



MY PORTUGAL

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From the moment I was born, I've been a multicultural person. My parents are Dutch, but I grew up in the sunny south of France. They came on a holiday over 40 years ago and never left. It's funny how history repeats itself because I feel like I'm following in my parents' footsteps. In 2019, my husband and I took a vacation to Portugal and fell head over heels for the country and its people. We made a decision that would change our lives forever.

During that September trip, we not only fell in love with the beautiful country, but we also fell in love with the warm-hearted people. We turned to each other and said, “One day, we will retire here.” Little did we know that fate had something else in store for us.

Returning to Berlin, where we were living at the time, was a harsh reality check. We were back in our tiny 50m² apartment, surrounded by cold weather and rain. The stress of my job as a customer care manager took its toll, and I ended up experiencing a burnout. My husband, too, was unhappy with our lifestyle. After deep reflection and countless conversations, we came to a powerful realization: “Why wait until retirement to live the life we truly want?” And just like that, **our hearts were set on Portugal.** Unfortunately, COVID struck shortly after our decision, delaying our plans. But in November 2020, we packed our cats into the car, bid farewell to our jobs, and embarked on a four-day journey to Portugal to start afresh.

Today, with the possibility of remote work, it's easier to embrace the lifestyle we've always dreamt of while maintaining our careers.

The biggest change in our lives is the **abundance of sunlight.** Waking up to sunshine streaming through my bedroom windows has completely

transformed the way I start my day. I've come to realize that sunlight is vital for my well-being.

Moving from a bustling city to a charming village is exactly the environment we envisioned for our daughter to grow up in. It's everything we hoped for and more.

Contrary to my initial worries, **everything has been smoother than I imagined.** Within two months of moving, we found a place to call home, secured jobs, and began a new life.

The personal advice I give my clients is: if you want it, go for it. Don't look at other people's failures.

I've been pleasantly surprised by the **kindness and hospitality of the Portuguese people.** They embrace expats with open arms, and many of them speak English fluently. When we moved in, our neighbours warmly welcomed us with thoughtful gifts. It's a heart-warming feeling to be

embraced and accepted. As someone who enjoys cooking, I'm delighted by the **local market prices**. They are often on par, if not cheaper, than supermarket prices. Food is an essential part of my life, so having the possibility to have **fresh fruits and vegetables on a daily basis** is a dream come true.

When describing Portugal, the simple life is truly the best way to put it.

The country offers good food (and wine), beautiful weather, and kind-hearted people. What more could I ask for?

Currently, most of my friends are fellow expats. I don't believe it's solely due to a language barrier but rather the shared experience we all have. We've gone through the same journey and moved to Portugal for similar reasons.



However, thanks to my daughter attending the local kindergarten, we've been invited to birthday parties and play-dates, which has expanded our local community. What I truly admire about the Portuguese is how they find joy in life's small pleasures, take pride in their traditions and culture, and, above all, love sharing them with others. As an expat, **I've always felt included and welcomed by the Portuguese community**. Even though my husband and I aren't Portuguese, navigating important aspects of life, such as pregnancy, giving birth, registering our child at the municipality, obtaining her passport, and finding a kindergarten, has been surprisingly easy. Everything was well-explained, and **people were incredibly helpful along the way**.

Choosing to raise my child in Portugal has been a fantastic decision.

Safety is a top priority when considering a child's well-being, and **Portugal provides a safe environment**. We live on the ground floor and sleep with the windows open, a testament to the **peace of mind** we have here. •



One day, I found myself at the local market just before it closed. An adorable elderly lady packed three bags of fresh fruits and vegetables for me. However, to my dismay, I realized I had taken the wrong purse and didn't have my wallet or any money to pay for my groceries. I apologized, expecting an awkward situation. However, the lady simply looked at me and said, "You live here, right?" "Yes, I'm from here," I replied. She smiled and said, "Oh, no worries. Take the bags and pay me tomorrow." This kind of empathy and trust is rare to find in many countries, but it still exists among the Portuguese people, and it's something I truly cherish.

