



ADVICE & TIPS – PORTUGAL



Speculative applications, especially for recent graduates, are an important route to employment. Personal contacts are very helpful in this respect. Especially for small and medium sized companies informal methods of recruitment (word of mouth, networking, speculative applications) are routine. For that reason a working holiday or a temporary job in for instance the tourist sector might be a good stepping–stone to more permanent work. Your temporary job will allow you to get acquainted with Portuguese people, who could help you in spotting employers who are likely to recruit in the near future. Hiring employers are otherwise rather difficult to trace.

Although it may be relatively easy to find casual and temporary jobs in Portugal in the tourist industry, finding graduate-level employment presents more of a challenge.

- *Typical problems encountered:* there are a growing number of graduates in Portugal, making it a competitive job market. In 2006, close to 72,000 graduates entered the labour market and at the end of 2007, nearly 40,000 graduates were registered with the Portuguese Public Employment Service Jobcentres in Portugal.
- *How to improve your chances:* research the job market thoroughly so that you have realistic expectations.
- *Language requirements:* you will probably find it a challenge to get a job at any level in Portugal unless you speak Portuguese, particularly in occupations requiring contact with the public. Portuguese language courses are run in Portugal by many Portuguese institutions and organisations such as CESA Languages and the Eurolingua Institute. A knowledge of other languages, such as English, Spanish, French or German, may be an advantage, particularly in tourism.

The Application Letter

Application letters can either be typewritten or hand-written. In case of a speculative application, hand-written letters are most common. A reaction to an advertisement however should be typed, short and simple, with a conventional style. Try to emphasize in your letter your skills and experience that makes you a suitable candidate for the job. Copies of diplomas and testimonials of former employers are not yet requested at this stage. Do not send them to the employer, but do bring them with you to the job interview.

The use of application forms is widespread in Portugal. There is a large difference between application forms. Some are very standardised, while others ask more about previous practical experience in unstructured (i.e. open) questions.

The Curriculum Vitae

A Portuguese CV is usually in reversed chronological order. Several pages are not uncommon, with a maximum of three to four pages. A clear presentation is requested, numbering each section separately. Start with your personal details (name, date and place of birth, civil status, address and telephone number including the international access code). In this section you can also mention whether or not you have a driving license, as well as your ID number and your religion. Continue with your education (including

courses), professional training (a distinct category from university education), work experience, linguistic ability (mention in order of fluency the languages you are able to speak) and a separate section for seminars you attended. Computer skills, if applicable should also be given apart. Emphasise all the professional training you have had from seminars to full courses. For Portuguese recruiters this means that your former employers thought you were outstanding enough to receive further training.

The Application Procedure

Portuguese application habits are less regulated than in some other countries. This openness often helps the mobile worker. The most important of the selection procedure are the interviews. Most emphasis is on professional experience and practical training. Usually the selection procedure consists of several interviews and some psychological and technical tests. Aptitude and psychometric tests are used for candidates up to middle level management.

It seems as an open door, but be aware employers are looking for graduates who match their needs. So the most important thing you can do when applying for any job is to read the vacancy advert carefully! Not meeting the requirements for the job is in most cases the reason for failing to pass the selection round.

Where can I work?

- Major industries: tourism, property and business services, hotel and catering, public services, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy and water provision, retail.
- Recent growth areas: call and contact centres and shared services centres.
- Shortage occupations: seasonal jobs in the tourism, hotel and catering sector; in the health sector - doctors (in various specialisms), and to a lesser extent nurses; in the information technology sector - engineers, analysts, programmers and software and hardware technicians.
- Major companies: Re/Max Portugal, Deloitte, Martifer, McDonalds, Accenture, Pricewaterhousecoopers, Real Seguros/Real Vida Seguros, Liberty Seguros, Mafre, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft.
- Major cities: Lisbon (the capital and largest city), Porto, Vila Novo de Gaia, Amadora, Braga, Almada, Coimbra, Funchal.

What's it like working in Portugal?

- Average working hours: the maximum legal working week is 40 hours. The working day may be quite long, as it is common to include an extended lunch break or siesta.
- Holidays: annual leave entitlement is 22 days, plus 13 national public or bank holidays and one council public holiday. Holidays are mainly taken during August, which leads to some factory 'shut downs'.
- Salaries: the statutory minimum wage (*retribuição mínima mensal garantida, RMMG*) increased by 5.7% in 2008 to €426 per month and will rise by a further 5.6% to €450 in 2009.
- Tax rates: tax and national insurance amount to total deductions of around 25%.
- Working practices and customs: all employees receive a bonus of one month's salary in June and at Christmas, so in effect they are paid 14 times their monthly salary each year.