



FEDER



REGIÃO DE TURISMO DE
SÃO MAMEDE
ALTO ALENTEJO

REGIÃO DE TURISMO DE SÃO MAMEDE

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PARQUE NATURAL DA SERRA DE S. MAMEDE

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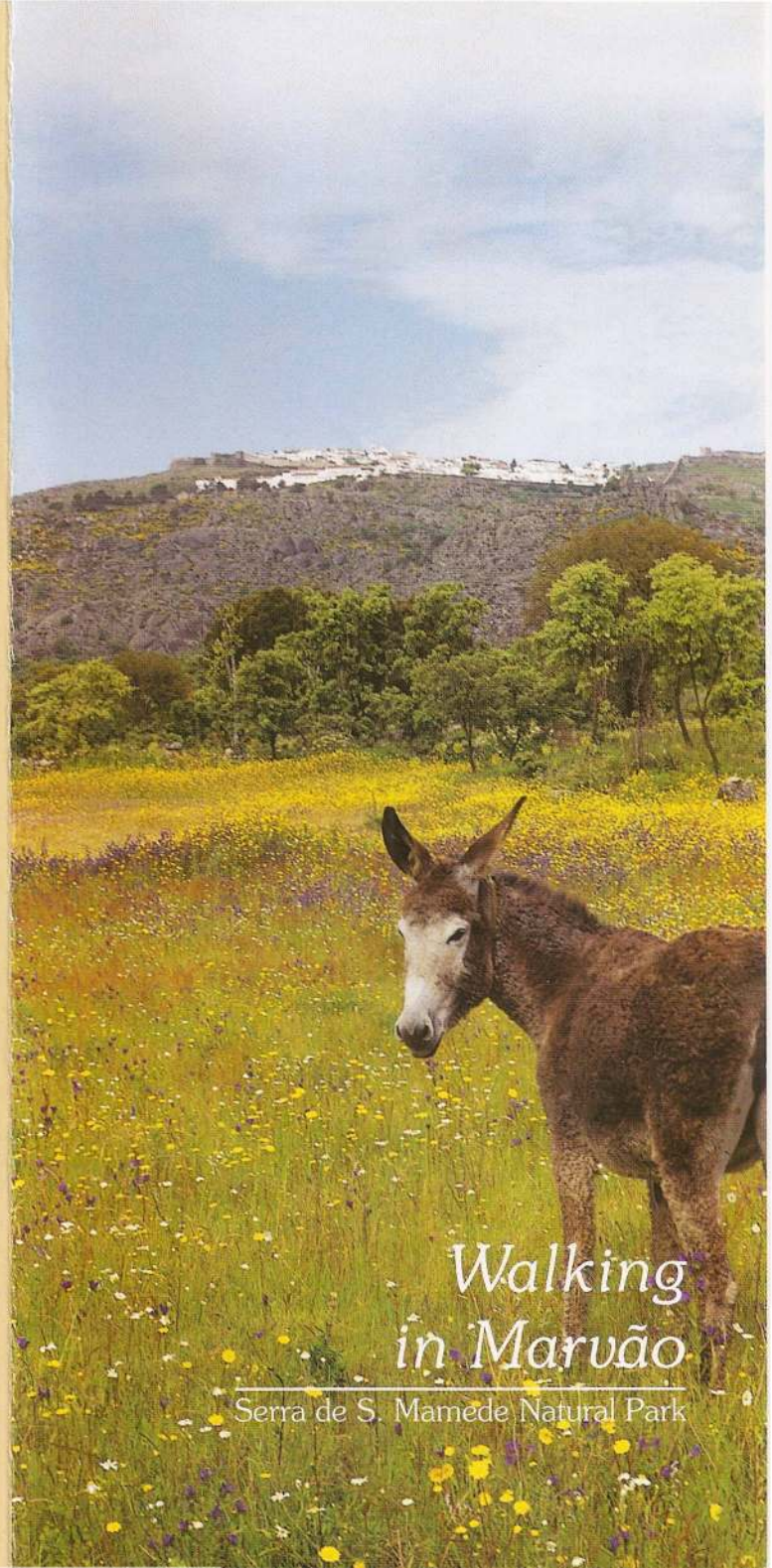
FOTOGRAFIA

Veludo Azul, Lda

DESIGN

Veludo Azul, Lda

Veludo Azul, Lda



Walking
in Marvão

Serra de S. Mamede Natural Park

INTRODUCTION

This is a different Alentejo, with escarpments and crags, valleys and ravines, oaks and chestnut trees. But there is the cork tree, now imposing, now with a modest presence, perennial in leaf and in memory, telling us that in "the land beyond the Tagus" there are not just slopes and plains. Diversity, exuberance and shade are here, too.

In the tight bends of the medieval cobbled streets can be heard the echo of the bells of white churches and the cheerful birdsong. And the free bird that hops and sings also releases us to look and smell the wild aromas of the steep forests, the smooth taste of the ever-pure water, the green havens where time stands still. Marvão, without the Moors, watches as we ramble along its slopes.

Below, at the 16th-century bridge, the poplars draw our eye up to the blue sky. Alongside, the Portagem Tower no longer levies a toll on travellers - but it asks the river to kiss its feet.

And the various water-mills, which the Sever calls at, doze yearningly, remembering the wheat.



READING THE TRAIL

- The trail begins and ends in Largo das Almas (the Square of the Souls), at the Portagem. A green sign, with the symbol of the Parque Natural da Serra de S. Mamede, marks the spot.

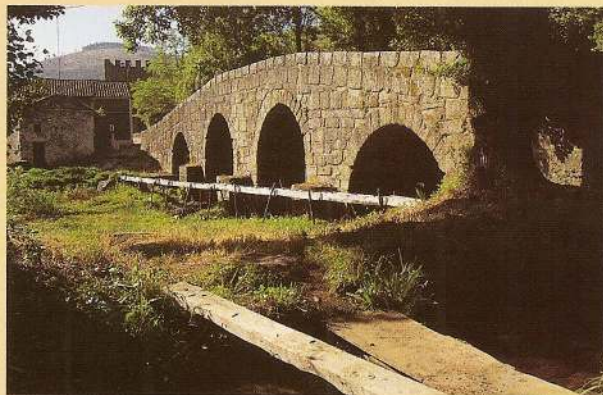
- The trail is clearly marked with posts about a metre and a half high and painted green and white at the top. Also, some green arrows mark the way. These signposts are usually on the left of the trail.

POINTS OF INTEREST

I- Largo das Almas (Portagem)

1.1 - The 16th-century bridge - May be a reconstruction, undoubtedly larger, of a former Romans bridge. Many of the building materials are undoubtedly from Roman times.

1.2 - The Tower - About 20 metres from the end of the bridge



there is a square stone tower dating from the XIV century, designed to be both a lookout point and for collecting bridge tolls.

1.3 - The Church - A small, rural church of the XVIII century which undoubtedly occupies the site of much earlier churches.

2 - Portagem Toll Tower to Lady of the Star

By the Portagem tower, magnificent poplars line the banks of the Sever; further on are small farmsteads with olive, cherry and chestnut trees.

The end of the tarred road leads to a mediaeval cobbled lane, possibly of Roman origin. The trail passes through a wooded area embracing cork oak, carvalho negral and chestnut. In between are pine trees and traces of old olive groves now abandoned. The forest floor is carpeted with rosemary, heather, broom, shrubs and laburnum. As we approach Sr^a da Estrela, cork trees become more plentiful.

The view is magnificent; to the Southeast, the dramatic peaks of quartzite; and to the south, the Serra Selada and S. Mamede ranges.

Shale, granite and quartzite rocks abound.

3 - The Convent Church of Our Lady of the Star

(Igreja do convento de Nossa Senhora da Estrela.)

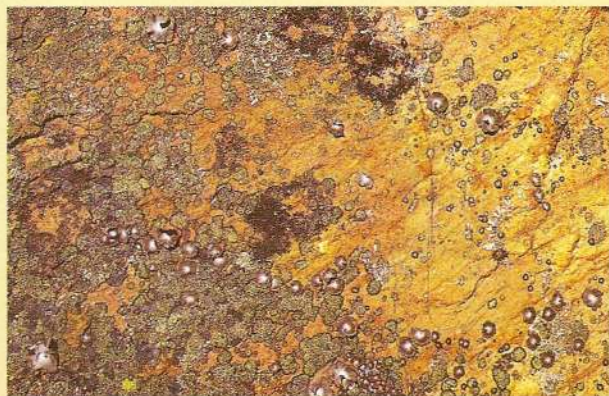
The convent, belonging to the Order of St. Francis, was founded in about 1448. It underwent alterations in the XVI, XVII and XVIII centuries. It has a single nave with a XVII

century altar made of Estremoz marble. The main chapel contains remnants of XVII century tiles, while the chapel screen is a wonderful example of XVI century ironwork. The cross in the churchyard (a national monument) dates back to the XV century and is in marble on granite steps.

Today the convent is a residential care home for the elderly, run by the Holy House of Mercy (Santa Casa de Misericórdia) of Marvão.

4 - The Lady of the Star to Abegoa stretch

After a short stretch of tarred road, offering splendid views of the granite plains of St. Anthony of the Sands (Santo António das Areias), we come to another medieval road, flanked by granite walls overgrown with ivy and lichen. Chestnut, olive, walnut, oak and horse-chestnut trees are all around, with small cultivated terraces dotted among them. Also in this early stretch, there is a local fountain dating from the Middle Ages, when it was the town's water supply in peace time. It is also worth noting the granite landscape (on the right as you go down) with huge boulders formed by erosion. At the end of the cobbled lane the path turns



towards Abegoa, a cluster of small houses with large chimneys. Looking to the west, the convent church of our Lady of the Star is visible against the backdrop of granite. Behind and above Abegoa stand the walls and castle of Marvão on quartzite. Around are carvalho negral and horse-chestnut, treeless areas with only clumps of broom and laburnum. On the more fertile land, small plots of vegetables, olive trees and chestnut grow.

5 - Abegoa to Fonte Souto

From Abegoa, the route continues along granite, through a landscape where oaks predominate, with cork trees in drier areas.

In Fonte Souto, there is a XIX century chapel now derelict and deconsecrated, and two mediaeval tombs cut into the rock (7).

6 - Fonte Souto to the Portagem Toll Tower

Initially, the predominance of carvalho negral in the damper areas of the slopes is noticeable. Cork trees also have a significant presence and in some places grow out of cracks in the granite which is clearly visible here in its typical local form.

Further along, chestnut trees abound and towards the end there is an important forest of cork-oaks.

As can be seen from the map, the trail then meets up with the first stage of the route, already described in 2.

NOTE

A full study of the fauna of the Serra de S. Mamede is at present underway, though it is worth remarking on the presence, among the birdlife, of songbirds (worth highlighting due to their rarity are the ring ouzel, the blue rock thrush and the black wheatear), and some birds of prey,



namely the buzzard, the kestrel, the little owl and the tawny owl.

Amongst the mammals are the wild boar, otters in the river Sever, and the civet cat. Trout are fairly common in the river Sever.

There are also some unusual members of the reptile family, some of which are unique to the Serra de S. Mamede, as for example Bosca's newt, the Iberian frog and Schreiber's green lizard, which are endemic to the Iberian peninsula; the latter two species are isolated populations in the S. Mamede region. There is also an isolated population of the Iberian midwife toad in S. Mamede.

Walking in Marvão

