

Episode 89: Porto

Summary

Nick and Wendy talk about Porto, the second largest city in Portugal. They talk about life along the riverfront and the other things they did during their recent trip to Porto with Nick's family.

Transcript

Nick: Today Wendy and I are talking about Porto, which is the second largest city in Portugal, where we live. Because we were just there a couple of weeks ago, right?

Wendy: Yes we were, on the occasion of the visit of your parents, uhh, who were visiting from Australia, and so we showed them around, and travelled around Portugal and got to revisit some places that we hadn't been to in a while, and also see some new places.

Nick: Right, so Porto, as I said, is the second largest city in Portugal. And Portugal is really one of these countries that has two major cities, in the same way that Germany does or Australia or Brazil or some other countries. Umm, and actually the name of the country of Portugal comes from the city of Porto, so it's a very important place in the country. And we'd been there a couple of times before, once for a weekend or a long weekend when we were living in Geneva. That was probably six years ago. And then a couple of other times we'd just sort of passed through, umm, but we hadn't really explored it properly for some time until this recent trip. So that was great to spend three days there and check it out again.

Wendy: It was, yeah. It's a beautiful city. Umm, it does have some similarities to Lisbon, but then it also has some things that make it quite distinct as well. I really love both cities. Uhh, I know that there's quite a rivalry between the two, uhh, among, you know, the inhabitants. So, I mean, I think it's kind of a fun rivalry where it's all in jest¹, but they do make fun² of each other and, umm, you know, Lisbon ... people who live in Lisbon will say bad things about people who live in Porto, and vice versa. Umm, but even though we live in Lisbon, umm, I guess because we haven't grown up here and, you know, had that rivalry all our lives, we don't feel that, we don't feel any kind of animosity³ against Porto, I don't think.

¹ in jest: in a joking or not serious way

² make fun: tease, provoke

³ animosity: feeling of dislike

Nick: Yeah actually, maybe the opposite, because in Geneva where we used to live, there's a large population of people of Portuguese descent. And basically all of them seem to come from Porto. Umm, and when I was teaching English there, I taught quite a few students who were of Portuguese descent and they had all come from Porto. And so they would keep telling me how great it was, and when I told them I was moving to Portugal, they wanted me to move there, but instead we moved to Lisbon. Umm, so, yeah, they're definitely proud of their city, which is great.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm, for sure.

Nick: And so we went with - as you said - my parents and also my brother Tim, so we were five of us there together. It didn't start off very well.

Wendy: No, yeah, there was a lot of drama when we first arrived, because we had booked an Air BnB, and when we got there, it was not as advertised and, yeah, it was just not acceptable and so we had a big argument with the managers of the BnB. Eventually they cancelled the reservation and we had to go find somewhere else, uhh, which was very stressful. But we did and we found a much better place and so it all worked out in the end.

Nick: Yeah, there was a time when we didn't exactly know what we were going to do, and because my Dad is a worrier, umm, I think he was a bit worried about it. Umm, but yeah, we were able to make this booking, and they were great, they were able to come and meet us very shortly after we'd made the booking. And, umm, it was an amazing place with this incredible view over the famous bridge, the Luís I bridge of Porto, which is one of the icons⁴ of the city, so it was great in the end.

Wendy: Yeah, it was a fantastic location, where we ended up, and, uhh, and also just a much better apartment as well. So everything worked out.

Nick: Yeah, and so it was interesting to see Porto a little bit through the eyes of my parents and my brother as well. And one of the things that my Dad, especially, had said about Lisbon was that, while he liked it a lot, that it didn't seem to make great use of its waterfront, which I think is true. We have a river called the Tejo in Portuguese or the Tagus in English, umm, in Lisbon, but there aren't a lot of places where you can go and there's lots of cafés and restaurants and lots of buzz around it. There's a lot of, kind of, shipping and other things around the river, so the river, for me, is not really one of the great highlights of Lisbon. And Porto is completely different. It also has a river which is the Douro, and basically everything takes place on the two banks of the river.

⁴ icons: symbols (famous sights, in this case)

Wendy: Yeah, although I will say there are parts of Lisbon along the river that do actually have restaurants and cafés. Umm, we don't go there very often, I've only been there a couple of times, basically when I was scoping out⁵ a running, umm...

Nick: Route.

Wendy: Running route, yes, thank you. Which I still haven't been running or jogging since we moved to Lisbon, but I have thought about it a couple of times and, because it's so hilly, the river is the one obvious place where I could go running, if one day I decide to do it. Umm, so I've been down there a couple of times just to see if that would be a good place to run. And there is actually a path, and also a bicycle path, where you can cycle along the river. But it's quite cut off⁶ from the rest of the city and so it's not a place that you really pass by very often unless you're specifically trying to go there. Whereas in Porto, that really is the heart of the city. Where the river is, that's, you know, the whole city was created around the river.

Nick: Yep, for sure. And it's interesting that one side of the river of Porto, and the other side has another name. I mean, it's essentially a suburb, but it's called Gaia and it seems to be quite separate, or the people on each side of the river seem to have their own little rivalry even within the city. And so Gaia is where a lot of the, umm, factories are that produce port wine, and so that's a very famous thing that comes from Porto. Umm, and so I think the people from Porto on the other side joke that the only reason that Gaia exists is that it can basically supply them with this wine and other produce and things like that. But it's interesting to get both different, umm, perspectives from each side of the river.

Wendy: Yeah, because you have a beautiful view from Gaia looking back over to Porto. Uhh, but actually the views from both sides are really beautiful.

Nick: Yep. And so we spent a lot of time along the river, just walking along the river on both sides. Umm, and there's, you know, there's lots of restaurants and bars and things like that, so it's a really fun place to be. The Porto side also then just extends uphill, umm, and so there's an area, and this is the area where we ended up staying, where there's a lot of steps. Umm, but it's just this kind of fascinating little maze⁷ of these alleyways and steps and you never really know what you're going to see around the next corner, and that's a lot of fun as well.

Wendy: Mmm-hmm. That part reminded me of Alfama in Lisbon, which is the old, umm, Moorish and Jewish neighbourhood, uhh, that was not destroyed by the earthquake. So, unlike the rest of the city that's built along a grid pattern, it's also

⁵ scoping out: figuring out, checking out

⁶ cut off: separate, apart

⁷ maze: confusing network of paths

lots of, you know, narrow winding⁸ alleys and cobblestone pathways. Umm, yeah, so it had ... the two cities have that in common. Umm, but as we said, there are some distinct things about each city as well.

Nick: So what are the other things that we did in Porto? We went to a few parks because my brother Tim really likes walking and it's also really good for Mum if she can walk a lot as long as⁹ they're aren't too many stairs. Umm, and so we went to one park in particular, and there were peacocks in the park, just kind of walking around, free, and that was a nice little surprise.

Wendy: Yeah, and they were putting on a nice display. The males were showing off all their feathers to the females. So, yeah, we sat there for quite a while and just watched the peacocks and relaxed.

Nick: We also took a river cruise as many people do. And so it's the Six Bridge Cruise, I think they call it, umm, because you go under six different bridges. Umm, and so you go basically both sides of where the main city of Porto is. So you go down one way and you go under all the bridges, and then you come back and then go further in the other direction. Umm, and so that's a great thing to do as well, because there's this one famous bridge like we mentioned, umm, the Luís I bridge. And it's really interesting because you can go under it, on one of these boats. You can also walk along the bridge at ground level, but it's also a very, very high bridge, and so there's an upper level, much, much higher. And you can walk across that or go across that by tram or by car. Umm, and so we experienced this bridge basically in all the ways you could possibly do it.

Wendy: Yeah, yeah. Did we walk on the high part or just on the low part?

Nick: No, we walked on the high part as well. Because there's that church that's up the top on the Gaia side.

Wendy: Yeah.

Nick: And then we walked from there to the other side. And then the city walls are on the Porto side up at that high level as well.

Wendy: Yeah, OK.

Nick: We also saw someone jumping off the bridge as well. Not the higher part, but the lower part.

Wendy: And they weren't trying to kill themselves, they were doing it, uhh, on purpose just, I don't know, for a thrill¹⁰ or to get attention. Uhh, but he was wearing

⁸ winding: frequently bending or curving; not straight.

⁹ as long as: provided that. See also: Episode 56: Mafalala.

¹⁰ thrill: a sudden burst of excitement

a wetsuit and we had seen him, we had passed by him earlier when we were walking on the bridge and then later as we were just sitting there watching, we saw, 'Oh, he's going to jump!' And he did, and he made it back out, so, uhh, he was fine. But it was, even though it was from the lower part, it was still a pretty high jump.

Nick: Yep, so we chose not to do that. Umm, but anyway, it was a great, uhh, three days that we had in Porto and it's definitely a city worth checking out.

Wendy: For sure.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the trip to Porto not start well?
2. According to Nick, what is the difference between the riverfront in Lisbon and Porto?
3. What unusual thing did Nick and Wendy see at the Luís I bridge in Porto?

Exercises

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

1. We're going to go to the beach this weekend, _____ it's not raining.
2. When they went to the park, her children really loved the _____. They spent hours in that labyrinth trying to find their way out.
3. When he was a child, his friends used to _____ of him. Now that he's a big star, they don't do it anymore!
4. I was just saying it _____, but I think she took offence to it. I need to be a bit more careful with my jokes in future.
5. Rome has so many _____: the Colosseum, the Vatican, the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain etc. It's hard to know which one to visit first!
6. They found a house for sale that they really want to buy, so today they're _____ the neighbourhood to make sure it's a nice area.
7. The kids got such a _____ when they went on the rollercoaster. They screamed in happiness all the way down.
8. The most direct path up the mountain is very steep and difficult. Luckily, there's also a _____ path that takes longer but is easier.
9. They don't like each other at all. Everyone can see the _____ between them.
10. They've decided to buy a house in the country where they can be completely self-sufficient. It's a beautiful house, but it's very _____ from civilisation.

Discussion Questions

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

1. Have you been to Porto? If so, did you like it? If not, would you like to go?
2. Wendy mentioned a rivalry between Lisbon and Porto. Are there rivalries between cities where you live? Are they friendly rivalries or serious ones?
3. Other than Porto, can you think of another city that has a lot of life and activity along a river? Can you describe it?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. Because the apartment they had booked was not acceptable, so they had to find another place to stay.
2. That in Porto there is a lot of activity and places for people to enjoy themselves, and in Lisbon this is less true.
3. They saw a man in a wetsuit jumping off the bridge.

Exercises

1. as long as
2. maze
3. make fun
4. in jest
5. icons
6. scoping out
7. thrill
8. winding
9. animosity
10. cut off