

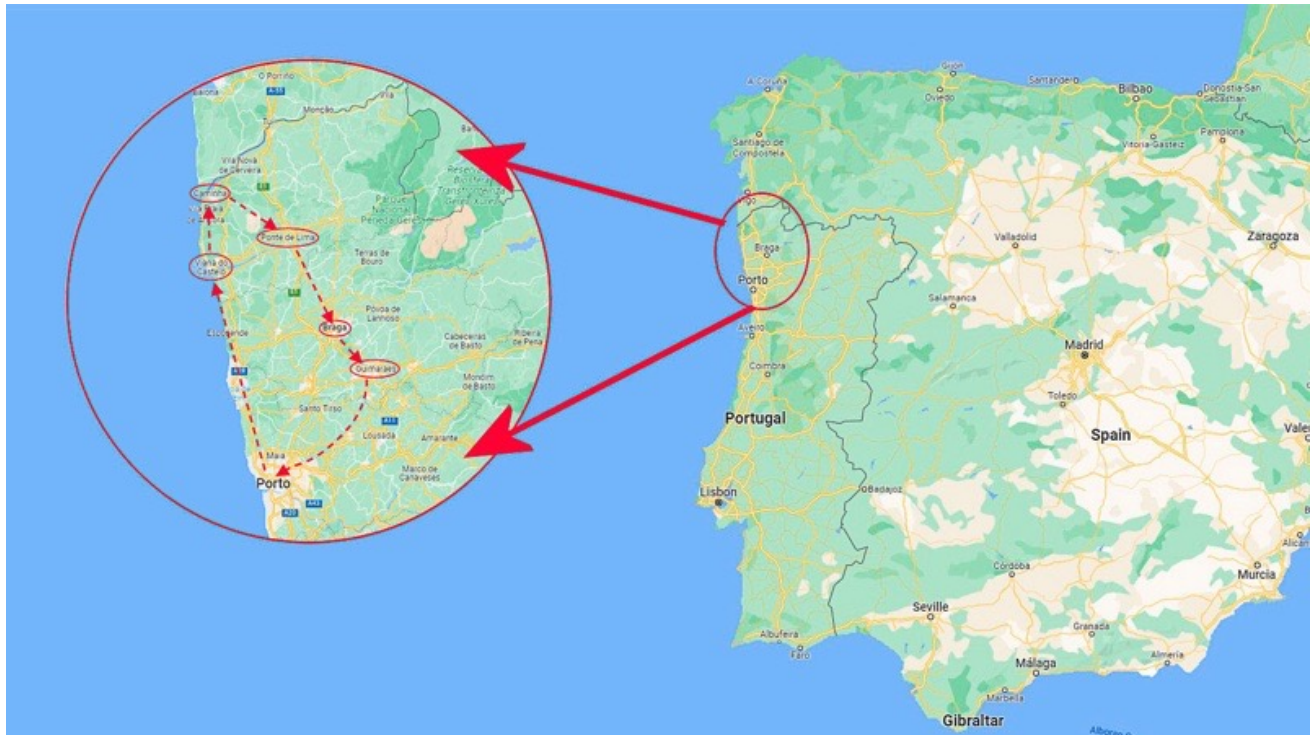
## Return to Portugal 2022 — Part 2 A Tour of the Northlands!



In the evening we meet up with Judy's high school friend, *Graça* (Grace), who lives in Porto. She drove us out to the mouth of the Douro River to view the sunset over the Atlantic. Nice!



She took us for a dinner of roasted pork loin, potatoes, & chestnuts (yes, chestnuts!). Delicious! But the green stuff, a spinach/olive oil purée — bleah (hey, I did try it!). Of course, Judy loved it.



Two days later Grace took us on a full-day whirlwind tour of the North. Great, now I have two Portuguese tour guides! All I've got to do is sit back, enjoy the ride, and take photos.



But before leaving Porto, she takes us for walk atop the big bridge for a photo-op!



Wow! Another great view!



This bridge is only used by the Metro trams and pedestrians, so there's no other traffic.



There are 6 bridges across the Douro in Porto, built over the decades from 1877 to 2003. Here you can see 4 of them.



It is a glorious morning in early September. Let's hit the road!



First stop: high atop the mountain overlooking the town of Viana do Castelo is the magnificent Sanctuary of *Santa Luzia*



Although done in Byzantine & Gothic styles, it's actually "new", completed in 1943.



The interior is beautiful, although we had to crash a wedding to see it (but we were discreet, and it's totally allowed). We left our best wishes to the happy couple!



Just two Portuguese gals catching up after 32 years....  
From atop the mountain, you can look out over the "other side" of the Atlantic Ocean.



And on the highway to Caminha, you can look out across the Minho River to Spain.  
(not going there, this is a Portuguese vacation.... and besides.... it's....)



Time for a snack!  
Graça's favorite pastry shop is in the town of Caminha, at the northern tip of Portugal.



I had a *Bola de Berlin*, a granulated-sugar-dusted sweet bun filled with egg custard; for Judy, a *Pastel de Gila*, a flaky pastry cup topped with a sweet spaghetti squash egg custard. After a total sugar rush topped off with a shot of espresso, we are energized!!



The *pastelaria* is right on the main square in the pedestrian zone, surrounding a central fountain dating from the 17th Century.





The square is lined with restaurants, and the locals are all out dining *al fresco* on this beautiful Sunday afternoon. What a perfect setting in which to relax!



This tower was part of the old city wall from the 12th Century. The clock was added in the 17th. The Baroque building was the former City Hall, now the tourist office.



Caminha is a lovely little village, clean, well-kept, and not super-touristy. It's obvious the residents take great pride in their little hometown.



Our next stop is super-touristy: the village of Ponte de Lima. It is the oldest village in Portugal, chartered in 1125 (which makes it even older than Portugal itself, founded in 1143). You can see it's decorated for a local festival.



The name means “Bridge of the Lima (River)”, and here it is! This one, built in the 14th Century, mirrors the design of the original one built in the 1st Century by the Roman Empire.



Although larger & busier than Caminha, it's another very picturesque town. Let's walk over to the clock tower....



The tower is the steeple of the old church, built in the mid-15th Century and still in use.



Panoramic shot of the interior. It has held up pretty well after 600 years!  
(for sure, there have been some upgrades....)



Stained glass window over the entrance. Beautiful!



As in Caminha, this imposing structure is a remnant of the old city wall — but this one was repurposed as a prison.



You did not want to get on the King's bad side — ain't nobody bustin' outta this place, amigos! How times change: now it's the tourist office, selling souvenirs, and people dine in its shadow.



Still, I found it hard to reconcile its ominous presence with the surrounding gaiety.



Next stop: a brief swing through the city of Braga to view Portugal's oldest cathedral, established in the 12th Century. This facade is from the 17th & 18th Centuries.



You can see the later additions in the darker stone on top.



I loved the intricate stone and metal work over the entrance. We didn't go inside because we had to hustle to our final stop:



Guimarães, birthplace of the Country of Portugal and its first King, Afonso Henriques, seen here striking a heroic pose.





Born in this very castle over 900 years ago, he seized control from his mother in 1128, declared independence from the regional Spanish kingdom, and went on to defeat and drive out the occupying Moors from the south. Portugal officially became independent in 1143.



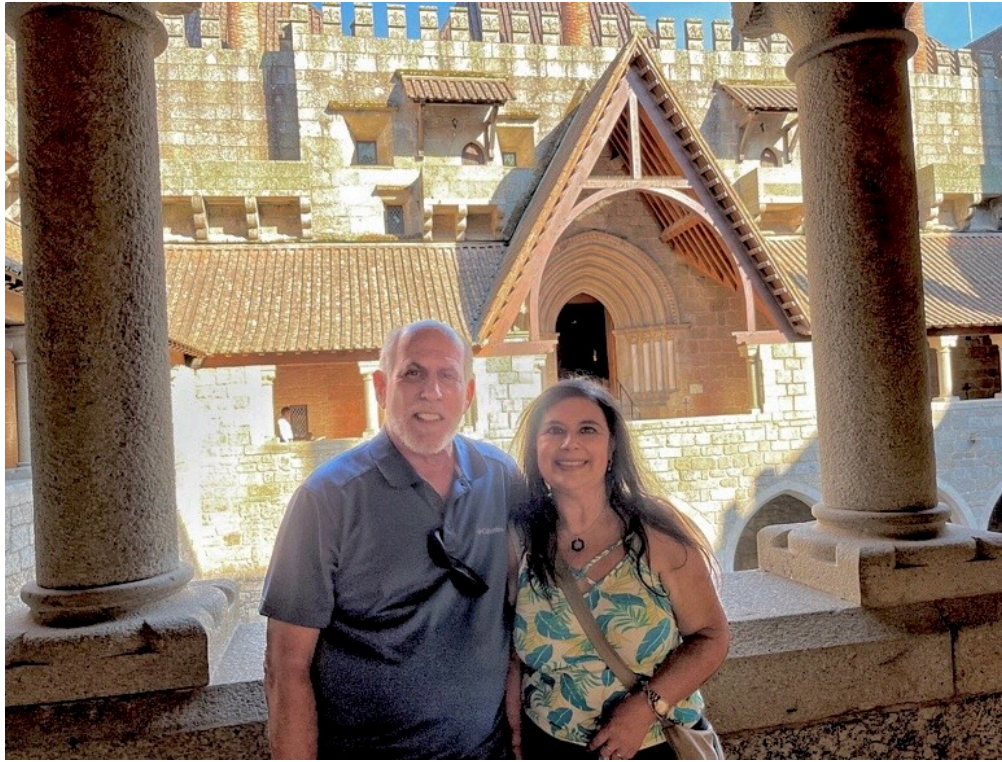
I wasn't able to go inside, but I was able to strike a heroic pose on the steps!



Adjacent to the old castle is a newer palace from the 15th Century, built by a Duke.



I strike a more casual pose in the courtyard.



Here we are on the upper level, across from the chapel entrance. Not much to see inside.



As we conclude our tour, the three Portuguese heroes exult in their glorious heritage!



Finally back in Porto, we end the day with a “*Francesinha*”, Porto’s signature dish: a sandwich made of layers of ham, sausage, & beef, topped with melted cheese and smothered in a beer-and-tomato sauce, with fries. The name means “little French girl” (I don’t know why), but I think “Cholesterolinha” is more fitting. And you thought Philly cheese steaks were bad for you!



Of course, like so many bad things, they were delicious!  
What a filling end to a fulfilling day! And we’ve still got one more day in Porto tomorrow!