



OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM THE TOP:
Elephants in the Addo Elephant
National Park, South Africa;
Paris, France.

THIS PAGE, FROM THE TOP: Costa
Vicentina, Portugal; The village of
Mértola in Portugal; Serra da Estrela
National Park in Portugal.

23

PORTUGAL

When you think you 'know' Portugal, you'll peel another layer. Lisbon and Porto, with their ceramic tiles, pastel hues (and *natas*) and trundling trams, need little introduction. Yet the country's soul whispers loudest in its most overlooked corner. Venture to the historical Beiras' hinterlands to cycle Fundão's low-slung hills fragrant with spring's cherry blossom, then slow down in forest-swaddled Cerdeira, a schist-stone village reborn as a creative retreat. Ramble the wild Costa Vicentina's old donkey tracks along juniper-scented clifftops, catching waves in surf-pounded, footprint-free craggy bays. Or dive deep into Portugal's centuries of Moorish rule in museum-like Mértola, soundtracked by nestling swallows, before sampling Talha Mafia's robust reds aged in ancient amphorae, still using the Phoenician methods introduced millennia ago. From the prehistoric rock art of the Côa Valley to Conimbriga's Roman-evoking ruins, another of Portugal's eras and pocket-sized surprises awaits at every turn.

BEST TIME TO GO: June's sardine-wafting, revelry-inducing Festas dos Santos Populares kick off city summer, before everyone beelines to the beach, but Portugal has year-round pulls. Pick September for old-school wine-treading harvests, November for Nazaré's giant, roaring waves, or spring for dreamy wildflower-lined hikes.



Words: Daniel James Clarke