



## **SINTRA**

PORTUGAL'S *GLORIOUS EDEN*

**WEDNESDAY 11 TO MONDAY 16 MAY 2016**

NICHOLAS FRIEND MA (Oxon), MA (Cantab)

Ptolemy referred to the ten twisting miles of mountains in western Portugal as 'the mountains of the Moon'. Thought to be the retreat of Diana the Huntress- Cynthia to the Romans - it was, thus, given the name Çintra. At its heart lies a magical town, Sintra, whose unique mild microclimate gives rise to some of the most beautiful parks in Portugal. A UNESCO World Heritage site, it retains a medieval layout, with narrow and labyrinthine streets, steps and inviting arcades.

A very ancient place, almost every phase of human occupation is visible here-from Neolithic traces to Bronze Age chambered tombs and dolmens, through to the Romans and the Moors, who built their precipitous castle here in the 8c. Throughout the 12c and 13c, convents, monasteries and military orders erected their residences, estates, water-mills and vineyards; the town once supported a thriving and distinguished Sephardi Jewish community many of whom guided the 15c Portuguese 'Age of Discovery', mapping the coast of Africa.

Since antiquity it has been a place full of myths and legends about supernatural activities; the great Portuguese Renaissance poet, Luis de Camoes, referred to the mountains of Sintra as a land ruled by water nymphs. During the 17c Union of the Crowns of Spain and Portugal, Sintra became a summer retreat for the Portuguese nobility, from the heats, both social and thermal, of the Castilian court in Lisbon. 18c Portuguese royals outdid one another in building their country palaces there. William Beckford, writer of 'Vathek' came to the palace of Seteais in the 1780s, and later rented the romantic palace of Montserrat where Francis Cook constructed an exotic Orientalist pavilion high up on a slope. Lord Byron waxed lyrical about Sintra's charms: 'Lo! Cintra's glorious Eden intervenes, in variegated maze of mount and glen', in his epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. WH Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender sought solace here and wrote of their experiences, and the composer Richard Strauss saw in Sintra a garden "*comparable to Italy, Sicily, Greece or Egypt, a true garden of Klingsor, and there in the heights, a castle of the Holy Grail*". Altogether Sintra represents one of the most magical, as well as one of the most influential, conjunctions of man and nature in Europe, a cradle of the Romantic Movement in architecture as well as literature.

### **WEDNESDAY 11 MAY**

- 11:20 Flight from London Heathrow Airport
- 13:55 Arrive Lisbon Airport, minibus to hotel
- 15:45 Arrive Palacio de Seteais Hotel
- 18:00 Drink and readings in hotel '*Sintra: Myths, Tritons, Mermaids and Ascetics*'
- 19:30 Opening group dinner in hotel

### **THURSDAY 12 MAY**

- 10:30 Lecture by Nicholas Friend '*The History and Architecture of Sintra*', coffee
- 12:00 Minibus leaves for Cascais
- 12:30 Arrive beach for group lunch at Mar do Inferno
- 14:00 Leave beach for Colares via coast road
- 15:00 Arrive Colares for winetasting at Colares Viuva Gomes
- 16:00 Minibus returns to hotel, rest
- 19:30 Optional dinner in hotel or Tacho Real Restaurant

### **FRIDAY 13 MAY**

- 10:30 Introductory lecture by Nicholas Friend on '*The Writers of Sintra*'
- 11:30 Minibus departs to Sintra
- 11:45 Private guided tour of Palacio Nacional
- 13:00 Private lunch at Quinta Sao Sebastiao, hosted by owner Salvador Taborda Ferreira
- 14:30 Introductory architectural walkabout
- 16:00 Tea and free time in Sintra
- 17:00 Minibus back to hotel for short rest
- 18:00 Drink and readings from José Maria de Eça de Queirós, Auden and Spender
- 19:30 Optional dinner in hotel or at Tacho do Xico

### **SATURDAY 14 MAY**

- 10:00 Introductory lecture Nicholas Friend on the Gulbenkian Museum, coffee
- 11:15 Minibus to Lisbon
- 12:00 Arrive Lisbon for Session 1 in Gulbenkian Museum with Curator
- 13:00 Group lunch in Gulbenkian Cafe
- 14:30 Session 2 in Gulbenkian Museum with Curator
- 16:00 Tea and minibus to hotel
- 17:15 Arrive hotel
- 19:30 Optional dinner in hotel or at Dom Pipas Restaurant

### **SUNDAY 15 MAY**

- 11:00 Minibus to Convento dos Capuchos
- 11:15 Visit Convento dos Capuchos
- 12:15 Group lunch at Monserrate Garden restaurant
- 13:45 Minibus to Palacio de Montserrate
- 14:00 Arrive Palacio Montserrate
- 15:30 Gardens of Quinta da Regaleira, minibus to hotel
- 19:30 Group dinner in hotel dining room

### **MONDAY 16 MAY**

- Check out, luggage on minibus
- 09:00 Minibus to Pena Palace
- 09:15 Pena Palace and Gardens, private visit to the reserves and Chalet of the Countess of Elda
- 12:00 Minibus to airport
- 13:00 Check in and independent lunch in airport
- 15:05 Flight departs for London
- 17:45 Arrive London Heathrow Airport



## **PALACIO DE SETEAIS**

Rua Barbosa Du Bocage 8  
2710-517, Sintra, Portugal

A former palace built in the XVIII century perched on the mountainside just outside Sintra, the Tivoli Palácio de Seteais has spectacular views of the Moorish Castle and Pena Palace. Perfectly placed within landscaped grounds with gardens and a maze, it features a swimming pool, tennis courts and an equestrian center. The beautifully decorated rooms with their rich tapestries and frescos evoke an atmosphere of calm elegance, peace, and comfort. The hotel restaurant serves a fusion of traditional Portuguese and international cuisine in an elegant dining room with panoramic views over the Palacio's surrounding gardens to the Sintra Mountains beyond.

£1975 Members, £2025 non-Members, £190 single room supplement, £300 deposit, includes return flights London to Lisbon, all transfers and taxis, five nights accommodation in Palacio de Seteais, all breakfasts, three lunches with wine, one private lunch in a manor house with wine, two dinners with wine, all tuition and lectures, the services of a local guide for part of the tour, all entrance fees and private visits, all gratuities, VAT.

*Please note that this tour is an 'Inscape Retreat', and so will be centred in a lovely hotel with morning lectures in situ, short excursions by minibus in the afternoons, and excellent meals available in the hotel dining room. However, Sintra is a hill town and short uphill walks of 200 yards or more will be necessary on uneven pavement. Participation in the afternoon excursions may not be suitable if you have limited mobility. You are welcome to spend the afternoon resting and reading in the landscaped gardens and swimming in the pool at the hotel.*