

**Ep #188: Traveling to Portugal with Points:  
Alex's Family Trip to Lisbon & the Algarve**



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Hosts**

**Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg**

## **Ep #188: Traveling to Portugal with Points: Alex's Family Trip to Lisbon & the Algarve**

Alex: To kick off this summer, my family took a trip to Portugal. Listen in as I share how we used points to save on our trip to Lisbon and the Algarve.

Welcome to Points Talk®. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom. Jess isn't here today because she's off in Italy having a lot of fun. And so you just got Alex and me today. So we're talking about Lisbon today. We have all, all of us have been to Lisbon, and we have a previous episode all about mine and Alex's trip to Lisbon and the Azores.

Alex loved Portugal so much that she wanted to take her family back, this time to Lisbon for a couple of nights and then to the Algarve. So let me just tell you, they asked if we wanted to go. We couldn't make it work because we were doing another trip. Then we canceled that trip. And let me tell, I tried to make it work. And especially I wanted to go to the Algarve so bad. But unfortunately, this is one of the future trips that they took without us. So anyway, Alex, let's get started.

Alex: You know, and my kids kept saying, "Wait, why aren't Grandma and Grandpa coming?" Spoiler, you guys did come for part of the trip, so we will get to that.

Pam: Right.

Alex: But yes, they were like, "Wait, Grandma and Grandpa aren't coming with us? What?"

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Pam: Yeah, I'm glad that doesn't seem normal for them. So anyway, tell us how you got, tell us about your flights. How did you get there?

Alex: Okay, so we did things a little bit differently. My sister, if you've listened before, you know I have a sister that's been living in London for the last 20 years or so, and they're actually moving to the United States. And so we wanted to take one last family trip to visit them in London before they moved. And since we'd already been there, I was like, we'll spend a few days there and then do the bulk of our trip in another place in Europe. Because once you get to Europe, it's so easy to get wherever you need to go.

So, because I loved Portugal so much in 2024, I thought, "Well, I would love to take my family back here." And I think it's kind of nice to repeat a trip because you know what to expect. You know where to go. You just have a little more knowledge of it, especially with taking...

Pam: It's like going home.

Alex: Yeah, especially when you're taking your family. So it just like took the overwhelm down a little bit, being like, "Okay, I've been here. This is going to be great." I've never been to the Algarve, though. So we did want to do something new.

So my husband also speaks Portuguese, so I thought it would be fun for him to get an opportunity to brush up on his Portuguese a little bit. And so...

Pam: How did that go?

Alex: Um, I'll tell you a really quick, funny story. We were in an Uber in Lisbon, and the first Uber, he's just chatting it up with the guy, the driver, super nice guy. Like...

Pam: In Portuguese?

Alex: In Portuguese.

Pam: Okay.

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Alex: And there's times where, you know, he doesn't get very much opportunity to speak it here in the US, but every now and then, he's been brushing up on Duolingo for a while. So he's talking to him. I'm following bits and pieces because sometimes some English will be spoken too, and kind of like figured it all out. So that went great.

And then the next time we get in the car, I don't know, in the Uber app, you can go on and learn about your driver and it says what language they speak. So the next ride, Mitch is talking to the Uber driver and the Uber driver's not responding anything. Nothing. He tries again. Nothing.

I look up in the Uber app, and it says he speaks English and Bangladesh. So I texted Mitch, "He doesn't speak, he doesn't speak Portuguese."

Pam: Oh, that is so funny.

Alex: But it was just so funny because Mitch was like, "Oh my gosh, I am really bad at this. I thought I was doing well. My Portuguese is terrible." So that was kind of funny.

Pam: That's so funny.

Alex: And then down in Algarve, when he would try to speak it, a lot of times they would just reply back in English. You know, it was kind of funny. One of our tour guides was like, "Oh yeah, people try to speak to us in Portuguese. We just speak English back."

Pam: Oh, that's funny.

Alex: So that was kind of funny, but it was still like a good experience. So yeah.

Anyway, back to how we got there. So I knew we wanted to spend part of our time in London. I just didn't know when. And it kind of depended on what was my sister's schedule like. And so I was like, we'll just fly to London and fly out of London, and then we have the flexibility.

Now, if I had figured out ahead of time what order we were doing things, it probably would have made it cheaper and a bit easier because I had to buy

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tickets from London to Lisbon round-trip, which I'll get to how I did those too. But we could have saved on one of those positioning flights if we had just flown right to Portugal. But we didn't know at the time, and sometimes just having the flexibility is nice.

So we actually, and we got, I felt good about the flights we took. We flew Virgin Atlantic from Boston to London. Now, if you're listening and you know, "Well, Alex, you don't live in Boston." We don't. We live in Salt Lake City. And so we positioned to Boston. The reason we flew out of Boston is I found really good flights on [seats.aero](https://seats.aero). They were about 17,500 points per person plus \$236 for premium economy.

So then, though, there was a transfer bonus from Capital One, a 30% transfer bonus. So I paid just over 13,000 points per person. And this was for premium economy. And premium economy on international flights is much better than what you imagine domestic premium economy. This is like more like a recliner with a little footrest, much like, I would say it's more like domestic first class, but maybe even a little nicer because you have the footrest that pops out.

Pam: Alex, I loved the video you sent of Noah in premium economy. He was living his absolute best life and could not be bothered with anything but drinking his drinks and watching his shows. He loved it.

Alex: Oh, yeah. He did love it. So he had his, their pillows have like a little, they fit around your neck, the ones that they gave us on the flight. We he has his blanket on, he's drinking his orange juice. It's so funny. I actually made a reel of it if anybody wants to go check it out, so you can visualize what we're talking about here.

So flying out of Boston is where what made this deal so much cheaper. And it's an overnight flight. So I was like, "This will be so nice to have a little bit more of a comfortable seat than just regular economy." And you guys, my kids, you would have thought we were in business class. They were like, "These are amazing." And I'm like, okay, well, let's just stick with premium economy as long as we can, because they were rather impressed with just that.

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So great, great flight. It's not too long from Boston. I mean, maybe it would have been nice for it to be a little bit longer so we could have slept more, but everyone did great on the flight.

So part of the reason why I was excited when I saw the deal out of Boston is Boston is a place that we have talked about going and visiting and taking the kids to. My oldest just finished 8th grade, and that is the year that you learn US history. And I was actually a US history teacher before I had him. So that has been something we've talked about doing with the kids. So when I saw, "Okay, these are great flights out of Boston," this is a great excuse for us to go visit Boston and take the kids there.

We spent three nights in Boston. Originally, we were going to do two, but we wanted to go to a Red Sox game. And so, to be able to go to the Red Sox game, it made it so we needed to spend three nights.

And then we'll get into a little bit of the Boston trip. My mom's going to cover that because they were there for Boston. And then to get to and from, from Lisbon to London, we used the \$300 Venture X credit from Mitch's Venture X business card to go towards our flights. Now, obviously, it costs more than \$300 to fly six people round-trip to Lisbon, but I used that credit to save and then paid cash for the rest. You have to book, use that credit in the Capital One travel portal, but I think you earn like 5x on your flight. So we actually earned a nice chunk of points, too. So that was kind of nice.

Now, if you were in Boston and you were like, "Well, I just want to go right to Portugal," which, when I was in Boston, I was like, "Man, this would have been really nice just to fly right to Portugal." But I didn't know that when we booked our trip. You could look into like TAP Air Portugal, that's a Bilt transfer partner. And I know what was it, June, they had like 100% transfer bonus from Bilt to TAP Air Portugal. You can book TAP Air Portugal, too, with other partner alliances like Air Canada and United. So that could be an option.

But yeah, and then, and then how we got home from London, we booked, it was actually a Delta-operated flight direct from London to Salt Lake City, but we booked it via Virgin Atlantic. We, the price was 20,000 points per person plus

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around \$175. You're always going to pay more coming out of the UK. That's just how it goes. And, but remember there was that transfer bonus. So I got the flights down to 15,000 points per person. So I felt really good about those award prices. And I think the thing, like Virgin Atlantic does charge more in taxes, but when you're paying such low award prices, I kind of look at it like I'm getting just a heavily discounted flight. So I felt really good about that. There's also another...

Pam: Well, using those transfer bonuses is huge.

Alex: Oh, the transfer bonuses is huge.

Pam: I mean, and the one thing that's good is there are so many transfer bonuses to Virgin Atlantic. I feel like, you know, every now, you know, quite often there is a transfer bonus from one of the banks. So yeah, it's, it works out really great.

Alex: I agree. I feel like that one and Air France seem to be the ones that pop up, you know, maybe more regularly than some of the others. So, I mean, and 30% though, I feel like 20% is what we usually see. So I was really excited about that.

And one thing too is I had this trip in the back of my mind for a long time. I knew my sister was going to be moving and I was like, "Okay, we want to go back." I didn't know where we were going to go yet when I booked the flights. I wasn't 100% sure once we got to London where we'd go. But I think that is kind of what helped me find the flexibility with the flights, is knowing, "We want to go to London. Okay, there's a transfer bonus. I check [seats.aero](https://seats.aero). I see that there's these direct flights." And it made it really doable for us to get these prices at such a good rate because I had that idea in my mind of this is when we want to go sometime in the summer, there's the transfer bonus and [seats.aero](https://seats.aero) came in clutch.

So if you're coming back from Salt Lake, if you're coming to Salt Lake City, I get this question a lot sometimes in email and DM, or emails and DMs, there's not a lot of direct flights from Europe to Salt Lake City. And for myself, I wanted to fly

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direct, coming home with kids, if that was possible. And so if you're going to Salt Lake City, your options are KLM through Amsterdam, Delta through Amsterdam, Paris, or London. That's literally it for direct flights to and from London. So like I said, [seats.aero](#), if you can avoid flying out of London, you'll save a lot. But for us, it was just, you know, with my sister living there, that made a lot more sense for us.

So that's how we did all of our flights. My mom is going to share kind of a little bit about Boston and what that was like, our thoughts on the hotel we stayed at, and more.

Pam: Okay. So luckily, we were able to make part of this trip. So we made the first part. We met them in Boston. And we stayed at the Hyatt Regency Boston. I've stayed there before. It is in an incredible location. Don't get it mixed up with the Hyatt Regency Boston Harbor. I haven't stayed there, but I am staying there on a positioning flight later this summer. So I'll have to compare them. But the Hyatt Regency Boston is in the greatest location. It's just so walkable. You can walk to the Boston Common, where I think the kids went and threw a football and had a lot of fun, to Quincy Market, so many historical sites. It is just really a prime location. And it has really easy access to the T, which is their metro.

Now, we were really impressed by the service at this hotel, especially in the restaurant. I really felt like they could not do enough for us. They bent over backwards to meet every single one of our needs. I mean, in the restaurant, it was insane. They were coming by all the time asking, "Do you need anything else?" And there wasn't room for us the first morning at breakfast and they sat us somewhere and they wanted to bring us. They were just, they were just amazing. They were just coming by all the time.

I would also say that we have Globalist. The Globalist perk there is really nice. You can either use it at their buffet or I think you can order like \$35 worth of food off the menu. But let me tell you, the buffet was very impressive. It had an omelet bar, but they also would make the best pancakes. We were in love with their pancakes. And so we ended up using the buffet every time. That isn't

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something I usually do. I'm usually a let's order off the menu girl, but it was really an outstanding buffet.

Alex: Yeah, the service from the, you weren't there the last morning, their flight left earlier, but there was a different person running the omelet and pancake station. Both of them were amazing. Our waiter was amazing. Our last day, he had asked us, "Oh, when do you guys check out?" And I said, "Oh, we leave this day." And he's like, "Okay." So we got down there that morning, and he already had a seat saved for us because we had a party of eight for the whole time. And he's like, "Oh, some of you are gone. I saved this for you." I was like, "Oh, that's so nice." Anyways, kindest, kindest people. I've never had such just genuinely kind service at a restaurant out of a Hyatt Regency. It was just so nice.

Pam: Yeah, it was really amazing. Now, I would say it's a little bit of an older hotel, slightly outdated. We use suite upgrade awards, so we had suites. I would 100% stay there again because of the location, because of the service. It is just, it is really top-notch for staying in Boston.

It's a Category 5, and nights start at 15,000 points a night. It's common to see 20k or 25k a night. I mean, really, honestly, when you think about that, that just sounds like pennies to me when you talk about some of the other hotels and the points you stay to stay at them. And for the service and the location and everything. Like I said, we did use suite upgrade awards, so that then we had, we usually take one of Alex's boys, we call him our roomie. We take Kai with us all the time, and that lets, and then it also helps because every, you know, we have enough for the Globalist breakfast. So it works out really good.

And especially Eli tried to get us to come on the rest of the trip. He just kept saying, "Can't you do it? Can't you do it?" And I really, honestly, did go back to the hotel and tried to see if we could possibly make it work. But we just couldn't. We just, it just wasn't going to happen. And so reluctantly, we said goodbye to them and let them go on the rest of their trip.

Alex: Yeah. And we're not going to get too much into what we did in Boston because this podcast episode would be way too long. But if you want to see what we did on that trip, it's all saved in an Instagram story highlight where I

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cover the whole trip. But in a nutshell, we went to the Red Sox game, we went to a Boston Tea Party reenactment, and we did a little guided walking tour of the Freedom Trail, and that's mostly what we all did.

Pam: Well, you know, really, Alex, because I've been to Boston before with adults, and I remember this was kind of focused around the kids, and I was kind of like, "Okay, well, this probably isn't going to be really interesting." You did a great job picking, you know, the things to do, and I found it really interesting. It was fascinating. The lady who gave us the tour on the Freedom Trail was fabulous. She was so engaging, so cute, so funny with the kids. I really think that Boston is an incredible city for families to go to. I just I just, I loved it. It was, you did a good job. Kudos to Alex.

Alex: Thank you. Thank you. You know, and planning the trips is a lot of work and kind of exhausting. So thank you very much. I was kind of tired of planning everything by the end of this whole trip. But yeah, we loved Boston. Mitch was like, "Man, that's maybe one of my favorite cities in the US I've been to. It's so clean, it's so pretty, the people are really friendly." We had a great time.

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Okay, so we flew to London, like I said, from Boston, Virgin Atlantic. Once we got to Lisbon, we rented a car. Now, if you're going to Lisbon and you're just going to Lisbon, do not get a car. I'm not saying you should, like don't, maybe don't consider it. Like 100% don't get a car. Driving in Lisbon was not for the faint of heart. And we had this big van. It was a Mercedes van that seated, I don't even know how many people it would seat, but it was, it was big. And the signage isn't great. We missed a couple turns. I'm like looking at the map, being like, "Okay, Mitch, now turn here, go here." It was, we were happy to get out of Lisbon with that car. But we picked it up.

Pam: You drove, you drove the car around in Lisbon?

Alex: No, I didn't drive...

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Pam: No, but Mitch did.

Alex: Well, oh, he drove it from the airport to the hotel. And then we left it at the hotel.

Pam: Got it, okay.

Alex: And then from the hotel, when we left to go to the Algarve, like, so I would recommend having a car for the Algarve so you can drive around and see the different areas. You can take Uber, and I, and Uber's pretty affordable, but with this many of us, we wanted the flexibility and freedom of having a car.

You can also hire drivers to take you down to the Algarve. I know you can take a train as well, that's just going to take longer. To hire somebody to drive us down was about the same price as us renting a car. Now, if you don't have to get a car for six people, you're going to be in a much better spot. But with a family of six, it was really hard to find something that would seat six and was automatic. They, and then the prices just got really high. But like we didn't really have an option. So we, but if you just have like a family of four or five, you can get a normal-sized car, and it's really affordable.

So we rented the car at the Lisbon airport. We picked it up right there. I actually booked it through Capital One Travel, which I've never rented a car through Capital One Travel before. Well, now I have, I've done it since then. But I always thought, "Oh, maybe the prices might be inflated when I'm booking through a travel portal," but they were really, really competitive, and I earned 10x the points on the booking. So that's a lot of extra points for just booking through the Capital One Travel portal. So that was nice.

We rented through Budget. I feel like when you're traveling through Europe, you're going to find some random things you've never heard of to rent cars through. I would definitely read reviews because some of them are a little sketchy and might try to charge you more for dings that you didn't put in the car and things like that. I like, Budget worked out fine for us. Yeah, like I said, we just left the car at the Hyatt Regency when we got there.

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Pam: Smart.

Alex: Yeah, we were like, "We are not driving this around."

So one thing that's interesting to know, like I was kind of researching this at the hotel before we drove to the Algarve, is there are toll roads throughout Portugal. Every rental car is legally has to have what's called Via Verde installed in the car. And basically, it's like you can just go right through the tolls. There's line, there's you'll see through the tolls, there'll be a big V that's green, and you just drive through that, and you don't have to stop to pay at the tolls. So that's important to know. It'll just go quicker. It is kind of expensive. I want to say it's probably about like €25 to €30 driving each way. I think we paid about €50 to €55 total round trip driving to and from the Algarve.

Pam: So, Alex, once you left Lisbon, how was the driving?

Alex: Fine. Totally great

Pam: Was it, was it easy then? Was it okay in the Algarve, and, you know, was just in Lisbon? Okay.

Alex: It was just in Lisbon. And like driving from Lisbon to the Algarve was super easy driving. You're just driving on like a highway basically the whole time. There were times where Mitch was like, "I kind of feel like we're driving through Wyoming right now." It's not a super pretty drive, but there's like gas stations all along the way. It's, it was really, really easy. I also would recommend using Google Maps, not Apple Maps. I find Apple Maps doesn't work as well internationally. So I always use Google Maps when we travel.

Pam: And how long did it take you to get to the Algarve?

Alex: It took us about just under three hours.

Pam: Oh, okay. Nice.

Alex: So it's not too bad. No. It was a fine drive.

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So we stayed at the Hyatt Regency Lisbon. This is also a Category 5 hotel. When I booked it, it was a Category 4. This was one of those ones with the Hyatt changes that we were like, "Oh, this is such a good, this is such a good find, like a steal at a Category 4." It's just newer, more modern. The hotel lobby smells really good. It feels like an upscale Hyatt Regency in my opinion.

So with the prices we paid back when it was a Category 4, we paid 18,000 points a night. We stayed here just two nights and used a suite upgrade room for one room. The standard suites sleep two adults and two kids, which is really nice for Europe. So we had, I think on the website it says like queen room, but it's actually a king room and it's a separate bedroom. And then there's a living room with a pull-out sofa bed, a kitchen, a washer, and it's really, really nice.

So I booked the standard room for Mitch and one kid on his Hyatt account, and then I sent him a Guest of Honor award, and they actually upgraded his room to the same suite as us. So that was nice. There are no connecting rooms here, but they put our rooms near each other. So I took a room with two kids, and then he took a room with two of the kids. It's actually kind of nice because at night, like I go to my king bed and sleep alone, and the two kids would be in the sofa bed. And then he'd have the same situation in the other room. We're like, "Oh, this is kind of relaxing to just, it was quieter." I had like my own personal space, I could just hang out by myself and watch a show or read a book. Anyways, it was kind of nice.

Anyway, we've all stayed at this hotel. Jess loved it. Jess also stayed at the Hyatt Regency and really loved that one as well. Same thoughts as us. Loved this one. Mom, you really enjoyed this hotel when we stayed there.

Pam: I really liked that hotel. You know, it's not that close to the city center, like walkable to city center of Lisbon, but it's in a really good location of its own. I remember it was walkable to the place that we got those Portuguese pastries, the best ones I think I've ever had. We went to it, last time we went to an amazing restaurant there. I think the food at the hotel is amazing if you don't want to go anywhere. I remember last time we got, we had food there.

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And the rooms are huge. I remember when we got in, it was just us girls. We got two rooms. I'm going, "A kitchen, a washer?" You know, it was like, "What the heck?" You know, it really is an amazing, amazing property whether you're going, you know, as adults or especially going for a family. And I would, I we just would Uber, you know, into Lisbon. Didn't take us very much time. I would 100% stay there again.

Alex: Yeah. So when we were in Lisbon, we only really had one full day there. So what we did is we went to Castelo de São Jorge. I could have said that wrong. I, it's hard for me to change, like, I don't, let me preface this, I do not speak Spanish in the slightest, but I took Spanish in high school. So I at least like know how they pronounce different letters. Portuguese is different. They make different sounds. And so I could be butchering all of this Portuguese. I should have had Mitch like run through all this with me and tell me, "How do I say all these things?"

But it is a castle, and we actually went there, Mom, when we went on our tour, but we just went to the outside of it. So we, I had read reviews, and it sounded like a really great thing for kids because you go onto the castle grounds, incredible views of Lisbon. You can walk up the castle ramparts, there's just little alleyways and like little areas the kids can go explore.

So I think we paid about €55 for all six of us. Maybe it could have been \$55, but around there. And I think some of the kids were actually free depending on the age. So they really enjoyed that. It was so funny. My second oldest was wanting pictures everywhere. And I was joking to Mitch like, "Man, I feel like I'm like a, I thought having all boys, I'd be like, oh, I won't get to do the in like, you know, taking all the fashion photos or anything." But he's like, "Oh, take a picture of me here." "Oh, can you get a picture of this?" So that was pretty funny.

Pam: That's hilarious. That's Cruz.

Alex: Yeah. So that was, that was a really fun activity that we did. Another nice thing, they had popsicle stands inside there. So we went and bought a popsicle, and we're walking through there with our popsicles.

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And then after that, we just walked around the Alfama area, which is a pretty famous area of Portugal. And then took an Uber to Time Out Market, which is a pretty, if you look up Lisbon, you'll hear about Time Out Market. It's a food hall. But I recommend you can walk around Time Out Market, you can get some food there if you'd like.

But we actually had them drop us off there and walked a few steps up and on the left-hand side of the street, maybe, maybe two blocks, if that, there's a place called Lupita Pizza. It is a top 50 pizza in Europe for like the last three years. And it is so good. It's this tiny little hole in the wall. So you know it's going to be good. We actually went there our last time in Lisbon with my mom and sister. And so I was like, "Okay, guys, we're going here again." And that was really fun.

I kind of feel like sometimes when you're in Europe, that's kind of the fun part is going discovering these little places and we got there. I think it has like four tables. You can get it to go as well. The lines can get really long. But we, I think we had to wait like 20 minutes. We just sat outside their restaurant, and then we were enjoying our pizza, our breadsticks, and our Coke, just sitting there in Lisbon, and I'm like, "Oh, this is, this is one of my favorite things to do, is just eat a good pizza in Europe with a Coke."

So then that night, we walked from our hotel to LX Factory. It is like an artsy place with food and shopping. We ate dinner down there, which was nice because there's just different options. So some of us went to one place, some of us went to the other. And I think that's the thing is a lot of people will say, you'll hear, "Oh, like, how's the location for the Hyatt Regency Lisbon? Should we stay there? Should we not?" I think there's a lot to do and see in Lisbon, and you're going to have to Uber to something, probably, most likely. And for this, like you could walk to the Belem, I forget what it's called, but it's the place that has the Pastel de Natas.

Pam: Right.

Alex: It's the Belem Monastery, maybe?

Pam: Yeah.

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Alex: They have like, they're the original. They're the most famous one. You can walk right there from the hotel. You can walk to LX Factory. There's just, there are things you can do right there. And then taking an Uber into the main sites is not hard to do either.

So the next day we headed to the Algarve, and we stayed in Lagos. And so I asked ChatGPT, "What area of Algarve should my family visit?" Because I was like, this is overwhelming a little bit. There's so many places that I've heard of or that I've researched, which one would be the best fit? And ChatGPT helped me land on Lagos. So we did that. And we actually stayed in an Airbnb. There are some different hotel options in some of the other areas of the Algarve, which I'll get to in just a little bit. But we paid about \$1,300 for our three-night stay. This place had two bedrooms, two bathrooms. It sleeps six. It's in a little condo area. I don't know what you'd call it exactly. But it's called Iberlagos.

Let me say like, the place itself doesn't look, it's not fancy. It maybe, it looks a little bit run down, but the room was great. The location, amazing. The views, unreal, which that's why I booked this place. It was honestly perfect for us and I was so super happy with our decision to stay there. There's lots of Airbnbs here at this location, and some of them are cheaper, but my, they're all like individually owned. And so for me, I wanted one that was well kept, and that was nicer, and that had the views. So we could go right out on our back patio and it had like this little covered part that you could use a remote, and it would like come out. Kind of like how trailer, I don't know, it's the awning, an awning, right?

Pam: Yeah.

Alex: So I had an awning that we could get to come out. My favorite thing to do was to sit out there on our balcony. We would play games, we would do these little art coloring books, we would eat our breakfast and dinner out there. And it was so nice because we could just see the water, we could see the rock formations. Like when you think of the Algarve, you think of those rock formations and along the those coastlines and that was what we just got to stare at on our balcony every day. And so that for me was why I chose this place.

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It is also steps from Praia Dona Ana, which is a famous beach. It was featured on National Geographic at one point and named one of the best beaches. And so that was beautiful. It's like the community had a giant pool and then straight down from the pool was the beach. And so you could walk right down to the beach.

Unfortunately, during our stay, they had a lot of seaweed there. And one of our tour guides mentions that, mentioned to us that they had some really strong winds that had just recently brought that in, and they just needed the winds to then push it out. And so it just seems like something that can happen periodically. But yeah, the kids, the pool was massive. It was a little run down, but it, I don't know, for me, like in Europe, like I don't even care. I'm like, "We are in Europe with this great view and this is amazing and there's just other families here." It was just something really kind of special about it that we really liked.

Pam: I thought your pictures of it, yeah, you know, looked amazing. The view looked amazing. Let me tell you, I had a lot of FOMO seeing those pictures. It would have been a place I would have loved. I don't need luxury all the time. You know, I mean, I like luxury when it's, you know, I'm going just, you know, with you girls or something or going with my husband when I'm going with family thing, I could care less. I want space, I want the beauty, in fact, I wouldn't want luxury. I'm not going to waste points, you know, or spend a lot of money on luxury when I'm taking kids. I just want to have a good time with them, and I was dripping in FOMO.

Alex: It really was a perfect place for kids. I would 100% stay at this same Airbnb again. Like when we got there, I was like, you know, when you book an Airbnb, you can only go off the reviews and the pictures. And until you get there, you don't really know what you're getting. And when we got there and I saw it, I was like, "Oh, this is exactly how I was hoping it would be." It was like, I could like let out a sigh of relief. I'm like, "Oh, this is going to be amazing."

So the Airbnb was very well run, great communication with the host, one of the best run Airbnbs I think I've, I never met the host, they just had the key set up, but they sent us recommendations to places to eat, recommendations of what to

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do in the area. It was just very well thought out, and you can tell they've probably been doing this for a little while. We could also walk from the Airbnb to Old Town Lagos, which is maybe like maybe a 10 to 15 minute walk. And we would walk down there for dinner sometimes.

We also made some dinners in our unit, but we went to a place called Nah Nah Bah, and it's a burger place. Super great place to go if you're going with family. It's very low-key and casual. The kids really loved that. And then right next door, there's a pizza place called Pizza Garage. And I think the same people own both because they were like, we saw different people working at each one the next day. We did go to both of them. And so is it really like authentic Portuguese food? No. But is it perfect for families? Yes. And it worked out so good for us.

And then after dinner, we would walk down Old Town. One night, we were walking through Old Town, and we saw a soccer game playing outside a restaurant. It was actually my kids are going to be so mad that I forgot what one it was. Champions League. I think it was the Champions League like final game. And so we sat outside the restaurant. It was like the last 15 minutes of the game. We watched the game. It goes into PKs. You know, we're just sitting in there, sitting outside this restaurant with a bunch of people from all over, just cheering. I mean, some are like, oh, you know, disappointed by the team that lost.

Pam: Oh, the boys loved it.

Alex: Oh, they loved it. It was one of those times where you're like, "Okay, this is going to be a core memory of this trip of sitting in Europe and watching a soccer game with people from all over." So that was a really cool experience.

We went shopping along down Old Town. There's a really fun soccer store that had so many soccer jerseys, all sorts of stuff that my kids loved. And then, as you know, like Ronaldo is from Portugal, and so he's huge everywhere. And so my youngest got a fun Ronaldo jersey, and then we got gelato. So that was, that was really fun to be able to do and just to be able to walk there.

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Then we did a kayak tour, and we went through Lagos Adventure. I would say that this is probably the most popular thing to do in the Algarve would be a kayak tour or a boat tour because then you can go in and see all the sea caves and get up close view of all these rock formations. There's different places that do it. I know Benagil Cave is a really famous one. That was a little bit further from where we were. So we did just the one that was literally right down from our hotel. It's what's it called again? Okay, I'm going to try to pronounce this right, you guys, because when I see it, I'm like, "Oh, it's Ponta da Piedade." No, it is not that.

Pam: That's what I would think it would be. That's what I was going to say it would be.

Alex: So I'm sorry if I butcher this, I'm going to try it. But I think it's "Ponce de Piadage." So that's like the Portuguese way, I think. Someone can correct me if I'm wrong, but that's kind of how I remember Mitch saying it. But that was also like a couple weeks ago. I could have forgotten by now. But we went on this kayak tour with Lagos Adventure. I'll put a link in the show notes. It was about two to two, I think they say it's like 2 hours and 15 minutes. I think we were gone for probably 2 and a half hours total.

So you meet down at the Marina. We just drove down there. It's maybe 10 minutes from the Airbnb. You get on a boat and they take you on a boat out to the rock formations. And then from there on the boat, you get onto the kayak. And then a guide took us around and told us all about the history, told us about the rocks. We were going in and out of the caves. There's two people per kayak. And I actually reached out to them on WhatsApp before because I was like, "Hey, we've got two adults and four kids. Are we able to do this with my kids' ages because I'm like, Mitch would go with my youngest who's five. I would go with the 10-year-old and then I've got a 14-year-old and a 12-year-old. Can a 14 and 12-year-old go together?" And they're like, "Oh, yeah, just come in the early morning one. The water's more calm." They were super nice and easy to communicate with, to like figure out if this would work for our family.

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They do ages four and up. So if you have little kids, like I was kind of like, "Are we going to be able to do this kind of stuff?" But it totally worked out. We were really happy that we did the kayak instead of the boat experience just because it's just a little more fun to be right there like in the water. And then afterwards, we were able to then swim off of the boat for a little bit off the main boat. And so the kids really like that. I didn't get in. It was way too cold for me, but it was fun. I think we paid €222 total for the six of us.

Pam: Wow, that's a good price.

Alex: Yeah, so I thought that was a good price. And the guides were so great. So yeah, we were really happy with that activity. In fact, my 12-year-old was like, as we're doing this, you know, he's with his brother. And I will tell you my two oldest did so good, the two of them. They did awesome. And he turns around as he's paddling the kayak, and he's like, "Mom, you've got to tell everybody about this. This is so cool."

Pam: Who was this?

Alex: That was Cruz. And so when you say, when he's saying I got to tell everybody about this, he means all of you. Like, "You got to post about this on Instagram, or you got to talk about it on the podcast. You got to tell everybody how fun this was." So that was pretty cool.

And then beyond that, we really just like, like I said, walked around Old Town, we played games, we visited some other nearby beaches and went on some walks. We really for us, this was kind of like we're just going to relax and enjoy the views. And it was so nice after being in Boston and then Lisbon to come here and just like decompress and chill.

So we loved it. I would 100% go back to the Algarve. We, there's a lot of different areas of the Algarve that you can go visit. We didn't really leave our area, but I think it would be great to go back and do that. We were just like chill time, I guess, here. But a lot of people do, they go from one town to the next.

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So, other places in the Algarve to stay on points, there is a Hyatt Regency actually that just opened this, I want to say this summer, it could have been late spring. It's in Vilamoura. I'm not sure if I'm saying that right, but you can look that one up. There's a Marriott W Algarve. There's a Hilton Conrad Algarve. There's some options in The Edit collection and Fine Hotels + Resorts®.

I think for my stay, I just wanted, I didn't really, I don't know why, I didn't really want a hotel for this stay. I wanted to kind of be right there on the, I wanted to be able to make our own food when we wanted. I wanted to be able to just sit out on my balcony and not, I didn't want the hotel feel, I guess, for this part of the trip. And so I was really happy with what we did.

And then lastly, we flew to London and we spent three nights. Oh, I forgot to mention something. So we then had to drive back to Lisbon. You can fly out of the Algarve. There's an airport over there called Faro or Faro. I'm not exactly sure how to pronounce it, but there's an airport there. The prices were, I don't know if it was just our dates, because my thought was we'll fly to Lisbon, then we'll drive to the Algarve, and then we'll fly out of the Algarve to London. But the prices were like \$700 one way per person. I was like, that is not going to happen. Not even close. I think we paid under \$300 a person for round-trip flights in and out of Lisbon. So I was not going to pay \$700 for one flight per person.

And so we had to drive back to Lisbon. And so we had to check out of our Airbnb by 10 a.m. And so we kind of had this time where you're like, "Okay, what are we going to do before we go to the airport? How are we going to kill this time? It's kind of hot. We don't want to really be outside all day getting hot and sweaty. Plus, we have our luggage and all of that stuff." So I was looking up what to do and we thought about going and seeing more areas of the Algarve, but then we thought, "You know, it might just be nice to get to Lisbon and be close to the airport."

And so I was looking up some options, and when I had been looking before about what to do in Lisbon, one thing that kept coming up to do with your family in Lisbon, which I just, anyways, it was the Oceanário aquarium. And I thought,

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"We aren't going all the way to Lisbon to go to an aquarium. We can go to an aquarium in Salt Lake City. Like that's, you know, I didn't come to Lisbon for that."

So then that next day I'm like, "Well, that might actually be a good thing to do because we'll be, it's like really close to the airport. There's food right there. We can go get, we can go to a restaurant, we can get something to eat, we can go to the aquarium, be in the air conditioning, and then we'll be close to the airport." So we decided to do Oceanário.

And you guys, we loved it. We loved Oceanário. It was like, it you don't need a whole lot of time there. I think we were there for maybe an hour and a half, two hours. But it was a really, really cute aquarium, and all of my kids really loved it. They have this giant like aquarium in the middle where it's an interesting, like the building's really interesting itself, but you can see, it's like in the center of the building and it's just really huge to make. So you have sharks in there, you have fish in there, you have all sorts of things, and you're like, "Wow, this is, I've never seen an aquarium like that."

So that was really cool. And then they have different areas where you can go and you can see penguins, like from different parts of the world, is kind of how I think they lay it out. And then we saw, or different oceans of the world, maybe is what it was. I'm not 100% sure. But we saw, like, very tropical fish, like what you would see in the Maldives in one section. And then we saw otters in another section. And then we saw penguins in another section.

So it was really fun. The kids really loved it. So hey, maybe, maybe I judged Oceanário a little too quickly, but I was like, "We're not going to go all the way to Portugal to go to an aquarium. We're going to do the cultural stuff." But it was a perfect activity to do before flying out.

And then lastly, we flew to London. We spent three nights at my sister's house. We mostly just hung around their town. The kids played with their cousins. We did go into London one day and we visited Borough Market. That's always a favorite of the kids and Mitch and myself. We love that. We spent way too much on chocolate-covered strawberries, but that is always the case when you're in

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Borough Market. You have to get the viral chocolate strawberries. We then walked across Tower Bridge to visit Tower of London, which I had never of all my times being there, I've never walked across Tower Bridge. So that was fun. And then we flew home.

So the trip went great. I will say, I always stress before a big trip like this. And I think for me part of it was like, "Is it going to be, are we going to be fine? Like our positioning flight and then getting our rental car, is everything going to go well?" And I stress more. I don't really stress when it's just like me and you, Mom, or me, you and Jess, or me and my sisters.

But there's something about being the one in charge of all the kids and knowing that I booked all the travel, I booked all the activities. This is all on my shoulders. I need to work on giving Mitch more responsibility because he'll help. It's just me being like, "Okay, you need to be in charge of this." So I need to get better at that. But honestly, the trip could not have gone better. We didn't, and knock on wood because this is not how it usually goes, but we didn't have any delayed flights. Everything went perfectly. Like the travel logistics went so well.

And we actually, our flight from Lisbon to London, I paid for the cheaper tickets that didn't include seats. And beforehand, on our flights to Lisbon, I ended up paying beforehand to purchase seats individually. But then when it was time to come back, it I waited too long and they wouldn't let me choose our, pay extra for our seats. I was like, "Well, I guess we'll have to see." I never do that. I like having control of where we sit. But it was significantly cheaper. So I was like, "Well, I'll just pay a little extra to choose our seats."

Well, I didn't get to do that on the way home, but they put us in the comfort seats and we didn't have to pay for them. So like when I say everything went great, everything went great. And so that was really nice. But yes, it is, I do want to say if anybody stresses before big trips with your family, you are not alone. I have that experience as well, even as a seasoned traveler. But great trip. I would totally go back to the Algarve. I loved Portugal, and I'd love to go explore more of it.

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Pam: Please go back to the Algarve so we can go again. As we've been talking, and I've been listening, I'm the whole time I'm going, "Okay, who can go with me? When can I go? Where will I stay? Which of those hotels am I probably going to stay at because I don't think Alex will want to go back? Does my sister want to go? What how am I going to work this out?" Because I would really like to do that, but I'd also like to go to Cascais.

Alex: Yes, I know.

Pam: And do that because we loved that when they were there. So maybe we can go back and do Cascais and the Algarve with you guys.

Alex: Yeah. Well, and that was the thing that was hard for us is because if you listen to our other episode, you heard me rave about Cascais. I loved that. I was like, "I'm taking the family back." But I was like, "I really want to try something new." So we did Algarve. So yeah, would love to go back and do Cascais as well sometime. We really loved it.

You know, oh, do you know what else I was going to say is Mitch brought this up too. I think we both realized like we love going to the big city for a day, a day or two. And then it is so fun to get out of the big city and see the other parts of the country. And so it was really nice to be like, "Okay, we went to Lisbon. We spent a whole day there. And now we're going to go and do the smaller towns." I just love the feel of the smaller town.

So I want to incorporate that into more of my travel, where it's like, "Okay, let's go here. Let's go to Rome, and then let's go to some of the other smaller areas around there and not spend, or let's go to Paris for a day or two, but then let's go down to the South of France and let's experience those kinds of places as well." So that's what Mitch and I decided we want to do more of that.

Pam: Yeah, that's great. Well, I definitely had FOMO when you left us in Boston. And that's only increased as I've, as we've gone through this podcast. I really want to go back. So let's make it happen the next few years.

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