
What Most Real Estate Agents Won't Tell You

Buyers wanting to see through agent practices

TL;DR

- Portuguese agents work for the seller, almost always — even when they pick you up at the airport and behave like your best local friend.
- Commission is 5% + 23% VAT (effective ~6.15%) and is built into the asking price, so the "free for buyers" line is, in practice, false.
- Disclosure rules in Portugal are looser than in the UK, Germany or the US, dual agency is legal, and there is no public sale-price database — due diligence rests entirely on the buyer.

Key 2026 number: on a €600,000 apartment the embedded agency commission is roughly **€36,900** — money the seller technically pays, but the buyer funds through a higher asking price. Understand that one number and most of the rest of this guide follows.

A candid, insider's view of how Portuguese real estate agents really work — the conflicts of interest, the half-truths, the polite omissions, and the practical things you need to know to protect yourself when buying a home in Portugal in 2026.

This guide is not an attack on agents. There are excellent professionals in Portugal who genuinely add value, and we will tell you how to spot them. But the structural reality of the Portuguese market means most of the people walking you through homes have economic incentives that are not aligned with yours, and the rules of disclosure here are looser than in the UK, Germany, or the United States. If you do not understand that asymmetry, you will overpay, or worse, end up in a transaction you cannot easily reverse.

Below are roughly thirty things that, in our experience, agents conveniently leave out — together with how to verify the answers yourself.

How Portuguese Agents Get Paid

Before anything else, understand the money. Almost every behaviour you will encounter from a Portuguese agent is downstream of how their commission is structured.

1. The agent works for the seller, not for you

Even when an agent is showing you ten houses, picking you up at the airport, recommending restaurants, and behaving like your closest local friend, their fiduciary duty (such as it is in Portugal) flows to the seller. In Portugal, the standard arrangement is that the seller signs a mediation contract (contrato de mediação imobiliária) with the agency, and the agency earns a commission only when the sale closes. No sale, no fee. That is who they work for.

This is not a Portuguese peculiarity, it is the global default. What is peculiar is that Portuguese agents rarely volunteer this fact. Many international buyers genuinely believe the friendly person showing them apartments in Cascais is "their" agent. They are not.

2. Commission is built into the asking price

The standard agency commission in Portugal is 5% of the sale price plus 23% VAT, so an effective gross cost of 6.15%. On a €600,000 apartment, that is roughly €36,900. Sellers know this when they price the property, and they raise the asking price to cover it. So while the seller technically writes the cheque to the agency at closing, the buyer is the one whose money funds the commission.

Commission ranges in 2026 are typically 3% to 5% plus VAT, with 5% being the default in the resale market and a little less common in luxury and new development. The more competitive the listing, the more the seller can push the rate down, and the more "exclusive mandate" or international franchise positioning, the more the rate stays at 5%.

3. "Free for buyers" is the most misleading line in the industry

You will hear this constantly. "Don't worry, you don't pay us, the seller does." That is technically true and economically false. The buyer pays via an inflated price. If the same property had no agency commission baked in, the seller would, on average, accept a lower number. Treat "free for the buyer" the way you would treat "free shipping" on Amazon — it is in the price.

4. Dual agency exists in Portugal, often without clear disclosure

In Portugal, the same agent (or the same agency) can legally represent both the seller and the buyer in the same transaction. There is no Anglo-American style fiduciary regime that prohibits this, and no requirement to seat the buyer with a separate broker. In practice, when you walk into an agency and ask to see one of their listings, you have just entered a dual agency situation. The agent collects from the seller, and informally guides you toward signing.

The conflict is obvious once you state it out loud: the same person cannot simultaneously negotiate the lowest possible price for you and the highest possible price for the seller. They will pick the side that pays them, every time. The seller pays them.

5. Co-brokerage and shared commissions

Many Portuguese listings (especially outside Lisbon's prime zones) are not exclusive. The same property may sit on the books of three, five, or even ten different agencies. When the agent walking you around is not the listing agent, what is happening behind the scenes is a co-brokerage split — typically 50/50 — between the agency that has the mandate and the agency that brought the buyer.

This matters for two reasons. First, the agent showing you the home may know less about it than the listing agent. Second, commission-sharing in Portugal is not legally mandated. Some agencies refuse to split, which means agents are heavily incentivised to push you toward in-house listings where they keep the full fee, even when those listings are objectively worse for you than something at a competitor down the street.

Pricing Practices

6. Asking prices are aspirational, not market

In Portugal there is no MLS, no Land Registry sale price database that the public can search by address, and no obligation on agents to publish historical sale data. Asking prices are therefore set with a generous coat of optimism. As a rule of thumb, in 2026, properties that actually transact tend to close 5% to 15% below asking, with bigger discounts on stale listings and lower discounts on prime urban stock that moves quickly.

For context: INE's full-year 2025 transaction data (published April 2026) puts the national median at **€2,076/m²** (+16.8% YoY); the Algarve median is €3,139/m² and Greater Lisbon €3,439/m². Idealista's asking-price index sits roughly 10% higher than INE's transaction medians at any given moment — that gap is exactly the optimism layer.

When an agent says "the seller is firm on price", interpret it as "the seller has not yet been offered enough to accept less". The reservation price (the real walk-away number) is almost always meaningfully below the asking price.

7. "Recently reduced" usually means "stale"

A 5% reduction headline is often a sign that a property has been on the market for six, nine, or twelve months without serious offers. Agents will sometimes pull a listing and re-list it under a new reference number to reset the "days on market" counter that some portals display. If a property is still available with a recent price drop, that is information — it tells you the seller is finally getting realistic, and it tells you that other buyers have already passed at a higher number.

8. Comp manipulation

Ask any agent to justify a price and they will produce comps. Ask carefully where those comps come from. Portuguese agents typically cite asking prices on idealista or supercasa, not actual sale prices. Asking is not selling. They will also cherry-pick comps within the same building or street that support the seller's number, while ignoring the cheaper ones.

A good test: ask the agent to show you the three most recent comparable transactions, with closing dates and final sale prices, not asking prices. If they cannot produce them, the price they are quoting you is essentially a guess dressed up in a spreadsheet.

9. Price-per-square-metre comparisons mislead

Portugal's property documentation distinguishes between gross area (área bruta), private gross area (área bruta privativa), and useful or net area (área útil). Terraces, balconies, basements, parking spaces, and storage rooms are often counted at full or half value depending on how the agent wants the number to look. A "€3,500/m²" listing might be €4,200/m² of useful area once you strip out a 40 m² roof terrace counted at full weight.

Always ask which area definition the price refers to, and check it against the caderneta predial (the tax registry document) and the certidão de teor (Land Registry certificate). If the agent's number

disagrees with the official documents, that is a red flag worth pulling on.

10. Dual contracts (illegal but still attempted)

Although strictly illegal, the practice of declaring a lower price at the deed (escritura) than the actual price paid still surfaces, particularly in older transactions and rural sales between Portuguese parties. The motive is to reduce IMT (transfer tax) and stamp duty for the buyer, and capital gains for the seller. If anyone — agent, seller, even a notary's assistant — suggests this, walk out. The capital gains exposure when you eventually resell is enormous, the criminal exposure is real, and AML scrutiny under post-2024 EU rules has tightened sharply.

Property Quality Omissions

11. "Cosmetic issues" hide structural problems

In Portuguese coastal and historic stock, the difference between a €15,000 cosmetic refresh and a €150,000 structural overhaul comes down to invisible details: humidity rising through the slab, salt damage to rebar, settled foundations, roof timber rot, electrical wiring that pre-dates current code. Agents are legally not building inspectors, and most are not technically equipped to evaluate any of this. They will describe a "charming property that needs a little TLC". They will not point out the staining at the base of the walls, the cracks running through the corner of the ceiling, or the fact that the previous renovation was done without a license.

12. Renovation costs are systematically downplayed

"Needs updating" can mean almost anything from new appliances to a complete gut. A full renovation of an apartment in Lisbon or Porto runs €1,200 to €2,500/m² in 2026 for mid-range finishes, and substantially more for luxury or for buildings with structural or licensing complications. A 100 m² apartment that "needs work" easily absorbs €150,000 before you have furnished it. Get an independent contractor estimate before you sign anything, never the agent's friend.

13. Neighbourhood problems

Agents will rave about the location and stay quiet about: planned construction next door, the bar that opens at 11pm in summer, the school catchment that has moved, the AL apartment one floor up that runs as a de facto hostel, and the assembly fight currently dividing the building. Visit at different times — weekday morning, Friday night, Sunday at noon — and talk to neighbours. The conversation you have on the landing in Portuguese with a neighbour who has lived there twenty years is worth more than any agent description.

14. Title problems brushed aside

When the Land Registry shows a mortgage, an inheritance not yet partitioned, an old usufruct, a missing license for an extension, or a co-owner who has not signed, agents will often say "the lawyer will sort it out before escritura". Sometimes they are right. Sometimes the issue cannot be sorted, and you discover this after you have paid a €30,000 deposit. Insist on seeing the certidão permanente

do registo predial and the caderneta predial before you sign anything, and have your own lawyer (not the agent's) read them.

15. AL (Alojamento Local) licence uncertainty

If you are buying as an investor for short-term rental, the agent will almost always say "yes, you can run it on Airbnb". As of 2026 this is a much more complicated answer than it used to be.

The current legal framework is **DL n.º 76/2024, de 23 de outubro** (in force since 1 November 2024), which reversed most of the 2023 *Mais Habitação* restrictions:

- AL licences are **nationally transferable** with the property (the old non-transferability rule is gone).
- The quinquennial re-authorisation requirement was eliminated — registrations are permanent, subject only to municipal containment.
- The CEAL (Contribuição Extraordinária sobre o Alojamento Local) was repealed.
- Containment and growth-area regulation was devolved to municipalities — Lisbon, Porto, Cascais and several Algarve municipalities maintain restrictions in their highest-pressure parishes.

Layered on top, **EU Regulation 2024/1028** applies from **20 May 2026**. It forces booking platforms (Airbnb, Booking, Vrbo) to verify each host's national registration number and automatically delist non-compliant properties. Grey-market operation is no longer feasible.

What this means in practice: an existing licence transferring with the property is a real asset. A "future AL potential" that depends on the buyer obtaining a new licence in a containment zone is, in many cases, worthless. Always verify the AL status (or the realistic prospect of obtaining one) with the local câmara, in writing, before assuming rental income.

16. Condominium fee history

Ask for the last three years of condominium minutes (actas), the current account balance, the reserve fund position, any pending special assessments, and any active or threatened lawsuits between owners or against the building. A €95/month condo fee is meaningless if a €12,000-per-unit elevator replacement is queued for next year. Agents rarely have these documents on hand. They should. Insist.

Process Tricks

17. Pressure to sign the CPCV quickly

The Contrato Promessa de Compra e Venda (CPCV) is the binding promissory contract that locks in your deposit, typically 10% to 30% of the price. Once signed, you are committed: if you walk away, you lose the deposit; if the seller walks, they owe you double. So the CPCV deserves the same scrutiny as the final deed.

Agents will often push you to sign within days, citing "another buyer" or a seller's deadline. That urgency is almost always manufactured. A serious property purchase deserves at least one to two weeks of legal review on the CPCV, including bringing forward title checks, urban planning checks, and energy certificate review. If the agent objects, that is itself information.

18. Discouraging your own lawyer

You will sometimes hear "we have a notary who handles everything" or "the agency lawyer can prepare the contract for you, much cheaper". Politely decline. The notary's job is to verify identities and the form of the deed, not to represent your interests. The agency's preferred lawyer is, by definition, a repeat customer of the agency. Hire your own independent lawyer with no relationship to the agency or seller. Budget 0.75% to 1.5% of the price for proper legal work, and consider it cheap insurance.

19. Discouraging surveys

In Portugal, building surveys (*vistorias técnicas*) are not a standard part of resale transactions. Agents will sometimes treat your request for one as an insult to the seller. Ignore that. For anything older than 30 years, anything that has been renovated, anything coastal, and anything above €500,000, get an independent engineer's report before you sign the CPCV. It costs €500 to €1,500. It is worth it.

20. Steering to a preferred mortgage broker

Agencies often have an in-house or partner mortgage broker. Sometimes the broker is genuinely good, sometimes the relationship is built on referral kickbacks. Either way, never use a single source for your mortgage. In 2026, spreads between Portuguese banks on the same profile easily reach 0.4 to 0.7 percentage points, which on a €400,000 loan over 30 years is worth tens of thousands of euros. Compare at least three banks directly, plus an independent broker who is not affiliated with the agency.

21. "Other offers" sometimes invented

The phrase "we have another buyer interested at a similar level" is a staple of every market in the world, and most of the time it is true; some of the time it is bluff. There is no easy way to verify, but you can test: politely ask whether the other offer is in writing and whether the seller is willing to provide a 24- or 48-hour exclusivity window in exchange for your serious bid. Real competing offers usually accept a structured process. Imaginary ones often disappear.

22. Best-and-final pressure without an actual competing offer

In a thin sub-market, "best-and-final" can be a negotiating frame, not a real auction. If you suspect there is no actual second bidder, you can call the bluff by submitting a firm offer at your number with a short expiry and walking. About a third of the time, the agent calls you back the next day.

What Agents Don't Want You to Know

23. They show you what they have, not what is right for you

Agents are inventory-driven. The properties you will be shown are the properties their agency holds the mandate on, plus a curated set of co-broker listings where the split is favourable. The objectively best property for your brief might sit on the books of a competing agency — and you will never see it. The way around this is to brief two or three agencies independently, or to retain an independent buyer's agent (more on this below) who is not bound to a single inventory.

24. Off-market and pocket listings exist, but only if you are "in"

A meaningful share of Portugal's most desirable stock — particularly luxury villas in the Golden Triangle, prime apartments in Lapa or Príncipe Real, and recovery projects in the Douro — never reaches the public portals. They circulate quietly between trusted buyer's agents and a small group of vetted clients. If you are buying above €1.5M, assume that 20% to 40% of the market is invisible to you unless you have introductions.

25. Real time on market

Days-on-market is one of the strongest negotiating signals you have, and it is the one agents most aggressively obscure. They re-list properties, change reference numbers, switch portals, or rotate between agencies to reset the visible counter. Use the Wayback Machine, screenshot history, and direct questions to neighbours to triangulate how long a property has actually been available. A property quietly trying to sell for 14 months is in a very different negotiating position from one freshly listed last week.

26. The seller's actual reservation price

Almost every seller has a private floor that is meaningfully below the asking number. In normal market conditions, this gap is often 10% to 20%. Agents know it (or can guess closely), and they will not volunteer it. The closest you can get is to ask, sincerely and quietly, "if I were to offer X, would you take it to the seller and at least try?" The agent's body language and pace of response tell you a lot.

27. Their own opinion of the property

Most agents have a private view on whether a listing is overpriced, structurally sketchy, or in a deteriorating sub-market. They will almost never share that view with you because doing so undermines the sale. The exceptions are the agents worth working with — they will quietly say "this one is not for you" or "I think there are better options in your range".

28. Multi-agency listings at different prices

Because most Portuguese mandates are non-exclusive, the same property is frequently listed on several portals at different prices, by different agencies, with different photos and different descriptions. You can sometimes find a property listed for €590,000 on one agency's site and €575,000 on another. Always run a reverse image search on the photos and a search on the property's address and area to surface every active listing. Negotiate against the lowest price.

29. AMI license verification

Every legitimate Portuguese real estate intermediary must hold an AMI licence issued by IMPIC (Instituto dos Mercados Públicos, do Imobiliário e da Construção). The licence number must be displayed on all marketing materials, contracts, and the office front.

Verify it yourself at www.impic.pt — click "Verificar número AMI", enter the number, and confirm that the agency exists, that the company name matches what is on your contract, and that the mandatory civil liability insurance (minimum €150,000 coverage, ~€265 annual fee in 2026) is current and active. Anyone operating without a valid AMI licence is acting illegally, and you have no recourse against the agency's insurance if something goes wrong.

It is also worth noting that, contrary to perception in many other countries, Portugal's licensing bar is low. There is no required exam for the individual agent in most pathways, no formal real estate qualification, and only mandatory annual training on AML and tax-evasion screening. Many of the people calling themselves "real estate consultants" finished their training a few weeks ago. Treat seniority and track record as your primary filter, not job titles.

30. Their conflict when representing both sides

If the agent showing you the property is the listing agent, ask explicitly: "Are you representing me or the seller?" The honest answer is "the seller". Some agents will try to fudge this with "I represent the transaction" or "I am neutral". There is no such thing. If you want representation, retain an independent buyer's agent or rely entirely on your lawyer for negotiation strategy.

How to Use Agents Effectively

The takeaway is not that agents are useless — far from it. Agents are an essential channel into the Portuguese market. They are simply not advisors, and you should not treat them as such.

- Treat agents as filtered information sources. Cross-reference everything they say with public records, neighbours, and at least one other independent professional.
- Verify everything: AMI licence, area, condominium status, AL status, debts on the property, licence for extensions and pools.
- Walk away from pressure. If the situation feels rushed, slow it down. Real opportunities tolerate due diligence.
- Use multiple agents in parallel. Brief two or three agencies on your target, do not give exclusivity, and watch what each one shows you. The differences are revealing.
- Be polite and professional. The agent network is small, and a reputation for being respectful and decisive is an asset that opens doors over time.

When to Use an Independent Buyer's Agent

A buyer's agent (sometimes called a buyer's broker, or "agente de compra") is paid by you, not the seller, and is contractually committed to your interests. The role is well-established in the UK and US, and is growing fast in Portugal — especially among international buyers, UHNW clients, and investors operating remotely.

Typical 2026 fee structures: 1%–2.5% of the purchase price for standard residential, or fixed fees of €5,000–€20,000; retainers of €2,500–€10,000 up front, usually credited against the success fee; sliding scale for ultra-luxury (€5M+).

When the cost makes sense: you are buying remotely, above €750,000, in a niche where off-market matters (Douro, Comporta, prime Algarve), without fluent Portuguese, or you simply want a single advisor managing agents, lawyers, surveyors and bankers on your behalf.

How to find a good one: confirm the AMI licence, ask for referenceable recent transactions, insist on a fee structure aligned with savings (not raw price), and — most importantly — get written confirmation that they do not accept commissions, kickbacks or referral fees from listing agencies, lawyers, mortgage brokers, or anyone else in the deal. Watch out for "buyer's agents" who are really re-badged listing agents paid by the seller. If the seller is paying, they are not your buyer's agent.

Verification Tools

A short toolkit you can use yourself:

- **AMI licence check:** www.impic.pt — "Verificar número AMI". Confirms the agency exists, is licensed, and has current liability insurance.
- **Land Registry:** certidão permanente do registo predial, requestable online at predialonline.pt with the property identification. Shows ownership, mortgages, and legal charges.
- **Tax registry:** caderneta predial urbana, downloadable from the Portal das Finanças. Shows the official tax description, areas, and VPT (taxable patrimonial value).
- **Urban planning:** licença de utilização and any planning constraints, available from the local câmara. Critical for verifying that what was built matches what was approved.
- **AL register:** RNAL (Registo Nacional de Alojamento Local), searchable online by licence number.
- **Condominium minutes:** actas das assembleias for the last three years, plus current accounts and reserve fund — request from the seller via the agent.
- **Independent valuation:** a chartered surveyor or bank valuation (avaliação bancária) costs €250 to €700 and is the strongest objective check on price.
- **Multiple agent shopping:** brief two or three agencies and an independent buyer's agent in parallel — the differences in what they show and what they say are themselves a data source.

Cultural Differences for Foreign Buyers

The Portuguese negotiating culture is different from the German, Dutch, or American style most international buyers are used to.

- **Pace:** relaxed at first, then firm. Initial visits are warm; closing conversations can become unexpectedly hard-edged. Do not mistake early friendliness for flexibility.
 - **Indirect communication:** a "we will see" or "let me speak to the seller" frequently means no. Read between the lines.
 - **"Nice price" vs. "fair price":** a Portuguese seller's "preço simpático" is not market value, it is the number that makes them feel respected. Negotiating without acknowledging that emotional layer can stall a deal the numbers would otherwise close.
 - **Family agencies vs. international franchises:** family-run shops often have deeper local knowledge and quieter networks; international franchises (RE/MAX, Century 21, Engel & Völkers, Sotheby's, Knight Frank, BHHS) bring standardised processes, English-speaking staff, and broader marketing. Both models work; both fail in their own way.
 - **Trust building takes time:** relationships unlock off-market inventory and price flexibility. The buyers who do best in Portugal treat agents and sellers as long-term counterparties, not single-transaction adversaries.
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Practical Tactics: How to Negotiate Better

A small set of tactics that consistently work in the Portuguese market:

- **Multiple visits at different times.** Morning, evening, weekend. You see the property, the neighbours, the noise, the light, and the building rhythm.
 - **Ask the agent directly:** "What is the real reservation price?" or "If I offered X, would the seller seriously consider it?" The honest agents answer; the dishonest ones reveal themselves.
 - **Walk away, and mean it.** Make a firm offer with a 48 to 72 hour expiry, then leave. A meaningful percentage of the time, the agent calls back within days. This only works if you are genuinely willing to walk; bluffing is transparent.
 - **Always counter, never accept the first counter.** The seller's first counter is rarely their last position. Even a small additional move (1% to 2%) usually pulls something out.
 - **Use silence.** After making an offer, stop talking. Portuguese negotiation has space for pauses, and the agent often fills the silence with information you can use.
 - **Decouple price from terms.** If the seller will not move on price, push on closing date, fixtures and fittings, deposit size, AL licence transfer, or a longer CPCV-to-escritura window. Many sellers will trade terms they do not value for a price they do.
 - **Anchor with comps and condition.** A negotiation grounded in three concrete data points — recent sales, urgent repairs, and time on market — is much harder for the agent to dismiss than a feelings-based offer.
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What Good Agents Actually Do Tell You

Some agents are excellent. The market is full of professionals who treat their job as a long-term reputation business and act accordingly. They are worth knowing. Signs you are dealing with one:

- They volunteer downsides without being asked. "The kitchen is small for the price, and the building has lift maintenance issues coming up next year."
 - They tell you when a property is wrong for you. "Honestly, with what you described, this is not the right one. Let me show you something else."
 - They decline to show or list overpriced properties. A serious agent who turns down a mandate because the seller is unrealistic is a rare and reliable signal.
 - They have a verifiable track record — closed transactions, named referees, years in the same market.
 - They are precise on documentation. They know the exact registo number, the exact area, the licensing history, and they hand you copies without being asked.
 - They are not the loudest in the room. The best Portuguese agents tend to be unhurried and quiet. Showmanship and pressure often signal the opposite.
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Industry Outlook 2026

A few structural trends shaping how agents will operate in the next few years:

- **Consolidation.** The big franchises continue to take share from independent boutiques in mass-market resale. Boutiques are repositioning toward the high end, where service and discretion still command premium fees.
 - **Tech-enabled brokerage.** Pure iBuyer economics have struggled here, but digital onboarding, AI valuations, and integrated mortgage and notary workflows are here and growing.
 - **Flat-fee listings.** A small but growing set of agencies offer fixed-fee listings (€2,000–€6,000) instead of percentage commissions. Buyers do not benefit directly, but pricing pressure on the 5% standard is finally showing.
 - **Tighter AL and AML enforcement.** The 20 May 2026 EU short-term rental regulation and post-2024 EU AML rules are squeezing grey-market practices on both AL income and undeclared transactions. Expect agents to be more cautious about what they put in writing.
 - **Buyer-side representation growing.** Almost invisible in Portugal a decade ago, now well-established in international and luxury segments and slowly extending into mid-market resale.
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FAQs

Is it normal for the agent to ask for ID and tax number (NIF) before showing me a property? Yes. Anti-money-laundering (AML) rules require agencies to identify clients before serious viewings and

offers. This is legitimate and you should expect it. What is not legitimate is the agency holding or sharing that data beyond the transaction.

Can I negotiate the agent's commission as a buyer? Indirectly, yes. Because the commission is built into the price, you negotiate it by negotiating the price. Some buyers ask the agent to "give back" part of the commission via a price reduction; this works occasionally on stale listings where the agent has more to lose by not closing than by trimming their fee.

What happens if the agent is unlicensed? You have very limited legal recourse and the agency's mandatory civil liability insurance does not protect you. Always verify the AMI number on www.impic.pt before signing anything.

Should I sign an exclusive buyer's agreement? Only with a true independent buyer's agent who is paid by you, with a clearly defined scope, defined fee, defined search area, and a defined term (typically three to six months). Never sign exclusive buyer paperwork with a listing agency.

Is the agent obliged to disclose defects? Portuguese law requires the agent to provide accurate information about the property's characteristics, price, and payment terms, and the seller is bound by a legal warranty against hidden defects (*vícios ocultos*) for up to five years after the deed. In practice, enforcement is hard and slow. Do not rely on legal warranty as a substitute for due diligence.

What's the difference between an agent and a "consultor imobiliário"? In Portuguese, "consultor imobiliário" or "agente imobiliário" usually refers to the individual person, while the "mediadora imobiliária" or "agência" is the legal entity holding the AMI licence. The licence belongs to the agency, not the person. This is why you verify the agency on IMPIC.

If I find a property myself, can I avoid the commission? No. If the property is listed with an agency under a valid mediation contract, the seller owes the agency the commission whether the buyer was introduced by them or not, and the price reflects that. The only way to avoid the agent layer entirely is to buy strictly off-market through a direct private sale — possible, but rare, and it does not exempt you from any of the other due diligence above.

How does this all compare to buying in the UK, Germany, or the US? Portugal has lighter regulation around agents than the UK or Germany, no MLS as in the US, looser disclosure obligations, and more comfortable acceptance of dual agency. The upside is a more relationship-driven market. The downside is that due diligence rests squarely on the buyer.

Bottom Line

Portuguese real estate agents are not your enemy, and most are not bad actors. They are simply playing a structurally seller-aligned role in a market with light regulation, no MLS, and a culture of polite indirectness. If you walk into the Portuguese market expecting your agent to be your advisor, you will overpay and you will miss things. If you walk in understanding exactly who they work for, what they are paid, what they will and will not say, and what tools you have to verify the gaps — you can use them effectively, and a small number of them, the good ones, will become genuinely valuable long-term allies.

The single biggest decision you can make as a buyer is to retain independent professional support — your own lawyer at minimum, and an independent buyer's agent for higher-value or remote purchases. Everything else follows from that.

Related reading

- **Mistakes to avoid when buying property in Portugal** — the broader 30-mistakes companion to this guide.
 - **Risk-averse buyer guide** — the seven categories of risk in a Portuguese purchase and what each one costs to mitigate.
 - **Buying property in Portugal without being in the country** — agent management when you cannot fly in for every viewing.
 - **When buying property in Portugal does not make sense** — twelve scenarios where the right answer is to walk away from the agent entirely.
 - **Mistakes to avoid when selling property in Portugal** — the same dynamics from the other side, useful when you eventually exit.
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How 2nd Haus can help

We should be honest about our own commercial position. **2nd Haus is, in formal terms, also a kind of agent** — an AMI-licensed intermediary, regulated by IMPIC, operating in the same legal framework as every firm described above. The difference is structural: we work on the buyer side, on a transparent fee that you pay (1%–2% of price, or a fixed retainer), and we contractually do not accept commissions, referral fees or kickbacks from sellers, listing agencies, banks, lawyers, or anyone else in the transaction. That alignment is the whole proposition.

What that means in practice:

- **Independent advisory:** we shop the whole market on your brief, including listings held by competing agencies and off-market stock.
- **Documented due diligence:** title, urban planning, AL status, condominium history, technical survey — written, sourced, and reviewed before you sign a CPCV.
- **Negotiation on your side:** we negotiate against the listing agent on the seller's reservation price, not toward their asking price.
- **One advisor, end-to-end:** agents, lawyers, surveyors, bankers and the notary coordinated through a single point of contact.

If you would like to discuss a specific search, an existing CPCV under pressure, or a property you have already shortlisted, we run a paid initial consultation (€250, credited against any subsequent engagement) and full buyer-side mandates from there.

Sources

Primary

- IMPIC (Instituto dos Mercados Públicos, do Imobiliário e da Construção) — AMI licence verification: <https://www.impic.pt>
- DL n.º 76/2024, de 23 de outubro — Alojamento Local framework: [Diário da República](#)
- EU Regulation 2024/1028 — short-term rental data collection, applies from 20 May 2026: [EUR-Lex](#)
- INE — Estatísticas de Preços da Habitação (national and regional medians 2025): www.ine.pt

Further reading

- Idealista Portugal news — buyer-cost analyses 2026: idealista.pt/news
- Antas da Cunha Ecija — DL 76/2024 commentary on AL transferability and CEAL repeal

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Want a buyer-side advisor on your specific case?

2nd Haus is a buyer-side real-estate consultancy specialised in the Algarve. We will tell you not to buy if that is the honest answer.

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