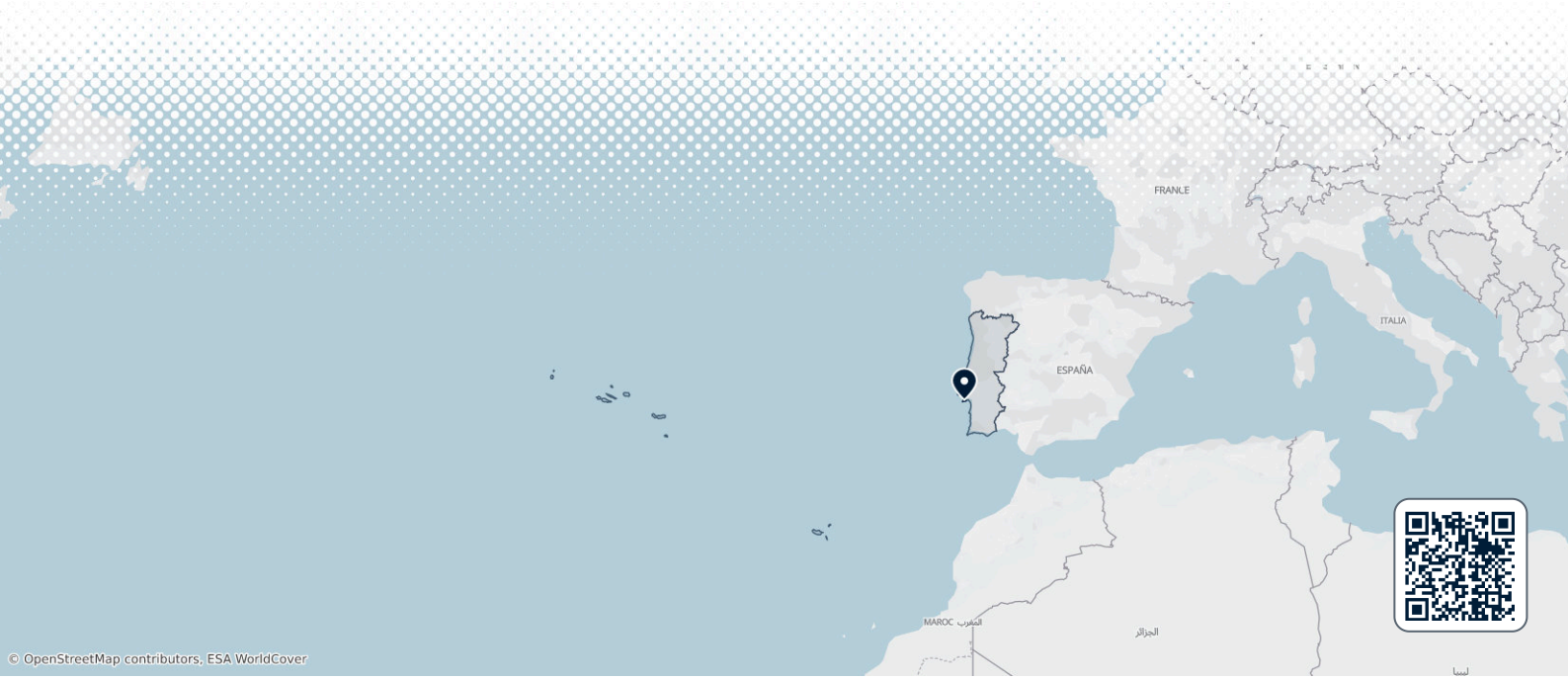


Sesimbra

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Sesimbra is a fishing town on a sheltered bay, about 40 km south of Lisbon. It sits at the foot of the Arrábida hills. A medieval castle looks over the harbour and the town beaches.

The town suits a relaxed coastal stay. Visitors come for grilled fish, swimming, boat trips and walks on the cliffs. It is also a base for Cabo Espichel and the Arrábida Natural Park, whose beaches start just east of town, and some people visit from Lisbon for a day.

When to visit

Summer is dry and sunny, and the sea is warmest from August to October. May, June and September are good months for the beach and for walking. Winter is mild but wetter.

The biggest annual event is the pilgrimage festival of Our Lady of Cabo Espichel. It usually takes place in late September. Pilgrims arrive at the sanctuary, and there is a mass, a procession and an entertainment programme.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for hiking	15° / 17° Feels like 11°	10° / 6°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	15° / 18° Feels like 12°	10° / 7°	Dry air
March	Great Great for hiking	17° / 22° Feels like 13°	12° / 8°	Dry air
April	Great Great for hiking	18° / 23° Feels like 15°	13° / 10°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	15° / 12°	21 sunny days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	17° / 15°	20 sunny days · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 29°	18° / 17°	24 sunny days · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 30°	19° / 17°	24 sunny days · Humid air · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 28°	18° / 16°	20 sunny days
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	16° / 13°	
November	Good Good for wildlife watching	17° / 21°	13° / 10°	Dry air
December	Good Good for wildlife watching	15° / 18° Feels like 12°	11° / 8°	Dry air

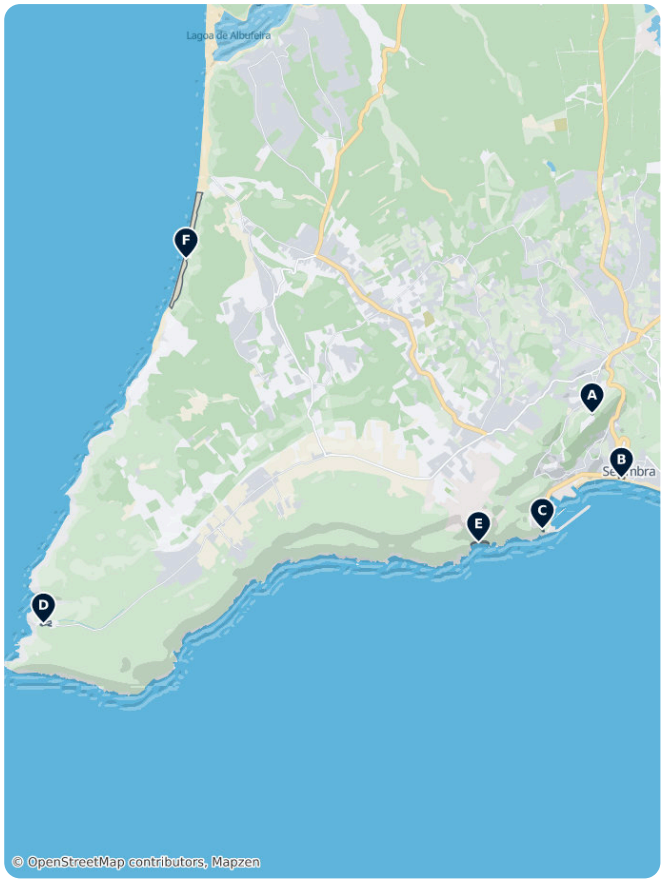
Best months: May, June, July, August, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

Most sights are in the town or on the cape to the west.

- A Castelo de Sesimbra stands above the town. It was a Muslim stronghold, and King *Afonso Henriques* took it in 1165. You can walk along the walls for views over the bay. It has been a National Monument since 1910.
- B Forte de Santiago is a 17th-century fort on the seafront. The tourist office is inside.
- C Forte do Cavalo is a coastal fort at the western end of the bay. It was built between 1648 and 1652.
- D Santuário da Nossa Senhora do Cabo Espichel is a baroque pilgrimage sanctuary on the windswept cape. Long rows of pilgrim lodgings flank the church. A walk of about 15 minutes along the cliffs leads to the lighthouse, built in 1790.
- Dinosaur footprints lie on the cliffs near the cape. The Pedra da Mua tracks are from the Late Jurassic. Look at them from the clifftop lookout, because the climb down to the rocks is dangerous.
- E Praia do Ribeiro do Cavalo is a sandy cove at the foot of a valley, with rocky islets just offshore. The trail down is steep and of medium difficulty. A boat shuttle is easier and depends on sea conditions.
- F Praia do Meco (Tramagueira) is a long beach northwest of Sesimbra. It is popular with naturists.



Sesimbra – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning

App Store · Google Play

Scan to download the app

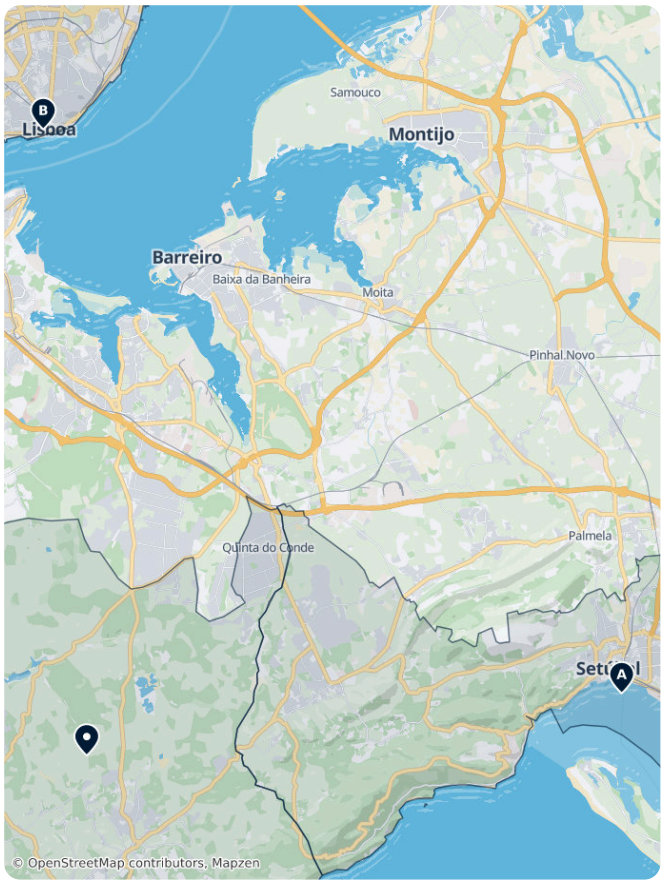
What to experience

- Boat trips leave from Sesimbra to look for dolphins in the Arrábida marine park.
- Diving is popular. A cargo-ship wreck, the River Gurara, sank off the coast in 1989.
- Walk from the sanctuary to the lighthouse at Cabo Espichel for the view over the cliffs. It takes about 15 minutes each way.
- Look for the dinosaur footprints at Pedra da Mua from the clifftop lookout. Bring binoculars, because the tracks are hard to see.
- Join the pilgrimage festival at Cabo Espichel in late September.

Day trips

Setúbal and the Arrábida coast are close. Lisbon is about an hour away.

- (A) Setúbal: about 30 minutes by car, or about 55 minutes by bus 3642 (roughly every 2 hours). From Setúbal, a catamaran crosses to the Tróia peninsula in about 15 minutes. A single ticket costs about 5 €.
- Portinho da Arrábida: a small beach in the Arrábida Natural Park, about 25 minutes by car. In summer, car access to the Arrábida beaches is restricted at peak times, so check the Setúbal municipality website before you go. Public transport is slow and needs changes.
- (B) Lisbon: about 70 minutes by bus 3721 from Sete Rios, or about 40 minutes by car.



Where to explore

Nearby places with their own guides:

- Setúbal is across the bay and the starting point for Tróia.
- Lisbon is the main gateway for the region.
- Sintra and Cascais are on the other side of Lisbon.

Getting there

Sesimbra has no airport or railway station.

- By air: Lisbon Airport (LIS) is the gateway. It is about 40 minutes from Sesimbra by car or taxi. There is no direct bus, so public transport needs a change in Lisbon.
- By bus: Carris Metropolitana line 3721 runs from Sete Rios in Lisbon to the Sesimbra bus terminal. It takes about 70 minutes and runs roughly every hour. Sete Rios is a rail and metro interchange. See Carris Metropolitana.
- By train: Fertagus trains run from Roma-Areeiro, Entrecampos and Sete Rios to Setúbal. From there, bus 3642 continues to Sesimbra in about 55 minutes. See Fertagus.

Getting around

- Buses: Carris Metropolitana buses link the Sesimbra terminal with nearby villages and beaches. Line 3205 goes to Cabo Espichel in about 30 minutes, but only a few times a day, so check times first. Pay the driver for a single ticket, or use a prepaid Navegante card, which is cheaper. See Carris Metropolitana for lines and timetables.
- On foot: the harbour, the seafront and the old streets are compact. A footpath of about 600 m climbs from the upper town to the castle. The cape and most Arrábida beaches are too far to walk.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The harbour and seafront are flat and compact. The castle is a climb. The cape and most Arrábida beaches are too far to walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

The seafront is flat, but roads to the cape and the park climb in places.

Driving

- Is a car worth it? Yes, if you want Cabo Espichel, remote beaches or the Arrábida coast. Buses to the cape run only a few times a day. For the town and the main beaches, you do not need one.
- Parking: parking is limited in the town in summer, so arrive early or use the car parks near the harbour. Check signs for paid zones.
- Tolls: the 25 de Abril Bridge charges a toll only when you enter Lisbon, so you pay on the return. The A2 motorway is also tolled.

Food & drink

Sesimbra is known for fresh fish and seafood. Look for grilled fish, swordfish, black scabbardfish and shellfish platters. Grilled fish is the local classic.

Most good places for a meal are on the seafront and in the streets just behind it. The municipal market is also worth a visit. Local fairs celebrate apples, sweets and bread during the year.

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.

Sesimbra – Plan Your Trip
Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.
3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning
App Store · Google Play
Scan to download the app

Safety & health

Sesimbra is a calm town. Normal precautions are enough. Keep valuables out of sight in parked cars, especially at remote car parks.

The main risks are in nature. The trail to Ribeiro do Cavalo is steep. Do not climb down the cliffs to the dinosaur footprints.

History

People have lived on the castle hill since prehistoric times. The Moors held Castelo de Sesimbra from the 9th century. It fell to *Afonso Henriques* in 1165 and to the Almohads in 1191. King *Sancho I* took it back in 1199.

In 1323 the walls were strengthened and a tower was added to watch for pirates. In the 17th century, forts such as Forte de Santiago and Forte do Cavalo were built to defend the bay.

Pilgrims have gone to Santuário da Nossa Senhora do Cabo Espichel since the Middle Ages. The present church dates from the early 18th century.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Portugal at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



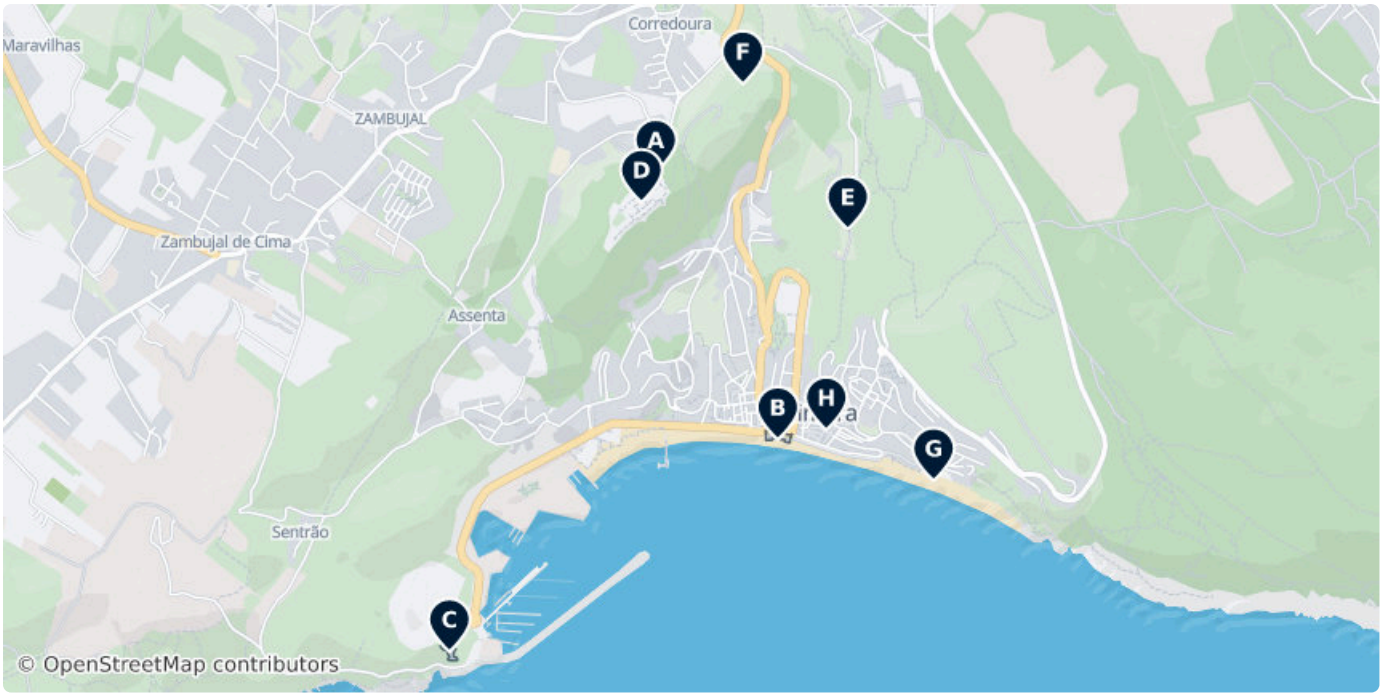
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Sesimbra's Essential Charm

Sesimbra’s landscape is defined by its strategic coastal defense and maritime heritage. The medieval Castelo de Sesimbra and the 17th-century Fortress of Saint James offer panoramic views of the Atlantic, while the Fort of São Teodósio protects the western bay. Archaeological sites like Outeiro Redondo reveal Copper Age origins, and the town's museum displays regional history. The central bay features the sandy expanse of Praia da California, complemented by a seafood scene focused on fresh Atlantic catches at local institutions like A Lota.





A Castelo de Sesimbra

This Moorish-origin medieval fortress sits 200 meters above sea level. It features well-preserved ramparts, the 12th-century Church of Santa Maria do Castelo, and two main towers providing views over the bay and the Arrábida mountains.

Rua Santa Maria do Castelo, 2970093, Portugal
(38.45270, -9.10694)

Apr-Sep Mo–Su	10:00–20:00
Oct-Mar Mo–Su	07:00–19:00



B Fortress of Saint James of Sesimbra

The Fortress of Saint James of Sesimbra is a fortress located in the parish of Santiago in the coastal town and municipality of Sesimbra,...

27 Rua da Fortaleza, Sesimbra 2970738, Portugal
(38.44274, -9.10113)



C Fort of São Teodósio da Ponta do Cavalo

The Fort of São Teodósio da Ponta do Cavalo is a coastal fort located in a dominant position at the extreme west of the Bay of Sesimbra in...

EM585, 2970, Portugal (38.43485, -9.11676)

D Museu Arqueológico de Sesimbra

Located inside the Castelo de Sesimbra, this museum displays archaeological finds from the local area, covering periods from the Paleolithic to the Middle Ages, with a focus on the region's early human settlements.

2970, Portugal (38.45158, -9.10762)

Mo–Su 09:30–18:00

E Moinho do Macedo

A traditional stone windmill located on the hills above Sesimbra, representing the region's historical agricultural practices and milling heritage.

Sesimbra (38.45057, -9.09780)

F Povoado Calcolítico Fortificado do Outeiro Redondo

A fortified settlement dating to the Chalcolithic period (3rd millennium BC). Excavations at this archaeological site have revealed defense walls and evidence of early metallurgical activities.

(38.45599, -9.10280)

G Praia da California (Caneiro)

Situated in the eastern part of Sesimbra Bay, this sheltered sandy beach is known for its calm waters and Blue Flag status. It is bordered by a pedestrian promenade and the Fortress of Saint James.

Rua Navegador Rodrigues Soromenho, 2970-773 Sesimbra, Portugal (38.44121, -9.09372)



H A Lota

A traditional seafood restaurant specializing in locally caught fish and shellfish. Located near the seafront, it emphasizes fresh ingredients sourced directly from the town's fishing port.

9 Rua Latino Coelho, Sesimbra 2970768, Portugal (38.44310, -9.09883)

DATA SOURCES

Map data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, ESA WorldCover, Mapzen
Data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, Wikidata, Wikipedia, Tripomatic

IMAGE CREDITS

- Castelo de Sesimbra — "Castelo de Sesimbra by Paulo Bras" by Paulo Bras, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Fortress of Saint James of Sesimbra — "Fortaleza de Santiago - Brazão Real na porta de entrada..." by Sacavem, Public domain
- Fort of São Teodósio da Ponta do Cavalo — "Forte_de_São_Teodósio_da_Ponta_do_Cavalo - entrada Local - Sesimbra / Portugal..." by Sacavem, Public domain
- A Lota — "A Lota" by Sygic Travel User, CC-BY-SA

A free travel guide — not for sale. Travel guide generated with AI on November 23, 2026. Text and layout by Tripomatic, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, available under the ODbL. Photos are under their own licences, as credited on this page.