

The EDI Committee presents: June 10 2022 – Portugal Day



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June 10th is designated as Portugal Day, the official day to celebrate the history and culture of Portugal. While the day is officially celebrated in Portugal as a public holiday, people of Portuguese descent may celebrate the holiday across the world.

Portugal Day, officially known as *Dia de Camões, de Portugal e das Comunidades Portuguesas* ('Day of Camões, Portugal, and the Portuguese Communities'), commemorates the death of **Luís de Camões** on June 10 1580. Luís Vaz de Camões is considered Portugal's, and the Portuguese language's, greatest poet. Camões wrote the *Lusiads*, Portugal's national epic celebrating the country's history and achievements.

The *Lusiads* focuses on the Portuguese explorations in the 16th century, which greatly expanded the influence of Portugal. The poem is considered to be the most important piece of Portuguese literature and has become a symbol for the glory of the Portuguese nation.

Camões was described as a vibrant person, who lived an interesting life. He lost one eye fighting and was shipwrecked off the coast of present-day Vietnam. According to legend, during the shipwrecking, he kept his epic poem dry by swimming with one arm and keeping the other arm above water.

In the year that Camões died, Portugal was colonized by Spain and began a period of rule by three generations of Spanish kings. It was over 60 years before the country regained its independence.

For such national days, it is common practice to use a date of birth to mark the national day, but since Camões' date of birth was not known, the date of his death is celebrated instead.

Fun facts about Portugal:

- Portugal has had the same defined borders since 1139, making it the oldest nation-state in Europe.
- In 1761, Portugal became the first colonial power to abolish slavery.
- Portuguese is the sixth most spoken language in the world. Portuguese is spoken by 240 million speakers and is the official language of nine countries.
- Portugal produces more than half the world's cork.
- The people of Portugal eat more fish and shellfish than any other country per capita.
- The colours of the flag were chosen for specific reasons; green symbolizes hope for the future; the red symbolizes the blood of the nation.

The EDI Committee would like to acknowledge and wish everyone a Happy Portugal Day!