

Douro Valley Guided Walking Holiday

Tour Style: European Centre Based

Destination: Portugal

Trip code: DRLCL

2 & 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Enjoy a great mix of walks with river views, trails between sleepy villages, vineyards and longer routes in the mountain landscape of the Serra do Marão. A trip to the Douro Valley wouldn't be complete without a visit to a local quinta and vineyard to sample the famous port, as well as a chance to cruise on the river or wind along the banks by rail to the magnificent city of Porto on your free day. The Douro valley in Northern Portugal is an area of spectacular beauty, the mountainous vine covered terraces stretch as far as the eye can see. The province is dominated by Portugal's wellknown river, the Douro, rising in Spain; the Rio Douro defines part of the Spanish-Portuguese border before flowing 200km west to Porto. The area is rich in history and home to Portugal's second city, the vibrant UNESCO world heritage city of Porto. Our base is the peaceful town of Peso da Régua, backed by the Serra do Marão Mountains and overlooking the wide valley of the River Douro. The town grew due to the development of the port industry, being a collection point for the wines before they were transported down river to Vila Nova de Gaia.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- A full programme of guided walks with 2 options every walking day
- All transport to and from walks
- The services of experienced HF Holidays leaders
- 'With flight' holidays include return flights from the UK and hotel transfers
- 7 night's accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Half Board – buffet breakfast and 3-course evening meal

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Stunning scenery of the Alto Douro UNESCO World Heritage wine region.
- Soak up the Portuguese culture in the traditional streets of Porto
- Cruise along the meandering Douro and return on the scenic 'Linha do Douro' railway.
- Walk in the mountain landscape of the Serra do Marão
- Visit a local vineyard, learn about making port and enjoy a tasting.

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 2 and level 3 graded Activity, Easier walks: 3 to 6 miles (5 to 9½km) on good but occasionally rough paths and tracks. Up to 1,300 feet (390m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 5 to 10 miles (8 to 16km) on good but occasionally rough paths and tracks. Up to 1,900 feet (570m) of ascent in a day.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome to the Hotel Vila Galé Collection Douro. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: High Above The Douro

Our first day of walks starts with a short transfer to the outskirts of Régua walking along ancient tracks and paths through terraced vineyards, hamlets and villages giving panoramic views of the Douro and Régua.

Option 1 - Vistas Of The Douro

Distance: 9 miles (14½km)

Total ascent: 1,500 feet (450m)

In summary: The easier walk passes through the lower hamlets closer to the river's extraordinary terraced sides before reaching the promenade, which we follow back to cross the Douro on the beautifully restored metal bridge, 'ponte metálica'. There will be an opportunity to explore Régua and the 'Museu do Douro', which tells the history of the area.

Highlight: Breathtaking views on our introductory walk.

Option 2 - Through Vineyards And Trees High Above The Douro

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 900 feet (270m)

In summary: The harder walk climbs to the distinctive white church of Loureiro before passing through woodland to descend to the river bank. There will be an opportunity to explore Régua and the 'Museu do Douro', which tells the history of the area.

Highlight: Walk in the vineyards with spectacular views of the Douro river.

Day 3: Exploring The Ancient Villages Of The Tarouca Valley

Today we head to the moorland area south of Lamego where the high moorland is dotted with large boulders, and goats and cows graze.

Option 1 - Ancient Villages Of The Tarouca Valley

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Total ascent: 600 feet (180m)

Total descent: 1,600 feet (480m)

In summary: The easier walkers start at the hamlet of Parafita before traversing the hillside to wander through the ancient village of Mazes. Both walks then descend through the pine trees to Lazarim where there is an opportunity to visit the beautiful new museum of masks, carved by artisans for the village's carnival every Shrove Tuesday.

Highlight: The village of Mazes, where people live and work much as they did over 50 years ago and the church bells ring to the tune of 'Ave Maria'.

Option 2 - Tarouca Valley's Deserted And Working Villages

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 1,300 feet (390m)

Total descent: 2,400 feet (720m)

In summary: The harder walkers start at the hamlet of Ribabelide, at almost 1,000m, and make a circuit to the fascinating deserted settlement of Antas before passing through the spectacular narrow gorge of the Rio de Santo and descending to Mazes. Both walks then descend through the pine trees to Lazarim where there is an opportunity to visit the beautiful new museum of masks, carved by artisans for the village's carnival every Shrove Tuesday.

Highlight: The narrow gorge with its ancient ruined water mill and levadas.

Day 4: Mountain Panorama From Serra Marão

Our highest point of the holiday is where both walks start, just below Serra do Marão, 4,700 feet. On a clear day there are panoramic views in all directions as far as Spain and Galicia.

Option 1 - Mountain Panorama From The Serra Do Marão

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 200 feet (60m)

Total descent: 2,400 feet (720m)

In summary: The easier walk descends through tree-covered slopes passing a hilltop chapel, and mountain villages, where life has changed little in centuries, to finish at Fontes.

Highlight: Fantastic views of the mountains of Serra do Marão.

Option 2 - Serra Do Marão Ridge

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 800 feet (240m)

Total descent: 3,600 feet (1,080m)

In summary: The harder walk follows the ridge along rough tracks and through rocky terrain, ascending two summits, and passing beneath wind farms. Then we descend through moorland, woods and through hamlets before arriving the village of Carvalho with its grand houses and fertile gardens.

Highlight: A beautiful day of high moorland walking with extensive views.

Day 5: Free Day

Today there are no organised walks, allowing you to relax in the hotel with its indoor pool and spa treatments, visit Porto, cruise along the Douro or visit the ancient city of Lamego and climb the 686 steps up to the beautiful Sanctuary of 'Nossa Senhora dos Remédios'.

Day 6: Vistas, Villages, Vineyards And Valleys Down To Pinhão

Today we head for the village of Favaios where the vineyards produce Moscatel, a liqueur appreciated for its sweetness and aroma. Before we start walking we have the opportunity for a tasting and look at the landscape of our route from the balcony in the museum of bread and wine. Both parties start their walks in this historic town passing one of the local bakeries where you can see wood-fired ovens and buy bread that's still warm.

Option 1 - Bread, Moscatel Vineyards, Vistas And Valleys

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Total ascent: 100 feet (30m)

Total descent: 700 feet (210m)

In summary: Today, we walk on sandy tracks through moscatel vineyards to finish on the cobbled streets of Vilarinho de Cotas.

Highlight: Sample delicious local bread made in wood-fired ovens.

Option 2 - Vistas, Villages, Vineyards And Valleys Down To Pinhão

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Total ascent: 100 feet (30m)

Total descent: 700 feet (210m)

In summary: The harder walk climbs up to the small chapel of Santa Barbara before following the route the easier walkers have taken down to the village of Vilarinho da Cota, where they will be picked up. As we descend, the dramatic and complex amphitheatres of vineyards open up in front of us clinging to the hillside. The harder walkers continue to the Rio Douro viewpoint 'Miradouro Casal de Loivos' before descending to the riverside village of Pinhão' where we meet the other party.

Highlight: The dramatic 'Miradouro Casal de Loivos' giving a birds eye view of the Douro.

Day 7: Villages On The Eastern Slopes Of The Serra Do Marão

Today's walks pass through the woods and mountain villages of the eastern slopes of the Serra do Marão.

Option 1 - Villages & Woods On The Eastern Slopes Of The Serra Do Marão

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 800 feet (240m)

Total descent: 1,600 feet (480m)

In summary: Our walk follows a track high above the valley to Ermida. We then descend passing chapels and through picturesque hamlets into the valley where corn is grown, and chestnut trees line the track. We arrive at the vineyards and village of Sedielos, and the coach.

Highlight: Enjoy the incredible views of the Serra do Marão.

Option 2 - Villages And Woods Underneath The Craggs Of The Serra Do Marão

Distance: 9 miles (14½km)

Total ascent: 1,800 feet (540m)

In summary: The harder walk starts in the village of Soutelo passing through woods to arrive at the tiny hamlet of Póvoa da Serra continuing on wide tracks under the dramatic black crags of the Serra do Marão before joining the route of the easier walk.

Highlight: The ancient and tiny hamlets we pass on this walk.

Day 8: Departure Day

Depart after a leisurely breakfast.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Vila Galé Collection Douro

This 4-star hotel is part of the exclusive "Collection" range of Vila Galé hotels. The hotel is located across the Douro River facing the town of Peso da Regua in the Douro region of North Portugal. The hotel takes full advantage of its riverside setting and there is a large public terrace with seating to watch the river boats pass by. It is surrounded by the vineyards of many famous port names you will recognise, such as Taylors, Sanderson and many more. Access to the town's facilities is via a footbridge a short walk away. With contemporary styling throughout the building and modern spacious rooms this is a perfect, relaxing base to return too after a days walking.

Accommodation Info

Rooms

All the 38 ensuite bedrooms are spacious and all face the river. They have telephone, TV, hairdryer, room safe, mini-bar, complimentary toiletries. All the Vila Galé hotels provide a hospitality tray on request from reception which includes all the items required including a kettle to make a cup of tea or coffee.

Facilities

The hotel has an indoor pool, a Spa and an outdoor jacuzzi.

Food & Drink

Our holidays at Hotel Vila Galé Collection Douro are on a Half Board basis and include breakfast and evening meal. The breakfast is a self-service buffet and in the evening there is a 3-course served meal. The hotel is able to cater for most dietary needs.

Your Evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our Guided Walking holidays continues into the evening. Your leaders will talk about the area and the choice of walks for the next day and will advise you of any activity you may want to join after dinner. Alternatively, you may choose to relax and socialise with your fellow walkers in the hotel lounge/bar.

Travel Details

THE HASSLE-FREE OPTION

Book your holiday 'with flight' from Gatwick to Porto airport. For flight times and prices please see the Dates & Prices tab.

If you choose this option we automatically include return transfers between the airport and the hotel.

THE FLEXIBLE TRAVEL OPTION

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flight' allowing you the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help

you reach your destination:

- We can book you a seat on the **HF Holidays' transfer coach** from Porto airport. This is timed to meet the HF Holidays' flights* (provisional flight times can be found on the dates and prices tab or you can call us on 020 8732 1220 for more information). Cost per single journey is £33.50

Transfers must be pre-booked. Please call 020 8732 1220 for more details

* Please note that HF Holidays is not responsible for your onward travel if you fail to meet the transfer coach

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

What To Bring

Essential Equipment

To enjoy walking/hiking comfortably and safely, footwear, clothing and equipment needs to be suitable for the conditions. Safety and comfort are our priorities, so our advice is to come prepared for all eventualities.

- Footwear with a good grip on the sole (e.g. Vibram sole) is the key to avoiding accidents.
- Walking/hiking boots providing ankle support and good grip are recommended (ideally worn in), and specialist walking socks to avoid blisters.
- Several layers of clothing, which can be added or removed, are better than a single layer (include spares).
- Fabrics (lightweight and fast drying) designed for the outdoors are recommended.
- Waterproof jacket and waterproof over trousers.
- Warm hat and gloves.
- Denim jeans and capes are not suitable on any walks.
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner.
- Thermos flask for hot drink.
- Water bottle (at least 2 litre).
- Spare high-energy food such as a chocolate bar.
- Small torch.
- First aid kit – your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication or blister kits (such as Compeed).
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Sun cream.

Optional Equipment

- Walking poles are useful, particularly for descents.
- Insect repellent.
- Camera.
- Gaiters.

Useful Information

Language: Portuguese

Currency: Euro

Changing money: There are several ATMs in Peso da Régua where you can obtain money.

Electricity: 220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

Tap water: Is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel

or local supermarkets.

Telephone code: If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialing the number.

To dial a UK number 0044

To dial a Portuguese number 00351

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am – 1pm Bank Holiday Monday: 9am – 1pm

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

ASSOCIATE'S FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying an Associate's fee of £10 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full life membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62 IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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