

# LISBON: THE GAY DISCOVERY



I'M not sure whether Lisbon is "the new somewhere", but it's probably Europe's answer to Casablanca. A fusion of nearby Africa; a hint of Asia from the old trading routes; a dose of ex-conquest South America; and a dash of Latino machismo from southern Europe. Add a wild vestige of Islamic invasion, Christian empire building, exiled royal families, long-term dictators and republican revolution and you're almost getting there.

Against this intoxicating backdrop, the gay scene gazes down from the lofty, beautiful Principe Real and Bairro Alto districts upon the sunken Baixa heart of Lisbon. The antique queer quarter roads are narrow, hilly, intimate grids, lined with pastel-plastered walls and a mix of bars, restaurants, boutiques and dwellings. Be warned: train long and hard for these late Lisbon nights! Don't eat out before 10pm, hit your first bar well after midnight, and any club will be almost empty the younger side of 3am.

Where to base these nocturnal forays, voyages and excursions? For a great, inexpensive gay-friendly roof over your head,

**Pensão Londres** (53 Rua de Dom Pedro V, Tel: 00 351 21 3462203) is pretty unbeatable - right in the thick of gay action, with many loftier rooms framing the entire central Lisbon basin. Or try at the best

**Blue Angel** (Rua Luz Soriano, 75; T: 00 351 21 3478069), billed as Portugal's first "gay hotel", whatever that means in this day and age.

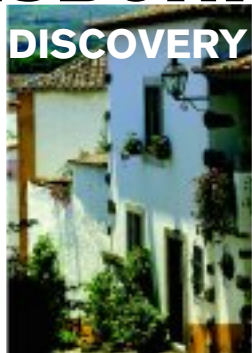
Few cafes and restaurants in the queens' quarters will scorn a clearly flourished pink pound. But make a B-line to overtly gay-friendly and informal café-restaurant **BS**

(116 Rua da Imprensa Nacional), open 11am - 2am Tues-Sun. And then?

Many bars and clubs in central Lisbon are pretty mixed, with a gay contingent. But honing in, men-only bars include the vibrant **Água no Bico** (170 Rua de São Marçal), more basic **Bar 106** (106 Rua de São Marçal), rougher **Max** (15 Rua de São Marçal) and older **Satyros** (6/B Calçada da Patriarcal).

Men-only or queer-dominated clubs include the relaxed **Finalmente** (38 Rua da Palmeira), bland **Bric-à-Bar** (82/84 Rua Cecílio de Sousa) with dark room and hot 'n horny, cruisy yet dancy **Trumps** (104B Rua da Imprensa Nacional). Bric and Trumps hold sway 'til 6am - every day!

Horn still up? Cruising areas include the mildly dangerously drugged-up eastern edge of the **Parque Eduardo VII** just north of centre; and the grassy stretch between the carriageways of the safer, aptly-named **Campo Grande**, major artery in from the north. Still steaming? Then the best male sauna in town is probably the spacious, youthful **Viriato** (4B Rua Telhal) where you can break a sweat and steam away surrounded by tanks full of turtles from 1pm to 2am any day. Or check out **Spartacus** (2 Largo



**They may have discovered the New World but the Portuguese are only now discovering themselves. ADRIAN GILLAN explores the exotic gay scene in capital Lisbon.**

Trindade Coelho) from 3pm to 9am all week round.

What with the long, late nights, you'd best make the most of your shorter days. Roam through the spicy, colourful, tropical mix of green palms and terracotta tiles, perched on rolling hills above one of the world's great natural harbours. The narrow, winding roads and warmer air make Lisbon daylife every bit as exhausting as its nightlife - and equally sultry for queer romance.

A natural, exotic blend of cultures - including the gay variety - Lisbon is a place of explorers, waiting to be explored. And your money will take you a great distance once you're here, so book a flight soon!



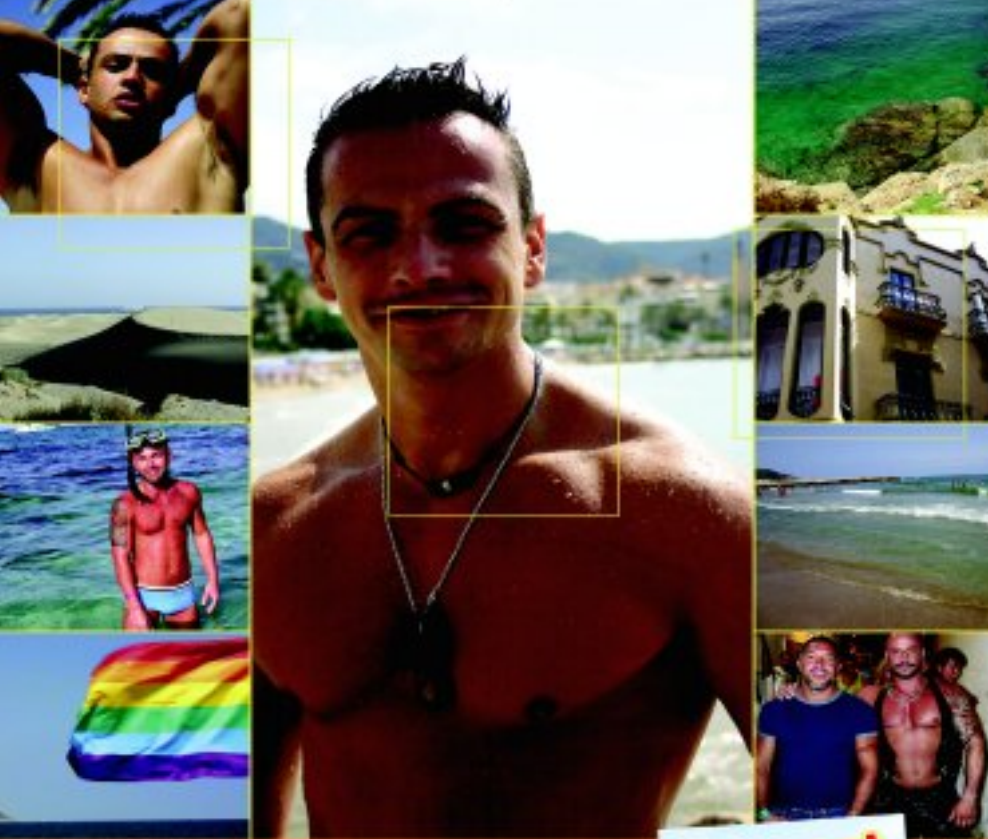
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