

Portugal: Minho & the Douro Valley

Tour-Only Itinerary

The countryside of Portugal, with its hillside farms and historic vineyards, has a timeworn charm that demands exploration. Start your tour in the Minho region, hiking a segment of the famous pilgrimage route, the Caminho de Santiago. You'll trek through forested valleys and rugged mountain pastures before descending the ancient "Way of Faith." The entire Douro River Valley is a UNESCO World Heritage site that's renowned for its terraced vineyards and stunning beauty. Here, you'll discover the stone fortress town of Marialva and cruise the Douro River in a traditionally styled wine cask boat. During your Minho and Douro Valley tours you'll stay at an elegant manor house built for traveling kings as well as a heritage estate on the banks of the Douro River.



Highlights

- Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims as you hike a section of the famous "Way of St. James"
- Taste a flight of elegant wines at the Quinta do Bomfim winery
- 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 in time
- Follow well-marked hillside trails among cypress, orange and almond trees
- Visit moorish villages and 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
- Hike through a medieval village carved into rocky cliffs
- Stay at a historic, luxury inn on the banks of the Douro River in Porto

- Enjoy delicious meals featuring family recipes passed down over generations

On all Flex-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.



Opportunities to break away from the group and explore on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 20 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious multi-course meals—a majority are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Flex-Guided Adventures and features a combination of paved roads and easy terrain, mixed with moderate hills, uneven footpaths and vineyards. On rainy days the footpaths and vineyards can be wet and muddy. Our transportation is available at specific meeting points for those who need assistance. Both morning and afternoon walking options are available most days. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners and experienced walkers. As one of our Flex-Guided tours, some days offer options for self-exploration, cultural visits, or free time to relax on your own.

DAY 1

Join your *Portugal: Minho & the Douro Valley* tour

Camino de Santiago: Ponte de Lima to Paço de Calheiros; 2.5 – 5 miles, easy to moderate

Meet your Country Walkers guide(s) at the Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel in Porto at 9:00 a.m.

This morning, join your guides for a brief orientation before a short transfer to the Minho – one of three regions you will visit in Portugal. In the heart of the Minho region, drive along the Lima River to the attractive riverside town of Ponte de Lima, named after its Roman Bridge. Here you will have lunch before lacing up your walking shoes and tracing a Portuguese segment of the religious route Caminho de Santiago to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

Your walk today begins with a crossing of the legendary Ponte de Lima. Seven original Roman arches remain.

After crossing the bridge, begin your journey through a farming landscape. Pilgrims from around the world have been walking this “Way of St. James” for more than a millennium to arrive at Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain where many believe St. James is buried. Soon, pastures give way to huge vineyards surrounding beautiful manor houses. One of them is a Paço, a small country palace and rest stop for the king during his travels through the countryside.

Your accommodation for the next two nights is the Paço de Calheiros, which has been owned and operated by the family of Count Calheiros since medieval times. The present-day family home was built in the 17th century. Its stalwart structures and three-foot granite wall have stood the test of time. You may stroll the grounds which offer breathtaking views of the Lima Valley. If the day is clear you may also glimpse the Atlantic Ocean.

In the evening, get to know your host, Count Calheiros at a welcome reception followed by a sumptuous dinner.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Paço de Calheiros

DAY 2

Historic Villages in Portugal's Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês

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

Today, explore the Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês in the northern Minho region. With its forested valleys and mountain pastures, this is Portugal's only national park. The little mountain villages in the park appear lost in time, but have adapted to the new world of tourism with well-marked footpaths linking them together. There will be time to learn about the unique grain storages known as *espigueiros*. These wood or granite structures were cleverly designed to keep animals away from harvested grains.

You will descend into the valley between the granite peaks of the Peneda-Gerês National Park, arriving in the ancient village of Soajo. This road was originally paved with large stones by the Romans, and for centuries has been walked by pilgrims from Peneda to Soajo; known as the Caminho da Fé, the Way of Faith. Alternatively, it is also referred to as the Caminho do Pão, the Way of Bread, as the inhabitants of this valley have made their living by moving their livestock up and down the mountains with the change of seasons. As you walk past aqueducts used for irrigating fields and powering flour mills, you may even see the indigenous Cachena milk cows or the wild Garrano horses.

Nearing the village of Soajo, with its dramatic backdrop of the Serra do Soajo Mountains, walk under a grape arbor past small, terraced gardens and vineyards. Winding your way through the village and past its ancient granite houses, you will soon arrive at the communal granary and its granite *espigueiros*.

En route back to Paço de Calheiros, the shuttle will stop for those who wish to take an optional walk that will end at our hotel. You will cross scenic rolling hills before returning to the estate. From a distance, the beautiful architecture will look even more majestic. As you amble downhill to your lodgings, a landmark chestnut grove comes into view letting you know the destination is close by.

Back at the manor house, you may opt to venture out and explore the forests that surround Paço de Calheiros on well-kept trails, join a walk through the Count's gardens, or relax by the swimming pool. This evening shuttle into nearby Ponte de Lima for dinner on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Paço de Calheiros

DAY 3

Guimarães. Village of Provesende. Douro River and Portugal's Wine Region

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

After our visit to Guimarães we venture to the county of Sabrosa, birthplace of the famous explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Our destination and the start of today's walk is the charming village of Provesende, dating to the Moorish era. After a brief exploration of town and its Baroque church, we follow paths downhill through vineyards, keeping the Douro River in sight. In 1756, the Douro Valley and Portugal's wine regions became the first controlled and demarcated winemaking region in the world. It's all thanks to the Marquis de Pombal who planted granite pillars in 1756 to define the boundary that produced the finest port. Today, the entire valley is a UNESCO World Heritage site. This magnificent landscape continues to inspire poets, painters, and photographers.

We end today's walk at your accommodations for the next two nights in the heart of the wine region in the town of Pinhão. The historic hotel is set on the banks of the Douro River, offering spectacular views of the Douro River Valley. Just steps away explore the small shops and restaurants of the small town of Pinhão.

This evening enjoy dinner in your lovely hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: The Vintage House

DAY 4

Vineyard walks in the Douro River region. Quinta do Bomfim picnic lunch and wine tasting

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

After breakfast, we shuttle to nearby vineyards with sweeping views of the Douro River Valley. Walking through paths of some of the most famous vineyards of the region we will arrive to the small riverfront train station of Ferrão where we will embark on a short scenic train ride along the banks of the river back to

Pinhão and its infamous train station with 3,500 hand painted Portuguese tiles. We conclude today's special walk in lovely vineyards of the Quinta do Bomfim where we will enjoy a splendid picnic before sampling some of the vineyards renowned wines. After lunch it is just a short walk back to your hotel.

In the afternoon, spend time at your leisure exploring the town of Pinhão and its train station where the "Wine House" museum is located. Then relax poolside at the hotel and enjoy the river views and its slow-passing boats. Later, enjoy dinner at one of the restaurants in Pinhão or the hotel's dining room at your leisure.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: The Vintage House

DAY 5

Cruise the Douro River on a *rabelo* boat

Rota das Aldeias Históricas to Marialva: 2 miles, moderate

This morning, you embark on a wooden sailing ship similar in style to the bygone *rabelos* that carried wine up and down the Douro River to other regions. Your privately chartered boat offers a relaxing cruise on the Douro River. Your guides will prepare a delectable picnic lunch on board. One of our highlights will be passing through the Douro's Ferrão lock before disembarking in Ferradosa. From here you shuttle to your lodgings in Marialva, a haunting medieval village carved into a rocky cliff or you may opt to walk a short distance on the *Rota das Aldeias Históricas* – an historical trail of more than 500 km connecting 12 small villages such as Marialva. Enjoy the remainder of the evening and dinner on your own.

Later in the afternoon, there is free time to explore Marialva.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Casas do Côro

DAY 6

Explore the medieval town and castle of Marialva

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

After breakfast, enjoy a leisurely stroll between stone walls, through vineyards, past fruit trees and cultivated fields.

After lunch, venture out to explore Marialva and its castle. Though its origin dates back to the sixth century BC, it was not officially granted a town charter until 1179. This hillside medieval village seems carved from the craggy slopes, so it's easy to see why it once served as an important military fortress. Wandering these streets on old, stone-paved roads makes for an otherworldly experience; you'll want to leave no corner ignored. Venture up to the medieval castle for a guided tour, where you'll learn more about Marialva's past.

This evening's farewell dinner is sure to please, featuring family recipes passed down over generations to your hotel's owner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Casas do Côro

DAY 7

Transfer to Lisbon. Your *Portugal: Minho & the Douro Valley* tour concludes.

This morning you'll shuttle (approximately four hours) to Portugal's capital of Lisbon. Your tour concludes at the hotel in Lisbon at approximately 1:30 p.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
12 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7	✓