

Porto Walk

(2 1/2 hr total walk time)

(Italic added to Steves plan)

Upper Porto (30-75 min walk)

Walk hotel up Avenidas dos Aliadois Or **Taxi** to

Mercado do Bolhão

A Perola Do Bolhao

Rua da Fabrica

Praca Gulherme Gomes Fernandes

Praca de Gomes Teixeira

Lello Bookstore

Jardim da Cordoaria

Parque das Virtudes

Prace de Lisboa Park

Clerigos Church & Tower

Lower Porto (20 min walk)

Sao Bento Train Station

Rua das Flores

Misericordia Church & Museum

Henry the Navigator Square

The Riberia

Prace da Riberia

Porto Walk

UPPER PORTO

- 1 Avenida dos Aliados
- 2 Rua da Fábrica
- 3 Praça Guilherme Gomes Fernandes
- 4 Praça de Gomes Teixeira & Praça de Parada Leitao
- 5 Lello Bookstore
- 6 Praça de Lisboa Park
- 7 Clérigos Church & Tower

LOWER PORTO

- 8 São Bento Train Station
- 9 Rua das Flores
- 10 Misericórdia Church & Museum
- 11 Henry the Navigator Square
- 12 The Ribeira
- 13 Praça da Ribeira

Note: Tram #22 line may be closed during Metro construction







Across the river, in Gaia, you'll see some distinctive boats—called *rabelos*—moored along the embankment. These were once the only way to transport wine from the Douro Valley vineyards downriver to Porto. These boats have flat bottoms, big square sails, and very large rudders to help them navigate the rough, twisty course of the river. Modern tourist boats docked here copy this style on a larger scale (for more about these boats, see page 409).

• *After about a block, you'll pop out at the bottom of the neighborhood's main square...*

10 Praça da Ribeira

This vibrant, ragtag space was long the city's front door. In the mid-18th century, city leaders attempted to clear it out and make a vast wasteland like Lisbon's Praça do Comércio.

But the proud people of Porto (who, remember, have granite in their DNA) asserted themselves—as they like to do—and that construction project was stopped. Today, this square is a thriving place of the people.



Stand on the riverfront and look inland: On the right is a classic line of Porto houses that survive (sometimes with old ladies looking out at the crowd from their windows). Check out the artwork in the square: the cube fountain and the statue of St. John the Baptist with his rough cloak, who overlooks the happy scene from above.

• *Our Porto orientation walk is over. There's a lot more of the Ribeira to see—just walk with the river on your right, following the rabelos. Or venture into the maze of distinctive, tiny lanes that climb up the hill from the water.*

At the end of the embankment is the towering bridge; its lower level takes you efficiently to Vila Nova de Gaia for some port tasting. Or save your feet and make a little cruise out of the crossing by catching the Douro River river taxi that shuttles back and forth.

Or, to head back up to the cathedral area or Porto's shopping neighborhood, ride the funicular—it departs from this side of the river, just past the bridge.

The **Ponte Dom Luís I bridge** rises 150 feet above the river on your far left. In the 1880s, Teófilo Seyrig, a protégé of Gustave Eiffel, stretched this wrought-iron contraption across the 500-foot-wide Douro. The Eiffel Tower-sized bridge is growing fragile, so this Porto landmark is now open only to trams and pedestrians, and a new bridge for cars will be built further upstream. (Eiffel himself designed a bridge in Porto, the **Ponte Dona Maria Pia**, a bit upstream—barely visible from here.)

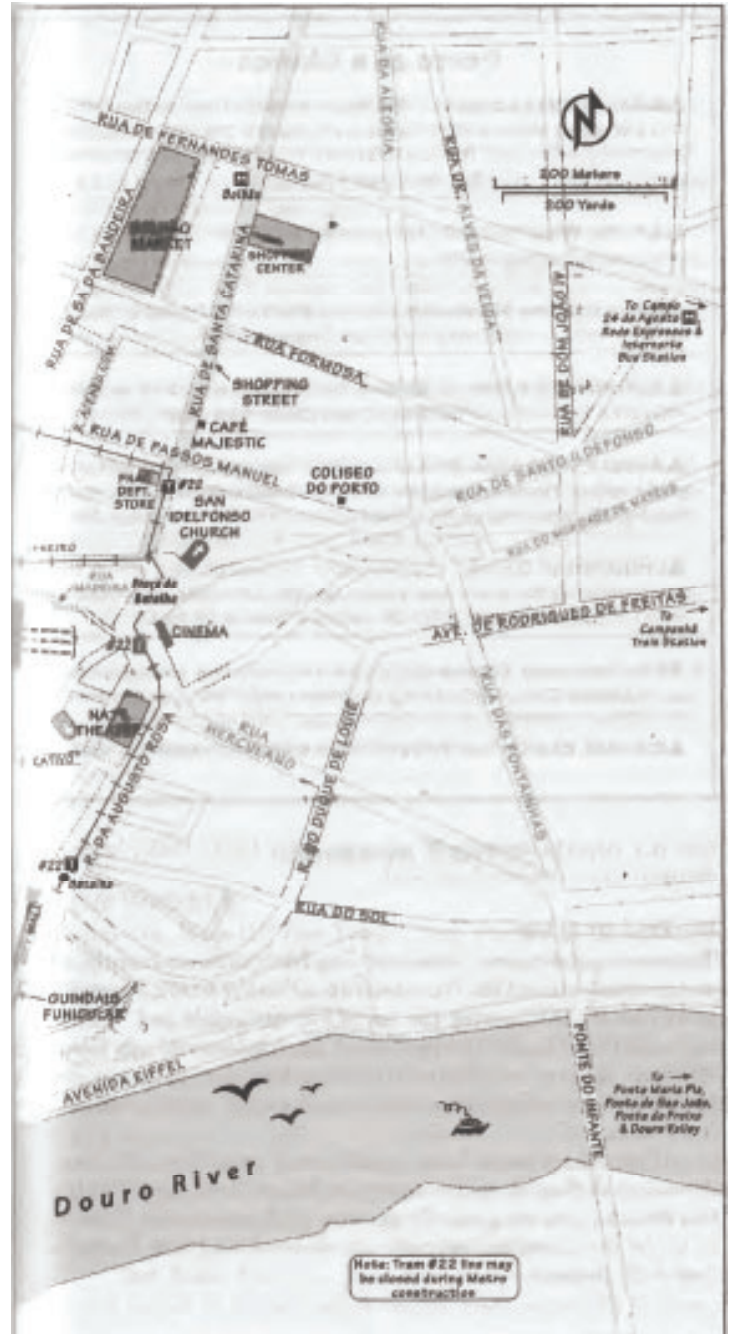
Vila Nova de Gaia (or just “Gaia”) is the port wine lodge district directly across the river. If you followed the Douro 60 miles upriver—beyond those bridges—you’d reach a wonderland of hand-built stone terraces where grapes enjoy a hardy existence. Port wine is harvested and stomped there, then floated downriver to age here. Historically, the wine could be legally called “port” only if it aged in Gaia, but deregulation now permits vintners to age their port where it’s grown. You’ll see the proud signs of 18 different company names marking their lodges here—each one inviting you in for a sample. (For more on the port-tasting scene in Gaia, see the sidebar near the end of this chapter.)

Look to your right and see how the river bends as it heads out toward the open Atlantic. To get out of the congested urban center, consider side-tripping out to the pleasant beach community of Foz, where the Douro meets the sea (see the “Sights Away from the Center” section, later).

Now turn around and face the **skinny houses along the embankment** (signed *Cais da Estiva*). Before tourism, the Ribeira was a working port. The city wall fortified Porto from the river, and (until the 20th-century embankment was built) the water came right up to the arches—many of which were loading zones for merchants. Imagine the busy harbor scene before the promenade was reclaimed from the river: cargo-laden riverboats lashed to the embankment, off-loading their wine and produce into 14th-century cellars (still visible). Today the old arcades lining the Ribeira promenade are jammed with hole-in-the-wall restaurants and souvenir shops. Behind the arcades are skinny, colorful houses draped with drying laundry fluttering like flags, while the locals who fly them stand gossiping on their little balconies. The contrast of bright tourism and vivid untouched neighborhoods within 30 yards of each other is amazing.

• From *Cais da Estiva* and with the river on your right, go for a stroll along the embankment known as the *Cais da Ribeira*, worth ▲▲.

As you walk, notice the various interchangeable companies along this embankment selling scenic “Six Bridges” cruises on the Douro, which take you past landmarks not visible from here (including Gustave Eiffel’s majestic steel Ponte Dona Maria Pia). If you’re interested, comparison-shop as you stroll.



Porto Walk

UPPER PORTO—THE CITY CENTER

• *Begin at the statue of cherubs holding fruit that marks the middle of Porto's main square/boulevard...*

① Avenida dos Aliados (Avenue of the Allies)

Worth ▲▲, this is the main urban drag of Porto, where Portugal's hardworking second city goes to work. Porto—often invaded, never conquered—is known as *cidade invicta*, the “Invincible City.” It's also called “The Granite City”—both for its stone-built cityscape and its sturdy, stubborn people (who like to say they have granite in their DNA). Rounding out the defiant symbolism is the dragon—the mascot of the locally beloved soccer team, FC Porto.



Avenida dos Aliados is named for the alliance created when Portugal joined the winning side during World War I. The wide boulevard, lined with elaborate examples of various architectural eras (mostly Art Nouveau and Art Deco) was inspired by early 20th-century Paris and is also reminiscent of Prague's Wenceslas Square. The twin bank towers flanking the street midway up were designed by Portuguese architect Marques da Silva (c. 1920). And crowning the square is the huge City Hall (Câmara Municipal), built in 1957, with a balcony where VIPs are presented.

Although currently under construction to add a new Metro line, this esplanade is where locals gather for good times and bad times. For example, 600,000 people celebrated here when Porto won the 2018 national football championship.

Praça da Liberdade (Liberty Square) marks the bottom of the avenue. The statue honors King Pedro IV (1798-1834), a hero in the 1832 Civil War, who advocated for a limited constitutional monarchy in Portugal (while maintaining his title as Emperor of



from his hometown toward the sea. For more on Henry, see the sidebar on page 196.

To Henry's right, the **Stock Exchange Palace** (Palácio da Bolsa) dominates this square. This is the palatial home of the Commercial Association of Porto. Commerce came to define Porto as royalty defined Lisbon

and religion defined Braga. The association even had its own system of courts and a representative to the king. In 1832, the monastery of the São Francisco Church next door burned down, and the queen offered the property to the Commercial Association. They seized the opportunity to show off, crafting a building that would demonstrate the considerable skill of Porto's tradesmen. The interior—which you can visit only with a 45-minute guided tour (see listing later, under “Sights in Porto”)—is a proud showcase of decorative prowess. Finely carved granite, inlaid-wood floors, plaster painted to resemble carved wood, and other details adorn everything from the glorious glass-roofed atrium to the exactly detailed Arabian Hall. Cross the square and drop in to see when the next tour is available (this walk ends nearby).

São Francisco Church is just to the left of the Stock Exchange Palace. This has the finest church interior in town, and its adjacent crypt is stacked with anonymously numbered tombs holding the remains of past parishioners (see listing later, under “Sights in Porto”; enter around the left side).

After you've admired the impressive buildings, consider an option for **wine tasting** near the square at the stately **Port and Douro Wines Institute** across from the red market hall on Rua Ferreira Borges (described in the sidebar later in this chapter).

• *To continue our walk, turn left at the bottom of the square, then turn right to head down the little street directly downhill from Henry the Navigator (Rua Alfândega—the aptly named “Customs Street”). On the left, you'll see the **House of Henry the Navigator**, where the great explorer is believed to have been born (the house has no Henry artifacts and is not worth a visit for most). From Henry's pad it's just a few more steps downhill to...*

② The Ribeira, Porto's Romantic Riverfront

The riverfront Ribeira (ree-BAY-rah, meaning “riverbank”) district is the city's most scenic and touristy quarter, with its highest concentration of restaurants and postcard racks. Narrow, higgledy-piggledy homes face the busy Douro River. Head down to the riverbank and scan the horizon from left to right.

At #222, look down the narrow street and up at the four-story cat. Fun and surreal street art is an endearing dimension of Porto. While the city is constantly fighting graffiti (the wolf is a favorite tag of anti-government gangs), Porto gives fine art students opportunities to show their talent by decorating sections of streets and walls. You'll notice the little electric boxes all along this street are painted with city-related themes by art students.

• *Eventually you'll reach some modern art spewing from a facade on the right. Symbolic of Christ's blood connecting heaven and earth, this marks the...*

10 Misericórdia Church and Museum

Porto's Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of our Lady of Mercy) is a powerful church-run organization dedicated to helping people with both their physical and spiritual needs. Since the 16th century it's been the city's United Way and Gates Foundation rolled into one. The organization remains a huge and important landowner in Porto, operating hospitals, schools, and other social services.

This building was once a hospital. Today it's an impressive little museum worth ▲ housing lots of artifacts (including early medical implements), paintings of leading benefactors of old, and treasures donated over the years, all well-described in English. Upon entering, head to the fourth floor and work your way back down, finishing in the dazzling, Mannerist-style church ornamented with fine *azulejos*. It was designed by Nicolau Nasoni, the prolific Baroque architect who left his mark all over the city (see sidebar earlier).

Cost and Hours: €5, daily 10:00-18:30, off-season until 17:30, Rua das Flores 15, +351 220 906 960, www.mmipo.pt.

• *Across the street, at Rua das Flores 10, the Wines of Portugal tasting room offers a nice getaway from the crowds and an educational wine experience (details in the "Wine Tastings in Porto" sidebar later in this chapter).*

The street ends at a former Dominican convent overlooking Largo de São Domingos. The big granite building is now filled with creative startups (part of a government-subsidized incubator program for entrepreneurs). Continue straight across the busy, cobbled street and head down Rua de Sousa Viterbo. Soon, on your right, you'll pass the big, red Borges Market—now a popular nightclub. Just past the market, you'll emerge at the top of...

11 Henry the Navigator Square (Praça do Infante Dom Henrique)

Head to the statue at the middle of the square. Arguably the most important Portuguese person of all time, Henry the Navigator put his country on the (figurative) map by putting many mysterious, faraway lands on the (literal) map. In this statue, Henry points

to prove it. A true "people's king," he left his heart to the people of Porto—literally. (It's buried in a local church.)

The square is a strong statement for a secular and modern Portugal: It's topped not by a church, but by the City Hall (which blocks the view of Trindade Church—the namesake of the nearby station where all of Porto's Metro lines converge). Throughout Porto, after the king dissolved the monasteries and confiscated church property in the 1830s, large tracts of land that had been the domain of the church became the domain of the people. Then, in the 1920s and 1930s (especially with the coming of the dictator António Salazar), Portugal demonstrated its national pride by razing many characteristic medieval quarters to modernize the country, building bigger squares and bigger buildings (as here). While this feels like a celebration of art, it's the old financial center of Porto and these buildings are all about commerce.

"The Imperial McDonald's" is directly to the right of King Pedro, hiding behind the trees. Filling what was once the Imperial Café, this is one of the fanciest McDonald's in Europe. Check it out—and ponder the battle of cultural elegance against global economic efficiency. Portugal is the only country where McDonald's serves soup. It's a very soupy culture; even McDonald's had to include it to gain locals' acceptance.

Now stand at the very bottom of the square, along the busy street. Notice that nothing is level in Porto. Looking uphill, you'll see the blue-tiled Church of San Ildefonso, and just downhill is São Bento station. This walk connects key landmarks, with a little uphill walking (at the start), then lots of downhill walking.

• *Next, head one short block up Avenida dos Aliados to the over-the-top bank tower on the left side of the square (labeled Unic—indeed it is). Angle up the little street just in front of that building (Rua do Dr. Artur de Magalhães Basto). After one short block, continue up the same street, now called...*

12 Rua da Fábrica

This street—named for the tobacco factories that once helped power local industry in this town—is one of many appealing shopping lanes in downtown Porto. The city has been transformed in recent years. Not long ago, streets like this were neglected and deserted. And while they may still be (artfully) seedy, like the derelict place on the left, life is fast returning—with clever boutiques and tempting eateries opening all the time. Pop into a few such shops as you climb to the top of this street.

Almada em Branco (at Rua do Almada #125, the first corner on the right), offers high-quality, locally handcrafted items: leather shoes, jewelry, cork products, sardines, and more.

At **Mercado na Invicta** (at #15 on the left), every table holds

the work of a different artisan. Creative enterprises like these were born out of the economic crisis.

Touriga Wine Shop (at #32) offers tastings and shelves stocked with local wines (see the “Wine Tastings in Porto” sidebar near the end of this chapter).

• *As you hike two steep blocks farther, notice the fine tiled facades. Keep going up Rua da Fábrica, huffing your way up three more short but steep blocks. You’ll pop out at a cute little triangular square called...*

③ Praça Guilherme Gomes Fernandes

Firefighters take note: The square’s namesake—honored by a statue in the middle—led the fire brigade that contained an 1888 blaze, which otherwise might have devastated the city.

Guilherme is eyeing the main reason to linger on this cozy square: the recommended **Padaria Ribeiro** pastry shop, a local favorite. Step inside and take your pick from the extensive sweet and savory offerings. You can either order something to go or have them bring it out to you on the square. You’ve finished the uphill portion of this walk—now’s the time for a little pastry break with the bustle of Porto passing by.

• *With the pastry shop at your back, turn right and follow the trolley tracks around the corner to the right. You’ll quickly emerge into a grand square.*

④ Praça de Gomes Teixeira and Praça de Parada Leitao

The centerpiece of **Praça de Gomes Teixeira** is the Fountain of Lions, and behind that is the main building of the **University of Porto**. U. Porto is a fairly young school (founded 1911), but the second-biggest in Portugal, with about 30,000 students who give this city—and this neighborhood (one of three main campuses)—a special energy. The square is named for its first rector and beloved math prof.

At the top of the square (facing the university), the **Armazéns Cunhas** department store demonstrates the sleek Art Deco style that took hold in Porto in the early 20th century—sprucing up a city of granite and *azulejos*. This neon facade, though now faded, might look more at home in Hollywood or Miami Beach. The peacock at the top trumpets the new fashions of the age, and neon announces *novidades—vendemos mais barato* (“new fashions—we sell cheaper!”).



major rivers in this part of Portugal, and the key regions linked by these trains (basically the north of the country). All this art seems old, but it’s really Portuguese revival art from the period just after World War I, celebrating the country’s heritage.

Nearby: Before continuing downhill to the Ribeira, stand in front of the station’s entrance to get oriented. Consider a detour to Porto’s **cathedral** and its viewpoint square. With the station to your back, you can see the cathedral’s serrated roofline on the ridge to the left—about a 10-minute walk away. Just beyond the cathedral is the upper level of the Luís I Bridge, which crosses scenically over the Douro to **Vila Nova de Gaia** and its port wine lodges. Buses to Vila Nova de Gaia leave across the street from the station’s entrance (the stop closest to the Metro entrance, buses #900, #901, or #906).

• *To continue our walk downhill to the Ribeira waterfront, cross the street, turn left, then take the right street at the fork. This puts you on a delightful, mostly pedestrianized lane connecting the town center with the riverbank.*

⑤ Rua das Flores

This traffic-free street is lined with iron railings, vivid *azulejos*, outdoor café tables, and enticing shops selling jewelry, antiques, chocolates, and other temptations. A decade ago, this was a deserted no-man’s-land; today, it’s a touristy main drag—and a great example of how Porto is blossoming. And yet, some funky graffiti (a Porto specialty) and ragtag housefronts still survive as reminders that Porto is a work in progress. Enjoy this strip for a few blocks downhill.

At #213, notice the flowers on the facade celebrating the street’s name. The protected sign, *Ourivesaria*, recalls a jewelry shop—one of many that have long lined the street. This was the end of the Jewish quarter and right up until 1496 was lined with silver, gold, and jewelry shops. That’s the year King Manuel I ordered all Jews to convert to Christianity—or be expelled. Beginning in 1497, the remaining Jews were forced to convert. Many became Christians in name but not in practice (as the secret synagogues found under these buildings attest). Meanwhile, the gold and silver shops stayed open and their heritage survives to this day. The ornate wrought-iron balconies were a way for wealthy aristocratic families to boast their status.



church you see perched on the hill). All of these are described under “Sights in Porto,” later.

LOWER PORTO--GRAND INTERIORS AND RIBEIRA WATERFRONT

• *Begin inside the main entry hall of Porto's stately...*

⑧ São Bento Train Station (Estação São Bento)

The station, worth ▲, has a main entry hall that features some of Portugal's finest *azulejos*—vivid, decorative hand-painted tiles that show historical and folk scenes from the Douro region. Originally a Benedictine convent, the land and building were nationalized and used to provide an ideal welcome for trains when they arrived in the 1870s. The distinctive tiles tell the story of Porto in a romanticized way, typical of that age. The trackside tiles celebrate the traditional economy, such as the transport of port wine.

Tiles: As you face the tracks, the large, blue, upper tiles on the left show medieval battles back when Spain and Portugal were at war. Victorious in their Reconquista over the Moors, the Portuguese had to settle on their borders with neighboring Castilla.

Tiles on the opposite wall (far right when facing the tracks) show a pivotal event from Porto's past: the 1387 wedding of Portugal's King João I and the English princess Philippa, which established the Portuguese-English alliance—the oldest in Europe.

Notice also the cathedral as it looked in the 14th century and the fine portrait of Philippa on her horse. She's not happy with the arranged political marriage or her king's concubine—the brightly lit woman behind him. But things eventually work out. Philippa left the king and went home to her native England. João then realized he loved her and begged her to return. She did so, and they had nine children who went on to be instrumental in starting the Golden Age of Portugal. Below is their most famous son, Prince Henry the Navigator, shown conquering Ceuta for Portugal in 1415. While humble Ceuta was just a small chip of Morocco (across from Gibraltar), it marked an important first step in the creation of a soon-to-be vast Portuguese empire.

The multicolored tiles near the top show different modes of transportation, evolving from Roman chariots (next to the big clock), and progressing counterclockwise 360 degrees to the arrival of the first train (left corner above Philippa).

Notice the words *Douro* and *Minho* overhead. These are the



Just past the end of the square, you can't miss the brilliant blue *azulejos* on the side of **Carmo Church**, depicting the founding of the Carmelite Order. Circling around to the front, you'll see this is two fine Rococo churches in one: On the right, Carmo Church; on the left, the Carmelite church, with a huge white convent that once housed an order of Carmelite friars. (Like other convents and monasteries, it was nationalized in 1834 and today serves as the headquarters of Portugal's national guard.) These two churches were divided by what they like to call the “world's narrowest house”—with the green gate and door. The house served as a secret meeting place for order members during wartime and as a temporary shelter (for people such as doctors who worked in the order's hospital, artists who worked in the church, and the sacristan).

Stretching downhill from the church is the delightful cobbled square called **Praça de Parada Leitao**. At the top end is the venerable (and recommended) **Café Piolho d'Ouro**, beloved by the local “bats.” Over the years in Porto, students with their black capes and habit of coming out in flocks after dark earned the nickname, and this café is bat central. If you wander inside, you'll see plaques on the walls celebrating decades of graduating classes.

Lately this entire neighborhood has become a lively zone of student cafés, bars, and hangouts. If you're looking for some action after dinner, this neighborhood would be the top local recommendation.

In front of the café, notice the **trolley stop** for one of Porto's historic lines. As in Lisbon, rickety trolleys have long been a part of Porto's history, and the city is committed to bringing them back as an integral part of the public-transit system. In 1872 (40 years after being invented in the US), the first trolleys in Iberia began operating in Porto, pulled by horses and oxen. Dubbed



americanos based on their origin, the trolley network was electrified in 1904. Essential for connecting suburbs with the city center, more than 100 trolley lines were still in use by the 1970s. However, buses and cars—the by-products of modern prosperity—almost eliminated this important part of the city's heritage.

Today, a few lines survive as vintage trips appealing mainly to tourists, although some locals of an older generation use them as public transport. From here, trolley #18 rattles to the Tramway Museum, down to the river, and out to Foz (a short walk from the Atlantic Ocean).

• Walk back to the big square with the university building on your right. An elevated park sits just ahead. On the left side of the downhill street that runs along the park, you'll see...

5 Lello Bookstore

Built in 1906, the shop boasts a lacy exterior bearing the original name, Lello & Irmão, and a fancy Art Nouveau interior. It looks like wood, but it's mostly made of painted plaster with gold leaf. J. K. Rowling, who worked in Porto for a year, was reportedly inspired by this Harry Potter-esque shop. And sure enough, the interior feels like something you'd see on Diagon Alley.

The Harry Potter connection—which was attracting 2,000 Potterheads a day to ogle the interior—became too much for this fragile, little bookshop to handle. So now visitors must buy a voucher to enter. (Warning: Lines can be ridiculous and, while it's charming, there's really not a lot to see inside.) Once inside, follow the quaint tracks to the book trolley. Climb the sagging staircase to find the old cash register and admire the stained-glass ceiling and the slinky hanging lights.

Cost and Hours: €5, can be applied toward any book purchase (good selection of books in English by leading Portuguese authors), daily 10:00-19:00, Rua das Carmelitas 144, www.livrariালেllo.pt. Buy tickets and check your bag at #166, four doors uphill, then join the queue at the bookstore's front door.

• The cross street just downhill from the bookstore is Galeria de Paris, lined with characteristic shops and bars. On this corner is a branch of *A Vida Portuguesa*, the Lisbon-based shop for quality, authentic local souvenirs (Rua Galeria de Paris 20). Across the street, just uphill from the bookstore, is some brilliant city planning at...



PORTO

6 Praça de Lisboa Park

This innovative solution shows what smart urban planners can do to camouflage an ugly concrete parking garage in the historic heart of a city: build a park on top of it. The most direct way to our next stop—the church tower—is through the modern concrete mall, which tunnels past shops and cafés under the middle of the park. But I'd rath-



er head up the stairs (just to the right of the mall) to walk across the park itself—a green respite dotted with inviting olive trees in the heart of a congested city. Up top, a hip bar called Base serves drinks, which you can enjoy at picnic tables or under one of the 50 gnarled olive trees. This is a great spot for a drink after dark.

• Make your way across the park—either down below or up top—to reach the can't-miss-it...

7 Clérigos Church and Tower (Igreja e Torre dos Clérigos)

This church, which consumed three decades of Nicolau Nasoni's life (1731-1763), shows the ambitious architect's flair for theatrics and is worth ▲. He fit the structure into its hilltop location, putting the tower at the back on the highest ground, dramatically reinforcing its height. Nasoni worked in stages: first the church, then the hospital and the Chapter House (meeting room for priests and monks). He topped it all off with the outsized tower. You can go inside the church for free or pay to climb the tower (see listing later, under "Sights in Porto").

• Take the atmospheric, traffic-free, trolley-track-lined lane to the right of the tower—an urban canyon of azulejos and funky shops. Heading downhill, you'll find yourself back where you started—at the Avenida dos Aliados. This time, keep going straight, one more block. You'll run right into São Bento train station.

The second part of our walk begins just inside the station. But if you'd like to explore one more part of Porto's city center—the traditional market hall, bustling shopping street (Rua Santa Catarina), and azulejo-slathered church on Praça da Batalha—you can hike up the hill just to the left of the station (toward the pretty