

THE SMART SHOPPER

LISBON



HIDE AND CHIC

Leather, linen and old-world bargains lure **Evie Dow** to Portugal's revamped capital

Handmade gloves, hats and riding boots, embroidered bed linen and monogrammed towels, all at bargain prices; old-fashioned shops with wooden counters and antique glass display cabinets; shopkeepers who

jewellery and elaborate silverware. "All handmade," says the owner, Albeato Sampaio. "My German and Italian customers say my prices are so good. But young people now want iPads, not silver soup tureens. My craftsmen are in their eighties. When

wrap your purchases in brown paper tied with ribbon or twine, as English shopkeepers did in the 1940s... Whether such images make you crave acquisition or not, Portugal is an intriguing place to shop. It's where The White Company sources many of its beautiful cotton and linen goods, and where antique dealers go to hunt for pieces they can sell at a massive mark-up in London or Paris. The lovely traditional products on sale amid the fading grandeur of the least expensive capital in Western Europe feel covetably contemporary - and in the revamped industrial waterfront design district, a new generation of young designers is producing some interesting art and fashion. As a shopping destination, therefore, Lisbon falls into the "unexpectedly rewarding" category. Having arrived with only hand luggage, expecting to do little more than sightsee, I leave a few days later laden with carrier bags, just hoping the check-in staff won't notice.

I start my long weekend in Chiado, just up from the central Rossio Square, on one of the main shopping streets, Rua do Carmo. At 87a is Luvaria Ulisses - purveyor of handmade gloves since 1925, and the smallest luxury shop I have ever seen, measuring barely 3ft by 3ft. If it were any smaller, no one would be able to get in - and, as it is, I have to wait on the pavement while the single customer inside has her gloves parcelled up. Bending over to look at the gloves in the glass cabinet is a challenge, but worth it. Simultaneously displayed are long, supple calfskin gloves of up-to-the-ampit length - the sort Louis Vuitton et al were selling this winter at £600 - for £127. "You wish to try? I see you are - ah, size seven-and-three-quarters," says the dapper owner, Carlos Carvalho, squeezed into the doorway of the stock cupboard.

Next door at 87b, Joalhas do Carmo also looks as it did when it was opened - by the grandfather of the current owner - in 1924, but here the mood is slightly melancholy. Mahogany glass cabinets display 19-carat gold copies of 18th-century

they go, I wonder if I will carry on." I linger over an exquisite gold rope necklace, but it's £5,000.

At Paris em. Lisbon, a wood-fronted linen shop on nearby Rua Garrett, the stock is not only delectable but such alluringly good value that I want to scoop up everything: monogrammed linen hand towels for £7; white-on-white embroidered pillow cases that open on the long side for £15; finely stitched kingsize duvet covers for £65. After restocking my linen cupboard, I recover across the road at the most famous of the city's cafés - the gilded, deliciously dim old Café a Brasileira. Coffee and the Portuguese speciality, a sweet, yolky *pastéis de nata* tart, costs just £2.20. Fuelled by a regular intake of this treat, and grateful for the No28 train, clanking up and down the steepest streets, I continue exploration.

On Rua do Loreto, I step inside the wood-paneled Casa das Velas do Loreto (in the same family since 1789) and find tall, honey-scented ecclesiastical candles for £15. At **A Vida Portuguesa**, on Rua Anchieta, my heart quickens at the fine Portuguese soaps and beautifully-packaged *finessed* sardines. Junk stalls in the Estrela park yield some

irresistibly j-rushing, framed black-and-white family photographs from the 1930s, costing a few euros each. Exploring the new waterfront design area, Santos, provides a satisfying few hours.

Back on Rossio, at the 120-year-old Chapelaria Azevedo Rua, I linger at a handmade man's fedora for £57 - the double of one I swear I saw on Jermyn Street at £120. I postpone checking out handmade riding boots at Vitorino de Sousa on Rua dos Correeiros. And it is just as well that, before I hit the antique shops of Rua de São Bento, I meet the art-restorer owner of the new Palácio e Chafariz del Rei boutique hotel, a 1906 mansion he renovated. "Lisbon has great antique stores," he says, "but so does Oporto - and 50 per cent cheaper." So it's advisable to take a large suitcase there? "A van!" he says with a grin, and points to a beautiful 1920s leather sofa and chair bought for £170.



World of leather Top right: Luvaria Ulisses, opened in 1925, where handmade calfskin gloves (above) cost from £48. Top left: the M+de design museum

HOW TO DO IT

When to go

Any time, but May is best: it's not too hot, the purple jacaranda is in blossom, and you can take a 30-minute train ride to the beaches at Cascais - home row to the **Casa das Histórias**, showing the surrealist work of Portugal's brilliant Paula Rego. Bear in mind that Sunday is quiet, only museums open.

Where to stay

On the outskirts, the **Lapa Palace** and

Postana Palace hotels are very grand, but all the chic new spots are central: **LX Boutique**, **Inspira Santa Marta** and, just off Rossio, the **Altis Avenida** (00 351 29 172 4307, portugal-live.net, rooms from £115), with young staff, black-carpeted rooms, a spa, and a seventh-floor roof terrace brasserie. For more information, see visitlisboa.com and lytao.com

What to do

Pack flat shoes: you will walk a lot. On arrival, get the **Comvida Lisboa** shopping guides, free at all hotels, and a three-day **Lisboa Card** (€28) for the trams, Metro and buses. In budding **Baixa**, see the new **Mude design museum** (mude.pt) in Chiado, old shops; in **Príncipe Real**, new design stores, cool cafés such as **Orpheu**, and boutiques such as **Kolovrat** (kolovrat.org) at Rua Dom Pedro V 79, for witty printed silk scarves and spider-web silver necklaces costing €330. Go to **Bairro Alto** at night, for the bars, and medieval **Alfama** for almost hilariously mournful fado. Hottest area: waterfront, ex-industrial **Santos**, buzzing with lifestyle stores, bars and restaurants; see **LX Factory** (lxfactory.com) and **Ler** (lerdevagar.com).

Where to eat and drink

Have cocktails at new, glass-walled **Le Chat** (00 351 91 779 7155) at Jardim 9 de Abril. Have dinner at rough-chic **560** (00 351 21 346 8317, restaurant560.com) at Rua das Gáveas 78: wild mushrooms in Azores cheese, swordfish with banana, then pineapple carpaccio with coriander sauce. Finish at the new **Sol e Pesca** bar (00 351 21 346 7203) at Rua Nova do Carvalho 44.