

A NEW & EXCLUSIVE ESCORTED TOUR

HISTORIC GARDENS & CAMELLIAS OF NORTHERN PORTUGAL

A week exploring the gardens, cities & towns of northern
Portugal with Rosemary Legrand

3rd to 9th March 2024

NOBLE CALEDONIA



Camellias are thought to have been brought to Europe from the East by Portuguese sailors in the 16th century, and have since thrived in Portugal, particularly in the north of the country where the ideal conditions make this area home to nearly 8,000 varieties of this beautiful and enigmatic flower. We have timed this new escorted tour to coincide with spring when the camellias are in bloom providing a welcome splash of colour in shades of white, pink and red alongside the fascinating towns and cities we will explore in this historic part of Portugal.

Our six night tour begins in the coastal city of Aveiro, the perfect base to visit some of the most beautiful gardens in the region including Santar, a lovely aristocratic village encompassed in lush gardens and vineyards. Aveiro itself has much to offer and we will take time to explore the city's canals and waterways lined with colourful Art Nouveau architecture and discover the history of Portuguese porcelain at one of the world's largest ceramic factories. From here we head south to Porto, Portugal's second city, where we will sample its famous port wine at one of the many cellars. The city is also home to many elegant Baroque palaces with enchanting private gardens including Quinta de Villar d'Allen, a private estate with some of the oldest camellias in the country. A highlight will certainly be our visit to Braga where we will tour the meandering streets of the historic centre and visit the Benedictine Monastery of Sao Martinho de Tibaes with its peaceful gardens and orchards.

As well as the excursions we will enjoy leisurely lunches and wine tastings and free time to relax and enjoy the vibrant towns and cities at your own pace. This is a tour for camellia lovers and indeed all garden enthusiasts with visits included to some of the region's most beautiful gardens at the height of their season. We will be joined by horticultural expert Rosemary Legrand, who will accompany us on our excursions and share her knowledge and provide talks during the week.

Guest Speaker – Rosemary Legrand



Rosemary is a former nursery owner and daughter of the late George Hyde, who was a hybridist of azaleas and rhododendrons. Many of his award-winning hybrid plants can be seen at the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, Surrey, the de Rothschild rhododendron gardens at Exbury, Hampshire, and the National Trust Gardens at Kingston Lacy in Dorset. Rosemary had the honour of presenting the late Queen Elizabeth II with a collection of her

father's azaleas named after the Queen's former Head Gardener, Fred Nutbeam, at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1996. She has travelled extensively to gardens in many parts of the world and is an experienced public speaker. She is on the RHS Speakers Register and also speaks for NAFAS. She wrote a number of contributions for the book *1001 Gardens You Must See Before You Die* and articles for Royal Horticultural Society publications.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Porto & Aveiro, Portugal. Fly by scheduled flight to Porto. On arrival transfer to Aveiro and check in to the Hotel Aveiro Palace for a three night stay. Meet for dinner this evening at a local restaurant. (D)

Day 2 Aveiro. The city of Aveiro is situated on the edge of a saltwater lagoon and is noted for its canals and waterways through which local boats, known as moliceiros, meander. This morning we will explore the city on one of these colourful vessels to admire the many ornate and brightly painted Art Nouveau buildings that line the canals. The area is also known for its salt production, and we will stop at the salt fields where we can see the traditional harvesting that still takes place here. Continue to Ilhavo to visit the Vista Alegre Museum, located on the site of one of the world's largest tableware factories. This fascinating museum traces the history of Portuguese porcelain from the early 19th century featuring a collection of over 30,000 pieces. Also see the 17th century chapel, richly decorated with gilded wood carvings, marble altarpieces and beautiful frescos, carefully restored in 2015. We will enjoy a delicious local seafood lunch before



returning to the hotel for an afternoon and evening at leisure. (B, L)

Day 3 Santar & Viseu. This morning we will drive inland to the charming Garden Village of Santar in the heart of the Dao Wine region. Here we will explore the magnificent collection of gardens and vineyards that have been restored and united into a single landscape, designed by famed Spanish landscape architect Fernando Caruncho. Stroll through Casa das Magnolias, which dates from the 17th century and enjoys glorious views of the Serra da Estrela Mountains, and explore the imposing Casa das Fidaigas with its grand Baroque fountain and boxwood paths dividing the area into formal gardens, vegetable gardens and orchards. There are numerous species of camellias here planted by the Duke of Viseu. We will have an opportunity to taste the local Dao white wine before heading to the historic town of Viseu for lunch. Return to the hotel for an afternoon and evening at leisure. (B, L)

Day 4 Quinta de Villar d'Allen & Porto. Check out of the hotel this morning as we head north towards Porto. Here we will visit one of the few surviving manor houses that surrounded the city, Quinta de Villar d'Allen. Purchased by English businessman John Allen in 1839, the property has remained in the family ever since and it was his son Alfredo whose passion for botany led to the importation of many exotic species and a large collection of camellias. We will enjoy a guided tour of the house and gardens by a member of the Allen family. Following our visit, we will check in to the InterContinental Porto Hotel. This afternoon join a city tour of Porto including a visit to the Casa Tait, where we can admire the magnificent collections of roses, camellias and fuchsias and enjoy the beautiful views of the Arrabida Bridge and River Douro. We will end at one of the many port wine cellars where we will have a tasting and hear all about the wines and how they are produced, before returning to the hotel for an evening at leisure. (B)

Day 5 Braga & Lousada. The city of Braga is often regarded as the religious centre of Portugal, and it was here that the first cathedral in the country was constructed in 1089. On a walking tour this morning we will discover the historic centre of the city including a visit to the Biscainhos Museum. This Baroque former palace houses an exhibition of 17th and 18th century art and ceramics, but its hidden gem is the majestic landscaped garden featuring granite statues, fountains and a cloister, as well as the Virginia Tulip Tree, the oldest of its kind in Portugal. We will also visit the Benedictine Monastery of Sao Martinho de Tibães, founded in around 1060 and located just outside Braga. On a guided tour we will stroll through the large gardens and many courtyards lined with large

azulejos tiling. See the Baroque cloister and the main chapel with its lavish altar piece and gilded woodwork. Continue to Lousada for a late lunch before returning to Porto where the remainder of the afternoon and evening is at leisure. (B, L)

Day 6 Guimaraes, Quinta de Curvos & Apúlia. This morning we will drive to the outskirts of Guimaraes where we will visit Camélias Park Flavius, one of the most important camellia nurseries in Portugal. On a guided tour we will see some of the more than 2300 varieties of camellia, including native Portuguese varieties and a huge collection of japonicas, sasanquas, and hybrids. Continue to the exquisite Quinta dos Curvos vineyard where we will enjoy a wine tasting, and spend some time exploring the beautiful gardens which feature one of the largest camellia collections in Europe. Following our visit we will continue to the coast to the town of Apúlia where we will enjoy lunch with views of the Atlantic coast. Return to Porto this afternoon and meet this evening for a farewell dinner at the hotel. (B, L, D)

Day 7 Porto to London. Transfer to the airport for our return scheduled flight to London. (B)

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	PRICE
Double Room	£2795
Double Room for sole occupancy	£3295

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights accommodation at Hotel Moliceiro, Alveiro • Three nights accommodation at InterContinental Porto • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included lunches and dinners • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Guest Speaker • Tours as described with local guide • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

NB: Some of the excursions will include extended periods of walking including steps and over uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

HOTEL MOLICEIRO

Conveniently located in the heart of Alveiro, Hotel Moliceiro overlooks the Central Canal of the Ria de Aveiro and is just a short walk away from the many bars, restaurants and cafes of the city centre. The hotel's 49 comfortable rooms are decorated in a mix of modern and classical styles with all the modern conveniences including complimentary Wi-Fi, tea and coffee making facilities, television and safe. The Moliceiro Bar serves a buffet breakfast, prepared with seasonal ingredients, and in the evening is an elegant place to enjoy a cocktail and relax after a day of exploring.



Standard Room



Buffet breakfast



Lobby



Lounge



Bar

INTERCONTINENTAL PORTO – PALACIO DAS CARDOSAS

Formerly the Palacio das Cardosas, this luxury hotel exudes character and occupies an enviable location on the Avenida dos Aliados in the heart of Porto. The spacious rooms feature simple yet elegant décor boasting high ceilings and marble bathrooms with a separate bathtub and walk-in shower. In-room facilities include air-conditioning, complimentary Wi-Fi and tea and coffee making facilities. The Astoria Restaurant serves traditional Mediterranean and Portuguese cuisine whilst the elegant Bar das Cardosas is the perfect place to relax and enjoy a cocktail or glass of port wine. The hotel also features an onsite Wellness and Fitness Centre.



Double Room



Bar Lounge



Lobby



Restaurant



Double Room

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Pink camellias.