

# Embracing the new while cherishing the old

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tion,” she says, comparing her old job to her new one, “but food is culture.”

The conversation eventually transcends sardines, and it's evident that though her business is successful, she is here because the cannery is an ode to her country, and working here is a way to continue saying “I love you” to her husband.

As she speaks, Ferreira is so endearingly caught up in ideas of her country, her family, and the past, she leans so far forward her head is nearly horizontal.

I worry aloud that, like the mom-and-pop hat and glove shops that still dot her city's streets, a place this wonderfully outdated might eventually succumb to time and be replaced by one of the chain stores that are slowly multiplying around town. “We've gotten past problems with factories, with freezing, with the arrival of big box stores. We made it,” she assures me. “We'll be here.”

## TUGS AT THE HEART

Fall in love with Lisbon's heritage in a photo gallery at [boston.com/travel](http://boston.com/travel).

Change has come, but it takes time to understand how a nation this isolated at the end of the Iberian Peninsula survived being drawn into the 21st century.

“We had a rough regime up until 1974. Between '74 and the mid-'80s, people . . . survive,” says José Caetano, who got together with Italian chef Augusto Gemelli to open the high-end Gemelli restaurant in 2007.

“My parents — our parents — were in a prison. It was impossible to get out. If you did, you took a bag and the clothes on your back and you left,” Caetano says. “Now, Portugal is changing in terms of maturity. People who are 30 and 40 are more interested in food, cinema, art, theater, and expositions. These are the people who are pushing the country.”

Here, something clicks. Portugal's political and geographic isolation created an island-like buffer that gave its people time to evaluate and adopt or decline an outside influence. While Paris paved over miles of its cobblestones, Lisbon's streets and sidewalks are beautifully coated with them. Here, people are both set in their habits and open to doses of outside influence.

“We're strangely motivated by our personal culture. We like sardines and tuna and fado,” says Caetano, “Young people now like these things because they are Portuguese.”

“I don't think too many Starbucks will come,” he says, referring to the Seattle company's



PHOTOS BY JOE RAY/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Regina Ferreira wraps a package at the Conserveira de Lisboa. Customers queue up outside the “illegal bakery” in the Barrio Alto neighborhood. The Elevador de Santo Justa was built by Raoul de Mesnier du Ponsard, an apprentice of Gustave Eiffel.

lone Portuguese outpost, in a shopping center several miles west of the capital. “If you talk with a thousand people, they'll all say they prefer Portuguese cafes. We like to get our coffee in the morning at the cafes near our homes. I send my son to pick up breakfast, and I'll go down and pay later.”

Many here are realizing that there are things worth preserving. The wood-lined yellow trolleys — this city's leisurely icons — still clink their way across five routes in town. Though the trolleys are hopelessly outdated money vacuums, locals habitually shun the metro and bus systems for a ride on their eléctrico. “Four years ago, my feeling was that with globalization, we were all starting to be alike, to dress alike, to use the same products,” says Catarina Portas, a former journalist who opened A Vida Portuguesa, a boutique that specializes in nostalgic and enduring Portuguese products. “It was evident that we'd see a resurgence of the local.”

The store is a shrine to the past, but cleverly in tune with the present. It exalts everything from Ferreira's sardines to Coração metal polish — complete with the original 1928 logo of a heart pierced by an arrow — to tiny shrines to St. Anthony, the patron saint of good marriages and the finder of lost objects.

I watch a group of women in their 60s walk through the shop, stopping in front of almost every item, each clearly associated with a memory. Moments later, a twentysomething guy grabs a tube of Couto brand toothpaste and heads to the cash register as if he's never heard of multinationals like Crest or Colgate.

“The younger generation has no idea what it was like to live in the Salazar times,” says Portas. “It influences us much more than we are conscious of, but these products help us figure out who we are.”



Over dinner with friends of friends (who, in typical local fashion, immediately become my friends), this quest for the Portuguese to understand who they are becomes evident when it comes to expressing themselves; that pierced heart is often worn on a sleeve.

“I think we became explorers because there's nowhere to go,” says Pedro Matos, a United Nations consultant and founding member of the local citizens group, Um Dia Por Lisboa (One Day for Lisbon), referring to the country's history as a global empire. “Our back is to Spain.”

He's almost paraphrasing Portuguese literary hero Fernando Pessoa's poem “The Field of the Castles.”

*Europe, stretched out from East to West/And propped on her elbows, stares/ From beneath her romantic hair/ With Greek eyes, remembering./ Her left elbow is pulled back;/ Her right forms an angle./ The first, lying flat, says Italy;/ The second says England and extends/ the hand that holds up her face./ She stares with a fatal, sphinxian gaze/ At the West, the future of the past./ The staring face is Portugal.*

Over dinner, a theme of gentle melancholy and the identity it fosters is tossed around the table, each person with a slightly different nostalgic picture of the



origins of their slightly sad souls.

Later, we spill out the door to continue our discussion on the streets of the Barrio Alto neighborhood — the heart of Lisbon's night life. Starting at midnight, young and old mix in the street, often ducking into tiny bars they affectionately call chapels to buy another round. Over the course of the evening, everyone trickles downhill, making a small exception near daybreak to go back up to the “illegal bakery” on Rua da Rosa where, if the police aren't around, you queue up for sandwiches and pastries ordered through an iron grate.

One thing that sticks out over the course of the evening's conversations is the aside, “You've heard fado; we're all about jumping out the window.” I quietly mention that I haven't been to a fado show, and their glances urge me to rectify the situation quickly. “Go here,” says a friend, directing me to the Mesa de Frades club in Alfama, the district where fado was born.

The next night, listening to a singer known as Carminho, people take on the look of the devout

at prayer. Tinged with the deep feeling of a Berber chant or Jewish hymn, history and melancholy course through the songs.

The crowd is silent at the end of one of Carminho's best, where the lyrics may be heartbreaking, but her voice is a vehicle for pure emotion, both singing of pain and piercing it. As a group, they shudder and capitulate and the entire city — the art, architecture, tiles on the wall, and people on the street — it all connects.

In Lisbon, there are these moments, like seeing the glint of a streetlight reflected on a tile facade, or hearing the rumble and electric hiss of a trolley, or feeling the touch of a little woman who leans on you while she's speaking, moments where the hope and expectations of town are surpassed by reality, where, using only your heart, you understand the Portuguese love of country and the feeling about themselves that's still being defined. It's all there, it's always been there: the heart on the sleeve.

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## If you go . . .

### Where to stay

**Pensão Ninho das Águias**  
Costa do Castelo, 74  
011-351-21-885-40-70  
For the budget-minded, the “eagle's nest” is hard to beat. Though the rooms are devoid of charm, the staff is kind, and there's a terrace and a tiny sunroom accessed via a spiral staircase that offer stunning views. Doubles start at \$45.

**Hotel Britania**  
Rua Rodrigues Sampaio, 17  
011-351-213-155-016 and toll-free 866-376-7831  
[www.hotel-britania.com](http://www.hotel-britania.com)  
A four-star Art Deco gem designed by architect Cassiano Branco in 1944 and renovated in 2005. Rooms start at \$175-\$649.

### Where to eat

**O Caracol**  
Rua da Barroca, 14  
011-351-21-342-70-94  
If fresh seafood like squid or cuttlefish sautéed in their own ink doesn't appeal, try pork that gives way under the weight of your fork. Three courses and wine for less than \$39. Call ahead.

**Bar do Peixe**  
Rua Praia do Moinho de Baixo  
Near the town of Alfarim  
011-351-21-684-732

Going to the Meco beach 40 minutes out of town is a perfect day trip if you're here for a few days. The woman who runs the restaurant gets her fish from her husband, who fishes in front of the restaurant. Lunch or dinner with wine for \$26-\$39.

**O Cacho Dourado**  
Rua Eca de Queridos, 5  
011-351-213-543-671  
If you want to dine with happy locals, this is the place. Lunch for less than \$19.

**Gemelli**  
Rua Nova da Piedade, 99  
011-351-121-395-25-52  
[www.augustogemelli.com](http://www.augustogemelli.com)  
Count on about \$130 per person at this restaurant that blends Portuguese products and Italian style.

**Shopping**  
**A Vida Portuguesa**  
Rua Anchieta, 11  
011-351-21-346-5073  
[www.avidaportuguesa.com](http://www.avidaportuguesa.com)  
For hunters of unique souvenirs.

**Conserveira de Lisboa**  
Rua dos Bacalhóes, 34  
011-351-218-871-058  
Pick up tasty canned goods and fall in love with owner Regina Ferreira.

# Onboard and off-piste in an arctic land of fiords and fog banks

By Eliza Wilmerding

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

TROMS, Norway — Halfway up our first mountain in the Lyngen Alps, the fiord cut coastal range in arctic Norway, I climb into a belt of fog and anxiety. All this way for blind skiing? I'm to blame. I urged my friends to take their vacation days for this place. Later I would discover that I wasn't the only one stressing as we huffed our way up that sleeping giant. The others were too — for their own reasons.

We four are a writer, an artist, a financier, and an engineer — two men and two women, three telemark skiers and one snowboarder. Our paths might never have crossed if it weren't for the shared freedom we find in the mountains. In our 20s, we spent nearly every weekend in the Sierra backcountry. We took avalanche awareness classes, climbed ridges, dropped into slopes, and exacted the best turns we could through everything from “Sierra cement” to freshly fallen fluff.

We're in our 30s now and ski less. This year, the engineer was the only one who really made for the mountains. He skied 18 days and ran a half marathon before this trip. When two of us found ourselves working in Scandinavia for the year, I suggested joining up in a most symbolic place: Norway, where ski touring began.

Norway boasts 38 ski resorts, 291 peaks rising more than 6,500 feet, hundreds more at lower altitudes, and myriad backcountry



AMANDA HERMAN

In the Lyngen Alps, in the northern island kingdom of Troms, snow falls into May but temperatures near the fiords stay mild.

routes. We opted for four days of sailing and skiing in coastal Troms, a northern island kingdom and home to the Lyngen Alps.

Skiers looking for skiable terrain in late spring find it at higher altitudes or latitudes. Lyngen is at the same 70-degree latitude as Barrow, Alaska, but with a warmer climate thanks to its proximity to the Gulf Stream. Here, mountain conditions mimic the Alps (without the altitude), with snow falling into May, but temperatures near the fiords staying mild (between 17 and 50 degrees from March to mid-May).

We arrive in Tromsø and join three Britons, two Swedes, mountain guide Per Ås and his protégé, Jonatan Hultén, and our skipper, Charles Wara, and board the S/Y Goxheim, a 1940s Norwegian motor cutter that Wara rebuilt into a gaff-rigged sailboat. “It's his other marriage,” says Ås,

smiling. “The boat is his home. Even when he returns to his wife, he stays on the boat.”

Indeed, it's the coziest of floating base camps with a spacious cabin and galley glossed with bright woodwork. We stow our gear and motor off for the coastal village, Hamnes, where we dock and eat Wara's homemade curried fish dumplings.

Every morning we fill up on Wara's spread of juice, coffee, breads, cheeses, jam, lox, ham, salami, peppers, and cucumbers, then hit the drizzly deck and boot up. We strap skis (pre-fixed with climbing skins) to our packs and begin our ascent. We hike through a birch wood, up a mossy slope, toward the tree line. At the snow line, we clip in and begin skiing uphill, the snow sinking heavily under our skis. It's warm enough for wet slides. We ski nothing steeper than 30 degrees for safety's sake, and Ås's route links ridges and high

## If you go . . .

### How to get there

Tromsø is 1,100 miles north of Oslo. A number of carriers fly from Boston to Oslo. Scandinavian Airlines and Widerøe (Norwegian Air) fly from Oslo to Tromsø. Your guide will meet you at a predetermined place in town, and bring you to the boat.

### What to do

Each of the internationally certified mountain guides listed can set up your trip. Prices cover cabin bed, board, nonalcoholic beverages, guiding, fuel, and harbor fees; \$2,727 for a full week; cost may change depending on group size.

**Per Ås**  
Les Hieres  
05320 La Grave, France

011-33675-871-047  
[www.peras.se](http://www.peras.se)  
**Stefan Palm**  
11 Rue du Ruisseau  
Villard Late  
05330 St. Chaffrey, France  
011-33-663-077-259  
[www.mountaintime.nu](http://www.mountaintime.nu)  
**Jonatan Hultén**  
Les Hieres  
05320 La Grave, France  
011-336-1985-3803  
[www.jonatanhulten.com](http://www.jonatanhulten.com)

You will need your own backcountry pack with shovel, probe, transceiver, hydration system, spare clothes, and ski touring equipment. A typical day includes a 4-to-5-hour ascent of 3,000-3,600 feet.

points, and avoids potential avalanche terrain traps.

It's no news that Americans are heading off-piste, away from crowds, and toward untracked slopes. They are buying new equipment, enrolling in avalanche courses, and opting to climb for their delicious descents, and the pride that comes with it.

For those types, there's Norway, home of the cambered side cut and telemark ski. These people have been skiing for centuries. In Rodøy, there is a 5,000-year-old rock carving of a man on skis. Viking farmers, hunters,

and warriors skied for transportation. (The word “ski” goes back to the Norse word “skiö,” meaning stick of wood.) The Sami reindeer herders have been skiing with their herds for as long as they can remember. At the Ski Museum in Oslo, you can see carved Sami skis dating to 800 AD with poles that doubled as spears.

We enter a fog bank and my heart sinks. A man in a Tromsø ski store had said, “If you're really, really lucky, you'll find some very good slush.” I had shrugged it off, figuring that we would shift our weight back and blast

through the sticky spots. Fog is another story. In fog, you could be anywhere in the world and feel like you're nowhere. The others worry, too. One frets we won't rack up enough descents. The others fear they won't keep pace.

We summit in a whiteout and peel off our climbing skins. One by one, we ski a pitch nearly blind. We skirt right and stop near Ås above another pitch.

“Ah, what a view,” Ås says. There is nothing but opaque, sunlit vapor and soft snow.

“Mmm. Special Norwegian fog,” says the artist.

“It will lift in five minutes,” Ås says. And, miraculously, as soon as the others glide up, the glittering fiord and two towering peaks reveal themselves. We hoot and take off down two long pitches, savoring every minute.

Back onboard, we wolf down a predinner bowl of soup, enjoy the sun on deck, and point out skiable couloirs as we sail north to Arnoy, a mountainous island inhabited since the 17th century. “If the conditions stink for the rest of the trip, it'll be OK,” says the financier.

Indeed, there will be no more disappointment due to weather. We'll think only of the bright moments: the 300 yards of uninterrupted turns we will have on Big Troll Peak, the soft drop down the western-facing slope of Water Coffin, and our last descent in view of the harbor and boat below.

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