

## **A STUNNING AND UNIQUE LANDSCAPE**

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Douro region, from the direction of Northern business, CGD

## **“A STUNNING AND UNIQUE LANDSCAPE”**

**This might well be a synthetic formula to describe a region which possesses one of the world’s most fantastic landscape heritages: the region of Douro.**

‘Douro is trendy’ and, and beyond the growth of tourist interest, the number of people looking for Douro is quite important either to start anew, or to come back to the land.

As a matter of fact, in Douro, the main economic activities gravitates around its main primordial resource: earth. Not only does it feed the primary sector but also, for instance, the touristic potential. The revival of “quintas”, ancestral homes, is each time more frequent. Some people are re-introducing wines produced thanks to a know-how and flavours belonging to the first demarcated area in the world.

In addition to famous port wine, the region has begun to take a stand thanks to its table wines and, even to its sparkling wines: some producers have been selling on an international scale, such as Mateus and VINOQUEL. These examples further illustrate to what extent Douro has caught new generations’ eye.

Then one cannot forget the new types of accommodations. The offer is quite varied and to everyone’s taste: charming hotels; renewed noble houses and ‘quintas’; small lots with bungalows; new spaces centred on oenotourism such as, for instance, Casa Agrícola de Cever, in Santa Marta. More often than not, the actual landowner did follow the same steps: he/she visited Douro quite recently, fell under its spell and moved in. That’s what Ms. Felismina Henriques did as she recovered a family house located in Foz Côa, and reopened the doors to visitors as ‘Quinta Chão Ordem’. As “small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) 2013” this is one new success story to be credited to those who are, actually, looking for their future by coming back to the past, to their ancestors’ land, as was also the case of the owner of Visconde da Varzea Hotel – a magnificent 18<sup>th</sup> century palace –, Ms. Maria Manuel Cyrne, who formerly dwelled in Lisbon.

Gastronomic tourism is one of the great assets of this region, where diverse produces and highly praised dishes abound...: blood sausages and many other meat products stuffed with diverse white meat; young goat; ‘bolas’ made in Lamego; covered almonds from Moncorvo, amidst many more.

In general, these produces come from ancestral activities, at the basis of the regional economy, subjected to a revitalisation program by younger generations who try their best to get around difficulties in this region. For instance one must stress that the sector of blood sausages is well represented in this region, as for instance with “Fumeiros do Douro”, in Armamar and “Fumeiros Porfirios” in Lamego, both firms being run by second generation managers.

In what concerns the art of culinary, there are all kinds of establishments from the more traditional ones to those offering “gourmet cuisine”, using endogenous products. In the first case, one may refer to the “Tasquinha” run by Ms. Filomena who, after having lived several years in Switzerland, came back to her country in order to carry on with her parents’ business. Next to the tower of Ucanha, in Tarouca, one feasted on traditional meals such as corn cobs in an iron pot and the “marrãs.”<sup>1</sup> One must also mention the “Lagar”,<sup>2</sup> in Moncorvo, whose premises are installed in a former olive oil storehouse, run by two young women who, even if non-natives of the area, decided to take up the torch and go on with their parents’ business.

In Douro, “gourmet” is equated with *Chef* Rui Paula. As a Douro’s native son his most exquisite delicacies are concocted with home produces. Furthermore, not only does this space satisfy one’s appetite but it also is a comfort for the soul: the view over the Douro captures its “incommensurable beauty”, to quote Torga.

But do not be fooled if you think that Douro has no industry. One finds for instance the head office of Solicel, one of the European model companies in the extraction of schist, an iconic product of the region, which at the present time, is not only used to delimit the vineyards as long ago, but has also multiple usages, hence being exported.

In consequence, there are plenty of arguments to explain this new *Douromania*: a return to the sources, in a country rife with abundant natural resources. There, one can find a healthy ambiance, a magnificent landscape, where a wide array of business opportunities is outlined.

Thus one envisages a new life for Douro: first come people, then ideas follow, businesses flourish and employment ensues and, last but not least, economic growth occurs.

In this agricultural country people are determined to return to their roots by reinventing themselves, searching for a sustainable solution under such adverse circumstances and Douro is quite proud to be a part of this ongoing revolution.

It seems as though ... “Douro is trendy”.

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1 T.N.: ‘ Marrã ’ : pork . The word bears another meaning: filthy.

2 T.N. : ‘lagar’ means storehouse/factory for olive oil