



## PICTURESQUE PORTUGAL ~ DOURO VALLEY E-BIKE & BOAT CRUISE

**8 Days – Cycle & Cruise through Portugal and Spain on this fully guided E-Bike tour with van support!**

**TOUR DATES: July 17 ~ 24, 2024**

On this bicycle journey, your posh floating hotel travels alongside you! Since 2015, Stephanie Ventures has hand-selected best-in-class operators to ensure our guests enjoy exceptional bicycle and boat touring experiences along Europe's majestic rivers. Knowing a comfortable cabin on board the ship awaits after an eventful day of cycling is one of the many reasons our guests tour with us again and again! You will not have to go far in the evening to enjoy a well-deserved and beautifully presented three-course dinner on board. You can look forward to a relaxing meal with your fellow travelers while you sail past the scenic terraced slopes of the Douro Valley.

On its way to the Atlantic Ocean, the Douro River meanders picturesquely through a dramatic landscape of deep gorges and manicured vineyards – a testament to the region's 2,000-year-old wine culture. A mild climate allows not only vines, but also olive and almond trees to thrive. Here, in the "green north," explorers, kings and port wine were born.

The city of Porto gave its name to the whole country, which makes it clear that the real roots of Portugal lie in this charismatic metropolis in the north. That is why Porto is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is considered by many to be the "secret" capital of the country, though the locals of Lisbon may beg to differ. Regardless, ancient Porto is regarded as one of the most beautiful cities on the Iberian Peninsula and Porto is certainly an enchanting place to begin a journey. You will sail and cycle into the Douro Valley, also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The bicycle route leads through a spectacular landscape, the wooded hills and verdant hillsides of the Serras, a region renowned for its viticulture. Cypress and olive trees line the paths through the vineyards where here and there, you will see stately "quintas" (mansions) high in the hills.

### Unique on this Douro e-bike & boat trip:

- 6 guided bicycle rides in UNESCO region of Douro River Valley, picturesque villages and vineyards include Pinhão, Lamego and Barca d'Alva
- Support van available for cyclists throughout the bike rides with space available for non-cycling travel companions!
- Lodging on the luxurious cruise ship A-ROSA ALVA
- Onboard spa offering optional massages and beauty treatments (not included in tour price). Sauna and small swimming pool on the sundeck!

### ITINERARY

#### DAY 1: Individual arrival in PORTO, world capital of Port Wine

Porto airport is located about 18 km north of the center of Porto. Overseas guests are urged to arrive the day before the tour begins and stay in a nearby hotel. The river cruise ships are moored on the southern bank of the Douro with magnificent views of the monumental old town and the impressive Porto landmark: Eiffel Bridge Ponte Dom Luis I. Embarkation begins at 3:00 pm. At 4:30 pm, your tour guide will welcome you aboard the ship. Before dinner, a local guide will lead you on a tour of the atmospheric old town on the northern bank of the river. Porto is ancient, dating back to Roman times. It owes its importance as a trading port to its proximity to the mouth of the Douro River and the Atlantic Ocean. Today it delights the visitor with its colorful houses



nested seemingly on top of each other on the city's steep slopes. Upon your return to the ship, you will convene for the first of several memorable meals onboard. *Overnight mooring: Porto.*

### **DAY 2: PORTO through the Douro Valley to PINHÃO (15 mi.)**

Before breakfast, the ship departs Porto and sails upstream. Around noon you will reach Peso da Régua, which is considered the capital of the "Alto Douro", the oldest protected wine-growing area in the world. The river valley features breathtaking beauty with its steeply terraced slopes. After lunch on board, you will travel by van a few miles into the hilly hinterland to begin your first bike ride. After some initial rolling hills, the bike route heads leisurely down to the banks of the Douro. Eventually, a wide photo worthy view of the winding river valley appears before you. In Pinhão you will reach your ship again. Pinhão is a small wine-growing town, but it is considered the geographical center of the port wine region. Many renowned port wine producers and traders own quintas (mansions) in the area. Dinner on board. *Overnight mooring: Pinhão.*

### **DAY 3: PINHÃO to SABROSA, birthplace of Magellan (15 mi.)**



Before the ship departs during lunch and continues eastwards, we use the morning for another bike ride north of the river valley: You start in the mountainous hinterland of the river and cross the small hamlet of Sabrosa on the bike course, which can boast of being the birthplace of the first circumnavigator Magellan. Through vineyards it goes along the river loops of the Rio Pinhão, which flows into the Douro at the village of the same name, back to the ship.

In the afternoon, weather permitting, you can enjoy the river scenery on the sun deck as the ship approaches the Spanish border. The Douro is the most water-rich river on the Iberian Peninsula and navigable up to 14 km into Spain, where a 60m high hydroelectric power plant without a lock

prevents the onward journey at Vega de Terrón. Barca d'Alva is the last town before the Spanish border. From here, the Douro River separates the two Iberian nations. Until 1985, the railway line that connected the remote Douro Valley with the rest of the world ended in Barca. Since then, the place has sunk into a deep slumber, and you almost feel like you are at the end of the world. A wonderfully secluded location in the Douro Natural Park. Dinner onboard. *Overnight mooring: on the border with Spain.*

### **DAY 4: Along the border of PORTUGAL and SPAIN (36 mi.)**

Our ship anchors all day today in the Spanish-Portuguese border region and we use the time to cycle a longer distance in this lonely, remote region where we will visit two historic fortified towns. After breakfast, your guides will drive you south to Almeida to begin the day's ride.

Almeida was contested for centuries between Portugal and the Muslim Caliphate of Córdoba and was therefore well fortified early on. The city walls are arranged in a star shape around the city center and are still imposing and well preserved today. The last time the fortress played a role was during the Napoleonic Wars. On the way back to the banks of the Douro, you will cycle through peaceful valleys and small farming communities. Impressively situated on a hill, you can see another fortress from afar, which is located on our cycle route: Castelo Rodrigo. For the last few miles of cycling, you will descend on a path parallel to the Spanish-Portuguese border, which is formed by the Águeda River. You will enjoy magnificent views of the Douro Valley before you reach your ship again in Barca d'Alva. Dinner on board. *Overnight mooring: Barca d'Alva on the border between Portugal and Spain.*



### **DAY 5: Cycle through the ALTA DOURO WINE REGION (17 mi.)**

On the way back downstream, we leave the ship at Pocinho and you are driven to the heart of the Alta Douro growing area. South of the Douro you begin cycling back to Pinhão in the afternoon. The tiny town is beautifully situated at the mouth of the Rio Pinhão. Worth seeing is the small train station, which is beautifully decorated with blue "azulejos". As motifs you can find wine ships and grape harvest on these tile pictures. Dinner on board. *Overnight mooring: Pinhão.*

## **DAY 6: Panoramic Trip from the Pilgrimage Site of LAMEGO to the DOURO (13 mi.)**

In the morning you will sail on the ship as it leaves Pinhão until it reaches Régua after breakfast. From here you will be driven by our minibus to the famous pilgrimage site of Lamego south of the Douro Valley (18 km). Lamego was elevated to the status of a bishopric as early as the seventh century and flourished in the 18th century when the wine trade gained momentum. On a hill on the outskirts of the city, a monumental, baroque double staircase leads up to the church of "Nossa Senhora dos Remédios", dedicated to the Virgin Mary and attracting many pilgrims. Prepare yourself for a magnificent view of the city and the Douro Valley! We begin today's bike ride through the old town of Lamego and back to the riverbank on a stunning panoramic route to Peso da Régua, where the ship is waiting for us. During lunch, our ship continues the journey to Porto. Dinner on board. *Overnight mooring: Bitetos.*

## **DAY 7: Along the ATLANTIC SHORES to PORTO (27 mi.)**

At 8:30 a.m. your ship will stop at the tiny port of Bietos, and your guide will take you to the Atlantic coast to the beach of Furadouro. The route leads through pine forests and past dune landscapes directly along the sea and beaches. Many seaside resorts line the way back to Porto, where the ship will be waiting for you again around noon. In the evening, your guide will walk with you to a renowned port wine cellar in the Vila Nova de Gaia neighborhood. The winemakers' bodegas are true "cathedrals of wine". Here, in the district of the wine barons, you will stop at a winery to taste "Port" and visit a traditional winery. Final dinner on board. *Overnight mooring: Porto.*

## **DAY 8: ADEUS PORTUGAL!**

After you have been able to enjoy the sumptuous breakfast buffet once again, we offer a free transfer to the airport. The bus transfer takes place once in the morning from 9:00 a.m. (approx. 20 km / 25 min). Of course, it is a good idea to extend another night (or two) in Porto to experience this lively and fascinating city even more extensively.

### **What's Included**

- Accommodation for 7 nights in selected category of cabin
- MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch as a picnic buffet or as a buffet on board according to the program
- 7 multi-course dinners (choice of main dish)
- All drinks are included on this trip, except champagne, bottled wine, and exclusive rarities
- Support vehicle (Mercedes Sprinter type van)
- Electric bike
- Services of one English speaking tour director, bicycle guide and van driver
- All visits and admissions as indicated in the itinerary
- All transfers as indicated in the itinerary
- Visit to a port wine bodega with tasting
- Departure airport transfer
- CO<sub>2</sub> compensation in the region

### **What's Not Included**

- Airfare
- Travel Insurance – it is advisable to purchase coverage as soon as you pay your deposit
- Helmet
- Gratuities for guides and crew
- Bike protection available for purchase onboard

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**E-BIKE TRIP - ROUTE ASSESSMENT:** The total distance by e-bike is 208 km (130 miles). Although the north of Portugal is very mountainous, cycle routes are not particularly strenuous, as you will often start cycling above the river valleys and cycle much more downhill than uphill. Most of the time you ride on quiet, low-traffic country roads. On the sixth day, at the beginning of the stage, we ride through the village of Lamego, where there is some car traffic. There may also be a little more traffic on the fifth day. All climbs are easy to ride with e-bikes! To participate in and enjoy the biking part of the tour, it is important that you are in good physical condition and that you have the necessary bike handling skills to ride safely with the group. Prior group riding experience is strongly encouraged but not a requirement. Our e-bikes weigh about 50 lbs. The weather is variable, it may not always be sunny, and the winds may not always be calm.

## SHIP: A-ROSA ALVA – your home on tour

### Ship details

- Capacity 126 guests, 63 outside cabins
- Length 79.8 m, Width 11.4 m
- Speed max. 22 km / h
- Built in 2018
- Sails under the flag of Portugal
- Languages on board: German, English

### On Board Amenities

- Wine & Beverages: Drinks on board are included except champagne, bottled wine, exclusive rarities. Drinks with picnics are also included.
- Dining: breakfast buffet onboard, packed lunch or buffet onboard. Dinner: appetizer/salad and dessert buffet, main course (choice of main course) served at your table.
- Spa-ROSA: On board there is a spa area with sauna. Various massages and beauty treatments are available for a fee
- Sun deck with swimming pool, shaded seats, chaise loungers, outdoor shower. Lounge with an outdoor area at ship's bow



### GUEST CABINS and PRICING

#### Cabin Style A – Deck 1

Size 12 m<sup>2</sup> (129 sq ft)

Large window (cannot be opened)

Air-conditioned

**Double Occupancy per person €3675 (VAT included)**

**Single Occupancy per person €4695 (VAT included)**



#### Cabin Style C\* – Deck 2

Size 14.5 m<sup>2</sup> (156 sq ft)

Panoramic window (cannot be opened)

Air-conditioned

**Double Occupancy per person €4175 (VAT included)**

**Single Occupancy per person €5395 (VAT included)**

*\*We recommend this cabin type for friends traveling together because it is spacious enough to separate the bed into two twins*



### Cabin Style D\* – Deck 3

Size 14.5 m2 (156 sq ft)

Panoramic window (can be opened)

Air-conditioned

**Double Occupancy per person €4349 (VAT included)**

*\*We recommend this cabin type for friends traveling together because it is spacious enough to separate the bed into two twins*



CLIMATE in PORTO	April	May	July / August	September	October
Average Daytime Temperature	18°C / 64°F	20°C / 68°F	20°C / 68°F	24°C / 75°F	21°C / 70°F
Average Nighttime Temperature	8°C / 46°F	10° / 50°F	18°C / 64°F	14°C / 57°F	11°C / 52°F
Hours of Sunshine	7	8	9 / 10	7.5	6

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Meeting point:** Individual arrival in Porto. At 5:00 p.m. you will be welcomed by our tour guide at the reception of the ship A-ROSA ALVA in Porto. After a short welcome, the journey begins with a guided tour of the old town on foot. ***The address of the jetty in Porto is: Cais de Gaia, district: Vila Nova de Gaia (southern bank of the Douro).***
- **Arrival by plane:** Closest airport is PORTO (OPO)
- **Airport transfer:** The taxi ride from the airport to the ship is not included in the tour price. The airport is located ten miles north of the center of Porto. We recommend that you take a taxi. The distance to the ship is about twelve miles and the journey time - depending on the flow of traffic - between 30-40 minutes. Rate: EUR 25 – 30.
- The metro (line E (purple)) connects the airport with the center of Porto every 20 minutes (26 minutes to the metro station Trindade, where you must change trains in the direction of Sao Bento station. From this station in the center of the old town it is about one mile to the pier. In addition, there are several bus lines that run from the airport to the center.
- **Departure by plane:** The free transfer to the airport usually takes place at 8:30/9:00 a.m. directly after disembarkation (depending on the exact return flight times of the participants). If you want to leave later, the tour guides or the ship's reception can arrange a taxi or minibus (up to seven people) on site.
- **Follow-up stay in Porto:** An extended stay in Porto is highly recommended. The city offers a wealth of opportunities to fill several days with an interesting program. For an extra stay before or after the trip, we can recommend our Hotel Infante de Sagres, which is centrally located in the old town, near many interesting sites.
- **Escort (Support) Bus:** **A Mercedes escort bus is a mobile base that you can always rely on for quick bike adjustments or repairs as well as the possibility to ride in the bus!**
- **Entry requirements, health, and safety instructions** You will receive up-to-date information on entry requirements as well as health and safety instructions with your final travel documents. It is the responsibility of guests to ensure that they meet the requirements. Check with your airline for updates.
- **NOTE:** Timetable and program changes reserved: Due to high and low water, maintenance work and waiting times at locks and bridges, timetable changes may occur at short notice. In rare cases of strong high or low water or force majeure, it may happen that parts of the route have to be covered by bus or train and in individual cases hotel accommodation may be necessary.

## About Stephanie Ventures

*Our expertise is active, affordable, small group travel and we pride ourselves on putting a unique spin on our itineraries to ensure you will not find another tour experience out there quite like ours. Founder Stephanie Scott started the company in the US, with 35 years of experience in specialty food and wine, during which she designed many fun, memorable events, and travel adventures. She managed the title sponsorship of one of the most popular men's pro-cycling teams in the US for 15 years, but is content to ride her bike, at home and on tour, at a more leisurely pace. She believes that one of the best ways to see the world and meet its people is by traveling around it on two wheels. She logged many kilometers on bike paths of Europe before launching her tour company in 2015.*



*Certified as a Tour Director by the International Tour Management Institute, Stephanie worked as a tour guide in San Francisco before founding Stephanie Ventures. She went on to host amazing bike & barge tours in the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Fast-forward a few years and a pandemic, and in the dead of winter 2022, Stephanie sold everything she owned and ran away to Europe to realize her long-time dream of living and working there. From this new home base in Alphen aan den Rijn in South Holland, she is closer to the destinations she offers. Join her as she searches for panoramic views, history, local culture, regional cuisine, wine, beer, or whatever the locals drink, and much more! Be sure to bring your spirit of adventure, hearty appetite, and a good sense of humor!*

Stephanie Ventures • Hoofstraat 5a • Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands

Website: <https://stephanieventures.com/>

E-mail: [StephanieVentures@Gmail.com](mailto:StephanieVentures@Gmail.com) • Phone: +31 6 2510 7863

VAT: NL004167539B