



Dining alfresco in Lisbon. Inset: Donna Williams (left) and Jennifer Moretti

## DEAR TRIP COACH...

To celebrate my 35th birthday, my friend Donna and I will be jetting to Paris and then on to Lisbon. While I've found an amazing amount of information about Paris, I could use some advice on Portugal. Can you help us plan our trip? *Jennifer Moretti, Plano, Tex.*



**We'd like to take a walking tour of Lisbon to get a feel for the city, but we don't want to be with a huge group. Do you have any suggestions?**

Go with the tour operator **Live Local Spirit**. You describe what sort of experience you want—the top sightseeing spots, markets and shopping, or hopping nightlife—and it will tailor an itinerary to your needs. You can opt for either a "Friend for the Day" (a guide who accompanies you) or a personalized booklet with a list of places to visit, a calendar of Lisbon's cultural events, and a small dictionary of key

Portuguese words and phrases (011-351/926-611-661, [livelocalspirit.com](http://livelocalspirit.com), half-day tours from \$48, booklet \$27).

**Is there anything we should make sure is included on our tour?** The **Gulbenkian Museum** houses one of Europe's most impressive art collections, with objects ranging from ancient Egyptian bas-reliefs to modern paintings (Av. de Berna 45A, 011-351/217-823-000, [museu.gulbenkian.pt](http://museu.gulbenkian.pt), \$9.50).

The 16th-century **Jerónimos Monastery**, in the Belém neighborhood, is on the Tagus River, about four miles from the city center. Built over the course

of 50 years at the height of Portugal's imperial clout, it's a stellar example of Portuguese architecture at its most Gothic and most ornate (Praça do Império, 011-351/213-620-034, [mosteiro.jeronimos.pt](http://mosteiro.jeronimos.pt), \$8.25).

Not far from the monastery, be sure to stop at **Antiga Confeitaria de Belém** for a *bica*, or strong espresso, and a *pastel de Belém*, a scrumptious little custard-cream tart that was invented in Lisbon (Rua de Belém 84-92, 011-351/213-637-423, [www.pasteisdebelem.pt](http://www.pasteisdebelem.pt)).

**For my birthday night, I'm thinking Donna and I will put on our little black dresses and go out for a nice dinner. Restaurante Flores** in the Bairro Alto Hotel mixes Portuguese and Mediterranean flavors. The black grouper stuffed with peppers and chorizo is one of the standouts, especially accompanied by a crisp Alentejo white wine, such as Pêra-Manca. The passion-fruit *bavaoise*, a chilled custard drizzled with caramelized milk, would make a memorable birthday cake (Praça Luís de Camões 2, 011-351/213-408-252, [bairroalto.hotel.com](http://bairroalto.hotel.com), entrées from \$8).

**I love to dance, so that would be a fun way to end the evening. What would you recommend?** Lisbon has a large Portuguese-African community with roots in Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Angola, and its music is a gorgeous blend of up-tempo and wistful. The best place to catch a show is at **Cabaret Maxime's** B.Leza nights, named for a famous Cape Verdean singer (Praça da Alegria 58, 011-351/213-467-090, [cabaret-maxime.com](http://cabaret-maxime.com), from \$6.50). After hours, the in crowd dances to DJ music at **LuxFrágil**, a club co-owned by actor John Malkovich. When you're ready for a breather, the terrace has great views of the Tagus River (Av. Infante Dom Henrique, Armazém A, Cais da Pedra a Sta. Apolónia, 011-351/218-820-890, [luxfragil.com](http://luxfragil.com), cover from \$16.50). >>>

**FIRE AWAY!**

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE COACHED:** E-mail your questions—seriously, the more the better—to [Letters@BudgetTravel.com](mailto:Letters@BudgetTravel.com).