



## Country Walkers

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## Portugal: Porto to Lisbon

### Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



Blessed with a language that's half music and a landscape that's half poetry, Portugal is emerging as one of the most sought-after destinations in the world. Join us on a *passeio* (walk) through its most spectacular sites, lingering beside historic whitewashed *quintas* (estates) in wine country and soaring peaks in the Alto Alentejo. Starting in the vibrant revitalized wine city of Porto—a seamless blend of historic gardens and 21<sup>st</sup>-century architecture—you head inland to the idyllic Douro Valley, where vineyards and olive groves carpet the floodplain of this UNESCO World Heritage region. Next, it's on to the rolling plains and granite peaks of the Alentejo, a large agricultural region that produces many of the nation's cheeses, wines, and cured meats. Along the way, relax in a hilltop vineyard, converted monastery, and luxury boutique hotel. Enjoy a unique perspective on the landscape during a luxurious boat cruise. Converse with locals during a visit to a family-owned olive oil mill and as you walk through an oak forest cultivated for cork harvesting. And dig deep into the country's history during stops at a medieval fortress, 7th-century village, and an ancient Roman temple.

## Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

### Day 1

#### Join Your Country Walkers Portugal: Porto to Lisbon tour

*Meet in Porto. Casa de Mateus guided tour. Douro Valley: Casal de Loivos to Pinhao; 4.5 miles, easy to moderate, 1,500-ft. elevation loss*

Your guide(s) will meet you at 8:30 a.m. at the designated meeting point in Porto (as indicated by your Country Walkers Handbook, please call for more details). Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed in hiking shoes for the afternoon walk in the Douro Valley.

Following a short introductory meeting you and your fellow adventurers travel east (90 minutes) to Vila



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Real. Once headquarters for the port and wine trade (which later moved to Porto), Vila Real is now a quiet village and the capital of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro Province. While there, you have a guided tour of Casa de Mateus (House of Matthew), an estate of both architectural and cultural importance. Built in the early eighteenth century and attributed to Italian architect Nicolau Nasoni, the house is a baroque masterpiece. The tour includes the equally ornate estate chapel and the library, whose collection includes one of the first illustrated editions of Portugal's epic poem, Luis Vaz de Camoes' *Os Lusíadas*. Rounding out the tour, you stroll through delightful gardens with many interesting featured sections, including a cedar "tunnel" and an expanse of boxwood, pruned in intricate patterns.

Moving on, a one-hour drive brings you to the Douro Valley, and the tiny hamlet, Casal de Loivos, perched high above the Douro River. The first stop is our friend Paulo's olive oil mill, where he introduces you to his DOP (*Denominação de Origem Protegida*) or Protected Designation of Origin product with a tour and tasting. As you discover through the week, Portuguese olive oils are diverse, as there are countless varieties of olive trees. Passionate about his product—and no wonder, since he's a fifth-generation producer!—Paulo shows you around his small 'museum' and shares his family's traditions, which include winemaking. You savor a light lunch of local cheeses, cured meats, salad, and freshly-baked bread accompanied, of course, by a glass or two of Paulo's wine. The lovely view from the terrace down to the Douro is worth savoring as well.

Thus fortified, you leave Paulo on foot, walking through his vineyards on a gentle downhill path with views of the Douro shimmering below. The Douro is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the world's oldest demarcated wine region, the source of Portugal's renowned Port. This is a unique and unforgettable landscape of steep, terraced vineyards carved into the mountains that descend to the river, and whitewashed wine estates (*quintas*) built atop the hillsides. This lovely two-hour walk on a switchback trail culminates at the distinguished riverside Croft family estate, Quinta da Roêda. Founded in 1588, it is the oldest company still active today and this property is considered its crown jewel, whose renowned port wines are made from grapes from some of the oldest vineyards in the Douro Valley. You learn about its pioneering spirit, time-honored traditions, and innovative new styles during a tasting in the beautifully-renovated stables.

From Quinta da Roêda, a 40-minute transfer brings you to Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo, your home base for the next two nights. This renovated 19th-century manor house, the country's first wine hotel, is part of a *quinta* dating back to 1725, when it was the property of the Portuguese royal house. In the highly-acclaimed restaurant, you enjoy Chef José Pinto's innovative twists on traditional Portuguese cuisine, featuring locally-sourced, seasonal foods like pork medallions, followed by poached pears or a crème brûlée, all enhanced by the estate's own renowned wines. After a final gaze at the serene, expansive view, enjoy a great night's sleep.

### **Accommodation:** Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo, Covas do Douro

Perched on a hilltop overlooking the Douro River, the Quinta Nova allows you to experience winery life from the inside. Rooms are furnished with traditional elegance and typical amenities (courtesy bar, robes, hair dryers, laundry service, etc.) There is an outdoor pool and garden seating spots from



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which to enjoy the panoramic views.

### Day 2

#### Douro Valley

*2-6 miles, easy to moderate, maximum of 1,000-ft elevation gain.*

Coffee lovers will discover this morning, if they haven't already, that the Portuguese appreciate excellence in coffee as well as in wine. You awake to the smell of *café com leite* (coffee with steamed milk) and enjoy a leisurely breakfast before a morning walk through and around this large estate. The owners are also Portugal's largest producers of cork and the trails crisscross not only vineyards, but also stands of cork oak, cypress, orange, and almond trees, with breathtaking views of the valley and river all the way. Should you prefer to walk a shorter distance, your route can easily be customized. Relaxing poolside, or in the manor house library are also respectable options; in fact, you could impress your friends at dinner by researching the harvesting and production of cork, a truly fascinating process.

Midday you gather riverside to board a *barco rabelo*, a boat modeled on those traditionally used to carry casks of wine down the river. A catered lunch is served while you relish this fresh perspective on the vineyards and *quintas* from the water.

After you return to Quinta Nova, there is a special tour of the winery and a tasting, followed by a traditional Portuguese barbecue dinner (weather permitting).

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### Day 3

#### Serra da Gardunha to Castelo Novo

*4 miles, easy to moderate, 1,350-ft elevation loss*

This morning, you bid the Douro Valley farewell and travel south to the historic heart of Portugal with two interesting stops—walks included—along the route. The first of these, Trancoso, is reached after a 90-minute transfer. Situated on a plateau nearly 3,000 feet high, Trancoso served as an imposing fortress during the Middle Ages, and has always been strategically important due to its proximity to the Spanish border. Its large Jewish community was the source of much commercial development dating back to the 15th century. During the Napoleonic invasions, England's General Beresford maintained his headquarters in Trancoso. In short, the town's history parallels that of the nation, and



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you have a chance to ponder that history during a walk through the town and an independent lunch. Then, you continue on to the Serra da Gardunha, a Moorish name meaning “mountains of refuge” which overlook the Cova da Beira plain. Covered with vineyards during the 13th and 14th centuries this area has been known as “the King’s groves” ever since Portugal’s king decided to substitute chestnut trees for grape vines.

Beginning at a beautiful ridgeline, you start a scenic walk to the charming village of Castelo Novo, first settled in the 7th century. Although the walk is steadily downhill, and not especially long, it is a genuine hiking trail; rocky, with some protruding roots (walking poles are advised). On the outskirts of the village, you trace a riverside trail into town.

During a short stroll through the stone-cobbled streets, you view the remains of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century hilltop castle that gave the town its name (“new castle” in English) as well as impressive manor houses and churches. A 2-hour transfer delivers you to the day’s final destination: a former monastery dating to the 14th century, your *pousada* (hotel converted from a historic property) in the Alto Alentejo, where you arrive in time for a quick dip in the pool (or Jacuzzi) before reuniting for dinner in the hotel’s elegant restaurant.

The restaurant’s menu, a worthy complement to its luxurious accommodations, emphasizes seasonal produce and locally-sourced products in preparing traditional recipes with a contemporary twist. You might enjoy a starter of asparagus with Nisa (DOP) cheese, or Alentejo gazpacho, followed by chicken with muscatel and apricots served on a bed of greens, prawns with squid-ink pasta, or steamed sole on wild mushroom risotto. Desserts are exceptional, from a regional cheese plate to homemade ice cream with fresh fruit, or a traditional monastery recipe, a sweet cake called *tecolameco*.

### **Accommodation:** Pousada Mosteiro do Crato, Crato

This beautiful pousada underwent a sophisticated renovation from the former Flor de Rosa Monastery which preserved the old stone walls, vaulted ceilings, and tile floors. Converted rooms afford every imaginable comfort. The architect’s attention to detail is reflected in his furniture choices. A spectacular outdoor pool and luxurious spa round out the amenities.

## Day 4

### Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede

*6.5-7.5 miles, easy to moderate, 650-1,350-ft elevation gain and 450-ft elevation loss*

Today’s walk in the beautiful Parque Natural da Serra de São Mamede traces one of many historical paths in this region of rocky peaks, wooded hills, and fertile valleys. A 15-minute transfer to the hamlet of Galegos brings you to the departure point, a rural paved road surrounded by cork oak trees.

The Alentejo region is one of Portugal’s chief cork production areas (the other being the Algarve in the south), and these cork oak (*quercus subra* or *sobreio* in Portuguese) forests are part of extraordinary



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pastoral ecosystems called *montados* that are highly sustainable and help to prevent desertification of the region, preserve wildlife habitat, while providing grazing for domestic animals. Beginning each May, skilled workers known as *tiradors* begin harvesting cork bark manually, exactly as it's been done for the past three centuries. Today, Portugal accounts for half of the world's cork production.

The walking path climbs steadily with varied views of forest and open land with grazing sheep along the trail towards La Fontanera, located on Portugal's border with Spain. That fact made it a transfer point for smugglers sending in contraband coffee during the Spanish Civil War. You continue on the smugglers' path to a wonderful outlook with views of your next destination, the village of Marvão high in the hills. En route you stop beside the Sever River to enjoy a tasty picnic lunch of local cured meats, cheese, bread, and fruit that will energize you for the next leg of the day's journey.

The walk continues another two hours through lovely terrain dotted with (in addition to cork oak) fig, almond, pomegranate, and chestnut trees. Migratory and native birds are abundant here as well. Approaching Marvão itself is an amazing experience; a UNESCO World Heritage site, Marvão's nickname is "Eagle's Nest" no doubt for its mountaintop perch, but chiefly for the native Bonelli Eagle. Your minibus and driver will wait at the base of the hill to whisk those who prefer not to walk up the steep (approximate 700-ft. elevation gain) path to the village. There is time to explore the ruins of the 13th-century castle and the town's winding streets with charming whitewashed houses and traditional blue and white tile (*azulejo*).

After this very full day, you return to your beautiful *pousada* where the swimming pool or spa help you unwind before another wonderful dining experience.

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## Day 5

### Transfer to Évora via Arraiolos. Walking tour of Évora

*2-3 miles, easy*

Today's more leisurely pace begins with breakfast and perhaps a spa treatment or swim before your departure for the nearby town of Arraiolos. Arraiolos has a long tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages, of producing beautiful embroidered wool tapestries and rugs. Village men carded while women combed and dyed the wool, using natural plant dyes from the surrounding area. Their tapestries were highly prized and graced the homes of royal houses in Portugal and throughout Europe. This interesting history is explained in detail at the town's museum, where you can see one of today's weavers creating rugs based on traditional patterns. You stroll among the village's whitewashed, tile-roofed houses, or possibly shop for a lovely rug to take home before enjoying a tasty tapas lunch at a



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local restaurant.

Then it's on to Évora, capital of the Alentejo region, and also your base for the next two nights. On arrival, you embark on a walking tour of this fascinating town with a local expert guide. You explore the city's historic center including: the ancient Roman Temple of Diana (or Temple of Évora) and the Cathedral of Évora, a massive Gothic structure begun in the 12th century. You also visit the Igreja de São Francisco, which features Gothic and baroque architecture along with the skeleton-adorned Chapel of Bones. Once an important city for trading and religious purposes, today Évora is a vibrant university town.

The walking tour ends at your hotel, which was fashioned out of a palatial house located beside a 16th-century aqueduct within the city walls. Like the town itself, the hotel beautifully blends historic and contemporary styles. It also features an excellent restaurant offering Mediterranean cuisine, where you may choose to enjoy tonight's dinner. The evening is yours, though, so you may also want to explore the town and discover your own perfect eatery.

### **Accommodation:** M'AR De AR Aqueduto Hotel & Spa, Évora

This five-star boutique hotel is located near the center of Évora. Rooms are chic and ultra modern, with a full complement of high-quality amenities. The hotel spa has both sauna and Turkish bath, and offers an array of treatments. There is a lovely outdoor pool to enjoy and a computer room with Internet access.

## Day 6

### **Outeiro to Reguengos de Monsaraz**

*4-5 miles, easy to moderate.*

Today's walk in the Alentejo traverses typical Mediterranean landscape dotted with cypress, pomegranate, fig, and ancient olive trees. You depart from the tiny, rural village of Outeiro and soon reach one of some 150 dolmens and menhirs scattered across the surrounding plains. These carved rock monoliths and piled structures, similar to those found in western Ireland, date from the third and fourth millennia.

A sustained 30-minute climb along a cobbled path brings you to the very picturesque hilltop village, Reguengos de Monsaraz, designated the European Wine Capital for 2015. Your minibus and driver provide a lift up to the village for those who prefer to skip the climb. From this vantage point you see a huge modern dam and the Alqueva Lake on one side, and to the East, the Spanish border. Stroll this atmospheric village whose cobbled slate streets with whitewashed houses retain an authentic feel. Pop into artisan studios, and enjoy lunch on your own on an outdoor terrace. Be sure to visit the castle, which now houses a bullring within its walls!

The Alentejo region produces fantastic wines, and after lunch you continue on to the nearby Herdade do Esporao winery, which dates to pre-historic times and where grapes and olives have been the





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featured products for eight centuries. Today, the owners are crystal clear about their mission, which is to produce excellent products naturally, organically, and sustainably. Following a tour of this state-of-the-art operation, there is, of course, a tasting (outdoors, if weather permits).

Returning to Évora, there is time to relax a bit before a festive dinner celebrating the week's adventures. Tonight's restaurant is in the heart of Évora, and the meal—featuring locally-sourced products topped with wine from their own winery—is sure to be memorable.

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## Day 7

### **Your *Portugal: Porto to Lisbon* tour concludes**

*Almendres archaeological site; 1 mile, easy*

You depart Évora this morning for a visit to the Cromlech of the Almendres archaeological site. Dating from the 5th century B.C., the site consists of nearly 100 granite monoliths set in a circle; it's one of the largest such emplacements in Europe. It was most likely the site of an ancient civilization's sacred rituals. Today, it is a serene and beautiful place surrounded by cork oaks. Please note: depending upon access conditions, you may visit the Cromlech of Vale Maria do Meio instead of the Almendres.

From there, you make the 1½-hour drive to Lisbon, (stopping for lunch en route), where you bid *adeus* (farewell) to your guides and travel companions to explore the city on your own or travel onward. Your tour will conclude at the Heritage Avenida Liberdade Hotel, Lisbon, by 3:30 p.m.