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Portugal appeared as an independent kingdom in the twelfth century, when the Muslim rulers, who had conquered the area in the eighth century, were driven out. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Portugal acquired territory in South America (Brazil), Africa (Angola and Mozambique) and India (Goa), as well as other places. Because of this once huge empire Portuguese is today one of the world's major languages, ranked sixth according to number of native speakers (over 200 million more than 188 million of which are located in Brazil).





Portugal is split into two by its main river, the Tagus. The northern landscape is mountainous in the interior areas, with plateaus indented by river valleys. The south consists of rolling plains and has a warmer and drier climate than in the cooler and rainier north. The Algarve, in the far south, enjoys a Mediterranean climate much like southern Spain. It is a popular region with tourists.



Traditionally Portugal's economy was grounded in farming and fishing. Farming included the production of port and madeira wine, as well as cork. These two areas of activity no longer dominate the economy. Increasingly tourism plays an important part in the economic and social life of the country. Portugal joined the European Union in 1986. Although it does not have a large economy, Portugal has a high quality of life rating.



Photographs. Above right: A cork tree in Portugal. The red areas are where bark has been removed - this does not harm the tree. Below: Lisbon, the capital city, from the sea.

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Basketwork Heads



Woven straw and cane has been used in Portugal for centuries to make baskets and other containers (left). These two heads, on the other hand, are decorative items and were probably made to be sold to tourists. They reflect the changing nature of Portugal's economy, as it ceases to be dependent on old-fashioned farming and is increasingly dominated by the tourist trade.







The donkey head has a tag on it so that it can be hung from the wall, but its design clearly reflects the carnival masks that are used during parades to mark the beginning of Lent in various places in Portugal. One of the most famous, involving masks, is at Lazarim in northern Portugal. Here the masks are made from wood and are carved in all sorts of grotesque shapes, including animals and demons (left).

The bull mask alludes to the Portuguese tradition of bullfighting. Portuguese-style bullfighting differs in many respects from Spanish-style bullfighting. Portuguese bullfights (*corridas de touros*) are held in two phases. First there is the spectacle of the *cavaleiro,* in which a horseman fights the bull from horseback (below left). This is followed by the *pega,* in which a group of eight men, challenge the bull directly without any protection or weapon of defence. One man grabs the animal's head and his companions surround and secure the animal until he is subdued (below right). The animals are slaughtered outside the bullring, away from the view of the crowd.





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Sardine Packet



Like many countries with a coastline, fishing is an important part of life in Portugal. Many towns and villages have been built around a harbour or beach where fishing boats can be launched.

Portugal is renowned for its delicious, nutritious seafood cuisine. Popular catches include squid, crab, shrimp, lobster, hake, sea bass and octopus. The most commonly caught fish is cod, although it is rarely eaten fresh. It is normally dried and salted, which in Portuguese is called bacalhau, and used in a variety of dishes. In fact, it is said that there are 365 ways to use bacalhau one for each day of the year!



Sardines are also extremely popular and are usually eaten grilled, like those in the picture on the left. In Portuguese this is called *sardinhas assadas*. Sardines have many health benefits. They are an oily fish, which means that they are rich in Omega-3, helping to keep the heart and brain healthy. Sardines are also a good source of vitamin D and calcium. The Marie Elisabeth brand is owned by the international Heinz company.

Embroidered Apron



This colourful child's apron was probably made for the tourist trade. Traditionally embroidery was a much valued skill throughout Portugal. Today, perhaps the most famous Portuguese embroidery is that produced in Madeira, the island in the Atlantic which was colonised by the Portuguese in the early fifteenth century.



Madeiran white embroidery became popular outside the islands in the mid-nineteenth century when Elizabeth Phelps (1820-93), the daughter of a wealthy wine shipper from Clapham, turned the rural pastime of simple embroidery into a cottage industry. She did this because she was concerned about the poverty of the vineyard workers and wanted to provide them with a fresh source of income. The photograph on the left shows some ladies from Madeira hard at work.

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Costume Doll

The clothing worn in modern-day Portugal is similar to that worn in the United Kingdom. However, for certain festivals, traditional costumes are worn. These vary from region to region, but men often wear black, close-fitting trousers with a white shirt and sometimes a bright-coloured sash or vest. On their heads they might wear a long green and red stocking cap with a tassel on the end that hangs down to one side. Women wear colourful gathered skirts with aprons and cloth shawls over their shoulders.



This costume doll is marked with the word 'Macas' on the sole of one of its shoes. This probably indicates that it is from the town of Praia das Maçãs, which is on the coast near Sintra, not far from Lisbon.







Above left: Praia das Maçãs. Above; Sintra. Left: An early twentieth century postcard from Sintra showing a local girl.