April | May 2016

50 S O M F T H I N G

alia's over-50s magazine

Paint, Dance, Write Nurturing Your Creative Self

Australia v England Cricket in a POW Camp

Lavender Blue Ice Cream Sally Wise's Tasmanian Treat

Big Phish Spotting Dodgy Emails

Whistler's Mum Pop Art to Cultural Icon

Michael O'Neill

"It's time for a change"

50 S O M E T H I N G

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Cover: Power Play Michael O'Neill stands in front of former PM Paul Keating's Parliament House portrait, Canberra, Feb 2016 Photo: Mark Graham



FIRST UP









Campaigns

Letters

News



EPICUREAN



Books and Movies

TIME OUT



Top Shelf



Food



Travel



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Crossword



The Last Word



EPICUREAN

Editor

My desk is one of legend. Home to a constant stream of books. submissions, trinkets and press releases, it's only occasionally that something on it will make me pause.

In this instance it's the yellowed pages of a matted album upon which sits carefully labelled black and white photographs. The album belongs to 94-year-old Brian Walley, who, at 19, was shot down over Europe and incarcerated in a German prisoner-of-war camp. The photos, bought from the prison guards with Red Cross rations like soap, chocolate or cigarettes, depict life in Stalag 383 at Hofenfels in Bavaria.

Considering the circumstances, Brian's tale on page 26, fortunately, is a positive one. To keep them out of trouble, the Commandant allowed prisoners to play sport - international fixtures of rugby. cricket and soccer. The story and photos are quite incredible.

Something my desk will soon notice gone is the regular morning delivery of photocopied news articles replete with margin notes, underscores and sweeping circles. Sources tell me the articles originate from the big office down the corridor. The man who lives there, Michael O'Neill, is leaving. He is a mentor and a friend, and I will miss him terribly.

Sarah Saunders



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just been released.

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Publisher

National Seniors Australia A.B.N. 89 050 523 003 ISSN 1835-5404



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Printed by Horizon Media

CAMPAIGNS



With new Senate voting laws we can all hope that the preference whisperers will lose out

Inside politics

By Amanda Vanstone Guest Columnist

Many people say the next election will be a double dissolution in early July. Why wouldn't the Prime Minister have a double dissolution if the Senate refuses to pass important legislation? With new Senate voting laws we can all hope that the preference whisperers will lose out and our votes will go only where we intend.

If there is a double dissolution, the legislation which would reinstate the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) to clean up the union movement will be a key driver. How can anyone defend letting the rot continue, so often at the expense of workers?

Opposition leader Bill Shorten will have his work cut out for him. He'll try to distance himself from union connections but it will be hard.

The election will not only be on the rejected bills. Turnbull will want to stamp his vision for a stronger, smarter Australia all over the campaign. He will have some big picture thinking designed to dwarf that of his opponents. It will be about growing opportunities for Australians.

if they find a road to Damascus and support the legislation there will be no trigger for a double dissolution

But don't plan your election sausage sizzle just yet. If you listen to these independents who may lose their seats under the recent senate reforms you realise it is all about them. One stated that the Coalition and Greens wanted to get rid of them while Labor, on the other hand, wanted to protect them. We know where the preferences of this independent would go.

When the dust from the late night sitting settles, it might just dawn on this group of self-important senators that if they vote against the ABCC legislation they will probably

lose their jobs. However, if they find a road to Damascus and support the legislation there will be no trigger for a double dissolution and they can continue with the remaining four years of their Senate terms.

There are two reasons they may decide to

support the legislation. The first is simply self-interest or survival. The second is a genuine desire to improve future legislation and ensure a voice for the people they represent. As a result the Prime Minister would be denied the double and have to work with these guys. Hmm, wonder what they'll do...

Amanda Vanstone, a former federal minister in the Howard government, is now a presenter on ABC Radio National





the **old** scheduled federal budget date on 20 March



the **new** scheduled federal budget date on 21 March

(Following the Governor General's prorogue of Parliament)



O'Neill at Parliament House, Canberra, February 2016

Parliament Sits

31

Both Houses

As we go to print, sitting dates after 6 May have been superseded by the prorogue of Parliament

Defined benefit change

Over the last two budgets, the Government has announced several changes to the assessment of income and assets for government income support (GIS). These include the pension assets test taper rate change, effective from 1 January 2017, and the deeming of new Account-Based Income Streams from 1 January 2015. Another change that took effect from 1 January 2016 involves the way income is assessed from 'Defined Benefit Pensions' for GIS.

Defined Benefit Pensions are paid from superannuation schemes where the benefit is calculated by using certain factors such as length of service, member contributions and salary level on retirement.

These types of funds are typically available to government and certain company employees but are gradually being phased out. These differ from the more common account based 'accumulation' style funds where the member's benefit is determined by the contributions and performance of the financial markets the funds are exposed to.

For Defined Benefit pensions, the income payment less a 'deductible amount' is counted as income under the income test for GIS. The deductible amount generally represents the member's after tax contributions and accumulated earnings, and was in some cases in excess of 50% of the payment prior to the change. This meant that only the remaining amount of the payment was assessed under the income test.

The change from 1 January 2016 capped the deductible amount to 10% of the income payment, so at least 90% of the income from a defined benefit pension is now assessed under the income test.

Those who had a larger deductible amount now have more of their income assessed and so may have experienced a reduction or loss of age pension and associated benefits with the Pension Concession Card.

While after tax contributions and accumulated earnings form part of the tax-exempt component, not all tax free income from Defined Benefit pensions form the deductible amount. This may cause confusion determining the correct deductible amount. If this is the case, clarification should be sought from the fund and/or the Department of Human Services on 132300.

Members can use National Seniors' FREE independent Financial Information Desk (FID) by calling 1300 020 110 or emailing fid@nationalseniors.com.au FID covers topics from super to income streams, pensions, equity release, aged care and budgeting.









Fearless Leader

In a few months Michael O'Neill will pass the National Seniors baton on to a new chief executive. At Parliament House, in a pause between meetings, he shares with Sarah Saunders the highs and lows of ten eventful years.

It is early autumn, and one of the last sitting weeks of the federal parliament before the annual May budget.

Michael O'Neill and I are between meetings in the Senate courtyard – scattered tables, sandstone paving, lush green grass, magpies and tall oak trees that will blaze red as the season deepens.

Around us other lobbyists, journalists and politicians conduct whispered conversations, speculating on voting reform, impending tax changes and, of course, the chances of a double dissolution election.

Michael arrived at National Seniors a decade ago after first heading up Queensland's agricultural lobby AgForce and, for a shorter time, the Gold Council.

His first year with this very real, heaving movement of individual, passionate people was a baptism of fire.

The issues of older Australians – from pensions to nursing homes and work discrimination – couldn't have been more different from farm subsidies and the price of wheat.

But in a fearless style that has come to define him, Michael took that shift in his stride.

Under his watch National Seniors has waged spectacular battles. Most notable was the Rudd Government's OECDtrend-defying pension increase in 2009. A campaign with Choice and Industry Super that required the support of the Senate crossbench, to preserve protections for consumers of financial advice ranks a close second.

These ten years have also seen the organisation grappling with staying relevant in a world evolving by the nanosecond and a new generation of over-50s not redefining ageing but refusing to be defined at all.

Later this year, Michael leaves National Seniors on sustainable footings and with no regrets. He's ready again for a new, still unknown professional chapter and the promise, at least in the interim, of more time with wife Rosemary, their two sons and three grandchildren.

Why are you leaving?

MO: I'm leaving because after 10 years I think it's time for a change for the organisation, and time for change for me as well. So the challenges for me will be elsewhere and I'm looking forward to exploring other things. The organisation is well-placed to go forward at this time.

What do you consider your biggest achievement at National Seniors?

MO: I was given a legacy after 30 years and I think I'm leaving a good legacy after 40 years. That's important in terms of handing the organisation on in a state that continues to enable it to grow and develop.

I think the biggest achievements have been around the pension increase of 2009. That was a very substantial outcome. Probably add to that the FoFA debate and the significant role as an organisation we played in achieving a better result there than would have been the case had we not been active.

What have you enjoyed most about the job?

MO: I've enjoyed the diversity of the job: dealing with members from all backgrounds and federal governments of various persuasions. That has certainly kept us on our toes. And I've enjoyed particularly working with great staff who've actively partnered with me in that regard.

What have you found most challenging?

MO: The biggest challenge for the kind of role the organisation plays is to encourage governments and oppositions to move away from acting just in their own interests and acting in the interests of the nation generally including, in the case of older Australians, in providing a certainty for them to prepare for and plan their later years.



Magazine relaunch with Ageing Minister Justine Elliot and editor Sarah Saunders, 2010

Highlights?

MO: Again, the pension increase and getting a reasonably positive result in the FoFA debate. But I think being present at the National Apology to Indigenous Australians by Prime Minister Rudd was a particularly significant time to be in Parliament.

Do you have any regrets? MO: No regrets.

NO regrets.

What will you miss most? MO: Certainly the people I've worked with

I will miss enormously. I think we've got a really good board so I'll miss working with them. Thirdly, members generally. We've got a great group of people. Being able to hear their concerns and share their views going forward will be missed. I'll particularly miss going to Western Australia and enjoying the excitement of the membership over there.

What advice would you have for the new CEO?

MO: I don't provide advice to incomers. I think the best way is for people to start with a clean slate and find their way through.

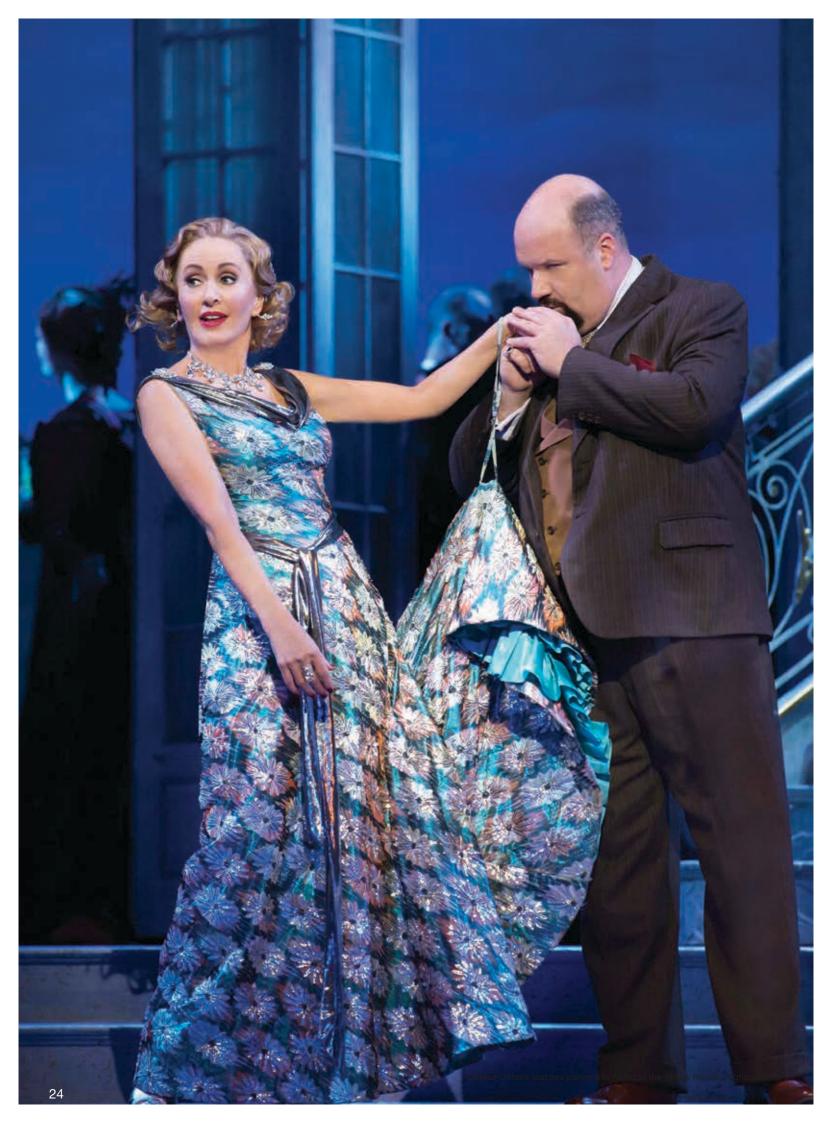
How would you like to be remembered? MO: People will remember as they wish.

What next for Michael O'Neill?

MO: We don't know. We're in an exciting and innovative time. So we'll see where that takes us. Certainly my intention is to continue to work, to contribute productively, and where that might land me, we'll just have to wait and see.

You've got three grandkids now, were you hoping to spend more time with them?

MO: Certainly I'm hoping to spend more time with the family. I've travelled a lot over the past ten years and particularly now with little people it's nice to spend time with them... and I'm a pretty good baby sitter. ■



if you drop your energy or you sing the wrong song, they just walk away

Songbird

At 52 soprano Marina Prior is already considered a "matriarch" in performing arts circles. But, as Rosemary Desmond discovers, it's a title she enjoys.

From busking on the streets of Melbourne to taking a bow before tens of thousands at *Carols by Candlelight*, Marina Prior has done it all.

But after a career spanning more than 30 years, the Australian soprano is still surprised at her success.

"It seems to have snuck up on me... All of a sudden I'm in a show and I am regarded as the matriarch.

"I'm really proud of that because I remember being in companies with Nancye Hayes and June Bronhill. They were the matriarchs who had such a body of work behind them and I really am in awe of them.

"Then I just blinked and I am now that person and I take that role seriously. I love imparting what I've learned to the younger performers I'm working with... that is a joy."

Prior's roots in the world of musical theatre go back to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, where her father worked in the shipping industry and both parents were members of the local Gilbert and Sullivan society.

The family moved to Melbourne when Prior was a young child and her interest in the performing arts blossomed. She took singing lessons from the age of 12 and learned piano, flute and guitar.

Later, as a University of Melbourne music student struggling to make ends meet, Prior turned to busking.

"I used to work as a waitress but I was hopeless – I kept getting the sack. Then one Christmas I stood on a street corner in Bourke Street and started singing Christmas carols and before I knew it, I had a big crowd around me. "It became my night job. It was a fantastic training for me, because people haven't paid for a ticket, so if they don't like what you do, if you drop your energy or you sing the wrong song, they just walk away.

She did not remain an unknown busker for long.

While still at university, she auditioned for Victoria State Opera's production of *The Pirates of Penzance* and landed the female lead role of Mabel, an experience she described as being 'dropped in the deep end' of what became a hit show.

That success was followed by many others including Cats, Guys and Dolls, Les Misérables, The Witches of Eastwick and Mary Poppins.

Asking what is her favourite role is like asking a mother to name her favourite child. Best front-runner would be Christine Daaé, opposite Anthony Warlow and later Rob Guest, in the Australian premier of *The Phantom of the Opera* (1990 to 1993).

We do live in a youth-obsessed society but I try not to buy into that

"Phantom of the Opera was a very special one for me because it gave me a launch platform.

"I got into recording and my public profile was elevated during that show which gave me the opportunity to do more things."

Prior has also worked with some of the biggest names in the business, including acclaimed British actor Paul Eddington (James Hacker in Yes, Minister) and opera great Jose Carreras.



Niceties Marina with Cameron Daddo

Aside from their obvious talent, both men had a common trait.

"I've found that often when you work with people who are very successful at what they do, they tend to be incredibly generous and warm and open, probably because they don't have anything to prove."

And although she is best known for her musical theatre roles, Prior also enjoys acting – in fact, she enjoys anything she is currently working on.

Prior believes evolving as a performer is the key to success.

"We do live in a youth-obsessed society but I try not to buy into that because I would rather be pro-active and constantly evolving as an artist and as a person. It's a great opportunity to be a flag bearer for older women to show that we're relevant, we have a voice. I have a wealth of experience behind me that I didn't have 30 years ago."

One role she would love to play is Mrs Lovett, business partner and accomplice of barber and serial killer *Sweeney Todd*.

"You've got to be older to play it and I'm very keen to do that one day. You can only play the romantic heroine for so long."

Juggling work commitments with a blended family of five keeps her busy. Prior has three children from her first marriage to Peter Lowrey. She is now married to actor Grant Piro, who is a father of two.

"He (Piro) does a lot of film and television and when he is doing that I don't work and when I'm working he does less of that ...and so we tag team."

The Sound of Music continues its Australian tour in Brisbane until 1 May, before moving to Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide.

TOP SHELF

Few paintings can claim cultural icon status. But this portrait of a stoic mum does. Dr Isobel Crombie explains why.



James McNeill Whistler's *Portrait of the artist's mother*, 1871, is among a select group of artworks that have transcended their times to become universally known. Iconic artworks have an undeniable charisma that sees them admired, copied and even parodied.

They are touchstones of what art means to many, and often connect the viewer to basic human qualities. As recently described by Peter Schjeldahl, *Portrait of the artist's mother* is 'instantly recognised and forever inexhaustible'.

Roosevelt's enthusiasm was critical in taking the painting from the ranks of popular to iconic

The work then travelled to Paris before being shown in Philadelphia and New York. It was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1883, and was also displayed in Dublin, Amsterdam, Glasgow and Munich. Wherever the painting went it polarised opinions: some critics thought it was painted as if in a fog, others appreciated its subtle tones.

When Whistler sold Portrait of the artist's mother to the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, in 1891 it became the first painting by an American artist to enter a French gallery's collection. In 1933 the Louvre, Paris - then-owner of Portrait of the artist's *mother* – loaned Whistler's signature work to the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York. It proved an enormous drawcard and, as a result, subsequently went on a record-breaking tour around the United States, making headlines wherever it was shown. At this time, when the nation was in the grips of the economic horrors of the Great Depression, Whistler's painting of a 'Puritan' mother stoically bearing the trials of her life touched a profound emotional chord with many viewers.

United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Whistler's painting with his own mother when it was shown

> at MOMA. Soon after, he suggested that the painting be used as a Mother's Day stamp, and even sketched how it should appear. Roosevelt's enthusiasm was critical in taking the painting from the ranks of popular to iconic. The addition of a cheery pot of flowers to the

stamp design was the start of many often humorous parodies of the portrait in which the mother, or the object of her gaze, has been altered.

On loan from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, Whistler's Mother is on display at NGV International from 25 March – 19 June 2016. Tickets on sale from ngv.vic.gov.au

Dr Isobel Crombie is Assistant Director, Curatorial and Collection Management, National Gallery of Victoria



When Whistler painted this work at age 37, it had been a decade since his debut as an artist and he found himself in a difficult phase of his career. *Portrait of the artist's mother* came at a moment of artistic doubts, and its resolution marked a breakthrough in Whistler's creative life. At a time when storytelling dominated British art, its uncompromising aestheticism was confronting.

Arrangement in grey and black no. 1 (as it was first titled) was rather grudgingly accepted into London's 1872 Royal Academy exhibition.

EPICUREAN

April | May 2016

Out West

Detour a little west and you'll not only escape South East Queensland's infamous crowds but also discover a foodie's paradise. Rosemary Desmond samples Stanthorpe's tree-ripened apples and full-bodied reds.



TRAVEL

if you fancy burning off some of your indulgence, the Girraween National Park is just is 26km south of Stanthorpe

After sweltering through a long, hot and humid Brisbane summer, the chance of a weekend on the Granite Belt seemed like a breath of fresh air.

And so it was.

About two-and-a-half hours south-west of the Queensland capital, the tidy little town of Stanthorpe has for years laid claim to being a wine and food lovers' destination – with an added bonus of a cooler climate due its altitude around 1,000 metres above sea level.

Having made the journey, we woke the next morning to a tapping sound on a glass side door of our villa at Alure, a 50 acre luxury retreat just south of the town.

There was no-one at the door, except a startled magpie who may have wanted to share our breakfast basket of locallymade bread, cereals and jams. He didn't wait around.

Alure has two modern villas and a tented construction for those who like 'glamping'. But the term 'tent' does not do justice to the villa built from the floor upwards, with canvas framing it from the roof down.

Alure is a place for couples only – no children allowed – but you can bring your dog.

The owners' Maremma sheepdog zealously guards her half dozen charges from behind one of the few fences on the property.

There are plenty of other cosy and quirky accommodation options in Stanthorpe but

for most visitors, it's all about the food and wine.

One of the region's oldest wineries is Ballandean Estate, home to the Opera in the Vineyard black tie charity event, slated this year for 1 May.

Ballandean's Barrelroom Restaurant late last year welcomed young chefs (and partners) Travis Crane and Arabella Chambers who source the vast majority of their produce locally, with seafood from the nearest fishing port at Ballina on the NSW north coast.

Travis also forages for fresh greens such as wild fennel and asparagus growing nearby.

"We did have a beautiful patch of watercress but someone let their cows onto it," he told us.

Naturally, the wines take centre stage at Ballandean Estate, and it's not just the more

usual offerings such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay.

Stanthorpe has its own alternative wine trail known as 'Strangebird' – featuring varieties representing less than one per cent of the total bearing vines in Australia.

We tried Fiano, a fresh white variety, originally from Campania, Italy, then after lunch, decided to take home a bottle of a 'big' full-bodied red with an alcohol content of 14.8 per cent called Saperavi, which originates in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

It was made for drinking with roast meats such as beef or lamb.

Dinner that night was at the Granite Belt Brewery and Happy Valley Retreat's restaurant where brewer Geoff Davenport has

matched craft beers with a mixed platter of local produce, followed by dessert (with a beer, of course!)

The rare roast venison, fig and walnut chutney, paired with Irish red ale, was memorable. For dessert, there was Pozieres Porter, matched with a rich, dark chocolate tart with mascarpone and fresh berries. Bliss for chocolate lovers.

And you cannot leave Stanthorpe without calling in at Sutton's Farm, a family-run apple orchard 13kms north of the town (opposite

the Big Apple – where else?)

There you can pick apples which have never seen a cold room and taste-test a variety of apple products, including cider, cider vinegar, juice, syrup and brandy. In a large tin shed, a part of

which is furnished with old

you can order lunch from a changing menu. But leave room for the apple pie with cider ice cream and cream, highly recommended and well worth the wait.

Former sheep farmer turned prawn trawlerman and now orchardist, David Sutton, cooks 300kg of apples a week for the pies alone. The pastry is made from scratch every day.

Just don't ask David or his wife Ros for a pie to take home. They are not interested in 'expanding' their business into takeaways. They like things just as they are.

The rare roast venison, fig and walnut chutney, paired with Irish red ale

However passionate the locals are about their produce, there is more to do in the area than just eat and drink.

The area is home to around 120 local artists who exhibit and hope to sell their work at the Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery where there are 253 pieces, including paintings, sculpture and pottery, on a three week rotation with many more exhibits kept in the basement.

And if you fancy burning off some of your indulgence, the Girraween National Park is just is 26kms south of Stanthorpe – and a world

way in terms of peace and quiet.

Girraween is a curious mix of eucalypts and granite boulders – some the size of cars – perched precariously on top of one another.

There are 17kms of walking tracks and waterholes where the local wildlife comes to drink. The silence is only broken by the occasional bird call.

A visit to Stanthorpe can be a little pricey, depending on where you eat and sleep, but for a special occasion, such as an anniversary or birthday, it's a delightful change from the hotter and more crowded coast.

The writer was a guest of Southern Queensland Country Tourism

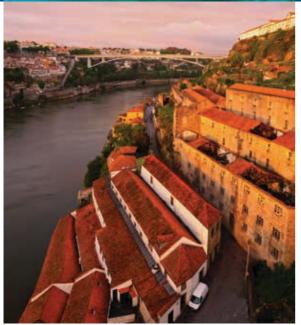


you can pick apples which have never seen a cold room

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8 Day Secrets of the Douro

Departs: 20 May 2017

Members from: \$3,895pp twin share Save: \$800 per person when you book and pay in full by 15 June 2016 FB Full breakfast L Lunch D Dinner

Day 1: Saturday 20 May 2017 Porto (D)

Welcome to Porto. You will be met at the airport and transferred to the ship where you will be welcomed by your Captain and crew. Enjoy dinner on board.

Day 2: Sunday 21 May 2017 Porto – Pinhao (FBLD)

A full day sailing the windy turns and twists of the Douro Valley. A UNESCO world heritage site this area is sparsely populated by small quaint villages, working vineyards and small farms. Later this afternoon arrive in the village of Pinhao.

Day 3: Monday 22 May 2017 Pinhao -Vega Teron (FB L D)

Today visit the village of Lamego including Roman ruins. Return to your ship for lunch and an afternoon sailing to Vega Teron, your gateway into Spain, complete with Portuguese cooking demonstration.



Day 4: Tuesday 23 May 2017 Salamanca (FB D)

Founded in Roman times. Salamanca is home to one of the oldest universities in Europe and the seat of the Spanish language. With its grand squares and medieval structures, a walking tour here is like stepping back in time. Enjoy a full day including tapas tasting and plenty of free time to explore.

Day 5: Wednesday 24 May 2017 Pocinho (FB L D)

Arrive in the picturesque village of Pocinho and join your excursion to the Coa Valley Museum. This impressive concrete structure details pre-historic stone carvings made by the early inhabitants

of the Douro, which were uncovered during the construction of the nearby dam. Return to your ship for lunch and afternoon sailing towards Regua.

Day 6: Thursday 25 May 2017 Regua (FB L D)

Wake up in the former roman settlement of Regua. Visit the Douro Museum for a look at wine making in the region.

Day 7: Friday 26 May 2017 Porto (FB L D)

Located at the mouth of the Douro River, Porto is a fascinating eclectic mix of modern and ancient architecture. Its most famous export is fortified wine, and the hillside across from the city centre features numerous wine caves and tasting boutiques in the area of Vila Nova de Gaia. Sample the local fare and learn about the craft of creating port.

Day 8: Saturday 27 May 2017 Disembarkation (FB)

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