

## TORRE DE BELÉM AT 500: LISBON'S ICON CELEBRATES LANDMARK ANNIVERSARY



**8<sup>th</sup> June 2015** – The Torre de Belém, Portugal’s symbol of the Age of Discovery and a UNESCO protected monument, celebrates its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year through a series of commemorative events.

Situated on the northern bank of the Tagus River, just a short tram ride from the city centre, the ornate tower is one of Lisbon’s most famous icons and a visitor must-see.

It was originally built in 1515 as a fortress to guard the entrance to Lisbon’s harbour and is a prominent example of the composite “Manueline” (late Gothic) architecture, incorporating maritime elements and stonework motifs of the Discoveries, as well as sculptures depicting historical figures and exotic animals.

The Torre de Belém has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage monument for being “a reminder of the great maritime discoveries that laid the foundations of the modern world”. A statue of “Our Lady of Safe Homecoming”, believed to protect sailors at sea, can be seen at the tower, as it served as the starting point for many of the voyages of discovery: it was from the beach in Belém that Vasco da Gama set sail to discover the sea route to India.

Concluding in October, a calendar of events has been planned to showcase the long and varied history of the celebrated tower and the surrounding area. Available for visitors and locals alike, these include:

- The exhibition “A magnífica e formosa torre - The magnificent and beautiful tower”, which explains the history of the monument through paintings, prints and other “memorabilia” (until June)
- A special collection of commemorative stamps, which will be launched by Correios de Portugal (June)
- A series of music concerts in collaboration with the “Festas da Cidade - City Festivities” programme, which will take place inside and outside the Tower (until July)
- A new multi-lingual, multimedia show, as well as various educational activities, have been added, in order to enhance the visitor experience

To mark the special occasion, a new book by acclaimed Portuguese author José Manuel Garcia has been commissioned to document the evolution of Torre de Belém over the centuries.



The celebrations will officially draw to a close in October with an international congress on “Art and Culture in the Age of Discovery” at the striking Cultural Centre of Belém.

Entrance to the Torre de Belém is free with “Lisboa Card”, which also includes unlimited use of the city’s metro, buses and trams network.

Direct flights to Lisbon operate from London, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Bristol with TAP Portugal, British Airways, easyJet and Ryanair.

For more information on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Belém Tower please go to [www.torrebelem.pt](http://www.torrebelem.pt). For more information on visiting Lisbon please go to [www.visitlisboa.com](http://www.visitlisboa.com).

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### **About Lisbon**

Portugal’s national capital, Lisbon, boasts one of the longest histories, warmest climates and bustling nightlife of any major European city alongside its dramatic location sprawled along seven hills overlooking the river Tagus and the country’s west coast. Famed for its year-round sunshine and beauty, Lisbon’s grand architecture dazzles and its old-world charm mingles with chic streets, galleries, lively nightlife and a centre which gives way to sandy beaches just minutes away. It is also one of the most affordable capitals in Europe, perfect for a captivating city break or short haul escape.

[www.visitlisboa.com](http://www.visitlisboa.com)

### **About Turismo de Lisboa**

Turismo de Lisboa is a non-profit organisation established through an alliance of public and private bodies operating in the tourist sector. It now has 713 associated members. Since its inception in 1998, the main objective of this association is to improve and increase the promotion of Lisbon as a tourist destination and therefore enhance the quality and competitiveness of the city.