

VASCO AND THE EXPLORERS

Touriga Nacional

Vasco da Gama (c.1460 – 1524) was a Portuguese explorer and the first European to reach India by sea; linking Europe and Asia via the Cape of Good Hope. Da Gama's first expedition left Lisbon in July 1497 and followed the route pioneered by earlier explorers along the west coast of Africa, before heading into the open ocean and crossing the Equator to seek the South Atlantic westerlies that Bartolomeu Dias had discovered a decade earlier.

For over three months da Gama and his crew sailed for more than 10,000 kilometres before they successfully made landfall on the African coast on 4 November. It was from here that they headed east to the Orient. The spices obtained from their expedition were all new to Europe and resulted in a commercial monopoly for the Portuguese for decades to come. But a century on, both the British and the Dutch challenged and eventually broke Portugal's naval supremacy for the route around Africa.

Da Gama never set out to colonise the Cape and neither is there evidence of him ever having populated the land with vines. But if he had, the complexion of the South African vineyards might well be influenced more by Iberian rather than French varieties. In reality, the modern era of Touriga in the Cape is as recent as the mid-1990s. It remains the most revered Portuguese grape, especially in respect of fortified wines. Deeply coloured, concentrated and tannic, Touriga is also distinguished by its fragrance and perfume.



Wine of Origin: Stellenbosch

Vintage: 2015

Alcohol: 14% vol

Imported By: www.dreyfus-ashby.co.uk

"I am not afraid of the darkness. Real death is preferable to a life without living." Vasco da Gama