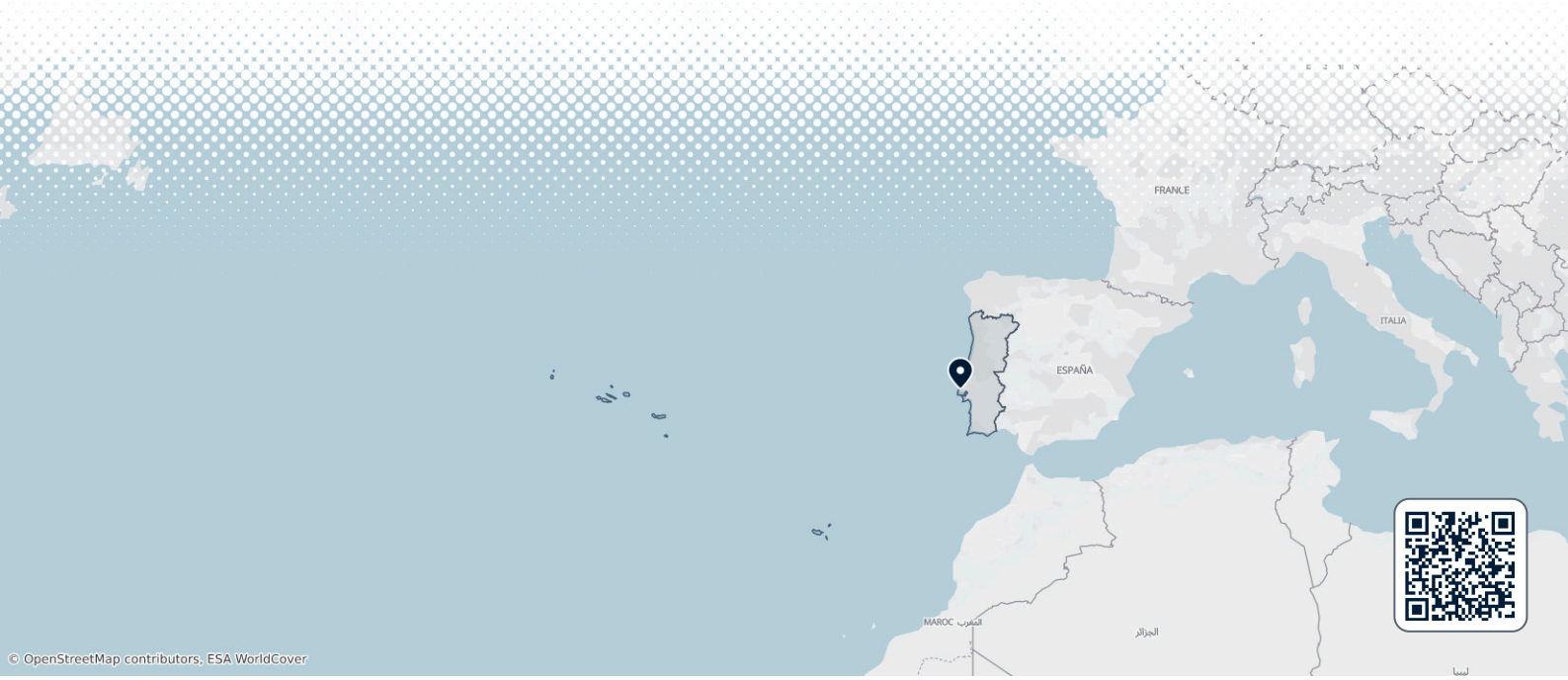


Mafra

West · Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Mafra is a town about 40 km northwest of Lisbon. It is known for its huge baroque palace and convent, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2019. The town itself is small and calm.

Most people visit for half a day or a full day from Lisbon. The royal hunting park, Tapada Nacional de Mafra, and the surf town of Ericeira are close by. Mafra suits history fans, families and walkers. The writer *José Saramago* set his novel *Memorial do Convento* around the building of the convent.

When to visit

Spring and early autumn are the best times for the palace and for walks in the Tapada. Summer is warm and dry. Winter is mild but often wet. The palace is indoors, so it works in any season.

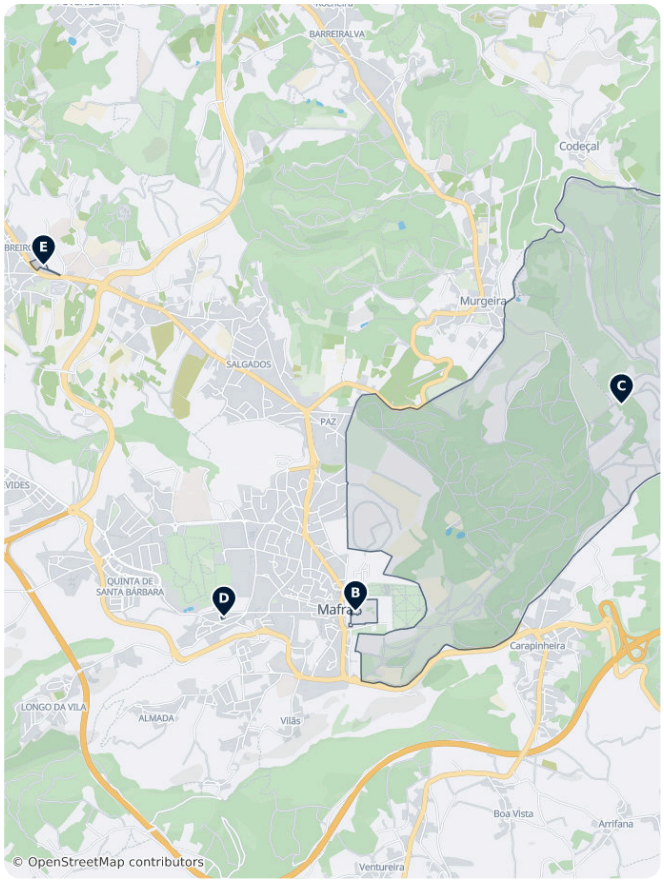
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for cycling	14° / 16° Feels like 9°	8° / 3°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	14° / 17° Feels like 10°	8° / 4°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	16° / 20° Feels like 12°	9° / 6°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	17° / 22° Feels like 13°	11° / 8°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 25° Feels like 16°	12° / 10°	21 sunny days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	15° / 13°	20 sunny days · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 28°	16° / 14°	24 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 29°	16° / 15°	24 sunny days · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 27°	16° / 13°	20 sunny days
October	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 25°	14° / 11°	
November	Good Good for cycling	16° / 20° Feels like 13°	11° / 6°	12 rainy days · Dry air
December	Good Good for cycling	14° / 17° Feels like 10°	9° / 4°	12 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: May, June, July, August, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Palácio Nacional de Mafra is the main reason to come. King *João V* started it in 1717. It has about 1,200 rooms, a long gallery and a library of around 36,000 old books. Part of the building is still used by the army.
- B Basílica de Mafra is the centre of the palace front. It has six historic organs, and the two towers hold carillons with 98 bells in total.
- C Tapada Nacional de Mafra is a walled former royal hunting park of more than 1,000 hectares. You can walk or cycle there and see deer and wild boar.
- D Igreja de Santo André is a Gothic church from the 14th century. It is the oldest church in Mafra, about a 15-minute walk from the palace.
- E Aldeia Típica de José Franco is a village of small scenes, built by the potter *José Franco* to show rural life of the past. It is a good stop with children, on the road to Ericeira.



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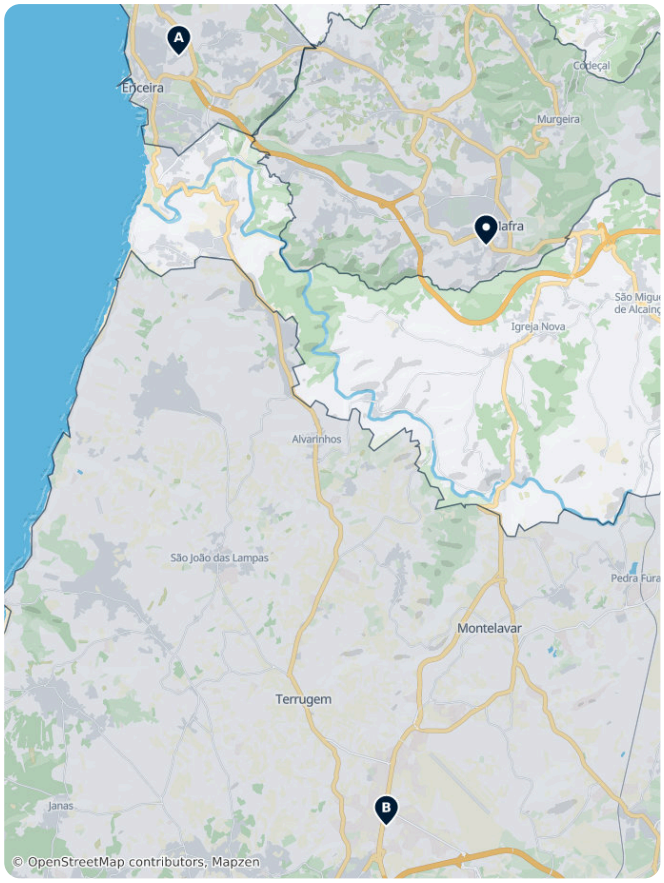
What to experience

- Listen to a carillon concert at the palace. The palace and the municipality organise concerts. Check the palace programme for dates.
- Walk or ride a bike in the Tapada. Guided walks, bike routes and horse-drawn carriage rides are offered, and there are bird-of-prey shows.
- Follow the Lines of Torres Vedras. Mafra was a key position on the second line of forts built against the French army in 1809 and 1810. The restored Fort of Feira overlooks Malveira, in Mafra municipality.

Day trips

Mafra is a good base for short trips. The closest places are on the coast and in the hills around.

- A Ericeira: about 10 minutes by car, with direct buses from Mafra. A surf town with small beaches and an old centre above the sea.
- B Sintra: about 25 minutes by car. Palaces, gardens and a medieval castle in a forested hill. A Carris Metropolitana bus also runs from Mafra, but a car is easier.
- Torres Vedras: about 30 minutes by car. There is no direct public transport. Its forts were part of the Lines of Torres Vedras, built in 1809 and 1810, and several restored forts can be visited.



Where to explore

- For the coast and surfing, go to Ericeira.
- For palaces and forest walks, go to Sintra.
- Most visitors arrive from Lisbon.

Getting there

- By air: Lisbon airport (LIS) is the nearest airport. Take the metro to Campo Grande station, then a bus to Mafra. From central Lisbon, driving takes about 50 minutes.
- By bus: Carris Metropolitana buses run from Campo Grande bus station in Lisbon. Line 2740 goes via the A8 and takes about an hour. Line 2803 also serves Mafra. A stop is at Terreiro D. João V, in front of the palace. Check timetables on Carris Metropolitana.
- By train: Mafra-Gare station is on the Linha do Oeste. The station is outside the town centre, so most visitors choose the bus. Check trains on CP Comboios de Portugal.

Getting around

- The old centre, the palace and the cafés around it are close together and easy to walk.
- Tapada Nacional de Mafra is about 3 km northeast of the centre. Aldeia Típica de José Franco is a few kilometres away, on the road to Ericeira. Use a car, taxi or bike for both.
- Local buses are run by Carris Metropolitana. Check lines and tickets on Carris Metropolitana.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old centre and the palace are compact and easy to walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling suits the Tapada trails and quiet country roads.

Driving

- A car is not needed for the palace and the centre. It helps a lot for the Tapada, the José Franco village, Ericeira and Sintra.
- The A8 from Lisbon and the A21 to Mafra and Ericeira are toll motorways. Use the Mafra Este or Mafra Oeste exits for the town.
- The national road N116 links Mafra with Ericeira. The N9 leads to Sintra.

Food & drink

Mafra is known for its bread. Pão de Mafra is a crusty loaf with a soft inside, from the old *pão saloio* tradition. Local sweets include fradinhos, small sweet tarts, and queijadas, which are small cottage-cheese pastries. Many bakeries in town sell them.

Cafés and restaurants gather around the square in front of the palace and on the streets nearby. For fresh seafood, the restaurants in Ericeira are only a short drive away.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Safety & health

Mafra is quiet and safe. Petty theft is rare, but do not leave valuables in a parked car at tourist car parks. Part of the convent is still an army school, so some areas are closed to visitors. Bring water and sun protection for walks in the Tapada in summer.

History

In 1711 King *João V* promised to build a convent if his wife gave him a child. The first stone of Palácio Nacional de Mafra was laid in 1717. The architect was *João Frederico Ludovice*. Gold and diamonds from Brazil paid for much of the work. The basilica was consecrated in 1730, when the complex was not yet finished.

The Tapada was created in 1747 as a royal hunting park. In 1809 and 1810 the area was part of the Lines of Torres Vedras, the forts built to defend Lisbon.

In October 1910, after the revolution in Lisbon, King *Manuel II* went to Mafra. He then left by boat from Ericeira and went into exile. In 1849 the convent was given to the army, and an infantry school was founded there in 1887. The school is still in the building today.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

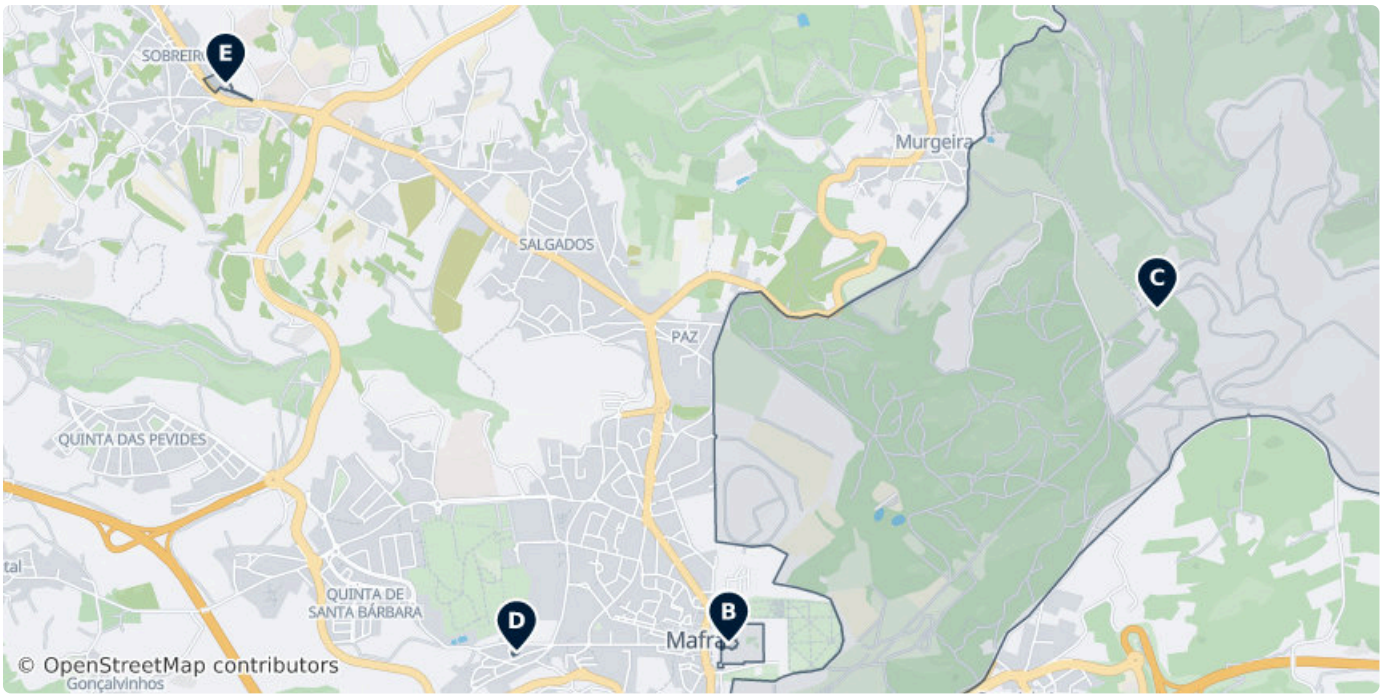


Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Top sights





A Mafra National Palace

The Palace of Mafra, also known as the Palace-Convent of Mafra and the Royal Building of Mafra, is a monumental Baroque and Neoclassical...

Terreiro D. João V, 2640 Mafra, Portugal (38.93691, -9.32656)

patrimoniocultural.pt/en/museus-e-m... , +351 261 817 550



B Basílica do Convento de Mafra

Baroque basilica begun in 1717 and designed by João Frederico Ludovice, part of the royal convent complex.

Mafra 2640, Portugal (38.93689, -9.32652)



C National Hunting Park of Mafra

Walled royal hunting park of about 1,187 hectares, created in the 18th century beside the Mafra palace and now a wildlife and leisure area.

(38.95051, -9.30403)

tapadademafra.pt



D Igreja de Santo André

13 Rua Pedro Julião, Mafra 2640, Portugal
(38.93652, -9.33765)



E Aldeia típica de José Franco

Open-air ethnographic village of miniature scenes showing traditional rural Portuguese trades and daily life, built by the sculptor and potter José Franco. Entry is free.

1 Rua de São Sebastião, Sobreiro 2640578, Portugal
(38.95966, -9.35291)

Apr-Aug Mo–Fr	09:30–19:00
Apr-Jun Sa–Su	09:30–19:30
Jul-Aug Sa–Su	09:30–20:00
Sep-Mar Mo–Fr	09:30–18:00
Sep-Mar Sa–Su	09:30–19:00

aldeiajosefranco.pt

DATA SOURCES

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- National Hunting Park of Mafra — "Tapada de Mafra Porta do Codeçal" by Júlio Reis, cc-by-sa-3.0
- Igreja de Santo André — "Igreja de S. André" by Michael Razuvaev, cc-by-4.0
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