

SINTRA TRAVEL GUIDE – THE PERFECT LISBON DAY TRIP



Sintra is a magical fairyland just outside of Lisbon full of castles and palaces that you can visit! It truly is one of the most unique places I have ever been to. We went on a day trip from Lisbon in July. My parents recently booked a tour to take them from Lisbon to Sintra and have someone else handle all the logistics for them. That's one way to do it and definitely a good idea if the logistics intimidate you. On the other hand, it is totally doable to do it on your own, and everything you need to know is below!

SHOULD I VISIT SINTRA?

OMG YES. The castles and palaces and gardens were so amazing and breathtaking. If you like pretty things and picturesque scenes, Sintra is definitely for you. For the record, I was being bah-humbug about it before we went. I did not like the idea of waking up early to head out here and I just assumed it would be an over-crowded tourist trap. I'm not sure if we just got lucky because it was not crowded at all, but after about 30 minutes of being in this town, I knew I didn't want to leave and that I needed to eat my words.

WHEN SHOULD I VISIT SINTRA?

I think whenever? We went on a Sunday in July and the crowds were not bad at all. We didn't even buy our tickets ahead of time and still only waited ~20 minutes to get in. I wouldn't go if it is raining. We had a freak rainstorm come through and then move out very quickly. I have read reviews of freak things happening where one of the palaces will close for weather, but that's not something you can know ahead of time.

HOW DO I GET TO SINTRA?

I am assuming that you are in Lisbon at this point and just doing a day trip. You should try and wake up early and get to Sintra just in case it gets more crowded as the day goes on. It's also cooler earlier in the day. We caught a train from Lisboa – Rossio to Sintra. Finding the train was a little complicated, but you will go down the stairs at the NW corner of Rossio. You will go into the tunnel and walk towards the

turnstiles until you see some escalators going up on the left. Go up these escalators and then you will see a couple ticket machines. I think each ticket was \$5. Use Google Maps to get the times right, because I think there is one train that goes straight there and one train that requires you to change trains. We took the one straight there. It looks like the trains leave on the hour or at 11 minutes past the hour and 40 minutes past the hour. It is a 40 minute train.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY IN SINTRA?

Some people spent the night in Sintra, but I don't think it is necessary. I do think a full day in Sintra is magical, so plan to do a full day.

HOW DO I GET AROUND SINTRA?

When you get off the train in Sintra, you will exit the station and walk up the street to a bus stop. Look for the signs for the 434. I think it was the second bus stop we passed. There will most likely be someone there selling tickets. I think they were \$7 each. Cash only, I think.

Hop on the bus and take it to Pena Palace first – I think it was the third stop. It should be pretty obvious once you are there. There were banners at each bus stop. Save your receipt/ticket for this bus as you will use it a couple more times.

This bus also goes to the Moors Castle, but we walked there after Pena Palace. Just ask someone how to walk there and they will tell you. The streets are incredibly narrow here, so see if you can find a path that is not on the main street. If you don't want to walk, you can take the bus again all the way around to the Moors Castle.

When you are done seeing these 2 sites, you can take the bus to the Historic Center to grab snacks and head to your final stop – the Quinta da Regaleira. Note that when you exit Moors Castle, take a right and walk up the hill about 30 m to get to the bus stop.

Quinta da Regaleira is just a 15 minute walk away on non-narrow streets. If you don't want to walk, you can always grab a tuk tuk for \$5 per person. You will also hear about / see the 435 bus that can take you to Quinta da Regaleira. If you want to go to more than these 3 stops, you can probably take that bus to them. But it is unnecessary to take this bus to the Quinta.

When you are done for the day, you can either walk back to the train station or take the 434 back.



HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD I SPEND IN SINTRA?

Like I mentioned before, I would just do a day trip to Sintra from Lisbon.

WHAT IS THERE TO DO IN SINTRA?

There are 6 or so palaces / castles in Sintra. We went to 3 of them. Pena Palace is the red, yellow, and blue one that you will see in pictures. The Moorish castle is basically a really long, really high wall that gives you INCREDIBLE views. We actually ended up loving this one more than Pena Palace, I think because it was just unexpected how beautiful and cool it would be. Finally, we did Quinta da Regaleira. Note that you will see this named many things. Quinta da Regaleira = The Enchanted Garden = Monteiro the Millionaire. It is basically an expansive garden with very beautiful and unique features. Most notably the wells that you have probably seen pictures of. I wish we had had more time to explore this place, but we wanted to get back to Lisbon since we only had 2 nights there.

PENA PALACE = PALAIS DA PENA

When you get off the 434 at Pena Palace, head to the ticket booths. I think it would be worthwhile to buy your ticket ahead of time online ([here](#)) and skip the ticket booth line. The tickets for Pena Palace are “palace + park” or just “park”. Get the Palace + Park. You can also buy tickets for more than one castle – we bought a 2 castle pack which includes the Moorish Castle. There were 2 lines to buy tickets – 1 for electronic machines and one for ticket kiosks with people. They took about the same time (we split 2 and 2 and raced), but one of the electronic machines was down at the time.

After you buy your ticket, you will wait in another line to get in. Right after you get in there is a café and restrooms. Head straight up to the Palace and enjoy that. Take lots of pictures. You can enter the palace if you want to get a tour of the rooms. At the end of the tour there is a shop, café, and restaurant. The

whole Pena Palace garden area is massive and we didn't have time to see it all. I know there is a little hike you can take to the top that would have been nice. We ended up going behind the café at the entrance and found gardens of hydrangeas that kind of scratched our garden itch. Don't miss those.







MOORS CASTLE = CASTLE OF THE MOORS = CASTELO DOS MOUROS

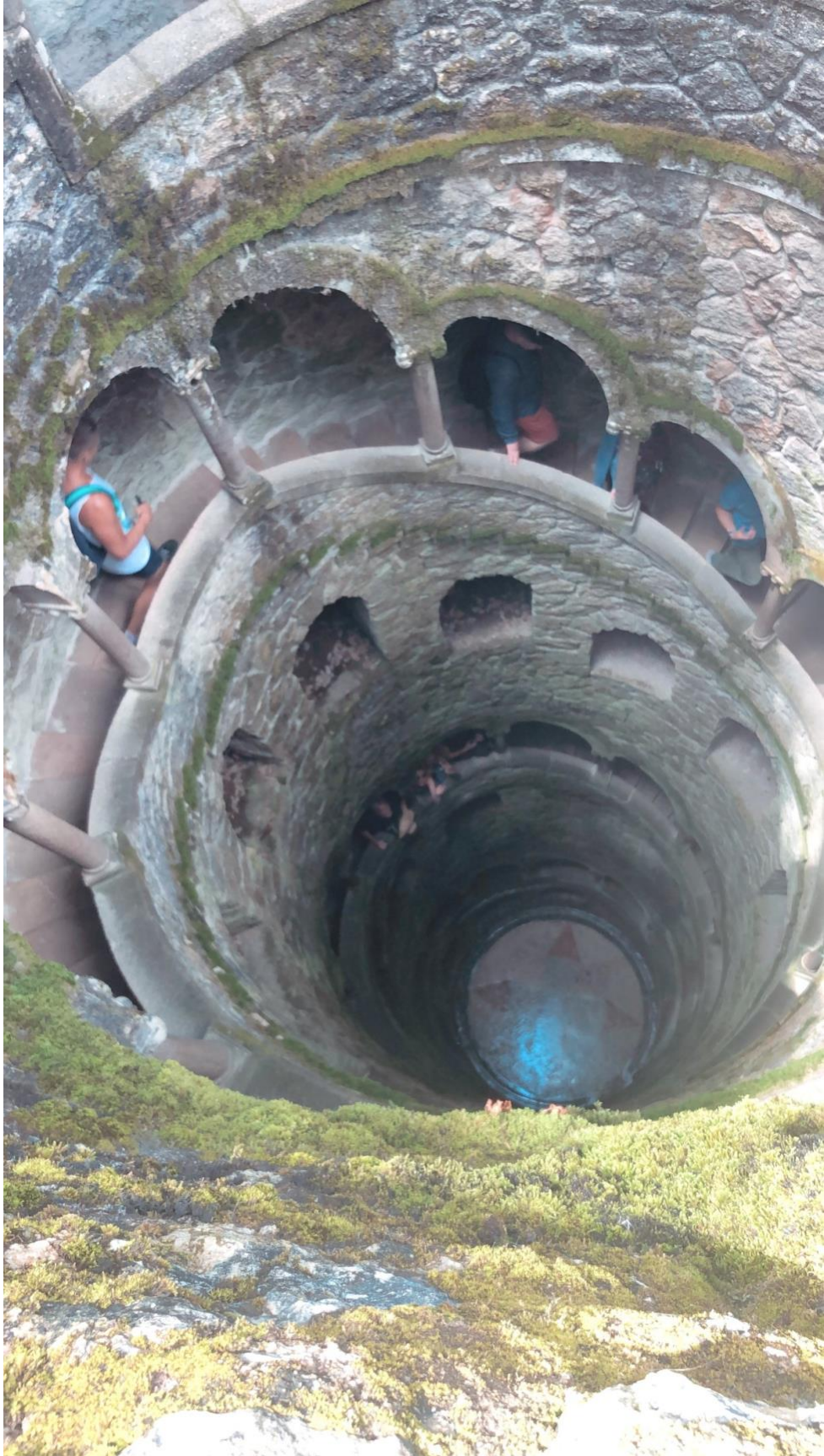
We accidentally took the hiking trail here, but like I said before, ask someone how to walk there or take the bus. The Moors Castle is pretty self-explanatory. There is no “structure” of sorts to tour – the main attraction is the wall. When you get inside, climb the stairs to the wall and just keep walking. The views you will see are SO incredible. Ugh I can’t even deal thinking about it now. You will see the highest point of the wall in the distance. I think it is worth hiking there, but don’t do it if you don’t have it in you. It is so many stairs to get there, but very easy to walk back. From that point up there you will get a shot of Pena Palace which is pretty cool too. Enjoy.



QUINTA DA REGALEIRA = ENCHANTED GARDEN = THE PALACE OF MONTEIRO THE MILLIONAIRE

When you are walking here from the city center, you will get to a fork in the road with 1 road that goes up and left and one path that goes down. Take the path up to the left even though you don't see any signs. Follow the palace wall around the corner and keep walking uphill. You will eventually get to the entrance. We bought a separate ticket to enter the gardens here. The signage in the garden is few and far between,

so feel free to get lost. I would first follow signs to the Initiation Well though because those are the iconic, eerie wells you see in pictures. You can walk down the stairs to the bottom of the wells and walk through really long cave tunnels and see where you pop out. It is dark and not marked so make sure you have your flashlight on your phone handy.





WHERE DO I EAT IN SINTRA?

The food options in Sintra are meh. I would either bring a PB&J from Lisbon or just stop somewhere in Sintra. We stopped at a little café inside the museum close to the bus stop in the Historic City center of Sintra, and it was good. My parents on the other hand loved the town and ate at a restaurant in a windmill!

WHAT SHOULD I PACK FOR SINTRA?

Very important – pack comfortable shoes!!!! You will be walking so, so much. That day was the highest step count of my entire trip (26k)!! Also... it got a little chilly for us so pack a little scarf or wrap. If you're super interested in getting cute pictures there, then make sure you have a cute outfit too! Just try and make that outfit include some cute walking shoes.

MY PERFECT SINTRA ITINERARY

Wake up and try and get on the 8:11, 8:41, 9:11 or 9:41 AM train to Sintra. We grabbed McDonald's because it was the only thing open early in the morning. There's one at Rossio. Get really excited while you are on the train. Get off the train and find the bus stop for the 434 bus. Take the bus up the narrow roads to Pena Palace. Get your ticket, get in line, and get inside.

Walk up to Pena Palace and take 1000 pictures. Do the tour of the palace. If you have time / care, walk around the rest of the grounds and check out the gardens. I am sure they are beautiful. Don't forget to check out the hydrangea garden behind the café when you enter and snap some pictures.

Ask someone how to walk to Moors Castle and go there next. Walk inside and take the stairs up to the wall. Walk all along the wall and die at the views. Snap 1000 pics. Hop back on the 434 bus (remember to walk to the right a little) and take it to town (1 stop). Grab some food if you haven't eaten yet.

Walk to Quinta da Regaleira (don't forget to walk up hill and follow the palace wall). Pay for entrance and walk to the Initiation Well first. Explore the gardens for as long as you have left. The trains back run every :00 and :40. I would just walk to the train station and head back to Lisbon for sunset and dinner. On the train, make sure and appreciate how much beauty you got to witness today!!