

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

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, 1,003-ft.

elevation gain

Your Country Walkers leaders will meet you at the Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel in Porto at 9:00 a.m. in the lobby. The tour begins with a short drive to Ponte de Lima.

This morning, join your leaders for a brief orientation before a short drive 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 Camino de Santiago that leads to the town of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

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

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 used as a 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

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*. Made of wood or granite, these structures have a clever design that keeps animals away from harvested grains.

Your trail will descend into the valley between the granite peaks of Peneda-Gerês National Park, arriving in the ancient village of Soajo. The Romans paved the road using large stones, and for centuries it has been walked by pilgrims from Peneda to Soajo which is why it is known as the Caminho da Fé, the Way of Faith. It is also known as the Caminho do Pão, the Way of Bread. 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, you 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, your shuttle will stop for guests who wish to take an optional walk that ends at the hotel. On this walk, you cross scenic rolling hills on your way to the estate. From a distance, the Paço's beautiful architecture is strikingly majestic. As you amble downhill to your lodgings, a landmark chestnut grove comes into view, letting you know your destination is close.

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

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 your visit to Guimarães, you venture to the county of Sabrosa, the birthplace of the famous explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Your destination and the start of today's walk is the charming village of Provesende, dating to the Moorish era. Following a brief exploration of the 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 of the land 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 to this day.

The walk ends at your accommodation for the next two nights in the heart of the wine region in the town of Pinhão. You'll stay at a historical hotel set on the banks of the Douro River, with spectacular views of the Douro River Valley. Just steps away, you'll find shops and restaurants in the small town of Pinhão.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your lovely hotel.

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, you 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 at the small riverfront Ferrão train station. Here, we will embark on a short scenic train ride along the banks of the river back to Pinhão, whose famous train station boasts 3,500 hand-painted Portuguese tiles. You conclude today's special walk in lovely vineyards, where you will enjoy a splendid picnic before sampling some of the vineyard's renowned wines. After lunch, it is just a short drive 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, dine at one of the restaurants in Pinhão or in the 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 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. Relax and watch the scenery glide by as your privately chartered boat cruises the Douro River. For lunch, enjoy a delectable picnic on board the *rabelo*. One of the highlights of your cruise will be passing through the Douro’s Ferrão lock before disembarking in Ferradosa. From here, you may choose to shuttle to your lodgings or you may opt to walk a short distance on the *Rota das Aldeias Históricas* – a historical trail of more than 300 miles connecting 12 small villages. Your destination is in Marialva, a haunting medieval village carved into a rocky cliff.

Enjoy the remainder of the evening and dinner on your own.

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 time at your leisure; perhaps you’ll take a stroll between stone walls, through vineyards, and 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 medieval hillside village seems carved from the craggy slopes, making it easy to see why it once served as an important military fortress. Wandering these streets on old, stone-paved roads makes for an intriguing, otherworldly experience, and 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.

As you wander the historical streets of Marialva, past stone buildings, and daunting battlements, you'll understand why this medieval town once served as an important military fortress. Take a guided tour of the castle ruins and return for your farewell dinner.

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

DAY 7

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

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Air Package

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
12 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinner	✓	✓
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	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-trip breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	