



Portugal

Madeira & Porto

December 12, 2022 -> January 1, 2023

Thursday 12/22/22, Friday 12/23/22



Delays from the start, a nice plane, and a tired family.

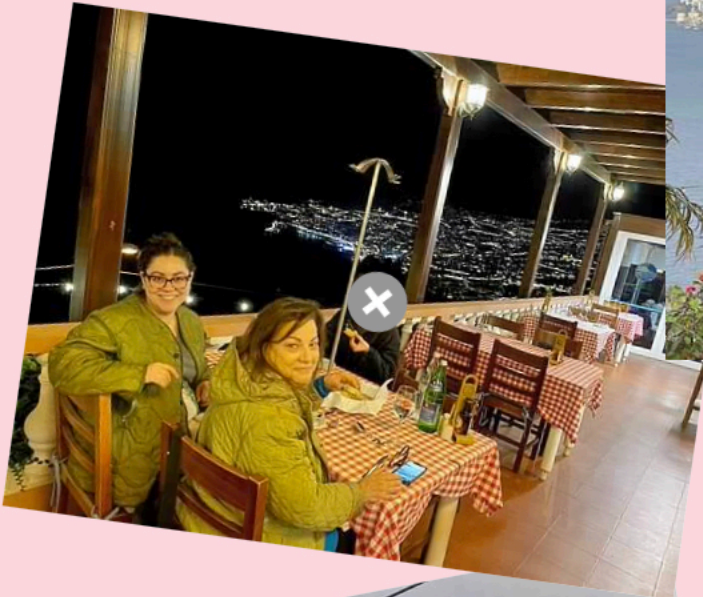
We started off with an Uber that was supposed to pick us up at 8 PM for a midnight flight, we got a text saying the car would be about 20 minutes early. Sitting by the front door already to go it arrived at 8:05 PM. Our travel adventure finally started. A few minutes into the drive one of the family members cried out oh s*#t, I left my phone at home! We turned around they got their phone and we restarted. The name of the family member is not being disclosed to protect the not so innocent.

Arriving at Newark airport, we did the usual walking, walking, walking to the gates and going through security. Unfortunately The usual TSA pre-check wasn't honored on Portugal Airlines (TAP), but at least I did not have to take off my shoes.

Joan and Steve got a bit of interrupted sleep, while Zoe and Claire did not sleep at all. Zoe was especially miserable as she was just getting over the flu.

We arrived in Lisbon for a layover, where another unnamed family member confidently asserted that we had to go from our current terminal number 1 to terminal 2. We realized that was wrong, so we had to travel back to Terminal 1, go through security again. After stopping for a snack and coffee, and a lot more walking, we waited at the gate for a few hours before leaving on the flight to Madeira.





Saturday, 12/24/22, Christmas Eve

Our hotel was on a cliff overlooking the ocean about 10 minutes outside of downtown Funchal. We started off taking a Bolt (what they use in Madera instead of Uber) to downtown where we took a funicular to the top of the hill. We went up with a British couple who has been living in Spain for about 20 years.

We visited the Monte Palace Museum with African art, another museum with a mineral collection, and walked the gardens.

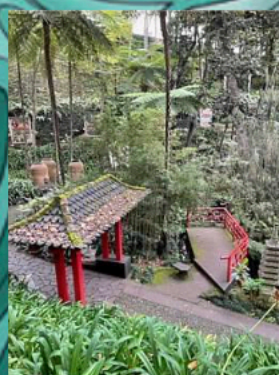


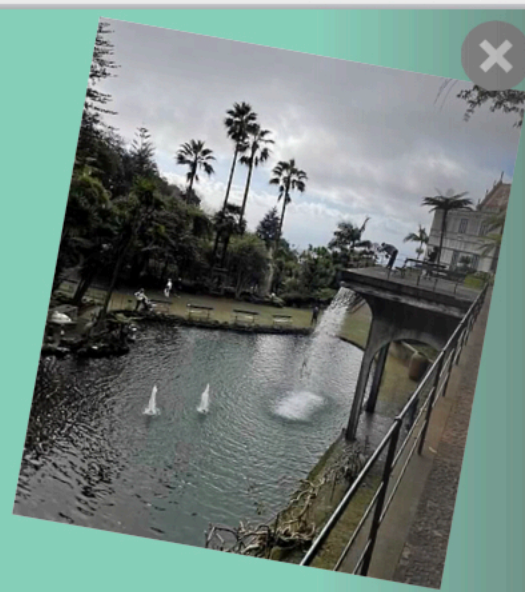
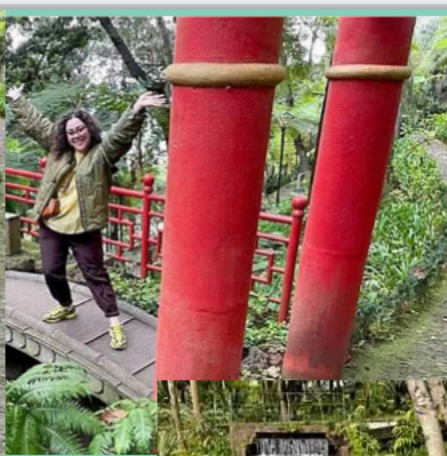


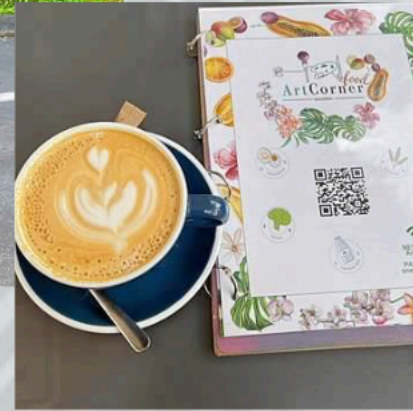
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To return downhill we did the touristy, but fun, toboggans, wicker sleds that slid down the smooth road maneuvered by two men on the back. A taxi took us the rest of the way down to downtown Funchal, where we walked around the city with multiple shops and then listened to a very good band playing Portuguese Christmas music.

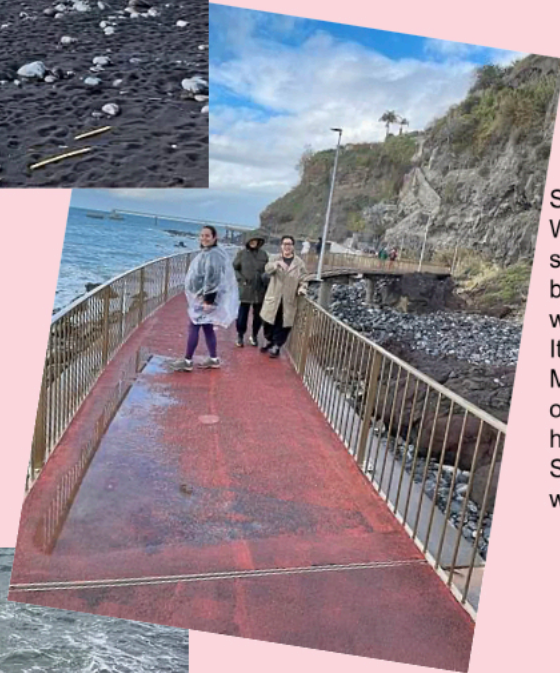
Some more walking and then dinner at Cidade Velha restaurant, which had great food and very friendly staff with a sense of humor. had Octopus.







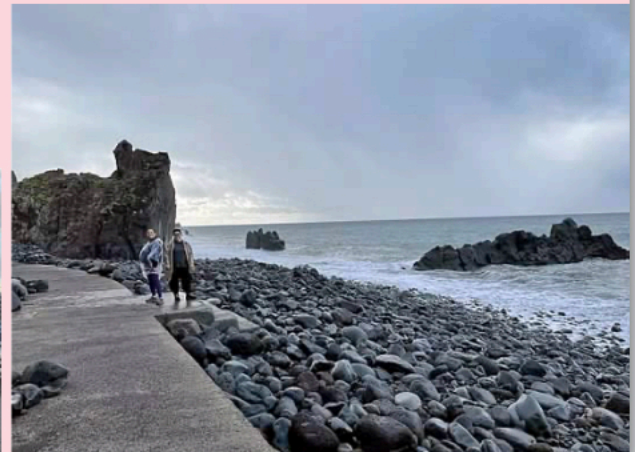




Sunday, 12/25/22, Xmas

With the forecast of rain, which could mean scattered showers or a full downpour, along with almost everything being closed for Christmas, we decided to take a short walk along the coast line which we were driven to by taxi. It was a nice 25 minute walk along the ocean (Passeio Maritimo) ending up in a town that Winston Churchill often vacationed at, Camara Lobos. Then back to the hotel to nap and relax for a while.

Steve hung out in the unused dining Area on the top floor where he met Dermot and Rosheena, an Irish couple.





Terraced Farming



Made from recycled soda cans





Paróquia
de
Câmara de Lobos
Com o orago de São Sebastião
Criada em 1430

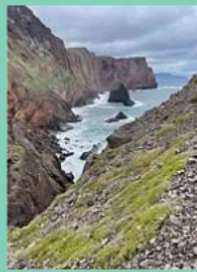


inside the church



Back at the Ocean
Gardens Hotel,
Funchal





Monday, 12/26/22

After planning for an early start on the day, a late start occurred. We went into town with plans to go to the market, then a well-known cookie store, an interesting bookstore, and lunch. Because the day after Christmas is still a holiday in Madera none of these were open. We did a lot of walking around town with almost everything closed and eventually found a very nice place to eat, the brunch club.

After brunch we took a taxi to the eastern most part of Madeira, a peninsula sticking out into the ocean. Rain has been predicted on and off throughout the day but good fortune was with us and it basically did not rain at all. We took a substantial hike up and down steps and trails which were fairly slippery with mud, and saw some beautiful views of rocks in the ocean and hills. Miradouros da Ponta da Sao Vicente.

We returned with the taxi to the hotel rested up for a while, then the bus into Funchal again where we had a nice Indian dinner.



Afternoon hike at Miradouros da Ponta de São Vicente e do Rosto - Praia da Baía D'Abra

Explosive 2.1-mile loop trail near Concha, Madeira. Generally considered an easy route, it takes an average of 1:36 min to complete. This trail is:

Add a trainee			
Length	Difficulty	Estimated Time	Estimated Cost
1.8 mi	488%	1:02:00	
2.1 mi	825%	1:33:36	

Origin: 2.1 mi | Elevation gain: 399 ft | Route type: Loop

Viewing: Details | Likes | Photos







Tuesday, 12/27/22

We did an all day jeep tour with Safari Madeira., Though the closest thing to safari animals were some cows and bulls grazing. Two of the bulls only had one horn, so I guess technically they were unicorns.

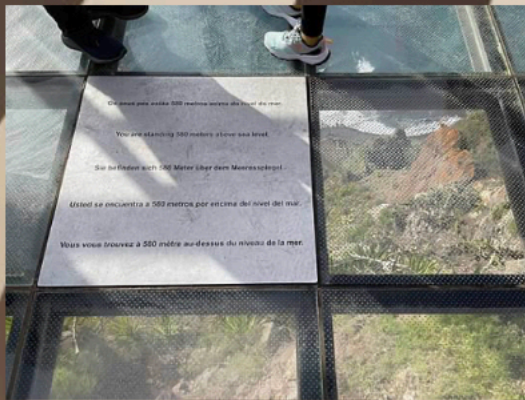
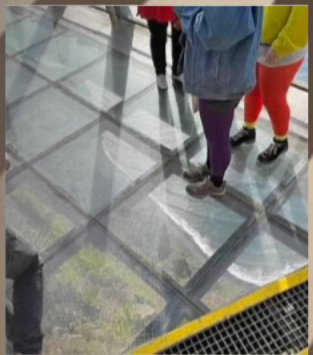
We saw several beach and fishing towns, And a lookout where you could walk onto a glass floor with a very large drop below you. We went through an almost 2 mile long tunnel through the center of the island to go up north, then went off road through narrow roads up to a mountain with great views. Then back to our hotel for dinner and an early bedtime for an early flight the next day.



More "Winston" at Camara Lobos again.



Close up of another mural in Camera Cabos using recycles metal











Wednesday, 12/28/23
A 6:25 AM pick up at the hotel to go to the airport for a flight which was delayed anyway, giving time to catch up with writing the diary notes!
We arrived at the hotel, Pestana Porto - A Brasileira, a very nice, classy hotel in downtown Porto. Luckily the rooms were ready early. We dropped off our luggage and basically spent the day wandering around the downtown area, which included a church, the downtown train station with tile murals, and an old bookstore, which was such a tourist location, that they charged five euros to enter it!





There were a lot of hills in Porto...and Medeira too!





Thursday, 12/29/22

We had a great breakfast buffet at the hotel and then a walking tour for about three hours with Fiel from Porto Walkers. He was great: animated, knowledgeable, and friendly with a sense of humor. Fiel and Steve got friendly with Steve with his talkative and enthusiastic nature, so there was a nice warm hug goodbye.

PortoWalkers is free but you tip the guide whatever you want at the end. There were about 15 people on the tour. It was raining the whole time, but apparently that is the norm for Porto this time of year. "It rains more in Porto than in London". After the walking tour we took the Funicular from the old district, Rebeira, up the hill to downtown (Yes, Downtown is uphill). We went to a restaurant (45 minute wait) to have a local favorite, a Francesinhas sandwich "An adventure in eating!": House Bread, Roasted Pork, Egg, Mortadella, "Chourição", Red Sausage, Fresh Sausage, Ham, Gouda Cheese and Special Sauce. Quite large, you need to get hungry before getting one. Steve and Zoe split it.

We walked some more in the rain, the ladies shopped, including the indoor market with an interesting assortment of produce, fish, chocolate and more. We then took an Uber to what we thought was our reservation for dinner and Fado music, but apparently there was a mixup, and the reservation wasn't for that night. We went back to the hotel .





Funicular in the rain



BURGUER	
Novilho Bread and Veal Burger	5,9 €
Houseburger de Novilho Bread, Cheese and Veal Cheeseburger	6,9 €
Burguer Chef Guedes Novilho, Queijo Brie, Cebola Caramelizada em Vinho do Porto e Rúcula Bread, Veal Burger, Brie Cheese, Caramelized Onion in Port Wine and Arugula	8,9 €
FRANCESINHAS	
Guedes*	12,9 €
Pão de Casa, Pernal, Ovo, Mortadela, Chouriço, Linguça, Salsicha Fresca, Fiambre, Queijo Gouda e Molho Francesinha House Bread, Roasted Pork, Egg, Mortadella, "Chouriço", Red Sausage, Fresh Sausage, Ham, Gouda Cheese and Special Sauce	12,9 €
Tradicional	
Pão de Forma, Bife de Novilha, Mortadela, Chouriço, Linguça, Salsicha Fresca, Fiambre, Queijo Gouda e Molho Francesinha Loaf Bread, Tenderloin Steak, Mortadella, "Chouriço", Red Sausage, Fresh Sausage, Ham, Gouda Cheese and Special Sauce	
<small>* Sugestão da Casa House Suggestion</small>	
<small>I.V.A. incluído a taxa vigente / IVA included at the prevailing legal rate</small>	
<small>Os preços indicados são em euros em vigor desde 19/12/22 / The above prices are expressed in euros valid from 19/12/22</small>	

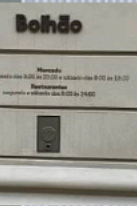


Many sidewalks in Porto are tiled...and therefore slippery in the (frequent) rain!





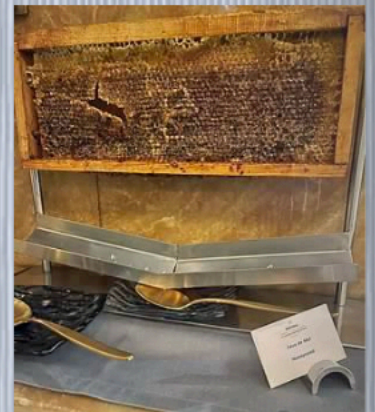
Downtown Market



Ham. Pig's leg.



Specialty canned sardines



Honey right off the hive

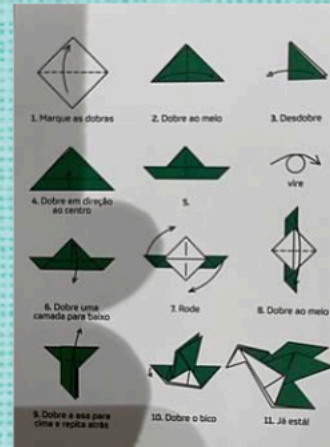
Friday, December 30

Breakfast again at the hotel and then picked up for a minivan tour of the Douro Valley.

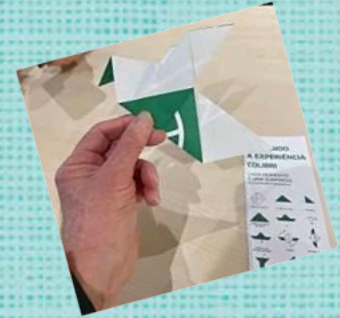
The city of Porto is basically near the mouth of the Douro river which empties into the Atlantic. The Douro River Valley has sloping hills on either side and many vineyards which are usually terraced with step like rows of grapevines. Port wine is made here. They take the grapes, and only partially ferment them, so a lot of the sugar has not yet turned into alcohol, making it very sweet. But then they add wine spirits to increase the alcohol content to around 20%.

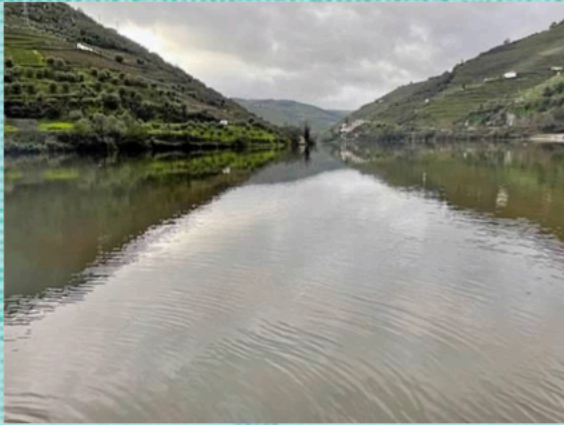
Our daylong tour was with Oporto tours, led by our Driver and tour guide Sophia, who was lovely. We saw beautiful countryside, took a one hour boat ride on the river, stopped for two wine tastings and a nice lunch.

Steve went back to the hotel, the girls did some more shopping.



Making an origami birds. Instructions from a truck stop.

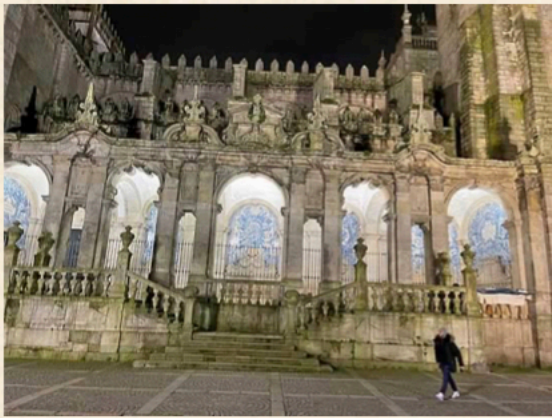










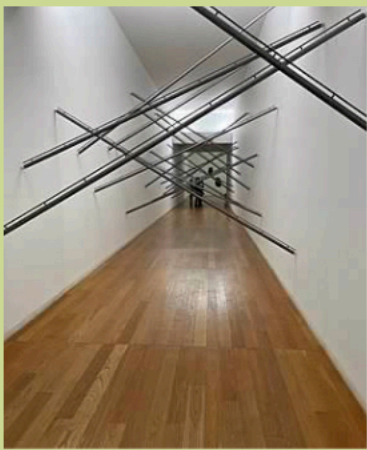


Friday evening we went back to Casa da Mariquinhas for dinner with Fado music. The waiter/host was nice to us because of the mixup the previous night (though it was probably Steve's fault) and gave us the best table in the small restaurant, about 6 feet in front of the performers. He also explained a bit about Fado music. It is very emotional, with a poem sung with music using one of several riffs, somewhat improvisational. The food was great and the music was enjoyable and interesting. Before the show, Steve got into a conversation with one of the musicians who explained about the Portuguese guitar. It is a 12 string instrument, but shaped a bit differently with three of the string pairs an octave apart, like a 12 string guitar, but the higher strings were paired strings of the same notes just to give more body. It paid off being friendly. Getting a great table, and getting an education about the music!

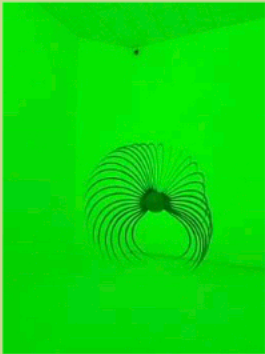
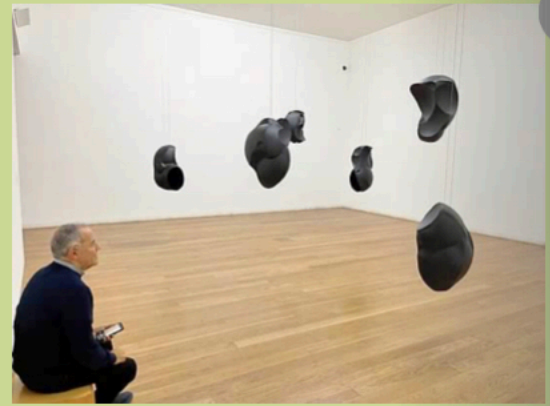


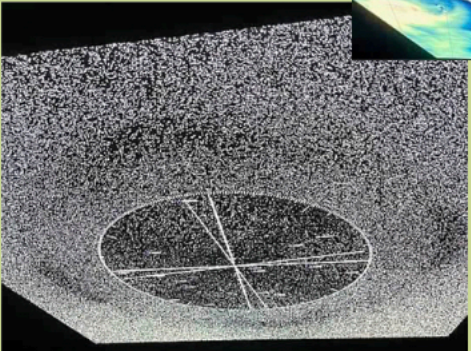
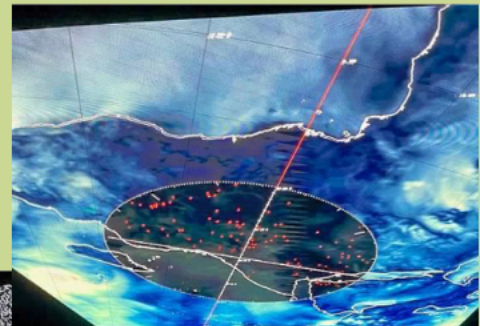


Walking home after
the Fado dinner.



Saturday, 12/31/22, New Years Eve
We went to the Contemporary Art Museum, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves. Our Uber driver had a second job/hobby of trading American items on eBay, including old comic books, trading cards, and other similar items. There were exhibits of Cindy Sherman, Miro, and others, as well as a video type show, and gardens. The ladies went for lunch and shopping and Steve walked to the upper level of the Don Luis I bridge with great views. We had a very nice dinner at a Nepali restaurant, Thamel. New Years Eve festivities in town like fireworks and a concert were canceled because of severe rain prediction. We all ended up hanging out in our rooms: Joan and Steve watched CNN New Years Eve show, and Claire and Zoe watched Doctor Who.

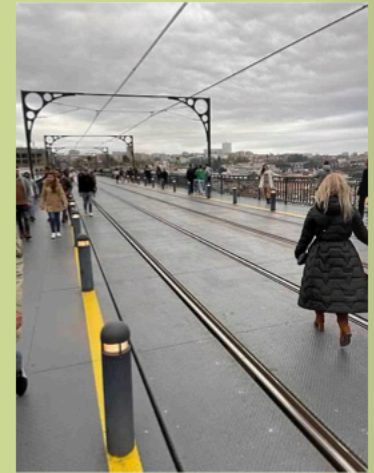




Video presentation
project3ed on the ceiling
and reflects on the floor

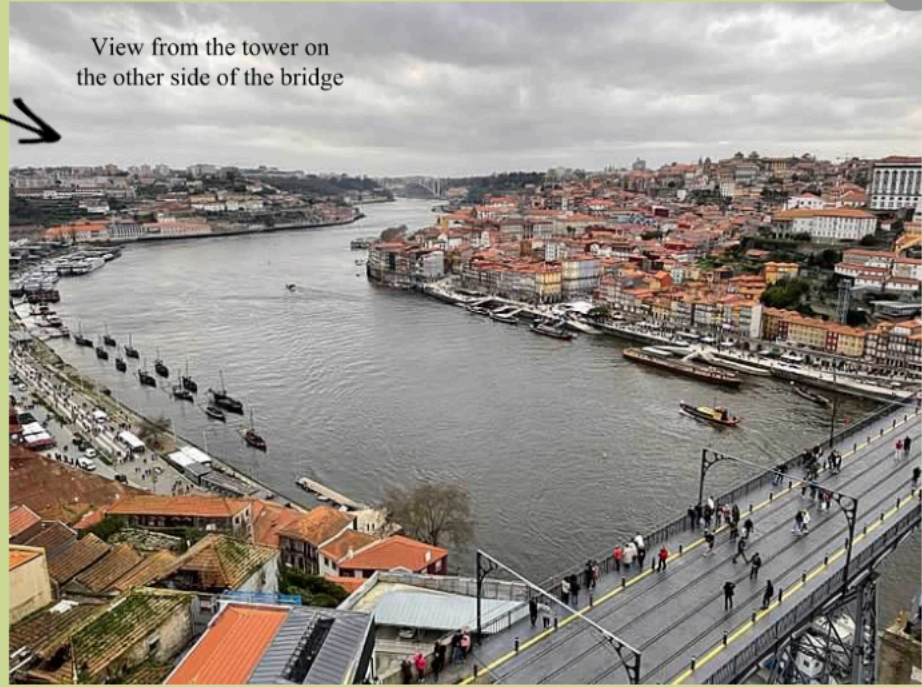


The Porto side of the Don Luis I Bridge. This bridge is at the upper level of Porto, and there is a lower level as well, since the city is on such a steep hill.



Harmonica player near the bridge





View from the tower on
the other side of the bridge



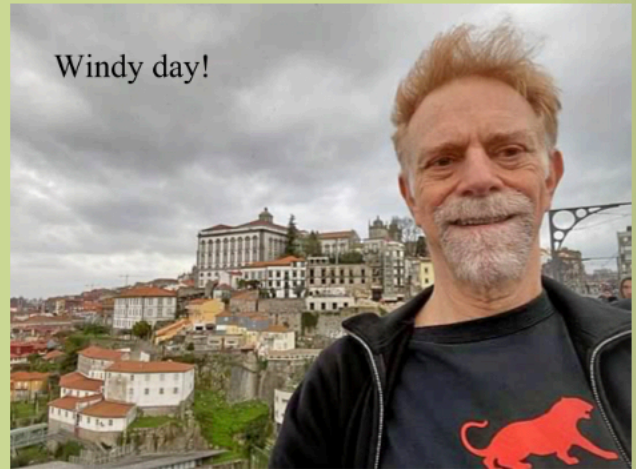
Stopping for roasted chestnuts
on the other side of the bridge
(the city of Gaia)



Park and trolley tracks (they go
over the bridge) in Gaia.



Upper and Lower levels of the bridge



Sunday, 1/1/22. The End of the trip, and the start of a New Year

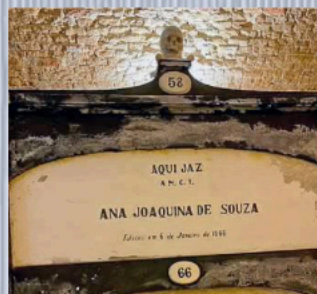
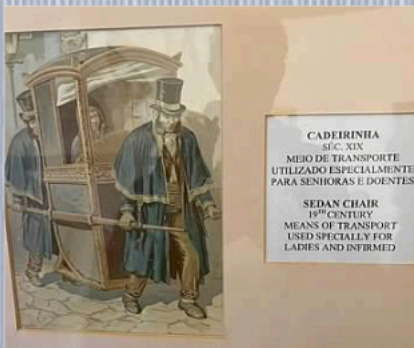
We went to the church of Saint Francis and saw the church and the museum and the Catacombs. When we left, it was pouring rain and we all got soaked, even with rain coats and umbrellas. Back at the hotel, the staff put Claire's and Zoe's shoes in the dryer and they used a hair dryer to dry off their pants. Steve had to deal with his soaking wet jeans though. Car service picked us up at 4:00. Then back to home sweet home.



A lot of churches in Portugal...



...and a lot of tile...



...and a lot of rain!



TIDBITS

The area on the Duoro River used to be one village or city, but hundreds of years ago the south side of it was given to a bishop, but the north side was not so they became two separate cities the bigger one, Puerto, is the second biggest city in Portugal. The northern one, Gaia, on the other side of the Don Luis I bridge, is much smaller. The name Portugal came from those two cities: Porto-Gaia.

In Madeira there had been a law that all the roofs of the houses had to be terra-cotta and the walls had to be white. This was relaxed a few years ago but makes the landscape interesting with white and orange houses speckled over the mountain side.

Even though Portugal is 90% Roman Catholic, they have some very liberal policies. They have drug injection safe houses, gay marriage was nationally recognized many years ago, and they will likely approve legal euthanasia soon.



