**SHORT TOUR 2024 TO SETÚBAL (LISBON)**

Our short tour in mid-October 2024 was fully booked. This may be because the attraction of staying in Lisbon, when the British climate was decidedly in the grey, damp phase of autumn, was too much to resist! Thirty of us enjoyed a wine tasting at the hotel on the first night, followed by visits to five wineries and a palace over the next two days. The visits were all to the Setúbal area on the south side of the River Tagus, so the journeys allowed us to see both of the bridges as well as the lovely Portuguese countryside.

Considering that the wineries were all in the same area, the variations between them made each visit very different. We started at Palhoça where the young winemaker is developing some excellent table wines to supplement his father’s and grandfather’s bag-in-a-box business. We went on to Herade de Espirra where the oenologist showed us how she resurrects old vines, before showing us where all the grapes are still crushed by foot. The tasting there was alongside a wonderful lunch of Portuguese dishes and we tasted our first Moscatel with the dessert. Our last visit was to Quinta do Piloto where we tried some wonderful table wines as well as two Moscatels. We all felt very contented as we headed back to Lisbon.

On Saturday, we first visited José Maria da Fonseca, a winery with an amazing history. The 18th century warehouse where their Moscatel is aged was originally a textile factory making uniforms for the British and Portuguese soldiers during the Peninsular War! They also discovered that sending barrels to sea dramatically speeded up the aging process and greatly improved the quality of the wine (and hence the price they can sell it at!). They still have a contract with the Portuguese Navy who have a tall ship and will take some barrels when they go on a long voyage. We again had lunch while tasting their wines, but sadly no “Return Voyage Moscatel”.

After lunch we relaxed with a bit of culture – a palace with large gardens that had belonged to the King and then an art gallery housed in a winery. Eventually we got to the last tasting of the tour at Bacalhȏa where we finished with the only Moscatel stocked by Tanners and were very impressed.

Throughout the trip we were accompanied by Robert Boutflower of Tanners and so benefitted from all the information that he gave us before and after each visit, as well as the fact that he kept the winemakers on their toes! Altogether an excellent trip.