



Ready...Set...Portugal? After weeks of anticipation, the weekend in Portugal has finally arrived. My roommates and I sit around the kitchen table scarfing down bread and butter, rushing to make it to the We Love Spain (WLS) bus stop on time. With the stop at least thirty minutes away from our home, the concern is very real. Once we arrive – on time, might I add -- students from our program, as well as students from other programs, begin filling up two large buses. The itinerary for the weekend goes as follows: Friday we arrive in the hotel in Albufeira, explore the beach, jump off a pirate ship, and end the night with a tour of the bars around the town. Saturday, we meet at the lobby, visit the so-called “End of the World” and explore Lagos. On the last day, we take a trip back to Albufeira and alternate between Sao Rafafel and Dos Pescadores beach.

Friday. Friday. Friday. Everybody getting down on Friday. Rebecca Black had no idea how much of that would be true. From the moment we arrive at the Grand Muthu Oura View Beach Club I am floored at how fancy it is. Each corner and wall is plastered with Portuguese and full of fancy furniture. Our group, in addition to separate study abroad students from another program, take up half of waiting area.

Our tour guide strolls up to the front desk and begins conversating with the concierge. After some discussion, he begins calling out names and we're given our room



keys. Three or four students are assigned per room. Key in hand, we trek out into paradise, a word which here means oh my god I never want to leave. Along the side of the courtyard are two separate lounge areas, connecting to a small bridge overlooking a pond. On the opposite end are our rooms...numbered very curiously and scattered around the hotel.

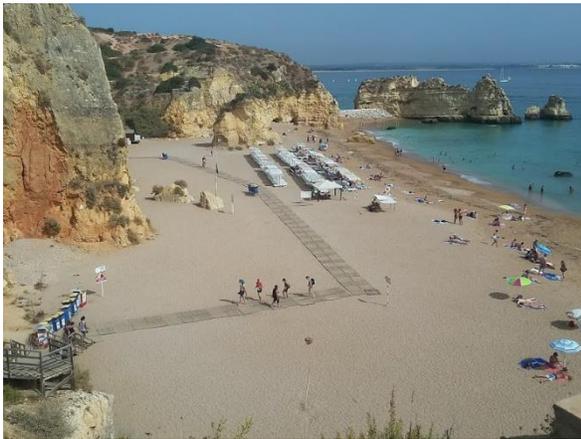
Before jump on a speed a pirate ship. 'jump off' and almost drown' certainly not (Except it totally steering the boat



long it's time to boat and jump off Notice I said not 'jump off and because that is what happened. did.) The pirate reaches its

destination and begins by bringing out a ladder within one of the cabins and several pirate-related costumes. I grab one of the pirate swords, a hat, and pretend to be Blackshorts -- Captain of the Seven Seas! We all take turns diving off the edge of the boat into the water...until it's finally my turn. Looking down at everyone, the water appears shallow and inviting. Lies. I take the leap, diving into the water and start bobbing in and out of it, swallowing salt water. In hindsight I expected this because A) I didn't know how to swim and B) I didn't know how to swim. Without thinking, I close the gap between the boat and me and push myself to the side of it. Once I've made it to the ladder, I climb up and get greeted with concern and questions about what happened.

Moving on, beaches in Portugal are treasures waiting to be discovered. Each has its own history, appeal, and atmosphere. Even the water is different at each beach! Carvalho Beach



works as a siren, luring you in with its breathtaking landscape and then pulling you in deeper into the water without warning. Waves continuously crash all around you and knock you off your feet. Oura, on the other hand, had a very typical beach set up as evidenced in the picture to the side. Apparently beaches in Portugal (or Europe?) have a very...relaxed dress code. More women than men walk around topless. Off in the distance, WLS sets up a volleyball net and a sangria tent, while the rest of us choose a spot to lay down. Sadly, this is the same routine we

follow while at the remaining beaches.

I only have three words to describe Portugal: I love you.