FREE CHEAT SHEET · CHECKED NOVEMBER 2026

Portugal Money Traps

12 ways visitors overpay in Portugal, and what to do instead. Print it, or keep it on your phone.

1 Euronet ATMs

The yellow and blue machines on tourist streets and at the airport often charge €5 to €8 a withdrawal.

Instead: use a Multibanco ATM run by a Portuguese bank, and pay by card where you can.

2 "Pay in your own currency?"

ATMs and card machines offer to charge you in pounds or dollars. The conversion quietly adds about 3 to 7%.

Instead: always choose euros, or "without conversion".

3 The couvert

Bread, olives, butter or cheese arrive before you order. Anything you eat goes on the bill.

Instead: say "não, obrigado" and it goes back. By law, an untouched couvert can't be charged.

4 Fish priced by the kilo

Fresh fish and shellfish are often priced per kilo, not per plate, so the bill can be double what you guessed.

Instead: ask the weight and the price before it's cooked.

5 Touts and menus without prices

Staff with photo menus pull you in on the busiest tourist streets, such as Lisbon's Rua Augusta.

Instead: walk a street or two away and look for a handwritten *prato do dia* (dish of the day). Skip places with no priced menu at the door.

6 Lisbon airport taxis

Detours and meters left off led to fixed fares from 15 October 2026: €16 or €19 into Lisbon on weekdays (7am to 10pm), €20 or €23 at night, weekends and holidays.

Instead: confirm the fare before you get in, or take Uber or Bolt from the P2 car park.

7 Uber and Bolt surge prices

Since 1 September 2026 there's no legal cap on surge pricing, so late nights and rainy days can cost far more.

Instead: keep both apps and compare every trip. When both surge, take a taxi on the meter.

8 Motorway tolls in a hire car

Many motorways have electronic gantries with no booths, and unpaid tolls can become fines weeks after you get home.

Instead: add the rental company's toll device (usually Via Verde). The Algarve's A22 has been free since 2025.

9 Tourist tax at check-in

It's charged per person, per night, on top of the room price: €4 in Lisbon and Cascais, €3 in Porto and Gaia, €2 in Sintra.

Instead: budget for it. Lisbon and Porto charge from age 13, for up to seven nights.

10 The red "hills tram"

Red sightseeing trams cost €25. Yellow tram 28 covers the same hills for €3.30, or about €1.72 with a navegante card.

Instead: ride tram 28 before 9am, or try tram 12.

11 Passes that don't pay off

The Lisboa Card is €31, €51 or €62 for 24, 48 or 72 hours. Started on a Monday, when Jerónimos and Belém Tower are shut, it rarely pays off.

Instead: add up the sights you'll really visit, plus about €7 a day for transport, first.

12 Turning up without a timed ticket

Pena Palace and Belém Tower sell timed slots, and weekend and summer slots sell out.

Instead: book Pena for a set time, and Belém Tower (€15) at least 24 hours ahead.

Tipping: 5 to 10% for good restaurant service; small change in cafés.

Emergency: 112

Street "drug" sellers: fake, keep walking.

Prices and rules change. Our free guides are updated as they do.