



From the Ambassador's Desk

A Bi-Monthly Update from the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon

October 2015

Versão Portuguesa

PHOTO HIGHLIGHT



Ambassador Sherman and Pedro Pessoa e Costa, Executive Director of AICEP, cutting the first grapes of the vinho verde harvest [Read more>>](#)

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

>> [From Ambassador Robert A. Sherman](#)



Portugal continues to impress me. After more than a year I find surprises and wonders throughout this beautiful country. Recently, I had the distinct pleasure of traveling in the Alqueva region of the Alentejo. While there I saw the Pedrogão Dam and learned about the impressive work to bring water to the region; I visited Monsarraz and saw a remarkably restored house and enjoyed some Alentejo hospitality; and I finished my visit with a dinner featuring our Embassy Speaker, Alice Bowman. Ms. Bowman is the Mission Operation Manager (MOM) for the recent NASA mission to Pluto, "New Horizons," and she spoke about the challenges of deep space exploration and the value of going where we have never been before. The presentation by Alice was in the best possible location, in the Alqueva Dark Sky Reserve, where after dinner I had the opportunity to go star gazing and see the Milky Way in all its glory. This was a sight I was not expecting to see in the middle of Europe.

I have also been up North to Douro and Minho visiting wine makers. While at Quinta do Vallado I met the Douro Boys and had the pleasure of learning this great group of wine makers is not all men and to hear how they are building the Douro brand outside of Portugal. It was such a treat to help kick off the vinho verde harvest in Minho. I was thrilled to learn about the remarkable increase in vinho verde sales in the U.S. and about the cooperation and collaboration among vinho verde producers to leverage their resources to increase exports.

Of course, I can't forget the south of Portugal with all of its potential for growth. I had the opportunity to travel to the southern coast as well, where an American investment fund plans a €1 billion investment in the Vilamoura Resort. Truly from north to south and east to west Portugal is simply remarkable. I continue to be impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit here and the willingness of creative individuals to take on challenges in order to start and grow businesses. This acceptance of risk spurred the Age of Discoveries, and is alive and well in the Portugal of today.

I frequently get to see this entrepreneurial spirit in action among our Connect to Success participants. The Connect to Success program is starting its second year with a new group of women owned businesses partnering with corporate mentors, working with MBA students on consulting projects, and participating in workshops to gain the skills and networks to build their businesses. I am particularly pleased to say that in September Connect to Success received the European Diversity Award for Supplier Diversity & Inclusion Program of the Year.

Beyond the economic realm, I wanted to acknowledge the important role Portugal is playing right now as a co-host nation for one of the largest NATO exercises ever, Trident Juncture. This exercise will involve approximately 36,000 troops from more than 30 nations, more than 230 units, more than 140 aircraft and more than 60 ships. There will also be at least 12 international organizations, governmental organizations and NGOs participating, including the European Union, the OSCE, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the African Union. NATO is enhancing its readiness and flexibility in response to a changed security environment and to challenges from the south and the east. Trident Juncture 2015 is part of this effort and we at the Embassy have been pleased to play our part.

The coming weeks and months promise more exciting travel and important policy discussions as we prepare for the next meeting of the Standing Bilateral Commission in the Azores this December. The Embassy will continue our outreach work and I am looking forward to getting out and seeing more of Portugal beyond the major cities. Who knows -- I may be visiting your hometown soon!

FEATURE STORY

>> U.S. Response to Migrant Crisis



The United States has the largest single on-going refugee resettlement program in the world. The United States is also the largest single contributor to UN refugee efforts with over \$4.1 billion given over the last few years. But the challenge we face now is large and the U.S. still needs to do more. There are 7 million men, women, and children who are displaced inside Syria. There are 4 million more who are refugees scattered throughout the region. As Secretary Kerry noted, “the magnitude and duration of this crisis obviously has stretched the global response thin.”

We must all work together to address the challenge of this current migration crisis and to that end President Obama has authorized the admission of up to 85,000 refugees to the United States in 2016 – at least 10,000 of whom will be from Syria. For 2017, the President authorized admission of 100,000 refugees worldwide, believing the increase is consistent with the U.S. responsibility to do more. Overall, the United States has provided over \$4.5 billion in humanitarian assistance since the start of this crisis – more than any other donor.

While not on the “front lines” of this massive refugee flow, we know that Portugal too is responding to this humanitarian crisis, having committed to accept 4500 refugees over the next two years, a 45-fold increase from its past refugee intake. This will be a challenge for Portugal, and the U.S. Embassy is working closely with the government and Portuguese NGOs to identify ways we can assist through knowledge exchanges between experts in the U.S. and Portugal, possible educational resources and scholarships, and training resources for those who will be working directly with refugees.

Ultimately, however, progress must be made in addressing the root causes of this problem. As Secretary Kerry and President Obama have said many times there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria. It requires a political solution, and the way forward has always been trying to find the common ground for that solution. There are no easy solutions, but working together and supporting each other as allies and partners we believe we can support the refugees fleeing the fighting and move towards a resolution of the ultimate causes of this current migration crisis.

UPCOMING EVENTS

>> 2015 Amadora BD International Comic Festival, October 23-November 8

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Various venues in Amadora and Lisbon
<http://www.amadorabd.com/>

>> Study Abroad Portugal Fair, October 30-31

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Sana Lisboa Hotel
The largest information fair to study abroad.
<http://www.studyabroadportugal.pt/>

>> Cine Clube film screening at American Corner, FCT-NOVA, November 17

“2001 Space Odyssey,” November 17 @5:00 p.m.
American Corner, FCT-NOVA (Library Auditorium)
<http://goo.gl/P1qxll>

LATEST STORIES

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>> **U.S. Embassy Lisbon Celebrates Connect to Success’ 1st Anniversary** [Read more >>](#)

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