

TTW Europe

Volume: 11, Issue: August 2022

Destination Diary

Basel

Special Feature

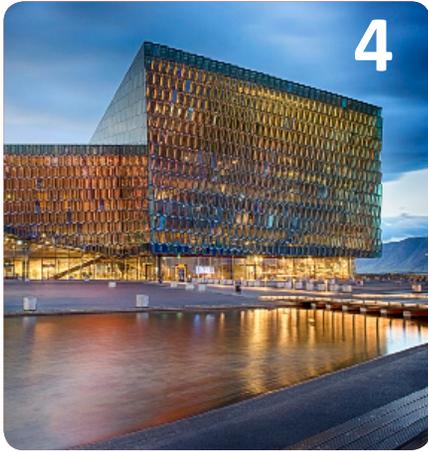
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Destination Diary: Switzerland has been a conventionally pet honeymoon destination. Those with a penchant for history will find it delightful to visit the city of **Basel** which is replete with ancient museums and monuments.



Special Feature: Read about the **National Museum of Azulejo** in Portugal which is certainly deserves a place in your Europe tour itinerary.

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On the Cover



Dear Readers,

Europe the name brings before us a plethora of images from serene landscapes, sprawling meadows, historical mansions, mystic alleys and the earliest of cities that keep various phases of history within its nooks.

TTW Europe (August edition) highlights some of the most magical destinations that are ideal for luxury travel as well as hosting important events and meetings. Switzerland has been a conventionally pet honeymoon destination. But how many of us know that the beautiful country has a lot of historical gems dotted across its length and breadth? Those with a penchant for history will find it delightful to visit the city of Basel which is replete with ancient museums and monuments. Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia has a wide range of attractions to explore.

Iceland, the country with some awe-inspiring geysers, dormant lava plains and the ethereal Northern Lights is also a promising destination for hosting meetings and events of any scale. This edition also features The National Museum of Azulejo in Portugal which is certainly deserves a place in your Europe tour itinerary.

Christophe Berger, Director of VisitMalta Incentive and Meetings will enlighten you more about the ongoing travel trends and how it is bracing for MICE tourism revival after the pandemic years.

Editor-In-Chief
Mr. Anup Kumar Keshan

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Meeting Points





**MEETINGS WITH
ENDLESS ADVENTURE**

Welcome to Iceland

The magical country of Iceland is a land of endless adventures. The country is home to some of the most magnificent natural wonders on the Earth, from the awe-inspiring geysers to the silent steaming lava plains and the ethereal Northern Lights.

The country is an adventurer's paradise and is best experienced with a multi-day road trip from Reykjavik. The first day of your road trip should take you from Reykjavik to the scenic Geysir area, where you can watch the world's tallest geyser, Gullfoss, erupt.

There is more to Iceland than the natural scenic beauty and thrilling adventures. Iceland's tourism industry is growing at a far faster rate than the rest of Europe and the rest of the world. Over the 2011-13 periods, MICE tourism in Iceland grew by an average of 18% compared to just 5.4% in Europe and 6% globally.

In the same period, the US and Canada were the biggest source of tourists to Iceland, bringing in 4.5% of the total tourism spend and 3.5% of all visitor numbers. Tourism is an important part of Iceland's economy and is one of the country's most significant industries. In recent years, Iceland has been one of the fastest-growing markets in the world for MICE tourism.

The Grand Hotel Reykjavik

A beautiful hotel located in the capital city, the Grand Hotel Reykjavik is one of Iceland's most popular convention centres. This 4-star hotel has 311 rooms and 11 meeting rooms. Located close to the oceanfront, the Grand Hotel Reykjavik is situated in quiet surroundings. Whether you're a business traveller, conference guest or a tourist seeking excellent service and amenities, the Grand Hotel Reykjavik is one of the best options. As a member of the top international hotel group, the hotel adheres to the Nordic Eco label criteria for hotels, which guarantees compliance with environmental measures, health, functionality and quality standards.



Fosshotel Husavik

This hotel boasts of impeccable conference services. It has over eight conference and meeting rooms specifically designed to cater to a large group audience. For all MICE travellers, these are among the most popular options for meetings. The largest conference room here expands over 345 sq.m. and has a capacity to accommodate up to 350 people. It also offers several exclusive conference packages that include dinner, lunch, and other refreshments for attendees.





Harpa – Reykjavik Concert and Conference Center

This unique landmark, situated at the intersection of Reykjavik's old harbour and the North Atlantic, stands out as a landmark in continuous dialogue with its surroundings. Designed by Iceland's famous architect, Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre has four seating areas, the largest of which can accommodate 1,800 people. An exhibition area is nearby, as are smaller meeting rooms throughout the building. Also included are catering and parking services alongside state-of-the-art equipment suited to ultra-modern facilities.

Radisson Blu Saga Hotel

Built in 1962, the Radisson Blu Saga Hotel is one of its kinds when it comes to hosting events, meets and conferences. With a total of eight meeting rooms, the total event space expands up to 1,339 sq.m. It can host up to 1100 people in its meeting space and offers over-the-top facilities and amenities for a successful event. Furthermore, there are several tourist attractions around the hotel that visitors are extremely interested in.



Top Attractions

Whoever comes to Iceland cannot go without exploring the different cities and the best places it offers. Given the beautiful and unbeatable natural beauty, there is so much to explore in Iceland –



Blue Lagoon, Grindavik: An iconic geothermal spa that's just 40 minutes from Reykjavik is a must-see tourist attraction. An old power station at the foot of a pale blue pool provides natural bathing. A whole industry has been developed around the Blue Lagoon since it first gained popularity in 1976.

In addition to the health benefits, the water from the underground hot springs reaches a temperature of 37-39 degrees Celsius.



Landmannalaugar Nature Reserve: The Landmannalaugar National Park is located 180 kilometres away from Reykjavik in Iceland's south. It's characterised by rhyolite mountains of different hues, lava fields and the mighty Hekla volcano. In this region, hiking and horseback riding are popular activities, and hikes range from a few hours to several days.



Aurora Borealis: Aurora Borealis is a beautiful display of bright lights seen within the atmosphere in the Northern Hemisphere as the result of the collision of the planet's magnetic field with charged particles from the Sun. Viewing the Northern Lights is possible any time of year, and the experience is always magical. The auroras light up the sky in a breathtaking way and can be seen from virtually anywhere on the planet.

Iceland is a paradise for adventurers and travel enthusiasts. Along with inexplicable travel sites, it is also home to some of the most coveted MICE destinations.

Destination Diary



Journeying through the ancient medieval trade city of Switzerland

Basel



Switzerland is the land of breathtaking destinations and a classical honeymoon favourite for global couples. Holidaymakers have long crowded the city among the Alps. Basel, also the trade capital of the country proudly declares to be the centre of attraction. Churches of different sects of Christianity surround the city like guardians, protecting the tipsy tourist walks within the city. The city has been recording the growth and decline of Christianity for more than 500 years. But, that is not the only reason to be attracted to the city.

Basel is an exotic combination of river and mountain-centric landscape. Although that is a speciality of any north European city, Basel informs the tourists about the unpolluted, chilly and innocent weather condition of the European continent. The city is among the few European cities that have not been touched by the global culture. So, if someone comes here looking for a wholesome experience with partying, clubbing and overnight energetic fun experience, Basel is probably not the right place for them. It is rather a place to get a deep sleep and connect with the nature like never before.

Waterways circling the city



Boat tours are a signature of the city. Mount Pilatus Golden Round Trips are one of those family trips that draw thousands of citizens to the city each year. Small boat trips for two people are a quick trip that can be booked at any time of the year. The trip covers the entire city especially around the Mount Pilatus Golden Round Trip.

For big families, cruise ships are available. The waterway track is round the Mount Pilatus. Besides being one of the spectacular locations for sightseeing, Mount Pilatus holds the legend of inspiring Reineke's famous composition titled 'Mountain of Dragons'.

Rejoice with music and lights



This year Floss festival will be hosted in Basel, in August. It has a live stage floating in the Rhine River with live musicians floating.

The canopy floats in the river while 50,000 foreign spectators make their way to enjoy the intoxication of music and colourful lights.

Peek-a-booing outside the city within a day

The outside of the city is something exotic in every way. Weekends or even weekdays can be picked up for a casual stroll outside the city. Switzerland being a solid block of sparkling geography, the other spectacular locations are connected with the city through natural geographical connectivity. Some locations are very close to Basel that awaits citizens.



Freiburg Breisgau Germany

It is actually a university but bears the signs of medieval Europe. The city has been severely damaged during Second World War. However, the previous history of the city helped the city recover and control the damage. The place has been managed with perfection.

The vibrancy of the European heritage along with the spectacular museum makes the city one of the major attractions. The Black Forest neighbourhood adds a pinch of mystery to glorious city. Freiburg is outside Germany but being connected by the Alps creates a pathway for the eager travellers.

Freiburg Breisgau is 58 km from Basel and takes about 33 minutes to reach. Freiburg Breisgau being a medieval town capital boasts some of the exotic locations. Luckily, these locations are accessible by the train.



Lucerne, Switzerland

One of the cleanest cities in the cleanest country, Lucerne is a trip to fairy land for everybody. Lucerne is just the right place for someone who wants to look within the fairytale world. The lights, architecture, buildings, water and swans make it a dream come true.

Mount Pilatus and Mount Titlis are two major attractions. But these two are like pilgrimages for the traveller. Lucerne may not be a clubbing spot but it is a breathtaking destination for both quick refreshment and for a longer travel experience.

The distance is 100.7 km and takes about 1 hr 11 minutes.

Zurich, Switzerland

Being capital of the most beautiful city of Europe is not easy. Zurich is playing the role with full grandeur. Home to numerous medieval churches and cathedrals, Zurich is central of attractions.

Zurich is a city that balances the essence of an urban cityscape with the ancient age-old heritage of Europe. The city has a spectacular night life that denotes the valuable cultures. The city offers walking tours as well as car trips.

The distance from Basel is 87.4 km and takes about 1 hr and 7 minutes.





Beer tours in Basel

It is organised by three bars together. In a single tour, travellers get the chance to taste the finest of beers.

The uniqueness about the tour is that it is incredibly short (2 hours) and rejoices the taste of the local liquor only.



Image Credit: Basel Tourismus

Basel is the centre of trade for Europe. Besides being a spectacular city filled with churches, it is one of the most secular cities. Basel is also situated right at the centre of visual surprises and amazement. The other prime European locations are half an hour far from the cityscape.



Face to Face

Malta, the beautiful island destination with an intense history of 7,000 years to its credit has made a significant place in the tourism and meeting industries of the world.

Its extravagant castles, theme parks, natural gems, luxury yachts and a wealth of exclusive facilities offer ample opportunities for the most ardent of travellers and event planners.

With reopening of international borders, Visit Malta Incentives and Meetings Tourists have restarted actively participating in fairs and exhibitions in its source markets across Europe and taking an initiative to identify emergent long-haul markets such as the USA, South America, Australia, and Asia, and start working to grow these new markets.

Christophe Berger

Christophe Berger, Director VisitMalta Incentives & Meetings shares with TTW Europe, the current travel trends in Malta and how the island nation braces for MICE revival post pandemic.



TTW Europe: What is the present tourism scenario in Malta after the reopening of international borders? What is the average annual tourist footfall post pandemic (2021-2022 tourism season)?

Christophe Berger: In 2021, the number of inbound tourists increased by a strong 47%, almost reaching one million, but remained 65% below the pre-pandemic year 2019. This follows a 76% plunge in inbound tourism in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of inbound tourists to Malta in 2022 is expected to reach 1.9 million, amounting to 70% of the volumes attracted in peak year 2019, and almost double the amount of tourists of the previous year 2021.

The most recent actual figures for 2022 are of the period January to April, where inbound tourists increased from 43,433 in 2021 to 429,841.



Table 1 (Source: National Statistics Office)

TTW Europe: What are your plans to promote tourism in the Maltese Islands?

Christophe Berger: Our plans as Visit Malta Incentives & Meetings are laid out in two phases. The first one is to consolidate our main European source markets- the UK, France, Germany and Italy. We restarted actively participating in fairs and exhibitions in these markets and taking other initiatives. Being an Island, airline routes are a lifeline for us and we believe that in focusing on the main markets we would also be supporting the existing routes which are so important for our connectivity.

The second phase is to identify emergent long-haul markets such as the USA, South America, Australia, and Asia, and start working to grow these new markets.

We also work closely with local suppliers and stakeholders. We have regular support schemes in place to assist them with promotional and marketing efforts. During the pandemic our M.I.C.E. Business Scheme was the strongest asset to support the industry in order to attract new business. Stakeholders are the backbone of our industry and we feel it's important to support and assist them get back on their feet and plan their initiatives.



TTW Europe: How does Malta Tourism Authority strive at securing a sustainable future for its travel industry?

Christophe Berger: During the pandemic the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) together with the Ministry for Tourism invested in training of the Tourism & Hospitality workforce. Through the e-Learning Scheme MTA focused on enriching the education and competence of our industry workforce to ensure that our service is top-notch for when we re-open. The scheme gave tourism employees access to a large number of accredited courses and also University degrees by covering 100% of the costs.

The Ministry of Tourism, MTA and the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association have launched the strategy for 2021-2030. It is based on three pillars: to help the sector: Recover, Rethink and Revitalize. The next phase is to unravel the idea of a single destination Malta. Our islands are so small yet they are packed with so many different experiences and this surprises our visitors. The vision is to offer various niche segments based on assets and products on offer in the various attractive zones on our islands. It's a vast strategy, but from a MICE perspective, there are plans to create a National Convention and Events Centre with an extensive year-round calendar of events. The future looks exciting.

TTW Europe: Please share your experiences of hosting MICE events after reopening of the borders.

Christophe Berger: As a central MICE organization we organize familiarization trips to Malta & Gozo. We had various fam trips since the re-opening and everyone is super eager to travel and restart. For us as a destination, the opportunity of hosting fam trips is an important one. Many events have started again and overall the general feedback is great, people are very happy to travel, meet again, discover and re-engage with their teams.

The sector is super busy and looking ahead – there’s a lot going on. The challenge currently is to source and recruit employees to work in tourism and hospitality. We’re also seeing a big focus on sustainability more than ever across all MICE events and meetings.

TTW Europe: Tell us something about some of Malta’s attractions and experiences that set the islands apart from others of its kind.

Christophe Berger: Let me give you a little background about our Islands. The Maltese Islands are a small group of Islands in the middle of the Mediterranean bathed in over 300 days of sunshine and enjoying great weather all year round. Together with Maltese, English is our official language. We are an official EU Member State, transact in Euro and also part of the Schengen Area, meaning that there is freedom of movement and no passport control when travelling in this area.

Being small means distances are short and so are transfer times. It doesn’t take more than 50 minutes to cross the entire Island lengthwise, yet there’s so much to do. The product offer ranges from local and authentic experiences such as wineries and agritourism places to international names such as Café del Mar and Beef Bar.

Our food is something to be experienced – it’s got influences from Arabic, Italian, British and French cuisines. The gastronomic scene has developed so much in recent years especially with Michelin guide including Malta on their map.





Perhaps the most remarkable thing about our islands is our rich 7,000-year history, National heritage and culture. The Megalithic temples, Valletta – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an open air museum, and the Hypogeum – a prehistoric underground structure, are just a few attractions and experiences which set the Islands apart.

Gozo, the smaller Island offers the beauty of tradition, rural setting and calmness. It is the perfect destination for those seeking wellness and retreats, and also outdoor adventure. Last but not least sailing is probably one of the most unbeatable experiences our Islands have to offer, together with all water activities.

TTW Europe: How do you assess Malta's future in incentive travel and meetings industries?

Christophe Berger: The pandemic has brought about trends and requests that our Islands can handle exceptionally well. One change we've seen is group sizes becoming smaller. We feel that this has increased the appeal of our Islands especially for incentive travel. In addition to this, outdoor spaces have become more important than ever and this is a core product offer that we have in Malta & Gozo due to being blessed with a great all year-round weather.

The Maltese Islands are a mature destination and this allows us to focus on and develop what we're best at. Our network of suppliers have also learnt and developed a lot from this tough experience, some of them diversified, some have merged, we've seen new concepts as well. It's all about being positive in how you handle change and I think we're on the right path to grow sustainably.

VisitBritain boosts international visits in run-up to Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, taking place from 28 July to 8 August, is fast approaching and VisitBritain is ramping up its international activity to drive visits in the run-up to the Games and beyond. This popular game is hosting more than 40 top travel buyers, tour operators and trade media from Australia, Canada and India on educational visits to Birmingham and the West Midlands during the Games, in partnership with the West Midlands Growth Company.

The trade visits, which range from five-to-eight days, get underway from 25 July. As well as attending sporting events at the Games, the international buyers are visiting destinations and visitor attractions across the West Midlands, from a river cruise exploring Shakespeare's Stratford-Upon-Avon, a culinary course in the heart of Birmingham's Balti Triangle to a trip back in time at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley.

United Kingdom plans to implement contactless border crossing from 2024

Home Secretary Priti Patel said that the United Kingdom is planning to implement "contactless" border crossings in UK airports from 2024. This new system will allow some passengers to enter the country without using an electronic passport gate or speaking to a Border Force Officer. Instead, they may have to upload a photo of themselves and submit it to the Home Office before they travel.

This new scheme is intended to reduce queues at the border, "helping to speed up legitimate journeys to the UK". The travellers will undergo "pre-screening" says the government, allowing them to be "identified at the border using the latest technology.



Visit Portugal introduced comprehensive new e-learning course

In order to help trade partners to better understand the country, Visit Portugal has introduced the comprehensive new e-learning course “Portugal Expert E-learning program.” This course will help agents to understand the country in detail. The training is split into multiple modules to offer in-depth knowledge on everything a travel agent would need to market the destination.

In addition, the training covers the specifics and advantages of MICE and weddings in Portugal.

After successfully completing the programme, the agents will be certified as destination experts, and the first few agents will also be qualified for exciting rewards from Visit Portugal. Also, the certified agent will be eligible to be the part of the Expert club, where they will receive news and updates on the location directly from the tourism board.



Interail tickets are now not valid on many trains in southeastern France

There are after 50 years in which international visitors have been able to travel by train at will along the French Riviera and into the Alpes-Maritimes, the Interrail tickets are now not valid in on many trains in southeastern France. PACA, the regional rail enterprise running Transport Express Régional (TER) services in the Provence-Alpes-Maritimes-Côte d'Azur area, says that passes issued by Interrail – and its worldwide variant, Eurail – are no longer welcome on its trains.

Exploring with the best of Yerevan



Founded in 782BC by Urartian King Argishti I, Yerevan, only 29 years older than Rome, derives its name from the Urartian military fortress of Erebouni. The city gradually prospered with trade routes and soon formed its own culture developing the city with temples, palaces and fortress.

The capital city of Armenia, Yerevan is dotted with landmarks portraying unique architecture, developing urban infrastructure and hospitality. Yerevan with its 1.3 million population is an event-tourism city, as many autumn and winter festivals are in pipeline. So, come and experience some of the unique festivals.



Walking around the City Centre

Want to get immersed in Soviet and Armenian culture, history and cuisine? Take a free walking tour here. The locals here will volunteer to show you their hometown. Here check out the grand Republic Square, Aznavour Square, impressive Opera House, the 18th century Blue Mosque and the famous Cascade complex. Please include Kond, one of the oldest quarters in the city, dating back to the 17th century.



Take a tour to Ararat Brandy Factory

Visit Ararat Brandy Factory to see its distillery and enjoy wine tasting. Ararat is the oldest brandy company in Armenia, opened in 1887. The tour includes a visit to its in-house museum, where visitors learn about the history of the company and making of this fine alcohol. It also carries the traditions of ancient winemaking process.

Taste the diverse Armenian dishes



Armenian cuisine falls in Caucasian food genre. National Geographic included Yerevan in its list of “Six Unexpected Cities for the Food Lovers”. Armenian cuisine is quite delicious, with freshness and quality coming before flavour and spices. Take a gastro-tour to taste dzhash (stew), kabob (grilled meat) and pilaf (rice with meat).



Visit the museums to witness city's history

To learn about the city's past, head to its museums. The Armenian Genocide Museum, Matenadaran and History Museum of Armenia are the popular spots to visit. It has a collection of over 400,000 objects. Here you can learn more about "hidden 19th century backyards and modern sculptures".



Cascade Stairway and Museum

It is a giant staircase with many porches decorated with artsy statues and beautiful floral decoration. Built in Soviet era (1971), Cascade Stairway and Museum connects the Kentron area of the city. It has eight levels, all of which are accessible. See the breathtaking 360-degree view of the city and the Mount Ararat.



Shop at Vernissage Flea Market

If you are shopaholic, then go to Vernissage Flea Market located in Aram Street. It is city's largest open air market where you can find local handicrafts, Persian sculptures and different artworks.

It is now the cynosure as you can find Armenian artworks such as rugs, wood carvings, paintings, musical instruments and jewellery. It stretches from Republic Square metro station to the statue of Vardan Mamikonyan.



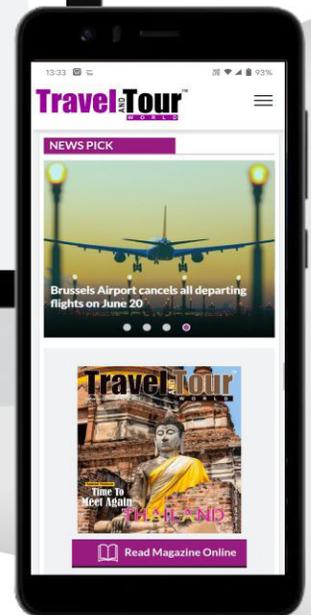
Don't Forget To Do

- Trek to Mount Aragats, Azhdahak, Spitakasar in Geghama mountain range and Khustup mountain.
- See the Terracotta cliffs of VayotsDzor.
- Visit cave town of Old Goris and the meteors of Khndzoresk.
- Take part in Harisa Festival and see Armenian dances and art forms.
- Relax and refresh at any spa of the coniferous fortified forest area in Dilijan and Jermuk.



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International Andros Festival

Date: 31 July-24 August, 2022

Place: Greece



Andros is at the epicenter of summer cultural activities, offering its residents and visitors special concerts, theatrical plays and local events. The Festival is once again organised by the Non-Profit Company “Friends of the Andros Festival” under the auspices of the Municipality of Andros, with the support of sponsors, volunteers and employees from Andros and other places.

The Unbeaten Path Festival

Date: 4-7 August, 2022

Place: Kovachevitsa, Bulgaria

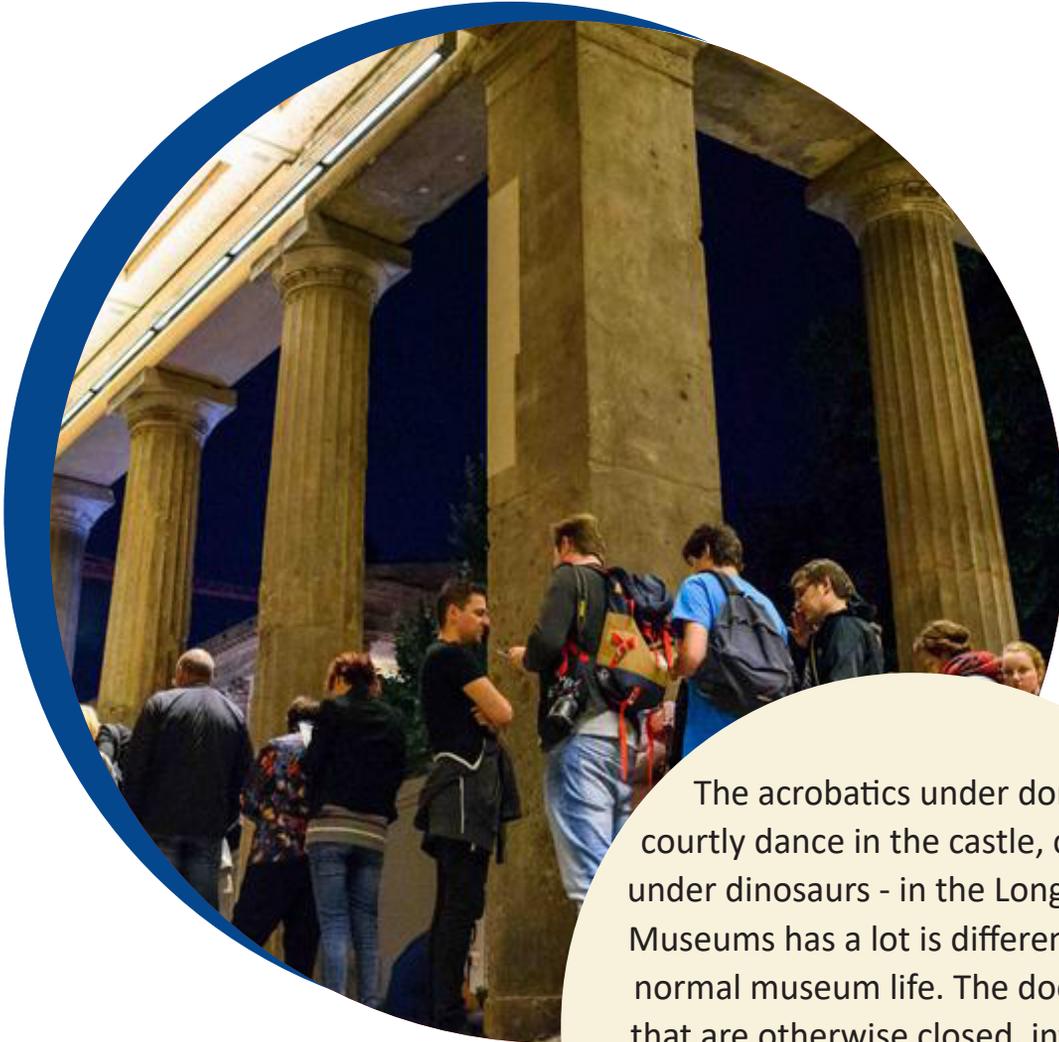


The Unbeaten Path Festival is a performing art fiesta and in this year, this cultural extravaganza will focus on chamber music with flute and harp. You will hear works by the French composers Camille Saint-Saens, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Gabriel Faure, as well as their contemporaries George Enescu and Amy Beech, whose works are deeply influenced by French music.

Long Night of Museums

Date: 27 August, 2022

Place: Berlin, Germany



The acrobatics under domes, courtly dance in the castle, cocktails under dinosaurs - in the Long Night of Museums has a lot is different than in normal museum life. The doors open that are otherwise closed, interesting guests come, and anyone who wants to can dance, draw, try a quiz and much more. The Long Night of Museums is a Berlin invention.

La Tomatina Valencia 2022

Date: 31 August, 2022

Place: Valencia, Spain



Bunol in Valencia is home to La Tomatina the famous tomato festival. Tons of ripe tomatoes are thrown by locals historically from warring towns and villages – followed by music and dancing. Each year the party gets bigger and better and is celebrated on the last Wednesday of August. Many thousands of people now make their way from all over Spain and abroad to be a part of this mega event.



National Museum of Azulejo

A visit to a local museum gives us learning experiences that have run the gamut from the pedagogical to the casual and the splendid. It is also a welcome addition to one's itinerary particularly for those keen on knowing about the bygone days of a place or race. Although tile art is common in the Mediterranean, but Lisbon has an entire museum dedicated to this art.

Located close to the Tagus River and adjacent to a scenic chapel, the National Museum of Azulejo is one-of-a-kind type of attraction in Lisbon. It is made up of ornate white and blue tiles that belong to the 15th century. The spectacular display of the ceramic tiles traces the museum's history and the evolution of the Portuguese art form. It also has a fair claim to being one of the country's most beautiful museums. Taking a tour round the museum will certainly instill within you a deeper understanding of the Portuguese culture, their history and art. At the same visitors will enjoy a visual treat looking at the spectacular work of art by some of the greatest Spanish painters of all times.

However, there are several other reasons for which the National Museum of Azulejo deserves a special spot in your travel itinerary.

Unbeknownst to many, the National Museum of Azulejo is both a museum and a national monument. It promulgates the idea that there is more than what it meets the eye. The theme keeps recurring in the azulejos, which offers a special experience to the onlookers.



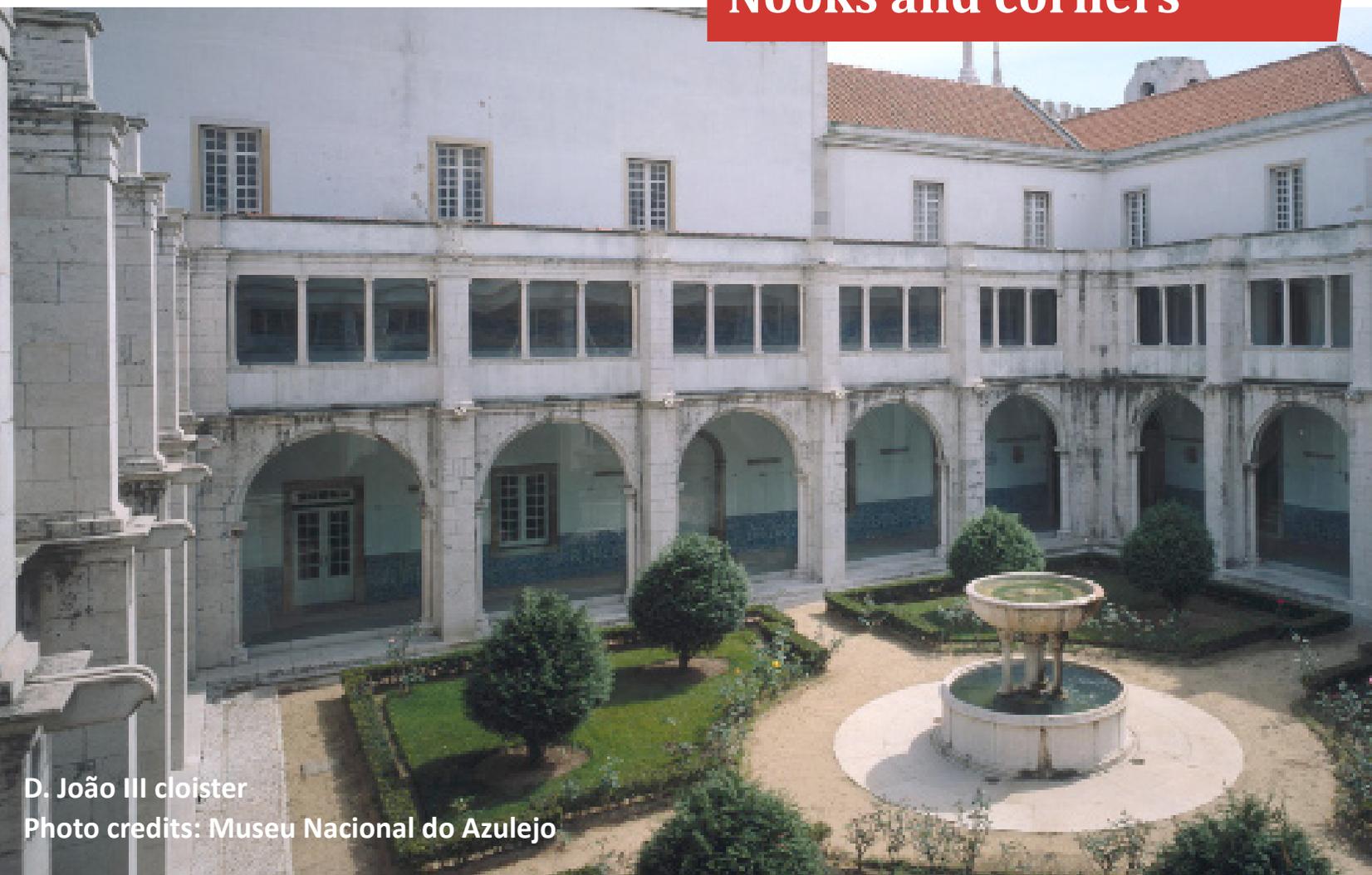
The word 'azulejo' has an Arabic origin 'al-zuraich' which means polished stone. The extravagant tiles which exude brilliance to the museum have striking resemblance with those found in Moroccan and Moorish architecture. The ceramic work implemented in the National Museum of Azulejo involved a variety of techniques as well as utmost skill and craftsmanship. Two skilled tradesmen were involved in the construction of this unique masterpiece- one looked after the patterns while the azulejador applied them on the target surface.

The oldest pieces of geometric patterned tiles on display came from Moorish-influenced southern Spain. But the most striking ones are the Chinese-inspired blue-and-white Dutch and Portuguese panels from the Baroque period.

The National Museum of Azulejo is housed in the building of Madre de Deus Convent. It is a 16th century convent founded by one of Portugal's most beloved queens, Queen Leonor. After the Great Earthquake, its interior was renovated and was converted into one of the city's most impressive monuments. What makes the museum one of the most iconic landmarks of Lisbon is its transformation from an old convent to a small Manueline (a Portuguese Gothic and Renaissance style) cloister and a church. Its ostentatious tile panels and gilded woodwork make this museum stand out among others of its kind in the city of Lisbon.

The altarpiece named "Our Lady of Life" is considered one of the first masterpieces of tile art. It was created in 1580 using a total number of 1498 tiles that belonged to a church once located adjacent to the castle. The artwork on the tiles depicts the birth of Jesus. Shades of different colours have been used to create the illusion of depth of the story which is conveyed through the painting.

Nooks and corners



D. João III cloister

Photo credits: Museu Nacional do Azulejo



Amid the elaborate and ostentatious decoration in the church, the panels in the ceiling with gilt frames will certainly catch the glimpse of every beholder. They feature beautiful paintings of King João III and his queen, Catherine of Austria. Those above the tile panels are by two eminent painters of the 16th and 18th centuries namely Cristóvão Lopes and André Gonçalves.

A more contemporary holding of the museum is the ‘Portrait of a Lady’ which consists of neoclassical and romantic nuances and date back to 1820. The painting stands out for its unique transparent effect with a veil over the face of the portrait which is indeed a tedious task to achieve in a painting. This is because it is impossible to guarantee the final result after heating the work of art. The other pieces of work include those by Portugal’s most iconic artists from the 20th century till date.



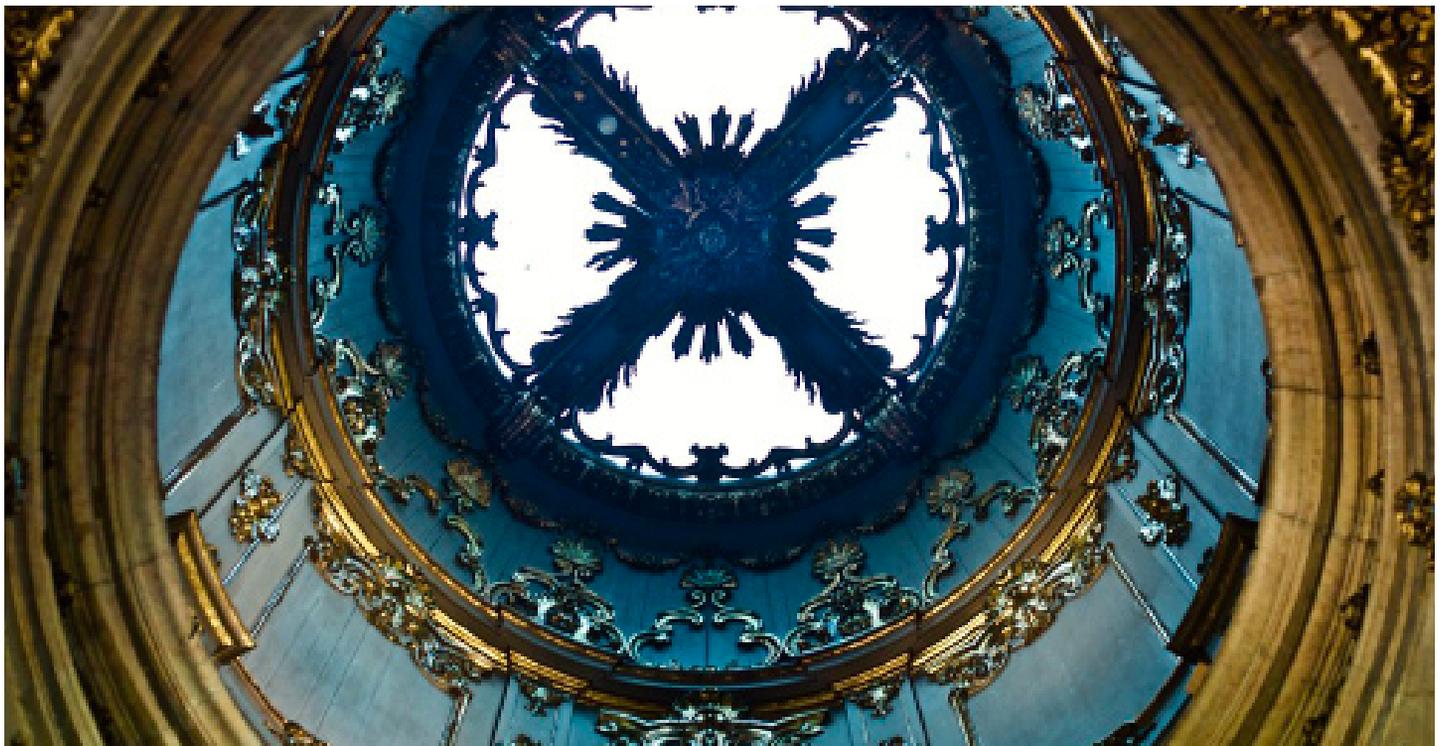
One of the most striking holdings in the museum is a colossal 23 m long panel housed in a room. The showpiece illustrates Lisbon before the historical earthquake in 1755. The painting is attributed to the renowned Spanish painter Gabriel del Barco who is hailed as one of the first masters of baroque tile art. The famous photograph features 14 kilometres of Lisbon’s skyline at a time.



What azulejos have to say about Portuguese culture?

Visit to Portugal is never complete without taking photos of the impressive azulejos in every size and colours. While they offer a visual delight to the spectators, at the same time they have a deeper message to convey about the facades of Portuguese history and culture. Colours and patterns are meticulously used to draw the eye in a certain angle. The Portuguese used errant paint drops, bleeding colours and also fingerprint occasionally. This gave the pictures a more natural appeal which is typical of Portuguese art. At the same time, a laborious amount of details injects subtle commentary or at times apply the azulejos into tight corners. The dichotomy is between form and function is fascinating!

The chief purpose of building the azulejos is to create a sensory experience and trigger emotional response. They may create an illusion of movement and depth or may even suggest something that does not actually exist. One such exclusive specimen of azulejo is the Nossa Senhora da Vida (Our Lady of Life) which features an empty space where used to be a window. It is presumed that light from the window would communicate with the image of Virgin Mary creating the illusion of Holy Spirit's descent.



Azulejo in today's Portugal

During the 19th century painters used azulejos in large scale which became a medium of creative expression for them in the 20th century. Over 20,000 azulejos were used as canvases to paint enormous murals that are found in the Sao Bento railway station. They stand as glaring examples of azulejo work and are certainly a sight to behold! These murals are created by the renowned painter Jorge Colaco in 1930. They depict Portugal's transportation history, its landscapes and its historical moments including the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385 and the Battle of Arcos de Valdevez in 1140. Over 20,000 azulejos were used to create.

Lisbon's subways are decked by the work of the contemporary azulejo artists. They use geometric patterns, landscapes, imagery and other patterns to create amazing artworks. The National Museum of Azulejo has a rich collection of modern azulejo paintings.

A noticeable feature in the cities like Lisbon or Porto is houses with facades covered in ornamental glazed tiles. Even in the idyllic neighbourhoods, where many ancient buildings have been worn down by time, these azulejo painted tiles lend an artistic appeal to its surroundings.



Satiate your cravings

The museum's cafeteria has a good collection of cheesecake and great to taste *meia de leite*. All are available without pinching your pocket. Visitors can also enjoy cake and coffee in the alfresco setting of the cafeteria which is beautified with beautiful sculptors and a pond with colourful fishes and a big turtle family.



While in Lisbon, visiting the National Museum of Azulejo signifies completing your tour with burgeoning seeds of an obsession. As one navigates through its open spaces, there are surprises at its every nook waiting for you to unveil, explore and enrich yourself with.

Calendar of Events



2-4 Aug 2022

**PATA Destination
Marketing Forum**

Songkhla, Thailand

pata.org/pata-destination-marketing-forum-2022



5-7 Aug 2022

**India International
Travel Mart**

Chennai, India

iitmindia.com

Connect TRAVEL
MARKETPLACE

8-10 Aug 2022

**Connect Travel
Market Place**

Detroit, USA

[connectmeetings.events
/event](http://connectmeetings.events/event)



9-12 Aug 2022

TECNZ

Tourism Conference

Nelson, New Zealand

tourismexportcouncil.org.nz



18-21 Aug 2022

ITE Hong Kong 2022

HKCEC, Hong Kong

itehk.com/travelexpo



**DIGITAL TRAVEL
APAC**

23 -25 Aug 2022

Digital Travel APAC

Singapore City

[digitaltravelapac.](http://digitaltravelapac.wbresearch.com)

wbresearch.com

TTW Europe

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