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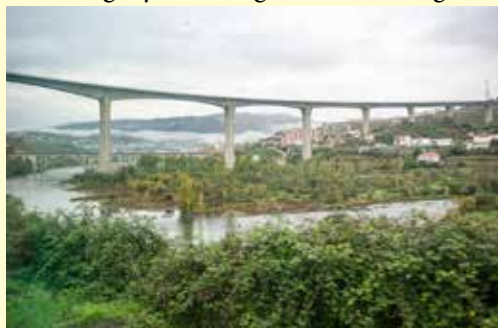


## Lamego

### Nossa Senhora dos Remédios

Today we are going to one of the most visited religious destinations in Portugal, the Shrine of Our Lady of Remedies. It is located in Lamego in the Viseo District of the Norte Region of the Douro along the banks of the Balsemão River. This area had seen its glory days during the middle ages as an important trade route and its decline during the Age of Discoveries as trade routes to the Indies were discovered. It has reinvented itself through modernization and capitalizing on the importance of viticulture and the designation of the area as the *Região Demarcada do Douro* and the establishment of the *Companhia Geral da Agricultura das Vinhas do Alto Douro* (General Company of the Wine Agriculture of the Upper Douro). It is the seat of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lamego and it is one of the preferred southern routes of the *Camino Santiago*.

We were leaving our ship in Pinhao as it repositioned down stream to Regua on the Rio Douro as we visited Lamego by bus. The scenery was exquisite and with evidence of modern construction with long stylish bridges crisscrossing



the river and with well-tended vineyards and Quintas on the background creating a perfect landscape for artist to paint or photographers like us to take of picture of .

The city itself was like a movie set. We drove through the long square past the cathedral then drove up a winding road as we went up the Mount St. Stephens where the Shrine was located, overlooking the city. While the original chapel was built in 1361, it was demolished in 1568 and the current shrine was designed in 1750 and completed only in 1905. The devotees shifted from St. Stephens in the early days to the Blessed Virgin and the Child Jesus and then finally to Our Lady of Remedies (for illnesses mainly) with the festival being held on September 6-8 annually and with the people in procession from shoulder to shoulder and in deafening silence unlike other festivals.

We were dropped off at the Parque de Santo Estevão close to the *Santuário* where stood the trunk of an over 700 year old chestnut tree that had since dried out and is now embellished with ivy. The facade of the temple was Baroque



*Dried out 700 year old chestnut tree with ivy*

and Rococo (Rocaile) style with two bell towers. Inside was the image of Our Lady of Remedies carved in wood and flanked by the images of her parents, *San Joaquin* and *Santa Ana*. There were three stained glasses depicting Our Lady of Conception, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Annunciation. The walls showed *azulejos* (painted tiles) on the life of the Blessed Virgin.

Outside stands the monumental stairway access to the sanctuary, with 686 steps,







obelisks. In one of these levels - the so-called "Courtyard of the Kings" - there are the images of eighteen kings of Israel, belonging to the family tree of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the base of the staircase are four figures depicting the four seasons. It was in this stairway that Ronette Chua ventured down, then up, then down again without so much as a sweat just to show how fit she was. Yes, how nice it is to be young-er.

There were fountains and statues in the long square that spanned several blocks, with shops found on its sides. Roasted chestnuts and ice cream were the favorite



snacks. The fountain with two gossiping women (*tsismosa*) was a curiosity. Not very far away was the Cathedral of Lamego and the Bishops residence. Across the street was the oldest theater in the area, Ribeiro Conceição Theatre, where modern plays were a popular fare.

We went back to the MS Gil Eanes for lunch and left Regua to enjoy once more the cruise down the Douro river as the last CME talk was given by Gerry Flores on Renal Failure and Contrast Nephropathy. We were told by Matthew and Rachel that later that day, we were given permission by the CroisiEurope central office to inspect the Captain's cabin and see the controls of the ship and later to go all the way to the mouth of the Rio Douro as it emptied into the Atlantic to enjoy Porto and its glittering lights at night. It was indeed a treat that all of us enjoyed watching from the top deck posing for pictures and trying to capture the moment with camera phones and other more sophisticated gears. Dinner that night was somber despite the entertainment that was provided by the village folks from Rachel's place, perhaps a realization that another Cruise of a Lifetime was coming to an end. But there was still Fatima and Lisbon to visit and explore. #



Monumental stairway & Courtyard of the Kings



