

VILLAGES OF SERRA DA LOUSÃ

WHERE VILLAGES SOUND UNIQUE

Lousã is a Portuguese village in the district of Coimbra, in the Centre region and a NUTS 3 area of the Coimbra Region.

Serra da Lousã is a mountain range measuring 1205 metres of altitude at the highest point (Trevim). It is located in the border between the districts of Coimbra and Leiria. It is part of the northern branch of the Central Mountain Range, consisting of Serra da Estrela, Serra do Açor and Serra da Lousã, and is also part of the Montejunto-Estrela System.

The villages of Candal, Casal Novo, Cerdeira, Chiqueiro and Talasnal are located in the southern sector of the municipality in the northwest sector of the Serra da Lousã, at elevations ranging from 540 metres to 730 metres.

The Villages of Serra da Lousã – Where Villages Sound Unique Project involved in the revival of a mountain landscape, composed of five small traditional villages, including the revival of their landscape in its different components, from traditional houses to native fauna and flora. The project began in 2002 and its implementation reversed a path of decline and abandonment, ensuring – by adopting planning, conservation and landscape management measures – the protection of heritage values and the revitalisation of villages, giving them new purposes. Implemented by the municipality - with the support of several partners - the project has involved twenty years of work, marked by strong political and technical leadership. The typical constructions of the villages were salvaged, maintaining the characteristics of the traditional urban clusters. Access, public and circulation areas have been rebuilt. The surrounding landscape was revived with native species and, at the same time, awareness campaigns, public participation actions and landscape promotion activities were carried out. This had a strong impact on the local economy, converting a territory condemned to depopulation into a living and attractive landscape. A landscape that now intends to evolve towards the creation of a Protected Landscape at the Regional level, complementing the ecological value of Serra da Lousã, previously recognised in the context of the Natura 2000 Network (Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 76/2000, of 5th July).

This project is part of a policy of sustainable development based on a “balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment” (European Landscape Convention).

ANCIENT VILLAGES



The homes in these villages were built in more challenging times. The construction focused on different types of housing and enclosures, exclusively using materials that could be obtained on-site, such as stone – schist – and chestnut or oak wood. It is this earthy rusticity, the perfect symbiosis between the “artificial” and Nature that we appreciate and value today.

The schist and wood constructions were simple rudimentary houses that now seem like “natural monuments” of Popular Architecture.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Recover and revitalise the architectural, landscape and cultural heritage of the Schist Villages of Serra da Lousã
- ✓ Support the local economy and promote job creation
- ✓ Reverse the path of decline and abandonment of villages and instill a new dynamics of sustainability
- ✓ Preserve and improve the environmental quality of Serra da Lousã
- ✓ Share the landscape of the villages and their heritage
- ✓ Safeguard and value the tangible and intangible heritage of the landscape of Serra da Lousã
- ✓ Preserve, revive and value the native fauna and flora
- ✓ Stimulate the experience living in a Schist Villages, giving them up-to-date purposes with a sustainable future
- ✓ Attract and involve the local population, tourists and visitors



SCHIST VILLAGES OF SERRA DA LOUSÃ



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OUTCOMES

Pioneering and innovative, this project is an inspiring example whose management model can provide a reference for other degraded, abandoned and devitalised landscapes.

In the last 20 years, the main results obtained demonstrate the impact of the project in the following areas:

BUILT HERITAGE

- 5 recovered mountain villages (Candal, Casal Novo, Cerdeira, Chiqueiro and Talasnal)

05
schist
villages

NATURE CONSERVATION

- Revival of habitats with increased numbers of native animal species
- Increased forest area of Serra da Lousã populated by endemic species

3810HA
area natura
2000 network

APPRECIATION AND VALORISATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

- Integration in the "Rede das Aldeias do Xisto" Classification as a Natura 2000 Network area 800,000 visitors in the last 20 years

+800K
visitors

MOBILITY

- 70 km of signposted, approved walking routes
- 14.8 km of access routes to the revitalised villages
- 50 km of signposted cycling routes
- Sustainable Mobility – electric chargers available

70KM
signposted

RAISING AWARENESS

- Per year: 100 events + 15,000 + participants
- Promotion of Training Activities and Workshops
- Holding Cultural Events
- Promotion of Exhibitions
- Promotion of Gastronomy
- Holding religious pilgrimages
- Creation of the brand "Isto é Lousã" (This is Lousã) by a group of young people from Lousã
- Villages hosting events of high national and international importance such as: Trail; Enduro Mountain biking; Bicycle races; Paragliding; Downhill; Rally of Portugal; SkyRace (Trail)
- Holding leisure events such as bicycle and pedestrian tours

+20k
events

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Revitalisation of the local economy
- 50 + new jobs
- Installation of catering and bar services
- 50 + accommodation units in schist houses

+50
new
jobs

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- Promotion of the project "Aldeias Resíduos Zero" (Zero Waste Villages) that aims to value solid urban waste.

