PORTUGAL - DAO & DOURO - £1,300

3rd October 2020 - 18th October 2020 (16 days)
The regions of Dão and Douro produce some of Portugal’s best wines. And as their corduroy landscapes begin to turn from green to gold, this tour links these areas via the beaches and lagoons of the Atlantic coast, the wooded valleys and castle-crowned hills of the interior, and the austere granite mountains of the Serra da Estrela. Along the way we’ll stay in good hotels (some with pools), enjoy hearty meals, have the opportunity to taste a little wine of course, cycle to the highest point in Portugal and along the country’s longest rail-trail (50km – all tarmac). We’ll also take a relaxing boat trip on the Douro and see some of the sights in the historic cities of Porto, Aveiro, Coimbra and Viseu.

All-day cycling distances average 65km, up to 80km on the flat coast and down to as little as 40km in the mountains or on half-day rides. The starting point is Porto, which can be reached directly from several UK airports or by car and ferry via Santander.

HOLIDAY TYPE: Guided
TOUR MANAGER: Christopher Juden
GRADE: Moderate
BOOKING STATUS: Places Available
ACCOMMODATION: Hotel
BOARD BASIS: Half Board
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Land Only
ROAD / OFF ROAD: Road
HOLIDAY STYLE: Moving-on
VEHICLE SUPPORT: Carry Own Luggage
HOLIDAY REF NO: 03462

Holiday Itinerary

Saturday 3rd October
Meet at Grande Hotel de Paris in the fascinating city of Porto. Re-assemble your bike if necessary and store the packaging here for two weeks. Stay 1 night. Meals: None

Sunday 4th October
Cycle to the mouth of the Douro and down the coast via Espinho, much of the way on traffic-free paths including sections of boardwalk above long sandy beaches. South of Esmoriz a cycleway leads through pine-wooded dunes to Furadouro. Then we follow the shore of a coastal lagoon (where flamingos may be seen) to São Jacinto and take a ferry to Gafanha da Nazare. Finally we ride past traditional salt pans into Aveiro, a cycle-friendly city with canals and art-nouveau buildings. 80km +150/–200m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Monday 5th October
Cycle via Ilhavo & Vista Alegre (19C porcelain factory with workers’ village) to Gafanha do Campo and by the southern arm of the lagoon to Praia de Mira, through pines and dunes to Quiaiaos and over Cabo Mondego to the attractive seaside resort of Buarco near Figuierea da Foz. 70km +/-300m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D
Tuesday 6th October
Cycle into Figuiera da Foz by the estuary and up the broad lower valley of the Rio Mondego, via Montemor-o-Velho (castle) to Coimbra, arriving with a free afternoon to explore this handsome city of learning. 55km +/-100m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B

Wednesday 7th October
Cycle further up the Mondego valley, now meandering between steep wooded hills, to pretty Penacova, then cross the Aguiera dam and ride by the lake amidst eucalyptus plantations. Join the Ecopista do Dão at Santa Comba Station and ride the first 20km of this, the longest rail-trail in Portugal, initially beside the Rio Dão then up the Dinha valley, passing our first Dão vineyards near Tonda station, to Tondela. 74km +800/-500m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Thursday 8th October
Cycle along the rest of the Ecopista do Dão to Viseu, arriving with a free afternoon to explore this pleasant city. 33km +370/-200m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B

Friday 9th October
Cycle on N231 across the grain of the country, dissected by the wooded valleys of rivers Dão and Mondego, where the ridges are a patchwork of forests, fields and vineyards, then to Seia at the foot of the Serra da Estrela and up 7km through thinning pinewoods to Senhora do Espinheiro. 51km +1,220/-760m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Saturday 10th October
Cycle through Sabugueiro up Serra da Estrela, amidst slopes of bare granite and great heaps of boulders (like super-sized Dartmoor tors), pass Lagoa Comprida (reservoir) and go up to Torre, at 1993m the highest point in Portugal! Descend via the Vale glaciário do Zêzere to Manteigas. 45km +1,200/-1,400m. Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D.

Sunday 11th October
Rest day in the mountain resort of Manteigas. Optional short ride (18km +/-500m), or shorter walk, to the Poço do Inferno waterfall. Meals: B D

Monday 12th October
Cycle up N232 for 5km, taking a newly tarred minor road (not on most maps) over two mountain ridges to Folgosinho (castle), Freixo and Figuiéro da Serra, then via Salgueirais and Vide-entre-Vinhos to the castle-crowned town of Celorico da Beira. 48km +990/-1,250m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Tuesday 13th October
Cycle on minor roads (not on most maps) that follow valleys via Fornotelheiro, Quinta do Salgueiro and Cardal, bypassing Fiaes, to the mediaeval walled town of Trancoso. Then via Terrenho and Antas to Penedono, another interesting old town with a spectacular castle that’s well worth a visit. 41km +800/-400m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Wednesday 14th October
Cycle on minor roads via Granja & Póvoa de Penela, where Douro vineyards begin to appear between the forests, fields and orchards. Follow an increasingly vine-clothed ridge through Trevões and Castanheiro do Sul where the vineyards become terraced as slopes steepen towards the river, and through Valença do Douro with stunning views both upstream and down. Three km along the riverbank and over a bridge brings us into Pinhão. A port wine tasting will be held this afternoon. 40km +450/-1,280m. Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D.

Thursday 15th October
A relaxing river cruise is included on this day from Pinhão for 56km through the spectacular Douro Superior and past some of the best port wine ‘Quintas’ via two of the deepest locks in Europe. The return is a similarly scenic train ride, after a short walk (1.6km) between harbour and station (and possibly lunch) in Pocinho. Half of the group will reverse this itinerary: train out, boat return. Meals: B D.

Friday 16th October
Ride along the south bank of the Douro on scenic N222, which is flat as far as Peso da Régua, rises to Resende and undulates through Oliveira. There are lovely views of vineyards and the river all the way, although west of Régua the wine becomes Vinho Verde rather than ‘Douro’. The day ends on the riverbank in Porto Antigo (near Cinfães). 68km +700/-730m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Saturday 17th October
Cycle over the bridge to Ribadouro and along the north bank (hilly at first) to cross the Rio Tâmega at Entre-os-Rios. After one more hill at Meires, the road flattens out and we divert onto a peaceful riverside cyclepath for the final 6km into Porto, passing under the iconic Dom Luis I bridge. 74km +/-800m. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D.

Sunday 18th October
Holiday ends. Meals: B

In the daily itineraries above, the km figure is the distance cycled, with +/-m being the approximate totals of ascent/descent. Meals are those included on that day: B = Breakfast D = Dinner.

Holiday Summary
Accommodation & Meals
Accommodation will be in hotels of 2-, 3- or 4-star standard, sharing rooms with en-suite facilities. If single occupancy is wanted this must be requested when you book.
Breakfast is always included and dinner on most nights. Vegetarian and other special dietary requirements can usually be met, if requested when making your booking – with full details please.
Vehicle Support
No vehicle support is provided. Each participant is expected to carry their own luggage on a suitably equipped bicycle.

Passports, Visa & Health
EU citizens must hold a passport that is still valid on the date of their return to their home country. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa. There are no compulsory health related requirements for UK residents, but you are strongly advised to check that your tetanus protection has not expired. You must also carry your European Health Insurance Card.

Travel Insurance
Our Booking Conditions stipulate that, for holidays outside the UK, travel Insurance is mandatory. Details of the level of cover needed and other conditions you should check are stated in the Booking Conditions. CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd cannot accept responsibility for any costs that may be incurred due to insufficient insurance cover.

Price
The price of £1,300 is based on a minimum number of 13 people taking part in the holiday; please note Booking Conditions, clause 3. If there are insufficient bookings by 25th July 2020, we will contact you and return all monies paid, although in certain circumstances the holiday may still run at below minimum numbers but at the same price.

Price Includes
- 15 nights hotel, sharing room
- 15 breakfasts, 12 dinners
- At least one wine-tasting
- Excursion by boat and train on the Upper Douro
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price Does Not Include
- Travel to and from Porto, Portugal
- Drinks with dinners
- Lunches or refreshments during the day
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Single occupancy supplement (£400, subject to availability)

Payment Schedule
A deposit of £400 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £900 per person to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 25th July 2020.

Cancellations
Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Written notice received:</th>
<th>Cancellation charge:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Before 25th July 2020</td>
<td>Deposit (£400)</td>
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<td>From 25th July 2020</td>
<td>100% (£1,300)</td>
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Additional Information

Area Covered By The Holiday
This tour has a varied terrain. The first couple of days south of Porto are virtually flat, by long sandy beaches backed by dunes planted thinly with pines, to our first significant hill at Figueira da Foz. It's still quite easy for the next three, following Rio Mondego through the university city of Coimbra, where its broad, straight valley becomes narrow and meandering between steep wooded hills. At the Agueira reservoir we branch to the Rio Dão, then gradually climb a ridge to Viseu. Here we turn right across the grain of the country, crossing the deep wooded valleys of both aforementioned rivers and ridges where clearings in the woods are planted with some of Portugal's best table wines.
Above Seia we climb into the Parque Natural da Serra da Estrella and spend three days amidst the country’s highest mountains. They’re one mass of granite, so hard that features of the last ice age remain almost untouched by subsequent erosion.
After a couple of days heading north through sparsely populated hills, crowned by the occasional castle, the slopes steepen and become clothed in vines as we drop into the Douro valley. Here we remain, tasting Port wine and exploring the most spectacular stretch of river between Pinhão and Pocinho by boat and train, before cycling the length of the lower Douro to Porto.

Rides & Rest Days
Such a variety of terrain calls for large variations in the daily distance ridden in proportion to the height climbed. (Descents don’t help so much, unfortunately!) Each day is carefully calculated so we should always arrive in good time. Some days we can’t help being a bit later or earlier, however, on account of where hotels happen to be.
Some days are much shorter on account of sights to see along the way or at the destination. Two days involve little more than half a day’s cycling, so we can check into our hotel early and spend most of the afternoon exploring the university city of Coimbra, or the mediaeval centre of Viseu, respectively.
There are also a couple of rest days: one amidst the natural splendour of the Serra da Estrela and another exploring the upper Douro valley the best way one can – by boat and train. Why not cycle? Because the only roads there ‘drop in’ from a great height and either terminate at the river or don’t follow it far before clambering up again! And besides, the best views are from the river!
Most of the route is on minor roads and almost entirely tarmac. Granite setts used to be ubiquitous in Portugal, though, and can still be found on longish stretches of some minor rural roads, throughout towns and villages and sometimes just on the bends in otherwise tarmac roads – so watch out for that! Main ‘N roads of secondary importance also comprise significant parts of the route, generally in less populated areas or where a nearby motorway takes most of the traffic. Use of major roads is limited to a few very short, utterly unavoidable stretches.

Cycle-tracks are also used in the few places where they are usefully provided, plus one long-distance rail trail. These mostly have tarmac, paved (slabs or setts) or concrete surfacing, but a few very short sections may be gravel or earth. Some of the first day’s route also uses pedestrian boardwalks (cycling permitted) to link sections of cycle-track and otherwise dead-end roads.

Participants who wish to be led will be led at a moderate pace with re-grouping stops at places of interest, or at least every 5 to 10km. We will use the ‘human signpost’ system, which allows the group to spread out into little bunches and individuals, each of whom can pause as they like, losing sight of the person in front, free from worry about missing a turn since the leader will have left someone at every turn, pointing the way, until released by the ‘back-marker’.

Anyone who nevertheless prefers to make their own way is very welcome to do so, provided they inform the ride leader. For this purpose GPS tracks & courses, along with a very detailed route instruction booklet in its own zip-lock waterproof wallet, will be sent to each participant at least one month before the holiday.

Accommodation & Meals

Location is paramount on a moving-on tour, so if a ‘no-stars’ guesthouse is the only place in the RIGHT place that will take our group, that’s where we stay! And whilst en-suite facilities for every room is our aim, occasionally that’s simply unavailable. A better restaurant or a night of 4-star luxury somewhere else will be found to compensate for the occasional basic hotel.

The single supplement is particularly expensive on this tour because a few of the more costly hotels charge the same for a room irrespective of occupancy. Whilst paying the full single supplement should secure a single room every single night, this cannot be guaranteed. Exceptional local difficulties in accommodating a large group may oblige extra room-sharing. In those circumstances it is possible that more than two sharers of the same sex may have to share a three or four-bedded room. This could apply equally to those who apply as a sharing pair. Such pairs may sometimes have to admit a third person, or split and each share with another pair.

When two people of the same sex request to share with one another, it will be assumed that they are a ‘pair’, requiring a ‘twin’ room, ie. separate beds. If you would prefer to be accommodated as a ‘couple’, please state this when booking. Conversely, when two people of opposite sex request to share or simply apply from the same address, it will be assumed that they are a ‘couple’ who prefer a ‘double’ room equipped with one large bed where available, or failing that a ‘twin’. If you are not a couple, or a couple who prefer separate beds, please clearly state this when booking.

Dinner is not included on three nights, when we are in cities with a plethora of restaurants and where participants may wish to coordinate dining with sightseeing. Included dinners will usually be taken in the hotel restaurant, and when elsewhere this will be noted in the route-book. If you have a restricted diet, please help us to make your meals as varied and nutritional as they nevertheless can be by providing full details when booking. If you write ‘vegetarian’, we will assume that you do eat eggs & cheese (because if you didn’t that would be vegan). If fish and/or seafood are also okay, please say so – or write ‘pescatarian’. If you don’t mind fish occasionally but not every day, or if you’ll eat white meat but not red… whatever your preference, please tell us exactly how it is for you and we will try to communicate that to the chef in every location.

Travel

The tour will start and finish in Porto, at the centrally located Grand Hotel de Paris (near Aliados metro station). Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements to and from this hotel, which has a large, secure, dry and well-lit cellar, ideal for bike parking, assembly and packing, and the storage of bike-bags and boxes.

There is no travel included in this tour, thus it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Manager nor CTC Holidays & Tours are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to meet the tour, please ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum occupancy, it will be cancelled. Participants who wish to be led will be led at a moderate pace with re-grouping stops at places of interest, or at least every 5 to 10km. We will use the ‘human signpost’ system, which allows the group to spread out into little bunches and individuals, each of whom can pause as they like, losing sight of the person in front, free from worry about missing a turn since the leader will have left someone at every turn, pointing the way, until released by the ‘back-marker’.

Anyone who nevertheless prefers to make their own way is very welcome to do so, provided they inform the ride leader. For this purpose GPS tracks & courses, along with a very detailed route instruction booklet in its own zip-lock waterproof wallet, will be sent to each participant at least one month before the holiday.

Weather & Clothing

This area enjoyed good weather – ‘shorts weather’ indeed – for most of early/mid October during 2019. The sun shone and temperatures reached the high teens or low twenties (°C) on most days, and it rained on only two or three occasions. Mornings were much colder, however, calling for knee-warmers or knee-length legwear at least. And it could be very cold at any time on the Serra da Estrela. 1,993m is seriously high, and the Atlantic is not so far away, so you should ensure that your clothing system includes suitable layers that with everything on you can survive driving rain at near freezing temperatures.

Cycles & Equipment

A touring cycle, hybrid or lightweight ATB is suitable for this tour. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (e.g. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. Muds guards are optional but show courtesy to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are recommended as the rail-trail has a tunnel. New tyres are recommended of at least 28mm width. Participants will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs.

Each participant is expected to bring, and carry, all of their own clothing, personal items and spares. You are advised to do some riding before the tour to ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation, or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled, we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Maps & Guides

You should carry a map (or GPS) in case you become separated from the group. No readily available paper map, unfortunately, depicts all of the minor roads in our itinerary or any of the cycle-tracks or rail-trails. The most detailed is Marco Polo’s Portugal: the whole country at 1:300K. It’s an awful lot of paper to carry, so maybe cut out and bring just as much as you need. Michelin 591 ‘Portugal Norte’ is the same scale, but a disappointing blow-up of their smaller scale whole country map that depicts even less of our route. So a GPS with OSM-derived mapping is best, or Viewranger or Maps.me on
your phone (unlimited online maps can be downloaded for free off-line use in both these apps).

**Travel Insurance & Advice**

In addition to travel insurance, EU nationals should carry a European Health Insurance Card, obtainable from [www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/). This enables you to take advantage of emergency medical services free or at a discount under a reciprocal provision that exists between EU member states. Your travel insurer may refuse to meet the extra costs of medical treatment if you do not carry this card.

Before booking you should check the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, at [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) or on 0845 850 2829.

**Tour Manager’s Contact Details**

If you require any assistance, or have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact the Tour Manager using the information provided below.

Christopher Juden

**Email:**
chris.juden.ctc@gmail.com

**Mobile:**
07709 881270