

A long weekend in Lisbon (11-15 October 2025)



Lisbon: view of the Tagus and the 'Praça do Comércio' (on the left) from the 'Castelo de Sao Jorge'

Note: All photos are mine, unless otherwise specified.

Saturday 11 October 2025

My flight from Roissy Charles-de -Gaulle to Lisbon airport was delayed, so I landed at around 19:30. My friend Filo picked me up there and we drove directly to her apartment, which is in a residential area named “Alvalade,” between the airport and the city centre (see Appendix).

During my stay, the weather in Lisbon was almost as warm as during summertime in Nancy. Filo told me later that many apartments in Lisbon (especially in old buildings) do not have central heating...

Sunday 12 October 2025

After a delicious breakfast of Portuguese specialties and exotic fruits, Filo made me discover “Alvalade”: this is a very agreeable area, full of life, mixing quiet residential streets with many restaurants on commercial arteries, a covered market and various quality shops.



We passed by a library (photo above) and a school, and promenaded on the narrow paths at the back of the buildings, leading to small, private gardens, variously tended, but many displaying blooming bushes and fruit trees:



Jacaranda tree, still in bloom



Brugmansia or Angel's Trumpet



Banana tree



Orange tree

We strolled into the Mario Suarez garden¹, where a restaurant, named ‘The Lago’, stands on an island in the middle of this artificial but charming lake (see [Lago Lisboa - Restaurante & Bar & Lounge](#)). We intended to dine there at night but unfortunately there was no table still available.



We headed back to the square where stand the ‘Igreja Sao Joao de Brito’ (church St John of Brito) and a sculpture commemorating the crossing of the South Atlantic (from Lisbon to Rio) in 1922: see more on the subject pp. 30 and 35. We had lunch in a traditional Portuguese restaurant, Tico Tico, where we ate a delicious roasted turbot fish: [Restaurante | Tico Tico e Novo Rio | Lisboa](#)

In the afternoon, we drove to Sintra (previously Cintra), about 30 km northwest from Lisbon (see map below). A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the historic centre of the *Vila de Sintra* is famous for its 19th-century Romanticist architecture, historic estates and villas, gardens, and royal palaces and castles. Sintra's landmarks include the medieval Castle of the Moors, the romanticist National Palace of Pena and Sintra National Palace, built during the Portuguese Renaissance.

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto I (1812), Lord Byron described Cintra as a ‘glorious Eden.’²

*Lo! Cintra's glorious Eden intervenes
In variegated maze of mount and glen.
Ah me! what hand can pencil guide, or pen,
To follow half on which the eye dilates
Through views more dazzling unto mortal ken
Than those whereof such things the bard relates,
Who to the awe-struck world unlocked Elysium's gates?* (Stanza XVIII)

¹ See more on: [Mário Soares Garden - Wikipedia](#)

² See more about Lord Byron, Cintra, and the Peninsula War on my blog: [England & Portugal: a long-standing alliance – The eternal student – anglophile version](#)



Map from Lisbon to Sintra³

We parked the car in the city centre, not far from the remarkable building of the town hall, from where we took a tuk-tuk to reach the entrance of the Pena Palace, standing at the top of a hill.



The main façade of Sintra's town hall

³ Source: [F.A.Q - Visit Sintra](#)



The side of the town hall



Column in front of its entrance



The tuk-tuk and its proud driver

The 25-min drive in the tuk-tuk was a bit of an adventure! But it was worth it: we passed the Castle of the Moors on our way up to the entrance of the Pena Palace. In 1838, King Ferdinand II decided to acquire the old Pena monastery and the surrounding lands, including the nearby Castle of the Moors. He then set out to transform the remains of the monastery into a palace that would serve as a summer residence for the Portuguese royal family. The Romantic style construction took place between 1842 and 1854, mixing medieval and Islamic inspirations. Though King Ferdinand and Queen Maria II commissioned a German architect for the building, they intervened decisively on matters of decoration and symbolism.



Aerial view of the Pena Palace (extracted from [Map of the Park and National Palace of Pena](#))⁴



Above are the photos of two of the stone gates, allowing us to reach the starting point of the visit proper, at the entrance of the house itself. The number of visitors per time slot being limited, Filo had bought our tickets in advance. As we had to wait until our time slot, we promenaded on the rampart walk around the castle, from which we enjoyed breathtaking views of Sintra's surroundings and the Atlantic Ocean.

⁴ You can download a map of the Pena Palace on this webpage: [Pena_EN_Teste](#)



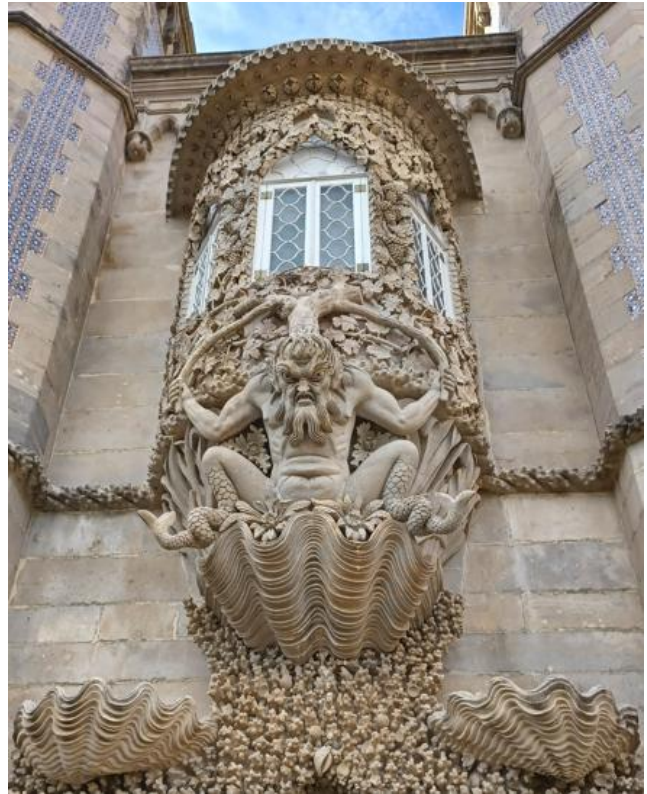
The way up to the castle entrance



View of the Castle of the Moors in the foreground, and the town of Sintra on the right



View of the Atlantic Ocean in the background

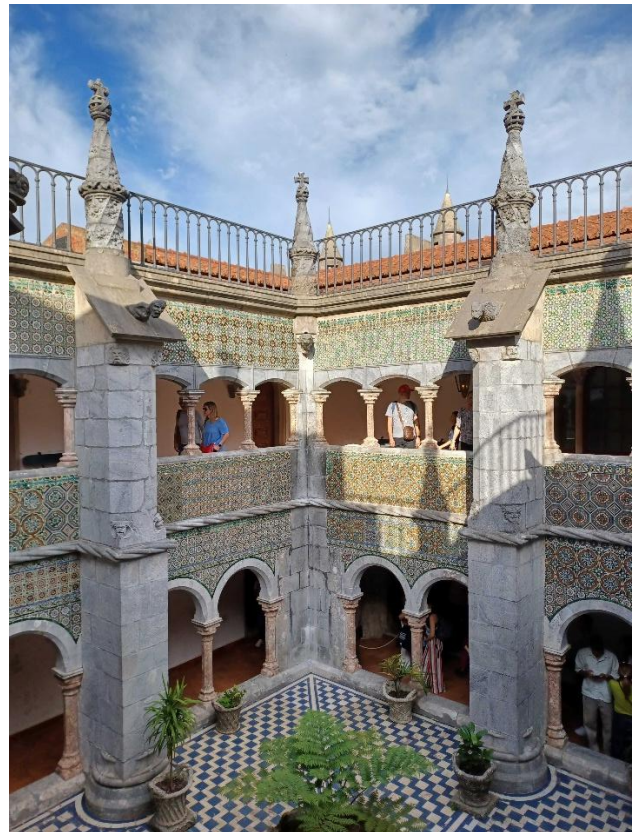


Allegorical gateway of the Creation: half-man, half-fish figure

It was quite difficult to select some photos of the interior of the castle for this photo album, many extravagant or surprising details drawing our attention during this visit: from the dining room entirely lined with tiles...



...to the beautiful Manueline cloister remaining from the original monastery (c. 1520):





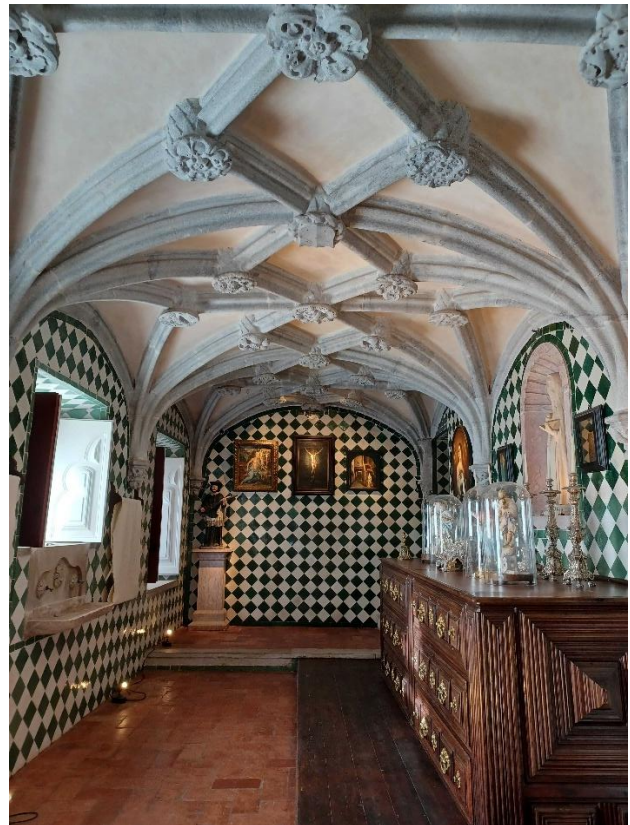
Ferdinand II, the "Artist King" (1819 – 1885)



Silver, enamel and lapis-lazuli centrepiece



The Stag Room



A smaller, intimate chapel

We then took the shuttle bus to go back to the town centre, when we had a look at the National Palace of Sintra, the oldest palace in Portugal, whose silhouette, formed by its two conical chimneys, is one of Sintra's landmarks:



Main façade of the National Palace



Detail of the stone carving of a window



Side view of the National Palace

Visiting the picturesque city centre later this afternoon was very agreeable, although many tourists were still wandering the streets at the end of the afternoon, or browsing through the various souvenir shops. We walked back to the parking place—quite a long walk from the National Palace to the City Hall—but stopped to several interesting viewpoints along the way:



View of the Castle of the Moors on top of the hill, from Sintra's National Palace



View of the City Hall from the National Palace



A pottery shop

Monday 13 October

That day was dedicated to visiting the city centre of Lisbon.



Map of Lisbon's city centre. Source: [Lisbon city centre map - Map of lisbon portugal city centre \(Portugal\)](#)

We arrived in the city centre through the 'Avenida da Liberdade' and parked the car underground, near the 'Praça dos Restauradores.' Lisbon is not called 'the City of Seven Hills' for nothing! We had to climb the steep 'Calçada da Glória' up to the 'Miradouro de Sao Pedro de Alcantara' instead of taking the Glória funicular railway: its service definitively ended at the beginning of September, after a tragic accident in which 16 people were killed.

However, the outlook from the mirador was worth the climbing! The twin towers of the 'Mosteiro de Sao Vicente de Fora' acted like a beacon on the horizon line, and we would have a better view of this monastery later in the day from the 'Castelo de Sao Jorge' (see photos below):



From right to left: the Tagus River, the Castle of St George, the towers of St Vincent and the Miradouro da Graça.



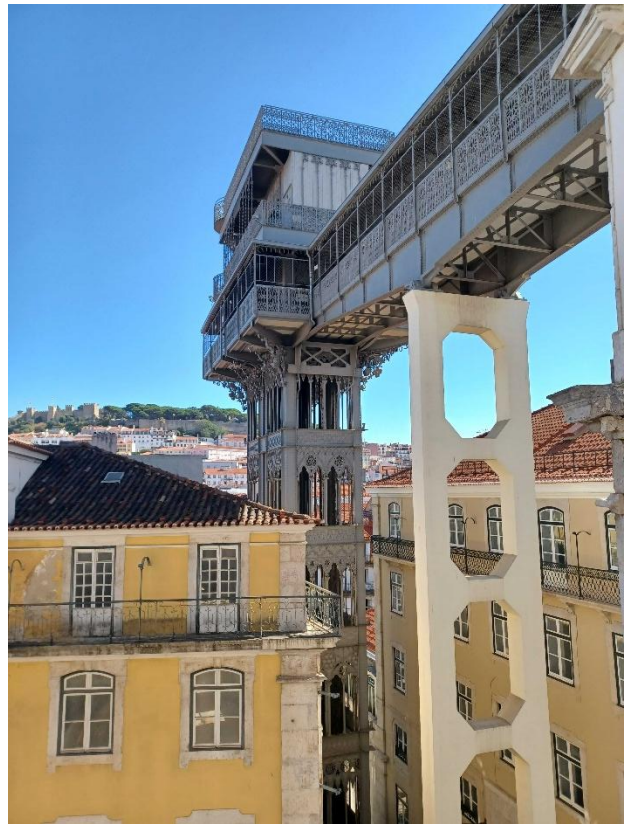
From right to left: the towers of St Vincent, the 'Miradouro da Graça' and the 'Miradouro da Senhora do Monte'



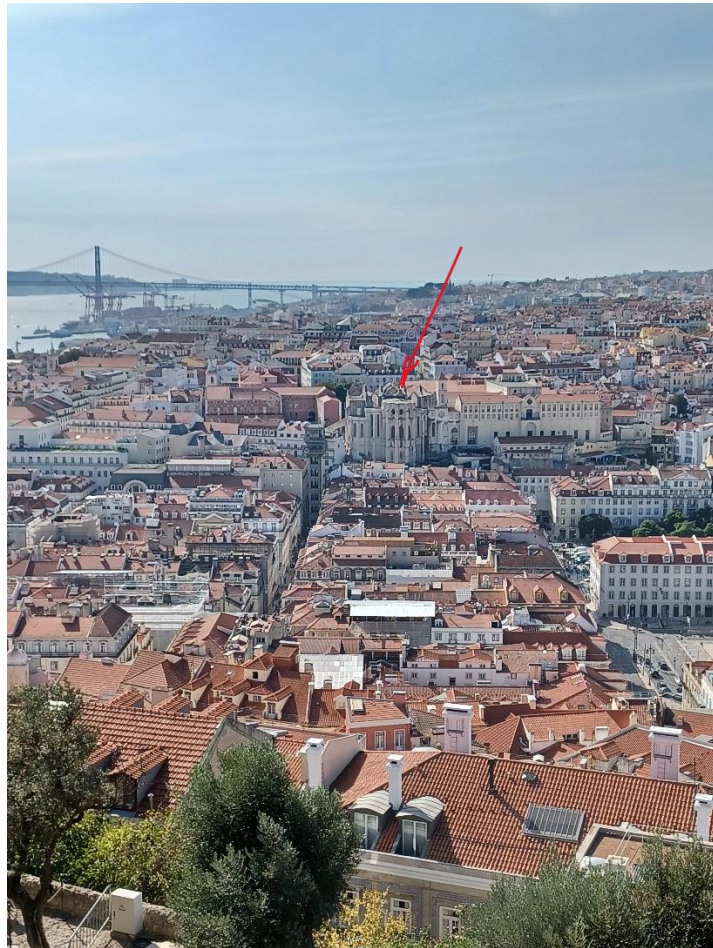
View of the 'Mosteiro de Sao Vicente de Fora' and the Tagus River from the 'Castelo de Sao Jorge' ⁵

⁵ See more on this webpage: <https://mosteirodesaovicentedefora.com/en/inicio-english/>

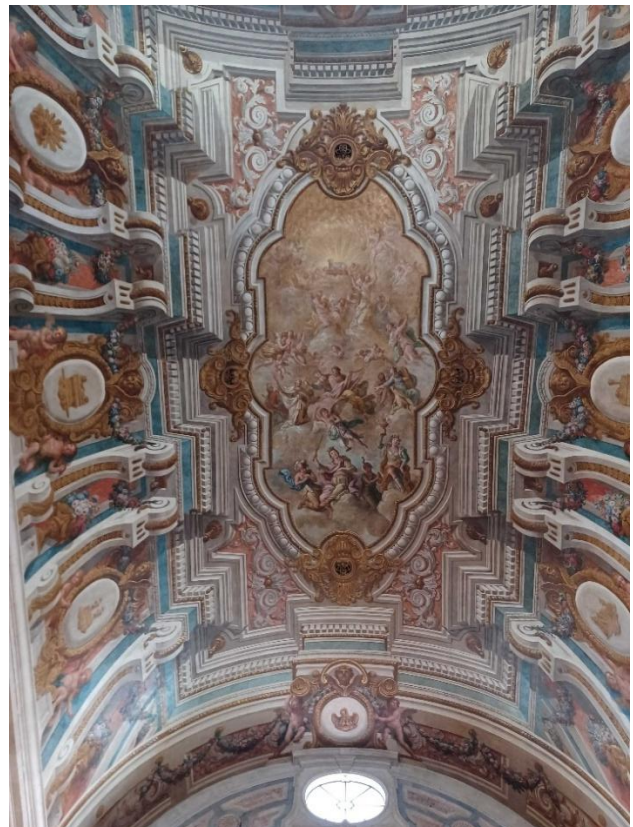
We then walked down the streets towards the remains of the 'Igreja do Carmo' and the 'Elevador de Santa Justa', quite a landmark in Lisbon.



We would also have a global view of the back of the 'Igreja do Carmo' later, from the Castle of St George:



Walking down the streets, we passed by the 'Igreja do Santissimo Sacramento,' recently renovated...



The altar and the vault

... and reached the 'Praça do Comercio', the heart of the area called 'Baixa' (or downtown), opening on the Tagus River. This square is the epitome of the new design of Lisbon, imagined by the Marquis of Pombal after the 1755 earthquake which devastated the city. We had lunch at a traditional restaurant under the arcades, Martinho da Arcada.⁶



After lunch, we walked to the 'Praça da Figueira' and took the bus Nr 737 to the Castle of St George and the area called 'Alfama'. We could also have taken the tramway Nr 28 directly from the Praça do Comercio. Because of the 1755 earthquake, there remain only some ruins from the castle, standing amid beautiful stone pines and jacarandas. The crenelated ramparts are a 20th-century medieval pastiche, but from them we enjoyed breathtaking views of the city.



⁶ See their website: [Martinho da Arcada - Café-Restaurante desde 1782 | Lisboa | Portugal](#)



Statue of *Dom Afonso Henriques* (1109-1185), the first King of Portugal, inaugurated in 1947.



Statue of *Dom Manuel I*, 'O Venturoso' (1469-1521), completed in 1933.⁷



⁷ Read more about both statues on this webpage: [Statuary – Castelo de São Jorge](#)

Then from the Castle we walked to the Museum of Decorative Arts, where we wanted to see some treasures of Portuguese craftsmanship. Amid the rich collections of this museum, my eyes were particularly drawn towards silver and textile artefacts, and beautiful 18th-century pieces of furniture.



Embossed silver plates



Indo-Portuguese art, 17th century



One of the pair of caparisons, richly decorated with silver, in the Cadaval Room

The caparisons were used in court festivities, such as pageants and bullfights, covering the back of the unsaddled horses carried by hand.



Embossed silver plates with aristocratic coats of arms in their centres.



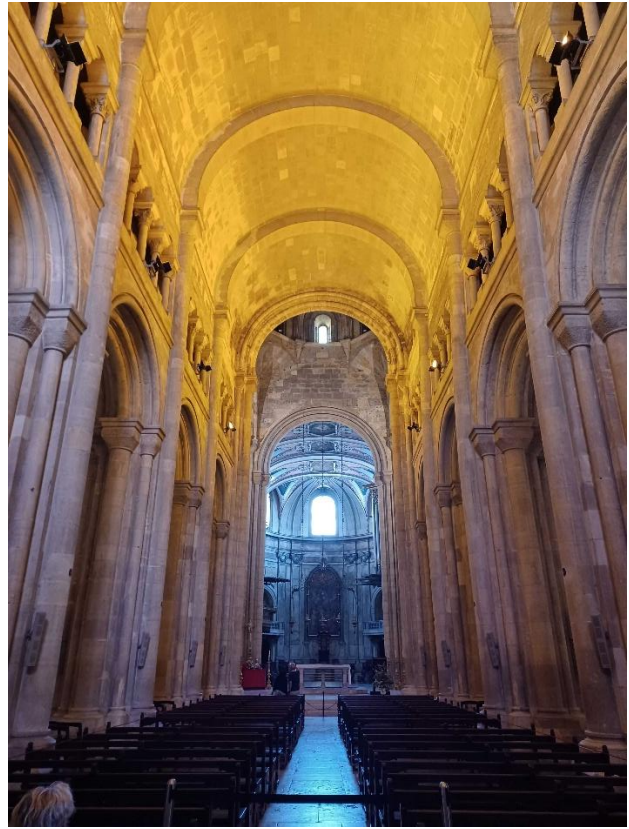
17th-century hanging cloth embroidered in silk on linen, possibly Portuguese of Chinese influence.
See detail below



Views of a stunning 18th-century four lid table, an ingenious and beautiful multi-purpose piece of furniture

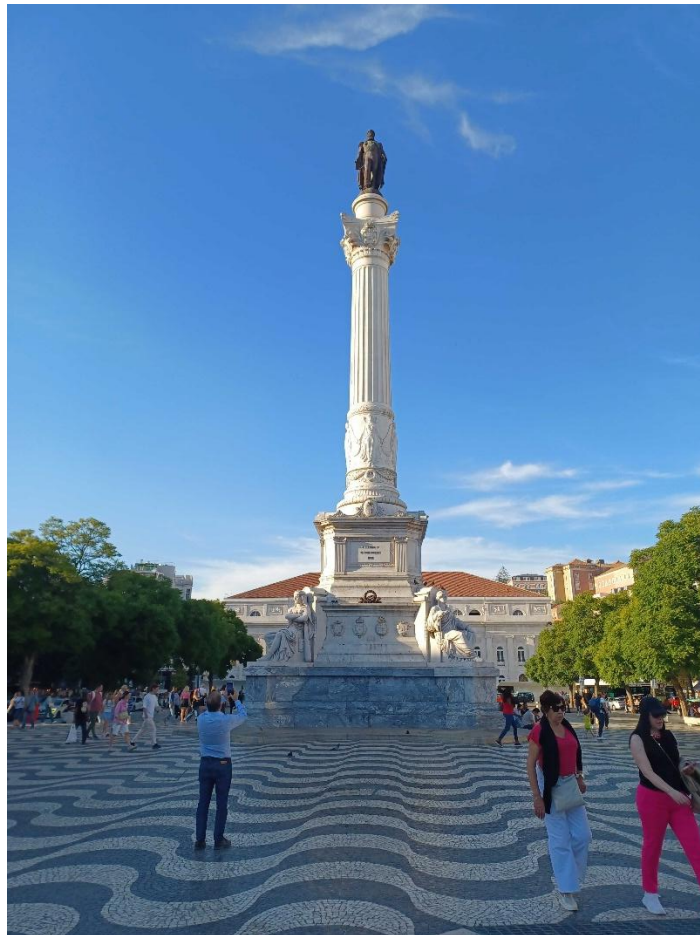
From the Museum we walked to the 12th-century Cathedral of Santa Maria Maior, whose medieval architecture reminded me of that of Coimbra's old Cathedral that I saw last year.⁸

⁸ See more on my blog: [Portugal: North & South \(I\) – The eternal student – anglophile version](#)



On our way back to the car park, we promenaded through the Praça Dom Pedro IV, whose statue dominates the huge square, its two monumental fountains, and the National Theatre at one end:





We then passed by the monumental Central Railway Station, on the 'Praça Dom Joao Da Camara', and the famous Art-Deco building, the 'Teatro Eden':





When driving home on the 'Avenida da Liberdade', we passed by the 'Praça Marques de Pombal', whose prominent statue is one of the main landmarks of Lisbon:



Panoramic photo from the website: [La Praça do Marquês de Pombal, où la ville de Lisbonne circule](#)

Note:

I had stayed in the city centre of Lisbon during a short weekend ten years before, but I only kept a few memories in my mind of some places that I "rediscovered" with more pleasure this day. However, I would recommend visiting a museum where we could not go back for lack of time this day, but which made a strong impression on me ten years before: the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (see their webpage: [Calouste Gulbenkian Museum](#)).

Tuesday 14 October

This day was dedicated to visiting Belem, a district located in western Lisbon, downstream of the Tagus River, famous for its museums and historic monuments.

On our way there, we drove under the 'Aqueduto das Águas Livres', one of the most remarkable examples of 18th-century Portuguese engineering, which remained intact when the 1755 earthquake devastated Lisbon. The main course of the aqueduct covers 18 km, but the whole network of canals reaches nearly 58 km. Read more on: [EPAL - Empresa Portuguesa das Águas Livres, SA](#)



Once arrived in Belem, we parked the car inside the Belém Cultural Centre, a 140,000 m² complex providing venues for conferences, exhibitions and performance arts (such as opera, ballet and concerts), in addition to meeting halls, shops and cafés. Built between 1989 and 1992, it is the largest building with cultural facilities in Portugal. The buildings are covered with the traditional Lioz stone, a type of limestone originating from the Lisbon region, characterized by its ivory colour, which can vary from light grey to rosy.

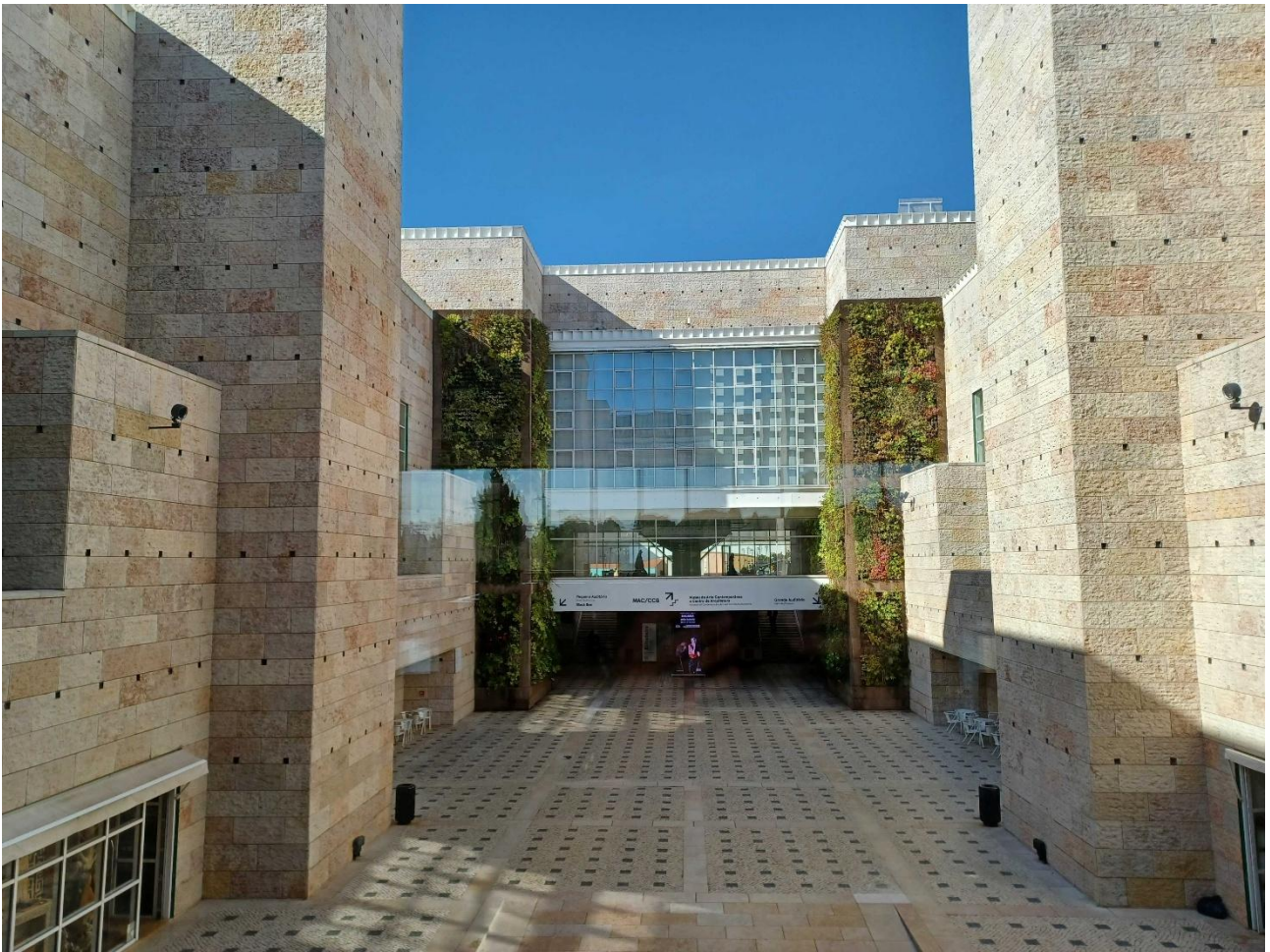


Aerial photo (cropped) by Therese C. (CC BY 2.0 Wikipedia ⁹)



We had lunch on the terrace of the restaurant 'Savage' (indicated with a red arrow on the photo above), from which we enjoyed a beautiful view. Though this restaurant seems quite popular on the social media, we were quite disappointed with the dishes we ordered... so I would not recommend it for its food.

⁹ [View from Padrão dos Descobrimentos - Centro Cultural de Belém \(2\) - Jul 2008 - Belém Cultural Center - Wikipedia](#)



One of the alleys designed by the architects inside the complex.

From the Cultural Centre, we had quite a good view of the Jerónimos Monastery. The building was commissioned by King Manuel I, whose reign lasted between 1495 and 1521. He also ordered the construction of the Tower of Belém (see p. 31) to protect not only the port of Lisbon, the Tagus estuary, but also the Jerónimos Monastery, then under construction.¹⁰

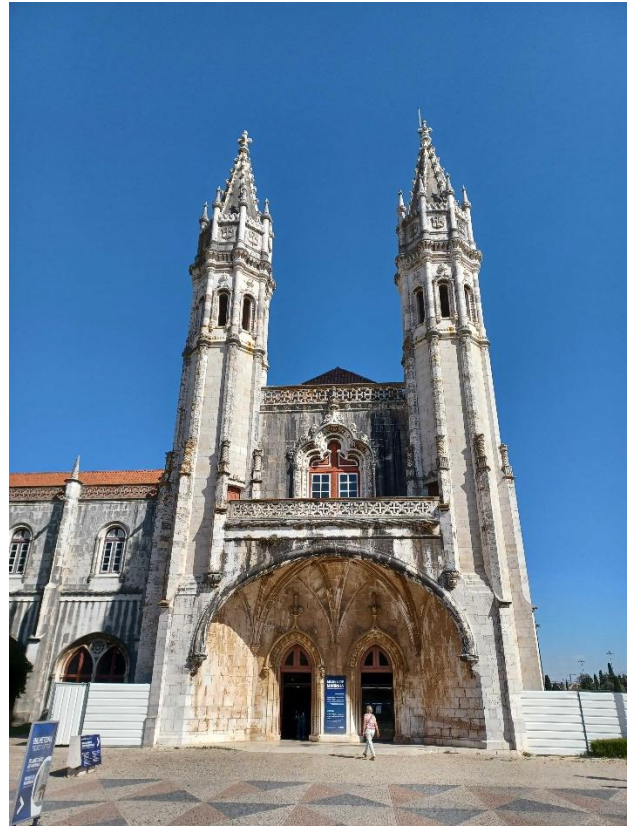


On the left-hand side of the building is the entrance of the Navy Museum, that we visited later in the afternoon.

¹⁰ See more on: [Jerónimos Monastery](#)



Main gate of the Jeronimos Monastery



Entrance of the Navy Museum

We did not visit the interior of the building and preferred to enjoy this sunny and warm weather walking on the promenade along the Tagus River, from the 'Padrao dos Descobrimentos' to the 'Torre de Belem'.



Monument of the Discoveries, western profile

The Monument of the Discoveries was inaugurated in 1960 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), represented at the head of the group sculpture, a ship in his right hand. Located along the river where ships departed to explore and trade with India and the Orient, the monument celebrates the Portuguese Age of Discovery (or "Age of Exploration") during the 15th and 16th centuries (see pp. 31-32).



Detail of the eastern profile of the monument

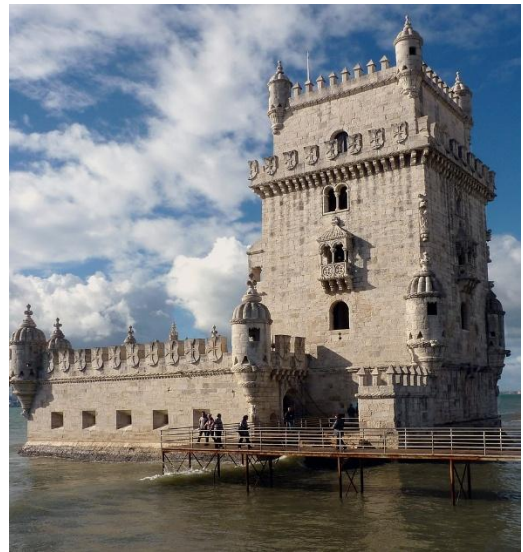
On our way to the Tower, we saw the Monument to the First Aerial Crossing of the South Atlantic, consisting of a stainless-steel replica sculpture of Fairey III biplane, that was used by Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral during their 1922 South Atlantic aerial crossing from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro (see the original p. 35).



We finally reached the Torre de Belem, but unfortunately, it was not open to visitors, and as the scaffolding masked most part of the building, I found another photo of it on the internet:



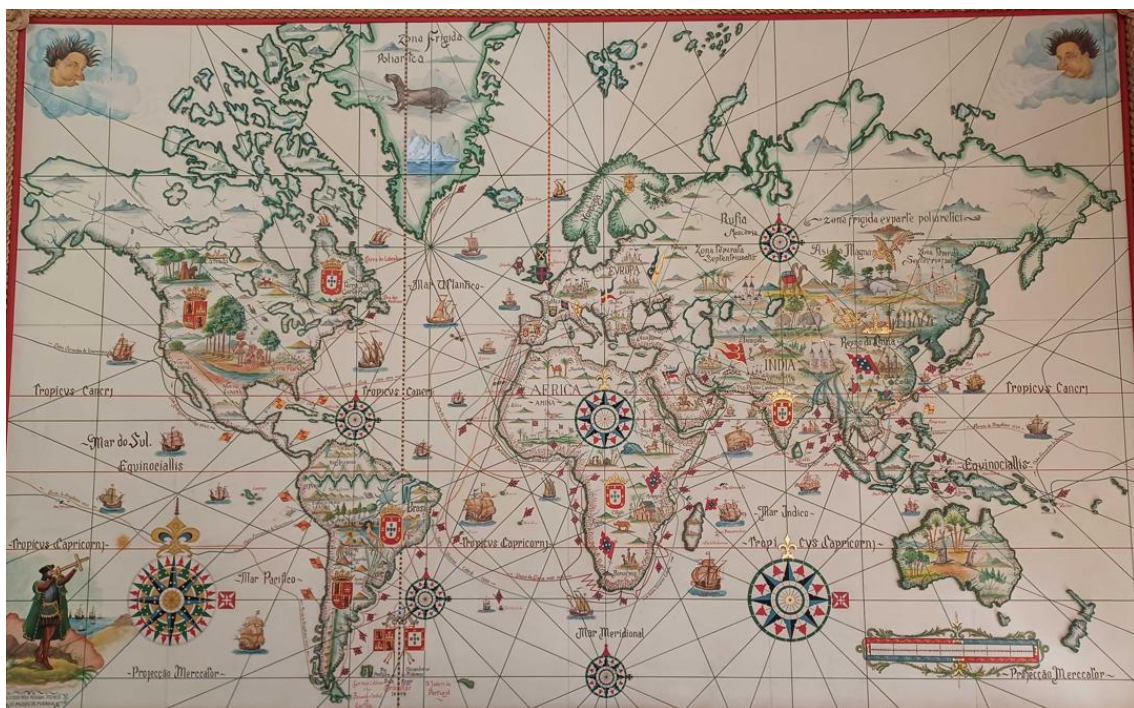
The Belem Tower as it is now...



... and as it was before ¹¹

This tower symbolizes Portugal's maritime and colonial power in early modern Europe. Built from Lioz limestone during the height of the Portuguese Renaissance, its architecture mixes the Portuguese Manueline style with Moorish influences.

We then went back on our steps and visited the Navy Museum, dedicated to all aspects of the history of navigation in Portugal. The exhibitions include historical paintings, archaeological items and many scale models of ships used in Portugal since the 15th century, a collection of navigation instruments and maps, royal barges, and the original Fairey III "Santa Cruz" that crossed the Atlantic in 1922.



Planisphere at the entrance of the Museum, showing the main routes of Portuguese navigators

¹¹ Photo by Patano, Wikipedia: [Santa Maria de Belém sul Tago - panoramio \(cropped\) - Belém, Lisbon - Wikipedia](#)



Scale model of a 15th-century caravel



A poster reminding the visitors of the main steps of the Age of Exploration (or Age of Discovery)

In the museum, frescos and statues celebrate Prince Henry the Navigator and Vasco da Gama (1460-1524), but what I found more touching are the following items, which witnessed the extraordinary adventures and achievements of Portuguese sailors and navigators throughout the centuries:



Brass nautical astrolabe engraved with the date '1605'



Statue of the Archangel St Raphael



Mariner's compass, made in Portugal in 1755

This statue of the Archangel St Raphael is probably the most important material evidence from Vasco da Gama's voyage. It went on board the second ship of the fleet, commanded by his brother, Paulo da Gama. The statue witnessed the arrival of the Portuguese in India and survived the wreck of Paulo da Gama's ship on the homeward voyage. Transferred to Vasco da Gama's ship, it accompanied him on every subsequent voyage.

Though the number of scale models occupying two wings of the museum is very impressive, to me the climax of these exhibitions is in the last hall, which displays real, ancient ships and airplanes.



The Royal Brigantine, last quarter of the 18th century

This vessel was ordered by Queen Maria I for her son, the future King John VI, in 1784. Used by the Royal Family for transportation and welcoming several foreign rulers visiting Portugal, it sailed for the last time in 1957, during the visit of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain.



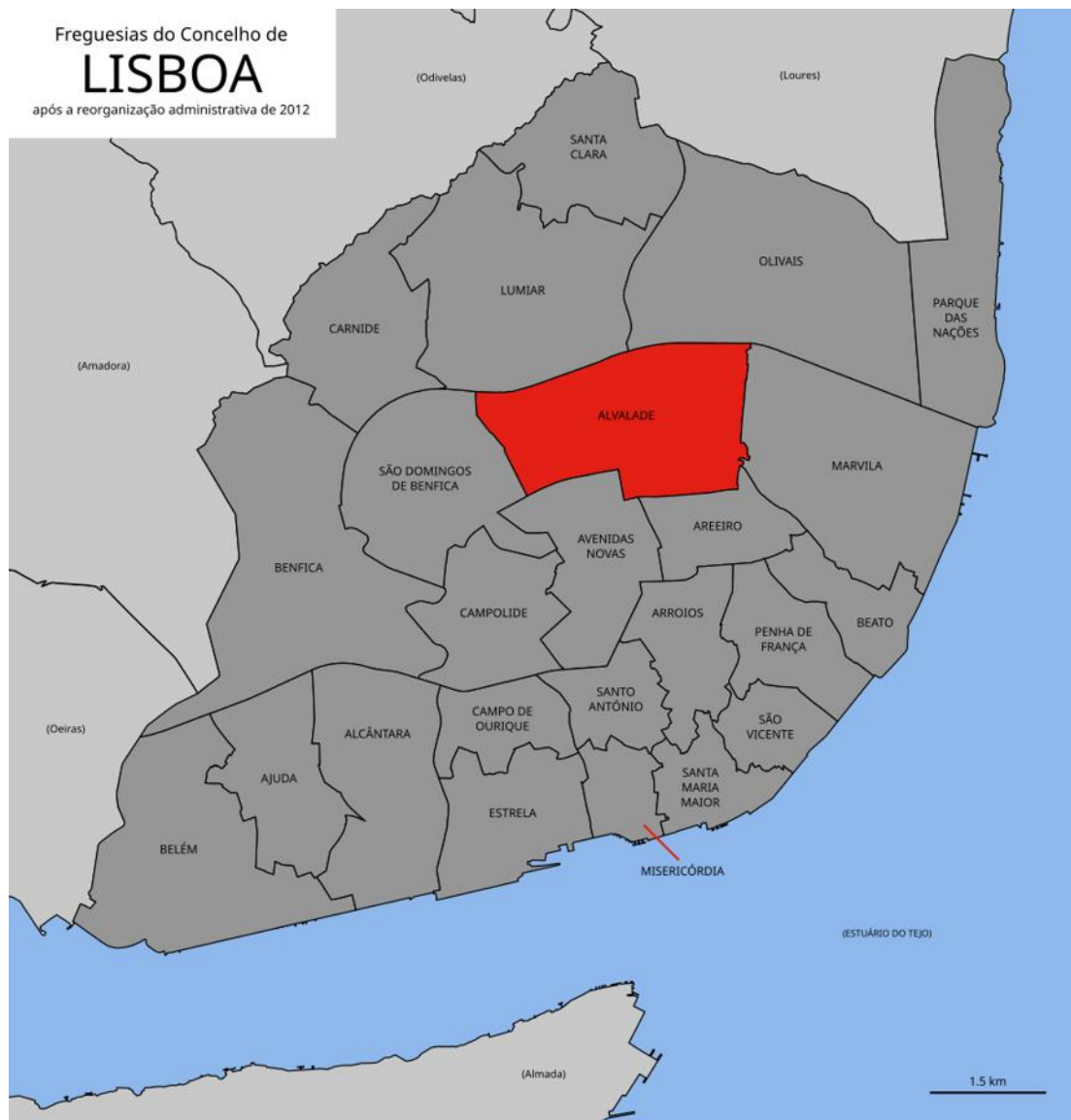
The original of the seaplane Fairey III D, 'Santa Cruz'

On March 30, 1922, Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral initiated the first air crossing of the South Atlantic. Three seaplanes were used. Though the first two were lost, this journey was completed with the arrival in Rio de Janeiro, on June 17, 1922, aboard the third seaplane, "Santa Cruz".

Wednesday 15 October 2025

As I needed to be at Lisbon airport at 11:00, Filo and I had a quiet morning before leaving her apartment. Having in mind the many hours of sitting which were to come, I enjoyed walking with my friend in the sunny streets of Alvalade, a last promenade before the drive to the airport!

APPENDIX



Map of Lisbon's districts ¹²

¹² Source : [Alvalade \(Lisboa\) localização - Alvalade - Wikipedia](#)