

Episode 79 The Global Travel Planning podcast focuses on tips for first time visitors to Portugal with guest Julie Dawn Fox

Tracy: Thinking about travelling to Portugal. Whether it's Lisbon's lively streets, Porto's riverfront charm or the golden beaches of the Algarve, Portugal has so much to offer first time visitors. In this episode, I'm joined by Portugal expert Julie Frocks to share her insider tips on when to go, how to plan your itinerary and the experiences you simply cannot miss.

intro: Welcome to the Global Travel Planning podcast. Your host is founder of the global travel planning website, Tracy Collins. Each week Tracy is joined by expert guests as she takes you on a journey to destinations around the world. She sharing travel inspiration, itinerary ideas and practical tips to help you plan your next adventure. Join us as we explore everywhere, from bustling cities to remote landscapes. Uncover cultural treasures and discover the best ways to make your travel dreams a reality.

Tracy: Hi and welcome to the Global Travel Planner podcast. Today we're setting our sights on Portugal, A ah, country of dramatic coastlines, rolling vineyards, colourful cities and a relaxed Pacific pace of life that is a way of capturing travellers hearts. By the end of today's episode, you'll know the best times to visit, how to plan your itinerary, the easiest ways to get around, what to eat and drink, and some hidden gems that first time visitors often miss. Now, to help us uncover the best of Portugal, I'm joined by Julie Fox, a British writer and creator of Julie Dawn Fox in Portugal. Julie has lived in Central Portugal since 2007 and brings years of local knowledge and on the ground experience.

Julie Dawn Fox's blog is about helping travellers explore Portugal

So Julie, to kick us off, can you introduce yourself, tell us a little about your website and share what inspired you to begin helping travellers explore Portugal?

Julie: Yes, so thank you, Tracy. my name is Julie, Julie Dawn Fox, full name, but I actually just go by Julie. and I moved to Portugal in 2007. I can't even get my dates right. Yeah, so 2007 and in 2010 I decided I wanted to start practising writing. I wasn't quite sure in what capacity I wanted to write, but then I started a blog and then I decided that my blog needed a focus and so the kind of general wisdom at the time was write about something that you're interested in. And because Portugal was still quite new to me, I love travelling. I was still noticing things that were different for me as a foreigner living in Portugal. And so these were kind of curiosities to me. Some things I didn't like, some things I loved, some things I was just like, oh, that's unusual. And so these were, became the topics of my blog. Julie Dawn Fox in Portugal and yeah over the years obviously I've become more and more used to things in Portugal so the kind of the differences don't strike me necessarily as much and my true passion has always been the travel. So that's how the blog's kind of evolved over ah, the years. It really is very much about helping other people explore Portugal and to get off the beaten track because at the time when I first started this there really wasn't much information about places other than Lisbon and Porto and Sintra perhaps in English or at least what was in English was in this kind of badly translated from flowery Portuguese. So it

was barely intelligible kind of English. So yeah back then it was very important I think to give people that kind of information.

Tracy: Oh, that's perfect.

You've had the website for quite a few years and now you have services

So now obviously you've had the website for quite a few years now and it's developed and grown and now you have services as well. You actually help. As well as having the website you do also help people who are planning to visit Portugal.

Julie: Yeah, yeah. So after a while when I first started writing it was more about this is what I did, my experiences. And then I kind of realised that actually to help other people I needed to kind of speak to them and say well if you want to do this then you need to be looking at this, this, this. And so people started writing in and saying you know, can you help me plan my trip? What should I do here? and so it became too much to sort of, you know, to handle, you know, answer every single email. So I started developing services and yeah so I do one on one travel consultations to help people who are happy to book their own travel but you know they've got gaps in their itinerary. Some of them already have quite a detailed plan, some haven't got a clue and some have just got so much information from friends, families, websites, YouTube videos, God knows what, and they're just overwhelmed. so yeah and then another thing that I do is I work with a local travel agent and so we kind of co create itineraries and then once the client is happy with the plan then the travel agent actually books everything for them and manages the trip and looks after them while they're there. So and then I started doing digital products. so ah, ready made itineraries that people can just purchase and follow. I started doing that a couple of years ago as well.

Tracy: Perfect.

How would you describe Portugal's overall vibe and appeal

So lots of good things on your website, lots of, ways that you can help, people planning a trip. Now, I'm just thinking about listeners who may not know much about Portugal beyond Lisbon and the Algarve, or Porto, but how would you describe the country's kind of overall vibe and appeal?

Julie: Okay, so the overall vibe and appeal is that it's very friendly. What's one thing that people usually remark on is how friendly people are. And, also, we get. Well, this varies from region to region, but sort of as a generalisation, we get a lot of sunshine, especially when you compare it to the uk, for example, where we're both from, so we both know how wet it can be. And, Yes. So, it's also very varied. and I don't think people realise that. So you can get even within a small geographical area. you know, you've got, everything from beach, mountains, rivers, lakes, you know, you've got sort of historical monuments, etc. So, you know, you don't actually have to travel very far within Portugal to see a lot and have a lot of different experiences.

Tracy: Fabulous.

Could you give us a sense of Portugal's geography and regional variety

So in light of that, could you give us a sense of Portugal's geography and regional variety, so that the different landscapes and climates and kind of cultural influences?

Julie: Yeah, sure. So, starting from the north, which, if I'm honest, is probably my favourite region. Well, it's really hard to choose. But anyway, let's just say I love the north of Portugal, possibly because, it gets more rain than, some of the other areas, so consequently it is greener and I think that's what draws me. But also it's very rich in traditions and culture. So there's a part, the sort of north northwest part is known as, the Minho region. And there's loads of really beautiful small towns, villages, small cities. It's on the Camino de Santiago pilgrim trail, which I've walked sort of several different routes from Porto. So, again, it's very dear to my heart because I've spent a lot of time actually exploring it on foot. And then in the east, you've got the, Peneda e Gerês National Park. It's the only national park in the country. and so there's lots of, you know, little villages and beautiful countryside. And then, you've got Porto, which is the major city, and, the Douro Valley, which is the most famous of Portugal's many wine regions. It's certainly not the only wine region in Portugal. And also the coastline, there, it's quite sort of, There's a lot of unspoiled coastline and undeveloped and. Yeah, so then we've got Central Portugal. So that's actually a really big region. Very varied. The tourism board, markets it as a country within a country, which is quite valid, because, yeah, you really have got, you know, you've got UNESCO World Heritage monuments. You've got, the highest mountain in mainland Portugal, and sort of various different mountain ranges. You've got several wine regions, including the Dao and, the Bairrada, which they produce, Espumante, which is like the equivalent of champagne or Prosecco or whatever. And you've got the major city of Coimbra. You've got loads of historical villages, schist villages in the mountains, mediaeval villages near the Spanish border. And, yeah, just amazing, coastline. it's just. Yeah, there's just so much to explore. incredible caves. Yeah, just all sorts. Then you kind of coming down, working north, north to south here. So then you kind of reach the Lisbon area. And to be honest, you could spend two weeks in Lisbon and just sort of like within an hour or an hour and a half of Lisbon again, you've got natural parks, you've got, Sintra, which is kind of full of fairy tale palaces and things like that. You've got amazing beaches, you've got prehistoric, sites. And, Yeah, you've got sort of, stunning, stunning beaches to the south of Lisbon, hiking trails, all sorts. more wine regions as well. At least three wine regions I can think of off the top of my head, including, one that does Moscatel, wine. So, it's kind of fortified, it's a bit different from port wine. Very, very nice. Then you've got the whole swathe of Portugal in between sort of Lisbon and then the Algarve, and that's the Alentejo region. also, this is one of the best wine regions in Portugal. so the Dao, sorry, the Douro and the Alentejo are the kind of most famous and they really are, sort of. They deserve the fame. but you've got kind of rolling plains, cork oak forest, stone pine forests, again, towards the Spanish border. You've got lots of mediaeval villages with the remains of castles and things. you've got the major city of Evora with Roman heritage, prehistoric, monuments. There's a bit of a. It's not Stonehenge, but there's a stone circle, double stone circle. and, So that's Fascinating if you're into archaeology and history. but then you've got a WHO coastline as well, which is absolutely beautiful. it's completely different from say the Algarve region. lots of, lots of little coves, dramatic cliffs, rock formations, fishing villages.

and that is kind of, there's a whole hiking trail called the Rota Vicentina, which starts let's say a couple of hours south of Lisbon in Siena, and then goes all the way, you can go all the way down the coast of Portugal into the Algarve region and then across the bottom to Lagos. so that is, you know, if you wanted to see the countryside, and really literally get off the beaten track, then that would be one way of doing it. okay. But if you're not into hiking, there's still. Am I going on too long?

Tracy: No, no, no, no. You've had, you asked about hiking. I ha. You're like no, I'm into drink, I'm into drinking port though. Just say that.

Julie: Okay, yeah, yeah. Okay.

The Algarve region is one of the most famous parts of Portugal

So, the Algarve region, I mean it's, that's one of the most famous parts of Portugal, especially for Brits. You know, it's sun and sand. So you know you get a lot of package holiday makers coming to the central part of the coastal Algarve. And that is quite a built up area. But you get away from that, to the east or the west you've got smaller towns, especially if you go inland. the coastline is really varied from west to east. So you've got the beautiful postcard beaches around Lagos and in the centre of Portugal. But then you've got more wilder dramatic coastline on the west. and you've got the Rio Formosa Nature Reserve, which, lots of little islands and sandbanks and stuff towards the east. and yeah, just again if you go into the, the hills then you've got a completely different, much more rural, more authentic kind of aspect to the region. And then we've got the islands. So you've got Madeira, which actually has two islands. I haven't been to the second one, but the Madeira Islands, the bigger one. again that's really varied for such a small island. It's volcanic so it's got really dramatic mountains and valleys and lots of, it's very lush, it's subtropical, semi tropical kind of climate. Lots and lots of flowers. It has a flower festival in May and slightly different food, from the mainland, Portugal, different cuisines, Famous drink is poncho, which is quite sort of strong. So just be careful. Even though it's got fruit juice in it, it's quite potent. yeah. What else? As with most of the islands, so you've got the Azores Islands as well, and that's a kind of archipelago of nine islands, with pretty much all of them, I'd say the north tends to be wilder, more lush, more full of vegetation, than the south. South tends to get more sun and kind of general rule of thumb and also, then tends to be the more built areas. But for any of the sort of, whether you go to Madeira or any of the Azores islands, there's less in terms of, you know, must see sites. It's more for nature, natural beauty, outdoor activities, that kind of thing, than, you know, going to see your history, culture, your UNESCO monuments, that kind of thing. There are a couple, but you know, it's. That's not the main draw. so.

Misconceptions people have about Portugal that you'd like to address

Tracy: Yeah, well, so there's a lot to Portugal and I have to say, for the first time ever I went this year, I'd never been to Portugal and I'm not, I'm a bit embarrassed to say, but we only actually managed to get to Lisbon and Porto. But I'm still glad that we actually managed to kind of experience a small little bit of what Portugal has to offer because obviously there's a,

there's a huge amount. So if somebody's arriving for the first time, and obviously I was a first time visitor this year in March when I went. What sort of things should we know about Portugal?

Julie: I'd say that, ah, for, you know, you need to know that it may look like a small country, especially if you're coming from somewhere like the US or from Australia where you've got vast, expanses that even though Portugal looks tiny on a map, it actually takes quite a long time to travel around, no matter which, you know, whether you're driving or using public transport. So for that reason I strongly recommend that you don't try to cover too much ground on one trip. it's something that a lot of people do underestimate also that, you know, there's very often a wonderful lesser known alternative to the main sort of sites. So for example, in Sintra, Pena palace is the colourful palace that appears on all of the postcards, all of the promo and stuff. But it's, to be honest, it's very overcrowded, and I don't recommend it anymore. so, you know, but there's plenty of other alternatives. You can go to Caylounge palace, which is also part of the Sintra Parks and palaces, and there's hardly anyone there and it's stunning. And, you know, you can wander around at will and, you know, see all the amazing tiles and the landscape gardens and stuff. And, yeah, it just got.

Tracy: I wish I'd spoken to you before I went to Portugal in March.

Julie: Did you go to Penny Palace?

Tracy: I did, I did. Not overly impressed, I shall have to tell you. But, yes, I should have spoken to you before I went. are there any common m. Misconceptions you think that people have about Portugal that you'd like to kind of address?

Julie: Yeah, I'd say some people still believe that Portugal is a cheap destination, which is not really true anymore. I mean, you can travel on a budget. That's true. And I do believe that Portugal offers great value for money, but it's not cheap. In fact, I was talking to my physio, the other day and she was like, portuguese people can't afford to travel Portugal. They end up going abroad because, you know, hotel prices really have gone up. I mean, in the time that I've been living here, I've seen the prices go way, way up. so again, everything's relative. So it depends on where you're coming from, how much you're used to paying for things. And for a lot of visitors from countries like, you know, the US or, the UK or whatever, especially eating out. Eating out can still be really affordable. and it is one of the great pleasures of being in Portugal. wine is also very cheap. so, you know, it's not all, like, super expensive, but it's just, you know, it's not a low cost country, not if you want to enjoy, the best it has to offer. So there's that. And then also people think that the only wine region in Portugal is in the Douro Valley, because that's the only one they hear about. And it's just. Well, it's not true. There's 27 wine regions and, you know, all of which obviously have something different to offer. Different terroir and so different grapes and different, flavours. And also that the Algarve is where you go if you want to go to the beach. Well, if you think about Portugal, half of its border is coast, so, you know, pretty much anywhere in the country you've got amazing beaches. So, you can save yourself an awful lot of travel time if you focus on Beaches that are closer to where you actually want to stay.

Is there a best time of year to visit Portugal?

Tracy: And is there a best time of year to visit Portugal? We were there in March actually. and we had a lot of rain. I will say it wasn't too cold, but we did have a lot of rain. But is there a best time of year to visit or, term of year to avoid Portugal?

Julie: Yeah, I mean, obviously with climate change, seasons changing, there's no kind of guarantee anymore of, you know, sort of okay, if you come at this time of year, this is the weather you're likely to get. And there's not really much of a shoulder season these days. And so I would say I would personally avoid July and August and any other time when it's European school holidays or anybody's school holidays, frankly. because, you know, prices go up, it's crowded and it's in my opinion too hot to enjoy sightseeing unless you manage to find an air conditioned, museum or whatever. For the afternoon period, especially, mornings you can just about get away with it, but in the afternoon it's just too hot to be outside quite often. So, yeah, so I would avoid those periods. if you don't mind a bit of rain, then I actually would say come, you know, March or April, October, November. In fact, to be honest, I prefer travelling in the off season. So the whole kind of span from October through to April, for me is the better time. I also, I like hiking. I know you don't, but, so for me, you know, it gets too hot after sort of May, it's just too hot for hiking. but just generally wandering around. I like bumbling around little villages and sort of, you know, getting lost in cities and things as well. And yeah, all of that is just much more enjoyable, not to mention more affordable, when it's not too hot. So.

For first time visitors, deciding where to go is actually quite tricky

Tracy: Now for first time visitors, deciding where to go is actually quite tricky. And I have to say when Doug and I were sitting thinking where should we go? The obvious places just jumped out were kind of Lisbon and Porto. So that's where we chose to go. But where would you kind of recommend as first time visitors that would be a good idea to kind of possibly include in their itinerary.

Julie: Okay, well, I do think, you know, you didn't, you definitely didn't do wrong, by choosing Lisbon and Porto. I mean they are the biggest cities. There's a lot, a lot to see and do. and you know, they, they have their own identity and their own sort of Feel, and they are quite different cities, I'm sure you'll agree. but I'd say that if you could include. And if you were just coming for like seven to 10 days, I wouldn't try to go much beyond either of those cities. I would try and do something in between, rather than kind of extending further north or further south. So what you might want to do is maybe incorporate some stops between Lisbon and, Porto. And because if you wanted another city, for example, then you could stop in Coimbra, which is, a UNESCO World Heritage, university. It was the first capital of Portugal, so there's lots of history there. it's also really pretty. It's on a river and kind of, you know, it's just a nice, Instagrammable place as well. but there's also lots of smaller places. So if you wanted to kind of balance your big cities with smaller, towns, then there are places you can visit that are far less touristy. there's Caldas de Raina, for example, which is, famous for its ceramics. and it doesn't have any major sites. It does have a ceramics museum and a very, very pretty park, and a fruit and flowers market in the main square, every morning. And, it's close to some really lovely beaches. you've got Peniche, which has got amazing rock formations. Obidos, which is quite well known as a mediaeval village. And it's quite convenient if you're

on that route between Lisbon and Porto. And, ah, Alcabasta, a lovely little town, dominated by another UNESCO, World Heritage monastery. This time it's Cistercian. So it's like 13th century. Really beautiful. Absolutely stunning stonework, in there, and a legend around it as well. but the town itself is really, really nice and calm. And apart from the monastery, you know, there's not really, again, no major sites. but it can make a nice base if you want that smaller town feel, because most visitors come in, go to the monastery, go away again. So if you stay overnight and use that as a base to explore that part of central Portugal, then it's really, really nice.

So if somebody has seven to 10 days, what would you recommend?

Tracy: So if somebody has seven to 10 days, what would you recommend? I'm just thinking Doug and I were there. I think we were. We had a week and we spent, I think we were four days in Lisbon and then we went up to Porto for three days. We did have ongoing plans, but we, There was a potential train strike in Spain, so we ended up Flying to Barcelona rather than what we had planned to do. and we, we did that by public transport. So I'm kind of interested. If you did sort of, where would you recommend for seven days? And then also kind of getting around. We, we took the trains. We did use public transport. We found it quite, quite, quite easy to get around that way. But there aren't a lot of trains in Portugal, which Doug was a bit disappointed about. But. Yeah. So what would you say for a, kind of seven day, to get a good feel for what Portugal has to offer?

Julie: Yeah, I'd say for seven days, actually. You probably did. Again, if you like cities, then what you did is ideal. I think you need four days minimum in Lisbon, especially if you're going to do a day trip to Sintra or if you don't, if you don't want, if you want to skip Sintra because you feel it's too busy. Although there are lots of different ways of experiencing Sintra. So, you know, so, yeah, a minimum three days actually in Lisbon and one for a day trip. And then the train, which takes about three hours to get to Porto, and then that gives you two full days in Porto, or less, or one and a half days, depending on your flight times, and then a day trip either to the Douro Valley, for example, which is a very common day trip. Or you could, there's plenty of others, you could take the train to another city, like Guimmarais, beautiful mediaeval, full of wonderful squares and things like that, or Braga or a, smaller town. So there's lots of places you can easily get to by train from Porto. So I think using those two cities as a base is certainly not a bad idea for your first trip. And also if, for example, you. Okay, you can do a lot by public transport on your own, but if you wanted to do a small group tour as a day trip, then being based in those cities is going to give you much more flexibility because if you choose a base outside those cities, then you don't get the small group tour options because there's just not enough people to make it viable for the tour operators. So then you're kind of limited to either having a car, or having a private guide, and driver, which obviously makes things a lot more expensive. So, yeah, if you've got, Sorry, if you've got like a few days, if you've got 10 days, for example, then I would say it may be worth, if you're happy to drive, to actually pick, up a rental car in Lisbon and then spend three days exploring. You're taking your time over, getting to Porto and then drop the car once you arrive in Porto because you really don't want to be driving in either of those cities. so. Yeah, but having a car in the central part will give you a lot more flexibility and enable you to make the most of your time instead of waiting. Waiting for trains and buses and things.

Tracy: yeah. I will say, I think what disappointed Doug with the trains was the fact that we couldn't get very easily from Seville to Lisbon because there's no train line, which we can't believe. There's no train line between those two. So we ended up taking a coach, which actually worked fine. so we did kind of manage to get around all right. And we found that the public transport was really not a problem whatsoever. And we did exactly as you said. We actually took a day tour out to Sintra from. From Lisbon. We didn't. In Porto. We just kind of explored Porto itself. I didn't get a chance, unfortunately. Going to try some of the, the different port, Are the distilleries. Is that what they're called?

Julie: the, port wine houses? Yeah, because it's the cellars. They actually, Yeah, they transport the port from the wineries in the Douro, and they store them, in the cellars in Villanova de Gaia, which is just across the river from Porto.

Tracy: So that's on my list for next time. I tell you, I didn't get a chance to do it.

Most restaurants in Portugal are welcoming of children, even at dinner time

Now, what about, etiquette tips or cultural norms that visitors should be aware of? Because there's always something that catches new people out.

Julie: Absolutely. Yeah. So, when you go to a restaurant and, you've probably experienced this already, you'll notice that the waiter of the service, might bring, dishes of olives, bread, or maybe even, cured meats, maybe an octopus salad or something like that to the table without you asking. A lot of people don't realise that these are not freebies. And so if you don't want to eat them, it's perfectly okay. Just sort of send them back untouched and you won't be charged. But if you want to eat them, just check. I mean, the bread and olives are usually really cheap and, you know, you don't usually need to check the price. But the ones with meat in or octopus or anything like that, they can actually rack up your bill quite quickly. So, if, you know, don't feel uncomfortable Asking the price before you tuck in because at the end of the day you're paying for it. so there's that. And also, well, whether you're travelling with kids or not, you might be surprised to find that the majority of restaurants in Portugal are quite welcoming of children and even at dinner time. So it's really not unusual to see kids in restaurants at night. whereas you might not be used to that in your home country. The same goes for activities at night if there's a concert or something like that. then again, it's not unusual to see quite small children who, you think that's way past their bedtime. Really not, you know, they kind of stay up late. Especially, when they're on holiday. You know, it's not unusual to see kids out at midnight. So yeah, Portugal's a very child friendly country. But also if you are travelling with young children, it's not that easy to find babysitting services. So just take your kids with you.

Tracy: That's a good tip there.

How do I tip when I go into a cafe in Portugal

Now what about. Because we always, I always get asked this about tipping and how to greet people on how to order in cafes. We get asked that about the UK all the time. So what about in Portugal? How do I, what do I do when I go into a cafe and am I expected to tip?

Julie: Okay, so a cafe, I mean, well, if you walk into a shop then it's always nice, especially if it's an independent shop, not one of the sort of chain stores. But anyway, you know, if you see an attendant or a shop assistant or whatever, then it's just polite to kind of, you know, make eye contact and say *bondilla*, which is good morning, or *boatard*, which is good afternoon. And then even if you don't buy anything, if you just have a little browse and you want to walk out again, then again saying *obligada*, which is thank you, or *adeus*, which is goodbye. it's just polite. You know, people appreciate that in a cafe. Most of the time cafes are table serviced. however, some places, especially if you want to eat outside on the terrace, sometimes if it says *M Pre Pagamento*, there'll be a sign, so you need to go in and pay at the bar. and so shops and pastry counters, things like that, look out for a ticket machine, because a lot of places they have a *Senya*, which is a ticket thing. So if you don't know that you could be waiting forever and never get served. But it's actually quite good because I, remember Years and years ago I went to, *Haberdashery* in Coimbra and I wasn't really aware of this senior system. And there's these kind of little, little old ladies and they've got very sharp elbows and they were kind of, you know, and I'm thinking, why am I getting served? And these kind of like, little old ladies come, like, flashing me around. So, yeah, it's if this is *semia*. And also then sometimes in these cafes or even places like this, you get given. You don't pay at the counter. Not always. So sometimes you might be given like a, you know, a blank, a credit card blank one or a slip of paper and you take that to the cashier, usually situated by the door. so, yeah, and tipping. Oh yeah, tipping. Right. So tipping, it's not essential, as in, you know, sort of some countries. it's definitely part of the, eating out situation. in Portugal, people do, waiters do get paid, at least minimum wage. However, tipping is appreciated. Of course it is. no one's going to get offended if you tip. amounts vary. So, you could, in a cafe or something like that or a bar where the value is not particularly high, you might just round up to the next, you know, sort of five or ten euros, depending on how much it is. In a restaurant, I'd say 10% is a kind of a good, average. If it's a little bit less, no one's going to get upset. If it's a little bit more, no one's going to get upset. So, yeah, so if you use 10% ish as your rule of thumb, if you want to pay more, you can. It's up to you.

Tracy: Okay, perfect.

What local dishes and drinks should somebody try when they go to Portugal

that really easily segues into one of my favourite topics to talk about, and that is food. So what? And I did try some very lovely food when I was in Portugal, which I probably cannot name, but I just know it was very tasty. but what local dishes and drinks should somebody try when they go to Portugal?

Julie: Okay. Possibly the most famous and, essential, food to try if you've got a sweet tooth at least is the *pastel de nata*, which is the custard tarts. they are absolutely divine. The pastry case is flaky and crispy and then the custardy inside is quite sort of creamy. if you get a good one, if they're a day old, then the case loses its crisp and the inside can be a bit lumpy. so you need to go Somewhere where they have enough turnover that they, are

constantly churning out sort of, you know, fresh batches. If you get one that's still warm, oh, it's divine. So, the actual recipe, originates from the monastery in Belem, which is in, district of Lisbon. So the Geronimo's Monastery, they patented the recipe. So there's only one cafe, bakery in Belem that's allowed to call these custard tarts the Pastel de Belem. everyone else, and they say they have a secret recipe. Everyone else can only call it a pastel de natter, which means cream, tart. it's pretty much the same thing. I don't really understand what the secret could be. But if you want to do a taste test, you know, then there are plenty of opportunities for you to try and find your best pastel de natter or, pastel de belang. And you can compare and contrast, and make your own judgement. So that's for the sweet tooth. There are lots and lots of other amazing Portuguese cakes. They may not look very much, very kind of exciting, but, you know, there's one, quesada, which, Cajun, means cheese. So it's sort of, it's made from cheese but doesn't taste overly cheesy. In fact, a lot of Portuguese cakes can be quite sugary. So this one I like because it's not too sweet. Other things. So, let's see, I did make a kind of list I was going to, just to remind myself. Oh, yeah. so Serra di Estrela cheese. so the cheese in Portugal usually comes in a round, so you can have it solid cured, you know, some of it's kind of rock hard, but really, really tasty. my favourite is the slightly runny stuff. and so you can actually scoop it out with a spoon. yeah. So good. and so there are two kinds of that runny cheese that you might encounter in the Lisbon area. It's probably you're more likely to find azetao cheese, which is a variation of this runny sheep's cheese. but Aze Tau is just north. Sorry, just south of Lisbon. So that's why it's, more available, in the centre of Portugal. It. This cheese originates from the Serra di Estrela, the mountains. and so, yeah, they've got their own, kind. So, yeah, you need the amantegada, which is buttery texture, but just give it a squeeze. in the supermarket, if it feels squidgy. Then it's probably. And leave it out at room temperature before you kind of eat it. And hopefully you'll get some that's scoopable. Then when you come to sort of meat and fish, I like, a naco napedra, which is steak on a stone. And so it comes pretty much raw. It might be seared, but then it's on a hot stone. So you can continue to cook it as long as you want or not. polvo, all agavero means, polvo is octopus. A, la galleiro means kind of, essentially in the oven, roasted with potatoes, olive oil and garlic. And it is delicious. And then bacalhau is salted cod. So every restaurant, apart from vegetarian ones will have some form of bacalhau on the menu. I like it with broa, which is cornbread. And then it's usually got a layer of, grelos, which is kind of, a leafy green. It's quite bitter. But it's nice when it's combined with the fish and the cornbread and then drinks wise. Obviously you've got the whole gamut of Portuguese wines which you have to try. There's a growing kind of craft beer industry which is, compared to some countries. Countries is still relatively young, but it's, you know, it's growing. They do have some great beers. but liqueurs, I really absolutely love liqueur bayrau, which, is from the central region. It used to be something that your granny drank. And it was originally, sold as a medicinal cure all because it's got lots of herbs in it. and obviously, I don't think it has much medicinal value, to be perfectly honest. But it does taste really nice, if you like that kind of, you know, herby kind of liqueur. And these. The marketing, they've done an excellent job on marketing. So it's really popular. You'll find it at festivals. It's now more of a kind of a trendy drink. and you can get lots of cocktails with it in as well. And another liqueur that I really love is ginginia, and that is made from sour cherries. And it is often served in a little chocolate cup, which obviously you can eat that as well as. Yeah, and it's, there's, there's lots of little kiosks in Lisbon, where you can go. So you go and have your lunch out or your dinner. then to round off your meal, you go to a ginginha bar and go and have a little shot of ah, sour cherry liqueur and you can have it with or without the cherry. In with or same without the cherry.

Tracy: Yes, I had that. I did try that. I remember that I definitely had Portuguese tarts for sure. And I definitely had the cherry liqueur in the chocolate cup. And it was delicious. I really liked it. I have to say that.

Sometimes navigating a Portuguese menu can be difficult when you don't speak the language

Now what about I'm just thinking about, you know, when you go to somewhere that you haven't been before, you don't speak the language. Sometimes navigating the menu can be a bit of a kind of, of you know, difficult. You kind of think how do, what do I order? How do I order? So is there is a kind of ways to kind of navigate your way around a Portuguese menu?

Julie: Well the now with AI you can do anything. So if you've got Google Lens, app, on your phone then or even, or chat GPT or something like that, honestly that's the easiest way because you can literally get a translation there. And then in a lot of the touristy places there will be an English translation on the menu. It's only really when you go out to the smaller towns and villages that you won't find that. And if you go properly off the beaten path, I don't say there's an improper and improper way to do that. But I mean if you, if you go really rural, then yes, you might actually be in restaurants where the servers don't necessarily speak English. And so this is where these tools could really come into their own. but one thing to look out for and this sort of would help with budgeting as well is in a lot of the traditional restaurants, the dishes, the main dishes are actually usually big enough to share. and that's how Portuguese families, economise when they go out for a meal. You know, instead of ordering one of these dishes for every each person, if it's a table of four, they may get one or two of these kind of like sharing dishes. And then you know, if you've had a starter and a dessert, that's probably enough. So if one of you wants one thing and one of you wants something else, look to see if there's a half portion, me a dos. so that would give you enough just for one person. in the city restaurants, a lot of them now it's just, you know, a portion is just designed for one person. So if you're not sure then check, just ask the waiter. You Know, will this do for one or is it big enough for two? there's no shame in that at all.

Tracy: No. Doug and I often share because we find that sometimes the portions are quite big. And that's a really good way as well to economise because obviously if you're travelling, unless you're like, mega loaded, we're all looking at ways that we can save a little bit of money, aren't we? So what about if, And things like, how would you save money on things like experiences or even accommodation or getting around? Have you got any tips for kind of trying to help with anybody budgeting when they're travelling to Portugal?

Julie: Yeah. So I'd say that, another way you can economise on food, for example, would be to look for a menu do dia, which means the menu of the day that's usually served at lunchtime. It's a set menu. you might have some choice as to what your main m or start is going to be. it may or may not include a, coffee and a dessert. Always check. You'll often get offered the menu or the dessert or the coffee, but just check Steinkoidl. Is it included? just to make sure you're not going to get a nasty surprise. but, you know, these menu didier, they range between, depending on where you are, kind of 8, €9 per person, up to 15, €20,

depending on where you are. And another way, obviously, you know, if you want to economise or if you want more space, lots of reasons for choosing to stay in an apartment, where you can go to the supermarket or the local market, cook your own meals and, you know, especially if you've had a really, if you've had a big menu de dia, you might not even want very much in the evening. So just having some bread and cheese and wine in your own space, can save you a lot of money. So, in terms of experiences and, you know, entrance fees, things like that, Lisbon and Porto do have city cards. However, I'd say unless you're going to be really kind of hitting every, you know, as many museums as you possibly can in whatever period of time you have the validity of the card for, they're not always the best value for money, although they do give you public transport as well. but it just, I think before going, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll have one of those. I would just do a little bit of research to see whether you're going to get the value out of it. if you're over 65, then a lot of places give you a discount, up to 50% on train travel. That's automatic, over 65 discount. And also in monuments, museums, that kind of thing. So again, the Lisbon card, for example, may not be worth it for you if you are a, ah, senior. in terms of saving money on experiences, apart from the entrance fees, then, obviously small group tours are going to be cheaper than private tours. And so again, if you want to take advantage of those, you need to be based in a city. But then you've got the pros and cons of that. It's more expensive to stay in the city than it is in the smaller town, so you have to weigh that up. but one thing I quite like doing, and we did this in, or done this in various cities around the world and including Lisbon, is to do one of the audio guided tours. we've got an app on our phone called Voicemap and you can just buy a tour. it's kind of, you know, self paced and so, you know, you can actually learn a lot, see a lot, get off the beaten track and, you know, if you get bored of it then you just give up. No one's going to get upset if you walk off. Whereas, you know, if you're on a group tour, you might feel a bit sort of like, got this day till the end. M. So, yeah, so there's lots of things you can do to, you know, avoid spending a huge amount of money as well as travelling off season, etc.

Tracy: Yeah. When, when Doug and I were there, we stayed in a very lovely hotel in Lisbon. And then to budget a bit, we actually stayed in a really lovely apartment in Porto. So that worked really well. And of course then we could go to the local supermarket, which was great, and also do some washing, which is always useful when you travel and to be able to have to do that. so we, we really enjoyed it. Both of those, were really good. And, we did, we actually did a tour, in Porto that I am sure was on a golf buggy. Does that sound about right for Porto? Yeah, that was a lot of fun. but even though we were there in March, it was still. Lisbon was still quite busy trying to get on the tram, that iconic tram that everybody wants to get on was, it was a bit, it was, it was quite busy. So I can only imagine how, what it can be like in the summer when there's a lot of tourists, arriving in the main cities especially. I can imagine the Algarve as well.

What are the biggest mistakes people make when planning a trip to Portugal

so if you think, if people planning a trip for the first time, what do you think could be like the biggest mistakes you see them doing when they're planning a trip to Portugal? And I know you help a lot of people plan the trip, so what are the things that you try to steer them away from doing?

Julie: Okay, so the biggest issue I see is trying to do too much and, trying to cover too much ground. And so you'll have people who've got seven days and they want to go to Lisbon, Porto, Douro Valley, Algarve, and maybe somewhere else, maybe Madeira. I mean, you know, and I'm laughing because I know that Madeira involves the flight, so, yeah, it's way too much. You could easily, as I think I mentioned before, spend a week, even two weeks in Lisbon itself and just explore the surrounding areas and still have very varied and amazing trips. Obviously most people don't want to limit themselves to just that kind of small an area for, you know, they want to sort of COVID a bit more ground. So, yeah, I would say really just pick one or two places not too far from each other. So you're not spending, you know, not wasting a day of your holiday in transit. You know, there's much better things you could be doing than sitting on a bus or driving or whatever. Although if you are going to, let's say travel from Lisbon to Porto, you could take the train, but one way of maximising your time and that day, for example, would be to maybe have a driver, if your budget allows, have a driver to take you from Lisbon and take you to a couple of stops on the way to Porto. And that way you get the best of both worlds, without sort of having to do any backtracking or extra journeys. So, yes, so think about those. Think about the alternatives to the must do sites, and, definitely be open to, the idea that you don't have to travel all the way to the Algarve to get to a nice beach, that you don't have to go to the Douro Valley. It is a very picturesque wine region, but there are very many other wine regions and just being realistic in terms of what you can achieve. So I would say decide what is the most important thing for you. Not what your friends have said, not what your family said, not what, you know, somebody else on the Internet has said for you and how you like to travel, the things that excite you, what is your must do, for each day, and then treat that, so that is your main focus. Anything else that you manage to have time to see or do or you stumble across, then that's an added bonus. So you know, I kind of, I used to be guilty of trying to cram too much in as well. But I am learning to control myself a bit more and do this like actually take this approach, you know. Okay. That's my thing. I've got these other sort of possibles, on my list of, you know, I could do this if time permits. But I'm I've made peace with. It's okay if I don't do that. Yeah. Because you never know how long things are going to take. And Yeah. And sort of punctuality in Portugal, it's not as bad as the reputation that Spain has. But some things don't always start on time and you know, so even you can't have a very rigid packed schedule that you know, 10 o'clock, I'm going to do this. 11, this, 12, this, it's not going to work. Your lunch is likely to take a long time if you have a proper sit down lunch and that can throw your afternoon plans out. You know, just. You need flexibility.

Tracy: Yeah. One of the nice things that Doug and I experienced in March is actually we went with total flexibility so we could kind of. We did do the trip to Sintra. We went to Pena Palace. I was a little bit disappointed. I am upfront about that. so we did do that. but it was actually quite a nice day trip because we did see other things and other places and as you said, the beaches which were amazing. But I agree we didn't feel that we had a very, we didn't have a very packed schedule. We could kind of wander around and just take it in and enjoy, and realise that actually we definitely want to go back to Portugal and explore it a little bit more. So for anybody who's visiting, what would be the number one tip that you would say to somebody? You need to know this if you come into Portugal?

Julie: I would say, this is a very practical tip. and I would say bring non slip comfortable shoes without high heels because they're going to get stuck in the cracks in the cobblestones or the cobblestones. You know, they're very slippery even when it's dry. So yeah,

sensible shoes, comfortable shoes. and layers because the weather is changeable and even in the summer, like you know, baking hot day, you still might want a shawl or a light Cardigan or something if you're in a place that's got, you know, really strong air conditioning, or if the breeze picks up or something like that. So, so, yeah, again, be flexible not just with your time, but also with your wardrobe.

Tracy: Yeah, that's a great tip. And I also think be prepared to want to go back because we definitely want to explore and see more of Portugal, that's for sure.

Julie Dawn Fox shares links to her website and social media

Now, before we sign off, this episode, so, for the show notes, we'll put in links to your, website and I'm sure you've got some social media as well that you'll want to share. so I'll just share the episode number as well. So that's a Global Travel planning. But before we sign off, Julie, would you just like to share with our listeners where they can find you?

Julie: Yes. So, my website is juliedawnfox.com so the dawn, just in case some people don't know how to spell that. So that's D, A, W, N. perfect.

Tracy: And do you, Are you also on Instagram and things like that? I believe you're like taking photos. Are you a photographer?

Julie: I, I do enjoy taking photos, yeah. But to be honest, I'm not very active on Instagram. So yeah, you'll find some stuff, but it's not really the main place to, sort of go for updates or anything, I have to admit. So, yeah, my website and also on my newsletter, that's kind of where I share what I'm doing. And

Tracy: Yeah, perfect, perfect. Well, I'll put a link to your website, where they can, I'm sure they can. If they go on the website, they'll be able to sign up for your newsletter and find out all about what you're up to and how they can, can get help if they're planning a trip to Portugal and obviously all your resources that you've got available there for planning.

Sam and Julie discuss Portugal on this week's Global Travel Final podcast

but for this week, Julie, it's been absolutely fantastic to talk about Portugal. it's a wonderful place to visit. As I say, we went this year and thoroughly enjoyed it and I wish I'd spoken to you beforehand. So, ah, that's all I can say. But thanks so much for coming on this week's episode of the Global Travel Final podcast.

Julie: Thank you. It's been an absolute pleasure.

Tracy: Thank you for joining us on this episode of the Global Travel Planning podcast. For more details and links to everything we discussed today, check out the show notes@globaltravelplanning.com Remember, if you enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on your favourite podcast app because your feedback helps us reach more travel

enthusiasts just like you. Anyway, that leaves me to say, as always, happy global travel planning. Sam