

On continuity of choice: the places and spaces visited by tourists and travellers in Portugal in the 18th and 19th centuries

Antónia Fialho Conde
Department of History, University of Évora, Portugal

The continued presence of sites and spaces on tourist itineraries in Portugal

Surveying a range of accounts of journeys in Portugal and travel guides to the country from the early 18th century, and comparing the places which feature in them with current popular tourist destinations, there is a degree of common ground represented by monasteries and convents and their surroundings. They go to make up what could be termed a “classic itinerary” of features which were in the past and are still regarded as being most attractive in Portugal, the cultural symbols of the country. While new models of tourism have emerged over time with changes in fashion, with new interpretations of traditional tourist attractions, a demand for new places and refuges, the search for the rural and exotic, as well as the pleasures of traditional gastronomy, the truth is that the itinerary of the contemporary tourist visiting Portugal, just like that of his or her 18th-century counterpart, takes in the monasteries of Alcobaça, Batalha and the Hieronimite monastery, Mafra convent, and a tour of Sintra.

Is what the tourist seeks from these sites and what they have to offer (in a variety of ways) the identity of the country – its unique quality, or rather a degree of continuity as regards the rest of Europe (for example, in relation to a certain artistic style, such as the Gothic)? Were and are similarities sought and praised, or are differences pointed to and negative traits criticised? Is the inclusion of features in tourist itineraries now simply taken for granted, due to their typically Portuguese or traditional quality, or does the singular nature of sites justify such inclusion today and has it done so since the 17th century?

Phenomena such as sedentary habits and intellectual curiosity are at the basis of modern tourism: it is the taste for travel which leads so many to want to get away and have new experiences. In the 18th and 19th centuries, when Grand Tour itineraries featured destinations such as Greece, Egypt and Turkey, only stoics and adventurers travelled in the Iberian Peninsula, which represented the frontier of Europe with Africa. The image of the Peninsula, and Portugal, was not enhanced by accounts which painted a picture of a country failing to provide the basic essentials of life and basic facilities of board and lodging for travellers. Nevertheless, the Peninsula did offer a special attraction which could be termed a flavour of exoticism (exotic fascination, on a par with Russia and Turkey), to which the political circumstances contributed and portrayed the region, in the eyes of Europeans from beyond the Pyrenees, as a theatre of war. Travellers usually arrived with preconceived ideas, greatly influenced by the image of backward nations peopled by fanatics, under the sway of religious fanaticism and authoritarian despots; coming from protestant countries or encyclopaedist France, they sought to intervene in the life of their countries of origin.

Tourists and travellers in Portugal

In Portugal, one of the first manifestations of tourism was represented by visits to spas to take the waters; this began in Roman times, and was still practised in the 17th and 18th centuries, stimulating the growth of interior regions, with resorts growing up based on spas at places such as Luso, Buçaco and Cúria. These began to decline in the 1930s owing to a trend which began in the second half of the 19th century towards seaside holidays, leading to the growth of extensive zones such as Belém-Cascais.

In 18th-century literature, accounts of journeys emerged as a literary genre for the circulation of ideas, and were used as a historical source par excellence: these days many of these accounts have been reprinted, contributing towards our understanding of the everyday life of the era, and they are also essential for providing knowledge about the society of the time. The knowledge that is available today derives from a range of practices that travellers were expected to indulge in: focussing on the wealth-creation (mines, industries) and agriculture of territories, political affairs (central and local government) and intellectual life (university, arts and letters, visits to palaces), they recorded particularities, visited libraries and specialists and spoke with local people; they searched out information, visited different places, questioned a range of people, discussed and passed judgement on what they found, and concerned themselves with and spoke on a variety of issues.

By the time some of these works were first published, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Portugal was an established destination for British travellers for a variety of reasons (political, military and commercial) but this group also included those who came for the pleasure of travel. This is why British accounts of 18th-century Portugal, mainly in letter form, predominate, such as those of James Murphy, William Beckford, Robert Southey and Arthur William Costigan. These missives portray the thoughts and emotions of typical visitors to the Iberian Peninsula; we shall seek to find common ground among such travel accounts, as well as characterising writers' individual discourses.

1. Among the learned men and scholars who visited the Peninsula were:

- Link, the German botanist, who impartially sets out the causes of the backwardness of Portuguese society, in a fine chorographic, economic, social and cultural guide to the country;
- the Italian, Giuseppe Baretti, from Turin, who was classically trained and extremely attentive to the details of the human and natural landscape;
- James Murphy, an expert on ancient writing systems, an archaeologist and architect of great merit, whose main achievement was the study and drawing of the monuments and archaeological treasures of Portugal at the request of William Burton Conyngham, who had already visited the country and strove to preserve them;
- Robert Southey, from Bristol, a man of letters, who would become a Lusophile, conducting studies of Portuguese and Brazilian history and literature;

- Karl Israel Ruders, from Stockholm, who was chaplain to the (protestant) Swedish legation, whose discourse, at the turn of the century (1798) was impartial and objective;

2. Adventure travellers also visited the Peninsula with the specific aim of spying in order to gauge the level of military capability of the country:

- Giuseppe Gorani, from Milan, who had served in the Italian and Austrian armies, spied for several governments;

- Charles François du Périer Dumouriez (1766), who was sent as a spy by Louis XV, was banished from the country by the Marquis of Pombal;

- Arthur William Costigan, also known as Colonel Diogo Ferrier, served in the Portuguese army, but was dismissed;

- William Dalrymple, an officer of the Gibraltar garrison, whose aim was to find out about English officers who remained in Portugal after 1762, and whose accounts should be read with prudence;

3. Members of the cosmopolitan European aristocracy also visited the Peninsula:

- William Beckford, from London, son of the Lord Mayor, Member of Parliament, whose great wealth was based in England and Jamaica; he was extremely talented in the literary field, and visited Portugal on three occasions (1787, 1793-96 and 1798);

- the Frenchman, Carrère, a refugee from Terror, whom Pina Manique distrusts;

- the Marquis of Bombelles, French ambassador to Portugal on the eve of the French Revolution, who played a military role in France.

Taking into account the diverse backgrounds and range of travel objectives of these writers, one can detect some points of common interest, basic questions which were the subject of commentary by these European writers of the 18th century:

1. history, antiquities and the classical past of sites and monuments;
2. the wealth and poverty of regions, and the factors that determine them;
3. the practices, customs and superstitions of local people;
4. historical geography: population – figures, distribution and relationship with resources;
5. the influence of climate on laws;
6. forms of government and varying degrees of absolutism.

As far as travel itineraries are concerned, these accounts demonstrate a marked preference on the part of their authors for the palaces of Sintra, Queluz and Mafra, the monasteries of Alcobaga and Batalha, and the Hieronimite monastery, as well as the surrounding areas:



The Hieronimyte monastery in Lisbon, in *Délices d'Espagne et du Portugal*, 1741.

There are frequent comparisons with the landscapes of countries of origin: thus Twiss compares aspects of the landscape of the Douro Valley with that of the Plymouth area, the barren Estrela Mountains with Westmoreland, while the huge stones near Almeida remind him of Stonehenge, and the fine red wine of Celorico, better than Burgundy, is the best he has ever drunk.

Decades	No. of travellers per decade	Travellers journeying for more than a year	Predominant country of origin
1700-1709	12	2	France
1710-1719	11	4	various
1720-1729	11	3	France and England
1730-1739	6	4	Italy
1740-1749	10	2	various
1750-1759	18	2	various; many Spaniards
1760-1769	21	-	various
1770-1779	35	-	various; many Spaniards
1780-1789	32	4	
1790-1799	34	-	

Total	190		
--------------	------------	--	--

Tourism is now an important economic activity and a mass movement. Analysing the places and sites featuring in travel itineraries and guides to Portugal, besides the major cities: Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra, there is a range of what are termed tourist attractions.



Lisbon, in *Délices d'Espagne et du Portugal*, 1741.

In Lisbon, the castle and the old quarters of Alfama and the Bairro Alto, the central squares of the Baixa area built by Pombal: Rossio Square, Commerce Square, the Hieronimite monastery and the Tower of Belém; in the vicinity of the capital, Sintra and Cascais. Further away from Lisbon, the monastery of Alcobaça, the monuments in Évora, specially the Roman temple, and the medieval citadels of Óbidos and Marvão are still considered essential for providing an understanding of the history of Portugal.

Current figures show that Sintra is the second most visited site in Portugal after the Hieronimite monastery and the Tower of Belém. Cultural heritage are also a permanence in, and the fascination with bullfights comes from the 17th and 18th descriptions.

Thus, historical monuments and sites continue to be one of the key types of tourist attraction in Portugal, along with others, which also feature in travellers' accounts from the 18th century:

- the beauty of the landscape and the contrast between coastal areas and the interior;
- the mildness of the climate, which is suitable for example for the practice of elite sports;
- the singular nature and richness of cultural manifestations, as well as the hospitable and secure environment.

Currently, an effort is being made to take advantage of these factors by investing in quality tourism, creating hotel facilities of a high standard; another aim is to reverse the trend established in the 1990s towards the influx of tourists with low spending-power who were only interested in the sun and the sea, by promoting alternatives in terms of tourism in rural areas (country accommodation, rural tourism and agro-tourism).

In the early 20th century tourism as an economic activity was still fairly insignificant, with a very low level of hotel capacity; only in the mid-century did this begin to grow, reaching 55,400 beds in 1949, and 202,190 in 1955. This trend resulted in the expansion of tourism in the 1960s, which defined the pattern of the Portuguese tourist industry, characterised by the increasing purchasing power of visitors, greater quality on the supply side, and increasing investment in the Algarve coast. 1976 marked the significant growth of the sector, with 958,000 tourist arrivals, above all from Spain (25.5%), the United Kingdom (12.8%) and Germany (10.9%).

The figure rose to 8.2 million in 1990, with Spanish and British tourists accounting for 69.2% of the total. This is tourism with a marked seasonal character, which has a direct effect on the economy in terms of fluctuations in the labour market and hotel occupancy rates. Consequently, there has been a move to diversify tourism and attract Portuguese visitors; meanwhile, 1990 figures demonstrate that 76% of the domestic population do not take vacations abroad, 66% for financial reasons.

In 2004 Portugal ranked 19th in the world as a tourist destination, receiving 11.6 million tourists, who spent 6,300 million euros (ranked 21st product in terms of profitability of country receipts); the sector accounts for 7% to 8% of GIP, providing about 10% of all employment. Carrying on the tradition of the 20th century, 5% of tourist activity in Portugal in the 21st century is religious in character, worth 500 million euros in terms of receipts, with Fátima the leading destination, followed by São Bento da Porta Aberta.

The profile of those who choose Portugal as tourist destination shows that most visitors come from the countries of the European Union, while among those who come from outside Europe, the Americans are the largest group:

Country of origin	Hotel occupancy 2003	Hotel occupancy 2005	Trend
United Kingdom	25.1%	30.7%	↑
Spain	17.1%	11.5%	↓
Germany	12.8%	16.5%	↑
France	8.9%	4.7%	↓
Italy	6.0%	3.1%	↓
Holland	5.2%	6.8%	↑
Ireland	2.7%	3.6%	↑

The enlargement of Europe will certainly bring changes in terms of the pattern of tourism. It should be stressed that heritage tourism must take into account the social and cultural dimensions of heritage. It is not enough merely to preserve for future generations or conserve the heritage. It must be cherished as a factor which sustains communities, providing meaning and self-identification through memory; it thus constitutes a stock of capital which local communities can use whenever necessary to invest in their own self-awareness and the transformation of the world of the heritage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Sources

ALVAREZ DE COLMENAR, Don Juan (1707), *Délices d'Espagne et du Portugal*, Leida, 5 Vols.

ID., (1741), Amesterdão, 4 Tomos.

BECKFORD, William (1901), *A Côte da rainha D. Maria I*, Lisboa, Livraria Editora, 1901.

BURRIEL ALVEROLA, Felix, (1902), *Viajes maritimas. Las costas de España y Portugal*.

Códice 76 Fundo Manizola, Biblioteca Pública de Évora (Portugal), *Itinerário de Antonino pello Reyno de Portugal, e Província de Estremadura, com algumas illustracões. Caminho de Lisboa a Merida*, M.P.CXLI. (ms. BPE)

COSTIGAN, Arthur (1810), *Lettres sur le gouvernement, les moeurs et les usages du Portugal écrits par Arthur Costigan, Officier Irlandais, à son frère*, Paris.

DARYMPLE, William, (1772), *Travels through Spain and Portugal*, Dublin.

DUMORIEZ, (1775), *État present du royaume du Portugal en l'année 1766*, Lausanne.

DÍAZ PÉREZ, Nicolás, (1877), *De Madrid a Lisboa*.

FERNANDEZ Y GONZALES, Modesto, (1874), *De Madrid a Oporto*.

LA FOSSE, Eustache de, (1479-1480), fls. 1451-1523, *Voyage a la cote occidentale d'Afrique en Portugal et en Espagne*, fls. 1451-1523. (ms. BNM)

LAVANHA, João Baptista, (1622), *Viagem de Filipe II a Portugal*, Madrid, (ms. BNM)

Link, *Voyage en Portugal depuis 1797 jusqu'en 1799*.

M.M., (1699), *Voyages faites en divers temps en Espagne, en Portugal, en Allemagne en France et ailleurs*, Amsterdam, chez George Gallet.

TAYLOR, J., (1826), *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne et en Portugal*, Paris (ms. BNF)

Studies

ANTON, S. , (1996), “El parque temático Port Aventura. Estrategias de producto para la reestructuración de núcleos consolidados en Cataluña”. *Estudios Turísticos*. 130: 7-36.

BENNETT. J. , (1995), *Human Ecology as Human Behavior. Essays in Environmental and Development Anthropology*. London: Expanded Edition.

BRUNEL, Antoine de, (1959), *Viajes extranjeros por España y Portugal*.

CARMONA FERNADÉZ, Fernando; GARCIA CANO, José Miguel (eds.), (2005), *Libros de viaje y viajeros en la literatura y en la historia*, Universidad de Murcia.

CHAVES, Castelo-Branco, (1977), *Os Livros de Viagens em Portugal no século XVIII e a sua projecção europeia*.

ELLER, J.,(1999), *From Culture to ethnicity to conflict. An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

FARINELLI, Arturo, (1979), *Viajes por España y Portugal desde la Edad Media hasta el siglo XX*, Roma: Academia Nazionale dei Lincei.

GARCIA MERCADAL, José, (1999), *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal: desde los tiempos remotos hasta comienzos del siglo XX*, Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 6 vols.

HARVEY, D., (1989), *The condition of posmodernity*. New York: Blackwell.

HERRERO MASSARI, José Manuel, (1997), *Libros de viajes de los siglos XVI e XVII en España y Portugal*. Madrid.

LAPEYRE, Henry, (1960), *Geographie de l'Espagne morisque*.

LAW, C. (ed.), (1996), *Tourism in major cities*. London: International Thompson Bussiness Press.

ROMERAL PÉREZ, Carlos Garcia, (2001), *Bio-bibliografía de viajeros por España y Portugal*. Madrid: Ed. Ollero e Rams, 3 vols.

SERRÃO, Joaquim Veríssimo, *Viagens em Portugal de Manuel Severim de Faria, 1604-09, 1625*, Lisboa, APH, 1974.

SHIELDS,R., (1991), *Places on the margin. Alternative geographies of posmodernity*. London: Routledge.

TRZYRNA, T. C., (1995), *A Sustainable World*. London: IUCN – The World Conservation Union.

URRY, J., (1990), *The tourist gaze. Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.

VERA, F., (1997), *Análisis territorial del turismo*. Barcelona: Ariel.