

# *Street Markets in Lisbon*

*What to buy when you want to take Lisbon home with you, not just a souvenir of it*

There is a version of Lisbon made up of miniature trams, generic-patterned tiles and tins of sardines with artisanal labels that cost eight euros despite having been mass-produced. That version exists, it is in high demand, and it is not the one I am talking about here.

Lisbon also has another network of markets, less obvious and far more revealing, where people buy the things that those who actually live here buy. Books, fabrics, old tools, original azulejos, vintage clothing, fruit from growers who do not have a shop. This is that Lisbon.

The Feira da Ladra takes place every Tuesday and Saturday in Campo de Santa Clara, behind the National Pantheon. It has existed in one form or another since at least the 12th century, and no article about Lisbon's markets can ignore it.

The Feira da Ladra operates in two worlds: that of the licensed stallholders and that of the sellers who arrive early and lay their possessions out on a blanket or in a crate on the ground. The former tend to sell with prices carefully considered. The latter sell what they have found, inherited or simply no longer need, and this is where the best discoveries are often made.

What to buy: original antique azulejos (there are specialist dealers who know exactly what they have), coins and stamps for collectors, discontinued pieces of Vista Alegre porcelain, clothing from the 1960s to the 1990s, books in Portuguese and, occasionally, in other languages. To find the best pieces, arrive early — before ten in the morning if possible. And bring patience, because there is a great deal of noise before the signal.

One practical note: the asking price is rarely the final price. There is no need to negotiate aggressively. Simply ask, politely, whether they can do a little better. It works more often than not.

Arroios Market underwent a refurbishment a few years ago and achieved something few markets manage: it modernised without losing its original purpose. It remains a neighbourhood market, with fresh fish, meat, fruit and flowers, while coexisting comfortably with a collection of restaurants and food stalls that make it worth visiting at almost any hour of the day.

What makes it particularly interesting is the diversity of the neighbourhood it reflects. Arroios is one of Lisbon's most multicultural districts, and that is evident in the stalls selling ingredients for Bangladeshi, Nepalese and African cooking alongside traditional Portuguese products. If you are putting together an interesting dinner, this is the place to start.

Campo de Ourique is a quiet residential neighbourhood west of the city centre, home largely to families and professionals who prefer calm to commotion. Its market was renovated a decade ago and has become one of the best examples of how a market can evolve without turning into a shopping centre with a token vegetable stall.

There are fresh produce stands supplied by local growers, a cheese and charcuterie section that is seriously good, and a collection of small restaurants serving lunch throughout the day. At weekends, the market comes alive with a small organic farmers' market that is worth visiting even if you are not shopping. Tasting is both permitted and encouraged.

The LX Factory Sunday Market takes place every Sunday in a former textile factory in Alcântara, beside the Tagus and beneath the shadow of the 25 de Abril Bridge. Technically, it is a street market, but it is also a place where young designers sell their own clothing, artisans showcase their work, vinyl collectors browse crates, and independent booksellers set up shop.

LX Factory is no secret. It was discovered a long time ago and has become a fixture on Lisbon's tourist trail. Yet it has not been entirely spoiled. The makers and artisans who trade there are genuine, the permanent businesses on site — Ler Devagar bookshop, for example, with its shelves stretching to the ceiling of a former industrial warehouse

— are authentic, and the food is genuinely good.

What to buy: clothing from emerging Portuguese designers that you will not find anywhere else, handmade contemporary ceramics, jewellery from small ateliers, and books from independent publishers. Avoid the items you have already seen on three other stalls at three other markets. There is a growing tendency towards homogenisation in the craft market, and it occasionally finds its way here as well.

In the same square that hosts Feira da Ladra, there is a monthly market dedicated to design, vintage pieces and craftsmanship. It takes place on the third weekend of every month and has a distinctly different profile from Feira da Ladra: more curated, younger in spirit, and populated by vendors who tend to know exactly what they are selling — and price accordingly.

For those who find Feira da Ladra too chaotic or too unpredictable, Santa Clara Market offers a more organised version of the same impulse: finding original objects that

do not exist in ordinary shops.

On Saturday mornings, the gardens of Príncipe Real host a small organic producers' market. It is modest in size but rich in quality: honey from Alentejo apiaries, olive oils from growers with twenty olive trees and no interest in exporting, sourdough bread, and sheep's cheeses from regions that do not even have an online presence.

This is a market designed as much for eating as for shopping. If you have access to a kitchen where you are staying, or if you simply want to assemble a picnic in the garden next door, there is no better starting point.

Lisbon's markets work best when you are not in a hurry and when you do not arrive with a list. A list destroys discovery. Arrive without knowing what you intend to buy, stay longer than you planned, and talk to the vendors when they talk to you. The best markets are conversations that occasionally happen to produce objects.

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