

PTG 25th Anniversary Rail Tour

5 Days | 15 to 19 March, 2024

7 Days | 14 to 20 March, 2024

PTG ran our very first tour, in Portugal, in January 1999. Following the notable renaissance in Portugal's railways over the last few years, we invite you to join us on a very special tour to celebrate 25 wonderful years of PTG Tours. Hopefully, as many people who were on that first tour as possible will be able to come but everyone is invited. We will also have an anniversary dinner on the first evening where we will remember those who are no longer with us, especially Graham Garnell.

Since our last tour, further class 2600 electric locomotives have returned to passenger service after a decade in storage, and several class 1400s, including those once destined for Argentina, have also been resurrected for work on the Douro Line. Add to that the long-stored 1940s-built Schindler carriages being put back into service, including three that were taken back from the National Railway Museum and the metre-gauge historic train being returned to service on the Vouga Line with diesel loco 9004 and steam loco E214. Two class 1551 locos, 1554 and 1557, have also been put back into service for C.P. to haul the emergency rescue train when needed. The line between Covilhã and Guarda, closed in 2009, has also reopened, completely modernised and electrified with a new section of track, the Guarda avoiding line (or Beiras Variante), allowing direct access from Vilar Formoso to the Beira Baixa Line.

Our main line charter train will consist of restored Sorefame carriages and be top-and-tailed with 1400s and 1551s. We have a ratio of at least two seats per passenger so plenty of room to stretch out and everyone gets a window seat.

Day 1 Thursday 14 March, 2024

Flights from several UK airports directly to Porto; Gatwick (09:40, 10:15, 13:40), Stansted (08:15, 13:10, 18:35), Luton (07:10), Bristol (10:15). There are also direct flights from Manchester (09:45, 17:10) and Edinburgh (13:50) to Lisbon for the train up to Porto. It is also possible to travel overland, by rail, from London St Pancras with a night in Hendaye and a night in Vigo.

There is so much to see in Porto and the wonderful Douro Valley railway to travel on that we suggest you fly out today. *You can fly out tomorrow if you prefer.* On arrival we transfer to the city centre by metro; which for much of the way has reused the track bed of the Porto metre gauge railway. You can still see a few of the old stations. Overnight in Porto.

Day 2 Friday 15 March (B)

Today is a free day for you to explore Porto's modern metro, or the historic trams. Alternatively, you might want to travel along the stunning Douro line, where most inter-regional trains are formed of 1400 + Schindlers. Paul will be here today to take the group who want to travel on the Douro Line, for a return trip along the length of the line. If enough people are interested we will ask CP to reserve a first class carriage for our group. Overnight in Porto. 25th anniversary dinner (pre-book this and pay on the day).

You can fly out to Porto today if you prefer with direct flights from Gatwick (09:40, 10:45, 14:20, 21:40), Stansted (10:45, 13:30, 16:45).

Day 3 Saturday 16 March (B,D)

After breakfast we join our special train consisting of reinstated Sorefame coaches along with either one class 1400 diesel loco and 1557, and head south to Entroncamento where we swap the 1400 for 1554, meaning the train will be top-and-tail 1551s – a consist not seen for many years. In the event of one of the 1551s not being

available, it will be substituted by a 1400. We continue our journey on the Beira Baixa Line all the way to Vilar Formoso, hauled by 1554 with 1557 at the rear, breaking at Castelo Branco for lunch, later traversing the new Guarda avoiding line and then to Vilar Formoso. From here 1557 hauls us back to Guarda where once again 1554 takes over as we head south to Covilhã, where we spend the night. For those staying in the TRYP Dona Maria, dinner is included.

Day 4 Sunday 17 March (B)

Heading south from Covilhã with 1554 leading, we head for Entroncamento to swap 1554 back for the 1400. After time for lunch, with 1557 leading we head north out of Entroncamento as far as Alfarelos, where our 1400 takes over to take us down the line all the way to Figueira da Foz. After a quick turnaround, 1557 takes us out of Figueira da Foz and at Bife de Lares, we turn south as far as Amieira. Once again our 1400 takes over as we traverse the third side of the triangle on our journey back to Porto. At Campanhã, 1557 takes over for the short ride down the branch to São Bento, a rare visit by the class to this station. Overnight in Porto.

Day 5 Monday 18 March (B)

We begin this morning at Campanhã, with another two 1400s top-and-tail (if there is a shortage of 1400s, one of them may be substituted by a 2600). As we pass through Campanhã, we will use the rare tunnel line towards Contumil where we stop for a depot visit*. We then continue westwards on the freight only line to Leixões, where our train reverses and completes the second side of the triangle towards Guifões where we have another depot visit*. We continue to Ermesinde where we stop for lunch. Look out for the plinthed metre gauge steam loco outside the station, and for loco-hauled passenger and freight trains passing through the station. The final leg of our journey takes us to Braga and a rare visit there by 1400s (and even a 2600). After a short time in Braga, we return to Porto Campanhã.

Day 6 Tuesday 19 March (B)

Return to Porto Airport on the metro for your flights home. Flights from Porto to Gatwick (18:40), Stansted (07:30, 12:30, 16:55), Luton (10:00), Bristol (12:50), Birmingham (14:40). Or stay on for our visit to Entroncamento and Lisbon.

ENTRONCAMENTO ADD-ON

Day 7 Tuesday 19 March (B)

Meet at Sao Bento station for local train to Campanha station where we take our loco hauled inter-city train south to Entroncamento where we alight for a depot visit*. We will be transfer from the station to the depot and works by a vintage DMU which is used as a staff train. So a rare vehicle and a bit of rare track. After the visit we have time in Entroncamento to visit the training school (some plinthed steam locos) and the National Railway Museum. Also time for some lunch. Mid-afternoon we take another IC service south the Lisbon for our overnight stay.

Fly into Lisbon, where you will be met by David. Transfer to your hotel near Oriente station by metro. Overnight in Lisbon.

Day 8 Wednesday 20 March (B)

Metro to the airport for return flights to the UK from Lisbon. The airport is very close to the city centre. Or stay on in Lisbon, there is lots to see including taking the train out to the old royal town of Sintra to see the fabulous palaces and castle.

Direct flights: to Heathrow (10:45, 12:55, 14:40, 15:45, 18:45), Gatwick (07:10, 13:05, 15:25), Stansted (11:55, 18:45), Luton (10:55, 18:30), Bristol (14:00), Birmingham (06:15), Manchester (07:35).

** Depot Visits: At the time of going to print, we are still awaiting confirmation. If approved, there will be a maximum number of participants for each depot visit, with places allocated in advance by the PTG office.*

Holiday Prices (per person)

- Flights from £170 - £300 (Stansted being cheapest)
- Special train (3 days): approx. £500-£750**
- Hotels in double/twin (including dinner in Covilha): £270 (4 nights), £330 (5 nights), £390 (including Lisbon)

*** the price will be set once we know how many people are travelling. For 50 it will be approximately £750 but will come down a lot if we get 100 people.*

Options

- Single room Supplement: £198 (4 nights), £248 (5 nights), £310 (including Lisbon)
- 25th Anniversary Dinner: TBC and will be pay on the day
- Douro IR day with Paul: £27 rail fare
- Entroncamento day: £50 including first class travel, £15 if your own travel

Deposit

- Travelling by air: £500
- Own travel: £300

Price includes

- All travel and excursions as outlined in the itinerary
- En-suite accommodation
- Meals as shown in the itinerary; B = Breakfast, D = Dinner
- Services of our tour manager. Holiday is fully escorted.

Flights

- Outward flights to Porto or Lisbon from several UK airports
- Return flights from Porto to several UK airports

Hotels

Lisbon: 24th January (Entroncamento group only)

Porto: 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th January

Covilhã: 27th January