

V I S I T
Belém

a beautiful district of Lisbon



BY JO EXPLORES

If you're looking to explore a bit beyond central Lisbon, the district of Belém offers a delightful escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

- **Situated 7 kilometres southwest of the city centre, at the mouth of the River Tagus**
- **Rich in maritime history, with numerous national monuments and museums**
- **Notably, it was from this location that Vasco da Gama embarked on his journey to India in 1497!**
- **The area is adorned with parks, green plazas, and open spaces, providing a refreshing atmosphere**
- **Be sure to indulge in the world-famous custard tarts – pastéis de Belém – which are an absolute must-try during your visit!**

Here are all the things to put on your list when visiting Belém:

1. Belém Tower (Torre de Belém)
2. Jerónimos Monastery (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos)
3. Monument to the Discoveries (Padrão dos Descobrimentos)
4. Eat pastéis de Belém
5. Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT)
6. Ajuda Botanical Garden (Jardim Botânico da Ajuda)
7. Ajuda Palace (Palácio Nacional da Ajuda)
8. Getting to Belém from Central Lisbon

Quick tip: Many attractions are closed on Mondays, and numerous sites offer free entry on the first Sunday of each month. Be sure to verify before your visit and plan accordingly!

1. BELÉM TOWER (TORRE DE BELÉM)



The **most recognised landmark** in this area, it serves as a symbol of Lisbon and the Age of Discovery. Additionally, it holds the designation of a UNESCO World Heritage monument.

Constructed in 1520, it initially functioned as a fortress to protect the entrance of the Tagus River and was later converted into a lighthouse and customs house. Originally positioned in the centre of the estuary, changes in time and tide have altered the river's course, and it now resides near the riverbank.



This stunning example of the Manueline style, which emerged during the reign of King Manuel I, features numerous stonework motifs, elaborate balconies, and a remarkable gargoyle depicting a rhinoceros—marking Europe's first documented evidence of this creature's existence!

There is a limit on the number of visitors allowed inside at any given time, so it's best to arrive early when the tower opens. The tour takes you from the lower battery, which once functioned as a magazine and dungeon, up to a top terrace offering a refreshing view of Belém.

TICKETS: Entrance to the tower costs €6 for adults and €3 for concessions.

You can also purchase a combined ticket for both the Tower and Jerónimos Monastery, allowing you to skip the line at the monastery later. Tickets are available for purchase online through the **tower's website**.



2. JERÓNIMOS MONASTERY (MOSTEIRO DOS JERÓNIMOS)

This magnificent religious structure has a rich history tied to early sailors and explorers. Notably, **Vasco da Gama** spent his final night there before embarking on his journey to India. Construction commenced in 1501 and continued for a century.

The church of the Jerónimos Monastery and its two-story cloister are regarded as the finest representations of **Manueline architecture** in the nation, with their stunning decorative details and symbolic elements. Within the **Church of Santa Maria**, you can also find the resting places of Vasco da Gama and the renowned poet Luis de Camões.



TICKETS: €15 for an adult, kids under 12 free; you can purchase your tickets [here](#).



3. MONUMENT TO THE DISCOVERIES (PADRÃO DOS DESCOBRIMENTOS)

Standing **tall at 52 meters** along the riverbank, this striking monument is impossible to overlook. It was erected to honour the 500th anniversary of Prince Henry the Navigator's death, one of Portugal's most celebrated explorers.

The monument resembles the **prow of a caravel**, a type of small sailing ship, and features sculptures of significant historical figures, including King Manuel I, Luis de Camões, Vasco da Gama, Magellan, and other distinguished Portuguese crusaders, monks, cartographers, and cosmographers. The sole female figure depicted is Queen Felipa of Lancaster, the mother of Henry the Navigator.

For a stunning aerial view of Belém, head to the **observation deck** atop the monument. Here, you can admire a magnificent **marble mosaic** featuring a compass and a world map.

Spanning **50 meters in diameter**, this beautiful piece was a gift from the Republic of South Africa to Portugal.

TICKETS: €10 adult or €5 concession, for online tickets visit [this website](#).





4. EAT PASTÉIS DE BELÉM

You simply cannot visit Belém without indulging in their renowned pastéis de Belém! While you may be familiar with ***pastéis de nata*** – the delightful and traditional Portuguese egg custard tarts available throughout Portugal – the ones from Belém are celebrated as the originals and the finest.

You can only find them there. So, make your way to the **Pastéis de Belém**, the establishment that crafted this delectable dessert in 1837, still preparing them according to the original (secret!) recipe. You have the option to enjoy your treat on-site or stand in line to take home a box.

A single pastel de Belém costs €1.40 and a box of 6 pastéis €8.40 (prices correct as of August 2024).



WHERE TO FIND THEM: Pastéis de Belém, Rua de Belém 84 92, 1300-085 Lisboa.

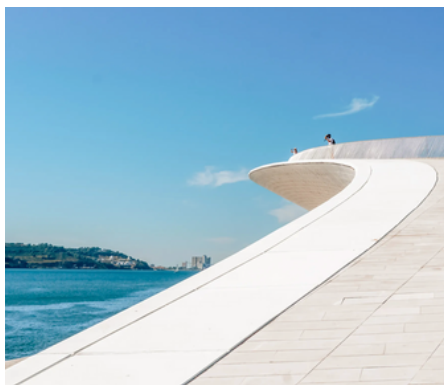
5. MUSEUM OF ART, ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY (MAAT)



As you stroll along the riverside heading back to central Lisbon, you'll have the opportunity to admire this remarkably futuristic building.

The Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) in Lisbon is a modern cultural institution that examines the overlaps between contemporary art, architecture, and technology.

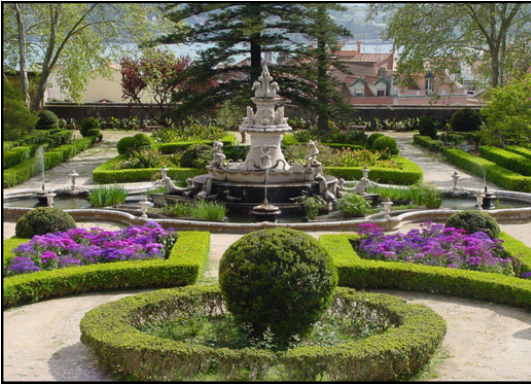
Situated by the Tagus River, MAAT features **exhibitions, installations, and interactive experiences** that push creative boundaries. Designed by Amanda Levete Architects, its striking architecture makes it a landmark, attracting visitors to a space of innovation and critical thought.



You can walk **across the roof (for free)** to enjoy some stunning views of the 25th April Bridge and the river.

TICKETS: The museum and its many exhibitions cost €11, concession €8. It's **free for all visitors on the first Sunday** of every month 10am to 1pm. See the [MAAT's website](#) for updated info.

6. AJUDA BOTANICAL GARDEN (JARDIM BOTÂNICO DA AJUDA)



This botanical garden holds the distinction of being **the oldest in the country**, established in 1768 as part of Ajuda Palace and designed across two levels.

It features a diverse collection of plants from various former Portuguese colonies, alongside some ancient trees. The garden exudes elegance, adorned with statues and a Baroque fountain embellished with serpents, fish, sea horses, and mythical beings.

The grounds follow a magnificent geometric layout, complete with meticulously trimmed hedges, low walls, and decorative fountains. Peacocks roam freely in this serene environment, which has also become a natural habitat for other urban wildlife in Lisbon.

Visitors can enjoy **breathtaking views of Belém**, the Tagus River, and the iconic 25 de Abril Bridge.



GETTING THERE: The garden can be found directly across from Ajuda Palace. Bus 760, which stops at Praça da Figueira in downtown, travels to the palace, taking approximately 30 minutes. Additionally, Tram 18, departing from Cais do Sodré, also has a stop just a short distance away.

TICKETS: €2 (concession €1).

7. AJUDA PALACE (PALÁCIO NACIONAL DA AJUDA)



The Palace of Ajuda was built to replace a temporary palace for King Joseph I of Portugal, who feared stone structures after the 1755 earthquake.

Construction faced many delays due to Portugal's economic and political issues, and it became the official royal residence 150 years later, remaining so until the monarchy's abolition in 1910.

In 1968, it opened as a house-museum and has since become a significant museological institution.



The restored opulent rooms allow visitors to experience the royal family's lavish 19th-century lifestyle.

GETTING THERE: Although the palace is often associated with Belem, it is a considerable distance from other tourist attractions and involves a steep uphill walk. The most convenient way to get there is by tram or bus, both of which stop near Ajuda Palace. (Buses 727, 729, 732 and tram 18).

TICKETS: Adults: €8.00, with concessions available - check the [website](#).

VISITING HOURS: The palace welcomes visitors daily from 10 am to 6 pm, except on Wednesdays.

GETTING TO BELÉM FROM CENTRAL LISBON

Belém is situated 7 kilometers west of the city center, and there are several transportation options to consider:

TRAM:

Tram 15 (or E15) travels from Praça da Figueira, passing through Praça do Comércio and Cais do Sodré, all the way to Belém. It operates every 10-15 minutes, with a journey time of around 25 minutes from Praça da Figueira. The best stop to disembark is at Jerónimos Monastery (Mosteiro dos Jerónimos), allowing you to explore the nearby attractions. However, be cautious of pickpockets, as they frequently target tourists along this route! A ticket costs €3.00 with the Viva Viagem Card or is free with the Lisboa Card.

TRAIN:

You can take the **Lisbon - Cascais train** from Cais do Sodré Station (Linha de Cascáis). The trip lasts only 7 minutes, with trains running every 12-15 minutes. From Belém train station, it's a 10-minute walk to Jerónimos Monastery and about 20 minutes to Belém Tower. Tickets from Cais do Sodré to Belém cost around €1.45.

BUS:

Numerous buses connect Central Lisbon to Belém. A ticket costs €2.00, and travel time varies based on your starting point. For instance, bus line 728 from Praça do Comércio, via Cais do Sodré Station to Belém Station, takes around 22 minutes. Alternatively, line 714 from Rua de São Paulo to Jerónimos Monastery takes about 33 minutes.

HOP-ON HOP-OFF BUS:

You can take the Yellow Bus 'Belém Lisbon' tour departing from Praça Figueira (blue tour). The complete loop lasts approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, and an adult ticket is €22 for 24 hours. For further details, visit the [Yellow Bus website](#).

BICYCLE OR SCOOTER:

Utilizing a shared bike or scooter has become a trendy way to navigate Lisbon for both locals and visitors. Why not make it an active day trip and enjoy a ride? Various bike rental options are available throughout the city. Popular **bike hire** companies include **Gira**, **Jump** (available via the Uber app), and **Lime**. You can also join several bike tours around Lisbon, which typically last about 4 hours. For **scooter** rentals, download apps like **Lime**, **Bungo**, **Hive**, **lomo**, **Tier**, **Voi**, or **Wind** to locate available scooters nearby.