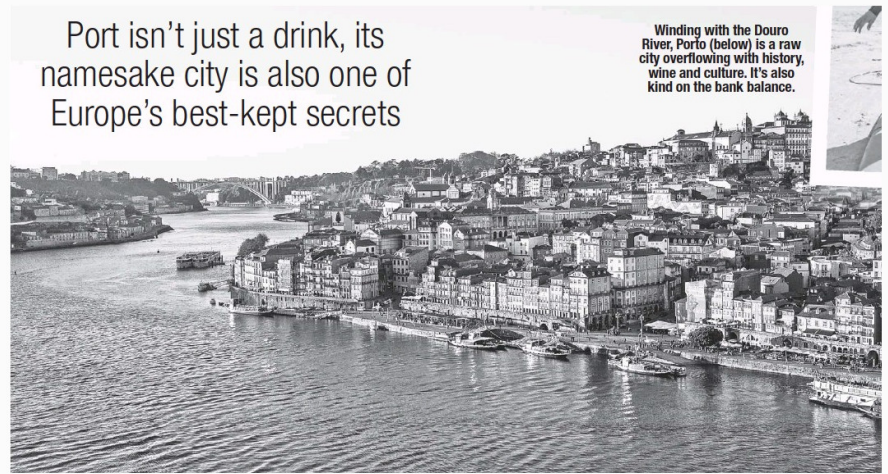


SWEET SPOT

Port isn't just a drink, its namesake city is also one of Europe's best-kept secrets

By KATIE JACKSON

IN the Age of Exploration, Portugal discovered the world. But ironically, it hasn't been until recently that world started discovering this cool-AF country the size of Indiana. Even if you have been to this sliver of the Iberian Peninsula, most travelers only make it as far as Lisbon. They have no idea Portugal's second city — recently named Europe's 2022 Leading City But Porto isn't exactly warm and welcoming. The city of 263,000 is in the north where it's always a good 5 to 10 degrees cooler than Lisbon, and locals are still getting used to tourists (until 2015, downtown Porto was nearly as dangerous as Brownsville, Brooklyn). But it feels refreshingly real in a way that



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Winding with the Douro River, Porto (below) is a raw city overflowing with history, wine and culture. It's also kind on the bank balance.

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Plus, getting to Porto has never been easier. In December, TAP Air added nonstop service from Newark (starting at \$500, roundtrip), twice a week. The flight is just under seven hours, and arrives midday, so

you have plenty of time to wander the cobblestone streets of downtown — designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site — before catching the sunset at Matosinhos Beach. Unlike Lisbon, which is at least an hour's train ride from

the Atlantic, Porto is just a 15-minute Uber ride from the coast. Because Matosinhos is man-made and sandy as opposed to rocky, it's an ideal place to learn to surf. In fact, Onda Pura, owned by a John Stamos doppelganger named

Of course, the No. 1 water-based attraction in Porto is the Douro River. It forms the southern border of the city before carving its way through the adjacent Douro Valley. These terraced rolling hills, dotted with vineyards as far as



Whether it's surf or turf, there is plenty to see and do. Stop by its most famous bookstore, Livraria Lello (left), or ride the waves — with the aid of a pro (below).



the eye can see, are home to the world's oldest demarcated wine region. In fact, the Douro Valley is the birthplace of Porto's namesake, port wine. In 2020, while most cities were still trying to recover from the pandemic, Porto celebrated the opening of the



You can't come to Porto without indulging in a glass of the fortified sweet stuff. Start at the World of Wine (above), the world's largest wine museum.

world's largest wine museum, World of Wine. The sprawling \$100 million complex (which will wow you, true to its If the double-decker metal arch bridge looks familiar, it's because it was designed by a student of Gustave Eiffel's. Indeed, what Porto lacks in skyscrapers (its tallest buildings are a 12th-century cathedral and the head-turning Tower of Clérigos) it more than makes up for with bridges. The Porto Bridge Climb is basically a junior-variant version of Sydney's and crosses what was once the Speaking of superlatives, Porto is also home to the world's most Instagrammable bookstore. Nicknamed the Harry Potter Library (because,

legend has it, this historic architectural jewel inspired former Porto resident J.K. Rowling), Livraria Lello is easy to find. Just look for the line of people that wraps around the block. During the summer, Lello receives 10,000 visitors per day — most of For the city's answer to New York's pizza slice and a vegan's worst nightmare, pop into any traditional restaurant and order a francesinha. This beer sauce-covered calorie bomb is a sandwich consisting of steak, hamburger, sausage, ham, cheese and a fried egg. Better yet, get a three-course fresh seafood dinner in a sit-down restaurant for just \$10, Hotels in Porto are just as cheap. Rates at the four-star Hotel Carris Porto Ribeira start at just \$80 (CarrisHoteles.com). Even the fivestar Hilton Porto Gaia, which opened last year in the wine cellar district, has rooms for under \$200 per night. For the best views of the city, check into the boutique Torel Avantgarde. Rooms start at

But the good times won't last: soon digital nomads and influencers will arrive in droves. So, take advantage of the exchange rate and go now.

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