



Lisbon—The 3-D city

by Geoff Hall

When I heard that the venue for EMWA's 30th conference was Lisbon. I was confused. No, that can't be right. Lisbon was 2003. Where are we really going? Lisbon confirmed, I was frankly delighted. The 2003 conference took place in the modern outskirts of Lisbon. The 2009 spring conference really is closer to the heart of my favourite city. Favourite city? What about Paris? Rome? Swindon? Terrific cities, with great charm and history, but Lisbon edges it for me. (OK, so I wasn't serious about Swindon.)

Lisbon has a lot going for it; European capital with an Atlantic coastline and beaches within a few minutes of the city centre. A visitor to Lisbon can enjoy the history of one of the great centres of former European power in the morning and a visit to a charming resort in the afternoon. So let me introduce you to the city.

I visited Lisbon for the first time on my honeymoon in 1971. (Those who know my wife will deduce that this must have been a different one as Pat is too young to have been married for 39 years—and who could put up with me for more than 40?) In those days, the dictator Salazar ruled Portugal. The impressive 25th April suspension bridge across the Tagus was the Salazar Bridge and life was lived at a gentler pace. A new Mercedes was a rare sight. Today, Lisbon is the capital of an important EU state and, thanks in part to EU development cash, the traffic barely moves on Friday evenings.

Hotel Tiara Park Atlantic hosts the 2010 EMWA spring conference and so this is probably the best place to start this quick guide to the city. Step outside the door of the hotel and you will find the *Eduardo VII* (Edward VII)



Eduardo VII Park is located on the north side of Marquis Pombal Square at the head of the impressive Avenida da Liberdade.

Park—named after the British king (1901-1910) to mark a visit and as a reminder of the long and friendly association between these two countries. Look south from the park and you will get an instant picture of the topography of the city centre; a broad, steep-sided valley.

A little history here. Marquis de Pombal is regarded as one of Portugal's greatest statesmen. A statue to him stands in the square. He is so highly regarded because of his response to one of the blackest days in Portugal's story—1st November 1755. Out in the Atlantic, one of the most powerful earthquakes in European history caused instant devastation in the capital and throughout southern Portugal. Occurring on the Christian feast of All Saints' Day meant that thousands perished in church as ancient buildings collapsed on their heads. A while later, survivors were mesmerised to find that the sea retreated leaving the wide Tagus River empty, revealing centuries-worth of lost shipping and cargoes. Today, we would recognise this as the precursor of a tsunami. The parts of the city that avoided devastation by the ensuing flood were soon ablaze. Lisbon was destroyed. The man who masterminded its reconstruction was the prime minister Sebastião de Melo, later the Marquis of Pombal. Readers with an interest in architecture might enjoy researching 'Pombaline style'.

Back to our view. To the east (the left in the view from the park) rises the rock on which you will find the Castle of St George and the most historic part of the city, Alfama. The western side of the valley is steeper, the districts Chiado and Bairro Alto—the upper town. In between, the valley floor, and towards the river, the Baixa, is the main commercial centre. A leisurely stroll south down the *Avenida da Liberdade* will take you to some of the main squares of the city.

The Squares

First, the *Praça dos Restauradores* (Restorer's Square) dedicated to the restoration of the independence of Portugal in 1640 after 60 years of Spanish domination, is home to the architecturally distinguished Rossio railway station. (This is where you can catch a train to Sintra, a world heritage site with its royal park and palaces Sintra is about 45 minutes from Rossio Station.) Close by you can find the *Elevador da Glória* (Glória Funicular) that will take you to the high town, Bairro Alto. Next, wander into the *Praça Dom Joao da Câmara* where you will find the original facade of Rossio Station.

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Next, *Praça de Dom Pedro IV*, commemorates Portugal's first liberal king. The square is known simply as Rossio. The 'Heart of Lisbon' is the centre of the city and home to cafés, bars and a hubbub of commercial activity. To the east, is the smaller *Praça da Figueira*, a more comfortable size for sitting at a pavement café than Rossio it is also an important focal point for travel round the city with bus, metro and tram stops.

Baixa

Pronounced *by-sha*, Baixa is the Pombaline grid of streets between Rossio and the *Praça do Comércio* on the waterfront. The buildings are both delightful and, for their era, remarkably advanced in resistance to the effects of earthquake. Someone, perhaps Pombal himself, thought it a good idea to dedicate some of the north-south streets to particular trades. I know of at least one EMWA member who will be hoping that the tradition still holds true for *Rua dos Sapateiros*. Not so, sadly, but this street, spanned at its Rossio entrance by the decorative arch *Arco do Bandeiro*, is a good choice for a route south to the river—traditional cafes, cheap restaurants, Art Nouveau and an Indian tandoori restaurant for when you've had enough of Portuguese food.

However, my route of choice would always be the *Rua Augusta*. Pedestrianised and with a wealth of shops and boutiques. You will know you've found it as you look to its far end past pavement cafes to the dramatic triumphal *Arco da Rua Augusta*. I recommend that visitors make at least three stops during their walk down the street—in addition to the open-air cafes. (Incidentally, I have discovered that Portuguese waiters don't understand the English expression 'small brandy' when ordered with coffee as a morning livener. Fortunately, I've never troubled to learn the pronunciation of the Portuguese expression '*conhaque pequeno*'.)

First stop, a crossing road *Rua de Santa Justa*. Turn right, to the west, and you have a great view of the structure that guides often call Lisbon's Eiffel tower—the *Elevador de Santa Justa*, which takes passengers up a level to the charming *Largo do Carmo* in the lower part of Bairro Alto.

Turn around to face the east, and you'll be rewarded by a glimpse of the city's guardian, the *Castelo de Sao Jorg*.

To the right and beyond the castle is the most ancient part of the city Alfama. Walk on down *Rua Augusta* and another key crossing is *Rua da Vitoria*. Turn to your right here to look west and you will see what looks like the mouth of an enormous concrete cave. It is in fact one of the two entrances to the Baixa-Chiado metro station that links the blue and green lines of the system, making it one of the most important transfer stations. Wait a minute, you might think. If Baixa and Chiado are two distinct districts, how can they share a metro station? The answer is simple in



Elevador de Santa Justa



St George's castle from the top of the Elevador de Santa Justa. (Taken on my visit 25 January 2010—and the weather really was as good as it looks)

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- > this 3-D city. The two entrances are not far apart on a map but they are at quite different altitudes. The station's impressive cascade of escalators provides an energy-saving, speedy and free way of travelling between the levels.

The next point at which to stop on the stroll down *Rua Augusta* is *Rua da Conceição*. This is an important point in the city, as it is one of the most convenient places to board the 28 tram. The 28 tram (*electrico*) runs from here to the



The cascade of elevators linking the Baixa and Chiado entrances of this important metro station provide a free ride between the districts

Getting about Lisbon

In this brief article, there simply is not room for a full description of Lisbon's potentially confusing transport system, and so I will make just one recommendation—the Sete Colinas card—and a mention. A ride on a bus, tram, lift or funicular costs €1.40. A single metro ticket costs €0.75. The Sete (7) Colinas (Seven Hills) card sold in the ticket kiosks of Carris and the Metro for €0.50, is a rechargeable electronic ticket that can be charged with a simple ticket, or with a combined ticket for the Carris (bus, tram and funiculars) and Metro networks. This costs €3.70 for one day. I bought mine in January 2010 in the lottery shop in the south-east corner of Rossio Square. €0.50 for the card and 3 days unlimited travel on the listed modes of transport—total €11.60. There is a dearer alternative that might suit some—the Lisboa card. This permits the use of all public transport facilities in the city and trains between Lisbon and Sintra or Cascais and also offers free entrance or discounts in monuments, museums or tourism circuits. The prices are €15 for 24 hours, €26 for 48 hours and €32 for 36 hours.

west, up into Chaido and then down to the waterfront close to the *Cais do Sodré* railway station.

In the opposite direction the 28 tram visits some of the most picturesque sights and interesting locations in the city. These small classic yellow trams are old and quirky; and the few of the old style that remain, go up and down through the narrowest streets. A cheap travel card allows passengers to hop on and off tram No. 28, other trams and underground metro all day. (See Getting about.)

Ask the driver to let you know when to get off for Castelo. *Largo da Santa Luzia* is best. Then it is but a short uphill walk to enjoy the stunning views from the *Castelo de São Jorge* and a historical treat. A few stops further on, brings the 28 to the edge of Alfama and close to Lisbon's best known street market—The *Feira da Ladra* (Thieves' Market) beneath the National Pantheon on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Flea market sums it up, but it's worth a visit and is open conveniently for those arriving for the conference early or adding the weekend to the trip.

Alfama

Alfama is Lisbon's most emblematic quarter and one of the most rewarding for walkers and photographers thanks to its medieval alleys and outstanding views. Its foundation of dense rock sheltered the area from the 1755 earthquake and the ensuing tsunami. Despite this and the frequent description of a walk through Alfama as a step back in time few, if any, of its delightful buildings predate the Christian re-conquest—although the Moorish influence is everywhere. With its narrow streets, tiny squares with sometimes surprisingly large churches, Alfama is a delight.

Chiado

Probably the most desirable residential area of the city, Chiado is an elegant shopping area with a delightful square and famous theatres, bars and cafes and the museum of contemporary art. There is also a museum of pharmacy. It is close to the *Elevador da Bica* that connects the area with the *Cais do Sodra* and its railway station. And it's all on the route of the 28 tram.

Cais do Sodré railway station

Trains from here connect Lisbon along the sophisticated Estoril coast to the fishing village turned popular resort, Cascais, passing tourist favourites at Belém, the Jerónimos Monastery, and the the *Torre de Belém* its defender. Without leaving the train, you get a nice view too of the Monument to the Discoveries, erected in 1960 on the 500th anniversary of the death of Henry the Navigator, the instigator of the Portuguese adventures into the unknown.

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The bronze statue sitting at a table in front of Lisbon's most famous coffee shop Café A Brasileira in Chiado is the poet Fernando Pessoa: born June 13, 1888—died of cirrhosis 30th November 1935. The service must have been better then. Pessoa is the one on the left.

Bairro Alto

The upper town, to the north and west of *Chiado*, is the place to find many of the best restaurants, several of which feature traditional *fado* singing in the evenings, bars and clubs.

Praça do Comércio

We end our stroll down the spine of the city. Passing through the impressive 19th-century triumphal arch we reach its historic entrance—Commerce Square—once the main maritime portal to Lisbon. Normally one of the most majestic sites of Lisbon, when I visited at the end of January 2010 it was a bit of a building site. Let's hope they've finished by May. The old marble steps leading up to Commerce Square from the River Tagus are a reminder of countless merchant sailors would have come to pay duties and trade. Its other name, Palace Square, comes from the palace that was located here for 400 years, until the 1755 earthquake.

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Special rates at Lisbon hotels for conference delegates

EMWA has secured a special rate at three hotels for conference delegates:

Tiara Park Atlantic Hotel

A special rate of €150 per room, per night for a deluxe single occupancy bedroom, has been secured at the conference hotel. This rate includes a buffet breakfast, taxes and service. In order to book a room, please download the booking form using the link below. Once you have completed the form, please return the form to the Tiara Park Atlantic, either by fax + 351 21 389 05 00 or e-mail sofia.fecha@tiara-hotels.com.

Sana Lisboa Park Hotel

The Sana Lisboa is located within 15 minutes walking distance, of the conference hotel. EMWA has secured a rate of €125 for a single room and €135 for a double room. This rate is per room, per night, and includes a buffet breakfast, taxes and service. To proceed with a booking, please complete the booking form, using the link below. Once you have completed the form, please return the form directly to the hotel by fax +351 21 00 64 345 or e-mail rebqt.lisboa@sanahotels.com.

Hotel Sofitel Lisbon Liberdade

The Hotel Sofitel, is located within 15 minutes walk of the conference hotel. EMWA has secured a rate of €135 for a single room, or €150 for a double room. This rate is per room, per night, which includes a buffet breakfast, taxes and service. To proceed with a booking, please contact, Ms. Rita Afonso using the following e-mail address: h1319-sl@sofitel.com and quote EMWA to secure a room under this special rate.

These details can also be found on the booking form available on the EMWA website: www.emwa.org

Share a room: Would you like to cut expenses and share a room at the conference hotel with another delegate? To find out more log in at http://www.emwa.org/component/option,com_facileforms/Itemid,105/

'News'

The word 'news' came from the first letters of the words North, East, West, South. This is because information was being gathered from all different directions.



Register for the 30th EMWA Conference in Lisbon on <http://www.emwa.org/Lisbon-2010.html>