

# Portugal Unveiled

## Why Expats are Flocking to This European Gem

Portugal has been home to countless expatriates to this day, especially Europeans. However, the number of expats relocating to Portugal from all over the globe has rocketed in the past few years. To illustrate, the Portuguese Immigration Service (SEF) stated in 2021 that there were nearly 555,299 expatriates living in Portugal, pointing to an increase of 5.4%, which is pretty remarkable for such a tiny country.

We've reached out to our community and other nomads to explore why they're motivated to move to Portugal. We've found that they tend to leave their homelands for Portugal for the low cost of living, safety, good weather, rich culture, and due to the desire to live in Europe.

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Part 1

# Introduction



# Life in Portugal

## Is It Really Worth the Hype?

As the GoVisaFree research team, we've discussed with the nomad community the reasons why digital nomads and expats are moving to Portugal and have prepared this report.

According to what we've gathered from our inspiring conversations, nomads and expats are fascinated by the cost of living, climate, and safety that Portugal offers. Those who look for an appealing lifestyle—for both themselves and their families—are attracted by Portugal's too many-to-count charms.





# Portugal Uncovered

Our objective in conducting this study is to understand the primary motivations for digital nomads and expats for moving to Portugal. We've reached out to our crowd of digital nomads to explore why they decided to move to Portugal.

We've asked our database the following questions to get a better understanding of their mindset and motivations:

**01**

What are the main reasons behind moving to Portugal?



**02**

What are your experiences in the country?



**03**

What can you do now in Portugal that you couldn't do before?



**04**

Do you still want to continue living in Portugal? Why/why not?





Part 2

# Reasons



# Portugal Calling

## Top 5 Reasons Why People Move There

As the data we've collected from the research participants indicates, the most common reasons for moving to Portugal are as follows:

01

### High Standards of Living — especially for families

Portugal offers the opportunity to establish an excellent work-life balance since nomads work remotely yet can afford higher living standards in the country.

A group of respondents states that Portugal is a perfect place to raise a child. Many Portuguese cities are still in touch with nature and don't fail to offer a vivid city life either. The respondents remark that they find this duality incredibly charming. On a different note, the excellence of the seafood in Portugal gets mentioned heaps of times. Digital nomads also think of Portugal to be an ideal location to work remotely with a newly started family by investing in a perfect property with a sea view at a fair price. On top of it all, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Portugal exhibits one of the lowest levels of violent crime in Europe.

02

### Being Part of the EU — the desire to live in Europe

Portugal is consistently ranked as one the safest countries in Europe, as well as one of the 10 safest in the world. It's a rapidly developing country where many people speak excellent English, and it's simple to travel around, thanks to the superb transportation links. Furthermore, the citizenship policy is one of the most straightforward in Europe: after holding a residence permit for only five years, you become eligible to apply for Portuguese citizenship.

Digital nomads who are interested in real estate remark that the Portugal Golden Visa program also provides them with easy access to Europe. The program allows you to live, work, and study in Portugal, as well as travel freely throughout Europe's Schengen Zone. Moreover, the scheme requires an annual stay of only seven days per year in Portugal, which is also adequate to qualify you to apply for citizenship after five years.

03

### Low Cost of Living

One of the most tempting aspects of Portugal is the low cost of living. Digital nomads are genuinely pleased by the low pricing. Portugal has a considerably lower cost of living compared to Western European countries. Affordable living expenses are especially appealing to digital nomads who want to save money or enjoy a better standard of living, or both simultaneously.

Grocery shopping from local markets and drinking local wines in Portugal reduce food expenditure significantly. It's also observed that the cost of living decreases with traveling outside of major cities. Public transportation is also inexpensive and efficient.

04

### The Weather

Portugal has a temperate climate, making the country perfect for individuals who like mild weather. Some primary reasons why nomads choose to live and work in Portugal are the pleasant weather, bright skies, and mild temperatures accompanied by sunshine all year round. It hardly falls below 15 degrees Celsius in Lisbon. The Algarve region, in particular, draws many visitors and retirees to its gorgeous beaches due to its charming climate.

Especially Brits and Scandinavians who long for the sunbeam throughout most of the year in their homelands are captivated by Portugal's mild climate and perennial sunlight.

05

### Perfect Remote Working Destination

Many digital nomads from the EU and around the world have selected Portugal as their home base due to its security and expat-friendliness. Portugal provides all that a remote worker can look for: good internet connection, easy access to nature, extraordinarily tasty food, pleasant weather, a stimulating culture, and low rents; and that's why nomads are eager to live in this beautiful, safe, and secure country with their families while working remotely.

In addition to providing the digital nomads with a perfect work-life balance, affordability, and many leisure-time appeals that are worth working for, Portugal is a much-favored location among nomads due to the abundance of coworking spaces and startup companies in the country. In short, Portugal seems to offer many job opportunities, the perfect environment to work, and the prize of enjoying life after work hours: all at the same time.



Part 3

# Insights





# First-Person Accounts

## Respondent Views on Motivations for Moving to Portugal

The respondents have shared with us their perspectives regarding moving to Portugal, the reasons why they chose to relocate there, and the experiences they had in the country.

### What has brought you to Portugal?

Reasons for choosing to move to Portugal included but were not limited to: the desire to live in Europe and expose our children to another way of life and different people, a slower pace of life that would allow us to enjoy each day more rather than working for the weekend, ease of acquiring a long-term visa, safety, love of the food/wine/culture, great weather, and its proximity to the rest of Europe which would allow for more, cheaper and easier travel. Bonus reasons included the ability to gain citizenship after five years and get an EU passport, the level of English spoken by most Portuguese, and the cheaper real estate possibilities.

**Allison Baxley**  
*Renovating Life*



*Allison and her family expatriated to Portugal from Brooklyn, New York, just over a year ago. She and her husband work remotely for TV and film projects back in the U.S., and they're running a blog together. ([www.renovatinglife.com](http://www.renovatinglife.com))*

I was motivated to move to Portugal for several reasons. Good weather, good food, cheap prices, and access to basic amenities (such as health care), among many other perks. I'm sure that a lot of people share the same motivations as me.

The thing that really sold me on Portugal is the fact that one can live a relatively comfortable lifestyle with very little effort. Sure, the economy isn't great right now and real estate prices are starting to go up, but if you're a digital nomad making an income that is comparable to an American or English resident, these issues are not so daunting. The fact that I can buy weekly groceries for less than \$100, go to the hospital without having to worry about a huge bill, and can still display valuables without having to worry about being robbed is fantastic. Combine these with the fact that the Portuguese government wants to have you here right now and locals are not xenophobic at all (they're quite welcoming in fact) and it just makes sense to live in Portugal right now.

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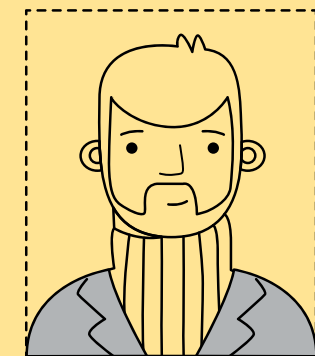


I'm totally invested in my new life in Portugal. My choice of abode, Madeira, has really stolen my heart and I can't wait to live my life here.

**I love it so much that I'm even starting to craft new tours, with a focus on local aspects, in Madeira with the intent of showing people how amazing this place really is. Hopefully, they'll see what I see in this place when they visit.**

**Chris Lininger**  
*Founder - Epic Backpacker Tours*

*For the last eleven years, Chris has been seeking out every shade of adventure in various parts of the globe and has visited more than 65 countries along the way. Since 2011, Chris has logged more than 6300 trail miles across five continents and climbed multiple 6000 + 7000-meter peaks in Pakistan and Nepal.*



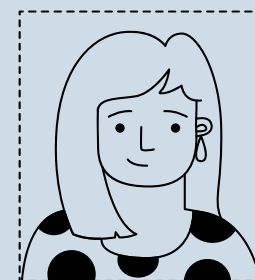


## What are your experiences in Portugal?

We had wonderful experiences living in Portugal. The weather is great most of the year, the people are nice and friendly, the cost of living (except for housing) is cheap and Lisbon is well-connected with the rest of the world. Of the 3 years we lived there, 2 were during the pandemic, so it compromised our ability to explore and enjoy our lives there, but we felt the way the government and society handled the crisis was quite ok compared to other countries. We ended up having our first daughter in Portugal and the experience with health care was also fantastic. Traveling inside the country was probably the biggest highlight during our time living there and we were able to see amazing gems that we'd never heard of prior to moving there. The non-resident low taxation was also a great incentive for living there.

### Simone Missagia

*Simone and her husband are a Brazilian/Finnish couple who moved to Portugal in 2019 and moved out in May 2022.*



## What can you do now in Portugal that you couldn't do in your home country?

What we can now do in Portugal that we couldn't do before relocating here is spend time at the beach as a family. Since we live just 6 minutes from the beach, we can visit it as often as we want. In the UK we were at least an hour away from the nearest beach and it was a rare occasion that we went.

We can all speak Portuguese to some degree, something I'd never have thought we'd do before moving here. Learning a second language for day-to-day living was not necessary before moving to Portugal.

We can also eat out more often and cheaper than before and nobody bats an eyelid if you arrive at 7 pm, 9 pm, or later with kids, especially at the weekend, as it's normal for families to gather later in the evening to enjoy a meal together. We do this with my father which is hugely important to us as we don't know how much time we have left together with him.

### Cath Jordan Travel Around Ireland

*Cath and her family are Irish expats who emigrated from the United Kingdom to Portugal in May 2017. They are an East Algarve-based family of three, with an 8-year-old son, and a German shepherd dog.*





As the cost of living is a lot cheaper than that of the US, especially in Lisbon where I was based, it meant that I was able to save a significant amount of money while still enjoying a high standard of living.

I was also able to travel extensively through Europe as Portugal is conveniently placed to travel with ease

**David Sheppard**  
The owner and  
writer for  
*hvacjudge.com*



Living as a digital nomad in Portugal gave me a great sense of freedom that I didn't have before. In my home country Ireland, I lived in an isolated rural area with little to do for a twenty-something-year-old. Finding a place to rent in a city was extremely difficult due to a housing shortage and high prices.

Moving to Portugal, a popular holiday destination for Irish tourists and a place of familiarity for me, felt like a great decision as I planned my getaway from cold and wet Ireland. I was by the breathtaking Atlantic ocean in this part of Portugal, and I enjoyed listening to the crashing waves in the evenings after a day of work. Parede was also a quick thirty-minute train ride to Lisbon, an idyllic city with many cafes and bakeries, lively nightlife, and interesting things to see and do.

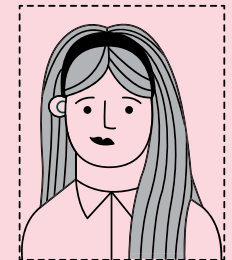
Some of the things I was able to do in Portugal that I couldn't do before include:

- Rent an apartment affordably and with ease near the beach and Lisbon
- Enjoy the outdoors more often, going for walks along the beach and swimming in the ocean
- Try new foods and experience different cultures within Portugal itself
- Meet the friendly Portuguese people or expats in the community

Portugal has been an excellent experience for me as a digital nomad. I recommend it to anyone looking for a place to live and work remotely!

**Caitriona Maria**  
*TPR Teaching*

*Caitriona Maria is a digital nomad and blogger from TPR Teaching. She lived in Parede near Lisbon for three months from February of 2022.*





Work-life balance where vacations are normal...People in Portugal are not workaholics.

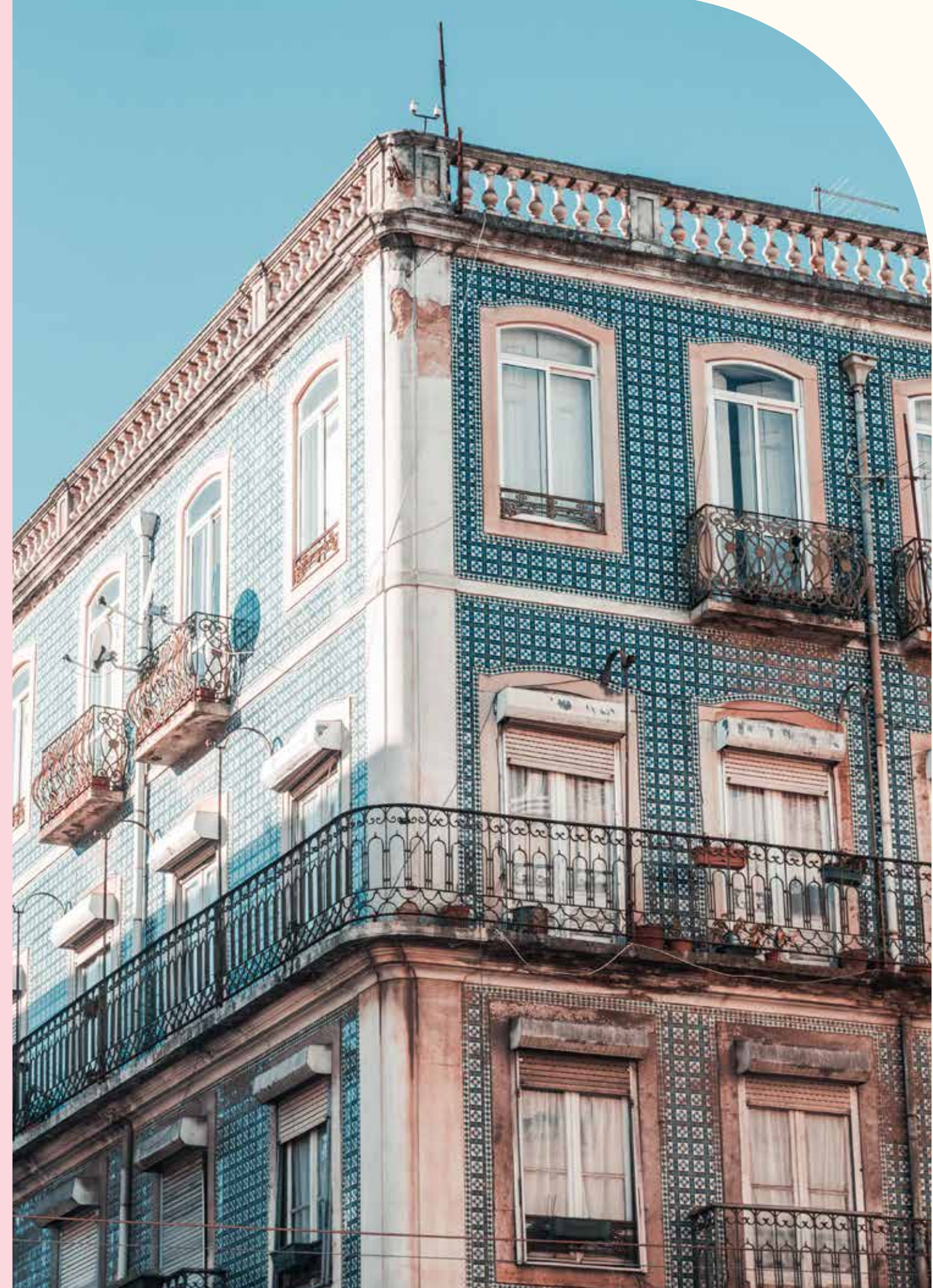
Our family has been full-time travelers since 2018 and are currently living in Portugal since last year. Having been to over 35 countries, Portugal stood out as the most welcoming to us. It is where we've felt a charming spirit.

**The people are so friendly, children are considered blessings, gatherings are essential, and family is at the center of it all.**

Portuguese women love and accept their bodies in all shapes and sizes.



**Leslie Stroud**  
*7 Wayfinders*



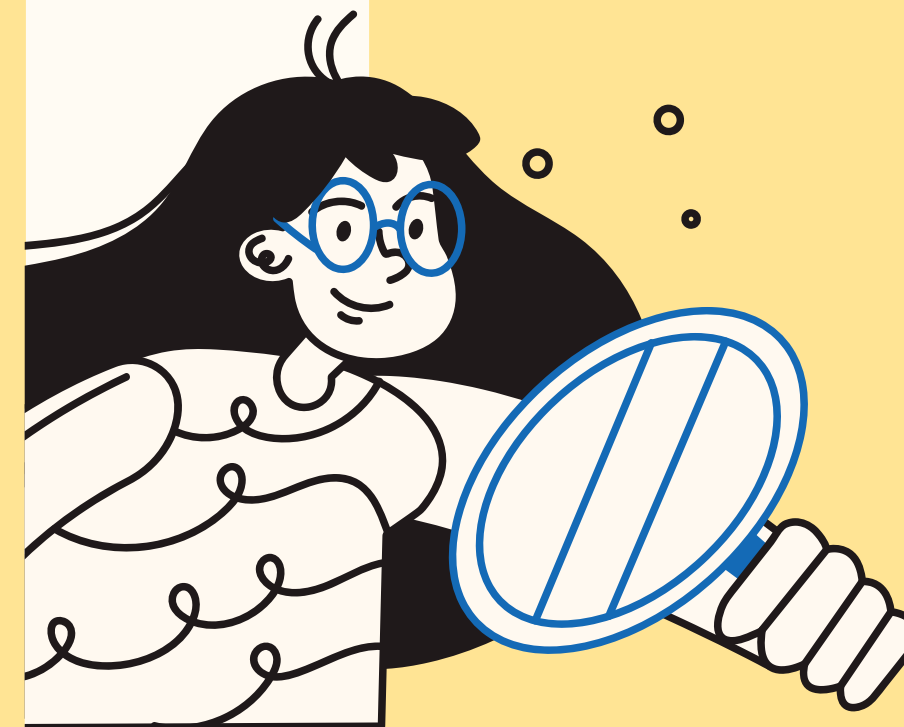
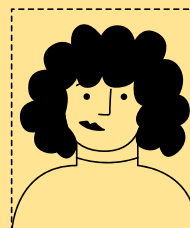


## Do you still want to continue living in Portugal? Why/why not?

Absolutely! I've gone back a couple of times since then and explored other areas (which made me fall in love with the country even more), and while I've gotten married and have a home base in the US now, I still work remotely and can take longer-term trips—and even look forward to potentially moving to Portugal one day with my husband. It's at the top of our list as we research places to do the nomad or expat thing, and we've been keeping an eye on Portugal's changing visa options. I've loved every minute spent there, and can't wait to go back.

**Sarah Stone**  
*Frayed Passport*

*Sarah worked remotely since 2015 and became a digital nomad in 2017. She lived for about three months in Porto, Portugal in 2018.*



Since arriving in Portugal just over a year ago, we could not be happier! We love our new life here and wouldn't change anything. While there have been ups and downs, and it has been difficult at times to navigate bureaucratic processes, we are overjoyed with our decision to move to Portugal. It's always hard to start over in a new place, especially a different country, and even more so when you don't know the language. But all the challenges have been worth it, and any adversity has only made us happier and stronger. We plan to stay a minimum of five years, but most likely, we will be here for some version of forever. We plan to buy the property and will always call Portugal home in one capacity or another.

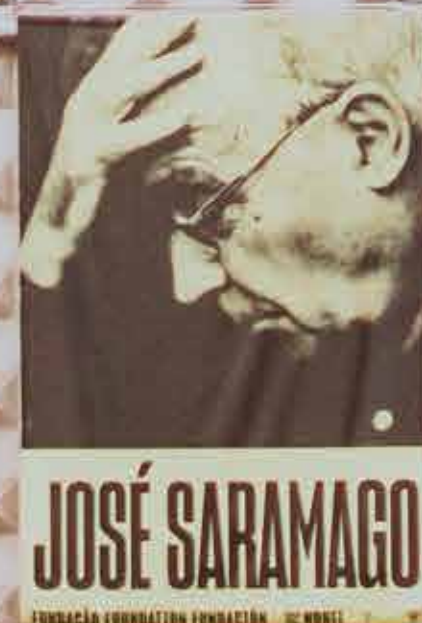
**Allison Baxley**  
*Renovating Life*

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this program are those of the respondents and experts and do not necessarily reflect the views of GoVisaFree.



Part 4

# Statistics



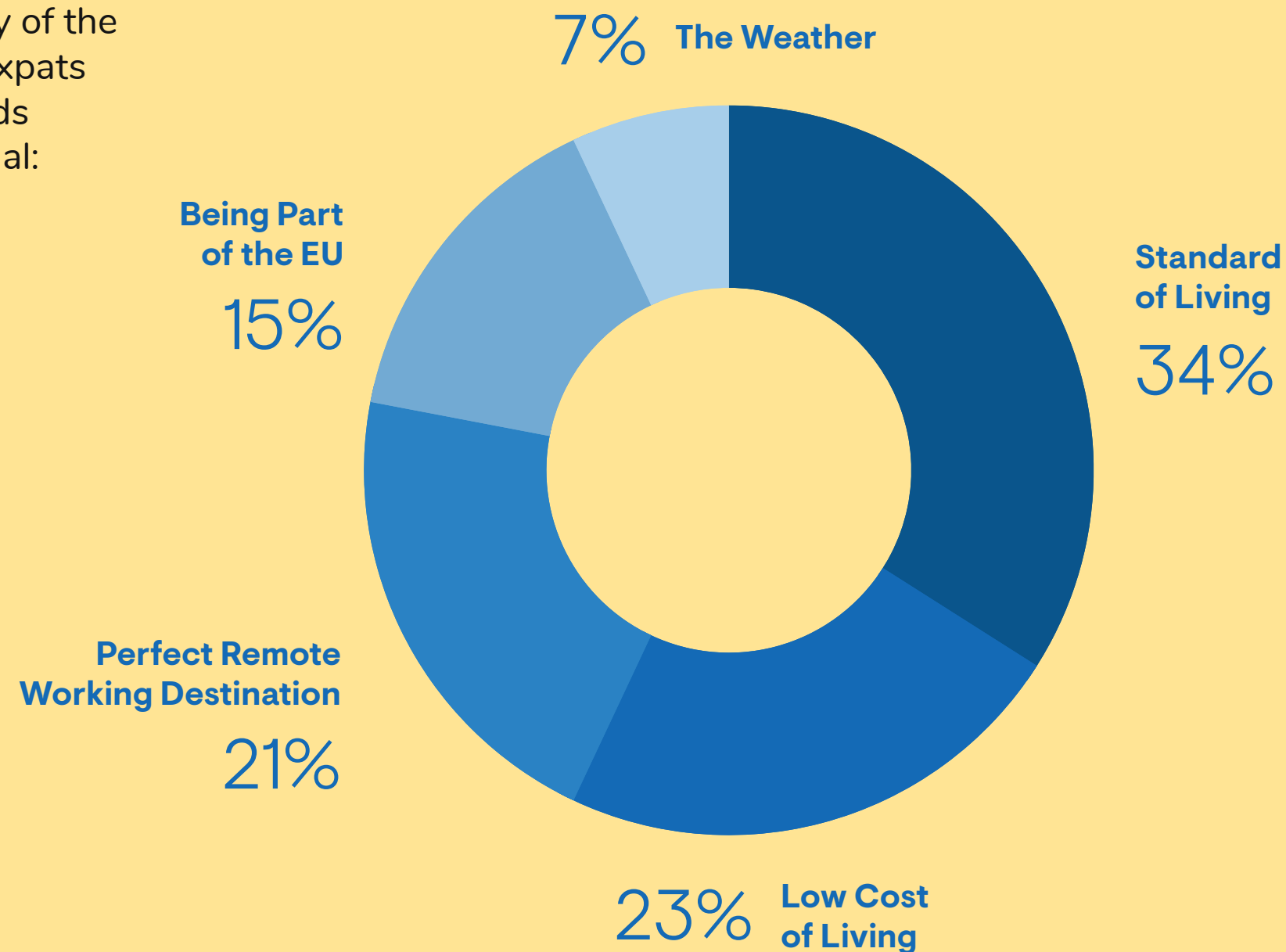
SEMPRE AO NOS  
CHE SITIO NOS  
GA AON ESPE  
MOS DE RAM  
Viagem do Elefante



# Numbers Speak for Themselves

Part of our research is based on the decision-making process and the primary reasons driving the expats and digital nomads toward moving to Portugal. The questionnaire has provided us with information about their decision-making process and the experiences they've had.

Here's a summary of the reasons behind expats and digital nomads moving to Portugal:



- 69% of the respondents have visited Portugal as digital nomads and then have decided to relocate there
- Roughly 2/4 of the respondents have stated that they have a more tranquil and comfier lifestyle in Portugal than they had before
- More than half of the respondents have stated that the standard of living and cost of living are the main factors that made them start living in Portugal
- The climate of Portugal has affected the decision of 7% of the respondents on moving to this Mediterranean country
- Approximately 73% of the participants have stated that they will continue to live in Portugal





Part 5

# Conclusion



# Final Thoughts

## Portugal's Promise as a Haven for Expats and Digital Nomads

Portugal is a hotspot for digital nomads and expats. It is also one of the prominent options for those who want to provide their families with a better life standard. Its affordable and high-quality living standards, safe and tranquil environment, as well as its beautiful weather, can attract anyone from all around the globe.

Digital Nomads and expats have moved or are considering moving to Portugal for many of the reasons listed above. Based on what we've inferred from the answers of the participants, we believe that this trend will continue in the coming years.





# Good-to-Knows Before Moving to Portugal

01

## Choose Your Visa

Pick the right visa for your needs – D7, Golden, or Startup Visa. Check requirements and paperwork ahead of time.

02

## Tax-Savvy Expat

Explore Portugal's Non-Habitual Resident (NHR) tax incentives and consult a professional for guidance.

03

## Connect with Fellow Expats

Join online and offline expat communities to share experiences, tips, and make new friends.

04

## Soak Up the Sun

Enjoy Portugal's Mediterranean climate – think mild winters and warm summers. Don't forget sunscreen!

05

## Immerse in Local Culture

Embrace Portuguese customs, food, and traditions. Stay curious and respectful of local etiquette.

06

## Rent Before Buying

Test the waters by renting before investing in property. Expect some red tape when dealing with real estate.

07

## Learn Portuguese Basics

Practice Portuguese phrases for easier integration. Don't worry, many locals speak English too!



# Data Collection

## Methods and Key Steps



### Period

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August - November 2022

### Age Group

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25-34: %40  
35-44: %37  
45-54: %17  
55-64: %6

### Interviews (357)

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Participants were asked questions and discussed issues related to their motivation for moving to Portugal and the experiences they had in the country.

### Questionnaire (410)

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Participants were asked numerous questions to better understand their tendencies and actions when searching. All of our research efforts were carried out remotely using online platforms.



## About Go Visa Free

GoVisaFree is a blog where we've started to share tips and other beneficial knowledge on different facets of living abroad. Our main goals are to connect and exchange useful information with fellow travelers, digital nomads, and expats; and simultaneously grow our network of global citizens who have the same passions, objectives, ideas, and worldviews in common.

Aiming at greasing the wheels for our fellow nomads in terms of living a borderless, visa-free life, we enjoy sharing our knowledge and growing as a family of global citizens that share the same mindset.

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