

Art, Peace and Calm: Visiting Lisbon with time and curiosity

It always begins with a small, almost ordinary gesture: pushing open the door of a pastry shop that was there long before we arrived and will remain after we leave. We order a *pastel de nata* and a coffee, sit at the counter, and think that's all it is. But the coffee arrives, the gentleman behind the counter asks if it's good, we answer something or other, and suddenly it's no longer just a coffee. It's something else. Because the conversation opened up, because he told us where the milk comes from, because he commented on the weather, because we stayed. And in that moment we realise we are not consuming Lisbon - we are inhabiting it, if only for a few minutes.

We step back out into the street without a fixed route. We walk up an avenue we know by sight but never by foot, or head down another we assumed was flat but turns out not to be. We pass through Alvalade, with its trees lined up like calm soldiers, or Campo de Ourique, where the city feels more intimate, more neighbourhood-like, more made to be lived slowly. There are no monuments waiting for us - there are people, open windows, the smell of lunch drifting down stairwells.

We continue on to Príncipe Real and walk simply trying to decipher accents. Who speaks Portuguese in that particular tone, who speaks French, who speaks English with a lilt we cannot quite place. Where they have come from, what they are doing here, how long they will stay. We ask nothing; we simply let the city pass through our ears. Nearby, a kiosk. We order a cold beer, lean against the metal counter, and let the late afternoon do the rest.

As the city begins to lower its volume, it makes sense to step into the **CCB (Centro Cultural de Belém)** and lose ourselves in the exhibition “*Lugar de estar, the Burle Marx legacy*”, on view until April 5. It is not an exhibition to rush through. It is meant to be wandered like a meticulously designed garden, observing how landscape, architecture and life can breathe together. The plants, the drawings, the photographs and the exhibition spaces ask for the same state of mind as a walk without a watch. There, we understand that calm is also a form of construction, that the way we inhabit space shapes the way we inhabit the world.

From there to the **Gulbenkian** is a short leap and a natural extension of the afternoon. At the recently opened **Centro de Arte Moderna**, the rooms invite another kind of silence - more inward, more concentrated. Among works that cross times and languages, we learn to look slowly, to linger on details we almost always ignore.

Lisbon in peace and calm is a practice. A practice of slowness, of attention, of knowing how to stop when it wasn't planned. It means accepting that the best moments might be found in an extra coffee, a side street, a card game, an unfamiliar accent, or a museum room where time seems suspended. The city is not a city when we run through it. It reveals itself when we slow down and allow ourselves to notice.

Haste turns the city into a pretty postcard; time turns it into a place we can inhabit. The magic lies in the hours that slip through our fingers. That is when Lisbon becomes truly delightful - not because it is perfect, but because it allows us to exist without a plan, without urgency, and without the obligation to be anywhere else.

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