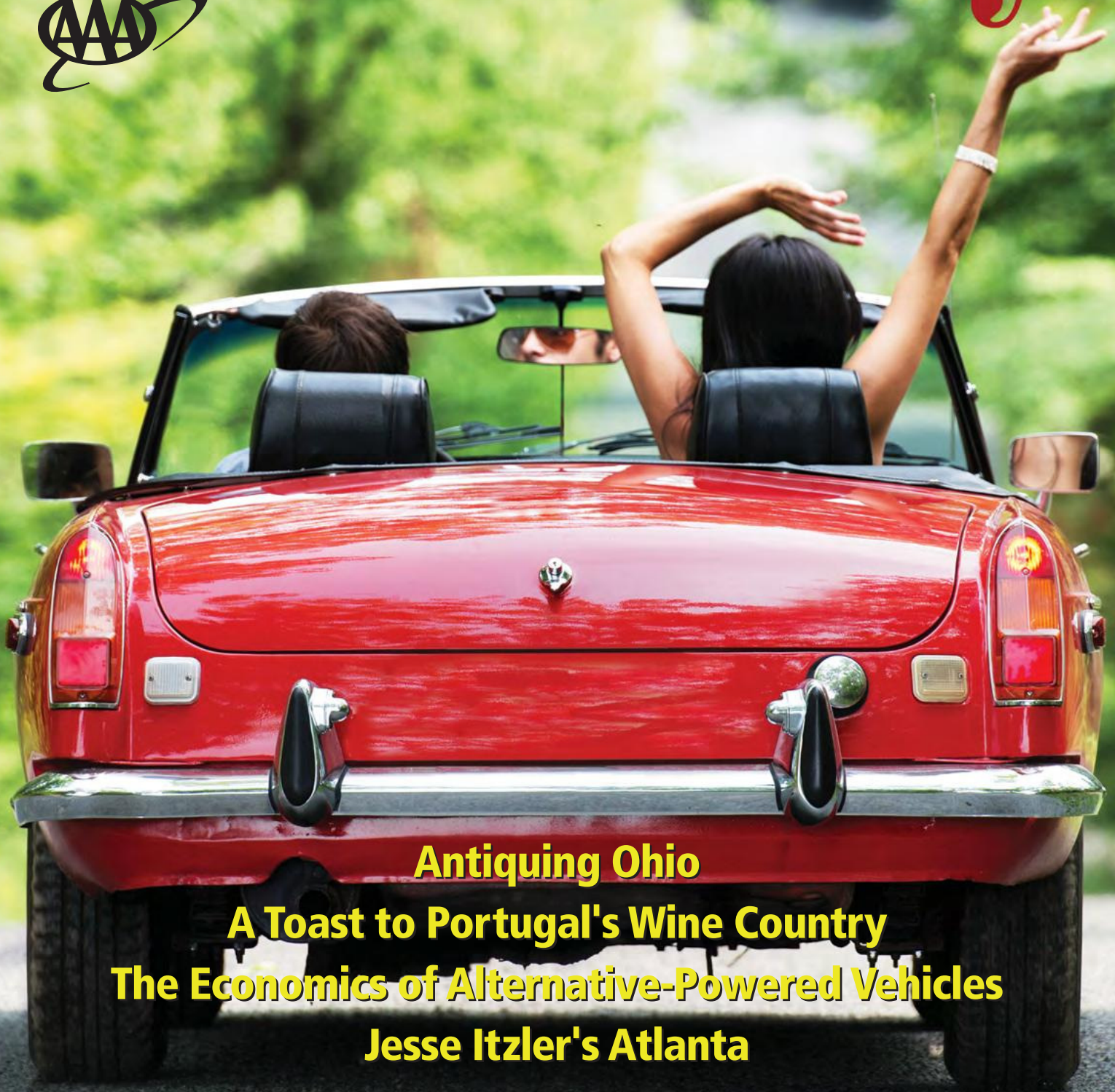


MAY 2018

# Home & Away



**Antiquing Ohio**

**A Toast to Portugal's Wine Country**

**The Economics of Alternative-Powered Vehicles**

**Jesse Itzler's Atlanta**



# had hit the travel jackpot.

Winding down switchback turns on a towering mountain stacked with narrowly spaced wine terraces as far as the eye could see struck me speechless. Program Director Patricia Queirós' words drifted back to me: "We don't have men, we have giants." While we rode down in comfort, Portuguese men toil these mountains on foot.

By Karen Eakins

My husband, Ken, and I were on Viking Cruise's Douro River tour in Portugal, packed with city scenes, ancient history and architecture, copious UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a winding river and incomparable wines—all anchored by a sleek Scandinavian riverboat and a stellar crew that "has service in its DNA," said Queirós. Oh, yeah, travelers on this cruise definitely cash in.

**City of the Seven Hills** One of the first things Portugal visitors learn—and it's usually repeated—is this *is not* Spain. This is a fiercely proud country with good reason. Established in 1143, Portugal was the launching point for a stunning number of the world's renowned explorers. Vasco de Gama, Ferdinand Magellan and Pedro Cabral all launched from here. Even Columbus came here first seeking patronage. Nowadays, explorers trek here.

We flew into Lisbon, the cruise's land-based starting point, a day early. Tivoli Avenida Liberdade Hotel, Viking's luxe accommodation choice, is located near the most popular areas—and while public transportation is plentiful, it's an easy walk to the riverfront, where ancient sailing vessels once docked with holds full of exotic goods.

Along the way, the distinctive black basalt/white limestone sidewalks wind by myriad shops, al fresco cafes, expansive Rossio Square and the Elevador de Santa Justa, a free-standing elevator designed by a Gustav Eiffel student that transports passengers between Baixa (Lower Town) and Bairro Alto (Upper Town).

Portugal's River of Gold offers an expedition filled with history and spirits, cityscapes and countryside.



The Talent of  
**DOING IT WELL**

GLOBAL  
EXPLORATIONS

We also paid 5 euros to access the top of the waterfront arch, Arco da Rua Augusta, where we surveyed such iconic city landmarks as the Romanesque, twin-towered Sé, Comércio Square and St. George's Castle, which lords over everything. A quick city bus ride took us to the National Tile Museum—Portugal is especially famous for its blue-and-white *azulejos*, which festoon buildings everywhere.

We met our Viking guides and traveling partners the following day for drive-bys or quick stops at such places as the UNESCO World Heritage Site Belém Tower, an early 1500s waterfront fortress, and the 1960 Monument to the Discoveries, fronted by Henry the Navigator, the visionary who didn't sail but set the country's exploratory pace. His personal motto—the Talent of Doing it Well—set the standard.

An extensive tour of the Maritime Museum, located in the Manueline-style Jerónimos Monastery, provided a fascinating exploration of the country's sailing history through paintings, models of famous sailing vessels, cartography, and historical artifacts such as helmets, navigational instruments and the wooden statue Archangel St. Raphael that accompanied de Gama to India.

A stroll through the Alfama, the city's oldest neighborhood, wound through cobbled corridors so narrow, neighbors could nearly shake hands across the

passageway. Here, knowledgeable local guides taught us about the different styles of fado, traditional operetta-style singing. A Taste of Lisbon optional tour that night gave us another well-informed guide, who taught us the city's traditions, customs and culinary tastes. Our stops at crowded, tiny taverns and well-loved family-run shops was a treat for the senses.

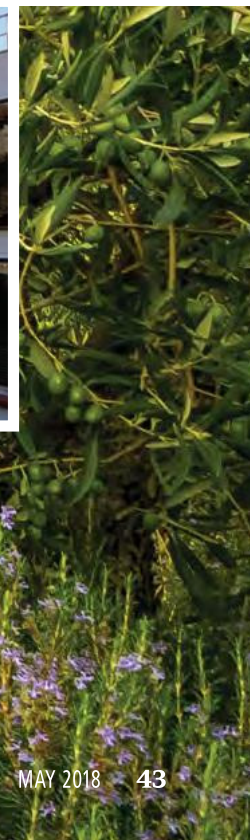
**Wine of Distinction** Ken and I opted for the coastal motorcoach route to Porto. Fatima—where the Virgin Mary appeared to three children in 1917—is a famous pilgrimage site and the route's first stop. The second stop, Batalha's Santa Maria da Vitória Monastery, where the country's most beloved, respected kings, queens and leaders—including Henry—are buried, was just as reverent. Another UNESCO WHS, it's graced with a facade considered to be the country's most beautiful.

Following a stop at Nazaré, a traditional fishing village and today, a surfer's favorite, we arrived in Porto at dusk. *Viking Osfrid* awaited us in Vila Nova de Gaia, where all the country's port wine was once required to be warehoused. It was the perfect vantage point to admire the *rabelo* boats (which until the 1960s transported grapes from the vineyards) and Porto's sparkling lights on the opposite bank.

Our group spent the next day touring Porto—another dizzying array of ancient buildings, winding streets, the hilltop basilica, the 20,000-tile-bedecked train station,



KAREN EAKINS: VIKING OSFRID





the climbable Torre dos Clérigos and a connection to former resident, author J.K. Rowling. Popular Rowling tourist sites are the Majestic Cafe—where she jotted *Harry Potter*'s first notes on paper napkins—and the Lello & Irmão Bookstore, whose double staircase served as inspiration. A Ferreira Wine Cellars tour caps the excursion and serves as the first official encounter with the country's most famous product: port wine.

**R**iding the River The Douro is narrow, shallow and winding, requiring daytime cruising. We cruisers relaxed and enjoyed gliding eastward through gorgeous UNESCO-designated scenery as well as presentations from our engaging program directors about the country's history, culture, language and unique wine.

Locals were invited aboard to showcase the country's cultivation of olive oil (samples included) and cork (with a jewelry-and-accessories pop-up shop); traditional dancing; and male university-student a cappella groups, aka tunas. Executive Chef Igor Pitonak taught how to create luscious *pastéis de nata* (egg custard tarts).

The voyage cruises along 135 miles of vineyards and back and includes shore-excursion travel by motorcoach to fascinating sites each day. Mateus Palace, the last Count of Vila Real's

18th-century home, is filled with authentic furniture and artifacts and viewed by guided tour, but the star here is the gardens out back.

The following day takes visitors across more terraced-vineyard mountains to rugged, isolated Castelo Rodrigo, a medieval outpost established to dissuade Spanish invaders. A traditional *quinta*, or wine estate, Quinta do Seixo, which produces Sandeman vintages, is visited as well.

A full day is spent in Salamanca, Spain, home to one of Europe's oldest universities. Following a group wine and tapas repast at the city market, Ken and I spent our free time exploring the New and Old cathedrals, walking the city's Roman aqueduct bridge, shopping the closet-size jewelry shops and taste-testing the city's decadent churros with chocolate.

Lamego is home to the 1791 Sanctuary of Our Lady of Remedies shrine and the Museu de Lamego, packed

with antiquities. The small shrine is famous for its double staircases graced with nine landings tiled in historical scenes—686 steps in all—used to reach it. Viking takes passengers up by motorcoach and, after exploring, those who wish can walk *down*. We still claimed bragging rights.

Favaios is a small town—only 1,500 residents—but its moscatel wine is some of the world's most award-winning. It's also UNESCO-designated for its Four Corners Bread, so a visit to one of the town's five bakers (who each produce 1,000 loaves per day) is a must-do. The Wine and Bread Museum was an educational stop before a wine dinner at fourth-generation-owned Quinta da Assendra. The enormity of tiny Favaios' artistry lingered as we wound our way down the Road to Douro, adding to the awe of this jackpot destination. **H&A**

**Karen Eakins** is editor-in-chief of *Home & Away*.

## Planning Your Trip

To learn more about Viking River Cruises' Portugal's River of Gold itinerary, or any other voyage, visit [viking.com](http://viking.com). To book your own Portuguese exploration and use AAA member benefits, visit your local AAA Travel agent or [AAA.com/travel](http://AAA.com/travel).