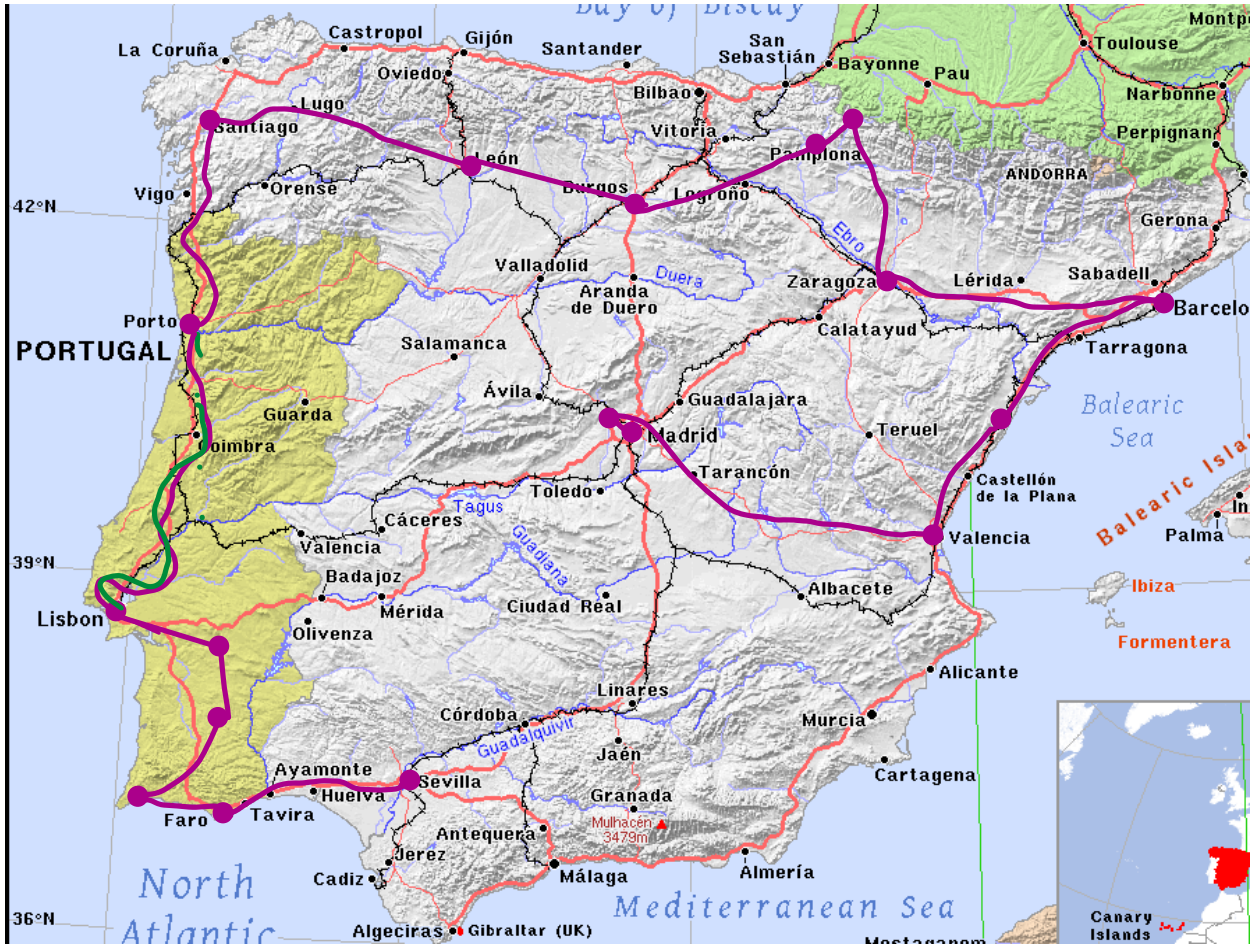
Walk Through Spain and Portugal from 1/26—3/22/2026
Results of Week 6: 3/2—3/8/2026

During this week we collectively walked 372 miles and had 18 participants. Sources for photos are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. The green line on map of Spain and Portugal indicates places we visited each week. A magenta line on the entire map is our proposed route for our 8 week walk map with major cities marked with magenta dots. PAT is free software. Copyright © 2010, 2013 by Ian Macky. **Note: This document is copyrighted by K. Scharer, 2026, except where other copyrights are noted.**

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL MAP



We left Monday morning and continued walking south and slightly inland to Coimbra. The area was inhabited by Romans during the Roman era and still today there are Roman structures such as aqueducts still preserved. At one point Coimbra was a major political center for the Kingdom of Portugal but that declined in the last middle ages. Instead, Coimbra developed into an important cultural center. In 1290, the first academic establishment of higher education was built there. The University of Coimbra is the oldest university anywhere in the Portugues- speaking counties around the world. For a change of pace, we decided to visit some of the oldest buildings in Coimbra first this week. we toured the University Square and historic buildings, before seeing the Biblioteca Joanina, known as one of the best Baroque libraries in existence with over 40,000 books. Last in our visit to the University was a stop at the lovely botanical garden, considered to be one of the finest in Europe.

Joseolgon, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, panoramic view of the city left. Digitalsignal, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, main square, and historic buildings, below right.

Then we headed to some of the oldest Catholic sites in Coimbra.

In the 1100's, important construction of city occurred. The ruler, Afonso Henriques, had the Monastery of Santa Cruz erected, built a cathedral, rebuilt the old Roman bridge, and repaired roads, fountains, and the city walls. The old cathedral, built during the 1100's is shown left. Berthold Werner, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. We made a stop there before heading to another old building, from the same time period, the Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha. Nuno Tavares, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below right.

The Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Velha, (Saint Clara, the old) was built by Queen Elizabeth of Portugal. Unfortunately, it was built too close to the river and frequent flooding forced the Poor Clare Sisters to move to a new uphill site in the 1600's . A new monastery was built and is known as Monastery of Santa Clara-a-Nova (the new). When the Sisters moved, they also moved Oueen Elizabeth's tomb to the new building, shown below. José Luis Filpo Cabana, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior, left and interior of the church, right.

Next we visited the Monastery of the Holy Cross (Portuguese: Mosteiro da Santa Cruz), also from the same time period, the 1100's. Because the first two kings of Portugal are buried in the church, it was granted the status of National Pantheon.

This monastery was built outside of Coimbra's fortifications but it was a very important monastery to the Portuguese kings. It was founded by Saint Theotonius for the Canons Regular of the Holy Cross. He also served as the first Prior of the Monastery. syvwlch [2], CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Santa Cruz, left.

The monastery was able to acquire significant wealth due to various privileges granted by the Pope and the grants from the Royals. It also became a significant influence on the political and cultural scene. It had an important school with a large library and was highly respected for its educational activities and opportunities for scholars to learn in the

huge library. At least two Portuguese kings are buried there: King Afonso Henriques and his successor, King Sancho I.

Saint Anthony of Lisbon, who we know as Saint Anthony of Padua, served after his ordination at Santa Cruz. At one time he was placed in charge of hospitality and in the capacity interacted with Franciscans in 1220 when the remains of the five Franciscan protomartyrs were being returned to Assisi through Coimbra after being martyred in Morocco. This experience led St. Anthony to leave the security of the Monastery for the life of a Franciscan in Italy.

Our next stop was at the New Cathedral or the Cathedral of the Holy Name of Jesus. The Cathedral is located near the University of Coimbra in the upper part of the town. We attended Mass while we were there. Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. On the main façade, you can see four niches of the façade of the New Cathedral, each with a statue of a saint. The decorations on the lower and upper parts of the façade have different styles, based on when they were completed. The lower part is considered to be in the Mannerist style, while the upper portion completed in the early 1700's is Baroque. Cristina Morettini 95, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior right. Inside the church is a lovely barrel-vaulted ceiling. Noteworthy decorations in the church are the wooden gilded altar pieces like the one in the image at right. The gilded choir stalls were taken from the Old Cathedral and installed in the new Cathedral. If you enlarge the interior image, the choir stalls will become clearer and you will be able to see the gilded altar more clearly!

After doing some other individual sight-seeing, such as visiting the National Museum or shopping, etc., it was time to move on. Our next destination was Fátima. Fatima is one of the world's principal shrines of Marian devotion. I am always surprised when I remember how recently this shrine was developed! It is less than 109 years old! Fatima's fame is due to the Apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary who appeared to three shepherd children, Lúcia Santos, age 10, and her two cousins, Francisco, age 9 and Jacinta Marto, age 7. It started on May 13, 1917, when three children were tending sheep. Suddenly, the sky lit up and a woman described by the children as a "lady brighter than the sun" — appeared standing under an oak tree. It was during World War I that the Lady, identified as Mary, delivered a message that peace was coming. What is interesting is that Portugal had been a neutral country until 1917 when they began engaging the Nazi forces who were blockading ports important to Portugal's trade. The war went on, and on the 13th day of each of the next five months, Mary again visited the site to call for peace. Many people questioned whether the children were telling the truth and government officials grilled the children repeatedly but the children reported their experiences without variation; at one point they were put in jail for disrupting the population.

Attributed to Joshua Benoliel, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, , Lúcia Santos, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, left.

As word spread of the Mary's visits, many pilgrims began arriving on the 13th of those summer and early fall months to see the apparition.

Finally, on October 13, 1917, a huge crowd of people arrived at the oak tree area. They were drenched in a rainstorm when all of a sudden the sun came out, grew blindingly bright, moved around in the sky, then seemed to plunge to the earth. When the crowd came to its senses, the sun was shining and the rain had dried. This event has become known as the Miracle of the Sun. This was the last apparition of the Virgin at this site.

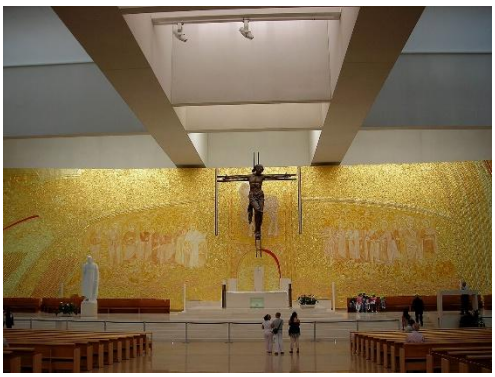
In 1930, the Vatican recognized the Virgin of Fátima as legitimate. Every year many thousands of people come to Fatima; some walk all the way from Lisbon to visit the shrine. The pilgrim-friendly Fátima is a huge complex, with two big churches and a vast esplanade adjacent to a practical commercial center, designed to meet the needs of the pilgrims for food and shelter. On the 12th and 13th day during the months from May through October, great numbers of pilgrims visit the shrine.

Andreas Trepte, CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons, panoramic view with Basilica in center and interior of Basilica, below left.

We also visited the towering basilica, completed in 1953. Its 200-foot spire is topped with a gold crown and a crystal beacon. Mary of the Rosary flanked is on the façade and mosaics of the Stations of the Cross are on the porticos. On the 13th day of each month an outdoor Mass is celebrated. Inside, on the ceiling in big letters in Latin is a sign, Queen of the Holy Rosary of Fátima, pray for us. There is also a large painting of vision the children had as well as the tombs of the children themselves. Francisco and Jacinta Marto both died from a flu epidemic a few years after their vision while Lucia became a Carmelite nun and lived until age 97. After her death in 2005, her body was interred here also.

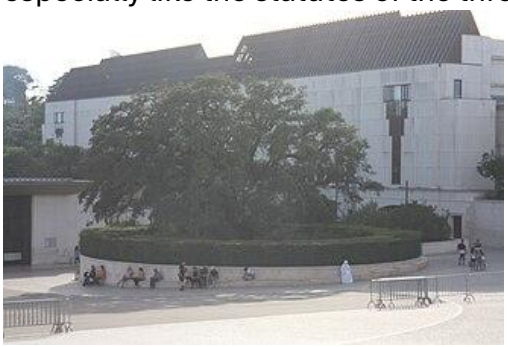
Pope John Paul II kicked off the construction of Fátima's grand new Church of the Holy Trinity with a stone from St. Peter's actual tomb in the Vatican. Completed in 2007, the huge new church can hold 9,000 devotees.

Berthold Werner, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below left. Therese C, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior, right.



As 100,000 pilgrims arrive at Fatima on special days of the year. Fortunately, the area I huge! The 50th anniversary in 1967 drew a crowd of 1.5 million

people. We spent some time here both at a Mass and also exploring the many facets of the shrine. I especially like the statutes of the three young people to whom the Blessed Mother appeared.



We saw the oak tree where the apparition of Mary first occurred and visited which stands on the spot where Mary appeared. Reis Quarteu, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left and image right. And we also visited the statute of St. John Paul II. As we walked around the complex we saw many other monuments and statues, such as one depicting the Blessed Virgin with the three children and an angel of peace. We spent the whole day here and used lots of miles walking around seeing all the monuments.

Santarem was our next destination. It is only a few miles from Fatima and about 45 miles northeast of Lisbon. The first place we visited there was the Miracle Church. That was not the official name of the church which is actually the Church of St. Stephen.

GualdimG, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, So why did people begin calling this the Miracle Church? The story centers around a women's attempts to regain her husband's faithfulness to her instead of his philandering. The wife went to a sorceress and asked for her help. The sorceress demanded that the wife bring her a consecrated Host in order to make the husband once again faithful to his marriage vows. This, of course, would be a sacrilege, but the woman was desperate! The wife attended Mass at St. Stephen's and after receiving the consecrated host, turns around, removed the host from her mouth, and covered it with a piece of clothing to being to the sorceress.

As she began to leave the church, blood began flowing from the Host; it looked like the wife had seriously cut her hand. The parishioners around her tried to help but she ran back to her home. Once there she threw the Host into the bottom of a chest in her bedroom. Late in that evening her husband returned and went to bed only to be awakened by a glowing light coming from the chest. Shaken, he awakened his wife who then confessed to her husband. Both were awed by the light. Both began praying in adoration and repented their individual sins. The next day they took the Host to their parish priest and reported their behavior.

The priest took the host, placed it in a wax case, and brought it back to St. Stephan's. The priest of St. Stephen's placed wax case into the Tabernacle . When the priest next opened the Tabernacle , a second miracle had taken place. The wax case with the Host was in pieces and the host was found in a crystal pyx . (A pyx or pix is the small round container used to carry the host to the homebound person.) The miracle was extensively investigated and then approved by the Church. The Host still resides at St. Stephen's in a reliquary on the tabernacle that all can see. And the Church of St. Stepen's became the Miracle church in people's minds and hearts.

Then we visited the Cathedral of Santarem. Senhormario, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Cathedral, left. The Cathedral of Santarém is from the 1600's and was originally a Jesuit church. After the Jesuits were expelled in the mid-1700's, the church became the Seminary Church. In the 1970's the church was designated as the Cathedral. It has a very beautiful interior with lovely alter pieces and other decorations in various styles such as Baroque and Mannerist, as

the image of the pulpit left demonstrates. Alvesgaspar, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons , Pulpit of the Cathedral. Carlos Luis M C da Cruz, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, Walls of Santarém Castle, below.

After exploring the city, we ended with a visit to the remaining walls of Santarém Castle and then headed out toward the coast to visit Obidos before we went to Lisbon. Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, panoramic view of Obidos, left, interior of St. Mary's Church below, left, and typical street view, below right.

Obidos is a town completely enclosed by great walls and most of the medieval castles are still standing. Because of its age, the narrow streets are still cobbled. And the city walls have prevented Obidos from dramatically changing. The castle protected the town for at least 800 years. The town was traditionally given to the Portuguese Queen as a wedding present. The tradition began in 1214 and lasted until the 1800's. As a result, the town remained very picturesque.

The Church of Santa Maria is lovely and serves as the primary church for the town. If you look at the above picture, you can find the steeple of Santa Maria in the upper right-hand corner and slightly to the left. While the exterior of this church is lovely, the interior is stunning! There are Azulejo tile paintings as well as Gothic religious art. If you enlarge the picture a bit , you can see some of the artwork on the altar piece. This church was the site of the wedding between King Afonso V and his cousin Isabel in 1444. They were married at the very tender age of 10 and eight years old, respectively!

This site of this church has served three different religious groups. It was originally built as a temple by the Visigoths during the 400-500's, then it became a Mosque in the 700's and finally became a

Gothic-style church in the 1100's. But the original church was hit by an earthquake in 1535 and it was rebuilt in Renaissance style.

After leaving Obidos , we headed to Lisbon, the Portuguese capital city. Our first stop in Lisbon was to the Jerónimos Monastery or Hieronymites Monastery. The building was constructed over a 100-year period beginning in 1501. King Manuel had it built to be the burial place for his family known as the House of Aviz. He expected his family to be the ruling dynasty for years after his death. King Manuel selected the Hieronymite Monks to run the monastery and to regularly pray for those interred in the Monastery. A second function of the monks was to provide spiritual guidance to sailors leaving on ocean voyages to settle new lands for his country. The Monastery is near the Tagus River which runs directly into the Atlantic Ocean. As happened elsewhere in the country, the Monastery was closed by state law in 1833. The monks left the building but the Church of Santa Maria remained opened as a parish church. The Monastery currently houses the Ethnological Museum of Portugal and a Maritime Museum.

Massimo Catarinella, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

After exploring the museums and enjoying the beautiful Portuguese Gothic Manueline architectural style and decorations of the Monastery, we turned our attention to the Church of the Monastery. The Church Santa Maria de Belém .Jakub Hałun, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, exterior of Santa Maria church. Szilas, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, altar, center. Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior , right The church associated with the

Monastery remains an active Catholic parish. "Belem" in Portuguese translates to "Bethlehem". As the pictures demonstrate, the same Manueline style of architecture was used for the church. Alvesgaspar, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Belém Tower, left.

As long as we were in the Belem section of Lisbon, we head to the nearby Tower of Belem, AKA the Tower of St Vincent, which stands at the entrance to the Targus River where it meets the Atlantic Ocean. The tower is part of a fortified defensive system which was commissioned by King John II to protect the city of Lisbon from maritime invasion.

Next, we headed for the Igreja (church) da Madre de Deus, pictured below, left, which is classified as a National Monument. Located in the eastern part of Lisbon, the Church of the Mother of God was part of the Convent of the same name, founded in the early sixteenth century. Vitor

Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left, and right images. Our tour included a visit to the Church. Madre de Deus church has beautiful Baroque decorations. The Renaissance choir of Madre de Deus Convent is on the right—enlarge it a bit to see the lovely artwork and gilded frames! Many of the wooden elements in the church are gilded. The interior of the church includes many paintings on the walls and ceiling and many blue and white tile designs. Perhaps this is what prompted the government's decision to turn it into the National Tile Museum. The Convent was founded in 1509. The 1755 earthquake in the area did extensive damage to the convent. Repairs were made and it continued to be used as a convent until it was closed in the late 1800's with the intent of making it a museum. But the Museum didn't actually open until mid-1950's. The National Tile Museum is the Portugal's only museum dedicated to tiles. It has quite a collection of beautiful tiles. Tiles from the 1400's up to current times are in the collection which are displayed in the former cloisters.

Alvesgaspar, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left, from 1660.

The Moorish invaders were the ones who introduced tile making in Portugal but from the 1500's, the Portugues began producing their own decorative tiles. The tile picture at left is an example of the Portuguese style of blue and white tiles known as azulejos. One picture that caught our eyes immediately is the scene at right known as *Nossa Senhora da Vida* (Our Lady of Life). It is actually an altar piece, measuring 16.5 feet and almost the same dimension in width. It consists of 1,798 tiles and is known as The Adoration of the Shepherds. Schad, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, above right. Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

After leaving the National Tile Museum we went to the Cathedral. Santa Maria Maior de Lisboa, AKA the Lisbon Cathedral, is the oldest cathedral in Lisbon. Santa Maria Maior de Lisboa was built on a spot where the Moors had a mosque. After the Moors were expelled from the area, the location was deemed perfect for a cathedral. The church was built in 1150. Afonso Henriques who was the first king of Portugal founded the church. The initial Romanesque building was damaged by an earthquake and has undergone extensive renovations over the years.

Holger Uwe Schmitt, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Cathedral interior, left.

The cathedral holds several tombs including that of the patron saint of Lisbon, St. Vincent of Saragossa who died in about 304. He is deemed to be a Protomartyr. St. Vincent was an ordained deacon who served with Bishop Valerius of

Saragossa. Because the Bishop has a speech impediment, St. Vincent served as his spokesperson, preaching in the Bishop's stead.

During his reign as the Roman Emperor, Diocletian began persecuting Christians, including those on the Iberian Peninsula. Vincent was imprisoned in Valencia. He was offered release if he would renounce his faith but he refused and said nothing would cause him to change his mind. The Governor of Valencia was furious and inflicted every kind of torture he could think of on St. Vincent. But St. Vincent would not recant. He remained in prison until he died from his torture. But Vincent's sense of peace during his torture and imprisonment so impressed his jailer that the jailer repented of his sins and converted to Christianity.

At one time, chapel of Nossa Senhora da Saúde was outside Lisbon's gates. Originally a chapel of São Sebastião was located her but the chapel of Nossa Senhora da Saúde was built on this spot in 1506.

Andrzej Otrębski, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. St. Sebastian was a healer during a plague which was raging in the area. Due to the large number of victims, a larger church was needed to meet the needs of the people. The people appealed to Nossa Senhora da Saúde (Our Lady of Good Health) to stop the outbreak of plague in their area. But it was about 150 years later that the chapel's name was changed to Nossa Senhora da Saúde. The primary image on the altar was also changed at the time to one of Mary as a healer. The chapel was damaged by an earthquake and it needed renovations over the years but the façade remains from the early 1700's. We continued our pilgrimage by visiting St. Anthony's.

SchiDD, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons exterior . Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons interior of St. Anthony's.. The Igreja Santo Antonio is dedicated to the Saint who is Portugal's Patron Saint. The Baroque façade looks more like a great mansion rather than a church. The interior, however, is bright and has various statues and paintings of the Saint. Although St. Anthony of Padua is thought of as an Italian saint, he was from Portugal and began his religious service in Portugal. The church bearing his name is built at St. Anthony's birthplace. There is a small chapel making St. Anthony's actual birthplace in 1195. The original church was also destroyed by that 1775 earthquake. It was rebuilt after that.

Pope John Paul II visited the crypt of St. Anthony when he visited in 1982. He blessed the statue of St. Anthony outside the church which you can see in the picture above.

Our next visit was to Carmo Convent, which was begun in the late1300's. The convent was built on a hill opposite the Castle of St. George in Gothic style. Bene Riobó, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. Vitor Oliveira from Torres Vedras, PORTUGAL, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below right and below left. It was a huge construction. Like much of Lisbon it was destroyed by the 1755 earthquake and while some attempts to rebuild it occurred, it was pretty much abandoned in 1834 when the Monasteries were dissolved across the country. A decision was made to leave it without the roof but to allow visitors as a type of monument to the earthquake. The absence of the roof allowed me to appreciate the beauty of the building more than I might have with a roof!

Our next stop in Lisbon was at the Castelo de São Jorge (Castel of St. George). fulviusbsas, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below.

The hill beneath the castle has long been inhabited by humans since the 8th century BC. And there is archeological evidence of the hill having been fortified since at least the 2nd century BC. Over the centuries, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, and Moors have occupied that hill. The fortifications were built by the Moors during the 900's. The Portuguese took possession in 1147. After the castle was built it had several different functions: palace, military barracks, National Archives, and national monument and museum.

We then had a little time for independent sightseeing. Some of us went to the Jardim Botânico d'Ajuda (Botanical Gardens), others toured the shopping districts and some went to a museums. There are multiple museums in Lisbon, including ancient art, modern art, digital art, coaches, the waterfront, and ship building, and even money! And some of us just rested. Lisbon was our last stop for the week; next week we will explore some smaller places as we begin heading south to Faro.

Thanks for participating!
Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer