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## Formula 1 back in Portugal



The Portuguese Grand Prix will return to the Formula 1 World Championship for two consecutive years, in 2027 and 2028, at the Algarve International Circuit (AIA). P8 (Photo: EPA/José Sena Goulão)

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# Alentejo airport tourist centre

Beja Airport will have a tourist information centre by the “end of the first half” of 2026 to give visibility to the region and improve hospitality conditions for those landing in the Alentejo.



According to José Manuel Santos, the president of ETA Alentejo, the first tourist information centre at Beja Airport will allow “building, managing and strengthening the perception of the ‘Alentejo’ brand among the tourist community”. “The space already existed,

but it wasn't properly regulated, and now it is. And our idea is to ‘brand’ that space with the ‘Alentejo’ image [and at the same time] make people feel welcome”. The new space, which should become operational “in June 2026,” is the result of a partnership between the Alentejo Regional Tourism

Entity (ERT) and the Polytechnic Institute of Beja (IPBeja). “We have a clear idea that the infrastructure will start to be used more by visitors, [that is], passengers who disembark for leisure, whether residential tourism or hunting,” he assured. According to José Manuel Santos, many of the

passengers who disembark in Beja currently “don't know they are in the Alentejo.” The operation of the post will be the responsibility of an IPBeja service team that, in a first phase, will be present on the days of passenger plane arrivals, will receive these visitors and give them a welcome kit.

## Improving the brand

According to the president, investing in this team and “updating the image” of the region will give “visibility and notoriety to the destination” and, consequently, allow for greater affirmation and exploitation of the tourism sector and the airport. To work towards this mission, the project also includes “small actions and initiatives” for training and

capacity building for airport professionals – agents of the Public Security Police (PSP) and the Federal Revenue Service.

“We also believe that these employees, who deal with visitors daily, who have a very important role in their functions and who are essential for the operation of the airport, should be sensitised to receive and welcome them well, having a supplementary function,” stated José Manuel Santos. At the same time, “information about the airport” will be added to the VisitAlentejo website of the Alentejo ERT, as it currently does not exist. According to José Manuel Santos, in 2024, the airport infrastructure recorded 600 executive aviation movements and 30 non-scheduled charter flights.

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## Weekend Weather

Sunshine and showers for Portugal

### Lisbon

A wet weekend is forecast in Lisbon with the heaviest rain expected on Sunday when temperatures are to peak at 13 degrees and drop to nightly lows of 9 degrees. On Monday light showers are to continue with a chance of sunny spells. Tuesday is to be mainly dry however rain is to return on Wednesday.

### The north

Rain is to continue in the north over the weekend, however there will be a chance of some sunny spells on Sunday when temperatures are to reach highs of 12 degrees and lows of 4 degrees. From Monday the weather is to remain stable with a mixture of sunshine and showers and average highs of 14 degrees.

### The centre

Showers on Friday are to ease on Saturday, when there will be highs of 13 degrees and lows of 4 degrees. On Sunday some light showers are forecast with highs of 11 degrees. From Monday it is to be mainly dry but with heavy cloud cover and average highs of 11 degrees and lows of 3 degrees.

### The south

Saturday is to be the best day of the weekend with a slight chance of rain and highs of 16 degrees. On Sunday there will be a chance of rain with highs of 15 degrees and lows of 7 degrees. Monday is to be bright and dry with highs of 15 degrees. Rain is forecast to return on Thursday with light showers.

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# Car tax changes approved



The Government has approved changes to the IUC. Contrary to what was initially announced, they will only come into effect in 2027, not 2026, and the payment month will be April, not February. The Government has approved in the Council of Ministers changes to the payment of the Single Circulation Tax (IUC), which will now be made at the same time for all taxpayers, regardless of the month of registration. But, contrary to what was initially announced, these changes will only come into effect in 2027, not 2026, and the payment will be made in April, not February.

“A legislative authorisation bill regulating the method of payment of the IUC (Vehicle Tax) has been approved,” announced the Minister of the Presidency, António Leitão Amaro, at a press conference held after the Council of Ministers meeting, clarifying, “so that there is no fake news,” that “the changes to the IUC do not imply any increase in the tax. On the contrary, they simplify the way Portuguese citizens pay this tax.” “The idea is that this payment will no longer be made in the month of vehicle registration and will instead, like most other taxes paid by Portuguese citizens, have a fixed month.” And that month will be April, contrary to what was initially

stated by Joaquim Miranda Sarmento. “In 2025, the current rules remain in effect, and in 2026, taxpayers whose total IUC (Vehicle Tax) value is less than €100 will pay in February,” said the Minister of Finance during a Council of Ministers briefing when a package of 30 tax simplification measures was approved in January of this year. Those who own a vehicle on 1 January of each year will pay the IUC in April if the value is up to €100. Between €100 and 5500, the tax can be paid in two installments – April and October. For amounts above €500, payment can be made in three installments: April, July, and October, the



Minister of the Presidency detailed. “There will be a transition regime in 2027 to avoid situations where taxpayers would have to pay the IUC

for 2026 and 2027 in a short period of time,” he concluded. Under this transitional regime, the tax must be paid in a single instalment during the month of October when

the tax amount is equal to or less than 500 euros, or in two installments during the months of July and October when the tax amount is greater than 500 euros.

## Plans for EU car preferential treatment

The European Commission is studying the possibility of granting special parking privileges to some smaller cars manufactured in Europe.

Cars that would be considered eligible would also have lighter rules and more generous subsidies, according to the Fi-

ancial Times, which broke the news.

Under this measure, electric cars “made in Europe” up to a certain weight, which could be set at 1.5 tons, would have access to reserved parking spaces and charging infrastructure.

Furthermore, these vehicles would bene-

fit from a decade of exemption from compliance with certain European regulations regarding safety and emissions.

According to the Financial Times, in negotiations, some automakers have been pressuring the Commission to include some existing models in the new catego-

ry, such as the new Renault Twingo, the Citroën ë-C3 from Stellantis, and the Volkswagen Golf.

This measure represents an incentive for the European industry, hoping to strengthen a type of vehicle where Europe still has an advantage over Chinese competitors.

Merry Christmas and a smiling New Year!



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# Airport staff strike announced



SPdH/Menzies workers, who provide ground handling services at airports, will strike on 31 December and 1 January.



In a statement, Sitava – the Aviation and Airport Workers’ Union – and STHAA – the Handling, Aviation and Airport Workers’ Union – announced that they had issued a “prior notice of strike, covering mainland Portugal and the Autonomous Region of Madeira,” from “Midnight

on 30 December 2025 to Midnight on 1 January 2026.” According to the unions, SPdH workers are now seeing “their future, their rights and conditions, and the future of the company questioned,” pointing to the preliminary report from the National Civil Aviation Authority (ANAC), which “places the consortium

formed by Clece/South in first place in the competition for the allocation of ground handling licenses, in categories 3 (baggage terminal), 4 (cargo) and 5 (apron).” Meanwhile, the Government has extended the licenses currently under bidding until at least 19 May, 2026, they noted.

## Jobs at risk

However, “since the preliminary report was released, SPdH workers remain in an absolutely unsustainable situation of uncertainty and anxiety about their future, which is unacceptable, even more so in a sector like aviation and airports,” they said, pointing out that “more than 3,700 direct jobs are at stake (2,888 in Lisbon, 482 in Porto, 207 in Funchal, 137 in Faro and 29 in Porto Santo).”

For the unions, “if the ANAC’s final decision to grant the licenses to the Clece/South consortium is finalized, and according to information from the Government, the transfer of undertaking will not apply”, adding that there is also “the possibility of TAP proceeding to self-service in its operation in Lisbon (and, possibly, in Porto)”, something that would lead to “a division of workers between two (or more) companies, without the

transfer of undertaking also applying”.

In the statement, the union structures indicated that contacts with the Clece/South consortium made it clear that, at this moment, there are “no conditions to assume any written commitment (primarily because they have not yet won anything), nor to give any written guarantee regarding jobs or acquired rights,” and that the companies do not know how “the selection/division of workers (from categories 3, 4 and 5, in Lisbon, Porto and Faro) would proceed.”

The unions further detailed that “the licenses of SPdH in Funchal, Porto Santo and categories 1 and 2 in the passenger area in Lisbon, Porto and Faro are valid and were recently renewed until April 2031,” indicating that “in the current tender, 2,070 workers are involved out of a total of 3,743, so only these would potentially be subject to the transfer of

the establishment.”

## Legitimate

The unions consider it legitimate for SPdH workers to fight “so that their jobs and rights are no longer threatened, that their Company Agreement is respected and the content of the collective bargaining is not undermined, and that their personal and professional dignity is respected.”

The strike aims for “the effective and written guarantee that, whatever the final decision of ANAC (National Civil Aviation Authority) in granting ground handling licenses in categories 3, 4 and 5, in Lisbon, Porto and Faro, SPdH workers will see their jobs secured, as well as their rights enshrined in the collective bargaining agreement and other regulations in force, and the negotiation commitments undertaken by SPdH for 2026,” they indicated.

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# Mask use returns to hospital



The Leiria Region Local Health Unit (ULS) has announced the mandatory use of masks for patients, companions, and professionals in its facilities, and the suspension of non-urgent activity.



In information sent to Lusa news agency, the ULS announced that it has reinforced the measures foreseen in the Seasonal Health Contingency Plan – Winter Module, “determining the mandatory use of masks for patients, companions, and professionals in all care

provision spaces.”  
“This measure aims to curb the chain of transmission of respiratory viruses and ensure greater protection for patients and healthcare professionals,” said the ULS. According to the entity, “the reinforcement now implemented also includes the sus-

pension of non-urgent activity, allowing for increased inpatient capacity and reinforcement of the Emergency Department teams, in a phase of high pressure.”

“Level 1 [of a total of four] of the Contingency Plan was activated last week in response to the significant increase in demand for health services, mainly for respiratory situations,” it clarified.

According to the ULS, “since then, several structural measures have been applied, such as increasing the number of beds, reinforcing professionals, accelerating clinical discharges, and referring patients with less complex conditions to the Pombal Hospital, ensuring more efficient management of care flows.”

“Level 1 is activated when there is a continuous increase in demand, especially in hospital admissions, and involves the implementation of several reinforcement measures,” the ULS explained previously.

The ULS also appealed to the population to contact the SNS 24 Line (808 24 24 24) before resorting to emergency services and to prioritise primary health care, namely the Complementary Care Service and consultations for acute illness, available at health centres.

The situation will continue to be monitored

daily, allowing for adjustments to measures whenever necessary, the Local Health Unit (ULS) assured.

The area of influence of the Leiria Region’s ULS corresponds to the municipalities of Alcobaca, Batalha, Leiria, Marinha Grande, Nazaré, Ourém, Pombal, and Porto de Mós. It includes three hospitals (Leiria, Pombal, and Alcobaca) and 10 health centres.

Portugal has entered an epidemic phase of influenza with a growing trend, registering an increase in confirmed cases, including hospitalisations in intensive care, the National Institute of Health Dr. Ricardo Jorge (INSA), warned on Friday.

“The data relating to influenza activity in this 2025-26 season (...) showed that in week 48, which began on 24 November, influenza activity is epidemic,” Raquel Guiomar, head of the National Reference Laboratory for Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses at Insa, told the Lusa news agency. The Influenza and other Respiratory Virus Epidemiological Surveillance Bulletin from INSA reveals that in the week of November 24-30, an increase in the incidence rate of severe acute respiratory infections was observed compared to previous weeks, reaching 10.5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.



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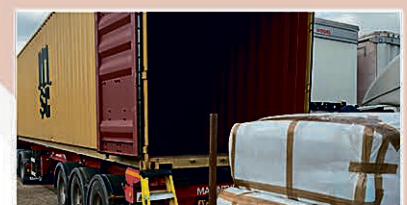
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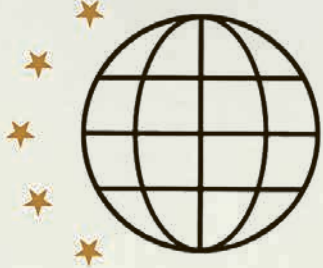


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# Portuguese Grand Prix confirmed



The agreement between the Portuguese Government and the championship promoters was signed in London, but the date of the Grand Prix will only be known in June 2026, when the 2027 World Championship calendar is defined, and it is expected to be part of the European 'season' during the spring. "We join in the announcement being made in London at this hour, that Portugal will once again be part of the Formula 1 Grand Prix calendar in 2027, at the Algarve International

Circuit, and it is also planned that the race will return in 2028," said the Minister of Economy and Territorial Cohesion, Manuel Castro Almeida. These will be the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> editions of the Portuguese Grand Prix, again in the Algarve, after the initial races in 1958 and 1960 at the Boavista circuit in Porto, the 1959 race in Monsanto, Lisbon, and between 1984 and 1996 at the Estoril Circuit in Cascais. Formula 1 returned to Portugal in 2020, after a 24-year absence from the World Championship, following the

reorganisation of calendars due to the Covid-19 pandemic, for the first of two editions in Portimão, which will return to the World Championship. British driver Lewis Hamilton, a seven-time world champion then with the Mercedes team, won the last two races on Portuguese soil.

## Welcome return

The Mayor of Portimão has welcomed the return of Formula 1 to the Algarve, considering the World Championship races is important for the region's economy and international projection.

The Portuguese Grand Prix will return to the Formula 1 World Championship for two consecutive years, in 2027 and 2028, at the Algarve International Circuit (AIA).

"The Formula 1 Grand Prix is important at all levels, economically and promotionally, not only for the region but also for the country, representing added value for the economy," Álvaro Bila told Lusa news agency.

For the mayor, "the fact that the Algarve International Circuit will be part of the Formula 1 World Cham-

pionship calendar for two consecutive years," in 2027 and 2028, "recognises the quality of the Algarve circuit and rewards the commitment of its promoters in holding major international motor-sport events."

Álvaro Bila predicts that the World Championship races in the municipality "will contribute to further projecting the

Algarve as a tourist destination, being a great promoter of the region's potential and the municipality of Portimão in particular."

On 14 August, Prime Minister Luís Montenegro had revealed, during the PSD's Festa do Pontal in Quarteira, that everything was on track for the return of the Portuguese Grand Prix to the Algarve.

## Algarve landmark mini-documentary



Carvoeiro Branco and Antrix, the real estate developers responsible for the recent acquisition of the Fábrica do Inglês in Silves, have released a new short documentary dedicated to one of the Algarve's most emblematic landmarks.

The documentary takes the viewer on a journey through the history of the Fábrica do Inglês, revisiting its past and the deep connection it maintains with the city of Silves.

Through never-before-seen archival footage, recovered material, and interviews -

including the testimony of a figure involved in the 1999 project - the short documentary offers an intimate look at a place that marked generations and continues to be an important symbol of local identity.

The film also reveals the current state of the complex, capturing the contrast between its historical relevance and its current condition. The documentary concludes with a message from Erik de Vlieger, CEO of Antrix and Carvoeiro Branco, expressing the inten-

tion to honour the memory of the Fábrica do Inglês and begin a new chapter that restores vitality to the space.

This short documentary is part of a broader effort by Carvoeiro Branco and Antrix to reconnect the community to the Fábrica do Inglês (English Factory), preserve its history, and celebrate its role in the region's cultural heritage.

The mini documentary can be viewed in full on the Carvoeiro Branco YouTube channel.

## Regional sweet recognised nationally



The Algarve regional sweet, Dom Rodrigo, has received a favourable national decision on its application for registration as a Protected Geographical Indication (IGP).

The typical regional sweet made with eggs, almonds, sugar and cinnamon was classified as an IGP, with the decision being published in the Official Gazette, according to the Algarve Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR).

"The decision officially recognises the uniqueness of this emblematic sweet, whose application was submitted by ADRA - Association of Regional Sweets of the Algarve, valuing its traditional character, strong connection to the territory and know-how transmitted over generations," highlighted the CCDR in a statement.

In addition to praising the knowledge passed down through generations for the making of

this sweet, the CCDR (Regional Coordination and Development Commission) specified that the recipe is made "from egg threads, soft-boiled eggs with almonds, sugar and cinnamon" and highlighted that Dom Rodrigo is "one of the most representative symbols of Algarve convent sweets".

The regional commission pointed out that the sweet "is historically associated with the cities of Lagos and Tavira, forming part of the cultural and gastronomic heritage of the region", but stressed that its production is "currently widespread throughout the Algarve" and "preserves consolidated artisanal methods" throughout the geographical area of the Faro district.

This is a "significant milestone for the economic, cultural and touristic development of the Algarve" that will guarantee "the protection of the product against imitations", as well as "high standards of origin, quality and authenticity".

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# 20,000 immigrant processes



**T**he number was revealed by Minister António Leitão Amaro and reported in Diário de Notícias.

“Portugal appeared in the report, because that was the past and reported reality, as processing 400 returns per year. This meant being the country in Europe that processed the fewest returns. That’s what the old statistics said. In the year 2025, look at the difference: we went from 400 to 23,000, we moved into the top six or top seven in that report,” he explained.

The baseline data used in Brussels was collected up to June of this year and is therefore outdated in relation to the country’s new migration policy. Leitão Amaro stated that he explained to the European Commission that Portugal is experiencing “a change in situation,” with an increase in returns and a decrease in asylum applications, among other things. This data will be analysed by Brussels to define Portugal’s position in refugee reception policies within the solidarity mechanism. “The European Commission

Around 20,000 immigrants currently in Portugal need to return to their country of origin.

had ended its analysis period in June. We are now working constructively with the Commission so that, within the flexibility mechanisms allowed by the rules, Portugal’s changing situation can be accommodated,” he detailed. “We need mechanisms that, to be credible, are applied to real situations,” he added.

According to António Leitão Amaro, this is not the only change in the scenario. Analysing the more than 400,000 expressions of interest, “very significant secondary movements” were detected, citing the number of “20,000 in recent years,” without specifying the period. Until now, Portugal was not considered a secondary movement country, a situation in which a person has an application rejected in one EU member state and then moves to another. “These elements are relevant for the purposes of the European assessment, and could lead to a declaration of migratory pressure or, alternatively, to the derogation of placement obligations,” he stressed. Therefore, Portugal’s situation will continue to be analysed, which, according to the minister, justified the vote against the final report on the mechanism.

## Lack of capacity

Another point highlighted by Leitão Amaro is the reception situation. Portugal

has capacity for 300 people, but has more than eight thousand pending applications. “Another legacy of the past is the lack of reception capacity,” he said, adding that the European Commission “has drawn attention to this several times.”

Regarding the capacity for return placements, the current number of available spaces is 86. “Consider this example: Portugal has approximately 20,000 returns pending. Do you know the current capacity of the temporary accommodation centres where people are placed upon return? Eighty-six. Why? Because for years there has been no expansion,” he criticised.

Two new temporary accommodation centres will be built in 2026. Until then, according to the minister, “transitional solutions” are being studied to house detained immigrants in Portugal. One of these solutions could involve “making use of an existing building,” he said during the presentation of the new proposal to accelerate the return of immigrants.

“Between some temporary expansion of existing units and the use of a building that can be converted, [we are seeking] a faster readjustment, respecting rights,” he said. The goal is to create more spaces to receive these people while the two new planned centres are not completed.

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## Change in passport validity

In 2026, the validity of the Portuguese passport will change.

The validity of the Portuguese passport will double from the first quarter of 2026, increasing from the current five years to 10, a measure integrated into the programme to simplify and reduce bureaucracy in public services.

According to the fact-checking portal Polígrafo, this change has already been announced by the government and is part of a set of 15 measures aimed at making document and administrative management more efficient in international travel.

The then Minister of Youth and Modernisation, Margarida Balseiro Lopes, justified in 2023 that the reduced term required frequent renewals. According to the same source, the government adopted this argument when defining 2026 as the year to extend the validity of the document. This change will not apply to minors, maintaining the

current limit, in line with the widespread practice in the Schengen area.

The publication adds that the decision also involves ensuring that the passport issuance process conforms to international standards, allowing citizens to travel with greater documentary stability throughout the decade of validity foreseen.

### What to expect?

The Government maintains the first quarter of 2026 as the key date for

the implementation of the measure, after the completion of the necessary technical and operational steps. Polígrafo writes that, until then, the current deadlines will remain in effect, and the shorter ones will remain subject to the five-year limit.

For those planning to travel next year, the scenario remains unchanged until the new model is fully operational, with the expectation that the transition process will be gradual and monitored by the responsible



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## United Kingdom Medical Breakthrough



Researchers in the UK have trialled a new gene-edited immune cell therapy for aggressive T-cell leukaemia previously resistant to treatment. In the early trial, most patients achieved deep remission and remained disease-free up to three years after treatment. The approach offers hope for a previously untreatable form of blood cancer and illustrates the potential of gene-edited immunotherapies.

## United States Opioid Vaccine



A biotech company, ARMR Sciences, is launching the first human trial of a vaccine designed to prevent fentanyl overdoses. The synthetic opioid is a leading cause of overdose deaths in the United States. The experimental vaccine trains the body to make antibodies that bind fentanyl in the bloodstream, thereby blocking its euphoric and lethal effects.

## Canada Culture Pass



The Canada Strong Pass is returning for the holiday season. It offers free access to cultural sites and museums nationwide. The programme runs from 11 December, 2025, to 11 January, 2026. Venues include national museums and historic sites under the Department of Canadian Heritage. The initiative is intended to help families enjoy cultural attractions during the holidays and support cultural institutions.

## Ireland Heritage Village



Plans to develop Royal Hillsborough as a world-class heritage village are expected to make significant progress in the new year, officials say. The regeneration has been long-awaited and should attract more visitors to the village, and the project aims to build on Hillsborough's existing attractions, enhancing visitor experience to support local tourism and economic growth.

## Denmark Happiest City



Copenhagen was named the world's happiest city in 2025 by the Happy City Index. The index measures happiness using indicators such as health, education, governance, environment and citizen wellbeing. Copenhagen scores high on quality of life, trust in institutions, strong welfare systems and urban design. Factors include work-life balance, access to green spaces, cycling infrastructure and social equality.

## Spain Visa Exemptions



Spain has proposed a visa exemption for short-term work stays with the United Kingdom to ease mobility for skilled professionals after Brexit. The plan would allow Spanish professionals to travel to the UK for brief service assignments without complex visa procedures. If adopted, it could help smooth post-Brexit business frictions and support ongoing economic cooperation between Spain and the UK.

## Poland Fur Ban



Poland's parliament has passed a law to phase out the practice of fur farming over the next eight years. This will end commercial breeding of animals such as foxes, minks, raccoon dogs and chinchillas. The law includes compensation schemes and support for people who have been working on the farms. New fur farms are banned immediately, and existing farms must close by the end of 2033.

## Italy Ancient Concrete



A house preserved mid-renovation during the 79 CE Pompeii eruption has revealed new insights into Roman concrete. Researchers have found that builders used a hot-mixing technique combining quicklime and volcanic ash, creating self-healing properties. The findings confirm and extend earlier theories about Roman concrete manufacture, offering insights for modern engineering and restoration.

## Greece Laser Archaeology



Archaeologists are using laser scanning and magnetometry to locate ancient settlements in Greece without excavation. The Small Cycladic Islands Project surveyed 87 mostly uninhabited islands, and researchers say the methods are non-invasive and more targeted. The findings are helping guide sustainable tourism and protecting cultural heritage, with some islands now designated as protected sites.

## Egypt Pharaoh Restored



Egypt has unveiled newly restored statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep III in Luxor. They were discovered broken and buried, and restoration work used 3D scanning and digital imaging to accurately rebuild the statues. The project highlights Egypt's ongoing efforts to preserve and promote its ancient heritage, and officials say the restored statues will boost cultural tourism in Luxor and beyond.

## South Sudan Flood Harvest



A town on the banks of the Nile in South Sudan is turning annual flooding into a community advantage. Residents plant crops on fertile floodplains once waters recede, producing robust harvests without heavy machinery. The cycle of flooding and planting supports food security and boosts local economic activity. The initiative highlights local creativity in adapting to climate-driven challenges.

## Japan Tech Care



Japan is facing a growing dementia crisis, with over 18,000 people with dementia reported missing last year. The health and social care system is now turning to technology, using GPS tracking, AI diagnostics, and care robots to support patients. Community initiatives, such as dementia-friendly cafés, highlight the continued importance of human interaction alongside technology.

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### 1. Bragança Environmental Rehabilitation

The Portuguese Government plans to rehabilitate 3,400 kilometres of waterways by 2030, in an investment of €150 million, as part of the “Pró Rios” project. José Pimenta Machado, President of the Portuguese Environment Agency (APA), stated that in Picote, the programme is vital as Portugal faces more extreme conditions, with floods and droughts requiring urgent preparation and ecological restoration.

### 2. Vila Real Parking Infrastructure

Vila Real has inaugurated a €4.5 million parking garage offering 285 paid spaces, intended to ease shortages in the city centre for residents, workers and visitors. Alexandre Favaio, mayor of the municipality, also revealed plans to add a new facility to Ferreiros and create two free peripheral car parks to this infrastructure to improve overall mobility.

### 3. Vila Nova de Foz Côa Cultural Attraction

The new president of the Côa Parque Foundation has outlined a strategy to increase visitors to the Côa Museum and Archaeological Park. His plan involves reinforcing investigations, digitalising over 17,000 engravings, securing around €2 million in project funding, ensuring environmental sustainability and renewing ageing infrastructure, while maintaining a regular programme of temporary displays, including a show devoted to sculptor Alberto Carneiro.

### 4. Pampilhosa da Serra Sustainable Strategy

Pampilhosa da Serra City Council has approved a €24.2 million Budget and Major Options Plan for 2026, with a people-centred strategy that prioritises financial sustainability and integrated territorial development. The municipality will maintain tax relief measures, expand support for housing rehabilitation, and reinforce investment in education, tourism, forestry, health and social action.

### 5. Castelo Branco Resilience Award

The Castelo Branco City Council has won this year’s Local Best Practices Award for Promoting Resilience, presented by the National Emergency and Civil Protection Authority (ANEPC). According to the ANEPC, the jury praised the innovative Flood Prevention System for its simplicity, accessibility and replicability.

### 6. Tomar, Santarém Rock Art

The Polytechnic Institute of Tomar launched in Mação Europe’s first Chair of Rock Art Archaeology, a pioneering initiative designed to consolidate the discipline, develop research infrastructures, and create academic programmes with international projection. Sara Garcês, the chair coordinator, said the project unites research, training and dissemination through a holistic approach blending archaeology, science and technology to integrate rock art as a structured subdiscipline.

### 7. Lisbon Passenger Traffic

According to new figures from the National Institute of Statistics, passenger numbers at Portugal’s airports rose by 4.7 percent in the first ten months of the year, reaching 63.869 million. The data shows that Lisbon Airport handled 30.7 million travellers, representing 48.1 percent of the total and a 2.9 percent increase on the same period in 2024.

### 8. Azores Book Voucher

More than 380 young people in the archipelago are benefitting from the Azores Book Voucher, with cards worth €38,000 already issued and over 390 purchases approved by the Regional Secretariat for Youth, Housing, and Employment. Each voucher is worth €100, and can be used for physical books in participating stores, remaining valid for one year from the date of issue purchase.

### 9. Madeira Hospital Admissions

Hospitals in Madeira recorded 25,800 hospitalisations in 2024, down 4.4 percent on the previous year, according to the Regional Directorate of Statistics. The authority also reported 392,500 outpatient consultations, up 5.0 percent, and 604,700 inpatient days, a 3.4 percent rise despite fewer admissions, across the region’s 10 hospitals, all located in Funchal.

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# The timeless beauty of Cashmere

Cashmere garments have a long and fascinating history that can be traced as far back as the first millennium before the common era.



Some legends even claim that ancient Roman aristocrats displayed great affection for the wondrous fibres from the distant East, which offer an incredible softness and provide gentle warmth. While it seems perfectly feasible that European merchants might have repeatedly come into contact with cashmere wool via the legendary silk road at an earlier date, evidence for a wider popularity among some parts of the western nobility can be more easily found from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The “fibre of the kings”, as it was sometimes called, only truly became a household name in Europe towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century however, in the wake of innovations in weaving technology. Ornate and extravagant cashmere shawls in particular were all the rage in the salons of Europe’s high society during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Patterns and styles

changed and continued to evolve throughout the centuries, but the cross-cultural recognition that cashmere wool has unique and desirable qualities ensured its lasting legacy and attractiveness outside of the regions close to the Himalayas. It is exactly the timeless elegance and luxurious feel of high-quality cashmere products that led the small team at Leodoro to make them one of the main pillars of their product offerings, in addition to their leisurewear collections. In Leodoro’s family run business, a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law team focuses on creating their own exclusive collections of premium quality garments and accessories, including cashmere sweaters, cardigans, shawls, scarves and even cashmere slippers. Round-neck, v-neck or turtleneck versions are available in a variety of classic and vibrant colours. “I have worked with professional cashmere

suppliers from inner Mongolia for nearly fifteen years and am confident that the cashmere products we offer in our boutique are of the highest quality. The 2-Ply cashmere sweaters in our collection can easily be worn for more than a decade, if handled and stored correctly. Since my mother-in-law Elke is a great cashmere fan anyway, I didn’t have to do a lot of convincing, once I showed her our supplier’s great quality.”, explains Oznur Stucken, Leodoro’s design & production director. At a time where more and more customers are beginning to grow tired of fast fashion, returning to classic cashmere fibres appears to be much more than just the latest trend. “A beautiful cashmere sweater or shawl are perfect gifts for those who value beauty, comfort and elegance. I don’t know a single person who would ever have been disappointed because they received a cashmere product as a gift.”,

remarks Leodoro founder and managing director Elke Groos, with reference to the shopping woes some of us might encounter when trying to find that perfect gift for their loved ones right before Christmas. At the newly opened Leodoro boutique in Almancil, customers can intuitively understand that they have come to a place that allows for a uniquely personal shopping experience, where one can be inspired and empowered in relaxed surroundings that support one’s overall well-being during the hunt for that perfect cashmere gift. In a world where seemingly anything can be bought online, the Leodoro team’s decision to not open an online shop might seem surprising to some, but Elke highlights their overall strategy: “We consciously made the decision to not have an online shop at the early stages of Leodoro’s development, in order to first properly establish the importance of the physical boutique environment in Almancil. Ideally our current and future customers will all appreciate the fact that our Leodoro boutique is not just a soulless point of sale, but a space that allows for people to really enjoy being there.” Visitors to the beautifully renovated boutique will not only be impressed by the tasteful interior design that includes a sparkling chandelier, but also by the presence of a rather unorthodox sales assistant called Leo. Not only did this kind and congenial canine soul inspire the actual name of Leodoro, he also embodies positivity, natural grace and beauty. “He is a very good boy indeed, although arguably a little bit spoiled. When it comes to his food and toy preferences, he constantly demonstrates his impeccable taste. If he were human, I am sure he would enjoy wearing one of our Cashmere sweaters.”, jokes Elke. For those individuals tempted to buy their first



piece of cashmere, but who may be bit hesitant with regards to optimal product care, Oznur has some simple advice: “When buying and wearing cashmere, especially if it’s your first time, I would suggest being particularly mindful when wearing individual pieces together with pointy or sharp metal accessories like wristwatches. This way you can protect the integrity of the cashmere fibres and can make sure that you can enjoy the maximum possible product longevity. For cleaning purposes, we recommend gentle hand washing or washing machine cycles that are suitable for delicate garments and are not hotter than 30°C, together with a suitable cashmere care shampoo. And it never hurts

to look at the care label for more information.” Cashmere lovers can find the Leodoro boutique on the Avenida José Santos Farias 135 in Almancil, close by the Jardim das Comunidades and next to Arcadia Luxury Villas. The boutique is normally open for business Wednesday to Saturday from 11am until 6pm, but in light of the festive season it’s open every day until and including the 24<sup>th</sup> of December.

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# Portugal houses most overvalued in EU



The European Commission estimates that housing prices in Portugal are overvalued by 25%, the highest current percentage in the European Union (EU).



“According to the most recent data available, housing prices remained overvalued

in several EU countries in the second half of 2025. The Commission estimates that the highest average overvaluation is in Portugal,

at around 25%, surpassing other real estate markets,” says the EU executive. In a portrait of the EU housing crisis, accompanying the plan proposed today for affordable housing, the institution adds that “housing price growth began to

outpace income growth in 2016 and the gap between the two has widened sharply,” with the largest increases in the last decade “occurring in Portugal, the Netherlands, Hungary, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Austria.”

## Affordable housing

The European Commission has presented the first EU-wide plan to promote affordable housing, which includes a strategy for housing construction (focusing on vacant homes and the renovation and conversion of buildings), the simplification of construction rules (such as permits) and the revision of state aid rules (making it easier for Member States to invest in affordable and social housing). It also includes increased

European funding (from the EU's long-term budget, cohesion, the InvestEU program, and the European Investment Bank), combating real estate speculation (with greater transparency in the sector), and a new law on local accommodation (with

a legal framework for local authorities to act).

Furthermore, attention is given to young people, including students, who are among the groups most affected by the housing crisis, with measures to mobilise investment in university residences and to avoid excessive mortgage payments. Cooperation structures will also be created, such as a Housing Alliance, involving Member States, mayors, and regional authorities, as well as market monitoring mechanisms.

## New homes

Over the next 10 years, the EU will have to build approximately 650,000 new homes per year, implying a public and private investment of €150 billion annually.

The European Union faces a housing crisis in countries like Portugal, where house and rental prices have increased significantly, making it difficult to access affordable housing, especially for young people and low-income families. House prices in the EU have increased by an average of up to 60% since 2015, with some member states registering increases of over 200%, while rental prices and energy costs have also continued to rise. However, residential building permits have decreased by about 22% since 2011.

Pressure is also exerted through short-term rentals, which in some EU locations account for up to 20% of the housing stock, after having grown by more than 90% in the last 10 years.

## New holiday rules welcomed



The Airbnb platform has welcomed the new regulations for short-term rentals in Lisbon, highlighting that restrictions imposed in recent years have not diminished the difficulties in accessing affordable housing.

In a statement, the online platform that connects people who want to rent and travellers looking for accommodation states that, “six years later” after several moratoriums on short-term rentals, “Lisbon residents still face greater difficulties in finding affordable housing, with prices continuing to rise.”

Thus, Airbnb believes that the argument that “strict” restrictions on the sector “would help curb the increase in housing costs”.

The new regulations approved by the Lisbon City Council “will allow families to continue sharing their homes, while creating new opportunities for hosts and local businesses in various parishes of the city,” the platform considers.

## New rules

Lisbon City Council approved on November 27 the proposed amendment to the Municipal Regulation on Local Accommodation (RMAL), presented by the minority PSD/CDS-PP/IL executive and made possible with the support of Chega.

The proposal establishes that the proportion between local dwellings and permanent housing units be reduced in areas of absolute containment to “equal to or greater than 10%” and in areas of relative containment to “equal to or greater than 5% and less than 10%”.

In addition to the reduction of the indices, the proposal determines the “creation of a single area of absolute containment at the municipal level, whenever the municipality reaches an index equal to or greater than 10%”.

The entire left voted against the proposal,

calling it a “serious setback”. PS, BE, Livre and PCP argued that the area of absolute containment at the municipal level should have an index equal to or greater than 5%, as it was in the project submitted to public consultation.

## “Important step”

Quoted in the press release, Sara Rodríguez, head of Airbnb campaigns for Spain and Portugal, points out that the approval of the new regulation “represents an important step towards restoring stability and confidence in the vacation rental sector in Lisbon.”

The representative emphasises that “local accommodation plays a fundamental role in distributing the benefits of tourism throughout the city, supporting neighbourhoods and local economies.”

Noting that seven out of ten Airbnb hosts

in Lisbon indicate that hosting is not their primary occupation and that they only list a single property on the platform, the platform believes that the change “will allow more families to directly benefit from tourism profits” and “will also contribute to boosting the local economy and tourism activity and to offering visitors more affordable accommodation options.”

Airbnb points out that “Lisbon's experience reflects what has happened in other cities, where the introduction of strict regulations for short-term rentals has not solved the challenges of access to housing,” mentioning the example of Edinburgh, Scotland, where “strict restrictions on short-term rentals were eased by the municipality earlier this year, after a 22% drop in the number of short-term rentals in four years failed to stem the sharp rise in housing prices, while also deterring visitors.”

## Prime market remains resilient

The prime residential market was marked by a cyclical slowdown in the third quarter of 2025, however Lisbon stands out as one of the most resilient European markets.

According to Knight Frank's Prime Global Cities Index (PGCI), the average annual global appreciation was 2.5%, while Lisbon registered 3.1%, thanks to

factors such as demand exceeding supply, attractiveness to international buyers, and relative stability compared to the volatility observed in other European capitals.

In a statement, Francisco Quintela, founding partner of Quintela + Penalva, a Knight Frank associate in Portugal, explains that “these data highlight Lisbon's capacity for growth, investment attraction and

resilience” and “also demonstrate that, over the last few years, the city has been consolidating itself as a benchmark destination in the high-quality residential market”.

In continental Europe, cities such as Madrid (+6.1%), Zurich (+5.4%) and Geneva (+4.2%) showed higher appreciation than Lisbon, while Frankfurt matched the Portuguese capital at 3.1%,

which surpassed the appreciation of Berlin (2.7%), Dublin (2.3%), Paris (1.4%) and London, the latter with an annual decrease of -3.6%, given the cost of financing and the market's sensitivity to macroeconomic expectations.

In addition to Lisbon, Francisco Quintela is positive about other Portuguese cities: “We believe that prices in Lisbon and other regions

of the country, such as Comporta, Cascais-Estoril, or Porto, continue to show potential for appreciation in the coming years. This dynamism results not only from the high quality of new projects under development and the growing demand from national and international investors, who are seeking solid, secure, and sustainable markets.”

# Free public transport



Lisbon City Council has unanimously approved the extension of the free Navegante Urbano 3ª Idade pass, valid on the Carris urban network and the urban networks of the Metro and CP, until 2029.

The executive unanimously approved submitting to the Municipal Assembly a proposal from the vice-president, Gonçalo Reis (PSD), to add an addendum to the agreement on “free public transport” for “young people and seniors over 65, with tax domicile in Lisbon”. According to the mayor, Carlos Moedas (PSD), quoted in a statement, “Lisbon is one of the few cities in Europe that has free public transport” and the measure aims to “give a very clear signal” of the commitment to “decarbonising the city, the climate transition, air quality and reducing vehicle traffic”. “This is a very important proposal, which has already resulted in a significant increase in the use of public transport in our city, by both young and old people,” he added. The municipality decided in 2022, during Carlos Moedas’ first term, in coordination with the State and the Metropolitan Region of Lisbon, to adopt free access to

the Navegante Urbano 3ª Idade (Urban Traveller for Seniors) pass and passes for young people with tax domicile in Lisbon. “Free public transport for those over 65, in effect since July 2022, has been a decisive instrument for promoting social cohesion and strengthening the inclusion of the elderly population in the economic, social, and cultural life of the city, mitigating barriers to access to essential services, healthcare, cultural facilities, and social support networks,” the proposal reads. The measure also contributed “to the promotion of sustainable mobility” and “municipal objectives regarding climate transition, air quality, and reduction of vehicle traffic, by encouraging the transfer of journeys from individual transport to the urban and metropolitan public transport network.” “The experience accumulated between 2022 and 2025 shows a significant and stable uptake by the segment of beneficiaries over



65, a clearly positive social impact,” the text considers, noting that the generalisation of free transport for young people, at the national and metropolitan level, led to the cessation of the need for the municipality to maintain this benefit. In this context, “the reasons of public interest that led to the creation of free public transport for the over-65s remain, to a high degree,” and

it is “appropriate to proceed with its renewal and stabilisation for the period 2026–2029,” the proposal states. The mayor is mandated to coordinate with the State the changes to the agreement, without exceeding the total amount, including VAT, of €8.5 million annually until 2029, and to sign the addendum with Transportes Metropolitanos de Lisboa (TML).

# Metrobus opening

The operation of the Mondego Mobility System (SMM) between Coimbra and Serpins (Lousã), passing through Miranda do Corvo, began on 16 December.

The service will be free until the end of the month, as announced by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing. The SMM (Sistema Metropolitano de Mobilidade - Metropolitan Mobility System) will serve Coimbra, Miranda do Corvo, and Lousã, with electric buses (‘metrobus’) on a dedicated track, featuring suburban operation (between the three municipalities) and urban operation in the city of Coimbra, with connections to the

Coimbra-B train station and the University Hospitals of Coimbra, which are expected to be operational by 2026. After several delays, the ‘metrobus’ system is now operating on the suburban section between Portagem (Coimbra) and Serpins, a 36-kilometer route with 27 stations, representing the completion of the first phase of the project. The service to Serpins will operate on the schedule planned for the

normal SMM operation (between 5.30am and approximately 1am), after having operated in the preliminary phase in Coimbra with a shorter schedule (from 7.30am to 8pm) and less service. The start of operations for the ‘metrobus’ comes after three decades of numerous alterations, suspensions, and postponements to this mobility project. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing, which manages the project, estimates that the SMM

(Metro Mondego Metropolitan System) will be used by 13 million people per year, following an investment of €220 million, supported by the State Budget and EU funds. When the urban section is fully operational, the ‘metrobus’ will have a total length of 42 kilometres and an equal number of stations. In the urban area, during peak hours, the electric buses will run at five-minute intervals in each direction. Metro Mondego, the conces-

sionaire for the operation of the SMM, stated today that the start of service between Coimbra and Serpins “will transform mobility in the Coimbra region.” According to the partnership formed by the State and the municipalities of Coimbra, Lousã and Miranda do Corvo, the first ‘metrobus’ will depart from Serpins, in the municipality of Lousã, at 5.30am, heading to Portagem station, in the heart of downtown Coimbra.

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# New Continente supermarkets



Continente will open 20 more supermarkets per year over the next five years, aiming to reach nearly 500 hypermarkets and supermarkets in the country by 2030.

In this five-year plan, Sonae MC also plans to proceed with 150 renovations (at an annual rate of 30 to “address the history”) and hire 3,000 more people in the country, ruling out further attempts to internationalise the food retail brand that claims market leadership in Portugal. Just days before opening two stores in Alijó and Pombal, to close this year with a total of 403, the CEO of Sonae MC announced that the first openings in 2026, scheduled for January, will take place in Queluz, Alcântara-Terra, Campo de Ourique and Malveira. Luís Moutinho says that “there is still a lot of room to grow in urban areas”, with Greater Lisbon being “a great opportunity”, as well as the interior of the country, “in areas where Continente is not yet present”. “The competition is strong and makes us run even faster, but that’s not why we’re expanding, but because we anticipate trends and feel that our brand has to be in places where it hasn’t yet arrived and in areas of the country where we don’t have 27% [of national market share]. We don’t open stores to close them, the investment risk is high.

But we know the country like no one else and we have the Continente Card which allows us to know where our customers are,” the manager explains, in a report by Eco. The portfolio of company-owned stores currently comprises 41 Continente hypermarkets, 149 large Continente Modelo supermarkets, and 211 Continente Bom Dia convenience stores – excluding the 300 Meu Super franchises, a “complementary logic that allows for national distribution that even Continente Bom Dia cannot reach.” The northern retailer is not only in the discount format, in which international competitors such as Lidl or Mercadona operate, and which it admits it “does not want to have.”

## Anniversary

Presented by the MC leader during a meeting with journalists on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the first Continente hypermarket in Matosinhos, the expansion plan until 2030 will focus on the concept of proximity and convenience, given that “people want to shop more often, in smaller baskets, and closer to home.” “In hypermarkets, which

are under pressure, we will defend our business. Where we will grow is a little in Modelo and a lot in Continente Bom Dia,” he summarised. “We want to protect hypermarkets, but not from a defensive perspective, but by reinventing the concept,” Moutinho emphasised. One of these strategies has involved, in some cases, reducing sales areas because “there is no longer space to work with such large stores” and “to be more comfortable for the customer.” This is what was done, for example, in Guimarães Shopping, Gaia Shopping, or the Colombo shopping centre (Lisbon), where Continente once had 17,000 square metres and is now reduced to 11,000.



## Online

Regarding Continente Online, which currently accounts for around 4% of the company’s sales, twice the national penetration

rate, Luís Moutinho claims a 50% share for the e-commerce platform that Sonae launched in 2001, where the greatest growth is coming from orders with

fast deliveries and very low prices. Moutinho reports that online sales “are growing, but, speaking of food, the in-store shopping experience will always be far superior.”

## Supermarket prices may rise

Continente’s leader describes the business as having “low margins”.

The spokesperson for the distribution companies (APED) had already warned days ago that the price increase for basic goods next year “is inevitable,” with Gonçalo Lobo Xavier describing “enormous pressure from the point of view of the value chain” on products such as meat, fish, fruits and vegetables, cocoa, or coffee. “There’s no other option,” confirmed the CEO of Continente’s parent company.

“Prices have to go up. If there is inflation, prices have to go up. There may be higher or lower inflation, and it is expected to be lower [in 2026] than in the recent past, in 2022 and 2023. What we expect is that inflation levels next year will be stable, at levels well below those of recent years. But whenever there is inflation, prices have to go up. There is

no other remedy,” said Luís Moutinho on a report by Eco.

Assuring that the food retail business in Portugal “is low-margin,” during a meeting with journalists in which he presented the expansion plan that foresees the opening of 100 more stores with 3,000 jobs and closed the door to internationalisation, the CEO of Sonae MC promised, nevertheless, that “whatever the context, the strategy will always be to have the best price on the market [and] Continente as the champion of low prices.”

Operating in a “very mature and competitive” market where it has to compete with fewer operators compared to Spain (where there are several regional chains), but which have large international operations, the entry of Mercadona or

the strengthening of Lidl has also forced Continente to increase the number of own brand products.

“To compete with discounters, in addition to price, we have to have quality private label brands,” argued Luís Moutinho. In value, the penetration rate of private label brands in Continente’s sales is already around 35%. However, this is still far from the 48% that these items represent in the Portuguese large-scale distribution market – and in quantity they already represent more than half.

According to data provided by MC, based on an internal comparative analysis of a basket of products (at shelf prices, excluding card discounts), in Portugal, the average difference between the lowest and highest price is 8 percentage points, while in France it is 14 points and in the United Kingdom it reaches 27 points. For Luís Moutinho, “this indicates strong competition” and “a struggle to win over consumers and gain market share.”

According to the manager, the inflationary crisis experienced mainly in 2022 and 2023 “proved that retail in Portugal cushioned inflation.” “We lowered our margins. Upstream inflation was higher than downstream inflation for consumers. We are a price-competitive country. You can’t survive in Portugal without having the best value proposition, in which price is essential,” he claims.



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# Children have high levels of economic literacy



Children are informed about the crisis and demonstrate economic literacy, reveals a study on family experiences during the cost-of-living crisis, presented by the Miguel Torga Higher Institute (ISMT).

**E**ntitled “Family experiences during the cost-of-living crisis – Children’s perspectives on the impacts on well-being”, the research is structured around the economic challenges experienced since 2020, marked by increased energy and food costs and inflationary pressures, aggravated by the invasion of Ukraine. In a sample of 236 children, with an average age of about 15 years, from ten schools in five municipalities in the Coimbra district, 83% had heard about the crisis, according to the study’s coordinator, Manuel Menezes. “This contradicts claims that children are alienated and have poor financial and economic literacy. What our study clearly demonstrated is that they have a high level

of awareness and economic literacy,” he stated. Most of the children who participated in the study, promoted by EAPN-Portugal (European Anti-Poverty Network), are Portuguese, but there are also children of other nationalities, such as Brazilians and French. According to the coordinator, the group is “relatively privileged in terms of educational capital, social capital, and assets,” but these characteristics “do not, however, prevent the identification of some signs of vulnerability that persist in specific segments.” Manuel Menezes pointed out that “most do not report reduced spending,” but there are some indicators: 10.3% report difficulties paying for electricity and 20.8% report delays in rent or

mortgage payments. “This lower representation of material impacts cannot lead us to conclude that the impacts were not significant. It can also be interpreted as the resilience of families,” he said.

## “Generational anxiety”

The sample also signals a “generational anxiety,” with children having “significant concern” about their future. “More than 50% of our children showed this anxiety, fears about economic and financial issues, and fears about illness and death,” explained the coordinator, for whom psychosocial support is an issue that must be taken into consideration. The research indicates that children “aspire to financial stability,” but 18% prioritized their own and their family’s health. Among the children,



13% are concerned about global problems, which, according to the professor, shows “emotional and civic maturity.” For Manuel Menezes, the

study leaves the message that listening to children “is an ethical imperative” and an “essential tool that enriches the understanding of different social phenomena.”

“The way they perceive their well-being and that of their families is a barometer of the health and cohesion of our societies. We cannot downplay this fact”.

## Half of pensioners receive under €462



Half of old-age pensioners received a pension below €462, despite an average of €645, according to data analysed by economists at the Bank of Portugal (BdP).

According to the analysis of Social Security microdata for 2024 carried out by the central bank economists, there is “high dispersion,” with half of old-age pensioners in the general scheme receiving less than €462 and only 5% receiving more than €1,685.

“The proximity between the average retirement pension and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile reveals that most retirees receive significantly lower amounts than the average, reflecting an asymmetrical distribution concentrated at low levels,” points out the text prepared by Cláudia Braz, Sharmin Sazedj, and Lara Wemans, which will be included in this month’s Economic Bulletin.

The analysis also examined gender differences, indicating that women show less variability and are, on average, at lower levels.

In total, there were 2.5 million old-age pensioners in public schemes, of which two million belong to the Social Security system and 440,000 to the Caixa Geral de Aposentações (CGA).

### Average age

In 2024, the average age of retirees

was 75 years, with women’s age being 15 months higher than men’s, “reflecting a higher average life expectancy.”

In 2024, the average old-age pension for women was €490, compared to €812 for men. The difference, around 40%, falls to 28% when considering the sum of age and survivor pensions.

By age group, the lowest average pensions occur in the older age groups, with retirees under 65 having an average pension close to €770, falling to €537 for retirees over 80.

“This profile is likely associated with the increased length of contributory careers and the declared income of new retirees,” the bulletin points out.

The data also indicate that in 2024, among all old-age pensioners, 40% – or 804,000 people – were receiving the minimum pension, an indicator calculated based on the number of years of contributions.

The analysis also points out that the gender gap has been gradually decreasing in recent years, although there is still a difference between men and women, not only due to the narrowing of wage differences, but also due to the increased participation of women in the labour market and the increase in contributory careers, according to the authors.

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# New Research and Innovation Agency

The Minister of Education, Science and Innovation has said that the future Research and Innovation Agency, is an “opportunity” for Portugal.



“What we have had until now, with very important results, does not respond to the challenges that Portugal faces in the European context. It is a

system that has to look to the future and understand the place that Portugal wants in the European research space,” stressed Fernando Alexandre in statements to journalists.

Fernando Alexandre announced for the beginning of next year a “major national discussion” on Portugal’s strategic priorities in the areas of research and innovation.

“We will have to make choices, something we haven’t wanted to do in recent years,” said the official, considering that the government is undertaking a “profound reform” in the area of science, research, and innovation. The Minister of Education emphasised that Portugal will have a funding agency that does not manage an annual budget as before, “with marginal variations,” and will instead have medium- and long-term planning. “We will have a five-year budget – the only area where this happens – something that researchers have been demanding for a long time and that doesn’t exist in many European countries,” he stressed. Highlighting that this is “a major step forward in the funding of science

in Portugal,” Fernando Alexandre noted that this model requires different management, “because having a five-year budget means making choices and stating the country’s priorities.”

## Priority areas

The priority areas for investment, which will have to be approved by the government, will result “from consultation with the scientific community, companies, innovators, and all institutions of the scientific and technological system.” At the beginning of the year, the secretariat will release the methodology for the national discussion on the science and innovation sector, which will begin in February and conclude by the end of the year.

According to the Minister of Education, the program contract with the future agency will be awarded in 2027 for a period of five years, until 2031. The future Agency for Research and Innovation is part of the Foundation for Science and Technology and the National Innovation Agency, and its creation was promulgated by the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The note from the Presidency of the Republic states that the decree creating the agency was promulgated “given that the commitment to consult relevant entities in the matter was fulfilled and that the Government accepted changes that the President of the Republic considers essential.”

## Foreign workers down 35%



The number of foreign workers arriving in Portugal has fallen to 12,000, reveals the Bank of Portugal.

Immigration to Portugal has entered a phase of sharp slowdown after the peak recorded between 2022 and 2023.

In 2024 and throughout 2025, the number of foreign workers entering the country fell sharply, while departures continue to increase, outlining a clear reversal of the trend that has sustained the labour market in recent years.

According to ECO, based on analysis by the Bank of Portugal, entries of foreigners registered with Social Security decreased by 35% in the first eight months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, falling to

a monthly average of around 12,000 people. At the same time, the migration balance has deteriorated rapidly, with the monthly peak falling by almost half in just two years, mainly reflecting the sharp drop in entries.

The newspaper also highlights that departures of foreigners have been trending in the opposite direction for seven consecutive years, having increased by almost 40% in 2024 and doubled compared to 2022. This exodus, which includes employed and skilled workers, poses a structural challenge to the Portuguese economy, which is increasingly dependent on immigration to respond to the aging population and the needs of the labour market.

## Wine production drops to 10 year low



Wine production is expected to fall by 20% this year to its lowest volume in the last decade, despite being of good quality, and the price of olive oil is expected to decline by 5%.

According to the first estimate of the “Economic Accounts for Agriculture - 2025” from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), although wine production this year is “the lowest in the last decade, it is expected that quality wines will be obtained,



with balanced sugar levels and good aromatic concentration”.

The fall in wine production this year was due to “intense rains and mild temperatures in the spring [which] favoured

the development of mildew, reducing the number and weight of grapes”, as well as “extreme heat in the summer [which] caused burns and dehydration of the fruit”.



## Alentejo sparkling wine in top 50

Convés Espumante Branco, produced at Herdade da Lisboa in Vidigueira, has been chosen as one of the best sparkling wines of the year in Wine Pleasures’ 50 Great Sparkling Wines of the World 2026.

This Alentejo sparkling wine from the Cardoso Family was the only Portuguese wine to achieve Gold, with 95 points, according to

a report by Sul Informação.

Produced from Chardonnay, Arinto, Alvarinho, and Baga grapes, this Alentejo sparkling wine presents “a

fine and expressive aroma, with notes of white-fleshed fruit and citrus sensations”.

Convés Espumante Branco is available in wine

cellars, restaurants, and specialty shops throughout the country with a recommended retail price of €10.99.

# Electricity prices to rise in 2026



Electricity bills for customers in the regulated market will increase by an average of 1% starting 1 January, according to the Energy Services Regulatory Authority (ERSE).

“In the regulated market of mainland Portugal, the transitional tariffs for sales to end customers in Low Voltage Normal (BTN) show, on average, a variation of 1.0% in 2026,” it reads.

On 15 October, ERSE had presented its proposal for a 1% increase in the price of electricity for households in the regulated market, and the proposal was submitted to the Tariff Council for an opinion.

According to the energy sector regulator, the proposed increase now translates to a rise of between €0.18 and €0.28 in the monthly bill, including taxes and fees.

Starting in January, considering a power rating of 3.45 kilovolt-amperes (kVA) and a consumption of 1,900 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year for a couple without children, the total to be paid will be €36.82, including taxes and fees (except for the DGEG - Directorate-General for Energy and Geology fee).

For a couple with two children, with

a power rating of 6.9 kVA and a consumption of 5,000 kWh/year, the bill will be €95.03 (including taxes and fees). At the end of September 2025, 817,000 customers were in the regulated market.

“In the liberalised market, prices for end customers vary between suppliers and depend on the commercial offer contracted by the customer,” ERSE reminded.

The final price of electricity in the regulated and liberalised markets (whose prices vary between suppliers and depend on the contracted offer) includes the value of network access tariffs, regulated by ERSE.

Between December of this year and January 2026, network access tariffs will vary by -2.9% in very high voltage, -0.8% in high voltage, 1.8% in medium voltage, 2.7% in special low voltage, and 3.5% in normal low voltage.

Next year, consumers with social tariffs will have a 33.8% discount.



## Government to cut fuel tax relief

The government has said that it will continue to reduce the discount on the Tax on Petroleum and Energy Products (ISP), as requested by Brussels.

“We have to reverse the discount and we started doing so two weeks ago. We will use the same methodology as two weeks ago: whenever there are price decreases that allow us to accommodate part of the reversal of the discount, it will be done,” said the Minister of Finance, Joaquim Miranda Sarmiento, in statements to Portuguese journalists.

When asked when this will happen, the minister indicated that it was “impossible to

say”. “If I could predict the price of oil six months or a year in advance, I’d be a trillionaire like Elon Musk, but unfortunately I don’t have that ability,” he quipped.

At issue are the European Commission’s regular requests for Portugal to end the discount on the Tax on Petroleum and Energy Products (ISP), which was created in 2022 and 2023 following the energy crisis related to the war in Ukraine and high inflation.

According to the government, the European Commission has not imposed any date, so the reduction will be gradual.

At the end of November, the government

reduced the discount on the ISP applicable to unleaded petrol and road diesel, cancelling

part of the fuel price drop planned for the following week.

## Dutch tech company hiring

The Dutch group Conclusion, through its company Neotalent Conclusion, has inaugurated a new office in the Trinity Porto complex for its 115 employees and plans to hire 50 more staff.

“The opening of this new office in Porto reflects the solid relationship we have been building over the last ten years with talent and our clients in the North of the country,” says the managing director of Conclusion Iberia and CEO of Neotalent Conclusion, quoted in a statement, reported by Eco.

“This step reinforces the proximity we want to maintain with the local technology ecosystem and confirms the increasingly relevant role that Porto

plays in the development of our operation,” explains CEO Célia Vieira, who is responsible for designing the Iberian strategy.

Like the headquarters in Lisbon, the new office adopts the multi-brand model of the Conclusion ecosystem. Initially, it will house the Neotalent Conclusion team, but the space is prepared to receive employees from different companies within the group.

In Lisbon, Conclusion has a team of approximately 850 employees, distrib-

uted across the companies Neotalent Conclusion, a specialist in technological recruitment and IT services, and Score Conclusion, a strategic partner specialising in consulting and implementation of SAP projects.

In a statement, the technology company reinforces that “with the ambition to achieve a global turnover of 2 billion euros by 2030, the contribution of Conclusion Iberia will be decisive, both through organic growth and through acquisitions.”

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# Knowledge intensive jobs double



In 2025, 7.8 percent of the working-age adults of Portugal were employed in brain business jobs.



**B**usiness job is a term for employment in knowledge-intensive firms in tech, information and communications technology, advanced services, and creative professions. This is a 7.6 percent increase,

when compared to the year before. The level has risen from 3.8 percent in 2014, a significant improvement over time. The most significant increase in share of adults employed in brain business jobs has occurred in Cyprus, where the share has increased by

fully 136 percent between 2014 and 2025. Portugal is second, with 105 percent increase. The rate has nearly doubled in Bulgaria (99 percent increase), Lithuania (90 percent) and Croatia (89 percent). Lowest rate of increase is in high-cost Luxembourg (2 percent

increase), followed by Iceland (6 percent). This is the finding of the geography of Europe's brain business jobs index, produced by the European Centre for Entrepreneurship and Policy Reform (ECEPR), with support from Nordic Capital. Amongst the total population of Portugal, 9.1 percent are engineers and scientists. A comparison of European nations shows that a strong link exists between expert density and brain business jobs density. Some countries outperform in terms of brain business jobs, in relation to their expert density, while some overperform. Portugal underperforms, having a 0.3 percentage points lower share of adults in brain business jobs, in relation to how much would be predicted by the expert density of the nation. "Portugal and the Lisbon region in particular, are hubs of brain business

jobs growth. Portugal can continue this path by pursuing further growth-oriented reforms of taxation and business regulation", says Nima Sanandaji, CEO of ECEPR. In the Lisbon region 14.2 percent of the adults are employed in brain business jobs. The Norte region also has a high share of brain business jobs per capita, 6.6 percent.

## Strong in head offices and design

Portugal has particular relative strengths in head office and management, where nearly 108 800 are employed. The country has also recently developed a relatively strong design and other creative professions sector, with 42 400 employees. Klas Tikkanen, COO of Nordic Capital Advisors, emphasized the importance of combining high-quality education with favourable tax and regulatory

environments, stating, "Having many engineers and scientists in the population is closely linked to the share of advanced jobs. We also continue to see a trend in Europe where countries with the fastest growth in brain business jobs tend to have lower tax levels relative to GDP. Nations need to combine talent supply with competitive tax burdens, in order to grow with knowledge-intensive jobs." Fostering high-value-creating jobs remains important for the regional labour markets of Europe. Each percentage point higher share of the population of European regions employed in brain business jobs is linked to 0.24 percentage points lower regional unemployment. This means that in a region where 10 percentage points more of the population is employed in brain business jobs, the average unemployment is 2.4 percent lower, compared to the typical European region.



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## Unfulfilled vacancies in Europe



The profession with the most job vacancies to be filled in the European Union (EU) in 2024 was that of sales, marketing and development manager, with 8.4%, according to Eurostat.

The European statistical service highlights, however, that these data are published as experimental statistics, meaning they are still under evaluation, as they are partially compiled using a new data source based on online job advertisements.

Other professions where the demand for workers remained unmet, on average in the EU, last year were: auxiliary worker in the manufacturing industry and other administrative support workers (7.3% each), other sales workers (6.1%), and associate technicians in the artistic, cultural and culinary fields (6.0%).

According to the bulletin, although professions in the public sector, such as healthcare professionals and teachers, may also face recruitment difficulties, they are less likely to be advertised online, meaning they appear lower in the table or do not even appear in these data.

On the other hand, professions in the information technology field may be overrepresented in the online job advertisement data.

## Quality jobs

The European Commission has presented a roadmap for creating and maintaining quality jobs and launched a public consultation with social partners on this topic.

The Roadmap for Quality Jobs focuses on areas such as job creation and the promotion of good working conditions, such as promoting adequate wages.

According to a statement, the Commission also wants to support business modernization and support workers in the green and digital transitions through skills development and information.

The roadmap, drawn up after a consultation process that included European social partners, also focuses on the enforcement of existing labour rights, strengthening social dialogue and collective bargaining.

The Commission also launched a first phase of consultation – aimed only at social partners – on future legislation on quality jobs.

The consultation on the future Quality Jobs Regulation, which runs until January 29, 2026, covers topics such as occupational health and safety, subcontracting, algorithmic management and Artificial Intelligence, among others.



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# Increase in car rental

In November there was an “increase in demand for commercial vehicles, as well as a “sustained growth in motorcycle rentals.”



**R**ent-a-car companies acquired a total of 1,890 new vehicles last November, a figure that corresponds to an increase of approximately 4% compared to the 1,825 vehicles acquired in the same period of the previous year, according to ARAC – the National Association of

Vehicle Rental Companies.

## Modest growth

In a press release, the association indicates that in November, the “national market for light passenger and light commercial vehicles registered a total volume of 19,612 units registered, which corresponds to a modest

growth in commercial activity compared to the same period in 2024.”

“Despite the economic downturn observed during this period, the rent-a-car channel remained a central driver in the automotive landscape,” ARAC celebrates in the information released and reported by Publituris.

According to the association, the sector’s performance confirms its adaptability, investing in innovation and digitalisation, and responding to new ways of using automobiles, which shows that the “leasing model continues to assert itself as a preferred alternative to traditional ownership, valuing flexible, sustainable, and adaptable mobility.”

“This change reinforces the role of the operation as an instrument of economic efficiency, cost rationalisation, and access to cutting-edge technology,” adds the statement released by ARAC.

## Demand

The association explains that, in November, there

was an “increase in demand for commercial vehicles, driven by the distribution, services, and e-commerce sectors,” as well as a “sustained growth in motorcycle rentals, especially among urban logistics operators, due to greater mobility, reduced operating costs, and a smaller environmental footprint.” “These trends consolidate the role of the contracting sector as an engine of innovation and modernisation of mobility supply, in line with the principles of the energy transition and the circular economy,” ARAC also considers.

According to the association, November’s performance the report highlighted the “importance of the vehicle

rental sector,” which is affirmed as a “structuring pillar of national mobility,” since “the sector contributes significantly to the renewal of the vehicle fleet, the reduction of emissions, and the dynamisation of economic activity.”

## Essential support

“Rent-a-car is an essential support for tourism activity, guaranteeing the mobility of millions of visitors and contributing significantly to attracting tourist flows and enhancing the value of regions. Furthermore, it acts as a multiplier of economic competitiveness, allowing companies to optimize costs and make operations more flexible,” ARAC also argues.

# Coimbra Hotel to reopen



The Tivoli Coimbra hotel will reopen in April 2026, with a five-star rating, after a complete renovation, the company announced in a statement.

The hotel will have 100 rooms, and the number of suites has increased from four to 14.

“Marking its debut as a five-star hotel, the Tivoli Coimbra will elevate the hospitality experience in the city,” says Tivoli Hotels & Resorts.

“The renovation will bring new features throughout the hotel, from the rooms to the facade, including the entrance lobby, the breakfast restaurant, the Simone Urban Bar & Kitchen, and the creation of new wellness areas, including a new indoor pool.”

The project, they say, was designed by

Coimbra Jardim, the hotel’s owner, in conjunction with the architecture studio A3 Arquitectos and with interior design by Broadway Malyan, making it, they say, “one of the most emblematic hotels in the city of Coimbra [...]”.

Among the new features, the group highlights the new wellness area, equipped with an indoor pool, gym, treatment rooms, jacuzzi, sauna and Turkish bath.

Lusa inquired about the investment value of the renovation and is awaiting a response.

Tivoli Hotels & Resorts, founded in 1933 in Portugal as a luxury brand, currently has approximately 20 properties in its portfolio in Portugal, Brazil, Qatar, China, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain, with future projects in Europe and the Middle East.

# New shopping centre restaurant



Italian Republic has arrived at AlgarveShopping in Albufeira, offering its full menu for dine-in and quick meals in the food court.

As with its other restaurants throughout the region and the country, the brand presents a varied selection of pizzas, pastas, risottos, and appetizers, according to

a report by Sul Informação. Pizzas range from Margherita to Mediterranean, Calzone, or Vegetarian, priced between €11.40 and €14.20.

For those who prefer pasta, the menu includes traditional options such as Lasagna, Cannelloni, Spaghetti alla Carbonara, alla Bolognese, Penne

al Salmone, or Linguini Pescatore (from €13.50 to €14.30).

For those just passing through, Italian Republic also offers menus designed for quick meals, all with a drink included: the Pasta Menu (€9.90), the Hamburger Menu (€10.60), and the Pizza Menu, priced between €8.90 and €10.60.

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# More flight delays

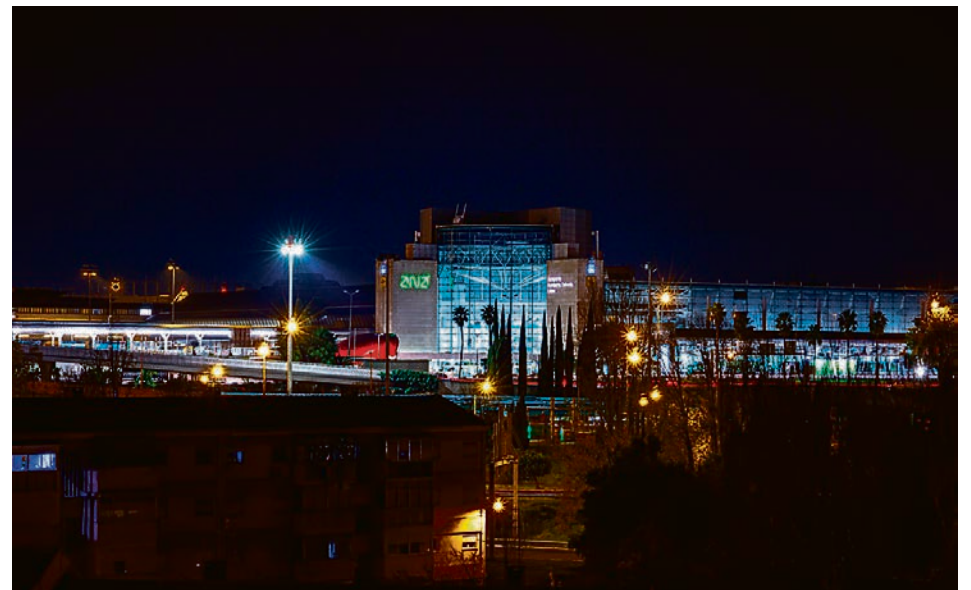


Delays in Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) in Europe have increased sharply in the last decade, well above traffic growth, reveals IATA, considering that, “financially, the impact is significant”.

It is estimated that ATFM delays have cost airlines and passengers €16.1 billion since 2015, of which more than 70% are linked to lack of capacity and staffing problems. Delays in Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) in the region increased by 114% in the period 2015-2024, compared to an increase of only 6.7% in the number of flights in the same period. The analysis excluded delays caused by weather conditions, and flight cancellations induced by ATC strikes were also not included. “Capacity limitations and staff shortages account for the majority of delays,” reveals the analysis, problems that have been known for some time but have been “inadequately mitigated,” especially in

France and Germany. Air navigation service providers (ANSPs) in France and Germany are responsible for more than 50% of all delays. “We are now seeing the consequences of Europe’s inability to control air traffic,” says Willie Walsh, Director General of IATA. The executive says that “a slight improvement expected in 2025, after a very bad 2024, does not alter the deterioration observed in the last decade.” Furthermore, Willie Walsh points out that airlines and travellers were promised a “Single European Sky that would reduce delays and decrease fuel consumption through more efficient navigation and routes. Instead, passengers have seen delays more than double.”

**“Unacceptable”** Walsh’s criticism continues by emphasising that, “while Eurocrats debate ways to increase the burden of compensation to passengers foreseen in EU261, the main cause of much of the delays suffered by travellers – air traffic control – remains unaddressed and unpunished,” concluding that “Europe’s connectivity and competitiveness suffer from schedules that have to accommodate ATC inefficiency. This is completely unacceptable.” IATA analysis shows that 7.2 million flights experienced delays between 2015 and October 2025. Of these, 6.4 million had delays of 30 minutes or less, and 700,000 registered delays of at least 30 minutes. In 2024, delays reached



30.4 million minutes (a 114% increase compared to 14.2 million minutes in 2015), of which 38% occurred in July and August. In 2024, staffing and capacity issues accounted

for 87% of ANSP delays. Delays related to staff shortages (excluding strikes) increased by 201.7% since 2015. Industrial action and strikes have become more common in recent years,

accounting for 8.8% of delays caused by ANSP. 9.8 million minutes of delays were caused by ATC strikes over the decade – a period that includes the pandemic, when air traffic virtually ground to a halt.

## Ryanair TAP appeal rejected



The General Court of the European Union (EU) has rejected the appeal filed by low-cost airline Ryanair, considering that TAP was “eligible” for the €2.55 billion state aid for its restructuring.



“Ryanair asked the General Court to annul this latest decision of the Commission,” but “the General Court dismisses the appeal filed by Ryanair,” the first instance of the Court of Justice of the EU announced in a statement, reported by Publituris. Specifically, according to the published ruling, “the Commission demonstrated that TAP was eligible to benefit from restructuring aid” and also “correctly assessed that the measure responded to an objective of common interest and that it was necessary, adequate and proportionate.” At the same time, “the General Court also rejects Ryanair’s claims that the Commission

failed to demonstrate that the restructuring plan was realistic, coherent, sufficiently broad and capable of restoring TAP’s long-term viability, and therefore there was no violation of the guidelines,” it adds. Furthermore, “the Commission cannot be accused of having carried out an incomplete analysis of the negative effects of the aid measure,” since “the principles of non-discrimination, freedom to provide services and freedom of establishment were not violated.” At issue is the approval given by the European Commission on 21 December, 2021, to TAP’s restructuring plan and the €2.55 billion in state aid to allow the group to return to viability, imposing commitments in order not to harm European competition. Among the remedies imposed by Brussels for approval of the restructuring plan are the obligation for the airline to make available up to 18 slots per day at Lisbon airport, the division of activities between TAP Air Portugal and Portugália, and the sale of non-essential assets such as subsidiaries in adjacent activities of maintenance, catering, and ground handling.

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# Are abandoned buildings embodying “saudade?”



Douglas Hughes



In a country famous for warmth, colour and postcard charm you'll find, between townhouses, boutique hotels and modern cafés; a lot of buildings that seem to have been forgotten. They're not merely relics of rural depopulation, nor just

the detritus of economic turbulence. They are, in many ways, a physical expression of Portugal's social, economic, and historical contradictions. They're beautiful, melancholic, hopeful, frustrating, iconic and problematic all at once. So, how did this small,

increasingly modern and globally admired country end up with such a visible surplus of abandoned structures? The reasons are complex and a testament of Portuguese history, economics, bureaucracy, culture and migration. Let's try to unravel some of it.

## The maze of Inheritance and ownership

Portugal's inheritance laws are among the strictest in Europe. You can't simply leave your house to one child while disinheriting the others. Property gets divided automatically among heirs, even if there are ten of them. Over generations, this creates “heir inflation.” A single stone cottage might have dozens of owners across multiple countries. To sell the house or even renovate it, every one of those owners must agree and sign. Good luck finding a cousin living in Toronto or a great-uncle who disappeared to Mozambique 50 years ago. The result? Buildings trapped in legal limbo, deteriorating simply because no one can legally make a decision about their future. And the bureaucracy doesn't help. Property registries weren't rigorously maintained until the late 20th century. Many homes still lack clear documentation. Resolving disputes can take years, cost an absolute fortune and drain the will of even the most dedicated families.

## Portugal's century of rural decline

Like much of southern Europe, Portugal transformed rapidly from a rural economy to an urban one. In 1960, the countryside was full of life, but by the 1990s, young people had fled villages en masse for Lisbon, Porto and abroad. Whole communities were hollowed out, leaving behind farmhouses with no farmers, manor homes with no heirs and shops and cafés with no customers. Driving through the hinterland feels like exploring the aftermath of an evacuation. As the population ages and birth rates remain low, the countryside continues to shrink and buildings (even schools) outlive their purpose. Once empty, they decay quickly in Portugal's warm, humid climate.

## The 2008 financial crisis

Portugal was hit hard by the global financial crisis. Banks collapsed, construction halted, credit evaporated and tourism was nowhere near today's level. Thousands of buildings, half built, fully built or awaiting investment were simply left to decay. We can still see remnants of this era. Concrete skeletons on the skyline, planned resorts overgrown with weeds and many beachfront developments frozen mid-construction.

## Tourism booms whilst some buildings crumble

Portugal's tourism boom has brought enormous investment and modernisation. Yet, not all buildings are easy targets for renovation. Many sit in protected zones where strict laws govern façade preservation, architectural authenticity and height restrictions. A developer might face years sifting through complicated paperwork when seeking planning approval. Many simply walk away. Thus, Portugal has both an explosion of new hotels and Airbnbs and a parallel universe of decaying structures sitting right next to them.

## The irony of the housing crisis

Portugal is facing a well-known housing shortage. Rents have skyrocketed, locals are priced out of popular regions while politicians debate endlessly about potential solutions. And yet, the country has one of the highest rates of vacant housing in Europe. This paradox stems from the barriers to unlocking abandoned buildings. The result feels absurd. Empty buildings everywhere whilst there aren't enough homes for ordinary families. If we look hard enough, there are some signs of change. Urban regeneration incentives are increasing, municipalities

are pressuring owners to renovate or sell and foreign investment continues to revive old neighbourhoods. There are also some young Portuguese entrepreneurs who are restoring properties as guesthouses, cafés and co-living spaces. In addition, some inheritance laws are being modernised. But progress is slow, because as we've already cited in this piece, Portugal's abandoned buildings aren't just construction projects waiting on the fringes, they really are symbols of history, memory, family conflict, cultural identity and decades of migration. They tell stories of people who left, people who stayed and people who simply couldn't decide what to do with the past.

## A country half renovated, half cocooned in old memories

Portugal is a land of beauty, resilience and contradictions. Its abandoned buildings are part tragedy, part poetry and the embodiment of “saudade”. They frustrate some, entrance others and bewilder nearly everyone. They are physical reminders that nations evolve unevenly. Growth sits beside decay, modernity exists beside nostalgia whilst prosperity is often set aside whilst yesterday's burdens are untangled.

## Irene of Tomar 635-653

Irene was born in Nabancia (present day Tomar)

Her parents sent her to a convent school and also engaged a private tutor. She only left home for school, Mass and to pray at St Peter's shrine. A young man called Britald began to follow her and then declared he wanted to marry her. Irene told him she wouldn't marry him but when he became melancholy she explained that she had given her life to God and would be a nun.

Her tutor, who was a monk called Remigio, began to make unwanted advances to her and when she refused him he left his job. Then he began to spread rumours about her and told people he'd left because she was pregnant. He'd also given her a drink which made her stomach distend.

When Britald heard all this he hired an assassin who followed her and killed her with his sword. He then threw her body into a

tributary of the Tagus

It is said her body was recovered by Benedictines after her Uncle Celsius, an abbot, had a revelation of her life, death and location of

her body. She was found near Scalabius which was named Santarem in her honour. Irene is the Patron Saint of Tomar and Loures and her feast day is, October 20th.



By Teresa Mulgrew

## About Douglas Hughes



Douglas Hughes is a UK-based writer producing general interest articles ranging from travel pieces to classic motoring.

“The views expressed on this page are those of the author and not of The Portugal News”

## Christmas Masses in English



The Chapel in Carvoeiro - Nossa Senhora de Encarnação - is greatly blessed to have two Masses said in English, this Christmas.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent on Sunday, 21 December at 4pm, and Christmas Eve Wednesday, 24 December at 6pm.

The celebrant will be Padre Nuno Coelho, our parish priest. Padre Nuno is enjoying serving the international community through these Masses in English. His commitment is to ensure that the Algarve has at least one mass in English. Padre Nuno also adapts his mass to include any French speakers present.

So, if you are looking for a meaningful celebration of your Catholic faith, in English / French, at this festive time, please join us. Everyone is most welcome even if you do not normally attend this church. We will sing traditional Christmas carols!

There will be a retiring collection for the Lagoa Food Bank. We have over 100 families in need at this time. Please give generously.

These masses will be in addition to the chapel's usual Saturday evening masses at 5.30pm (in Portuguese). Christmas Midnight Mass will be in Portuguese, in the Lagoa church, starting at 11pm.

For more information please contact: Madeleine Wheare 964 933 823; [carvoeirocatholics@gmail.com](mailto:carvoeirocatholics@gmail.com)

## Algarve Senior Bikers venture on a winter tour to Alentejo and Andalusia

In early December, six intrepid riders from the Algarve Senior Bikers (ASB) braved the cold and rain to explore the Baixo Alentejo and northern Andalusia in winter, when temperatures plummeted to 5°C in the morning.

The ASB winter tour started at Pulo do Lobo (Wolf's Leap), a natural gorge located in the Vale do Guadiana Natural Park, north of Mértola. There, a group of four riders from the Algarve met two riders from Setúbal, and they continued the tour together under Walter's guidance.

Further upstream, the Guadiana feeds the Alqueva reservoir, the largest in Europe. In some places, the river forms the border between Portugal and Spain.

From Pulo do Lobo, we continued south to Mértola. There, we enjoyed a guided tour of the town, followed by a delicious Alentejo-style dinner at the Tamuje restaurant in the historic town centre.

Mértola has a population of around 6,000 people, but attracts approximately 50,000 visitors every year. The town is situated on a hill above the Guadiana River. Its strategic location has made it an important fluvial commercial port since the Iron Age. Like the Mezqui-



ta-Catedral in Córdoba, Mértola's main church was built over the only medieval mosque to survive the Umayyad period in Portugal.


The next day, we left Mértola and the Baixo Alentejo region behind. We enjoyed a slow, relaxing drive through sunny, cool Andalusia, where we had an amusing encounter with a large herd of sheep that blocked the road for a while. We also marveled at the extraordinary landscape of the Rio Tinto mines, which have been exploited for gold, silver, copper, quartz, pyrite and calcite for 5,000 years.

We arrived in Aracena in the evening of day two to find dark, heavy clouds promising rain and mist, which is far from ideal for riding a motorbike. On the morning of day three, we took time to

visit the impressive Gruta de las Maravillas cave system, one of the most spectacular in Spain, with otherworldly landscapes of stalactites and stalagmites, crystal-clear lakes and subterranean passages spanning over 2km.

After visiting the cave, we left Aracena in light drizzle. We drove carefully along the winding roads of the beautiful Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park.

We arrived in Moura, our final destination, relatively dry. Due to a town-wide power cut, we enjoyed an unexpected candlelit dinner. It was the perfect way to celebrate completing our 700 km tour of this beautiful region of Portugal and Spain - there's no better way to experience it than on a motorbike with like-minded friends.



# Celebrate Christmas at All Saints

**Sunday 21st December 11:00**  
Christmas service with Holy Communion with Bishop Andy Lines



**Sunday 21st December 18:00**  
Carols by candlelight, the 350 year old Church will be lit by hundreds of lights  
All the traditional carols. Children very welcome. Come and join us  
With Bishop Andy Lines

**Wednesday 24th December 21:00**  
Traditional midnight (Bethlehem time) service  
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This year's West Algarve Golf Trophy brought sunshine, fantastic competition, and truly unforgettable moments on and off the course.

On Wednesday, 26 November, 64 players joined us at 9am for

a morning meet and coffee at the Espiche Golf Clubhouse, followed by a shotgun start at 10am. After what was surely a challenging round, we hosted a welcome cocktail in the stunning upper lounges of the

## West Algarve Golf Trophy 2025

clubhouse. The day ended with laughter, camaraderie, and great memories.

The competition continued on Thursday, 27 November, with a 9am shotgun start at Boavista Golf. Some players had already achieved impressive scores over the first two days, making the competition even more exciting.

The final round took place at Palmares Golf on Friday, 28 November, featuring a highly competitive round with the draw based on aggregate scores from the first two days. After the round, a prize-giving lunch was held at the clubhouse.

The overall winner was the Irish player Conor Downey, with an outstanding 102 stableford

net points. The first lady was our Espiche Golf member, Clare MacLeod, who scored 96 points. A prize for the gross aggregate was awarded to George Denton.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the event so special!

To all our participants: we sincerely appreciate your enthusiasm, sportsmanship, and energy throughout the tournament. We look forward to welcoming you back in 2026!

We are also extremely grateful to our partners and sponsors, whose generosity makes events like this possible: Vivenda Miranda, Vale do Lobo, Cascade Resort, Tivoli Lagos, Amendoeira Golf, Wildwatch Algarve,

ADM Group, Marina Club, Golf Clubs Rental Algarve, Benamor Golf, Castro Marim Golf, the Espiche Golf Academy team - Fraser Cramb, João Tomáz and Gonçalo Pinto, Volpe Golf, Currencies Direct, and Hugo Pinto, Head Pro at Boavista Golf & SPA.

Finally, a big thank you our teams at Espiche Golf, Palmares Golf, and Boavista Golf for bringing everything together and ensuring the success of this event.

The final results can be viewed here, including both net and gross scores.

If you are interested in participating in next year's event, please contact one of the golf courses.

## Pinetrees pupils shine in ABRS proficiency tests

Congratulations to Filly Carter, Martha O'Grady, and Mila Cassagne on passing a total of 16 riding and horse care tests examined by Mrs. Bev McHale. Bev was assisted by Paula Siebert. In the picture the riders received a SandyBlue rosette, and later will receive their coveted diplomas from the ABRS.

The Association of British Riding School tests were very popular with Pinetrees pupils in days gone by, pre-Covid. They are a great way to evaluate progress, encourage the desire to learn more, and, ideal for the non-competitive rider or those who do not own their own horse.

The next exam day is planned for the Easter holidays so if you are interested in giving this a go contact Pinetrees for details. There are syllabi to follow, so some training is involved and checking that the rider has the ability for the tests they are aiming for. Would you like to try?



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## Rotary BBQ and Quiz Night in Estoi

On Saturday, 11 October, the Rotary Club Estoi Palace International (RCE-PI) held its first BBQ & Quiz Night at the Casa do Povo in Estoi.

A total of 53 guests, a mix of Rotarians, local residents and friends from the wider international community, attended for a memorable evening of fun, friendship and community spirit.

Dinner featured a delicious suckling pig roast, complemented by vegetarian quiches, a variety of drinks, and a tempting selection of homemade cakes and tarts.

The entertainment for the evening consisted of lively interactive quizzes, where participants used their mobile phones to answer general knowledge questions. The organisers were particularly impressed by the foreign guests' knowledge of Portuguese history and culture.

The event also had a charitable purpose, raising just over €1000 in support



of RCEPI community projects, including the monthly donation of milk and food to the Faro Food Bank, whose food parcels are distributed by volunteers based at the Casa do Povo in Estoi.

The Club extends its heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended and contribut-

ed to the success of this special evening, where fellowship and service truly came together.

If you would like find out how Rotary helps the community please contact us at: [info@rotaryestoiipalace.org](mailto:info@rotaryestoiipalace.org), or visit: [www.rotaryestoiipalace.org](http://www.rotaryestoiipalace.org).

## Algarve Crafting Community

The Algarve Knitting and Crochet Group, based in Armação de Pêra, is delighted to announce the success of this year's winter project. Led by group organiser Sheena Rawcliffe, the initiative set out to create 555 hats for homeless and low-income families across the region. Thanks to an extraordinary community effort, the final total has soared to more than 700 handmade hats.

This achievement was made possible through the combined support of Friends Crafting in the Al-

garve, the Grupo de Croché e Tricô de Armação de Pêra, the São Brás Ladies, and a large number of individual knitters and crocheters from all over the Algarve, who generously contributed their time, creativity and wool.

In addition to the hats, volunteers also produced lap blankets, shawls, scarves and socks, ensuring that many more vulnerable people will be a little warmer this winter. All items will be distributed to charities and support organisations throughout the Algarve.

This year's project

received an added international touch with a thoughtful donation of 50 handmade scarves from Singapore, personally delivered by Michelle Seyffert, who leads a crafting group there.

"We are incredibly grateful to everyone who took part", said Sheena Rawcliffe. "The response has been overwhelming, and every single item will make a difference. Thank you to all the groups and individuals who contributed - this success belongs to all of you."

With over 700 hats completed - and so many hands joining together in kindness - this year's campaign reflects the remarkable community spirit that thrives across the Algarve.

Friends Crafting in the Algarve: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/422501637915234>

Algarve Crochet and Knitting Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/algarvecrochetandknitting>

Grupo de Croché e Tricô de Armação de Pêra: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61569542566892>

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If you would like your story to be considered, please email: [community@theportugalnews.com](mailto:community@theportugalnews.com)

# Algarve Christmas Message

A message from The Rt. Revd. Robert Innes.

I have just returned from a long weekend in the Algarve, where I was visiting congregations of the Church of England's Diocese in Europe in Palhagueira, Boliqeime and Praia da Luz along with our Anglican clergy: The Reverend Rob Kean and The Reverend Carla Vicencio Prior. I look after Anglican congregations across Europe, as far north as Helsinki and as far East as Moscow, so it was a particular treat to visit one of the warmest and sunniest parts of our European diocese in the far South West of the European continent. There were some particular highlights. I enjoyed a visit to the palace of Bishop Manuel, the Bishop of Faro. We were shown his wonderful garden. I don't think I had ever seen so many different vegetables and fruit trees growing together in a domestic garden. It felt like a new Garden of Eden.

We had a Christmas lunch with the remarkable Vale Silves community centre. I was honoured to be invited to present Christmas gifts to some of the elderly clients. And we watched some very moving and inspiring dance and singing from small children, teenagers and people in later life. I was deeply impressed with the centre's mission to care

for vulnerable people as a way of living out the command to love God and to love one's neighbour as oneself.

Wondering around Loulé, I enjoyed seeing the Christmas decorations, the long red carpet, the elves, the reindeer and the enormous snowman! Significant snowfall in the coastal areas of the Algarve is extremely rare, so I was amused at the prominence of snow scenes that seem more typical of Germany or Scandinavia. The contemporary festival of Christmas is indeed a whole mixture of traditions from medieval Europe, Victorian England and twentieth century United States.

### Remembrance

Yet we recall that, at the heart of this annual celebration, is the remembrance of a baby born in poverty in a small town in the ancient near east. This baby's country was under military occupation. Threats to the baby's life meant the family had to flee from their home and live as refugees. As the child Jesus grew, it became evident he had an exceptional religious intelligence. When he became an adult, he grew famous for his teaching and capacity to heal people. So exceptional was he, that people



came to see him as Saviour, as Lord, as God with us. He became the founder of the world's largest religion and the head of a community, the church, in which many millions of people have found love and hope and meaning. Across my European diocese, we are seeing significant numbers of people coming to church and returning to church – especially younger people. That could be because the world seems to get increasingly scary, the challenges get more difficult and the answer to our questions harder to find. As the plight of humanity seems

to feel more desperate, so we increasingly find ourselves in need of a Saviour. Perhaps, dear reader, you might even be one of those who finds themselves coming back to church this Christmas? If so, I hope you find a warm welcome and the possibility of discovering a spiritual home.

On my visit to the Algarve, I was thrilled to see evidence of people seeking to live in ways that follow the pattern of Jesus. Whether this is in the relationships of family life, in the care given and received in church community, in outreach to vulnerable children and isolated

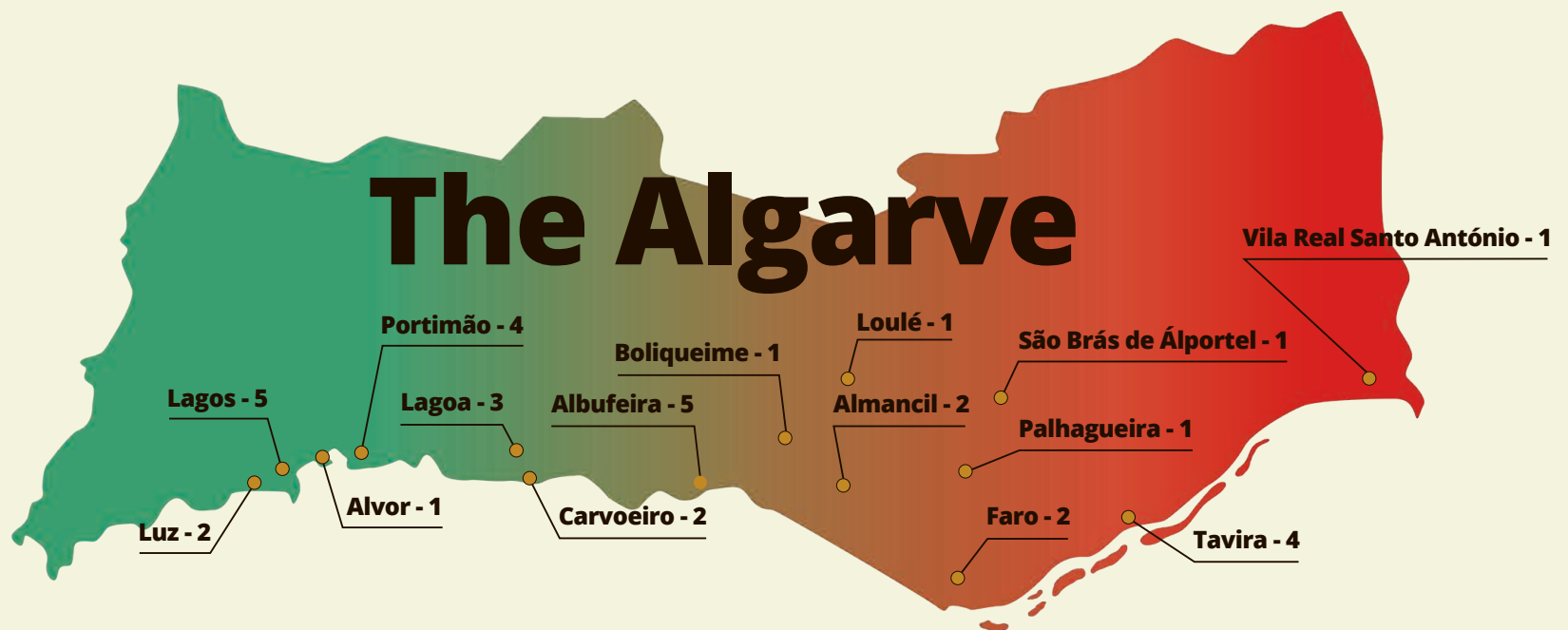
older people, or in concern and care for the natural world. It was my privilege to share in this, in the beautifully sunny and warm climate of the Algarve, for a few brief days.

I wish you all *feliz natal*, a very happy Christmas and a peaceful 2026.

### Bishop Robert Innes

For the last 11 years, The Rt. Revd. Robert Innes has been Bishop of the Church of England's Diocese in Europe. He looks after some 250 congregations across Europe, Turkey, Morocco and Western Russia.

**Number of Churches: The Algarve - 35 | Lisbon - 6 | Cascais - 4 | Estoril - 2 | Porto - 4 | Braga - 1**



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# 3 signs of frailty later in life and how it's diagnosed

Remember that frailty isn't an inevitable part of ageing.



**R**esults from a new National Audit Office (NAO) report suggest that many older adults with frailty are not receiving the follow-up care they need after diagnosis. The NAO found that frailty assessments for over-65s still haven't returned to pre-pandemic levels, and GPs often fall short in providing required post-diagnosis care. Of the 226,000 people diagnosed with severe frailty in 2024/25, only 16% received a medication review and 18% had a falls assessment.

The report also noted a stark local variation, with assessment rates ranging from just 10% to 90% depending on the area. In light of these findings, we spoke to Dr Nasrin Razzaq, GP lead for personalised care with an extended role in frailty at GP Pathfinder Clinics, who explained exactly what the main symptoms of frailty are and how it is diagnosed and treated.

## What is frailty? How is it defined in medicine?

Frailty refers to a person's mental and physical

resilience, or their ability to bounce back and recover from events like illness and injury, according to Age UK. "Frailty is regarded as a syndrome, and a syndrome is a group of signs and symptoms that helps recognise frailty which includes things like being slower," highlights Razzaq. "Generally, when we start thinking about frailty clinically, we are thinking about the over-65s and to do with the way the body's ageing, and the physiological things that are changing in the body. However, frailty

can exist under 65."

The GP adds that being able to diagnose frailty enables healthcare professionals to think about a patient more holistically.

"I often use the example of if a 35-year-old woman with a UTI comes with a GP, they are likely to be given three days of antibiotics and general advice and be set on their way," says Razzaq. "However, if an 85-year-old with frailty comes in with an UTI that is very different, in terms of their illness and they are likely to take longer to recover.

"The beauty of having that sort of label or understanding that somebody has frailty is that it prompts healthcare professionals to think about the patient in a more holistic way."

## What are some key signs of frailty to look out for?

**1. Slow walking speed**  
Taking longer than usual to walk a certain distance is seen as one of the major signs of frailty. "Being able to recognise frailty includes things like being slower, what we call 'gait speed', and you can measure that," explains

Razzaq. "One of the ways that we measure it is something called a Timed Up and Go (TUG) test, where we have a stopwatch and get a person to stand up, walk three meters, turn around and walk back again. "We time that and if it's in double digits, so more than 10 seconds, then it means they've slowed down a little bit. Less than 10 seconds is considered normal, slightly more is considered mild frail and more than 15 seconds is moderate frail."

## 2. Weakness

This can be seen as reduced grip strength or general muscle weakness. "One of the other symptoms of frailty is weakness or lack of muscle strength," says Razzaq. "We've got instruments that we can measure grip strength with."

## 3. Tiredness

"Feeling tired all the time is also a common presentation that GPs often see," says Razzaq. "Being tired isn't in itself a symptom of frailty, but if it's associated with things like muscle weakness or slowing down, then we will start thinking, is this person frail?"

## What should you do if you start presenting with these symptoms?

"Your first port of call should be your GP," says Razzaq. "When I talk about the GP, I don't necessarily mean just your doctor. Now we have primary care teams, clinical pharmacists and care coordinators who have all been trained on what to do if somebody presents with these symptoms and is worried about frailty."

## What assessments are used to diagnose frailty?

"The Timed Up and Go (TUG) test is probably the classic one and then there's also something called the Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment, which looks at the different components of a person," says Razzaq. "The aim is to holistically assess the patient, and we also do cognitive assessments.

"Then we also do functional assessments, for example getting them to stand with a broom and then squat to see how far they can bend down or getting them to lean forward. Sometimes we also do bone health screenings for things like osteoporosis."

## How is frailty treated and managed?

"The management or treatment of frailty is to develop a personalised care plan," says Razzaq. "The first part of a care plan is to just explore what's important to that person. We ask them about what matters to them most, so that might be being able to walk around a park every day, for example. "Then we start matching interventions to their needs. So, we look at the results of their assessments and think about if they require strength and balance exercises or swimming sessions, for example. You can get exercise on prescription now, which helps meet a lot of patients' physical and social needs."

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EXCELLENCE IN MEDICAL EYE CARE

# What is age-related macular degeneration?

There are two primary types of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), wet and dry.

**D**ame Judi Dench has opened up about her worsening eyesight. The beloved actress was first diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in 2012, and revealed in an interview with the Radio Times that she can no longer see the television. In the interview, Dench described the decline in her vision as “crushing”, and added: “Well, I miss seeing Clive Myrie doing Mastermind, but I can hear the questions”. Over the years, her diagnosis has helped draw vital attention to this eye condition and following her latest comments, we spoke with Denise Voon, a clinical adviser at The College of Optometrists, who explained what age-related macular degeneration is, the different forms it can take, and the key symptoms people should be aware of.

## What is age-related macular degeneration?

There are two main types of AMD. “There’s dry AMD and wet AMD, and although they fall under the same umbrella, they are quite distinctive,” explains Voon. She highlights that dry

AMD is the most common type. “The cells at the back of the eye and the retina gradually degenerate with age and can lead to deposits called drusen,” explains Voon. While a few small drusen are a natural sign of ageing, numerous small drusen, or larger ones, can be a sign of progression towards AMD, according to the The College of Optometrists’ website. “Dry AMD is usually very slow progressing and many people don’t notice any issues for years,” says Voon. “A lot of people have quite near normal vision, but if dry AMD gets a lot worse, it can lead to visual problems.” However, wet AMD tends to develop and impact your vision more rapidly. “Wet AMD is much less common, but it can impact your vision quite a bit more,” notes Voon. “It occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow into the retina and then they leak, and they can cause a very sudden and rapid loss of vision. “What a lot of people say is that they went to bed and seemed absolutely fine and then when they woke up, they couldn’t see.”

## Who is more likely to be affected?

The older we are, the greater our risk of developing the

condition. Around one in every 200 people has AMD at 60, according to Macular Society. There are also several other risk factors. “If you’ve got family history of it that can be a risk factor,” says Voon. “Obesity and having an unhealthy diet can also increase your risk, but the biggest risk factor for AMD is smoking.”

## What are the main early signs to look out for?

“What people often first notice, and this is both the same with wet and dry AMD, is that the straight lines can appear distorted or bent,” says Voon. “They look at a window frame and say hang on, why does that look bent?” Smudges and bright light sensitivity is another common sign. “They might also notice spots or smudges in their central vision and bright lights may become much more uncomfortable,” says Voon. “When you have AMD it might take your eyes longer to adjust when moving from a dark room to a light room. “In addition, colours can look faded but distortion and not being able to see in your central vision are usually the most common symptoms.”

## How is AMD diagnosed?

“We’d recommend going to see your optometrist at least every two years because often early stages of AMD are picked up during an eye test,” recommends Voon. “You might not notice any symptoms at all, but your optometrist might be able to see the drusen deposits that are present in dry AMD. “If you have a very sudden, rapid loss of vision and it might be wet AMD, then the best thing is to contact your optometrist and get them to have a look, and they’ll be able to refer you for treatment.”

## How can it affect someone’s everyday life?

“It usually affects your central vision, so reading can be more difficult and just getting around can be more difficult,”



highlights Voon. “One of the really common things that people complain about is they just can’t recognise faces because it’s just that central part that’s been blurred out.” If left untreated, it can lead to serious consequences. “If wet AMD is left untreated, it can lead to scarring at the back of the eye, so then you would get sight loss,” says Voon. “Once it’s scarred, there’s nothing we can do treatment-wise, so one of the main consequences is that you could lose your central vision.”

## Can it be treated?

Injections are the main form of treatment for wet AMD. “Anti VEGF (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor) treatments help stops the

abnormal growth of the abnormal blood vessels growing,” explains Voon. “It’s an injection into the eye and they are usually fairly regular.” “You can get some treatments for managing dry AMD privately, but they’re all quite new so we’re not quite sure how effective they are at this stage,” says Voon. “But there are some new, exciting things on the horizon that hopefully will come in fruition, but they’re still currently in the approval stage.” Optometrists can also provide advice on magnifiers or support with accessibility for phones, she adds. “There are lots of support groups available as well, and The Macular Society is

particularly active and really helpful,” says Voon.

## Can it be prevented?

“Quitting smoking is the biggest and best thing you can do to help prevent AMD worsening,” says Voon. It’s also important maintain a healthy weight and a normal blood pressure. “Regular exercise and healthy diet including lots of green leafy vegetables are particularly good for macular health,” says Voon. “Furthermore, visiting your optometrist regularly is also crucial as if they see anything that needs treating, they can refer you for treatment and advise you on how best to keep your eyes healthy.”

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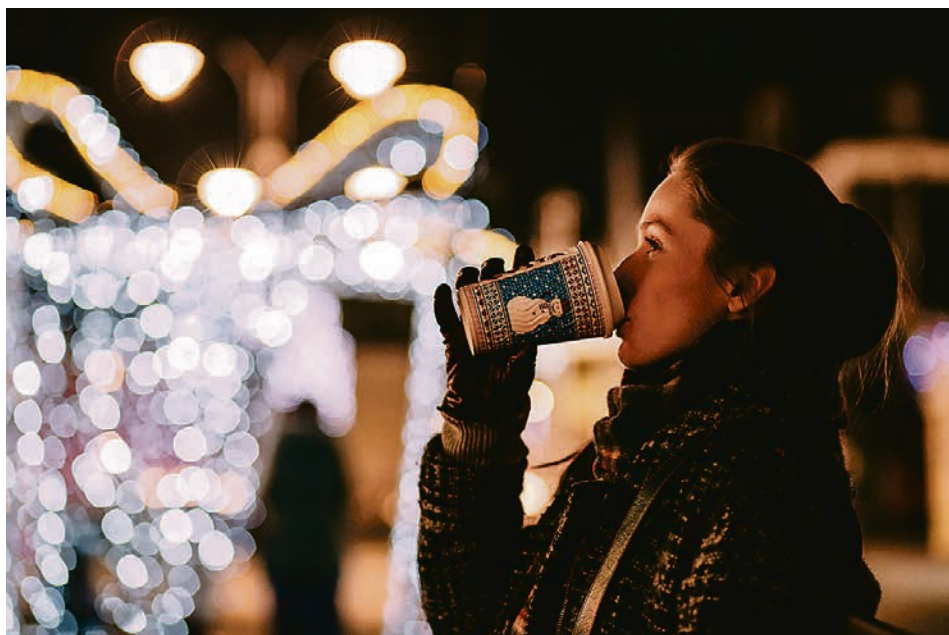
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# Finding Christmas lights

Christmas has the power of amplifying emotions. Joy can feel brighter, stress heavier, and the pressure to "be merry" can become its own emotional burden. If this season feels complicated for you, you're not alone.



Christmas lights and charming decorations can stir up depression and anxiety in ways we don't always anticipate. It's important to recognise these shifts, because when symptoms linger, they affect far more than mood - they impact physical health as well. Research shows that depression and anxiety can be as harmful to the body as obesity or smoking a pack of cigarettes a day - a powerful reminder that emotional pain deserves real

care and attention. Depression and anxiety work together in a loop - when one dominates, the other hides, yet both continue to push and pull overwhelming emotions beneath the surface. It often sounds like: "I feel low... I should be enjoying this... Why can't I enjoy this?... Something must be wrong with me." This is a potent combination, and the festive season can intensify it, magnifying everything we believe we're "missing". Depression can manifest as

a quiet, gnawing emptiness: getting out of bed feels like a small victory, making a cup of coffee becomes mechanical, and scrolling through social media deepens the ache of feeling "out of step" with everyone else. Anxiety may show up as overthinking, restlessness, or the persistent sense that you are not doing enough, being enough, or enjoying enough. There is nothing wrong with you. You are adjusting, processing, and navigating a complex emotional

landscape while carrying the heaviness of unresolved wounds.

Many expats say this time of year highlights a sense of missing out and grief for the old version of themselves. This identity shift can leave us unsure whether we are happy, sad, or both - a natural tension while carrying the invisible weight of adaptation. Studies show that expats with persistent sadness, hopelessness, sleep issues, fatigue, irritability, anger, or physical pain have a 50% higher risk than locals of developing long-term anxiety and depression, placing them in the highest percentile for these conditions. If you're experiencing these symptoms persistently, reaching out for a professional to assist you and provide crucial support with overwhelming emotions can make a significant difference.

## Navigating Challenges

Understanding how your brain processes emotion can transform your relationship with difficult feelings. Your brain reacts to imagined stress the same way it reacts to real stress - when your mind ruminates on worst-case scenarios, your body releases the same chemicals as if the threat were right in front of you. Likewise, your brain can't distinguish emotional rejection from physical pain, which is why being ignored, left without closure, or feeling unseen can land like a punch to the gut.

Most emotional reactions are based on your past, not the present moment. When you recreate past images in your mind, your brain retrieves the emotions attached to them, even if your current situation is completely different. This is why the holidays can feel so intense - your nervous system is responding to old patterns, not just to what's happening now. But here's

the empowering part: your emotions can change, and when they do, even your memories shift. You're not stuck reliving the same story.

## Let's allow neuroplasticity to create new connections of joy and positive attitude:

### Follow Your Joy Daily

Each day, choose three small things that bring even a slight sense of joy: go for a coffee, listen to a song, take a nap, read something, or enjoy a stroll. The key is to tune into what genuinely feels good to you in the moment, not what you "should" be doing to feel happy. Within a week of practising this daily, your nervous system recalibrates towards what energises you rather than what depletes you.

### Check In With Yourself

Record voice notes naming exactly what you are feeling: "Today I feel depressed and don't want to speak with anyone" or "I feel anxious and can't focus my mind." This isn't journaling - it's affect labelling, a neurological technique where naming an emotion immediately reduces its intensity. The moment you say, "I am feeling anxious," your prefrontal cortex activates, helping regulate your emotional brain and separating the emotion from your identity: you're not an anxious person; you're a person experiencing anxiety in this moment.

## Life Inventory

Say out loud three things about your current life that you appreciate: "I like that beaches are nearby," "I like the weather," "I like having parks within walking distance." When you intentionally redirect your brain to what you value, your emotional state influences which memories surface - when you feel sad, your brain retrieves sad memories; when you feel grateful, it retrieves joyful ones. This Christmas, you don't need to have it all figured out. You don't need to feel only joy, only belonging, or only gratitude. The complexity you're experiencing - the push and pull between grief and excitement, isolation and connection, who you were and who you're becoming - is not a sign of failure. It's evidence of growth.

Your nervous system is learning new patterns and forming new associations. Every small choice you make - naming your feelings, appreciating one thing about your life, following what brings you joy - reshapes your relationship with this season.

You're not just surviving Christmas as an expat. You're discovering what it means to celebrate on your own terms, honour both your roots and your growth, and trust that even in the heaviness, you're building something new. This is more than getting through the holidays - this is transformation.

## About Lorena Olea-Bouchat

Lorena Olea-Bouchat is a psychologist working online worldwide. She is the founder of the Human Psychology Institute in London and Psychology in a New Era in Portugal. With 20 years of experience across Europe and South America, she specialises in depression, anxiety, and complex trauma in expat communities.

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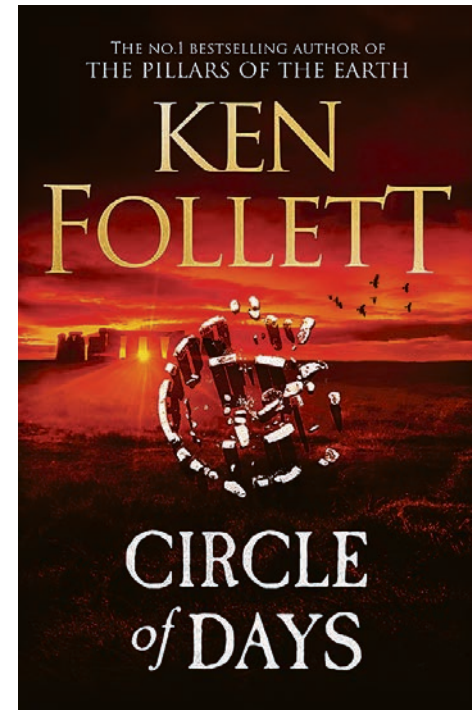
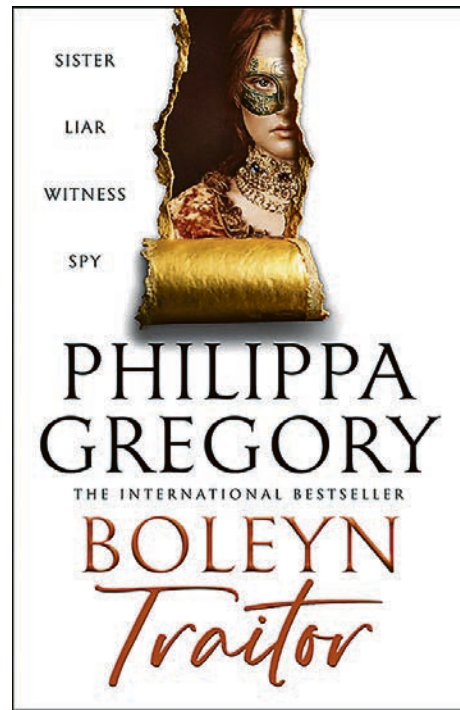
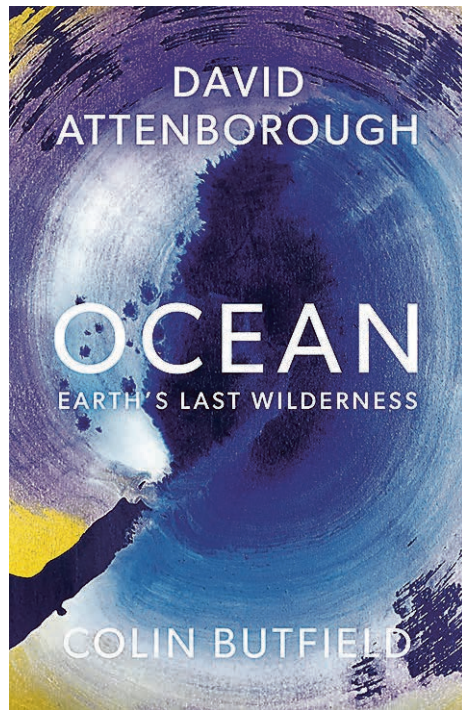
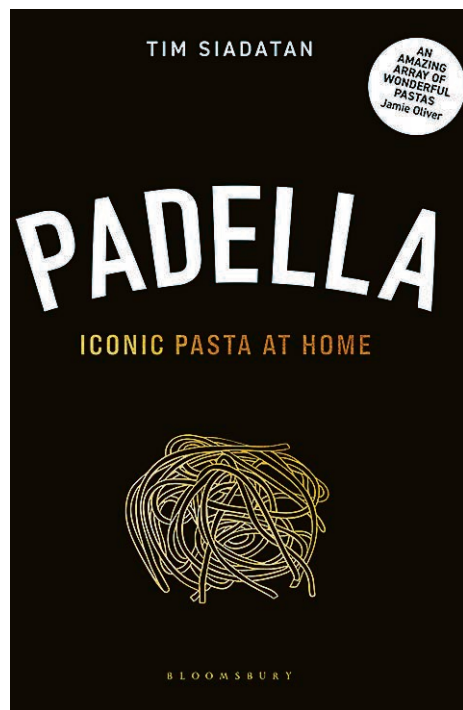
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# The ideal books for Christmas gifts

Bag everything from cookery to romance in our pick of the best.



Whether your loved one likes cooking or life stories, sagas or romances, there's a book out there which you can gift them to make them happy on Christmas Day.

Here are 10 which might suit anyone from hobbyists to history buffs, dystopian fans and real-life readers.

## Padella by Tim Siadatan

If you are already tired of the traditional Christmas fare, dip into cook and Padella restaurateur Tim Siadatan's mouthwatering recipes, inspired by his iconic pasta restaurants. A graduate from the first intake at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, he has become synonymous with bold Italian cooking, and this one has made the shortlist for Waterstones Book of the Year. Featuring delicious dishes including pappardelle with beef shin ragu, picci cacio e pepe, tagliarini with crab, chilli, lemon and parsley, and fettuccine with nduja, lemon and mascarpone along with many off-menu favourites, it will make you hungry all over again.

## Exclusive Deluxe Slipcase Edition of The Rose Field: The Book Of Dust Volume Three by Philip Pullman

In celebration of the conclusion to His Dark Materials and The Book Of Dust sequence, Philip Pullman fans should be overjoyed to receive this exclusive cloth-bound slipcase edition of The Rose Field: The Book Of Dust

Volume Three, a collectable featuring foil embossed covers and original illustrations by long-time Pullman collaborator and illustrator Chris Wormell, reflecting the intricate and fascinating universe of Lyra Silvertongue.

There are two further exclusive editions – one featuring foiled endpapers and a foiled cover design, exclusive to Waterstones, the other incorporating block-sprayed edges and a bespoke case design, available in participating independent bookshops.

## Ocean by David Attenborough and Colin Butfield

Sir David Attenborough needs no introduction but for those who want to take a dive into our oceans, exploring unique saltwater habitats, kelp forests, mangroves and coral reefs to the deepest corners of our most unexplored ecosystems, this book is a must.

With long-term collaborator Colin Butfield, Attenborough shares the story of our last great critical wilderness, uncovering the mystery, wonder and frailty of our ocean, showing its amazing resilience.

## The Look by Michelle Obama with Meredith Koop

Fashionistas will be slipping into something comfortable to browse this beautifully illustrated book which explores Michelle Obama's style evolution, from when she first entered the public eye

during her husband's US senate campaign, through her time as the first black First Lady. With insights from Koop, Obama's trusted stylist, as well as her make-up artist, hairstylists and many of the designers who have dressed her for notable events, the book takes readers behind the scenes to reveal how Obama's most memorable looks have come together.

## Sharp Force by Patricia Cornwell

Who doesn't want to curl up with a nail-biting page-turner over the festive season? The queen of forensics is back with a tale which begins in the early hours of Christmas morning when chief medical examiner Dr Kay Scarpetta receives a call that a serial killer known as The Phantom Slasher has struck again.

His pattern is to stalk with a sophisticated technology that enables him to invade his victims' homes and watch their every move. They wake up to a ghost-like hologram before being murdered in their beds. Then Scarpetta discovers that she could be the next victim...

## Boleyn Traitor by Philippa Gregory

The brilliant historical author who brought us The Other Boleyn Girl reframes Tudor history once more through the world of Jane Parker, wife of George Boleyn and sister-in-law to Anne Boleyn, whose testimony took two queens to the scaffold

for adultery.

This book explores the Boleyn traitor in a story of one woman's survival in Henry VIII's court as she navigates power struggles, ambition and danger.

## Paper Heart by Cecelia Ahern

Lose yourself in this poignant, heart-wrenching tale set in rural Ireland from the best-selling author of PS I Love You, in which a young mother who makes sandwiches in a petrol station has tucked away her dreams and is living a much smaller life than she would have wished. Her only passion, it seems, is origami, until an astronomer comes along to offer her the stars and helps her to see a world which is bigger and more beautiful than she imagined.

## Coming Home by Freddie Flintoff

You don't have to be a cricket fan to enjoy this heartfelt memoir by the man who recalls not only key moments in his sporting career, but also the run-ins with the media and the doctors telling him he couldn't continue to play. Told in short scenes, he zeroes-in on the crucial instances in his life, some highly celebrated, others less well-known, private, away from the cameras, but pivotal in shaping the man he is. After retiring, he thought he'd left the game behind, relaunching himself in the world of entertainment, but following the car crash that turned his life

upside down, it was cricket to which he returned. It's honest, open, reflective and funny, like the man himself.

## Circle Of Days by Ken Follett

More historical mastery from the best-selling author of The Pillars Of The Earth, this time focusing on the building of Stonehenge. It follows the intertwined lives of Seft, a flint miner, and a visionary priestess named Joia as they unite disparate tribes – herders, farmers, and woodlanders – to construct the enormous stone monument. Follett cleverly pieces together the story of ordinary people doing seemingly impossible things.

## Sunrise On The Reaping by Suzanne Collins

If they can tear themselves away from the films, fans of The Hunger Games series could not fail to enjoy this prequel, in which fear grips the districts of Panem on the 50th anniversary of the annual games. It finds Haymitch Abernathy in District 12 trying to make it through the day and being with the girl he loves. When his name is called, his dreams are shattered as he is wrenched from his family and shuttled to the Capitol with three other District 12 tributes – but he's determined to fight far beyond the deadly arena. This book, another on the shortlist of Waterstones Book of the Year, is the fastest selling YA title of all time in the UK. PATPN

## SATURDAY 20/12/25

## BBC One

- 06.00 Breakfast.  
09.30 Saturday Kitchen Countdown to Christmas.  
11.00 Nigella's Christmas Table.  
12.00 Football Focus.  
12.45 BBC News; Weather.  
13.00 Bargain Hunt.  
13.30 Hamza: Strictly Birds of Prey.  
14.30 **FILM:** Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (2014).  
16.00 Sing When You're Winning.  
16.30 Final Score.  
17.15 BBC News; Weather.  
17.35 Alan Carr's Picture Slam.  
18.20 Blankety Blank Christmas Special.  
19.00 **FILM:** Strictly Come Dancing: The Final.  
21.10 Michael McIntyre's The Wheel.  
22.00 BBC News; Weather.  
22.20 Match of the Day.  
23.50 The Football Interview.  
00.05 **FILM:** Planes, Trains and Automobiles (1987).  
01.35 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
01.40 BBC News.

## BBC Two England

- 06.05 Hey Duggee.  
06.15 Big Lizard.  
06.25 Super Happy Magic Forest.  
06.35 Grizzly and the Lemmings.  
06.50 Stage Stars.  
07.15 Bro's in Control.  
07.30 Cooking Buddies.  
07.55 Go Get Arty.  
08.10 One Zoo Three.  
08.35 Blue Peter.  
09.00 This Farming Life.  
10.00 Gardeners' World Winter Specials.  
11.00 Reindeer Family & Me.  
12.00 The Great Food Guys Christmas Special.  
12.30 Alison Hammond's Florida Unpacked.  
13.00 **FILM:** Tea with Mussolini (1999).  
14.50 **FILM:** Sense and Sensibility (1995).  
17.00 Chris & Michaela: Under the Christmas Sky.  
18.00 **FILM:** Porridge (1979).  
19.30 World's Most Dangerous Roads.  
20.15 Top Gear.  
21.10 Madness: Radio 2 in Concert.  
22.20 Madness at the BBC.  
23.50 Madness Live: Goodbye Television Centre.  
05.20 This Is BBC Two.

## ITV1 London

- 06.00 Capital's Jingle Bell Ball 2025.  
07.30 James Martin's Great British Adventure.  
08.25 John and Lisa's Christmas Kitchen.  
09.25 ITV News.  
09.30 James Martin's Saturday Morning at Christmas.  
11.40 Ainsley's Festive Flavours.  
12.40 John and Lisa's Christmas Kitchen.  
13.50 Inside M&S at Christmas.  
14.50 ITV News and Weather; Weather.  
15.10 **FILM:** Shrek (2001).  
16.55 ITV News and Weather.  
17.30 Westlife 25: Live at the Royal Albert Hall.  
18.35 **FILM:** Die Another Day (2002).  
21.10 The 1% Club Christmas Special 2024.  
22.10 ITV News and Weather; Weather.  
22.25 An Evening with Elton John and Brandi Carlile.  
23.35 English Football League Highlights.  
00.50 Shop on TV.  
03.00 Bullseye.  
03.50 Unwind with ITV.  
05.05 Be Your Own Boss.

## Channel 4

- 06.00 Cheers.  
07.50 Everybody Loves Raymond.  
09.15 The Simpsons.  
11.15 **FILM:** Ron's Gone Wrong (2021).  
13.20 Location, Location, Location.  
14.25 Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It.  
15.30 Kirstie's Handmade Christmas.  
16.30 Batch from Scratch at Christmas.  
17.30 The Great Christmas Bake Off.  
18.40 Channel 4 News.  
19.10 A Very British Christmas: Bamburgh Castle.  
20.10 Sandi Toksvig's Great Riviera Rail Trip.  
21.10 **FILM:** Die Hard (1988).  
23.50 **FILM:** Apocalypse Now: Final Cut (1979).  
03.00 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker - The Final.  
03.55 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
04.40 Sunday Brunch.  
04.55 The Simpsons.

## BBC Four

- 19.00 From Andy Pandy to Zebedee: The Golden Age of Children's TV.  
20.00 Derek Griffiths Remembers - Bod.  
20.15 Bod.  
20.30 John Le Mesurier: It's All Been Rather Lovely.  
21.30 Dad's Army.  
22.05 Mike Yarwood at the BBC.  
23.05 Parkinson at Christmas.  
00.25 Mystery Road: Origin.  
02.15 From Andy Pandy to Zebedee: The Golden Age of Children's TV.

## SUNDAY 21/12/25

## BBC One

- 06.00 Breakfast.  
09.00 Match of the Day.  
10.30 My Life at Christmas with Anita Rani.  
11.30 Prayer and Reflection.  
12.00 A Mary Berry Christmas.  
13.00 BBC News; Weather.  
13.15 Songs of Praise.  
13.50 Kingdom.  
14.40 **FILM:** Spider-Man: Homecoming (2017).  
16.45 BBC News; Weather.  
17.05 Countryfile: A Cornish Christmas.  
18.05 Celebrity Escape to the Country.  
19.05 Antiques Roadshow: Unseen Treasures.  
20.05 The War Between the Land and the Sea.  
21.00 Beyond Paradise Christmas Special.  
22.00 BBC News; Weather.  
22.30 Match of the Day.  
23.00 **FILM:** Die Hard 2 (1990).  
00.55 The Graham Norton Show.  
01.45 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
01.50 BBC News.

## BBC Two England

- 06.05 Prayer and Reflection.  
06.35 Home Comforts at Christmas.  
07.05 Countryfile.  
08.00 This Farming Life.  
09.00 The Polar Bear Family and Me.  
09.00 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites: Christmas Special.  
11.30 **FILM:** High Society (1956).  
13.15 The Hairy Bikers: Coming Home for Christmas.  
14.15 Equestrian: The London International Horse Show.  
16.55 **FILM:** The Heroes of Telemark (1965).  
19.00 Wild Horses, the Rockies and Me.  
20.00 Victoria Wood: The Secret List.  
21.00 **FILM:** Oppenheimer (2023).  
23.50 **FILM:** Raging Bull (1980).  
05.40 This Is BBC Two.

## ITV1 London

- 06.00 James Martin's Spanish Adventure.  
06.55 Fletchers' Country Workshop.  
07.50 **FILM:** The Grinch (2018).  
09.25 ITV News.  
09.30 Love Your Christmas with Alan Titchmarsh.  
11.30 Fletchers' Family Farm.  
12.30 ITV News and Weather; Weather.  
12.45 **FILM:** It's a Wonderful Life (1946).  
15.15 **FILM:** Jurassic Park (1993).  
17.40 ITV News and Weather.  
18.05 The Chase: The Bloopers.  
19.05 The Royal Variety Performance 2025.  
21.50 ITV News and Weather; Weather.  
22.10 **FILM:** John Wick: Chapter 4 (2023).  
01.05 Shop on TV.  
03.00 Inside M&S at Christmas.  
03.50 Unwind with ITV.  
05.05 Fletchers' Family Farm.

## Channel 4

- 06.15 Cheers.  
06.40 Cheers.  
07.10 Cheers.  
07.35 Frasier.  
08.00 Frasier.  
08.25 Frasier.  
08.55 The Simpsons.  
09.25 The Simpsons.  
10.00 Sunday Brunch.  
13.00 Four in a Bed.  
13.30 Four in a Bed.  
14.00 Four in a Bed.  
14.35 Four in a Bed.  
15.05 Four in a Bed.  
15.35 Kirstie's Handmade Christmas.  
16.35 Channel 4 News.  
16.50 **FILM:** The Little Mermaid (2023).  
19.15 London Zoo at Christmas.  
20.00 Game of Wool: Britain's Best Knitter - The Final.  
21.00 24 Hours in Police Custody: The Norfolk Narco Cartel.  
22.15 Celebrity Gogglebox.  
23.10 First Dates at Christmas.  
00.15 The Great Christmas Bake Off 2022.  
01.25 Celebrity Lego Masters at Christmas.  
02.20 24 Hours in A&E.  
03.15 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
04.00 The Simpsons.  
04.25 The Simpsons.  
04.50 The Simpsons.  
05.15 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker.

## BBC Four

- 19.00 What We Were Watching: Christmas 1985.  
20.00 Larry Grayson's Generation Game.  
20.05 Bruce & Ronnie Christmas Special.  
21.50 The Paul Daniels Magic Christmas Show.  
22.40 Roy Hattersley on Philip Larkin.  
23.20 Betjeman and Larkin: Monitor.  
23.45 A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story.  
01.30 Bruce & Ronnie Christmas Special.  
02.15 The Paul Daniels Magic Christmas Show.  
03.05 What We Were Watching: Christmas 1985.

## MONDAY 22/12/25

## BBC One

- 06.00 Breakfast.  
09.20 Zog.  
09.50 Zog and the Flying Doctors.  
10.15 Animal Park Christmas Special.  
11.00 Celebrity Homes Under the Hammer.  
12.00 Bargain Hunt.  
13.00 BBC News at One; Weather.  
13.50 Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers.  
14.20 **FILM:** Nativity! (2009).  
16.00 **FILM:** Spider-Man: Far from Home (2019).  
18.00 BBC News at Six; Weather.  
18.30 Celebrity Escape to the Country.  
19.30 EastEnders.  
20.00 Celebrity MasterChef: Christmas Cook Off.  
21.00 Amanda & Alan's Spanish Christmas.  
22.00 BBC News at Ten; Weather.  
22.40 **FILM:** Challengers (2024).  
00.45 Alan Carr's Picture Slam.  
01.30 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
01.35 BBC News.

## BBC Two England

- 06.15 Home Comforts at Christmas.  
08.15 Match of the Day.  
09.15 **FILM:** King of Kings (1961).  
11.50 **FILM:** An Ideal Husband (1999).  
13.25 Wild Horses, the Rockies and Me.  
14.25 Omar Sharif: Talking Pictures.  
14.55 **FILM:** Doctor Zhivago (1965).  
18.00 Celebrity Antiques Road Trip.  
19.00 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
19.30 Celebrity Mastermind.  
20.00 Only Connect.  
20.30 Christmas University Challenge.  
21.00 Secrets of the Conclave.  
22.00 Mammoth Christmas Special.  
22.25 The Mandy Who Knew Too Much.  
22.45 **FILM:** Beetlejuice (1988).  
00.15 **FILM:** The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994).  
01.55 **FILM:** Sign Zone: Oppenheimer (2023).  
05.40 This Is BBC Two.

## ITV1 London

- 06.00 Good Morning Britain.  
09.00 Lorraine.  
10.00 This Morning.  
12.30 Loose Women.  
13.30 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather.  
13.45 James Martin's Great British Adventure.  
14.15 **FILM:** The Lost World: Jurassic Park (1997).  
16.49 ITV London Weather.  
16.50 Tipping Point: Lucky Stars.  
17.55 The Chase Celebrity Christmas Special.  
18.55 ITV News London; Weather.  
19.30 Emmerdale.  
20.00 Coronation Street.  
21.00 Long Lost Family.  
22.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather.  
22.20 Inside M&S at Christmas.  
23.20 **FILM:** Live Free or Die Hard (2007).  
01.25 Shop on TV.  
03.00 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! Coming Out.  
03.50 Unwind with ITV.  
05.05 Sara Davies' Christmas Craft Off.

## Channel 4

- 06.10 Countdown.  
06.50 Cheers.  
07.45 The King of Queens.  
08.40 Everybody Loves Raymond.  
10.10 Frasier.  
12.10 Channel 4 News Summary.  
12.15 **FILM:** Too Close for Christmas (2020).  
14.00 A Place in the Sun.  
15.00 Kirstie's Handmade Christmas.  
16.00 Christmas at Chatsworth House.  
17.00 Jamie's Cook-Ahead Christmas.  
18.00 Channel 4 News.  
18.30 Inside Legoland at Christmas.  
19.30 Hamleys: Top 100 Toys of All Time.  
21.00 Taskmaster: Champion of Champions 2025.  
22.00 **FILM:** Violent Night (2022).  
00.15 The Great Christmas Bake Off.  
01.25 Deck the Halls: The Luxury Christmas Decorators.  
02.20 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
03.10 Hunting Britain's Parcel Thieves: Dispatches.  
04.05 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker.  
04.55 Hollyoaks Omnibus.

## BBC Four

- 19.00 TOTP: Christmas 1978.  
20.00 Keeping Up Appearances.  
20.30 Steptoe and Son.  
21.00 Yes Minister.  
22.00 Woman of Stone: A Ghost Story for Christmas.  
22.30 Lot No 249: A Ghost Story for Christmas.  
23.00 Count Magnus: A Ghost Story for Christmas.  
23.35 The Mezzotint: A Ghost Story for Christmas.  
00.05 Whistle and I'll Come to You.  
00.45 TOTP: Christmas 1978.  
01.45 Keeping Up Appearances.  
02.15 Steptoe and Son.  
02.45 Yes Minister.

## TUESDAY 23/12/25

## BBC One

- 06.00 Breakfast.  
09.20 The Smeds and the Smoos.  
09.45 The Highway Rat.  
10.15 Animal Park Christmas Special.  
11.00 Celebrity Homes Under the Hammer.  
12.00 Bargain Hunt.  
13.00 BBC News at One; Weather.  
13.50 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out.  
14.15 **FILM:** Despicable Me (2010).  
15.45 **FILM:** Spider-Man: No Way Home (2021).  
18.00 BBC News at Six; Weather.  
18.30 Celebrity Escape to the Country.  
19.30 EastEnders.  
20.00 Inside the Christmas Factory with Paddy and Cherry.  
21.00 Stuffed.  
22.00 BBC News at Ten; Weather.  
22.40 Outnumbered Christmas Special.  
23.25 Have I Got 2025 for You.  
23.55 Michael McIntyre's The Wheel.  
00.50 Blankety Blank Christmas Special.  
01.25 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
01.30 BBC News.

## BBC Two England

- 06.30 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
07.00 Celebrity Escape to the Country.  
09.00 **FILM:** The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965).  
12.05 **FILM:** The Hundred-Foot Journey (2014).  
14.00 Christmas Treasures of the National Trust.  
15.00 **FILM:** Spartacus (1960).  
18.00 Celebrity Antiques Road Trip.  
19.00 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
19.30 Celebrity Mastermind.  
20.00 Only Connect Pub Quiz Special.  
20.30 Christmas University Challenge.  
21.00 QI XL: Winter Wonderland.  
21.45 Live at the Apollo Christmas Special.  
22.30 **FILM:** Slumdog Millionaire (2008).  
00.25 **FILM:** The Photograph (2020).  
05.05 This Is BBC Two.

## ITV1 London

- 06.00 Good Morning Britain.  
09.00 Lorraine.  
10.00 This Morning.  
12.30 Loose Women.  
13.30 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather.  
13.45 **FILM:** Jurassic Park III (2001).  
15.19 ITV London Weather.  
15.20 Celebrity Lingo.  
16.25 Tipping Point: Lucky Stars.  
17.30 The Chase Celebrity Christmas Special.  
18.30 ITV News London; Weather.  
19.00 Emmerdale.  
19.30 EFL Cup Live.  
22.25 ITV News; Weather.  
22.40 **FILM:** John Wick: Chapter 4 (2023).  
01.30 Shop on TV.  
03.00 Steve Backshall's Royal Arctic Challenge.  
04.35 For the Love of Dogs with Alison Hammond at Christmas.  
05.00 Unwind with ITV.

## Channel 4

- 06.05 Cheers.  
07.00 The King of Queens.  
07.50 Everybody Loves Raymond.  
08.40 Frasier.  
09.10 Frasier.  
09.40 Frasier.  
10.10 A Baby Reindeer's First Christmas.  
11.10 A Place in the Sun.  
12.15 Channel 4 News Summary.  
12.20 Four in a Bed.  
12.50 Four in a Bed.  
13.20 Four in a Bed.  
13.55 Four in a Bed.  
14.25 Four in a Bed.  
15.00 Kirstie's Handmade Christmas.  
16.00 A Very British Christmas: Castle Howard.  
17.00 Jamie's Christmas Shortcuts.  
18.00 A Place in the Sun.  
18.30 Channel 4 News.  
19.00 The Dog House at Christmas.  
20.00 A Very British Christmas: Kensington Palace.  
21.00 First Dates at Christmas.  
22.00 Gogglebox Festive Special.  
23.35 Bill Bailey: Tinselworm.  
00.35 **FILM:** Brassed Off (1996).  
02.20 The Last Leg.  
03.15 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
04.05 Game of Wool: Britain's Best Knitter.  
05.00 Sunday Brunch.  
05.15 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker.

## BBC Four

- 19.00 TOTP: Christmas 1992.  
20.00 Doctor Who: The Ice Warriors.  
20.25 Innes Lloyd: The Producer.  
22.00 Michael Palin Remembers - East of Ipswich.  
22.15 East of Ipswich.  
23.25 Pavarotti at the BBC.  
00.35 Jesse Norman at the BBC.  
01.20 TOTP: Christmas 1992.  
02.20 East of Ipswich.  
03.35 Doctor Who: The Ice Warriors.

## WEDNESDAY 24/12/25

- BBC One**  
 06.00 Breakfast.  
 09.15 CBeebies Panto: Cinderella.  
 10.20 Pudsey and the Thread of Hope.  
 10.45 **FILM:** Puss in Boots (2011).  
 12.05 **FILM:** Minions (2015).  
 13.30 BBC News at One; Weather.  
 13.55 Shaun the Sheep: The Flight Before Christmas.  
 14.25 Wallace & Gromit: A Close Shave.  
 14.55 **FILM:** Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse (2023).  
 17.10 BBC News; Weather.  
 17.30 **FILM:** Paddington (2014).  
 18.55 EastEnders.  
 19.25 The Great British Sewing Bee Celebrity Christmas Special.  
 20.25 Gavin & Stacey: The Finale.  
 22.00 Two Doors Down Christmas Special.  
 22.35 BBC News; Weather.  
 22.50 Gavin & Stacey: A Fond Farewell.  
 23.50 Midnight Mass from Our Lady of the English Martyrs, Cambridge.  
 01.05 The Hit List.  
 01.50 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
 01.55 BBC News.
- BBC Two England**  
 06.30 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
 07.00 Celebrity Escape to the Country.  
 09.00 **FILM:** Citizen Kane (1941).  
 11.00 Homes Under the Hammer.  
 12.00 Bargain Hunt: Christmas Special.  
 12.40 Escape to the Country.  
 13.25 **FILM:** Meet Me in St Louis (1944).  
 15.15 Doris Day: I Don't Even Like Apple Pie.  
 16.05 **FILM:** Calamity Jane (1953).  
 17.45 Carols from King's.  
 19.00 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
 19.30 Celebrity Mastermind.  
 20.00 Only Connect Christmas Special.  
 20.30 Christmas University Challenge.  
 21.00 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Christmas Fishing.  
 22.00 A Ghost Story for Christmas: The Room in the Tower.  
 22.30 **FILM:** Indecent Proposal (1993).  
 00.20 **FILM:** The Duchess (2008).  
 05.00 This Is BBC Two.
- ITV1 London**  
 06.00 Good Morning Britain.  
 09.00 Lorraine.  
 10.00 This Morning.  
 12.30 Loose Women.  
 13.30 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather.  
 13.35 **FILM:** E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial (1982).  
 15.44 ITV London Weather.  
 15.45 **FILM:** Santa Claus: The Movie (1985).  
 17.50 ITV Evening News; Weather.  
 17.55 The Chase Celebrity Christmas Special.  
 18.55 Emmerdale.  
 19.25 Royal Carols: Together at Christmas.  
 20.40 Coronation Street.  
 21.10 **FILM:** Love Actually (2003).  
 23.40 Christmas Carols on ITV 2025.  
 00.40 Steve Backshall's Royal Arctic Challenge.  
 02.20 Gallagher PREM Unleashed.  
 02.45 Unwind with ITV.  
 03.50 **FILM:** It's a Wonderful Life (1946).
- Channel 4**  
 06.10 The Dog House at Christmas.  
 07.05 Terry Pratchett's The Abominable Snow Baby.  
 07.30 The Snowman.  
 08.00 Father Christmas.  
 08.30 The Snowman and the Snowdog.  
 09.05 We're Going on a Bear Hunt.  
 09.35 The Tiger Who Came to Tea.  
 10.10 **FILM:** Babe (1995).  
 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary.  
 12.05 Hamleys: Top 100 Toys of All Time.  
 13.35 **FILM:** Sister Act (1992).  
 15.35 The Snowman.  
 16.10 Mog's Christmas.  
 16.40 The Snowman and the Snowdog.  
 17.15 Channel 4 News.  
 17.30 **FILM:** Home Alone (1990).  
 19.30 Finding Father Christmas.  
 21.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown Christmas Special.  
 The Last Leg of Christmas.  
 23.00 The Big Fat Quiz of Telly.  
 00.55 First Dates at Christmas.  
 01.50 Taskmaster: Champion of Champions 2025.  
 02.45 **FILM:** The Craft: Legacy (2020).  
 04.15 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
 05.05 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker.
- BBC Four**  
 19.00 TOTP: Christmas 1986.  
 20.00 Peter Egan and Penelope Wilton Remember - Ever Decreasing Circles.  
 21.40 The Good Life.  
 22.10 Terry and June.  
 22.40 The Two Ronnies: Old Fashioned Christmas Mystery.  
 23.40 **FILM:** Porridge (1979).  
 01.10 TOTP: Christmas 1986.  
 02.10 Ever Decreasing Circles.

## THURSDAY 25/12/25

- BBC One**  
 06.00 Breakfast.  
 09.00 The Snail and the Whale.  
 09.30 Stick Man.  
 10.00 Christmas Morning Service from Bradford Cathedral.  
 11.00 Bluey's Christmas Bundle.  
 11.40 **FILM:** Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl (2024).  
 13.00 **FILM:** Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical (2022).  
 14.45 BBC News; Weather.  
 15.00 The King.  
 15.10 The Scarecrows' Wedding.  
 15.35 Gladiators: Celebrity Special.  
 16.35 Shaun the Sheep: Fleece Navidad.  
 16.45 The Weakest Link: Christmas Special.  
 17.30 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special.  
 18.45 Michael McIntyre's Christmas Wheel.  
 19.45 EastEnders.  
 20.15 Call the Midwife Christmas Special.  
 21.15 Amandaland Christmas Special.  
 21.45 EastEnders.  
 22.15 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special.  
 22.45 BBC News; Weather.  
 23.00 Absolutely Fabulous.  
 23.35 **FILM:** When Harry Met Sally (1989).  
 01.10 The Hit List.  
 01.55 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
 02.00 BBC News.
- BBC Two England**  
 06.00 My Life at Christmas with Anita Rani.  
 07.00 Royal Institution Christmas Lectures: The Truth About Food.  
 08.00 A Christmas Choir with Michelle McManus.  
 08.45 Carols from King's.  
 10.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Matter of Loaf and Death.  
 10.30 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out.  
 10.55 Agatha Christie: Talking Pictures.  
 11.25 The Nutcracker from the Royal Ballet.  
 13.00 **FILM:** White Christmas (1954).  
 15.00 Sign Zone: The King.  
 15.10 **FILM:** Evil Under the Sun (1982).  
 17.00 Dad's Army at the BBC.  
 18.00 Dad's Army.  
 18.40 Keeping Up Appearances.  
 19.30 The Morecambe and Wise Show: The Lost Tapes.  
 20.10 The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show.  
 21.15 **FILM:** Jaws (1975).  
 23.15 Jaws @ 50: The Definitive Inside Story.  
 00.40 **FILM:** And Now for Something Completely Different (1971).
- ITV1 London**  
 06.00 Royal Carols: Together at Christmas.  
 07.00 Good Morning Britain.  
 09.00 Lorraine.  
 10.00 This Morning.  
 12.00 Loose Women.  
 13.00 James Martin's Christmas Day.  
 15.00 The King.  
 15.10 **FILM:** Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981).  
 17.25 ITV Evening News; Weather.  
 17.45 It'll Be Alright on the Night.  
 18.15 Emmerdale.  
 19.15 Coronation Street.  
 20.15 Bullseye Christmas Special.  
 21.15 The 1% Club Christmas Special.  
 22.15 Romesh Ranganathan's Parents' Evening Christmas Special.  
 23.10 **FILM:** Red One (2024).  
 01.15 **FILM:** Love Actually (2003).  
 03.30 The King.  
 03.40 The Royal Variety Performance 2025.
- Channel 4**  
 06.00 The Dog House at Christmas.  
 06.55 Terry Pratchett's The Abominable Snow Baby.  
 07.20 The Snowman and the Snowdog.  
 07.45 We're Going on a Bear Hunt.  
 08.20 The Tiger Who Came to Tea.  
 08.50 The Snowman.  
 09.25 Father Christmas.  
 10.00 **FILM:** Babe: Pig in the City (1998).  
 11.50 The Snowman and the Snowdog.  
 12.25 Mog's Christmas.  
 12.50 Channel 4 News.  
 12.55 **FILM:** Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit (1993).  
 15.10 **FILM:** Frozen 2 (2019).  
 17.10 The Snowman.  
 17.45 C4's Alternative Christmas Message.  
 17.50 **FILM:** Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992).  
 20.00 The Great Christmas Bake Off 2025.  
 21.15 Gogglebox 2025.  
 23.15 **FILM:** Notting Hill (1999).  
 01.30 **FILM:** East Is East (1999).  
 03.10 The Last Leg of Christmas.
- BBC Four**  
 19.00 The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: The Read with Steffan Rhodri.  
 20.00 A Classical Christmas: Inside Classical.  
 21.25 TOTP: Christmas 1989.  
 22.25 TOTP: Christmas 1977.  
 23.15 Swingin' Christmas.  
 00.25 **FILM:** The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975).  
 02.00 The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: The Read with Steffan Rhodri.

## FRIDAY 26/12/25

- BBC One**  
 06.00 Breakfast.  
 09.00 The Farmer's Llamas.  
 09.30 Shaun the Sheep.  
 09.45 The Gruffalo.  
 10.15 The Gruffalo's Child.  
 10.45 **FILM:** Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit (2005).  
 12.00 **FILM:** Peter Rabbit (2018).  
 13.30 BBC News at One; Weather.  
 13.50 BBC Regional News and Weather.  
 14.00 **FILM:** Minions: The Rise of Gru (2022).  
 15.20 **FILM:** Puss In Boots: The Last Wish (2022).  
 16.50 BBC News.  
 17.10 BBC Regional News and Weather.  
 17.20 **FILM:** Paddington 2 (2017).  
 19.00 Would I Lie to You? at Christmas.  
 19.30 The Repair Shop at Christmas.  
 20.30 Call the Midwife Christmas Special.  
 21.30 EastEnders.  
 22.00 BBC News; Weather.  
 22.15 **FILM:** Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994).  
 00.10 Michael McIntyre's Christmas Wheel.  
 01.10 Weather for the Week Ahead.  
 01.15 BBC News.
- BBC Two England**  
 06.35 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
 07.05 The Great British Sewing Bee Celebrity Christmas Special.  
 08.05 Sign Zone: The Scarecrows' Wedding.  
 08.30 Sign Zone: Best of Weatherman Walking.  
 09.00 **FILM:** Bringing Up Baby (1938).  
 10.40 **FILM:** What's Up, Doc? (1972).  
 12.10 Homes Under the Hammer.  
 13.10 Bargain Hunt.  
 14.10 Escape to the Country.  
 15.10 **FILM:** The Italian Job (1969).  
 16.45 **FILM:** The Great Escape (1963).  
 19.30 Richard Osman's Festive House of Games.  
 20.00 Celebrity Mastermind.  
 20.30 Only Connect Boxing Special.  
 21.00 Christmas University Challenge.  
 21.30 **FILM:** The Great Escaper (2023).  
 23.00 **FILM:** Jaws 2 (1978).  
 00.55 **FILM:** Blue Velvet (1986).  
 02.50 **FILM:** Sign Zone: Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse (2023).  
 This Is BBC Two.
- ITV1 London**  
 06.00 Fletchers' Family Farm.  
 06.50 Love Your Christmas with Alan Titchmarsh.  
 08.40 James Martin's Christmas Day.  
 10.40 **FILM:** Shrek (2001).  
 12.20 ITV Lunchtime News; Weather.  
 12.30 ITV Racing: Live from Kempton.  
 15.00 Bullseye Christmas Special.  
 16.00 ITV Evening News; Weather.  
 16.15 **FILM:** Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984).  
 Emmerdale.  
 18.30 Coronation Street.  
 19.00 The Masked Singer: Christmas Special.  
 19.30 Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Christmas Special.  
 22.00 ITV News; Weather.  
 22.15 **FILM:** Die Another Day (2002).  
 00.45 Shop on TV.  
 03.00 How Jaws Changed the World.  
 03.50 Unwind with ITV.  
 05.05 Sara Davies' Christmas Craft Off.
- Channel 4**  
 06.05 Cheers.  
 06.35 Cheers.  
 07.00 The King of Queens.  
 07.30 The King of Queens.  
 07.55 The King of Queens.  
 08.20 **FILM:** Born Free (1966).  
 10.15 Jamie's Christmas Shortcuts.  
 11.20 Christmas at Lapland UK.  
 12.25 **FILM:** Turner & Hooch (1989).  
 14.30 Live AFCON.  
 17.15 The Great Christmas Bake Off 2025.  
 18.30 Channel 4 News.  
 18.45 The Dog House at Christmas.  
 19.45 The Festive Pottery Throw Down 2025.  
 21.00 Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2025.  
 23.00 Gogglebox 2025.  
 01.00 The Great Christmas Bake Off 2025.  
 02.05 **FILM:** Joyland (2022).  
 04.20 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.  
 05.10 Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker.
- BBC Four**  
 19.00 BBC Classical: Best of 2025.  
 20.00 Lesley Garrett at the BBC.  
 21.30 The Best of Lesley Garrett Tonight.  
 22.20 TOTP: Christmas 1985.  
 23.15 40 Hits of 1985 at the BBC.  
 01.35 Abba at the BBC.  
 02.35 TOTP: Christmas 1985.

## Pick of the Week

### Saturday 20 Dec

**Strictly Come Dancing (BBC1, 7pm)**



It's the biggest night in the ballroom – the grand final. After three months of hard-fought competition, the 2025 Strictly champion is crowned. The show begins with a dazzling group routine from our professional dancers and this year's finalists, before they each perform three times in a bid to be your winners. The complete cast of 2025 also return to the dance floor one last time for a fabulous group number. Your votes alone will decide who walks away with the Glitterball.

### Sunday 21 Dec

**Oppenheimer (BBC2, 9pm)**



The life of J Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist appointed by the US to run the Manhattan Project, their bid to develop the atomic bomb before the Nazis. Brilliant as he is, winning that race comes at a cost, and amidst his guilt and grief at what he's done, he is also suspected by the authorities of being a communist spy.

### Monday 22 Dec

**Violent Night (CH4, 10pm)**



(2022) A gang of violent home-invaders find out the hard way that you REALLY don't want to be on Santa's naughty list, in Tommy Wirkola's dark, violent Christmas comedy. With David Harbour.

### Tuesday 23 Dec

**Spartacus (BBC2, 3pm)**



76 BC. Born into slavery, the gladiator Spartacus longs for freedom and soon finds himself at the head of an army of slaves in revolt against the might of the Roman Empire.

# Discovering a kitchen of emotions

The menu of Gaspacho & Migas celebrates the very best of Portuguese ingredients, prepared with meticulous care and respect for tradition.



Tereza Pedro



**R**evitalising the ancient Algarve and Alentejo recipes, dishes are slow-cooked to perfection, allowing flavours to develop fully. Each plate is a testament to dedication to quality, creativity, and the art of slow cooking.

## A passionate vision behind the restaurant

Rogério Malheiro is a passionate restaurant owner whose love for Gaspacho &

Migas shows in every detail. With a degree in economics, he spent many years working for major companies. Thanks to his work, he travelled to many countries where he always explored local gastronomic traditions. A lifelong food lover, Rogério eventually decided to pursue his passion and open his own restaurant.

His wife is originally from the Algarve, which inspired their move from Lisbon to the south of Portugal.

Rogério found the perfect space for his restaurant in Lagoa and built everything from scratch. Before opening he completed extensive training with chefs and bartenders and immersed himself in specialised literature.

He worked closely with an interior designer to create a cozy and elegant space but not too extravagant, as the main focus is on the food. During my visit, Rogério gave me a tour of the kitchen, which is spotless and exceptionally well maintained! It's an open-kitchen project, although the kitchen is located on the floor beneath the dining area. Guests are welcome to observe the cooking process and interact with the chefs. The philosophy of this restaurant is simple: focus on prime products and exceptional quality ingredients. Gaspacho & Migas works with special suppliers for all their products - for example, their tomatoes come from an organic farm in the Algarve.

## A kitchen defined by expertise

In the kitchen, there is a specialist for each section, a garde-manger handles desserts and starters, a saucier - a chef to prepare

side dishes made in pots and sauces, and a chef de partie oversees the meat and fish station. A tournant is available to rotate through all stations, stepping in wherever needed. The menu is carefully prepared twice a year and celebrates the very best of Portuguese ingredients with meticulous care and respect for tradition. Their new winter menu includes highlights such as Octopus in Atlantic textures, Seafood rice with lobster, tiger prawns, mussels and cockles and Slow-cooked suckling pig belly with carrot migas and creamed spinach purée. Vegan and vegetarian dishes are also available.

## Discovering a unique dining experience

Tasting new foods and culinary adventures are among mine and my husband's favourite hobbies. For us, this is a type of self-care, a way to slow down and appreciate the moment. When I came across Gaspacho & Migas, I knew straight away this was a unique place we needed to visit. From the moment you step inside the restaurant, the sleek, modern interior - with its clean lines and soft lighting, sets the stage for a dining experience that is both sophisticated and inviting.

## A journey through flavour: Our meal

We started with the Watermelon Tartare, a beautifully presented textured watermelon, rocket and pine nut. This was light and fresh, amazing start for us, devoted watermelon lovers. As we continued, we were served bread, flavoured butters, fleur de sal and Maçanilha olive oil from the Algarve. Simple, elevated, and perfectly comforting. From there, we moved on to their signature tapas, "Gaspacho & Migas" to share. What is included in the tapas changes according to season, we were lucky to have Alheira croquette with sprouts and quail egg; Bolo do Caco with slow-cooked

beef cheek and Ilha cheese; a delicate Chickpea tartlet with tuna tartare, mango gel and chilli and a Seaweed brioche with octopus and spicy pepper emulsion. Each bite was different, surprising, and wonderfully balanced—like a mini journey through the kitchen's creativity. For the main course I chose the Duck Magret, served with pumpkin risotto and orange and ginger sauce with grilled courgette and fresh spinach. The flavours came together beautifully, and the sauce lifted the entire dish, adding brightness and warmth.

My husband enjoyed the Black Angus Entrecôte "Grain-Fed for 120 Days" accompanied by textured parsley root, crispy bacon and mustard sauce. It was cooked perfectly, tender and full of depth, he is a big meat lover and said this was one of the best steaks he has ever had. My sweet treat was Bread Ice Cream with Sweet Watermelon and Strawberry Gaspacho. The ice cream was creamy, nostalgic, and comforting, something I have never tried before! And paired beautifully with the refreshing gaspacho. My husband opted for Citrus Meringue Chocolate Mousse

with Orange Liqueur and Orange and Rosemary Jelly. The food was beyond perfect. From appetizers to dessert everything tasted amazing and looked like a picture from a magazine.

## Service & Wine

The service was excellent throughout the evening. Because the dishes are typically quite complex, your server will typically present or describe each dish as it is served to you, guiding you through the ingredients and flavours. It feels a little bit like culinary story time! We have enjoyed conversations with our servers during meals as interest in the cuisine and preparation is welcomed. Accompanied by a curated selection of Portuguese wines, the meal feels like a journey through the country's culinary heritage, elevated by modern techniques. Rogério worked with a sommelier to prepare a detailed wine list, including pairing suggestions for each dish.

*To discover more about Gaspacho & Migas, explore their latest menu on their website <https://gaspachoemigas.com/en/> and Instagram @Gaspacho&Migas.*



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# The showstopping alternative to the Christmas poinsettia

The hippeastrum can be just as eye-catching.

**A**re you ready to try an alternative to your difficult poinsettia, which so often seems to wilt when you get it through the front door? Make way for the hippeastrum, also known as amaryllis, the giant bulb which produces an array of mammoth flowers. You can use these huge beauties to decorate your Christmas table, spark festive conversation in your living room and provide a bounty of colour – in every shade from red to pink and white – in your kitchen. They are easier to maintain than poinsettias, says Claire Bishop, senior plant buyer for Dobbies Garden Centres. “Poinsettias are the absolute divas of the houseplant world. It’s like Goldilocks, ‘It’s too hot, it’s too cold, I’m going to drop all the leaves, I’m not happy’.” “In the right spot, a poinsettia is fabulous but you almost know you’re just going to have it for Christmas and if you have a draughty house or are going to be moving

it about, it’s not going to enjoy that at all.” If you didn’t have time to plant the hippeastrum bulbs yourself in October or November in time for Christmas, you can buy them in a pot, ready to reach their full glory over the festive season. And if you receive one on Christmas Day as a gift, it should be in flower in about six weeks’ time, Bishop says. “They are a stereotypical Christmas plant, however, I think people aren’t quite sure what to do with them,” she says. “A lot are bought in little boxes but you can almost choose when it flowers and it will flower a lot over the period, so it’s a beautiful centrepiece.”

## Ways to display

If you receive a boxed hippeastrum, a coir disc or compost pellet in the pot basically makes enough compost to fill the container but you need to rehydrate it with a little warm water so it expands, she advises. Bishop favours glass bowls for amaryllis displays. “Put the compost in the

bowl and then put the amaryllis in, so it’s a bit more unusual, more of a centrepiece,” she suggests. “You could then add moss and microlights nearer to Christmas, or plant it in the pot and make a festive wreath around it.” Red, white and peach colours are the most popular, she says. Ideally the bulb crown should be out of the soil. When it starts flowering it can become top heavy, but could be supported with holly stems, or willow from the garden, and you can decorate it with lights for the festive season, she suggests.

## Best situation

“They should be fine in a dining room, living room, near a window. They are not space-hungry because they are tall and thin, so if your space is limited you can still see across them. But you wouldn’t want to put it in a porch or vestibule. Don’t put them in direct sunlight, which will scorch them, or near a direct heat source. If you buy them late and want to bring them on quickly, they will shoot up more in a warm room, she adds.

## Flower power

Bulbs often produce four dinner-plate sized flowers, Bishop explains. “Each flower should last a couple of weeks if it’s kept cool, while other buds are emerging on the plant. Just snip off the spent flower to encourage all the energy back into the plant.” In the right conditions,



your blooms may last beyond the festive season and into January, as long as they are not near roaring fireplaces, radiators or any other source of heat, she says.

## What about waxed bulbs?

These are ideal for the no-maintenance fan, as the bulbs are coated in thick wax to seal in their nutrients and moisture for a single blooming cycle, and need no soil, growing medium or water to bloom. The roots of waxed amaryllis bulbs are removed before being dipped in wax. They are ideal for Christmas, but will not typically regrow even if the wax is removed after flowering, whereas normal bulbs may be more long term and can re-bloom.

## Growing them on

After they’ve finished flowering, hippeastrums have a dormancy period, Bishop explains. “You can leave it dormant for around eight weeks and then go again or just dry it out and leave it in a cool, dark, dry place then go again next year.” They don’t need much watering because the bulb shouldn’t be overwatered. Make sure the roots have enough water but don’t

let the bulbs sit on a wet surface, she advises. Time the flowering “The warmer your house, the quicker it will move on. You can almost stall it a little bit if you feel it’s starting to shoot up too quickly and move it to a cooler room. “Amaryllis like a bit of light, as all plants do. When it starts to shoot up its flower stem, it will grow towards the light so turn it to try to keep it straight,” she advises.

PA/TPN



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# The snowflake to help declutter before Christmas

This tidying trend can help bring back calm before Christmas.



**B**efore all the Christmas celebrations officially commence, now is the perfect moment to set aside

some time for some serious decluttering. Getting the house clean, organised and festive can feel like an overwhelming task, but the snowflake rule

offers a simple way to make it more manageable. We got in touch with professional organiser, Lesley Spellman, who hosts The Declutter Hub podcast

with Ingrid Jansen, who explained exactly what this tidying trend entails and how it can bring a sense of much-needed calm amidst all the Christmas chaos.

## What exactly is the snowflake rule?

Just as no two snowflakes are the same, this decluttering trend encourages you to eliminate any duplicates in your home to create a more streamlined space.

“The idea is that you go through your stuff in a really simple way and make choices based on duplicates that you have in your home,” explains Spellman. “You look at where you’ve got duplicates, and then determine which one is the most useful or the most sentimental to you.”

“This rule takes decluttering right back down to a simple ‘choose this one or that’ kind of idea and encourages you to not have anything additional to what you need in your home.” It helps simplify the often daunting prospect of decluttering. “A very simple method like this is perfect for people who have just found themselves in a position where they’ve got a little bit too much stuff and want to do a clear out ready for Christmas,” says Spellman. “The whole premise of the snowflake method is that it’s quick and speedy and you can get through lots of different rooms before Christmas.”

## Why is the lead up to Christmas the perfect time to use this method?

Helps create space  
It’s a great way to prepare your house before the inevitable influx of stuff that tends to accumulate during all the festivities. “It obviously depends on your individual circumstances, but if you’ve got children then there is

usually an exponentially crazy influx of stuff coming into the house around Christmas,” says Spellman. “There’s only so much space in your house, so clearing the decks a little bit allows the space for these things to come in.”

## Provides an opportunity to take extra things to a charity shop

The snowflake method may also lead to a pile of items that are in a good enough condition to take to the charity shop. “It’s an absolutely brilliant time of year to take things like partywear, brand-new items and Christmas decorations to a charity shop,” says Spellman. “It’s a good thing to do this side of Christmas because a lot of these things will be less useful to charity shops afterwards.”

## Helps you feel calmer

“There’s just this feeling of calm that comes with having less,” highlights Spellman. “Having control of your home and that feeling that you get from decluttering and organising your home just makes you feel a little bit calmer.”

## Provides the opportunity to teach your kids a lesson

“If you’ve got children, I think it’s really important to teach them that you can’t just ask for loads more stuff from Santa or mum and dad without letting go of some of the stuff that you’ve already got,” says Spellman. “I think teaching those lessons early on is a really good thing.”

## Can help you uncover things

“By following the snowflake method you will probably uncover a lot of stuff that you completely forgot about which might stop you from buying new things, so will therefore help you save money,” says Spellman. “Through this process you might

also uncover things like Christmas cards, gift bags and wrapping paper that you can use up rather than buying new.”

## Gives you a kickstart on new year organising

“So many people wait until January, which is obviously a big time for decluttering, but it’s brilliant to start now and get ahead of the game,” says Spellman. “Investing a little bit of time in decluttering now will help you feel so much calmer and more accomplished.”

## Here are some helpful tips on how to get started...

### Think about what the goal is

“It’s really important to understand what the big picture goal is,” says Spellman. “Ask yourself, why do you want to do it? Is it for the children or have you got guests coming over? Think about what’s important to you and what’s going to help turn the dial on a little bit more.”

### Focus on one room at a time

“Decluttering the communal rooms is probably going to be the priority,” says Spellman. “The kitchen is a great place to start as it’s the hub of the home and it’s important to have that as a space that you are proud of and feel comfortable in.”

### Break it down into manageable chunks

“If you start a massive declutter which takes you from 8am on Saturday morning to 7pm at night, then you are going to be completely worn out and won’t want to do any more the following day,” says Spellman. “But if you instead break it down over a few different weekends and start with the kitchen and break it down cupboard by cupboard that will help you manage your own energy levels.”

PA/TPN

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# What Christmas Celebrations look like

Through the eyes of your pet



Marilyn Sheridan

**T**ry to see Christmas through the eyes of your pet for a minute, and see how disturbing it might be. It's all exciting stuff to us and our families, but how confused pets - particularly dogs and cats - might find it.

## Xmas Tree

A tree, so familiar outside, is confusingly brought indoors, but heaven help them if they try to run up it. Many a Christmas tree has been felled by climbing cats or jumping dogs! It must deserve a smell at the very least, and those little toys swaying and shining on it are just begging to be attacked. Dogs in particular face a fate worse than death if they cock a leg and pee anywhere near it, chew or pull branches or try to steal any of those sweet



treats temptingly dangling at head height.

Enticing parcels might be laid out, and after your animals have finally learned not to touch them, on The Special Day, another one is laid in front of them where they are expected to tear it apart for the treat they can smell inside it. Confusing to say the least.

Snow spray is popular for trees and window panes to simulate frost and snowflakes, but pets can be tempted to lick it off, which isn't good. While the chemicals may be of low toxicity, they can cause a mild stomach upset (vomiting and diarrhoea are not welcome at Xmas!), and a large amount could lead to a dangerous intestinal blockage. And if you have a water-retaining tree stand, beware of pets drinking out of it, which could also be another stomach upset to deal with.

## Extra people

Christmas for pets is a combination of different sights, smells and sounds, alongside the emotional energy of their humans all determining whether Christmas is a positive or negative experience for them, and a whole host of guests being either wonderful or stressful. The extra people around would guarantee my dogs going into hiding to view the whole procedure from the bushes, where they will linger until they perceive it safe to come indoors to lick a few plates! Cats can go either way - they may also go into hiding somewhere, but equally they might relish more laps to sit on, and ultimately enjoy the attention.

## Keep up the normal routine

Changes in routine, unfamiliar people, noises and the decorations all might cause stress. Try

to maintain their normal feeding, walking, and sleeping schedules as much as possible, and ensure their 'safe space' is accessible. Keep them away from potentially toxic plants (poinsettias, holly, mistletoe), and even tinsel - those slivers of shiny metallic foil. Unsuitable festive foods - including both chocolate and mince pies - shouldn't be offered, or be within 'steal' range either! Let your guests know if you think your pet may be anxious and shouldn't be approached, especially while they are eating or sleeping. Sometimes ignoring them is the best policy to let them find their own

level of comfort around strangers.

If children are involved, supervise gift-giving and any play with new toys - clear up wrappings promptly, as these can be hazardous if swallowed, and keep an extra close eye on any new puppies or kittens who might be experiencing Christmas for the first time.

## Why a pet should not be a surprise gift

And talking of puppies and kittens, the term 'a pet is for life, not just for Christmas' should be heeded, and they aren't generally recommended as a gift - surprise or otherwise. A pet is a

lifelong undertaking that requires time, money, and energy for their whole lives. A surprise could be overwhelming for young children, who may not understand the essence of responsibility - and it all could end badly, with the poor creature ultimately being surrendered to a shelter.

## Xmas Day food for your pets

There are plenty of Xmas tidbits that your pets can share in small doses - turkey, beef, fish (no ham) and most veggies, but nothing with onions or garlic, grapes or raisins - just don't share it from the table!

## PETS FOR ADOPTION



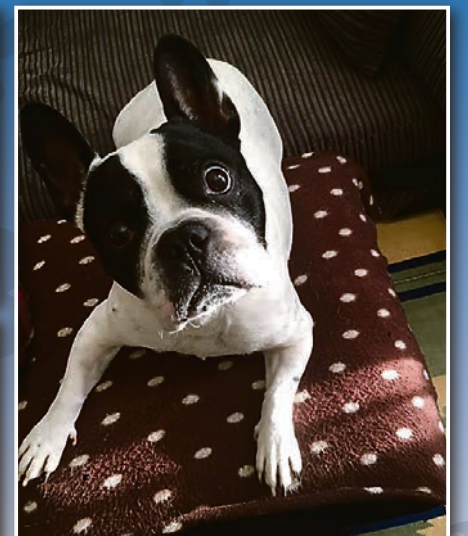
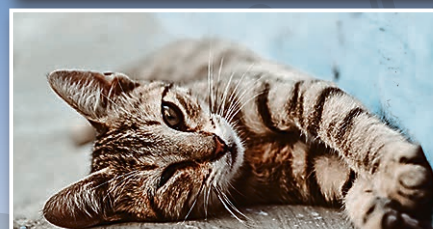
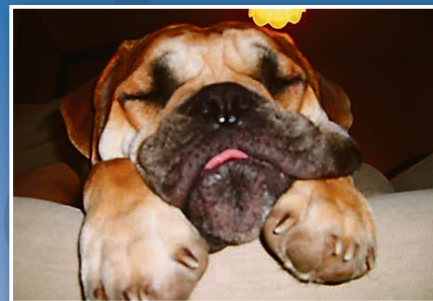
Dylan



Lennon

**DYLAN and LENNON** are friendly and fun loving 7 month old litter brothers who were fostered by one of our volunteers and thrive on human contact. They are good with other cats, children and dogs. Both are vaccinated, neutered, micro-chipped and house trained, but as they have been together all their lives, need to be adopted together.

If you can provide DYLAN and LENNON with a happy home, please call Corinna on +351 918 552 788 or send an email to [ccc.carvoeirocatchari-ty@gmail.com](mailto:ccc.carvoeirocatchari-ty@gmail.com).



Please send your pets for adoption to [linda@theportugalnews.com](mailto:linda@theportugalnews.com) for free

# Seasonal Grimacings



The season of tat with extra trimmings is upon us. But there's no need to despair.



Some of you might have been unlucky enough to have read my article in TPN last year where I whinged about Christmas, grinch-like. I don't intend a reprise this time but I do want to mention that the local radio stations which I listen to while I potter around are now in full festive mood and are extolling the virtues of the Christmas fairs, ice rinks and bright Christmassy lights in the big cities hereabouts. This means I have adopted Operation Humbug, my defensive position for the season, whereby trips to the urban

centres mentioned will only be undertaken if that's where the ambulance takes me, otherwise they are now off limits until after the season of goodwill. The reason is that I want to maintain my sense of goodwill to all people and the safest way to do that is to avoid the bling and the blarney.

### Crass commercialisation

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not actually a Scrooge or a grinch, even if some members of the family will tell you otherwise. I really do like Christmas. What I don't like is the crass commercialisation of it all.

What I do like is a period of time that brings together family and a few friends for a brief moment of peace and calm. It should be something that embraces the season, the dark days and long nights - a time when we need a bit of reassurance and a bit of love. I genuinely don't think we get these things from the glitz and glamour that fill the streets. I'd go as far as to say that they tend towards having the opposite effect: they obscure and conceal reality and, for many, create a new level of worry, that of falling short of the demands made by the demons of commerce. Peace? Goodwill? Not to be found in the shopping centres at any price.

### Getting ready for the celebrations

In my positive state of mind I am getting ready for the celebrations. Nothing elaborate. Nothing flashy. My greatest contribution so far has been the production of some home-made mincemeat. I mean, what is Christmas without mince pies? I don't go as far as my mother did, who rather overdid the whole thing, bless her, by having a mince pie every day during December leading up to the Big Day - her version of an advent calendar. My plan is more cunning. I am hoping to convert entire communities to the delights of the wee things, though so far the reach of my empire hasn't gone much beyond the tuga family, members of the local church choir and staff at the physio centre way over in Fafe -



but I'm working on it. Problem is, am I setting myself up for making annual deliveries to a slowly widening circle of aficionados? Oops.

Naturally, I can't make the mince pies until I've made the mincemeat and I need to do that a week or two before baking the pastries; after all, the brandy needs time to soak through all that fruit. This is another positive from living in Portugal. If I'd remained in Blighty I wouldn't have thought twice about popping down to Sainsbury's and buying a jar or three of mincemeat but here the only realistic option is to make your own and once I'd got over the shock of realising that you can use butter instead of suet it has been a joy.

### The Christmas Tree

The next on the list is the tree, a small living thing that I can replant in the woods later. A few gentle decorations: nothing gaudy and certainly nothing that flashes. I leave that to the perverts in raincoats. I know just the place to get a little pinheiro and I'll be off to fetch it in the morning. What else? Making sure that we have the necessary ingredients for a steamed sticky date and cranberry pudding, that's what. I've always liked the idea of Christmas pudding but I've

never really liked the taste so the discovery a few years back of this lighter but oh-so-seasonal version was very welcome.

### Bacalhau for Consoada?

The best news is that this year we probably won't be having bacalhau for consoada. I can't tell you how happy that makes me. I like bacalhau in all its variations with the exception of the way it is done for Christmas Eve. But now, external events are assisting the slow course of cultural change. I'm all for change, especially if it means polvo instead of bacalhau. Meanwhile, I have a solemn duty to perform. While the sad creatures in the cities down in the valleys and plains below our hills suffer the humiliating ritual of Christmas bling and razzmatazz for weeks on end, I shall be keeping an eye out in our little village to check that any decs peeping from front windows into the dark of the evening are discrete and tasteful. Should they be otherwise, I shall tut loudly to myself. So far, all I've noticed are some rather sad Santas hanging from balconies in the rain, like felons left on the gibbet for the crows, but they don't intrude upon the general ambience of the scene so I simply shake my head and pass on. All is looking well.



## About Fitch O'Connell

Fitch is a retired teacher trainer and academic writer who has lived in northern Portugal for over 30 years. Author of 'Rice & Chips', irreverent glimpses into Portugal, and other books.





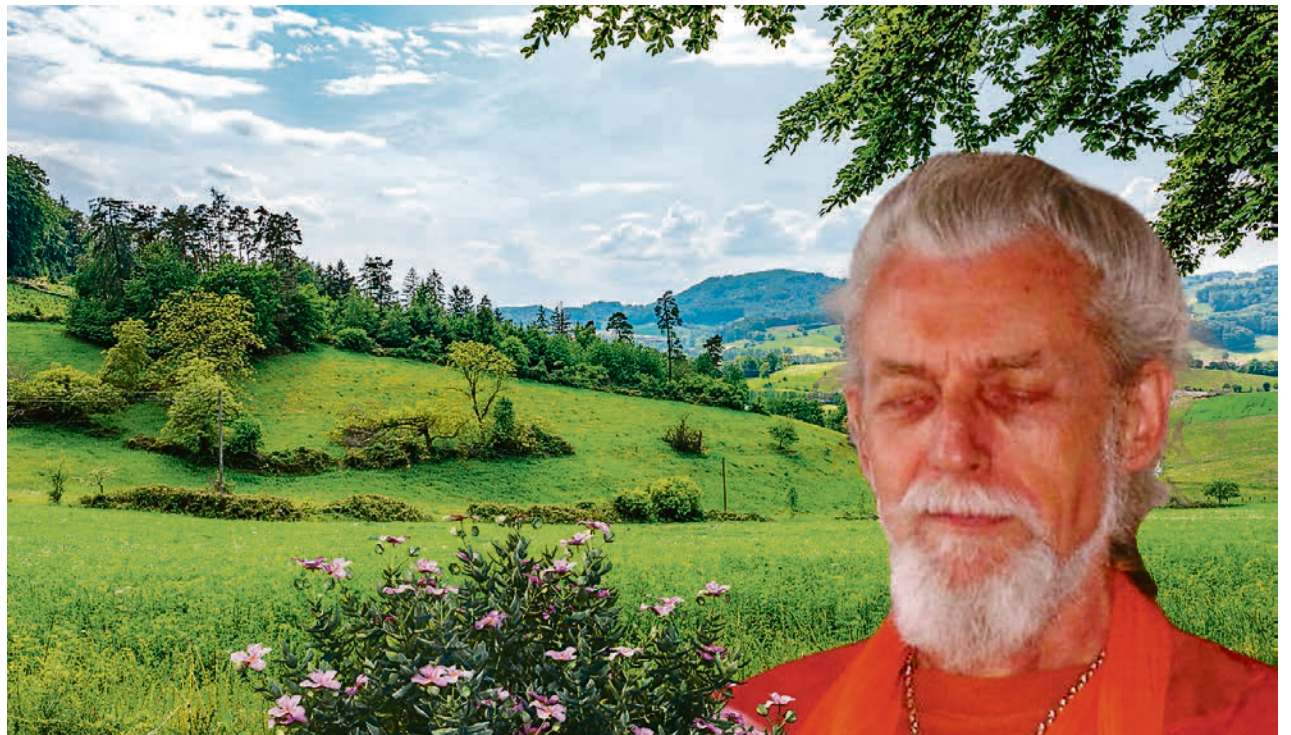
Muz Murray

# Problems on the Spiritual Path - Part 2

Whenever soul-sickness came upon me I always turned to nature for solace.

Sitting in a field, or a wood, or on a mountain and soaking up the healing harmony of my surroundings, I could always experience that clouds and sunsets and birds and trees and flowers and bees were all still flowing on as happily as ever, eternally changeless in essence. What was the difference between me and nature, I wondered? Why does it flow and I don't? Where did I go wrong? The trees and flowers are not neurotic or mentally confused, yet they are as conscious and sensitive as I am. Scientific experiments have shown that even plants have some form of seemingly primitive 'emotional' or 'symbiotic' attachment to those who care for them. Plants are attuned to the thoughts of man and are in vibratory rapport with all other forms of life. They are also affected by any creature's death. Yet their reactions are momentary and not reflective. A tree does not fret and worry about how it is going to manage to put out buds and blossoms and bear fruit. It has no anxiety for the future, for fear of insufficient rain or sun-

shine for the coming year. It does not know how, or what, it does, and yet through an effortless unselfconscious unfoldment, it grows and opens out in glorious diversity. Like the rest of organic nature, it is conscious, but without ruminative thought. The natural world is a fantastically complex process of multifarious levels of Consciousness in operation without the intervention of separative locally individualised and self-conscious mentalities. That flawless flow of Consciousness, which is the substratum of all existence is simply flowing through the natural world and unfolding it without resistance. There was my answer! I had forgotten that I too, was a product of that process. The natural world has not set itself apart from anything. On the relative plane, it just is. As a function of the inseparable Omnipresence, it is sustained by it. But man has come to think of himself as a separate entity from nature, even on the gross relative plane. In today's world he often feels estranged even from his own parents, and thus, by extension, from all of



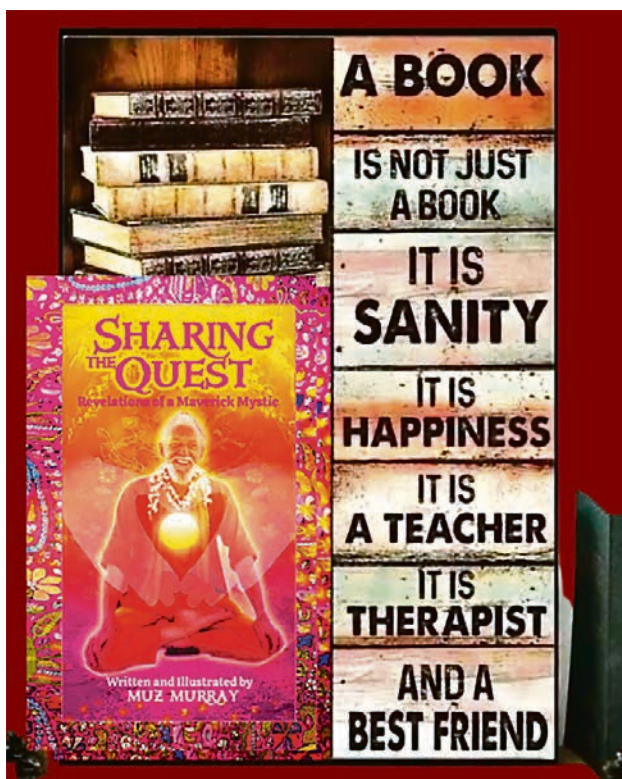
humankind. He has the illusion of being encapsulated in his own separate existence, with his own autonomous mind and an individual consciousness. He feels dreadfully alone and has the erroneous belief in the necessity of forging his own salvation, or 'unfolding' for himself. If he could overcome his sense of isolation—created by his sense of selfhood (ego and mind)—he could be as spontaneously unfolded just like the rest of creation. But it is the idea of mind itself which obstructs the flow of that underlying Consciousness of the universe, and prevents him from experiencing his true nature as the Self. The Self is described in Sanskrit as Sat-chit-ananda, the primal formula, meaning Existence = Consciousness = Bliss. This is the nature of Cosmic Consciousness, which is always there awaiting us, whenever the tightly coiled spring of the little self is unwound. And we are immersed in it like fish in the sea. But even when we understand the problem intellectually; even if we are able to accept the fact that we are constantly existing in a state of unrecognised bliss (needing only the removal of mental

block-ages to experience it, as shown in the mystical experience, or in the temporary effects of some psychedelic drugs), it does not help us very much. Although we may know, in essence, that we are already the Self and that there is therefore nothing more to be attained, we do not experience it as living reality, but only as a mental idea. All mental ideas must dissolve in the light of direct conscious experience. Therefore, since mere intellectual knowledge does not make us any the happier, it becomes futile to give up our sadhana or spiritual practice, which is the only well-proven means to realise such experience. If the methods of the sages did not work, they would not have been persisted in for thousands upon thousands of years. So, we can opt to use the methods and work on ourselves, or remain

lost, anxious, aggressive, stressed and unhappy. But in any case, our inherent nature refuses to allow us to backslide for too long. Once we have become conscious of 'being on the Path', we may try to give it up, become tired of practice and forget it for a time, but our driving need will win out in the end. Once you know something of the spiritual life, you cannot easily return to cabbage-hood. Besides, the Omni-presence is always working on us from within. When a springtime bud is near its flowering time an inexorable force of nature impels it to burst into blossom. And so, it is with us. Some unbidden pressure builds up inside and pushes us to carry on our inner work - to make us flower. And we ignore its promptings at our peril. Even anguish stirring in the soul is a birth-pang of the spirit - a prelude to our inner blossoming.

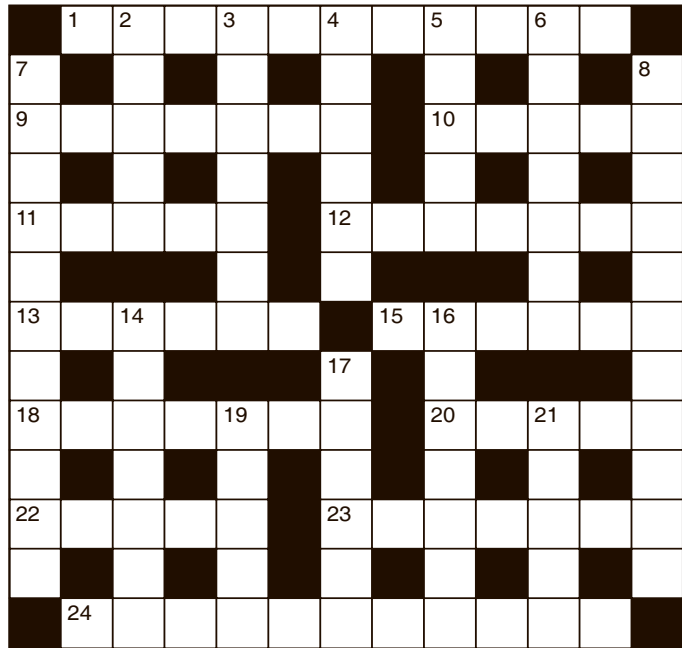
It is wiser to attune ourselves to these inner promptings which tell us we are drifting away from the Self, rather than relying on the wretched ramblings of the mind which lead us further astray. We cannot expect the endlessly chattering mind to quieten by itself. We have to do something about it. The slippery sense-of-ego and its self-justifications for 'sloping off' can never be over-come without constant vigilance and awareness of its wily ways. There is no easy way out. Ultimately, we have no hope of attaining inner peace without working on ourselves.

*Part 3 follows next month:  
From: Sharing the Quest:  
Revelations of a Maverick Mystic  
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*British mystic, author, psychotherapist, spiritual counsellor, mantra yogi, fine artist and illustrator, theatrical set and costume designer. Founder-editor of Gandalf's Garden magazine and Community in the London Sixties, and 3 years as columnist for Yoga Today magazine, BBC 4 Scriptwriter, author of four spiritual self-development books and two storybooks for children.*





Last week's cryptic crossword solution  
**Across:** 1 Prod; 8 Understudy; 9 Compiled; 10 Lose; 12 Sited; 14 Dragon; 15 Wicked; 17 Cattle; 18 Snub; 19 Close-ups; 21 Matchmaker; 22 Nuts.  
**Down:** 2 Revolution; 3 Dump; 4 Added; 5 Graded; 6 Stalwart; 7 Type; 11 Spoilsport; 13 Take back; 16 Decamp; 17 Crooks; 18 Same; 20 Earn.

**CRYPTIC CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

1. It needs a second to put this on! (6,5)
9. One expected to make an impression (7)
10. Waterway vessel by which the French return (5)
- 11 & 14Dn. Performance given by a manual operator (5,7)
12. Yes, cast can produce elation (7)
13. Mavis shows a disease of the throat (6)
15. Get up for abandoned dances (6)
18. United Nations set back by obvious kind of missile (7)
20. An awful long time to get a ring back (5)
22. As part of a payment it helps the levy (5)
23. One isn't helped to work like this (7)
24. Colleagues in the cast? (11)

**DOWN**

2. In an outstanding position (5)
3. Aims to show where the Bedouins may be (7)
4. Well laid out plot could be a danger (6)
5. Shows some deficiency – in need of discipline, we hear (5)
6. Wine producer holds the label showing the season's yield (7)
7. One-time knocker, we're told (11)
8. Held hands and hoped for a good deal! (6,5)
14. See 11 Across
16. It's built to withstand the main onrush (3,4)
17. Likely to get shot after the twelfth complaint! (6)
19. Hostile character in 'The Polythene Mystery' (5)
21. To provide financial help is a strange, unending wonder (5)

**QUICK CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

1. Surroundings (11)
9. Obvious (7)
10. Rascal (5)
11. Incident (5)
12. Hide (7)
13. Interment (6)
15. At rest (6)
18. Increase (7)
20. Kingdom (5)
22. Relief carving (5)
23. Treachery (7)
24. Arousing attention (11)

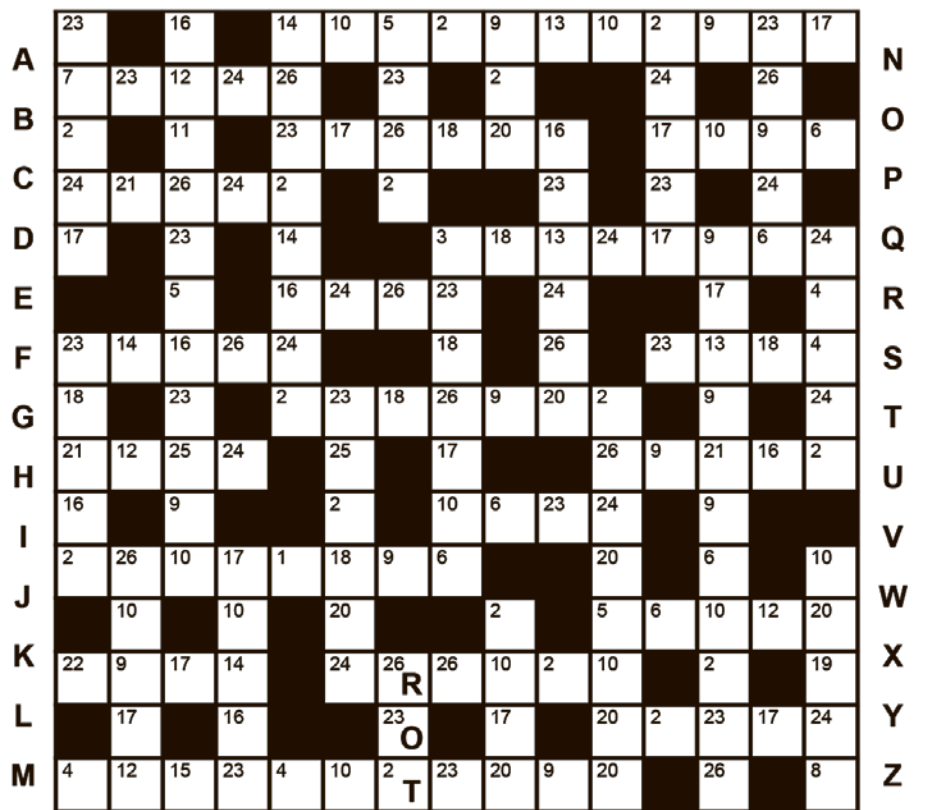
**DOWN**

2. Artless (5)
3. Sloth (7)
4. Science of light (6)
5. Imbecile (5)
6. Slight (7)
7. Similarity (11)
8. Substitute (11)
14. Diet (7)
16. Flood (7)
17. Figurine (6)
19. Eat away (5)
21. Fire-raising (5)

Last week's quick crossword solutions  
**Across:** 1 Span; 8 Exasperate; 9 Sentinel; 10 Stay; 12 Stench; 14 Stigma; 15 Kismet; 17 Regard; 18 Anon; 19 Entreaty; 21 Santa Claus; 22 Yank.  
**Down:** 2 Pedestrian; 3 Next; 4 Launch; 5 Spills; 6 Pressing; 7 Deny; 11 Admiration; 13 Nominative; 16 Trench; 17 Ritual; 18 Also; 20 Easy.

**CODEWORD**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	T											
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
					O							R



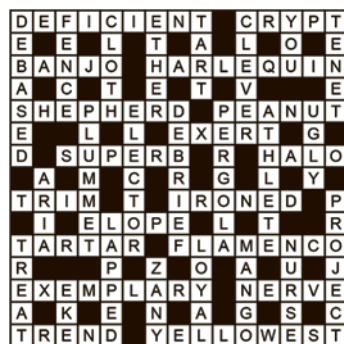
**SUDOKU**

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9. Answers next week.

				3	4		1	
	4		7				8	
	7				2			
		7	8				2	
2			3					5
	1		4		3			
		6						1
	4			9	8			
7		3	1					

						6		2
8				1		9		
	4		9		7			5
		7			8			
9								1
			3			7		
1			4		5		7	
		5		2				9
7		4						

Last week's Codeword Solution



Last week's Solutions

Medium

5	7	2	3	9	6	4	1	8
6	9	8	2	1	4	7	5	3
4	3	1	5	8	7	6	9	2
9	6	7	8	5	3	1	2	4
1	2	3	4	6	9	5	8	7
8	5	4	1	7	2	3	6	9
7	1	9	6	4	8	2	3	5
3	8	6	7	2	5	9	4	1
2	4	5	9	3	1	8	7	6

Hard

4	2	8	6	3	1	9	7	5
7	9	1	8	5	2	6	3	4
6	3	5	7	9	4	1	2	8
5	4	9	1	8	7	2	6	3
1	6	2	3	4	9	8	5	7
3	8	7	2	6	5	4	9	1
8	7	4	5	2	6	3	1	9
2	1	3	9	7	8	5	4	6
9	5	6	4	1	3	7	8	2

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# 3 bedroom villa with swimming pool, located in Estates at Spatia Comporta

3-bedroom Villa with 456sqm of Gross Private Area, implanted in a plot of land with more than 9.000sqm, composed of 3 suites, open space kitchen for the dining room, pantry, a large living room with suspended fireplace model Ergofocus and with access to the outside and a guest bathroom.

One of the suites has an independent entrance, providing full privacy. In the outside, there is a pleasant garden with local vegetation with swimming pool and pergola with dining area. Located at the Development Estates at Spatia Comporta, just an hour's drive from Lisbon down Portugal's western coast, it will take you into one of the country's most beautiful and unexplored areas. The superb location, unspoiled environment, golden beaches and funky out-of-town vibe make Comporta a destination unrivaled in Europe. The sand dunes and pinewoods, blessed by a gentle Atlantic breeze, are the idyllic setting for Spatia Comporta, where an authentic sense of place blends seamlessly with a luxurious standard of service and the beauty of the natural

landscape. Spatia is a luxury resort designed to meet the highest standards of those looking for true luxury, comfort and refinement, including all the resort services that make the experience even more complete and exclusive. Composed by the Spatia Club with reception, lounge area and restaurant, Technogym, tennis and padel courts, two swimming pools, 19 luxury cabanas and 38 exclusive villas with 3 and 4 bedrooms, with an architecture that combines a contemporary style with the identity of Comporta, with private gross areas ranging from 436 to 540sqm, implanted in plots of land with 1 to 9 hectares with an extensive pine forest, being each villa in perfect harmony with nature. The building's contemporary design is inspired by rural and local construction and has resulted in single-story

homes with large white panes, arranged in the best orientation to take advantage of natural lighting and promote the relationship between indoors and outdoors. The homes feature expansive, light-filled interiors, high ceilings, and minimalist designs that prioritize comfort and tranquility. At Spatia Comporta you can find the perfect balance between the traditions of the Alentejo region and a contemporary approach. Spatia's beach club, with 3km beach front at Praia do Pinheiro, is expected to be opened soon, located at 15 minutes' driving distance from Spatia Comporta. Located about 10 minutes driving distance from the main beaches and golf courses in the region, 15 minutes from Carvalhal and the centre of Grândola, 20 minutes from Comporta and Melides, and 1 hour drive from Lisbon.

**PRICE: €3.000.000 · LOCATION: COMPORTA · REF: 34090**



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**Email:** t.thomaz@dils.com  
**Website:** www.dils.com





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**Tavira Office**  
+351 281 320 280

**Vilamoura Office**  
+351 289 301 294

For more information visit  
www.landandhousesalgarve.com  
www.landandhousesalgarve.de

EC: N/A



**TAVIRA**

Large plot with excellent views very close to Tavira

Ref. LHR-803 €285.000

EC: B-



**TAVIRA**

Very nice 2 bedroom apartment with garage and communal pool in Tavira

Ref. LHA-1573 €305.000

EC: B-



**TAVIRA**

Nice 2 bedroom Apartment with garage and private roof terrace in historical centre of Tavira

Ref. LHA-1560a €320.000

EC: E



**TAVIRA**

Unique Apartment with terrace on an excellent location in the historical centre in Tavira

Ref. LHA-1561 €375.000

EC: A



**TAVIRA**

New 3 bedroom Penthouse apartments with private roof terrace in Tavira

Ref. LHA-1548p €630.000

AMI-968



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Ref: V1828

New, Modern semi-detached house comprising of 3 floors with 2 bedrooms, 2 magnificent terraces, the 1 on the top floor has amazing views overlooking the city and the Arade River, in a total area of 91 m<sup>2</sup>, located in the historical centre of the Moorish Silves City, only a few steps away from all amenities, shops and restaurants. A unique opportunity for those looking to live with charm, comfort and quality in the heart of one of the most authentic cities in the Algarve. Book your viewing with the Servesul Team!

**Area: 91 sqm**  
**Bedrooms: 2**  
**Price: €300.000,00**


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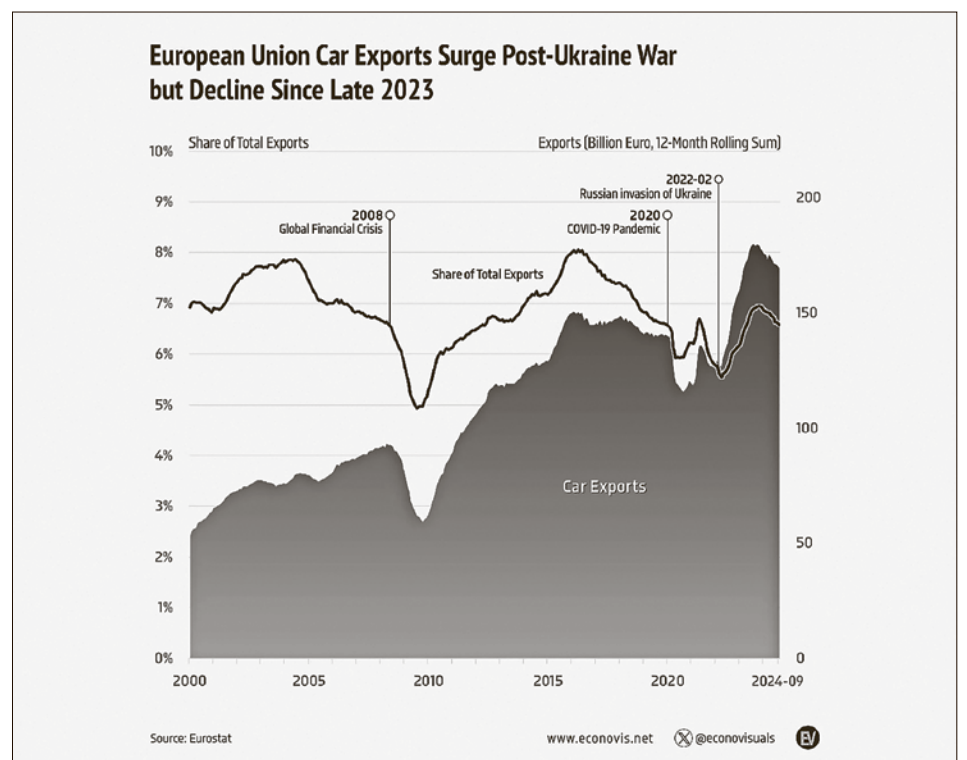


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# Property tax reduction



Braga, Braga City Council has approved a reduction in the municipal property tax (IMI) rate for urban buildings from 0.33 to 0.32 percent in 2026, which means €1.1 million less for the municipal coffers.



The measure only received a dissenting vote but was criticised by the entire opposition, which wanted a more significant reduction. The councillor from the Liberal Initiative, Rui Rocha, said that the reduction, on average, should not be worth more than a coffee a

month. “The reduction is a signal, we are in favour, but it seems to us a frankly insufficient signal,” said Rui Rocha. The criticisms are shared by the Amar e Servir Braga movement, which considered the reduction “very timid,” and by the Socialist Party (PS), which said that with an annual income of 300 euros, the

decrease will be around 10 euros. The Chega party councillor, Filipe Aguiar, voted against, considering that the IMI (Municipal Property Tax) is a tax that shouldn’t exist because it “penalises families very severely.” **“Too little”** “Obviously, we welcomed this reduction, but we think it was too

little and that we should go for the minimum rate,” he said. For Mayor João Rodrigues, the approved reduction is based on a logic of fiscal justice and financial responsibility, ensuring that the measure does not compromise the municipality’s ability to maintain “quality public services, support those who need it most, and continue investing in the city.” “We didn’t choose between lowering taxes and carrying out public works. We chose to govern rigorously so we could do both. We want a Braga that works, grows, and cares, without always asking more from those who already pay everything,” the mayor emphasizes. The municipality emphasizes that it maintains a fiscal policy focused on housing and urban rehabilitation, valuing those who recover and care for heritage, encouraging the improvement of the housing stock, and combating the degradation of buildings. “The city hall preserves benefits and mechanisms that protect families, especially in their own permanent housing, and reinforces clear signals that the city must be treated responsibly, with

incentives for those who invest in rehabilitation and demands for those who allow properties to deteriorate,” says a statement from the municipality. For João Rodrigues, “fiscal policy must have a purpose.”

## Incentives

“Those who rehabilitate and give life to the city should be incentivised. Those who allow degradation and put people and property at risk cannot be rewarded. Braga wants more quality housing, more rehabilitation, and more care for urban space,” he argues. In the meeting, the City Council decided to maintain the 3 percent participation rate in Income Tax, with the entire opposition abstaining. The Socialist Party (PS), the Liberal Initiative, and the Amar e Servir Braga party wanted a reduction to 2.75 percent, admitting that the drop in revenue for the municipality would be around 800,000 euros and requesting that the matter be voted on at the next meeting, but the mayor did not budge.

## Tax reduction on short term contracts

The tax benefit covers all moderate rents, regardless of the contract term, according to the Government.



The Government wants to reduce the income tax rate from 25% to 10% on all lease agreements, new and existing, provided they have rents at moderate prices, i.e., up to €2,300. And now it has been clarified that the measure may be applied regardless of the term of these contracts, also covering short-term ones.

This is one of the measures in the government’s tax package that was presented last week and still needs to obtain parliamentary approval to come into effect. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing has now clarified that this reduction in income tax to 10% on property income applies to lease agreements with a minimum term of one year, as provided for in the Civil Code, writes *Jornal de Negócios*.

Short-term leases are also covered, such as “contracts for non-permanent housing or for special temporary purposes, namely for professional, educational and training or tourist reasons,” according to the same newspaper. This includes cases

of students and teachers who are relocated, or people who rent a house temporarily for health reasons, among other reasons that must be identified in the contract. Once a year, owners can enter into a contract for special temporary purposes for tourist reasons.

The new simplified affordable housing regime (RSAA) – in which rents must be 20% below market value and landlords are exempt from

income tax – also allows temporary residences for special temporary purposes, provided that the tenant has tax residence in a municipality different from the rented property and that the contract has a minimum term of three months (renewable if the temporary purpose remains). In other cases, rental contracts must be for permanent housing and have a minimum duration of three years.



## Councils to receive State properties

The Government will transfer 25 vacant state-owned properties to the management of 19 municipalities, with an investment of €13.5 million in their requalification.

Among the purposes of the investments to be made in the properties to be transferred, as well as the governmental areas involved, are the economy and tourism, housing, education, social action, culture, agriculture and forestry.

“In the municipality of Sintra, one of the properties included is the former Sintra 3 Tax Office, where a Training and Citizenship Centre will be created aimed at the most vulnerable public,” reads a statement.

Arcos de Valdevez, Arganil, Bragança, Castro Verde, Chaves, Figueira da

Foz, Fornos de Algodres, Lisbon, Mangualde, Mira, Mogadouro, São Brás de Alportel, Sintra, Tomar, Torre de Moncorvo, Viana do Castelo, Vila do Conde, Vila Nova da Barquinha, and Vila Pouca de Aguiar are the municipalities that will receive these state-owned buildings.

The agreements will be signed at the Queluz Palace in Sintra, and will be attended by, among others, the Secretary of State for the Treasury and Finance, João Silva Lopes, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Housing, Miguel Pinto Luz.

## Top Film of the week

### The Housemaid

**Title:** Amanda Seyfried, Sydney Sweeney, Brandon Sklenar, Michele Morrone

**Genre:** Thriller

**Director:** Paul Feig

**Rating:** M16

**Plot:** A struggling woman is happy to start over as a housemaid for an affluent, elite couple. Adapted from Freida McFadden's bestseller, *The Handmaid*, Sydney Sweeney plays Millie, a hardworking woman relieved by the opportunity for a fresh start as a housekeeper for Nina (Amanda Seyfried) and Andrew (Brandon Sklenar), an upper-class couple. But her world begins to crumble when she discovers that this family's secrets are far more dangerous than her own.



## Cinema Listings

### NOS Forum Algarve – Faro

The Housemaid; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Zootopia 2.

### NOS Mar Shopping - Loulé

The Housemaid; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; Wicked: For Good; David; Zootopia 2.

### Algarcine Portimão

Avatar: Fire and Ash; Five Nights at Freddy's 2; David; Zootopia 2.

### Algarcine Lagosshopping

Eternity; Nuremberg; Five Nights at Freddy's 2; Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights; Zootopia 2.

### NOS Évora Plaza

The Housemaid; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Wicked: For Good; David; Zootopia 2.

### Estação Viana Shopping - Viana do Castelo

God save the Tuche; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights; Zootopia 2.

### Cineplace Loures Shopping

God Save the Tuche; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights; Zootopia 2.

### Cineplace Leiria Shopping

Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights; Zootopia 2.

### Palácio do Gelo Shopping - Viseu

The Housemaid; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Zootopia 2.

### Forum Coimbra

The Housemaid; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights; Zootopia 2.

### Norte Shopping - Porto

The Housemaid; Eternity; Nuremberg; Avatar: Fire and Ash; Now You See Me - Now You Don't; David; Zootopia 2.

(PV) - Portuguese version  
(OV) - Original version.

### Cinema Contacts

#### Cinemas NOS

www.cinemas.nos.pt

· Távira, Faro & Loulé

#### Cinemas Algarcine

· Portimão: 282 411 888

· Lagos: 282 799 138

· Olhão: 289 703 332

· Sines: 269 633 510

#### Cinemas Cineplace

www.cineplace.pt

· Portimão: 282 070 101

· Leiria: 244 826 516

· Loures: 210 110 677

· Viana do Castelo: 258 100 260

## Music

### Algarve Jazz Orchestra

**Christmas Concert: Vintage Swing.** 20 December at 4pm at Auditório Carlos do Carmo. Tickets cost €10 via <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Algarve Jazz Orchestra Concert.

21 December at 6pm at Praça Al Mutamid, Silves. Free admission.

### Vintage Swing by the Algarve

**Jazz Orchestra.** 23 December at 7pm at Centro Cultural de Lagos. Tickets cost €12, available for purchase at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Budda Power Blues.

27 December at 9.30pm at Casa da Música. Tickets cost €20-€25 via <https://www.ticketline.pt/>

### Al Guitar Duo.

25 January at 5pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. Tickets cost €10, please contact [admin@amigosdomuseu.com](mailto:admin@amigosdomuseu.com)

### Fado.

25 January at 9pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. Tickets cost €10, please contact [admin@amigosdomuseu.com](mailto:admin@amigosdomuseu.com)

### Danny Ocean.

2 February at 9pm at Coliseu de Lisboa. Tickets cost €32-€37 at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Lucas Luco.

7 February at 9.30pm at Multiusos de Gondomar. Tickets cost €25-€45 via <https://www.bol.pt/>

### The Last Dinner Party.

8 February at 9pm at Coliseu dos Recreios. Tickets cost €38-€42, and can be purchased at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Fernando Daniel.

21 February at 6pm at Coliseu de Lisboa. Tickets cost €20-€35 at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### The Kooks.

6 March at 9pm at Sagres Campo Pequeno. Tickets cost €37-€39 via <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Suede.

19 March at 8pm at Super Bock Arena. Tickets cost €42-€52, available at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### SassyBom.

Every Sunday at 7.30pm at Valverde Restaurant. The New Orleans Dixie Quintet plays old favourites in Praia da Luz. Bookings can be made by contacting +351 962 541 124.

## Theatre

### The Nutcracker and the

**Kingdom of Ice.** 28 November to 11 January at AM Arena, Alegro Alfragide. Get ready to embark on a magical adventure, where the Christmas spirit is alive in every song, every step, and every smile. Tickets cost €16-€60, available for purchase at <https://www.seetickets.com/pt/event/quebra-nozes-e-o-reino-do-gelo/am-arena-alegro-alfragide/3510577>

### Cirque Du Soleil - OVO.

25 (5pm), 26 (4pm & 8pm), 27 (12pm, 4pm & 8pm), 28 December at 2.30pm and 6.30pm at MEO Arena. The incredible and exciting world of OVO, Cirque du Soleil's most colourful show, arrives in Lisbon this Christmas, with new acts and characters. Tickets cost €45-€105, and can be found at <https://www.ticketline.pt/>

### CATS Musical.

6 to 11 January at 5pm at Sagres Campo Pequeno. CATS is a timeless musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, adapted from the book *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot, which perfectly fuses music, dance and poetry. In the performances in Portugal, the musical will have Portuguese subtitles. Tickets cost €30-€75, and can be purchased at <https://www.ticketline.pt/>

### "The Tale of Silyan!"

9 January at 6pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. A Documentary Film by Tamara Kotevska. Tickets cost €4, please contact [admin@amigosdomuseu.com](mailto:admin@amigosdomuseu.com)

### "Apocalypse in the Tropics".

23 January at 6pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. A Documentary Film by Petra Costa. Tickets cost €4, please contact [admin@amigosdomuseu.com](mailto:admin@amigosdomuseu.com)

## Festivals

### CORPO DE HOJE: Performing Arts'

**Festival.** Running from September 1, 2025, to March 29, 2026, in the Algarve and Funchal. This 8<sup>th</sup> edition shakes the dusk off the body and slows down time through dance, theatre, and performance. For more information, please visit <https://www.corpodehoje.pt/>

### Inaugural concert of the Algarve Chamber Music Festival.

9 January at 9pm at Cineteatro Louletano. The Festival is a non-profit organisation dedicated to bringing world-class musicians to the Algarve for an annual series of public performances and master classes, such as Qian Wu and Juho Pohjonen, piano, Isang Enders, cello and Pablo Barragan, clarinet. Any profits will directly benefit musical education in the Algarve. Tickets €15 at [cineteatro.cm-loule.pt](http://cineteatro.cm-loule.pt), and more information [festivalmusicacamaralgarve.com](http://festivalmusicacamaralgarve.com)

## Other Events

### South | Spectres Beyond the

**Tagus.** 27 September to 10 January in Santiago do Cacém. This exhibition celebrates 50 years of Alfredo Moreira da Silva's work, referring to a poetic and universal imagery.

### Brush and Beyond - Diverse

**Expressions.** 8 November to 31 December at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. Free entry. For more information, please contact [admin@amigosdomuseu.com](mailto:admin@amigosdomuseu.com)

### Cascais Christmas Village.

22 November to 4 January at Parque Marechal Carmona. This Christmas, Cascais transform into a true stage of magic and enchantment! Among reindeer, elves, and Roman soldiers, the Three Wise Men, and Santa Claus himself, the festive spirit will be alive and present for all ages. Tickets cost €12-€14 at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### "Route 66" by Luís Vasconcelos.

29 November to 17 January, Open Wed-Fri from 3pm to 7pm and Saturday until 8pm at Lumina Galeria, Lisbon. The venue will now feature a new space dedicated to documentary and fine-art photography, designed for an attentive, curious audience that is receptive to investing in art. (Christmas Holidays: 24 December to 3 January). For more information, please visit <https://www.luminagaleria.com/>

### The Spot Market.

13, 14 and 20 December at Espaço Amoreiras. The best lifestyle and fashion market in Lisbon returns for two special Christmas editions. Free entry.

### Ferragudo Christmas Charity

**Event.** 20 December from 3pm to 7pm at Praça Rainha Dona Leonor. The heart of Ferragudo will transform into a festive wonderland for its very first Christmas Charity Event. Every donation, every helping hand, and every smile will help make the season brighter for local families.

### Christmas Circus.

20 to 28 December at Coliseu dos Recreios. We are proud to be part of the memory of all Portuguese people for 135 years, showcasing what is considered the greatest show on Earth. Tickets cost €20 to €30, and can be purchased at <https://www.bol.pt/>

### Santa Run.

21 December at 9am at Mercado Municipal dos Calieços. As part of the Albufeira European City of Sport 2026 programme, this event promises to fill the streets with colour, joy, and excitement, with hundreds of athletes and sports fans of all ages dressed as Santa Claus. For more information, please contact 289 599 505 | 289 599 505 or [desporto@cm-albufeira.pt](mailto:desporto@cm-albufeira.pt)



NOTE: Events are correct at the time of going to press and according to information given to **The Portugal News**. However, events may be cancelled, delayed or fail to live up to their billing. Please send your events to [events@theportugalnews.com](mailto:events@theportugalnews.com) by midday on the Friday before the following publication.

**Christmas at the Wyndham Grand Algarve.** Experience the magic of the festive season, surrounded by elegance, comfort and joyful spirit. Christmas celebrations bring traditional and unique flavours, while New Year's Eve inspired by a Venetian masquerade ball features a remarkable menu signed by Chef Alexandre Oliveira. An elegant invitation to celebrate in "Grand". For more information, please contact reservations@wyndhamgrandalgarve.com or +351 289 000 380.



**The World's First Temples?** Göbeklitepe and new excavations at Mendiktepe and the early Neolithic of southeastern Türkiye. 6 January at 2.30pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. An Archaeological Talk by Professor Douglas Baird. Tickets cost €5, please contact admin@amigosdomuseu.com

**Quiz Helping Hands Algarve.** 13 January at 7pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. Registration costs €3.50, please contact admin@amigosdomuseu.com

**Charity Lunch.** 18 January from 1pm to 4.30pm at Ponte Romana, Silves. In aid of the Gaivota home in Albufeira for orphaned, distressed and endangered children. There will be live music, a fusion of iconic easy listening and pop rock. Registration costs €15, please support and book a table by contacting 282 443 275 or info@restauranteponteromana.pt

**Sale of second-hand books.** 29 January from 10am to 12.30pm at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. Free entry.

**"Cafés and Coffee".** 30 January to 26 March at Museu do Traje, São Brás de Alportel. An exhibition by the APG. Free entry. For more information, please contact admin@amigosdomuseu.com

**Wine Flight Every Friday.** We invite you to this unique wine tasting experience! Come and check in at Wine Castle HQ located in Mexilhoeira de Carregação where you will discover new flavours and aromas in our curated selection of wines. We will be travelling through our hand picked selection of producers from all corners of the country and international. You are all invited to join in and embark on this adventure. Call for more info and to reserve your spot at 961 386 661.

**Teias Local Art.** Open Mon-Sat, from 10.30am to 7pm, at Rua António Crisògo dos Santos 31, Lagos. Exhibition of high-quality arts & crafts, created by local Algarvian artisans. Workshops available. For more information, please contact 914 008 976 or visit [www.teiaslagos.pt](http://www.teiaslagos.pt)

**Local Arts & Crafts Exhibition.** Open daily, from 10am to 5pm at Artes@Spa, Caldas de Monchique. Glass, Jewellery, Textiles, Ceramics, Wooden puzzles, Natural skin care products, Greeting cards for all occasions, Original Art and Prints. For more information contact Gillian Goode on 961 571 984.

## Workshop & Other Events

**Ceramics Breakfast Set Workshop.** 20 December from 2pm to 5pm at Teias Arte Local, Lagos. Led by Vanessa Carrasco. Registration costs €45, please contact saramica.ceramics@gmail.com

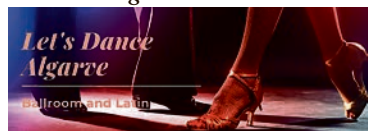
**BTC Walk and Talk.** Every Saturday, at 6pm, meet at Ferragudo Square. A natural walk accompanied by freedom-oriented people to discover the true path to financial sovereignty with Bitcoin. Free registration. For more information, please visit [www.bitcoinwalk.org//algarve/](http://www.bitcoinwalk.org//algarve/)

**Dementia Support Group.** Every Friday from 11am to 12.30pm, at the Biblioteca Municipal de Lagoa. The Algarve branch from Alzheimer Portugal has started the first Dementia Support Group in the Algarve. For more information or to join the group please contact +351 965 276 690 or email geral.algarve@alzheimerportugal.org

**Sip & Draw Party with Nori, Unleash your Creative Mind!** Draw a masterpiece guaranteed. Fridays 3pm-6pm. Sip & Paint Party. Step-by-Step Instruction Painting workshop. All levels welcome. Saturdays 4.30pm-7.30pm. All materials, snacks & drinks provided. Barbaleta Institute for Growth, Lagos. Book your Place by PM +351 936 350 370.

**Portuguese Conversation Meetings.** Tuesdays: 4-5.30pm for Advanced, 6-7.30pm for Beginner and 8-9.30pm for Intermediate at Barbaleta - Your space to grow in Lagos. For more information and to book please call +351 937 771 948, email Barbara@barbaleta.com or visit [www.facebook.com/BarbaletaGrow](http://www.facebook.com/BarbaletaGrow).

**Let's Dance Algarve.** Dance lessons in Vila Real de Santo António. Learn to dance Chacha, Jive, Waltz, Tango, Salsa and more. Enthusiastic Dutch teachers. For more information about dance classes please visit <https://www.facebook.com/LetsDanceAlgarve>.



**MEETUP Algarve walking.** Social walking events of 2.5 to 3.5 hours listed every week. Discover so much more of what the Algarve offers. Coastal and inland, including Monchique. For full details go to - [www.meetup.com/Algarve-walking](http://www.meetup.com/Algarve-walking).

**Photography "Darkroom Printing Workshop".** Dates would be according to the availability of the participant. One on one workshop at Gonçalo Martins workshop in Portimão, near Alvor. €100 with chemicals and paper included. For bookings or more information please call 962 058 336 or email omaildogoncalo@gmail.com.

**Silver Jewellery Workshop.** Make a simple piece of jewellery in one morning or afternoon at Nini Jewellery Workshop in Albufeira. For more information, search Nini Jewellery Workshop on Facebook.

**Knitluzly-Knit & Natter.** Weekly on alternate Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 2.30pm. Join our fun group of knitters and crocheters, from beginners to experienced, for chat and giggles at Vila Luz Aparthotel, Luz. For full details join the Knitluzly-Knit & Natter Facebook group or call 911 549 339.

**Music stimulation activity for People with Dementia & carers.** Fortnightly at 11am until 12.30pm at Centro Paroquial do Amparo in Portimão. For English speakers (English songbook) and no singing skills necessary. For more information and to enrol please contact geral.algarve@alzheimerportugal.org or call +351 965 276 690.

**Coffee & Conversation for Expats.** Every Wednesday at different venues. "Join our get together for a great opportunity to meet other newcomers in the Algarve. For more information, please sign up to [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Loulé Town walking Tour.** Thursdays from 10.30am to 12.30pm. For more information and to see upcoming dates please check out [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Online Coffee & Conversation.** Once a month on a Wednesday at 7pm. An opportunity to connect with other internationals in Portugal and to ask any questions. For more information and to sign up please check out [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Eat n' Meet.** Once a month on a Sunday at 12.30pm. The Expat Centre Portugal organize a lunch for newcomers in the Algarve and around Loulé. For more information and to sign up please check out [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Learn Portuguese together.** Learning the language truly helps to build connections. Their Portuguese classes are interactive and fun! New beginners' and intermediate classes in Loulé start on a regular base. For more information and to sign up please see [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Let's tee-off together.** Join The Expat Centre Portugal in playing golf while exploring the beautiful Algarve. International newcomers are looking forward to playing golf on a monthly base, discovering one golf venue at a time. For more information and to sign up please see [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

**Introduction to Generating Additional Income.** A free and informative workshop for beginners and experienced investors. This workshop is for anyone who is curious about realizing a passive income, needs extra income for a specific project, or simply wants to know about a new way of investing. For more information and to sign up please see [www.expatsentreportugal.com/events](http://www.expatsentreportugal.com/events)

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## Algarve Markets

### Silves

**Silves** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at Sítio do Encalhe from 8am to 1pm

### Loulé

**Loulé** - Every Saturday of the month in front of the Convent of Santo António from 7am to 1pm

**Almancil** - Every Thursday of the month next to ASCA from 7am to 1pm

**Almancil Flea Market** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at Parque das Cidades from 8am to 1pm

**Alte** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month at José Cavaco Vieira Square from 7am to 1pm

**Quarteira** - Every Wednesday of the month at Fonte Santa from 7am to 1pm

### Lagos

**Lagos Levante** - Every Saturday of the month from 7am to 2pm

**Vi'VO Market** - Every Wednesday from 4pm to 8pm

### Albufeira

**Guia** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday

**Albufeira** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month next to the Marina from 8am to 1pm

**Albufeira Flea Market Calijos** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month next to the municipal market from 8am to 1pm

### Vila Real de Santo António

**Vila Real de Santo António Flea Market** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month at Avenida da República from 9am to 5pm

**Cacela Market** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at Vila Nova de Cacela from 8am to 2pm

### Portimão

**Portimão Flea Market** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at Fair and Exhibition Park from 8:30am to 12:30pm

### Castro Marim

**Castro Marim Market** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month from 8am to 1pm and Market at Velho Cavalinho Taberna e Loja Medieval from 9am to 4pm.

**Castro Marim Flea Market** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month from 9am to 1pm by the Municipal Library

### Faro

**Faro** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month from 8am to 2pm in Estoi, next to the EB 2-3

**Faro Flea Market** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month in Estoi

**Agrícola de Faro Market** - Every Sunday morning from 8am to 1pm at Largo da Igreja do Carmo

### São Brás de Alportel

**São Brás de Alportel** - Every Saturday of the month at Roberto Nobre Park from 7am to 2pm

**São Brás de Alportel Flea Market** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at Roberto Nobre Park from 8am to 2pm

### Aljezur

**Producers Market** - Every Saturday at the Espaço Multiusos from 8am to 1pm

DISCLAIMER: The Portugal News has no say with regard to any changes in the programming, cancellations or date changes of events organised by other entities. Any information should therefore be requested from the respective event organisers.

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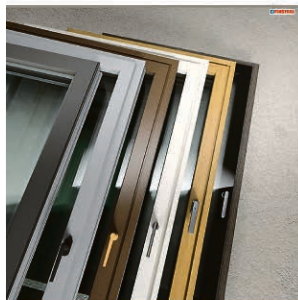
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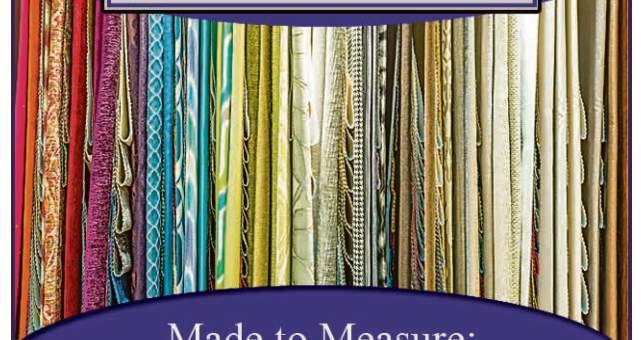
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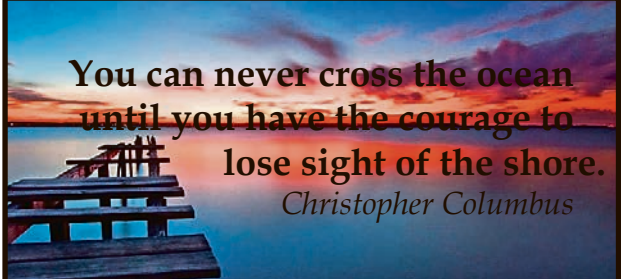
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Christopher Columbus



## Letters to the Editor

### Immigration

There's a disconnect on the immigration narrative. Are immigrants good or bad? Helping or hurting? The answer is yes. Immigrants, like all people, are a mixed bag. But for the average person, immigrants are just the face of things changing.

Most people read about how immigration benefits the economy; but they don't experience it. They see they're being priced out of their own neighborhoods. They can see others getting tax breaks they don't get. They may see strangers acting inappropriately for Portugal. Getting along with a bunch of foreigners—rich or poor—ain't easy. But it would be easier if the government made the benefit to the people more tangible.

What if immigrants paid a Social Benefit tax every year according to their income? The public chooses where that money goes. It could fund an annual tax deduction only for Portuguese nationals, for example. Or a direct payment. That would be a start.

Foreign developers that want to build pricey apartment buildings would be required to build an equal number—or equal square meterage—of high-quality and beautiful apartments affordable for someone earning the minimum wage. These apartments are reserved for Portuguese people only. The government could grant developers some of the thousands of abandoned homes they own IN EVERY neighbourhood; and make permitting free.

And foreign corporations that benefit from the educated populace should be required to pay local employees the same rate they pay equally qualified employees in other countries. Bring up the minimum wage.

Some inequality is unavoidable. But the government inadvertently created too much inequality in order to woo us immigrants in. Unless they balance the scales and design incentives in both directions, the harmony Portugal is so brilliant at is at risk.

NAME AND ADDRESS  
WITHHELD By email

### Tornado Death

EDITOR, It is with deep regret we inform you that the tornado which hit Hola Camping Albufeira has now taken its second victim.

The first victim (Margaret Leivers) who died on that fateful day of 15th November has now been joined by her husband Victor Leivers, who despite the dedication of the staff at Faro Hospital lost his 4 week battle yesterday.

They are both together again in peace. The whole community and staff are very saddened by this great tragedy.

I and my husband feel very grateful to have got out alive having been trapped in the next demolished mobile home.

CHRISTINE MOORE, By email

### Re: Portugal car tax changes approved

EDITOR, Well doesn't that surprise me.

Bet it changes again before 2027 or even gets scrapped

PETER, Via www.theportugalnews.com

EDITOR, It sounds already too complicated. Just like the residency papers—how did they work out—everything they try to simplify will end up in a total disaster.

MARIANNA,  
Via www.theportugalnews.com

EDITOR, I see no comment from the government that they will pro-rata the charges in 2026 to ensure that people won't pay twice for a number of months? For example, in my own case, if I pay in August '26 (my renewal date) for the coming year, but unless that charge is pro-rata only up to end-March '27, I'll effectively be paying another 'full year' after only 8/9 months?? Government clarification needed please!!

ROBBIE, Algarve  
Via www.theportugalnews.com

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# Jayden Schaper wins maiden title

Jayden Schaper won the 2026 Alfred Dunhill Championship after a play-off against Shaun Norris at Royal Johannesburg club.



**T**he pair were tied at 16 under par after the tournament was reduced to 54 holes but it was Schaper who claimed a first DP World Tour win with an eagle at the first play-off hole after a stunning approach from a fairway

bunker which he described as “probably one of the shots of my career”. He said: “It’s just so special, it’s been so close the last few weeks and probably the last couple of years. It’s a dream come true and it’s prayers answered.” It denied Norris a successful

title defence after he had shot 62 on Sunday to come close to a repeat of last year’s success at Leopard Creek. Norris made a birdie-birdie start and then eagled the eighth for an outward nine of 31, four under the revised par of 35 after the waterlogged par-five sixth

was modified into a par three on Saturday. He dropped a shot at the tenth but bounced back immediately, and four straight birdies from the 13<sup>th</sup> took him ahead on his own. “I wasn’t thinking much back then,” he said. “I was just trying to hit my spots and give myself the best opportunities, and luckily I made them all.” He had to settle for pars at the final two holes but, speaking before his rivals had finished, he said: “I’m just grateful to have played such a good round today, I

hit the ball nicely and made a lot of good putts. To put myself in this position again, I’m blessed and grateful.” Overnight leader Eugenio Chacarra started with a birdie but dropped two shots at the par-three fifth after hitting his tee-shot onto the rocky edge of a water hazard. He started birdie-bogey on the back nine and with Norris setting the target at 16 under, the Spaniard needed a strong finish as the rain started again. His birdie putt at the 15<sup>th</sup> slid by and when he shaved the hole at the 17<sup>th</sup>, his challenge appeared at an end.

Schaper chipped in for a birdie at the 16<sup>th</sup>, his third chip-in of the week, and hit a superb approach at the next for another birdie to move alongside Norris. He found a bunker at the last to prevent him making a tournament-winning birdie and headed back down the 18<sup>th</sup> with Norris. Norris hit a fine drive and approach into the green and while Schaper found sand off the tee, he sent a breathtaking hybrid straight at the pin and onto the back fringe - a shot sportingly applauded by Norris. The younger man brilliantly holed his putt for an eagle and his first DP World Tour win.

## Thanks

“First there’s one thing I need to say,” said Schaper at the trophy presentation. “I just want to thank my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, there’s only one reason I’m out here. “To my family, my friends, my coach, this is something I dreamed of.

“Obviously Shaun had an incredible round of golf to get into the play-off today but I got myself into the play-off.

“If you told me at 16, that’s quite a tough par three, to chip in there for birdie, make a nice little birdie on 17, you always stay out there fighting and when I was in that play-off, it’s either Shaun or myself going to win so you just hit the shots and play attacking. “It goes to last week as well and having massive support out there. To be in SA, playing in an event like this and obviously this week being close to home as well, it’s just so cool.

“You obviously travel a lot for golf throughout the year and you don’t really see your friends and family that much so to be able to do this and share this moment with them, it’s pretty cool.

“If you look at the names on the trophy, it’s something you want to win. In 2020 I had the lead going down the back nine and it didn’t go my way but to come and to be standing here now, it’s incredible.”

Chacarra finished third on his own at 15 under after a level-par final round, with fourth place shared by South African trio Oliver Bekker, Christiaan Burke and 2023-24 champion Louis Oosthuizen.

Frenchman Martin Couvra shot 63 to finish 12 under, tied for seventh with England’s John Parry. A five-way South African tie between Aldrich Potgieter, Samuel Simpson, Christiaan Bezuidenhout, Michael Hollick and Branden Grace completed the top 10.

*DP World Tour*

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# Rui Patrício hangs up his gloves



Goalkeeper Rui Patrício, who had been without a club since June, has ended his playing career at the age of 37.



The Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) announced in a statement that the most capped goalkeeper in the history of the national team (108 games) will be honoured on Friday, starting at 12pm, at the City of Football in Oeiras, highlighting his “unique career” with the national team and Patrício’s “enormous longevity” in Portugal’s goal. Rui Patrício had been without a club since the end of June, when he left Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates, for whom he played only two matches, both in the Club World Cup, after having played for the Italian team Atalanta in the 2024/25 season.

The goalkeeper, born in Leiria, came through the Sporting youth system and defended the ‘Lions’ first team for 12 years, between 2006/07 and 2017/18, in a total of 467 games in all competitions, without ever winning a national championship, but during which time he won two Portuguese Cups (2007/08 and 2014/15), two Cândido de Oliveira Super Cups (2008 and 2015) and one League Cup (2017/18). Sporting Lisbon’s debut for the ‘lions’ came under the guidance of Paulo Bento, who had coached him in the ‘green and white’ youth teams and who gave him a

starting position in a match in Madeira against Marítimo on November 19, 2006.

That would be the only match he participated in that season, but in the following season, 2007/08, he quickly became the undisputed ‘master’ of the ‘lions’ goal, a status he held until his departure in 2018 – by then as team captain – amidst controversy, as he was one of the players who terminated his contract with the Lisbon club following the invasion of fans at the Alcochete training academy.

## Wolverhampton

At the time, he joined the Portuguese contingent at Wolverhampton, a club managed by his compatriot Nuno Espírito Santo, who, months later, would reach an agreement with Sporting to pay €18 million for the goalkeeper’s transfer. For Wolves, he played 127 matches in three seasons, almost as many as he played for Roma (129) in the same period, between 2021/22 and 2023/24, also under the management of a Portuguese coach, José Mourinho. In his first season with the Giallorossi, he won the inaugural Conference League title in a final against Feyenoord.

After his time in the Italian capital, he remained in Italy, but moved to Bergamo to represent Atalanta, in an

‘adventure’ that lasted only six games, just three of which were in Serie A.

The surprising transfer to the United Arab Emirates served only to play two matches for Al Ain in the Club World Cup, in the defeat against Juventus (5-0) and in the victory over WAC Casablanca (2-1).

## Appearances for Portugal

Wearing the Portuguese jersey, Patrício won Euro 2016 and the 2019 Nations League, and his last match for the

Portuguese national team took place in March 2024, in a friendly against Sweden (5-2) in Guimarães, which preceded the team’s participation in the last European Championship. The first of 108 call-ups, which made him the goalkeeper with the most appearances for the senior national team, came on November 17, 2010, again under the guidance of Paulo Bento, who had already left Sporting for the national team. Rui Patrício’s debut in the Portuguese national team jersey couldn’t have been more memorable, given Portugal’s 4-0 victory over then-reigning world champions Spain in a friendly match at the Estádio da Luz.

In total, Rui Patrício participated in five European Championships (2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2024) and three World Cups (2014, 2018, and 2022), in addition to the 2017 Confederations Cup.

Despite being called up for his fifth European Championship last year in Germany, the goalkeeper was not used by coach Roberto Martínez, who had already given the last Portuguese goalkeeper position to Diogo Costa.

# Portugal-Colombia most sought-after tickets



The match between Portugal and Colombia, for the third round of Group K of the 2026 World Cup, is the most sought-after match for tickets in the random draw, according to FIFA.

The match, scheduled for Miami, United States, on 27 June (12.30am on June 28 in Lisbon), tops the list released by the governing body of the sport, ahead of others in the first phase, such as Brazil-Morocco, Mexico-South Korea, Ecuador-Germany and Scotland-Brazil.

These are the five most sought-after matches, involving nine teams from five different continents, FIFA highlighted, adding that in the first 24 hours of the third phase of ticket sales, five million tickets were requested.


The 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the World Cup will take place from 11 June to 19 July, 2026, and will feature 48 teams for the first time, in an unprecedented tripartite organisation between the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

The three hosts lead the search for tickets, followed by interested parties from Colombia, England, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Scotland, Germany, Australia, France, and Panama.

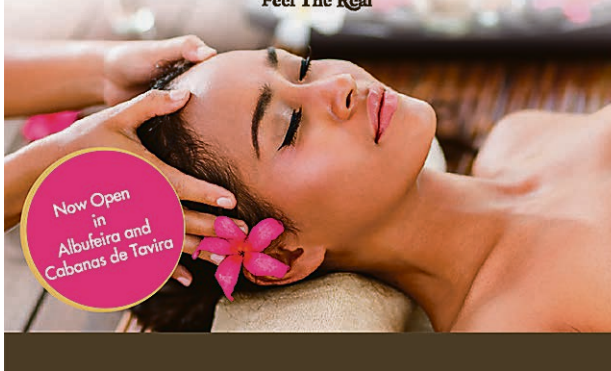
Portugal is in Group K, along with Uzbekistan, Colombia, and the winner of Path 1 of the intercontinental play-off (with Jamaica, New Caledonia, and DR Congo).

The current phase of selecting matches for the random draw runs until 13 January, 2026, followed two days later by a sales period through the FIFA ticket sales and exchange portal.

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