



**A golden age**  
A street performance on a shop-filled street. Opposite page, clockwise from left, Rosior; the patio at the Four Seasons Hotel Ritz; Luvaria Ulisses store; and the Shoes Closet store at Embaixada LX.

# THE CLUTCH-YOUR-HEART BARGAINS ARE THE RAVISHING HANDMADE EVENING AND WEDDING DRESSES THAT MARIA VIRGINIA MAKES FOR ABOUT €900 (DH4,584)



## HANDMADE DRESSES

It's a thrill to discover that the dramatic dresses worn by Joan Collins in the seminal 1980s television series *Dynasty* were made by a Portuguese dressmaker, Maria Virginia Silveira. At 68, she still runs a made-to-measure, couture-quality dressmaking service from the boutique that she bought after moving back to Lisbon from London. The boutique, **She**, at Rua Castilho 75, parallel to Avenida da Liberdade, specialises in chic, ready-to-wear dresses at a bargain price – €110 (DH558) – but the clutch-your-heart bargains are the ravishing handmade evening and wedding dresses that **Maria Virginia** (00351 917 607 782) makes for about €900 (DH4,584; fabric and trimmings extra). Her most recent creation was a Valentino-worthy wedding dress in the palest oyster satin, made for the Dubai-born daughter of a senior official at the UAE Embassy in Lisbon, an incredible feat of *Borrowers*-tiny hand stitching, pleating and embroidery.

## WHERE TO STOP FOR COFFEE

On little squares across the city, the old, green, wrought-iron kiosks that used to sell newspapers have recently been converted into coffee stalls and bars with tables and chairs in the open air. Many have good views as well as excellent coffee, a nice mix of cakes, and chicken-salad wraps for €3 (DH15). Must-try – or at least, must-see — cafes include the 19th-century wood-panelled **Nacional** next to the main Rossio square; **A Brasileira**, with its mahogany counter, brass fittings and decorative wall tiles on Rua Garrett, near La Perla and across the square from Hermès and the new branch of the cult American skincare brand Kiehl's; and the main cafe in the **Jardim da Estrela botanical gardens**, where you can savour homemade cake – the carrot and tangerine is good – while watching ducks and geese on the shaded pond. It's worth getting a taxi here for a coffee before

crossing the road to where the famous and ever-more-popular 28 tram starts its journey up to medieval Alfama. For an ice cream, the best is at **Santini**, on Rua do Carmo, at €2 (DH10) per delectable scoop. Milk caramel and coconut are especially recommended. **GETTING AROUND** Few cities are as easy to get into, out of, and around as Lisbon. In one direction, the airport is a 20-minute, €20 (DH102) cab ride from the centre; in the other, Estoril, once a favoured escape for Portugal's royalty, and the broad, firm, sandy beaches of Cascais, are 20 minutes along the coast on a €2.60 (DH13) train ride from the central waterfront Cais do Sodré station. Small but often steep of street, Lisbon can be explored by clanking 19th-century wooden trams if you get tired of walking up its little cobbled streets.

ROSOR; FOUR SEASONS; REX FEATURES; EMBAXADA LX; BLOOMBERG

The number 28 tram lurches up and down the seven hills on which the city is built, stopping at most of the places that you might want to visit. A one-day travel card for the trams, buses (useful for getting to the marvellous Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, on the waterfront on the outskirts of the city) and Metro costs €6 (DH31), from any Metro station or tobacconist. For a personalised, go-where-you-want guided tour in a six-seater motorised tuk-tuk imported from Thailand, there's Eco Tuk Tours (00351 914 925 450, [www.ecotuktours.com](http://www.ecotuktours.com)); a two-hour tour costs €90 (DH458), whether two or six hire the customised vehicle. **WHERE TO STAY** Modernist, filled with large open-plan rooms flooded with natural light and adorned with some stupendous Portuguese artworks, the **Four Seasons Hotel Ritz** opened in 1959 – commissioned by

Salazar, Portugal's dictator until 1968 – to be a showcase for the best that the country could offer. Some of the best views of the city are seen from its rooftop running track and, because of the state of the Portuguese economy, it has the rather delicious additional appeal of being one of Europe's least expensive Four Seasons. It's a 10-minute walk from here through the Edward VII park to the must-see Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. And with large rooms, fast-running baths, perfect beds and linen, flawless service and a truly delectable breakfast served in the huge, light-filled restaurant, Varanda, the hotel is an undiluted pleasure to visit. If you want to split your stay between city and beach, maybe throwing in some golf and a visit to the Casa Histórica museum to see the works of Portugal's most famous living artist, Dame Paula Rego, the newest smart place to stay in Cascais is **The Oitavos**. This is a 141-room glass and steel structure in the middle of an award-

winning golf course, with a vast, entirely open ground floor and big, airy, high-ceilinged and light-filled rooms looking out over heather, the golf course and the sea. You can fall asleep with the glass doors leading to the terrace wide open, listening to the sound of waves. Bliss. The food is outstanding, too. **GETTING THERE** Three nights' bed and breakfast at the Four Seasons with return Emirates flights from Dubai costs from €1,518 (DH7,731) per person, including taxes with **DialAFlight** (0044 844 811 4444; [www.dialaflight.com](http://www.dialaflight.com)). They can also arrange stays at The Oitavos. Direct return flights with **Emirates** ([www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)) cost from Dh4,075, including taxes. The website [www.visitlisboa.com](http://www.visitlisboa.com) has plenty of useful listings, and the Portuguese and English booklet *Lisboa Bairro a Bairro* is an invaluable shopping guide.