

Porto: a city carved in granite



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Nowadays, the city of Porto, in the north of Portugal, enjoys a popularity it is not accustomed to. Chosen in three separate years of the recent past as the Best European Destination, the whole of the urban tissue is adapting to the tourism wave.

But the wind of real estate renovation that usually follows these visitors found a legacy with which to mesh: a granitic profile found all over the city, the labor of generations of artisans with precise hands and high quality raw materials. The classic facades of monuments and residential buildings are the frame in which new projects must be fitted and, more than a shock, a harmonious evolution is what's being sought.

City icons like the City Hall building or the Porto Cathedral (dating back to the twelfth century) are built entirely out of this “indigenous” rock. Even the city's wide reception area, the Aliados Avenue [1], was in 2005 restored by the superstar team of architects Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto Moura, becoming a more open and luminous space – and now featuring a thorough pavement rework in Grey Montemurro granite.

The massive rise of the Yeatman Hotel [2, 3] amid the criss-cross of ancient Port Wine cellars is an example of such integration. The same mastery of stonework found elsewhere in the city's heritage is mirrored in this sprawling construction. The several Portuguese companies involved in the project made use of advanced cutting and fitting technology for the Yello Vila Real and Yellow Mondim granites, covering the façade and the pavement with these medium granulate materials. Due to the heavy presence of curved surfaces in the project, the option was to cut the stone by water jet.



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Some streets below, we find the riverside promenade [4], a track running from the bustling city center to the serene outfall of the waters into the sea. The whole length, from the pavement to the benches, is entirely built out of Lapa Grey Granite – highly resistant to frosting and defrosting.

Incoming city visitors looking to gaze at these edifices can, since 2016, arrive in new ways. That was the year the Leixões Cruise Terminal [5] was opened, an imposing construction that presents a synthesis of many movements and flows. The complexity of concave and convex shapes in the façade precipitated cutting work done in 5 axis CNC equipment, using as materials Yellow Vila Real granite with shot blasted finishing.

When the city's monuments were built, choosing granite must have seemed like the obvious choice. This was a material with plenty of supply, and already there was a long history of working this stone. Nowadays, however, the reasons are numerous. In the global market, Portuguese ornamental rocks are acknowledged for their quality, and the marriage of tradition and know-how with new technologies provide assurance to those who depend on materials able to meet the most demanding standards.

ANIET – National Association of the Extractive and Manufacturing Industry – was founded 42 years ago with the mission to propagate this typically portuguese culture of mixing tradition and innovation in the rock industries, and promoting the demand for materials that already export 70% of its production. Within the extractive and manufacturing sector, the ornamental rock subsector represents half of the total export value. Nowadays, throughout Europe, there are traces across urban profiles that are reminiscent of Porto's facade.