

Portugal: Minho & the Douro Valley

Tour-Only Itinerary

Travel beyond the Douro Valley to discover the hospitality of Portuguese royalty and the charm of ancient hilltop villages. Starting in Porto, you'll explore the ancient Roman ruins of historic Ponte de Lima during a stay at a 17th-century estate that once housed traveling Portuguese royalty. Here, you'll meet the Count de Calheiros and learn about the history of Portuguese aristocracy. Explore spectacular Portuguese vineyards—tasting superb vintages and enjoying a relaxing boat cruise along the river's sunlit banks. In true Country Walkers style, your local leaders reveal a delightful hidden gem: the medieval village of Marialva—a charming labyrinth of ancient stone dwellings set beneath an imposing hilltop castle. A final day in Lisbon provides the perfect opportunity to reflect upon your fresh appreciation of Portuguese history, culture, and cuisine.



Highlights

- Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims as you hike a section of the famous “Way of St. James.”
- Cruise down the picturesque Douro River aboard a private *barco rabelo*, a boat traditionally used to carry wine casks.
- Explore high mountain valleys and tiny farming hamlets forgotten by time.
- Visit Moorish villages including the birthplace of explorer Ferdinand Magellan.
- Tread across the elegant stone arches of an expansive 2,000-year-old Roman bridge in Ponte de Lima.

On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4-8 miles per day. This tour features a combination of paved roads and easy terrain, mixed with moderate hills, uneven footpaths, and vineyards.

DAY 1

Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins

Camino de Santiago: Ponte de Lima to Paço de Calheiros; 2.5 – 5 miles, easy to moderate, 1,000-ft.

elevation gain

Your Country Walkers leaders will meet you at our pre-tour hotel, the Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel, at 9:00 a.m. in the lobby. Please be dressed for walking—comfortable, weather-appropriate attire, sturdy footwear, and a daypack (to carry essentials such as rain gear and a water bottle) are required. The day begins with a short drive north to the Minho region, one of three regions you'll explore during your journey through Portugal.

Travel along the scenic Lima River to the charming riverside town of Ponte de Lima, named for its iconic Roman bridge. Here, enjoy lunch before lacing up your walking shoes to trace a Portuguese segment of the famed Caminho de Santiago, the pilgrimage route that ultimately leads to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

Your walk begins with a crossing of the legendary Ponte de Lima, an elegant structure featuring seven original Roman arches that have endured through the centuries. As you continue, follow a route long traveled by pilgrims seeking spiritual renewal. The landscape gradually shifts from farmland and pastures to vast vineyards surrounding traditional manor houses. One such estate, known as a Paço, once served as a royal rest stop for the king as he traveled through the countryside.

Your accommodation for the next two nights is at the Paço de Calheiros, a historic estate that has belonged to the family of Count Calheiros since medieval times. The current manor house, dating from the 17th century, is a fine example of noble Portuguese architecture, protected by thick granite walls and surrounded by terraced gardens. From the grounds, enjoy panoramic views of the Lima Valley, and on clear days, you may even catch a glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean in the distance.

This evening, gather for a welcome reception hosted by Count Calheiros himself, followed by a sumptuous dinner served in the estate's dining room.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Historic Villages of Portugal's Peneda-Gerês National Park

Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês & Caminho da Fé; 3 – 4 miles, easy to moderate

Today, explore Peneda-Gerês National Park, located in Portugal's northern Minho region. With its forested valleys, granite peaks, and mountain pastures, this is Portugal's only national park. The remote mountain villages here appear frozen in time, yet they've gracefully adapted to modern tourism with well-marked footpaths connecting them. Along the way, you'll learn about the region's unique grain storage structures known as *espigueiros*. Made of wood or granite, these cleverly designed granaries elevate harvested grains above ground, protecting them from animals and moisture.

Your walk descends into the valley between the granite peaks of Peneda-Gerês National Park, ending in the ancient village of Soajo. The trail you follow was originally paved by the Romans with large stones and has been used for centuries by pilgrims traveling from Peneda to Soajo—hence its name, the Caminho da Fé (“Way of Faith”). It's also called the Caminho do Pão (“Way of Bread”), a nod to the valley's agricultural heritage. Residents have long practiced transhumance, moving livestock seasonally between high pastures and lower valleys. As you walk past aqueducts once used to irrigate fields and power flour mills, you may encounter indigenous Cachena milk cows or even spot wild Garrano horses roaming the hillsides.

As you approach Soajo—backed by the dramatic Serra do Soajo Mountains—your path leads under grape arbors and past terraced gardens and vineyards. Winding through the village's ancient granite houses, you'll arrive at its communal granary and the famous cluster of stone *espigueiros*, still used today.

On your return journey to Paço de Calheiros, the shuttle will make a stop for those who wish to take an optional walk back to the estate. This scenic route leads you across rolling hills with picturesque views. As you descend toward the manor, the Paço's majestic architecture appears on the horizon. A nearby landmark chestnut grove signals that your day's journey is nearly complete.

Back at the manor house, you may choose to explore the surrounding forest trails, join a guided walk through the Count's gardens, or relax by the swimming pool. This evening, you'll shuttle into nearby Ponte de Lima for dinner on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

Guimarães. Provesende Village and the Douro River Wine Region

Guimarães; Provesende to Pinhão; 2.5 – 4 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, depart your hotel and begin your journey into Portugal's renowned Douro wine region. En route, stop for a short break in the historic city of Guimarães, often referred to as the birthplace of Portugal. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Guimarães was the seat of the country's first king and played a pivotal role in the formation of the Portuguese nation. During your visit, your guides will share insights into its rich medieval history and architectural heritage.

From here, continue to the county of Sabrosa, the birthplace of the famed explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Your destination—and the starting point of today's walk—is the charming village of Provesende, which dates back to the Moorish era. Following a brief exploration of the village and its Baroque church, set out on foot along paths that gently descend through vineyards, with sweeping views of the Douro River as your constant companion.

In 1756, the Douro Valley became the world's first controlled and demarcated wine region, thanks to the Marquis of Pombal, who marked the boundaries with granite pillars to protect the production of port wine. Today, the valley is a UNESCO World Heritage site, its dramatic scenery continuing to inspire poets, painters, and photographers from around the globe.

Your walk ends in the heart of the wine region, in the riverside town of Pinhão, where you'll stay for the next two nights. Your accommodation is a historic hotel set on the banks of the Douro River, offering spectacular views of the surrounding valley. Just steps away, you'll find inviting shops and restaurants in the center of town.

This evening, relax over a delightful dinner at your hotel, savoring the flavors of Portugal's iconic wine country.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Vineyard Walks in the Douro River Region. Picnic Lunch and Wine Tasting. Independent Exploration of Pinhão

Vineyard walk to Ferrão train station; 3 – 4 miles, easy to moderate

Fueled by a satisfying breakfast, begin your day with a shuttle to nearby vineyards offering sweeping views of the Douro River Valley. Walk along scenic paths through some of the region's most celebrated vineyards, eventually arriving at the small riverside Ferrão train station. From here, board a short, picturesque train ride that follows the riverbank back to Pinhão, home to a charming station decorated with 3,500 hand-painted Portuguese tiles.

You'll conclude today's special walk in a lovely vineyard setting, where you'll enjoy a splendid picnic lunch followed by a tasting of the estate's renowned wines. Afterward, it's just a short drive back to your hotel.

In the afternoon, enjoy time at your leisure. You may wish to explore the town of Pinhão, visit its historic train station, or stop by the "Wine House" museum to delve deeper into the region's viticultural heritage. Later, unwind by the pool at your hotel and take in the serene views of the river and its slow-drifting boats.

This evening, take a short shuttle to the D'Origem Olive Oil Museum in the village of Casal de Loivos. Here, you'll learn about the traditional methods used to produce Douro's prized olive oil. Enjoy tastings of freshly pressed oils paired with local tapas, then return to Pinhão for dinner on your own, either at one of the town's inviting restaurants or in your hotel's dining room.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

Cruise the Douro River on a *Rabelo* Boat

Rota das Aldeias Históricas to Marialva; 2 miles, moderate

This morning, you'll embark on a wooden sailing vessel modeled after the traditional *rabelos* that once transported wine along the Douro River. Sit back and relax as your privately chartered boat glides through the tranquil landscape, offering sweeping views of the valley's terraced vineyards and riverbanks. Midday, enjoy a delectable picnic lunch served on board.

A highlight of your cruise is passing through the Ferrão lock, an impressive engineering feature of the river, before disembarking in Ferradosa. From here, you may choose to shuttle directly to your accommodations, or opt for a short walk along the Rota das Aldeias Históricas—a historic route spanning more than 300

miles and connecting 12 traditional villages. Your destination is Marialva, a hauntingly beautiful medieval village nestled into a rocky hillside.

Enjoy the remainder of the evening at your leisure, with dinner on your own in this atmospheric setting.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6

Independent Exploration of Marialva

Loop walk from Casas do Côro; 2.5 – 5 miles, easy to moderate, 703-ft. elevation gain

Begin your morning with a delicious breakfast and some time at leisure. You might enjoy a peaceful stroll among stone walls, vineyards, fruit trees, and cultivated fields that surround the property.

Savor an included lunch in the village before venturing out to explore Marialva and its castle. Though its origins date back to the 6th century BCE, the village was not officially granted a town charter until 1179. This medieval hillside town appears carved into the craggy slopes, and it's easy to see why it once served as a strategic military fortress. As you wander the narrow, stone-paved streets and pass ancient battlements and weathered stone buildings, you'll feel transported to another time.

Climb to the top of the village for a guided tour of the castle ruins, where you'll learn more about Marialva's layered past and its role in Portuguese history.

This evening, gather for a farewell dinner featuring traditional family recipes lovingly passed down to your hotel's owner—a fitting and flavorful close to your unforgettable journey.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

Travel to Lisbon. Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends

After breakfast, you'll shuttle approximately four hours to Portugal's capital, Lisbon. Your tour concludes at our post-tour hotel, the Sofitel Lisbon Liberdade, at approximately 1:30 p.m. From here, you are free to

continue your journey independently, whether exploring more of Lisbon or traveling onward.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Air Package

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
13 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
One extra night in Porto and one extra night in Lisbon, including breakfast	✓	
Airport arrival and departure transportation	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	