

Douro Valley

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The beautiful, terraced slopes of the Douro valley, covered in vines, start near Barqueiros, extending to Barca de Alva, and offer one of the most striking manufactured rural landscapes. Until the late 19th century, the river was the major access route inland and the means of transport for produce from the distant

interior. The Douro River is the third longest on the Iberian Peninsula, after the Tagus and the Ebro rivers. The river is 897 kilometres in length and the final 22 kilometres are a mesotidal estuary. The river has 5 locks and 15 dams, and the highest lock is at Carrapatelo, about 35 metres of vertical drop, the tallest in Europe. For 120 kilometres, the Douro Valley forms the border with Spain and is the longest border in Europe. The same 120 kilometre stretch of the Douro Valley is the edge of the Douro International Natural Park, created to protect the flora and fauna of the Douro valley region. The Douro River starts in the Sorria province of Spain, flowing from its source near Duruelo de la Sierra across northern-central Spain and Portugal to its outlet at Porto.

WINE & PORT

Famous for Port, wine, Port wine, river cruises and beautiful terraced vineyards wrapped around the steep curves of the valley, the Douro valley will steal your heart and capture your imagination. A UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage site since 2001, the Douro wine growing area known as Alto Douro has been producing wine by traditional



landholders in the Alto Douro region for some 2,000 years. Since the 18th century, its main product, port wine, has been world famous for its quality. Portugal has over 250 native wine grape varieties with the Douro mostly farming around 13 varieties, including Portugal's most common local grapes, Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Touriga Franca, Tinta Cão and Tinta Barroca. The Alto Douro made famous worldwide for Port, today sells as much still wine as it does Port. The new wave of top Douro wines has also led to a greater focus on the grape varieties that go into Port wine. Most top Quintas now replant vines with single-variety vineyards and focus on a limited number of varieties, but older, mixed vineyards will remain in production for many decades to come. In the past, barrels of Port wine were transported on the Douro River using specific boats called Rabelo boats and they were made specifically to survive the strong streams from the Douro Valley to Vila Nova de Gaia. Vila Nova de Gaia is a city and a municipality in Porto District in Norte Region, Portugal. In 2001, the city proper had an estimated population of 178,250.