dinner we were able to discuss with Marilyn and her colleagues the locations and areas that we had seen and to hear some first-hand experience of filming in Portugal. Despite the early start, we were late back to our hotel at around midnight (or in one case nearer 1.30am) to rest before starting again at 8.30 the following morning. It was going to be a punishing four days!

#### DAY 2:

Tuesday was going to be spent away from the city, visiting the beach resort of *Cascais* but on the way we stopped first at the *Ribeira* covered market where Mick was able to stock up on local fruits and some salami which very much became a feature of our journey until we discovered the cool box on the coach (actually that's a little unfair – the salami and Loquats were delicious). The market is a terrific location with the colourful fruit and vegetable stalls in the centre and booths selling meat fish surrounding the outside. Upstairs is a restaurant and an open area, which could be used for more stalls at busy times, the run up to Christmas for instance. At the time of our visit the area was set up for an event with a portable stage and sound system at one end.

We made a stop at the quayside, underneath the bridge of the 25<sup>th</sup> April. Originally built by the dictator Salazar in the 1960's it was renamed to commemorate the revolution in 1974 when the Army Captains rose up in revolt against the dictatorship and their military superiors. Known as the 'Carnation Revolution' because a child reputedly placed a carnation in the barrel of one of the guns, the revolt was largely peaceful with no shots being fired by the revolutionary army. We also inspected the rather beautiful ferry terminal building with its 50's period interiors.

Back on the coach we headed to Lisbon's monorail near Oeiras for some photos before finally heading out of town towards Cascais Marina. The monorail is a relatively new addition to Lisbon's transport system with the first 'cars' running in 2004. Each car takes 71 standing and 8 seated passengers and is entirely automatic. The 'dwell time' at each stop is only 30 seconds so it must be a bit of a crush during the rush hour to get everyone off and on.

Now we were on our way to the beach resort at *Cascais*, which sits on the coast to the west of Lisbon. Originally a small fishing village, Cascais has grown to become an elegant resort. During the 30's it attracted quite a following amongst artists, who came to enjoy the light and the dramatic coastline. It was also here that the beach scenes at the beginning of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* were filmed, where 007 (George Lazenby) saved the Contessa Teresa di Vincenzo (Diana Rigg) from drowning.

Despite its celebrity, Cascais maintains its fishing roots. The daily catch is still auctioned on the quayside with the boats bobbing in the water alongside. Portuguese legend has it that it was a Cascais fisherman, one Afonso Sanches, who first discovered America some

ten years before Columbus. We saw the beautiful Casa Santa Maria, a former convent and now a museum built right on the coast beside the mouth of a river and next to a lighthouse, now a hotel.

Re-boarding our coach, we headed towards the *Cabo de Roca* and Europe's most westerly point. On the way we passed the beautiful but treacherous beach and dunes at *Praia do Guincho* (Screech Beach!). Here surfers enjoy the huge Atlantic rollers when the wind is right, but there are apparently vicious rip-tides to catch the unwary and drag them onto the rocks.

After a photo opportunity at the monument that marks the westerly point we made our way to the Palácio de Seteais – now a beautiful boutique hotel owned by the Tivoli Group. The palace was originally built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and has been extensively refurbished recently. We were treated to a delightful lunch in the hotel's dining room before being shown some of the bedrooms and the gardens.

Following lunch we went to the nearby Regaleira Palace, an extraordinary Gothic Mansion and gardens covered in Masonic symbols and designs. This was the most wonderful place although we did not have time to do it justice. We did get to see the main parts of the garden including the 'Well of Initiation' where one descends some 27 metres into the ground via a spiral stairway which passes through the 9 stages of the Masonic ritual before being 're-born' through subterranean tunnels and over (via stepping stones) a small lake. Judging by the leaflet that I picked up on the way out, there was plenty more to see in the house and gardens and many areas that could be used for film locations, game shows or simply Gardeners World.

As ever time was now against us and we still had plenty to see. Next was the Palace and Monastery at Mafra with its 230 metre long corridors and beautiful library. It's difficult to describe the colossal size of the place, which was built in 1717 to celebrate the birth of a daughter to the King. He wanted a palace to compete with the great buildings in Europe and at one time had more than 45,000 workers building it overseen by 7,000 soldiers. Despite this it seemed that the palace would never be finished and it nearly bankrupted Portugal. They ended up creating 5,200 doorways; 2,500 windows; 880 halls and rooms; 154 staircases; 29 courtyards and two bell towers boasting the world's largest collection of bells (57 in each tower) that can be heard over 24km away when they are played on Sundays. Clearly we weren't going to get round the whole palace! We were taken literally at the gallop through the main corridors and central basilica to the library, reputed to be one of the finest in Europe Decorated with precious marbles and exotic woods it contains some 35,000 volumes including early versions of the bible and the earliest known version of Homer in Greek. Making our way back to the entrance at a slightly more sedate pace, we saw chandeliers made from antlers and furnishings from animal skins with the backs and seat-frames of the chairs from more antlers. The scale of the place would make this a terrific location. It reminded me of something out of *Amadeus* should anyone be minded to remake this film.

Leaving Mafra we headed to the extraordinary *Quinta de Loidos*. This is an estate, owned by the art connoisseur Joe Berardo, where he is creating a huge Buddhist garden complete with statuary of various sizes and descriptions. The site seemed to affect us in differing ways; some were impressed with the layout while others seemed irritated by its brashness and lack of care in the planning – steps and statues not quite lining up so the

symmetry was destroyed. Incidentally the Quinta de Loidos produces quite a decent white wine in a style similar to the Californian chardonnays with butter and oak highlights and a fresh finish, ideal for a summer party or barbecue.

We made it to our final destination, just as the sun was setting, to the medieval walled town of *Obidos*. Perched on a hill rising out of a plain of arable land, the town is a picturesque gem. Originally it would have been quite a formidable fortified town, which was restored following damage during the 1755 earthquake. It consists of two main streets with the small houses on either side and a castle at the far end. The little houses all seem to be a shop or restaurant of some kind, selling food, drink and souvenirs much as they would have done since medieval times. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Queen Isabel of Aragon remarked on its beauty and the King promptly gave the town to her! It has been offered to brides by their princes ever since. The area below the castle walls have become an event area including a Snow Event for Christmas 2007, organised by the Artists Group who were our hosts at Monday's dinner. After a meal in one of the town's many restaurants we boarded the bus back to Lisbon and a well-earned rest. It had been another marathon day.

#### DAY 3:

A later start – deep joy! 9.00am saw us boarding the bus for a trip to Lisbon's Bullring via a short detour to the Lisbon Aqueduct. Construction started in 1731 with the water being bought by a series of canals for about 58km to the main aqueduct, which crosses the Alcantara valley as it enters the city. Work finally finished in 1748 when the first water crossed the 35 arches, the tallest of which is 65m tall. It is said to be one of the finest examples of Baroque engineering in Portugal. We took several pictures around the base of the towers amongst the roads that cross the valley and from the Monsanto Park, the wooded area covering the valley.

The *Campo Pequeno* Bullring was built in 1890 and originally housed 10,000 spectators. In 2006 an ambitious restoration project was undertaken which included creating a shopping complex and underground carpark under the bullring and adding an innovative closing roof to the central bullring area. The space can now be used all year round for events and concerts, with a special floor covering the traditional sand floor of the ring. The re-vamped space holds over 7,000 spectators and is similar in size to the Royal Albert Hall in London. The management are hopeful of some sort of tie in with the ROH at some point in the future with events touring between the two venues. We saw both the arena area and 'backstage' where the bulls are stabled before the fights.

Then we headed back to the quay area at Belem and to a very modern hotel – The Altis Belem Hotel and Marina. This newly opened boutique hotel has probably the best views of the quay and 25<sup>th</sup> April bridge in Lisbon. Its rooms are themed around a colour and are given individual names. We saw two of the five suites and were intrigued by the clear glass walls that separated the bedroom from the bathroom and shower and in one case, the hot tub situated on the balcony overlooking the bridge. This is a high-design boutique hotel, which would work well for either a film or television drama or photo-shoot. It also will have an interesting rooftop swimming pool and spa area when they are finished in a month or so.



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After lunch we went to the *Sant' Anna* Tile Factory, the oldest surviving handmade tile factory in Portugal. Here they make the wall tiles that we kept seeing all over Portugal using the original methods and in some cases, the original moulds. It was fascinating to see the highly skilled painters working on tile pictures ready to be applied to walls of buildings around the world. The building itself is old having been built in around 1741 though re-built after the earthquake. The old wooden floors and rickety looking tables seemed too delicate to withstand the weight of the clay tiles, pots and vases that are manufactured. Could you use this as a location? I shudder to think what would happen with a full crew (images of bulls and china shops) but with a small number of people and a lot of care it would make an interesting space in which to work.

We finally got to drive over the 25<sup>th</sup> April bridge that we had been staring at for the last three days and travelled out of Lisbon to the *Quinta do Calhariz* palace in the Arrabida region. The villa was built in 1640 and has been in the same family for the last 28 generations. We were met by the present Marquis de Palmela and his son, the Viscount and were shown the house. The old rooms are large with high ceilings so that the summer heat is trapped in the upper part of the room keeping the occupants cool in summer. To the rear of the house was a stone walkway with steps leading down to a knot garden laid out below the house. The old stone steps and the green of the box hedges made for beautiful photographs and would make a great location for a photo-shoot with the vines in the middle distance. The *Quinta do Calhariz* is also where the famous Queijo de Azeitao cheese is manufactured. Made from sheep's milk with the addition of salt and thistle plants, it's a creamy cheese that is very much a speciality of the region.

Again time was getting short as we drove through the *Arrabida* mountain region following the coast with its 20km of sandy beaches stretched out below us. Unfortunately the sun started to go down behind the mountain as we passed along the road so it was difficult to get good photos, however the road had several promising aspects and views and would be worth further consideration, particularly for driving shots or car commercials.

We returned to Lisbon over the extraordinary Vasco Da Gama bridge. At 18km long it's the longest bridge in Europe and stretches right across the mouth of the bay. The bridge is so long that the engineers had to take the curvature of the earth into account when positioning the piers on which the bridge rests to. Due to environmental concerns the bridge also extends across the marshland on the left bank to protect important habitats and the streetlights have been positioned so as not to cast light onto the water below.

Dinner was hosted by another production company, D&D Audiovisuais ([www.ddaudiovisuais.com](http://www.ddaudiovisuais.com)). It was interesting to hear another company with a slightly differing profile talk about their work in Portugal. D&D work in the Portuguese film and television industries and have more than 115 TV and film projects under their belts. Their work has included Game Shows like 'Treasure Hunt' based on the English version hosted by Anneka Rice and a version of Keeping Up Appearances which ran to 26 episodes and was awarded the Golden Globe (Portuguese Bafta) for best drama; to feature films nominated at the Cannes Film Festival and even Portuguese Soap Operas.

#### DAY 4:

A slightly later start gave us time to pack and check out before joining our hosts for the trip to City Hall and a meeting with Irene Barata, Director of the fledgling Lisbon Film Commission (Irene-barata@cm-lisboa.pt). We had a good discussion about setting up a film commission and what services and assistance that it might give to film companies and Location Managers, especially from abroad.

We took the chance to walk around the centre of Lisbon and including the Triumphal Arch and colonnaded walkways that mark one side of Terreiro do paço (Palace Square) built on the site of the Ribeira Palace, which was destroyed in the 1755 earthquake. The area was remodelled by the Marquis de Pombal to create an area for commerce and government buildings.

Back on the coach we went to the *Prazeres Cemetery* where a cholera outbreak in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century filled the cemetery with both rich and poorer victims. There were some huge and ornate mausoleums and statuary. Outside the cemetery is an area with a turning circle for some of the trams. We got some good photos of the older tramcars as they waited to go back down the hill towards the centre of Lisbon.

From the cemetery, we went to the *Conde d'Obidos* Palace on a hill looking down to the quay area. The buildings are now owned by the Red Cross with the original Palace used for conferences and events. It's beautiful library and reception rooms have stunning chandeliers and the now familiar tiles, possibly made in the Sant' Anna tile factory that we saw the previous day.

Now we headed to the modern part of the city. Built on the waterfront it is also called the *Parc das Nações* (Park of Nations) and is the site where the EXPO 98 exhibition and trade show was held in 1998. The site is now a collection of very modern buildings, with offices for modern technology companies and also restaurants and shops along the waterfront. In the lead-up to the opening of the Expo, the Portuguese authorities pre-sold all the buildings thus ensuring that the park area continued as a thriving area and to offset the costs of setting up the exhibition. Here also is the Lisbon Oceanarium, the largest in Europe and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in the world, and the very modern Casino Lisboa. We split up after lunch with some of us going to the Casino and admiring the modern theatre space, rotating bar area and the floors of slot machines and roulette tables.

Finally weariness overtook us and we met in the rotating bar area for drinks before heading for the airport.

And that was the end of the trip.

What had I got out of the four days?

I am now much more familiar with Lisbon and Portugal.

I have a good idea of the type and range of architecture that the city has to offer and some idea of where to look for the views and streets that would make interesting locations for filming. I have also seen some of the countryside surrounding the city and enjoyed the interiors of the Palaces and Villas in the Lisbon area. I feel confident that

filming in Portugal is straightforward and rewarding. It has a warm and stable climate, with sunshine for most of the year but without the heat of Spain or Italy in the summer months. It also benefits from being in the same time-zone as the UK.

Many thanks are due for their hard work in setting up and hosting the trip to:

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And to all those who gave up their time or waited after working hours to show us their Palaces and Villas and allowed us to take photographs.

Our hosts Vitor, Filipa, Claudia, Sarah and Chris  
at Palácio de Seteais



GLM on a very windy Cabo da Roca

