

Episode 40: Lisbon Lookouts

Summary

Nick and Wendy talk about their new home of Lisbon, Portugal. They discuss the city's hills and some of the lookout points that afford great views of old Lisbon.

Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are coming to you from our new home town. As you know, if you've listened to previous episodes, I'm Australian, Wendy's American and we lived in Switzerland, in the city of Geneva, for six years. Umm, but we recently moved and now our new home town is the city of Lisbon, which is the capital of Portugal. How exciting!

Wendy: It is exciting, yeah. We're very happy to have made this move. And, uhh, I mean, there's been lots of, you know, not so fun stuff that comes along with a big international move like that, so we've had to deal with a lot of paperwork and going shopping and buying furniture and new things, but the actual city of Lisbon, we really love and we're really excited to be here.

Nick: Yeah, we've obviously moved quite a few different times, but we always did it without really having a proper base, and so we moved with very little stuff.

Wendy: Yeah, a lot of times we literally¹ just had backpacks. Everything that we owned, we carried on our backs. And so it made life very simple. And this time it was a bit more complicated.

Nick: Yeah, so we had to move some things from Switzerland to here and, then, as you said there was other paperwork and things like that. But that's all mostly finished, and now we can enjoy ourselves in Lisbon.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: And as a way of introducing Lisbon, we thought we would talk about the different lookouts or the different viewpoints that there are in the city. Because one of the things that is very famous about Lisbon and it's one of the first things that people realise or understand when they arrive is that there are a lot of hills in

¹ literally: in fact or actually; not an exaggeration

Lisbon. And it's built on seven hills, the same as Rome, and so that's quite nice for us because we used to live in Rome as well, but whereas in Rome the hills don't really affect your everyday life that much...

Wendy: No, it doesn't feel like a hilly town. You mostly feel like you're just walking on flat ground. And in Lisbon you very rarely feel like you're walking on flat ground. Uhh, yeah, there's a lot of ups and downs, so you get a lot of exercise just by walking around the city.

Nick: Right, and so most of the historic neighbourhoods are on these two different hills which are opposite each other, and that's also where we live, and, so yeah, especially if you're a tourist or if you live where we are, then you're walking up and down the hills, umm, a lot. But that's part of the charm² of the city.

Wendy: Yeah.

Nick: You know, some people say things like, 'Oh, Lisbon would be great if there weren't as many hills,' but if there weren't as many hills, it wouldn't be the same city that it is.

Wendy: No.

Nick: And so one of the really interesting aspects about all of these hills is that it's afforded³ the opportunity for these lookout points that you have in various places around the city. And it's interesting because usually when you think of lookouts or viewing points, viewing platforms, you're thinking about places that are in nature.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: Like in the United States, for example, if you go to the Grand Canyon, there are lots of viewing platforms and points where you can look out over the Grand Canyon from the rim. But here in Lisbon it's very much urban lookout points where you're looking out over the city from these different vantage points⁴, umm, with different angles and looking at different parts of the city from the different lookouts.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: Umm, and so it's really nice when you're walking up and down - especially up - a lot of the hills, to be able to take a bit of a pause, take a bit of a break, and then look out and see the views from one of these viewing platforms. So there are

² charm: attraction, appeal

³ afforded: given, supplied

⁴ vantage points: positions or places that give you an advantage (such as a good view)

several of them, there's at least four. Umm, probably the most famous one is the lookout which is called Santa Luzia, and it's in the area of Alfama which is the most famous of the historic neighbourhoods of Lisbon. And it's really quite an amazing view because you're looking out over Alfama itself, over the kind of oldest part of Lisbon, and also over the river, umm, the river which is, in English, which is called the Tagus, umm, in Portuguese the Tejo. And so you get both of those views of the river and also old Lisbon as well. And so it's quite a sweeping view⁵, you can see basically in all directions and it's really amazing.

Wendy: It is, yeah. Umm, Lisbon is a beautiful city and, uhh, it has ... most of the buildings are covered with these red-tiled roofs, and so you see these, uhh, roofs at lots of different angles, kind of higgledy-piggledy⁶, uhh, grouped together, and so it's a beautiful sight, really.

Nick: Yeah, because in the hill where Alfama is, you know, there's also different levels and different hills within the hills, and so, yeah, the houses and the rooftops are all at different heights and it's just a really lovely jumble⁷, umm, of rooftops and of different buildings and the buildings are in different colours. They're usually bright colours, and so you can really see this all, umm, from these viewpoints, or from this viewpoint in particular in Santa Luzia. And it's great because sometimes when you're walking in Alfama, you know, you can't really see that whole thing. You're in a narrow⁸ alleyway and you can just see the buildings kind of rising, umm, very close to you. Uhh, and so you miss the forest for the trees⁹, basically. But then you can really see everything when you go to this viewpoint. And then you can also see the river as well. Umm, we did actually look, when we were looking for a place to live, at a place that was right near there and it had a ... from the window, it didn't have as good a view as from the viewpoint, but it had a view of some of the rooftops and also a bit of the river, and it was interesting that they were trying to use the river as the real selling point, but what we think is the most interesting part of that viewpoint are the rooftops.

Wendy: Yeah, yeah. The river is not the most beautiful river I've ever seen, probably because it's so big and wide, umm, that ... I don't know. It, umm, you have lots of big boats, not necessarily very attractive boats, umm, and the activity along the bank of the river is often related to, you know, shipping of different materials and

⁵ sweeping view: a view that allows you to see a lot in several directions

⁶ higgledy-piggledy: jumbled, crooked, disorderly

⁷ jumble: mess, confused mixture

⁸ narrow: not wide, limited in size. Often used to describe streets.

⁹ miss the forest for the trees: focus too much on details (trees) and fail to see the big picture (forest). See also: Episode 10: Stockholm.

things and so you have this busy port, umm, atmosphere. And I don't think that's really the best part of the city for me.

Nick: Yeah, no, I would agree. I would agree for sure. And so you look, umm, towards the south, I guess, from this viewpoint in Alfama, then from Alfama you can climb even higher to the next historic neighbourhood which is called Graça and there's a lookout point up there as well. And then in this one, you look towards the west, and so it's looking in a different direction, umm, and it's obviously a little bit higher. It's right next to a church or a monastery even, umm, and then you look back towards a different part of the city. But, it's also very interesting because you're very high, umm, and the land immediately in front of you is called Baixa which is the low point, uhh, between the two main hills of the historical neighbourhoods of Lisbon. And so you look down on this area and then on the other hill that rises opposite on the other side as well.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm. Yeah, I really like that one, because you're up very high and so you can see really a lot of the city.

Nick: And it's another one where you're not really aware as you're walking nearby there, necessarily, what's kind of around you, and suddenly you go to this platform, and then suddenly the whole city opens up in front of you and you can really see a lot.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: And then as you look all the way over the other side, umm, you can see the neighbourhood called the Bairro Alto, which is the high neighbourhood or the tall neighbourhood, one of the most famous of the historical neighbourhoods in Lisbon. And over on that side, there's another lookout point where you can look back, uhh, towards Alfama, towards the medieval castle, towards the cathedral and towards Graça as well. Uhh, and so that's a spectacular lookout point because there's an enormous platform, it's very large and so there's lots of places where you can go. Umm, and there's places where you can sit down and have a drink or even perhaps something to eat as well.

Wendy: Yeah, I think they might serve small snacks there.

Nick: Umm, there are a few kiosks, which are these little shacks¹⁰ I guess you would say, which serves drinks, both drinks like tea and coffee and then also beer and wine. And the kiosks are quite famous I think in Lisbon, even though they're, umm, they're quite ... they're not exactly modern or they just have this, umm ... I think there's a nostalgia for them. They're in a lot of the little parks and things like that around the city and so there's definitely a couple of these kiosks at the lookout

¹⁰ shacks: huts or cabins

point in the Bairro Alto. And, umm, I remember when we were visiting here years ago and we were seeing some friends, they took us to that spot because it's one of the famous spots in the city and you can go to the kiosk and have a drink and enjoy yourself and enjoy the views.

Wendy: Yeah, yeah, it's a great way to just sit and relax and just enjoy the atmosphere and enjoy being in Lisbon and watching the people around you.

Nick: It's also a really good way to orientate yourself, uhh, about the city, to know what things are in, or which things are in which direction. And you can really get a good look out over the whole city and really understand how it all comes together and how it all works.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm.

Nick: So, if you ever come to Lisbon, that's one of the things you should definitely do is find these lookouts and, uhh, you'll have great views in all directions, uhh, across the whole city.

Wendy: Definitely.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was this move to Lisbon more difficult for Nick and Wendy than previous moves?
2. What do Nick and Wendy like most about the views from the Santa Luzia lookout in Alfama?
3. Why isn't the river one of Wendy's favourite places in Lisbon?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. It's a one-way street because it's very _____, so two cars wouldn't fit.
2. In some European cities, you can climb to the top of the cathedral tower and get a _____ over the whole city.
3. We took a taxi and the ride took _____ one minute. We should have just walked.
4. If you're at the beach and you're thirsty, there might be a couple of _____ on the sand where you can buy something to drink.
5. In the game Jenga, players build a _____ tower that isn't very stable and eventually falls over.
6. The true _____ of a city like Rome or Venice can often be found in the narrow backstreets away from the main attractions.
7. At the meeting no one would let anyone else talk and so all you could hear was a _____ of different voices all at the same time.
8. One of the best _____ in London is the top of the London Eye ferris wheel. From there, you can see the whole city.
9. After he received death threats in the mail, he was _____ special protection by the police.
10. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome has so many great works of art that it's easy to focus on those and not take in the whole church. If you do that, you'll _____.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Have you been to Lisbon? If so, did you like it? If not, would you like to go? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever made an international move as Nick and Wendy just did? Was it easy or difficult?
3. Do you have lookouts or viewpoints where you live, or can you think of other cities that do have them? What can you see from them?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. It was more difficult because they had more things to move after living in Geneva for six years. Previously they had often moved with just a backpack full of things.
2. They like the views of the rooftops and buildings of Alfama and the way that the hill shapes the urban landscape.
3. Because it's quite large and because there is a lot of shipping that takes place there with large, unattractive boats.

Exercises

1. narrow
2. sweeping view
3. literally
4. shacks
5. higgledy-piggledy
6. charm
7. jumble
8. vantage points
9. afforded
10. miss the forest for the trees