

## Portugal Rowing Tour – Handy Hints

### Getting around

Oporto airport is on the metro line E (violet) which goes to the city centre and all the way to Campanha railway station. Tickets are cheap (though the ticket machines are not easy to work out). BUT BE WARY OF PICKPOCKETS AT THE METRO STATION.

You may prefer to get a taxi – they can be booked via booking.com and cost about EUR20.

The train to Pinhao on Friday morning leaves at 9.25 from Campanha station, usually from platform 1. It's best to buy tickets in advance on [this site](#): You will need to print your ticket to show to the conductor. There is a discount for seniors over the age of 58.

The hotel where we are staying on the last 2 nights (the Eurostars Porto Douro) is a long way from a metro station and Campanha, so is not ideal for your first night.

Oporto is very hilly, and there are steps (a lot of steps) from the town centre down to the river bank. It may not look far on a map, but will take some time to get around.

The Portuguese team will meet you at Pinhao station and take you to the picnic/boating site. They have 3 minibuses, which also need to take all the luggage, so don't bring huge suitcases! The minibuses will take you to and from the hotels each night.

### Paying for things

Credit cards are accepted everywhere but contactless does not work. The POS machines appear to take contactless but the payment will always be rejected – presumably due to some strange quirk of the Portuguese banking system. You will need a physical card to poke in the slot, and it's a good idea to have some cash as well.

You won't need much money on the tour, as all the meals (including wine and beer with dinner) are included.

### The rowing

The Portuguese team will launch and recover the boats at every stop, as they consider this safer than leaving them to people who are unfamiliar with them. They will also carry out minor repairs, so if you have a problem, let them know straight away.

They have one safety boat. Please try to keep all the rowing boats together so the driver can stay in touch with you all. Follow his advice on which side of the river to row on and when to enter the locks.

The locks are booked for a specific time. If you arrive late, you will not be able to go through! The team have allowed plenty of time for you to get there, but don't dawdle! In fact, you will probably arrive early and will have to wait.

## **Locks**

You will be issued with a lifejacket, which you must wear in the locks.

There are yellow buoys at the side of the locks, which move up and down with the water. The boats must be attached to these buoys.

Each boat will have a boat hook and a rope. Once you are in the lock, the cox should use the boat hook to position the boat next to a yellow buoy, and another crew member (usually stroke or 3) must loop the rope over the buoy.

DO NOT pull the boat too close to the wall of the lock – keep the rope slack and use the boat hook to keep the boat straight and away from the wall.

All crew members must keep their blades flat on the water – the ones away from the wall must be at right angles to the boat and the ones next to the wall swung parallel to the boat but kept under control. BE VERY VIGILANT that the blades and riggers do not catch on any projections.

You will not feel any turbulence in the lock, but on exiting (particularly locks 1 and 2) there will be a strong sideways current. KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON!! Allow plenty of space between each boat and continue rowing until you are well past the rough water.

## **What to bring**

- Water shoes (the boats land on beaches)
- Dry bag
- Trainers to wear in the boat (the boats have straps, not shoes)
- Gloves (if you normally wear them)
- Seat pad
- Water bottle
- Sun screen
- Hat
- Micropore and blister cream
- Waterproof jacket (the weather in Portugal doesn't look much better than here!)

## **Final thoughts**

The Portuguese work their socks off to give us a relaxing and fun tour. It would be nice to take them some small gifts – club T-shirts, caps, sweets etc.