



Obidos: Portugal Perfection

Description

“Portugal has a peaceful feel about it. I sit on the terrace overlooking the vineyard there and I feel cut off from the world. You need that sort of thing.”

Cliff Richard

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One of Europe's most well-preserved walled medieval towns is the remarkable town of Óbidos. The enchanting village is one of Portugal's top destinations. Why buy a postcard when you can visit this postcard-picture-perfect town and make one of your own from the many gorgeous photos you will take?

First impressions that blow you away are always something to cherish. Óbidos was our first stop in Portugal after our flight to Lisbon. The drive was just over an hour on wide, well-marked modern highways. Upon arrival, it was love at first sight.

We were awestruck by this little gem of Óbidos. It has charm, rich history, friendly locals, and beautiful sights. Join us as we take you on a journey through this picturesque wonder.

One of the Seven Wonders of Portugal



Obidos is a lovely town of narrow cobbled stone streets and whitewashed houses, with vibrant bougainvillea draping gothic doorways. Above it is an imposing stone castle. A 39-foot wall that remains intact to this day surrounds the town. The entire town is a National Monument and a UNESCO City of Literature. It is one penned as one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal.

The town was founded originally as a Roman settlement and outpost dating back to Portugal's Roman occupation. Obidos was abandoned around the 5th century after the Romans' fall. In 713, the Moors took over the area and fortified the town. In 1148, it fell to the first King of Portugal, Afonso Henriques. The Moorish influence remains to this day.

Where is Obidos located in Portugal?

You'll find Óbidos in central Portugal in the Oeste Region, around 50 miles northwest of Lisbon. It is on high ground near the Atlantic coast; Óbidos has had strategic importance in the territory. It had already been settled before the Romans arrived in the Iberian Peninsula.

Óbidos makes for an easy day trip. The drive to Óbidos from Lisbon is just over an hour, although that includes a toll road. There is a pay and display car park in front of the entrance gate to Óbidos. It'll cost you just a few euros for a couple of hours.

If you want to visit Óbidos on a day trip from Lisbon, taking a bus is the easiest and cheapest way. The bus takes around 1 hour and 10 minutes from Lisbon.

- [Óbidos Vila Natal](#)

A Town for a Wedding Present



People refer to this town as the Wedding town present. In 1228, King Dinis showed his soon-to-be bride Óbidos, and she fell instantly in love; we can see why. King Dinis then gave the town as his wedding gift to his new Queen. This tradition continued with later Kings until the 19th century. Shortly after gifting it to his new Queen, the King remodeled the castle and the walls. The Queens managed the town over the centuries and took on many construction projects. These included the impressive aqueduct built in the 16th century at the town's entry. An earthquake in 1755 caused significant damage to the castle and other buildings.



Óbidos

When approaching Óbidos, the massive Aqueduct greets you. Built by Queen Catherine of Austria in the 14th century, it is 2 miles long and was created to bring water to the castle from the nearby mountains. It remains incredibly intact and oddly where we parked our car while visiting the town. Yes, this almost 600-year-old structure now sits on the city-paid dirt lot.

Royal patronage over the centuries helped Óbidos retain its charming and unique personality. Considering its popularity, we expected it to be touristy, but it has maintained authenticity and warmth. It is what makes Óbidos special.

Óbidos Castle

The Óbidos Castle rests above the town, watching over its kind and loyal citizens. The castle is a mix of Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque architecture. It is a stone structure in a trapezoidal design and has withstood many battles throughout its years, including Napoleon Bonapart. It alone makes Óbidos worth visiting.



After being abandoned for many years, restoration began in 1948 and returned to its original glory. It is now a luxury hotel that likely would have pleased many previous royal owners.

The castle on the hill is surrounded by a fortified 39-foot high battlement over a mile long and fully encircles the town. These walls are magnificent in their size and power. They are incredibly intact. It is easy to imagine what a foreboding sight it was to oncoming aggressors. Visitors can climb atop the wall and walk around the town. The views are breathtaking.

Visiting the Medieval Town



Park at one of the two lower gravel lots; we parked in the south lot, where you can get a great view of the Aqueduct that spans a couple of miles and stops before the town's main gate. From there, walk along the aqueduct, then cross the street to the welcome center with bathrooms and shops. Check with the helpful staff for suggestions on how to layout your visit.

We suggest starting at the Museum Paroquial de Óbidos before entering the town. It will give some good perspective about what you will see and learn some of its stories. The history of this fantastic town spans over 1000 years.

Entering the Porta de Vila of Óbidos

After a quick stop at the museum, you will reach the city gate, Porta de Vila. Although it doesn't seem impressive since it is not massive or ornate, we assure you this town saves its essence after crossing the threshold. Watch out for the occasional horse-drawn carriage. Yes, horse-drawn carriages are there to add to the mystique.



To the right, after you enter the gate, is the Porta da Vila, a gorgeous archway and balcony covered in classic blue and white Portuguese-painted tiles. It took us back at first by how striking the tiles were. We saw many of these tiles over the next two weeks; this speaks authentic Portugal.

Once past the gate, stick to the left as the road splits to an upper and a lower route. This street is Rua Direita, which is the town's main drag. This street will take you straight to the city's north end, where the castle is located.



Every building is brightly painted white with blue or gold trim. Move along this cobble-stone street and admire all the colorful flowers bursting out of small alley gardens, planters, and balconies. Bright banner flags are strung across the houses to bring more flair to the town. This town is full of treats for all your senses.

Many handicraft shops, cafes, restaurants, and bars are on this bustling street. Obidos is a great place to wander aimlessly because of its peaceful beauty. We also found the locals warm and friendly.

Local Pastries and the famous Ginja de Óbidos



We sure wish we had known more about well-known local specialties and culinary treats before our arrival. With much walking ahead, may we suggest a 1.50 euro expresso to pep yourself up? There were multiple barista locations to choose from. How about grabbing a Pasteis de Nata to enjoy along with that espresso? Pasteis de Nata is a delectable Portuguese custard tart, and Portugal is famous for it. The locals love their pastries, and there are many other confections to discover as you stroll down the main Rua Direta.



Now that you have some food in you, we recommend trying the Ginja de Obidos liqueur, a local

delicacy.

Ginja de Óbidos is the home of this famous liquor. It is a Portuguese sweet cherry liqueur that is delicious. You will come across many places that offer a shot served in a delicate chocolate cup. We don't know what we enjoyed more, the alcohol or eating the cup after. To our surprise, the cost was only 1 euro. We may have enjoyed a few during our stroll. Bottles of Ginja are for sale in various sizes and are very reasonable. You will find Ginja of Óbidos often during your travels.

We became so enamored with Ginja de Óbidos we wrote a blog post on it. [Check it out here.](#)

Onward toward the Castle



Continuing down the main street, two-thirds of the way down, the area opens up to the right. You will find the small Santa Maria square with a 15th-century fountain. The best feature in this square is the lovely Church of Santa Maria. A historical church built in the 16th century has an entrance with Renaissance Pillars, and the church consists of three rooms delineated by several columns. The interior is ornate with beautiful Azulejo tile paintings and astonishing frescoes of Gothic religious art. The Azulejo tile, usually blue, you will come to love and expect everywhere in Portugal.

Take the time to visit the Museum Municipal de Óbidos on one side of the square to see more beautiful artwork and antiquities. There is also a collection of archaeological treasures from the Middle Ages.

The square here is a lovely place to rest your feet, unwind, and take in the idyllic setting. Let your imagination take you back to what it was all those years ago.

The Royal Castle



Rua Direta has led you to the main square and the magnificent castle area. Livraria de Santiago will be right before you, which is something to check out. It is a beautiful old church that is now a bookstore. Make your way to the right; this path will take you up some winding steps and a few terraces. These terraces provide excellent views of the beautiful expansive valleys below.

As you continue, it leads you to the front of Óbidos Castle, now a beautiful luxury hotel. There are some small courtyards you can explore. Though you can't visit without being a guest, there is a way in. A restaurant at the hotel, Pousada de Obidos, has a menu of regional delicacies and a fantastic Portuguese wine collection. Have a delicious meal and get a peek at the castle interior.

The north end of town has a special section all its own. This area is Old Arms Square. It consists of the castle, but here is where so much more happens throughout the year. This is where many festivals take place. The Old Arms Square castle area has places for animals, games, and an outdoor stage/pavilion.

Annual Festivals



In the summer, a weeks-long Óbidos Medieval Market festival transports you back in time. The festival occurs in July and August. It happens over three four-day weekends. It recreates the Middle Ages in this medieval wonder of Óbidos. There are knights, noblemen, minstrels, jugglers, dancers, fortune tellers, and beggars. There are frequent theatre performances and concerts throughout the festival. Stands throughout the grounds offer a vast collection of incredible food, Portuguese artisans, live animals, and medieval weapons and tool displays. There are even a few nights with a traditional medieval supper. Many come in costume; if you choose to do so, you can rent one locally.

Óbidos has a famous annual Chocolate festival in March and April. It is usually only open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The festival is known to be a paradise for chocolate lovers and a joy for the senses. It is full of lavish pastries, chocolate sculptures, and more confectionaries than you can imagine. It draws masters in the field for competition. Of course, you will find extensive entertainment, including a fashion show, with chocolate costumes.

Beer, Literary, and Christmas festivals occur throughout the year. If you can, plan your trip around catching one of these. You won't be disappointed; it will be the icing on the cake on the treat they call Obidos.

Useful Tips for Your Óbidos Visit

1. The best place to take castle pics is behind the castle in the cavalry/stage area in the north area of the town.
2. Keep in mind that Óbidos is a destination for the Portuguese as well. Weekends can get very crowded. If you have flexibility, choose to visit on a weekday.
3. Ginja de Óbidos makes a great gift to bring back to the States. We bought home several bottles along with the little chocolate cups. It was a hit!!!

The Fortified Walls of Óbidos



These immense walls are striking in their entirety. There are locations to walk along the top of the fortified walls. Appreciating the magnificence of this fortified wall stretching over a mile is well worth the hike. It remains in impeccable condition. Your reward is stunning views.

Be warned, there are no handrails, and most areas are 40 feet above the ground. We do not recommend it for people who dislike heights or have young children.



Wandering outside of the walled town

Now that you have seen the most significant sights, walk to the trails outside the city walls. These paths will give a different perspective on the city. Enjoy the lush vegetation along the western border. Make your way back inside and start walking the rest of the streets. This town is relatively small, and it won't take that long. It is quiet and relaxing.

After visiting the whole town, it's time to settle in for authentic Portuguese food in one of the many small and charming restaurants.

Petrarum Domus Restaurant is the one we chose. It looked upper scale with a bit higher prices than we found during much of our Portugal travels but still reasonable. The food was delicious.

What to see and do in Óbidos?

- **Óbidos Castle** Is one of Portugal's well-preserved medieval castles that served as a royal palace. It is now a luxurious hotel. Walk the battlements and ramparts that offer views of the surrounding valley and over the village's lovely bright homes.
- **Church de Santa Maria** Is in the main square of Óbidos. The beautiful Renaissance church has

artwork and tile paintings throughout the structure. This church is historically significant as it is where King Afonso V married his cousin, eight-year-old Isabel, in 1444. Now, before you are too outraged, he was ten years old at the time.

- **Library de Santiago Church:** A church now a bookstore retains some of its original architectural characteristics.
- **Church da Misericordia** Is a church from 1498 and is used to exhibit local art.

There is that Ginja again



- **Ginja de Óbidos** You can't miss out on this delicious cherry liquor, a local delicacy served in chocolate cups. It is made from sour cherries but is smooth and sweet. It's an absolute must! [Click here](#) for our article on it.
- **Rue Direita** The main drag is filled with local handicrafts and souvenirs. The buildings along the street have fascinating architectural and decorative details.
- **The Municipal Museum** Has several art pieces by famous female artist Josefa D'Obidos.
- **Town Walls** These imposing battlements surround the town 39 feet high and remain intact. Find the staircase near Porta da Vila, where you can climb up on the walls and walk all the way around.
- **Church de Sao Pedro** Is a 13th-century church where one of the world's greatest female artists, Josefa D'Óbidos, was entombed.
- **Stay the night in Óbidos Castle** Though we did not do so, we have friends who have, and they loved it. It is magical to wander the streets at night once all the day visitors have left. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the luxury hotel.

Where to stay when in Óbidos

Our travel that day was from Lisbon airport to Porto. When we saw the castle and learned it was a hotel, too, we wished we had made reservations. There are many other accommodations in the area. Lisbon would be a reasonable place to spend the night as well.

It is important to price out properties on various sites. [Expedia](#) is a US-based company, whereas [Booking.com](#) is Europe-based. Not all properties appear on both, so check both. Our personal first choice is Booking.com. If the establishment has a website, check the price there as well.

[**Booking.com**](#)

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Final thoughts



Obidos

We arrived at Óbidos, tired and weary from our flight; we imagined only a quick stop but stayed for hours. Needless to say, it was perfect and set the tone for a fantastic and memorable trip.

Our stop here worked well as it logistically fit in on our path. We were not expecting to be blown away. We wished we could have given it more time and researched it more before arriving. We would suggest no less than two hours for your visit to Óbidos.

It was the best introduction to Portugal we could imagine. The warmth and grace of the Portuguese people made the day even more exceptional. It was the beginning of many beautiful experiences with the lovely citizens of Portugal and their stunning country.

Want to learn more about Portugal? Click [here](#) to go to our Portugal Travel Guide.

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We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

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[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

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