

Special Tour

Friday, 10 October 2008

Tour to Douro Valley



Guided Visit of the Palace of Mateus

Also known as the Solar de Mateus, and famously depicted on bottles of Mateus rosé wine, the palace epitomizes the flamboyance of Baroque architecture in Portugal. This baroque recreation was built in the early 18th century, probably by Nicolau Nasoni, for António José Botelho Mourão. His descendants still live here, but visitors can tour the gardens and part of the house. Its granite wings shelter a forecourt dominated by an ornate balustrade stairway and overlooked by rooftop statues. Behind the palace is an Alice in Wonderland garden of tiny box hedges, prim statues and a fragrant cypress tunnel. Inside, you can visit a few rooms, heavy with velvet drapes and fussy period furnishing. As the rosé, it is actually made down the road by the Sogrape

Company (Portugal's largest exporter of bottled wines). The palace produces its own range of jams and wines, which are sold in a shop on the premises.

Traditional Wine Lunch at a Charming Port Wine Estate

This is a family owned "quinta" (wine estate) with an history that goes back to the 15th century. The vineyards have an average age of more than 45 years and the wine estate maintains the tradition of winemaking of Douro and Port wines. The welcome meeting includes the familiarization with the history of the estate to explain the specific characteristics of the grape harvest and wine production. The typical cellar of the house includes granite-treading tanks (*lagares*) that are still used for winemaking today. During harvest season (Sept-Oct), visitors enjoy the chance to experience this ancestral tradition with popular music so characteristic for this great party of the year!



Example of Luncheon

Menu

Appetizers: Selection of regional sausages in the charcoal - *moiras*, *alheiras*, *chouriças*, cheeses, *empadinhas* (typical meat-cakes), *broa* (typical bread of corn), varieties of *bola* (typical bread-cake with smoked ham), and traditional olives.

Seated lunch: *Caldo verde* (typical cabbage soup) or *crème of spinach with smoked ham*, *cozido à portuguesa* (traditional Portuguese dish consisting of beef, pig's trotter, smoked ham and other meats and vegetables), a traditional sweet desert with port wines from the property, soft drinks and coffee included.

Itinerary

- 9:00 am -- Depart the Porto Palacio Hotel, buses will park in front of the hotel, on the street
- Guided Visit of the Palace of Mateus
- Traditional wine lunch, wine tasting, and grape harvest festivities
- 6:30 pm -- Return to Porto Palácio Hotel (approximate time of return)

