



## Douro Valley – The Oldest & Most Beautiful Wine Region in the World

### Description

“Portugal has a peaceful feel about it. I sit on the terrace overlooking the vineyard there and I feel cut off from the world. You need that sort of thing.”  
*cliff Richard*

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The designated UNESCO World Heritage Site Douro Valley in Northern Portugal attracts wine lovers worldwide. The birthplace of Port Wine, it has a centuries-old winemaking culture with 250 indigenous grape varieties. Douro Valley was the first demarcated wine-producing region in the world, established in 1756.

But the Douro Valley is more than just a well-known wine region.



It has a beautiful wild landscape, the world's third-largest river, stunning riverbanks, spectacular steep slopes covered with vineyards, and charming small towns. Once inside the valley, you will find many great restaurants, first-class accommodations, and luxurious spas that will make your entire experience unforgettable.

## Our Visit



Landscape in Douro Valley Adobe Stintas

We made a day trip by car from Porto during our fall visit. The roads in Portugal were excellent, and the scenery along the way was well worth it. We could go at our own pace and make random stops



along the way. At one point, a man we met at one of the wineries suggested heading up to Miradouro São Leonardo de Galafura for the spectacular views of the Douro Valley. It was one of my favorite parts of the day.

If you don't have a car, we recommend taking the boat trip if you are only on a one-day trip. Since it is impossible to drive through the entire valley in a single day, you will get an excellent sampling of the valley from the water. The boat trip is the most efficient way to see and experience the valley's main attractions. There are also many options for day tours from Porto or nearby areas.

If you can, a private tour would take your experience to the next level if you have the time and travel with your family. Private tours can be tailored to your specific interests. For example, they can assist you in arranging wine tastings or dinners of delectable Portuguese food in a unique location in the valley.

## Where is Douro Valley



The Douro Valley is in northern Portugal, just one and a half hours from Porto, and is the main gateway to the Douro Region. Stretching over 373 miles, which is why you can not do it one day, the Douro Valley is a historical and cultural region of Portugal, long known for its vineyards and the production of some of the world's best wines.

The demarcation of the Douro River Valley includes a broad swath of pre-Cambrian schist and granite land. Beginning around the village of Barqueiros (43 miles upstream from Porto), the valley extends eastward almost to the Spanish border. The region is protected from the influences of the Atlantic Ocean by the Serra do Marão mountains. The area is three official zones: the Baixo (lower) Corgo, the Cima (higher) Corgo, and the Douro Superior.

There are several options to get to Douro Valley. Porto is the usual starting point for your beautiful adventure to the Douro Valley. From cruise boats, trains, buses, cars, or by helicopter! Each



guarantees an equally impressive and picturesque journey that will amaze you.

## Transportation and Directions

1. By water: What better way to explore the Douro Valley than take a boat ride on the tranquil river? Cruise boats depart from Vila Nova de Gaia pier, just across from Porto's Ribeira. Several types of cruise boats are available, from day trips, for time-sensitive travelers to multi-day cruises for a more relaxed and extended visit.
2. By group tour: There are many options, such as Trip Advisor and Viator, to book tours. Often you will take it by bus, and the tour will take about nine hours.
3. By train: One of Europe's most picturesque railway lines, Linha do Douro, departs from São Bento station in the center of Porto and takes you across the entire Douro Valley to Pocinho. Train enthusiasts will enjoy exceptional views as you ride through the heart of the Douro Valley. We suggest getting a seat on the right-hand side of the train for the best views.
4. By car: This is how we visited Douro Valley. Traveling to the Douro Valley by road is a truly unforgettable experience because you have complete control of where and when to stop. There are countless incredible viewpoints throughout the Douro Valley. The N-222, which connects Peso da Régua to Pinhão through the Douro Valley, was awarded by the Avis (our favorite rental car company) Driving Index as the World's Best Road!
5. By helicopter: For those who prefer extravagant experiences. Tours can vary from 20 to 45 minutes.

## Map of Douro Valley Region

- [Valença do Douro](#)

## What is this Port Wine?



Port wine (Vinho do Porto or Port) is a Portuguese fortified wine produced in the Douro Valley of northern Portugal. Port wine is typically a sweet red wine, often served with dessert, although it also comes in dry, semi-dry, and white varieties. Other port-style fortified wines are produced outside Portugal. These countries are Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, India, South Africa, Spain, and the United States. However, under the European Union Protected Designation of Origin guidelines, only wine from Portugal can be labeled "Port."

There are several varieties of Port Wines. In most cases, they are distinguished by varied aging



techniques. There is Rubym Port, Tawny Port, White and Rose Port, Vintage Port, and Late Bottled Vintage Port. Each of these varieties is genuinely unique.

***Want to learn more about Port Wine? Check out our blog post [“Port: A Beloved Portuguese Tradition”](#)***

## The Region



The Douro Valley, where Port wine is made, was defined and established as a protected region. The Douro was thus an official appellation in 1756, making it the third oldest, after Chianti (1716) and Tokaj (1730).

The valley of the Douro River in northern Portugal is a microclimate optimal for cultivating olives, almonds, and especially grapes, necessary for making Port wine. The region around Pinhão and São João da Pesqueira is considered the center of Port production. It is known for its picturesque Quintas – estates clinging to almost vertical slopes dropping down to the river. The conditions where the grapes grow are harsh, and the terrain makes for difficult labor in the scorching heat.

***Do you plan to visit beautiful Portugal? Check out our [Portugal Travel Guide](#) to guide you in planning your next adventure.***



## Interesting Facts on Duoro Valley



- Did you know the Douro Valley region is one of the world's oldest wine-growing regions? When you explore this region, you will notice many activities directly related to winemaking.
- It's been recognized by UNESCO. In 2001 UNESCO declared the Douro Valley wine region a World Heritage Site — a testament to its significance.



- It has a 2,000-year history. Archaeological evidence shows that wine dates back in Douro Valley to Ancient Roman times. The first traces of vines date back even further — 3,000 years, to the Bronze Age.
- The Douro Valley produces Port Wine (one of Portugal's finest wines). That is why some people refer to it as Douro Wine. It's rich, sweet, and popular as a dessert wine.
- It's the only place in the world Port Wine can be made. Because of the formal boundary and the unique characteristics of the land, the climate, and the culture that contribute to the production of Port Wine, it cannot be produced anywhere else in the world. True Port Wine can only originate in the Douro Valley!
- Another intriguing fact about the Rio Douro is that it lacks natural soil. The rows of vineyards or other plants you see are not growing in the fertile soil. The rocks were broken up and turned into soil, which supported the planting patterns.
- This valley also has a natural park where endangered wildlife can be found. It is also one of Portugal's largest protected areas, with historic villages and ancient cultures. This park is a must-see for anyone interested in Portugal's true history. It has an area of approximately 860 km<sup>2</sup>.
- The Douro Valley is known for its incredible landscapes but also has beautiful roads cyclists frequently use. You can also rent a bicycle and ride it with your significant other on moderately difficult roads while admiring its natural beauty.

**We came for wine but fell in love with the landscape**



One of the main reasons people travel through the Douro Valley is to visit the “Quintas,” which are the heart of the Douro Valley’s history as they have produced the world-famous Port wine for centuries. A “Quinta” is a farm estate; in this region, it means a winery with vineyards attached. There are over 200 in the AVA.

A visit to Douro Valley must include at least two visits to these Quintas. A warning, these experiences



are popular, and the space for tours and tasting are very limited. As a result, you must make an appt for any Quintas you wish to visit well in advance. We visited during the off-season on a weekday, and several had no space for tours and tastings.

Several of these Qunitas do offer food. We had a lovely traditional lunch at Sandeman while enjoying stunning views. Since many of these wineries also have accommodations, a restaurant is often on-site.

**Our top five suggestions for Quintas in Douro Valley (this, of course, varies often based on preference)**

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[Quinto do Vallado](#) was built in 1716 and is one of the most famous in the Douro Valley region.

[Quinto da Pacheca](#) has been producing wines since 1738. and are pioneers of Duoro wines. They were one of the first properties to bottle wine under its own label.

[Quinto do Crasto](#) is located on the right bank of the Douro Valley. It has origins that date back to the early 17th century.





**[Sandeman Quinto do Seixo](#)** was our favorite stop in Douro Valley. Strolling through the vineyards, we were dazzled by the setting and nature's living colors. In addition to the stunning beauty, it is here where their high-quality wines are born and take shape.

**[Quinta Carvalhas](#)** is probably the largest and one of the most emblematic wineries in the Douro Valley. It's located at the mountain of Carvalhas, which is around 180 feet and offers stunning 360-degree views over the Douro Valley.

*One of our favorite places in Portugal was the walled city of Obidos. Check out our blog post- **[Obidos: Portugal Perfection](#)**.*

## Non-Wine Things to Do



Hiking in Douro Valley Adobe Stock Photo



- Visit the International Douro Park. It has massive cliffs and overwhelmingly beautiful views. However, avoid visiting this park during the summer because it can be scorching with no shade.
- Going for a hike is one of the best things you can do. There are numerous hiking trails that provide the best views of the entire valley. Some tour companies offer one-day or multi-day guided hiking tours.
- Cycling is another excellent option. You can rent bikes for a short tour and leisurely ride between wineries. But you should stay on the roads because the hills can be challenging.
- Museu do Douro (Douro Museum) is a museum in Peso da Régua dedicated to promoting the Douro Valley and Port wine heritage. It's a modern museum outlining the history of the Valley, where you can learn the cultural importance of the region and the Port wine production process, with a tasting session at the end.
- Visit the Congida River Beach in Duoro International Natural Park. The beach sits on an outcrop on the large reservoir formed by the Saucelle Dam near the Spanish Border.
- Mosteiro de Sao Joao de Tarouca is a medieval-era monastery. It is the Cistercian Order's first monastery.
- Kayak the Douro River if you're feeling daring. Most tours are guided but are very relaxing, allowing you to see the massive green hills from a different perspective. Rent a kayak for up to 6 hours and independently explore the entire area.
- Explore Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa. The Côa River is a tributary that runs into the Douro River. For thousands of years, the rock formations lining the river banks have engravings dating back 25,000 years.
- Drive to Miradouro São Leonardo de Galafura for the spectacular views of the Duoro Valley.

## The Most Attractive Feature



We are all aware that this valley is well-known for its Port wines.

So, after exploring the lush valleys and participating in some activities, fill your goblet with world-renowned wines.

If you are a true wine enthusiast, you must also visit the terraced vineyards. It is a spot for Instagram-worthy photos. Take plenty of pictures, as this is one of the world's oldest wine-growing regions, and share them with your friends. The interesting thing about these terraced vineyards is that they are also the highest point in the valley, and the roads up there can be quite nail-biters.

You can see for miles in every direction when standing in the middle of them.

## **Best Time to Visit Douro Valley**

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September and October are ideal if you want to visit this lovely location. The weather is pleasant during these two months. The fall colors are magnificent. Photographers will be in seventh heaven.

You can also choose April and May to enjoy the spring greenery and flowers. The almond trees will provide beautiful patches of white and pink flowers during Spring. The weather is mild and pleasant. Spring is the best time to visit if you enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking and boating.

The summer months are busy with tourists, but the heat can be scorching. It can make for long and exhausting days.

In winter, the olive harvest begins for many acclaimed olive oil producers in the region. There are always special activities to celebrate this time, especially for the festive season.

## Where to stay when visiting Douro Valley



There are many beautiful places to spend the night in the Douro Valley. We went on a day trip and were based in Porto then. That is where most day visitors come from. As a result, we can't speak to where to stay, but there are many options, from simple to luxury. We provide two links below.

We believe it is important to price out properties on various sites. [Expedia](#) is a US-based company, whereas [Booking.com](#) is Europe based. Not all properties appear on both. If the establishment has a website, check to price there as well.

## [Booking.com](#)

[Booking.com](#)

## [Expedia](#)



## Final Thoughts

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The Douro Valley will keep you busy with its winding roads, dramatic mountains, and beautiful vineyards. People recommend this valley for wine tours, but we know it can captivate your soul with breathtaking views. We guarantee that if you enjoy nature, you will fall in love with it.

It appears to be something from the heavens.

It's also an excellent spot for professional birdwatchers, with over 100 species of endangered birds. It serves as a haven for Golden Eagles and Egyptian Vultures.



However, if you're looking for next-level wine tasting, head to the town of Pinhao. It is located in the heart of the Douro Valley and plays a vital role in wine production.

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*Check out the Portugal website for [Duoro Valley](#) for more information*

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[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

## [Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

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[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

## [Viator](#)

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