

ON A HIGH

From wine blending to water battles, Olivia Palamountain reports on how Lisbon is boosting its fun factor with action-packed teambuilding activities

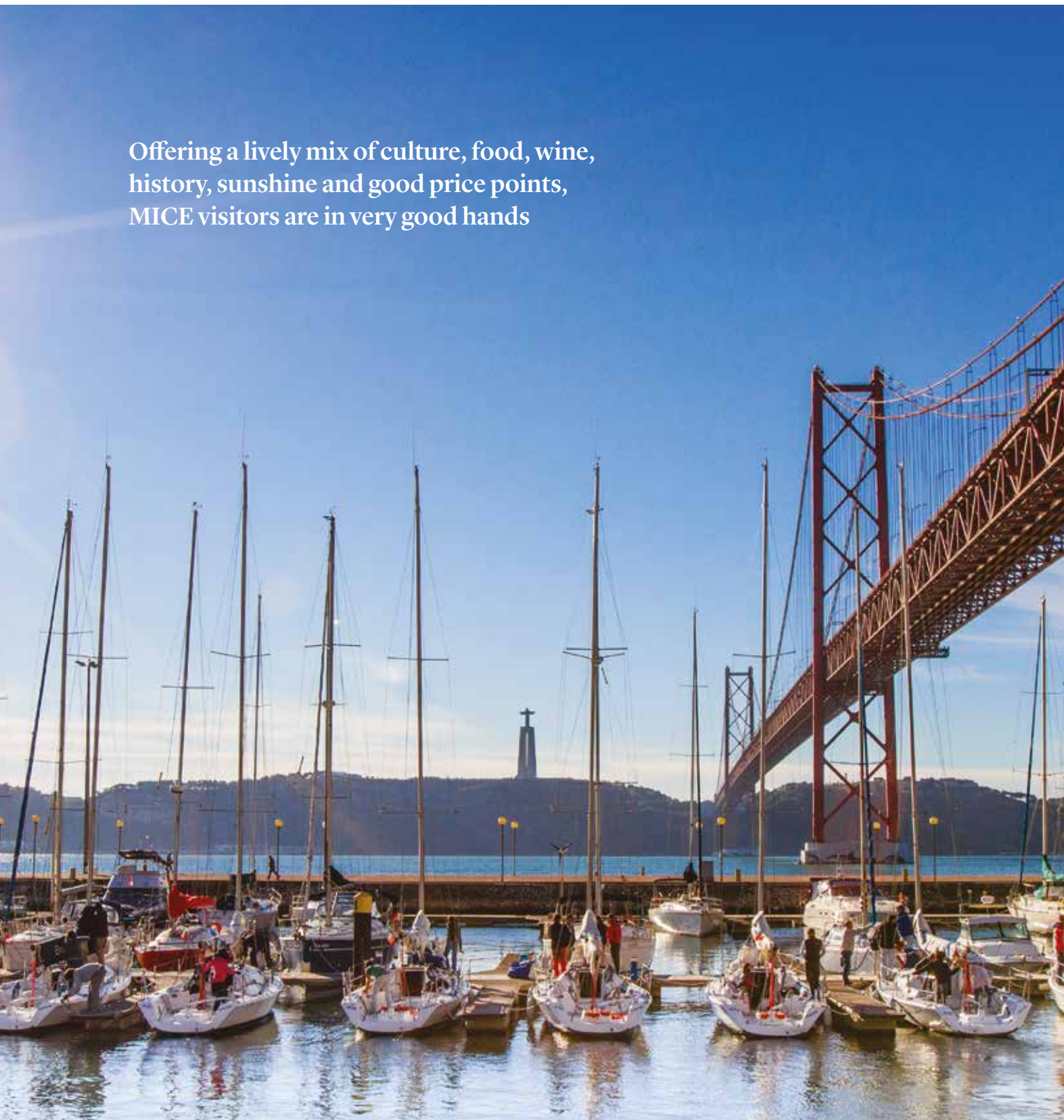
It's fair to say that Lisbon peaked early. Thanks to Portugal's intrepid explorers, the city flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries, acquiring power and riches as the centre of a vast empire. But subsequent disasters, such as the great earthquake and tsunami of 1755, followed by patches of economic instability, have seen this once formidable nation endure years of depression.

Today, however, Portugal is enjoying a renaissance, attracting a record 11.4 million foreign tourists in 2016, with Lisbon remaining the most popular destination. On the streets of the capital, it's easy to see why. The city is a joy, commanding a glorious position on the River Tagus with pastel-hued neighbourhoods scattered across seven hills – perfect for working off Lisbon's world-famous

custard tarts. Offering a lively mix of culture, food, wine and history, as well as 260 days of sunshine per year and very attractive price points, it's no wonder Lisbon is being rediscovered as Europe's next big thing.

MICE visitors are in especially good hands. Lisbon is home to diverse venues ranging from ancient monuments such as the Beato Convent to ultra-modern facilities, including the Lisbon Congress Centre, the MEO Arena and FIL Lisboa. Brand new for this year is SUD Lisboa, a swanky all-day restaurant with a rooftop pool on the banks of the Tagus, twinned with a state-of-the-art venue next door. Scratch the surface of this vibrant city and you won't ever stop digging. Did we mention the custard tarts?

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SAILING EXCURSIONS

With a maritime history that changed the way we view the world, and as a city built on its relationship with water, a sailing excursion in Lisbon is a must for any group. Terra Incognita has 20 years of experience offering sailing instruction and events on the Tagus, with its ship-shape fleet of yachts, catamarans and speedboats. According to the company's Nuno Ferreira, "a sailboat provides the perfect analogy of how to work in a corporate team". Under the watchful eye of a skilled skipper, groups of up to seven people on each vessel learn how to operate the boat together and navigate a route, in order to win a series of races and/or GPS contests. After a day of intense work, teams can release their inner pirate with a game of battleships using 100 per cent biodegradable water balloons, with everything is captured on camera by a professional photographer. The programme challenges participants to develop their communication and strategy skills, which they can take back to the office or boardroom. terraincognita.pt

WINE-BLENDING WORKSHOP

Get ready to follow your nose with a workshop at one of the best wine producers in the region. Available for groups of ten to 400 people, a visit to one of the Sintra vineyards guarantees one of the best methods of bringing people together – booze. Set in an 18th-century barn, the workshop is all about getting to know various grapes, identifying the flavours in wine, bottling, and of course sealing using cork, one of Portugal's primary exports. After a blind tasting of five Portuguese wines, each participant can mix their own blend from three base wines and finish the job with a personalised label. The curiously named "wine stomping" session is another group activity, depending on the time of year. godiscoverportugal.com

LISBON BY BEETLE

A city as stunning as Lisbon needs few frills to impress. But introduce a vintage car into the mix and you can't fail to blow your guests away. Cute and quirky, a soft-top VW Beetle tour of the city is a great way of acclimatising guests and introducing them to the famous sights. At Lisbon by Beetle, you can tack a wide range of supplementary experiences on to your tour, such as a surf lesson or dolphin watching, or even design your own bespoke event. All cars come with a guide and





storyteller to bring the views to life, but self-drive activities can also be arranged. Other motorised excursions available to book include Segway tours, eco-tuk tours, Go Cars and bikes.
lisbonbybeetle.com

CRAFT BEER EXPERIENCE

Portugal may be renowned for its wine but its craft beer scene is booming. What better way to explore Portuguese brews than with an orienteering challenge in Lisbon? A delightful experience, this half-day will introduce your team to unique recipes, curious places, local stories and high quality craft beer. In this challenge, your team will journey around the city (either on foot or by tuk-tuk) using a tablet and app-based programme to locate pit stops that each provide a different snapshot of craft beer. Participate in delicious tastings in four or more locations (budget and duration flexible), including snacks of local tapas and the option of an additional workshop, a competitive game of beer pong, or even an actor dressed as a comedy monk to talk you through the process.

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A FESTA OF FADO, DRINK AND SARDINES

Throughout the month of June, Lisbon gets loose to celebrate St Anthony, with nonstop music, dance and sardines, all served up on the cobbled streets. Bring a flavour of the *festa* to your group with a walking challenge that covers three of the city's most charming districts – and all the ingredients for a killer party. After a briefing from your host, before long you'll be sipping *ginjinha* (cherry liquor) in a traditional *tasca*, munching on codfish cakes by the river, and playing local games such as *piao* and *malha* (we won't spoil the surprise). The final flourish? A beautifully decorated gala dinner, complete with the obligatory sardines and a folklore performance featuring the stunning sounds of *fado*.

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