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Rolling with it in Lisbon


The longboarders turning
the Portuguese capital
into their playground

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Concrete

Despite its hills and cobblestone streets, Lisbon has an emerging longboard skate community that's beloved for its inclusive, laid-back vibe

 Words by Lucy Bryson

 Photography by Will Bremridge

surfers



lisbon's

25th of April Bridge glows in the late afternoon sun as Valeriya Gogunskaya's longboard carves across the riverside pavement below. For less graceful onlookers like myself, her effortless movements seem to defy the laws of physics. "For me, it's like breathing," she says. "It's escape, it's comfort, it's expression."

What started as a personal passion for Valeriya has made her one of Europe's most influential longboarding figures. Since moving from Finland to Portugal nearly 10 years ago, she's helped foster the first longboard dancing community here that's inspired people of all ages to pick up a board.

In a city famous for its ankle-breaking cobblestones and steep hills, longboarders have recently begun to claim pockets of smooth terrain along the Tagus River, turning a famously un-skateable city into an unlikely playground. These spaces represent small victories: flat, open areas that offer freedom of movement in a landscape that otherwise restricts it with steps and slopes at every turn.

Valeriya first discovered the sport through documentary videos of the Longboard Girls Crew, a global, inclusive skate movement that has racked up millions of YouTube views since it emerged 14 years ago. These videos – particularly the seminal, longboarding road-trip film *Endless Roads* – showed her "another universe" of possibilities. Valeriya started

Previous spread Valeriya Gogunskaya (left) and Leslie Sagua (right)
Right Valeriya goes with the flow by Lisbon's 25th April Bridge

**“It’s escape,
it’s comfort,
it’s expression”**

Try it out

Fun Track at Doca de Alcântara rents longboards, although these are perhaps better suited to casual longboarders rather than skilled practitioners. Valeriya loves to skate in this part of town with her own board, but recommends avoiding weekend afternoons when the area gets crowded with families and scooters.



“We can express ourselves freely and in different ways.”

Join the community

Longboard Dancing Lisbon offers classes with Leslie and Giu for all levels, and can also provide quality boards to rent, and for extended periods of time if needed. Follow @longboarddancinglisbon on Instagram and DM for rentals and to book sessions that take advantage of Lisbon’s spectacular viewpoints.

collecting images of female riders and eventually tried out a longboard herself, cementing an unexpected passion that would totally transform her life. What began as casual cruising evolved when she stumbled upon videos of longboard dancing.

“I was absolutely mind-blown,” she says. “It has this very powerful first impression because it’s such an unusual combination.”

The discipline draws inspiration from skateboarding, surfing and dance. Unlike traditional skateboarding’s focus on technical tricks, longboarding emphasises flow, with skaters delicately walking up and down the board, spinning and swaying – all while maintaining impeccable balance. “Longboards are much longer,

more stable boards with bigger wheels, which allows for bigger carves and much smoother, surf-like riding,” Valeriya explains. “That’s why we sometimes call it ‘concrete surfing’.”

But when Valeriya arrived in Portugal close to a decade ago, there was a distinct lack of a skate community like she’d craved since watching *Endless Roads* on repeat from her bedroom in forested Finland. Together with local group the Sealand Association, she decided to organise a skate meetup herself, and was shocked when around 30 people congregated in Santa Cruz, north of Lisbon on a coastline famous for its surf. These meetups grew, evolving into Longboarding Days & Nights – a

Immerse yourself

The Longboard Camp in Santa Cruz runs weekend and week-long retreats combining longboarding with surfing and yoga. Programmes range from three-day weekends to full-week immersions, with accommodation and meals included. All equipment is provided, making it perfect for complete beginners or those travelling without gear.

“Portugal was the only option”

Opposite page
Giu Alfeo does some
longboard dancing
Here Giu and Leslie Sagua
having fun on the
streets of Lisbon

groundbreaking dancing and freestyle community in Portugal. By 2018, this grassroots initiative had transformed into The Longboard Camp, a full retreat that now draws practitioners of all ages and skill levels from across the world. With weekend and week-long options, they offer a chance to learn longboard dancing and freestyle in a judgement-free, joyous environment under the beating Portuguese sun.

Chilean longboarder Leslie Sagua discovered the sport on social media just before moving to Portugal when the pandemic restrictions derailed her plans to work in Germany.

“Portugal was the only option,” she says. “I don’t know what the word is – destiny, maybe.”

In Lisbon, Leslie’s passion for longboarding helped her connect with internationally renowned longboard dancer Giu Alfeo, who was already running sessions as DockSession Lisbon, alongside teaching private classes. In 2023, Giu brought the two together, rebranded as Longboard Dancing Lisbon, and Leslie came on board as an instructor in 2024. “While it might look intimidating,” Giu notes, “absolute beginners are very welcome.”

Newcomers today have it easier. Where Leslie had to forge her own path, longboarding arrivals now find a ready-made scene: established meetups, regular classes and a welcoming community that spans nationalities and generations. “No one’s cooler than

“I think longboard dancing can be for anyone, something that’s beautiful”

anyone else,” says Karolina Lunk, a Hungarian yoga teacher at The Longboard Camp. “You can be a misfit. You don’t have to dress in any particular way. You don’t have to act in any particular way or be really skilled. It’s insanely welcoming.”

“It has a lot of feminine energy,” Valeriya says. The beautiful part of the discipline, for her, is that it combines tricks and steps, “which are like yin and yang energy to me.”

“I think longboard dancing can be for anyone, something that’s beautiful about it is that we can express ourselves freely and in different ways,” adds Giu. “The term ‘dancing’ might be something that some men might shy away from, whilst for women might think they can’t be skaters because of the gendered stereotypes society tells us.”

Longboarding might still be a niche pursuit in Lisbon, but it resonates with the city’s larger creative undercurrent. In a region better known for riding ocean swells than concrete paths, longboarding bridges these worlds, bringing the flow of surfing onto land. This connection makes perfect sense in Portugal, where surf culture runs deep along the Atlantic coast.

It’s also a fitting counterpart to Lisbon’s vibrant street art scene. The city has become a canvas for artists like Vhils, who carves faces into crumbling plaster, and Bordalo II, whose sculptures made from discarded materials comment on environmental issues. Like longboarding, these works transform and reclaim public space.

